



DEPARTMENT OF
**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT
REVIEW**

DATE: 16 September 2025

TO: The Honorable Councilmember Nicole Jones, Chairperson, Land Use, Housing and Transportation Standing Committee

FROM: Kevin J. Vonck, Director, Planning and Development Review

CC: Sharon L. Ebert, DCAO for Economic Development and Planning
Odie Donald II, Chief Administrative Officer

RE: ORD. 2025-161: To amend ch. 5 of the City Code by adding therein a new art. VI, consisting of §5-160 - 5-167, for the purpose of establishing a residential rental inspection program

This paper establishes a Residential Rental Inspection Program (RRIP) that promotes safe, decent, and sanitary housing in residential rental dwelling units, in a manner consistent with general law and authority set forth in § 36-105.1:1. Code of Virginia.

Since this paper was last discussed in July, Councilmembers have identified several amendments for potential consideration. The table below provides a summary of such proposals along with my response as to its implications and feasibility.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT	RESPONSE
Fees for inspections charged to owners	Included: as proposed, no charge for initial inspection; charges for follow up inspections for failure to correct violations previously cited, as set forth in section 5-5 of the City Code.
Program approved before any district is created by Council	Included: as proposed, this legislation only establishes a program; further amendments needed to establish district.
Mandatory corrective measures and time line to make corrections.	While not explicitly defined in this paper, we are required to follow building code regulations as set forth in section 5-5 of the City Code.
Require city staffing ratio to number of units and budget appropriations prior to district designation.	Recommend amending Sec. 5-163 to include a provision that requires the administration to provide a fiscal impact statement when creating a new district.

Exempt residential rental units that are in single-family dwelling units.	No opposition.
A district shall only comprise one (1) parcel, or multiple parcels that are owned or managed by at least one entity in common, including parent entities	No opposition, though perhaps minor concern about effort required to verify ownership of multiple layers of LLCs.
Only applicable to buildings that contain five (5) or more residential rental units.	No opposition, though may want to lower threshold to three (3) dwelling units to better align with commercial building code threshold.
Reduce duration of rental inspection district from ten (10) years to five (5) years; prohibit sales within district without Council approving terms and conditions.	No opposition shortening time frame; not sure we can legally condition sales of real property within district.
Reduce criterion regarding written notion of code violations from forty-eight (48) months to six (6) months.	Opposed. Although the included criteria are advisory, six (6) months is too short to capture a true picture of violations, especially those that may be seasonal. Forty-eight (48) months is the “grace period” a compliant unit receives. Compromise at twenty-four (24) months?
Require a baseline threshold, such as a specific number of unresolved code violations within a defined period, as a trigger for consideration of a rental inspection district.	Opposed. Although the included criteria are advisory, setting strict thresholds may cause us to overvalue cases with a high number of minor violations over a low number of major violations. We may also miss units where tenants are concerned about retaliation from reporting violations.

Given our limited authority set forth in § 36-105.1:1. Code of Virginia, we will need to work with the Department of Housing and Community Development and other partners on separate legislation for these requested amendments:

- Tenant rights and protections agreement
- Affordable Housing Incentive Program to owners to prevent sales, rent increases, and displacements
- Rent controls and eviction prevention in districts
- Fair housing protection for tenants, and community- devaluing properties, redlining, displacement

I will be glad to discuss any of these amendments further at the upcoming Land Use, Housing and Transportation Standing Committee.