

City of Shoreline Tenant Protections Frequently Asked Questions – [Ordinance 996](#)

1. **When did the Shoreline City Council adopt residential tenant protections?**

On Monday, December 11, 2023, the Shoreline City Council adopted [Ordinance No. 996](#), adding Chapter 9.35, Residential Tenant Protections, to the Shoreline Municipal Code (SMC). The Ordinance went into effect on December 19, 2023.

2. **How are the new tenant protections in the Ordinance enforced?**

The protections provided by the Ordinance are enforced by the tenant themselves. Under SMC 9.35.090, a landlord found to be violation of the provisions of the Ordinance may be liable to a tenant in a private right of action (a court case) for the greater of double the tenant's economic and noneconomic damages or up to three times the monthly Base Rent of the dwelling at issue, and reasonable litigation costs and attorneys' fees.

3. **What is Base Rent?**

Base Rent is the amount paid for the dwelling unit and it may include utility charges. Base Rent does not include such things as pet rent or rent for a parking space.

4. **Under Ordinance 996, what notice is required for rent increases?**

- 120 days for Base Rent increases greater than 3% but less than 10%.
- 180 days for Base Rent increases greater than 10%.

In contrast, the WA State Residential Landlord-Tenant Act ([RLTA](#)), chapter 59.18 RCW includes a 60-day notice provision for any rent increase.

5. **Who is covered by these tenant protections?**

Under SMC 9.35.10.B, the protections apply to all dwellings and renters governed by the WA State RTLA.

6. **Can a landlord require a social security number to screen a prospective tenant?**

Under SMC 9.35.060, a landlord may request, but not require, a social security or tax identification number. A landlord may utilize information including, but not limited to, previous names, addresses, personal references and work history to screen prospective tenants. A landlord cannot utilize a prospective tenant's non-disclosure of such number as the sole basis for denial or a rental agreement.

7. **Does Ordinance 996 limit late fees for rental payments?**

Yes, under SMC 9.35.050 late fees charged to a tenant shall not exceed 1.5% of the tenant's monthly Rent.

8. Does Ordinance 996 limit move-in fees and security deposits?

Yes, under SMC 9.35.040, all move in fees and security deposits related to Base Rent charged by the landlord before a tenant takes possession of a dwelling unit shall not exceed one month's Rent. Additionally, if a tenant requests in writing, they must be allowed to make installment payments in the following circumstances:

- Tenants entering rental agreements with terms lasting six or more months may choose to pay their move in fees, security deposits, and last month's rent in six equal consecutive monthly installments over the first six months occupying the dwelling unit.
- Tenants entering rental agreements with terms lasting fewer than six months may choose to pay move in fees, security deposits, and last month's rent in two equal consecutive monthly installments over the first two months occupying the dwelling unit.

The RLTA only provides for two to three equal consecutive monthly installments.

9. Under what circumstances can a tenant adjust the due date of rent payments?

For tenants whose primary source of income is a regular, monthly source of government assistance, under SMC 9.35.050(B), the tenant can request, in writing, an adjustment to the due date for rent in the rental agreement be altered to a different date of the month to align with the government assistance payment date.

10. Does Ordinance 996 speak to fees related to tenancy?

Yes, under SCM 9.35.065, certain limitations on fees now apply:

- In addition to Base Rent and Optional Rent, all fees to be charged to a tenant, whether one time or re-occurring, must be disclosed in an addendum to the rental agreement which must be acknowledged by the tenant.
- A landlord may not charge a fee for a tenant's access to common areas and/or a prorata share of utilities for such areas, for providing tenant services such as mail collection and distribution, or for the performance of any landlord duty required by the RLTA.
- A landlord may not charge a fee associated with the issuance of a notice to a tenant, whether or not the notice is required by state law, including but not limited to a fee for preparing and delivering a notice regarding late payment of rent, a notice to pay or vacate, or a notice of noncompliance with a rental agreement.