

## **Code Change Policy**

Governance of Columbus City Codes is one of Council’s primary responsibilities, and the impact that code changes have can be broad, significant, and can carry risk. Even minor changes can have unknown negative consequences on interested parties that may or may not have been involved in the formation of new or amended code provisions. For these reasons, we propose to follow a comprehensive policy around code changes. This policy will be enacted for all code changes that would be proposed after the 5/20/24 Council meeting, and will be included in the Clerk’s office guidelines for drafting legislation moving forward.

### **Universal Principles:**

1. Unless there are extraordinary circumstances, code changes are never adopted as emergency measures.
  - a. If code changes must be passed as an emergency, the content of the code change and a corresponding fact sheet must be published in a widely-available format for no less than 14 days prior to passage.
2. All significant code changes should be subject to a public hearing, ideally prior to appearing on a Council agenda for a first reading. Recognizing that “significant” is subjective, significant code changes would be considered anything for which we would rationally expect feedback or input from interested external parties.
  - a. An exception to this would be changes that do not enact what we would normally consider to be substantive policy changes, or anything objectively non-controversial; for example, an ordinance to clean up previously authorized code changes because of drafting errors.
3. All code changes should be accompanied by a fact sheet, the format of which will be prescribed by the Clerk’s Office, and distributed to Councilmember offices and staff well in advance (i.e. at least 5 working days) of a public hearing. It is incumbent upon drafters to complete the fact sheet and ensure that it has been distributed to Councilmember offices.
4. Drafters should be able to demonstrate that they have completed a thorough community engagement process to determine the scope of interested parties and that questions or concerns by said parties have been addressed well in advance of requesting a code change to appear on a Council agenda.

### **For Code Changes Proposed by the Administration, Attorney, or Auditor:**

1. It is strongly recommended that drafters work with Council offices to set up no fewer than two briefing sessions during which Councilmembers can be briefed on the details of a proposed code change and to allow them to ask questions of administration/Attorney/Auditor staff.

**SHANNON G. HARDIN, PRESIDENT | ROB DORANS, PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE**  
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**MELISSA GREEN | EMMANUEL V. REMY | CHRISTOPHER L. WYCHE**

**CITY CLERK | ANDREA BLEVINS, CMC**

**DRAFTING OFFICE/DEPARTMENT**

**Fact Sheet:** Proposed Changes to [insert title, chapter, etc.]

**Drafter:**



**Department Requesting Code Change:**

Department of Building and Zoning

**Drafter:**

Wendi Bootes

**Email and Phone:**

wsbootes@columbus.gov/5-6349

**Columbus City Code Title Being Amended/Created/Repealed:**

To enact Chapter 4515 of Title 45, Housing Code.

**What is the overall purpose of this code change?** *Summarize the general themes of the code change(s) and the need for these changes. Please utilize language and descriptors that would be easily understandable by the general public.*

The purpose of the legislation is to create a local registry of all residential rental properties within the corporate limits of the City. The registry includes requirements that property owners identify local operators who are responsible for the property, creates a process for proactive inspections, and enhanced requirements for properties with chronic or severe code violations.

**Why is this code change needed?** *Examples: Correcting a drafting error; bringing code into alignment with changes to state law. For other policy changes, it may be necessary to provide a much more in-depth rationale in the section.*

Columbus currently does not have a registry to track all residential rental properties and ensure that issues with critical systems are identified before they fail and necessitate vacates. A registry is necessary to ensure that the City has accurate information regarding who is responsible for a property and for creating a process by which health and safety risks are proactively identified at rental properties.

**What would be the impact of not adopting this code change?**

The City would continue to lack reliable information about who owns or operates many rental properties throughout the city.

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**Fact Sheet:** Proposed Changes to [insert title, chapter, etc.]

**Drafter:**



**Are there any operating or capital budget cost/savings implications for this code change?**

*These may be direct or in-direct, and please also consider long-term impact.*

This code will charge a registration fee as well as collect a penalty for failure to register. Additionally, this code will create an operating budget cost for the purchase of a software that will assist with running the registry.

**Describe the community engagement process regarding this code change. What residents, impacted parties, and constituents may be affected? Have they been engaged, and how so? How was their feedback incorporated (or not incorporated) into this code change? Will this code change take effect with the ordinance, or is there a delayed effective date.**

Based on feedback from interested parties, substantial changes were made to the proposal to respond to concerns raised by both the opponents and the proponents of the legislation.

The registry will fully take effect in January 2027. Property owners and operators will have the ability to pre-register beginning in approximately October 2026.

Building and Zoning Services, the Department of Development, and City Council engaged in an extensive community engagement process when developing this legislation. Key impacted parties and constituents that participated in this process included: (1) The Columbus Apartment Association, (2) The Columbus Realtors Association, (3) The Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio, (4) BREAD, (5) Legal Aid Society of Southeast and Central Ohio, and (6) COSHN.

Administration and Council staff met with interested parties at multiple stages through the policy development and drafting process. City Council also held three public hearings where both proponents and opponents were invited to respond to the legislation.

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