

# New proposal may change housing code

*If passed, rental units in the city would face stricter requirements for 'habitable conditions'*

By Teri Meeuwse  
Higher Education Reporter

When business and comparative literature major Paul Thompson moved into his house with four other roommates last year, it wasn't up to the best of standards for someone to live in.

"It was a disaster," Thompson said. "There were feces on the floor, dog or human. It looked like someone had broken into it before we moved in. We didn't have double-pane windows; there wasn't any weather stripping. It was just a mess."

In November the Eugene City Council will hear a new rental housing code proposal that will require landlords to register their rental units under stricter habitable conditions requirements than those currently required. The condition that Thompson found his home in would become a violation of the housing code and a thing of the past.

The proposed code, prepared by the Departmental Advisory Committee to the Planning and Development Committees of Eugene, would follow the Oregon Residential Landlord and Tenant Act that is in effect now, but would include and enforce a more specific definition of "habitable conditions."

John Davidson, who works for Legal Services at the University and is part of the advisory committee to the city, said the definition used now requires landlords to keep their rentals up to standards that eliminate hazards or threats to life. But the new definition would include better weather protection, heating facilities, and ventilation systems and would require working locks for individual rooms that are rented, such as in quads.

Funding for the proposed code would come from a one-time \$12-per-unit fee at registration, a \$12-per-month penalty for not being registered under the new code, a 2.5 percent-per-annum fee on security deposits and prepaid rent deposits and the fines property owners would pay for violations of the code's provisions.

Joy Poust, a broker for Spyglass Associates, said she feels the proposed code wouldn't be fair to those involved.

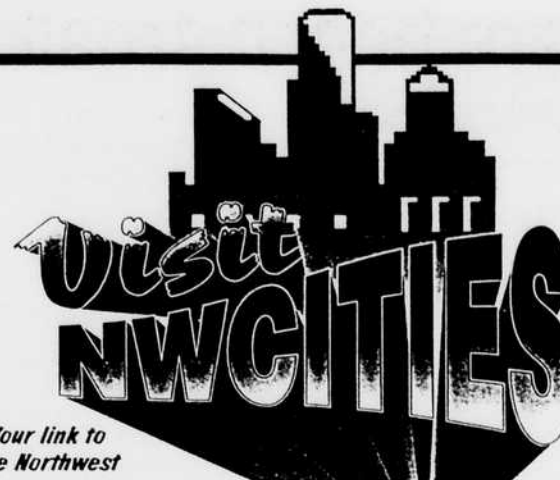
"I feel we are already covered by the state code, and with the shortage of money in the city and the small percentage of those problems, it wouldn't be fair for landlords to pay for the inspections," she said. "I think in the end, it would reflect in the rent going up, and nobody wants that."

Davidson said these new requirements will help keep Eugene's rentals in better condition for current and future tenants.

"I've already written to 180 landlords this year," he said. "It's that time of year that we get complaints about habitability and weather proofing."

According to a draft of the proposed code, if a tenant files for an inspection request after a formal complaint is made to the city, the rental housing would be inspected for the new requirements with the exception of the threat to life and/or health. If those requirements are not met, the landlords would be assigned a time period to meet them. If the problems are not fixed in the proposed time, the rentals will be subject to scheduled annual inspections until the units pass two consecutive inspections, or until they are no longer rental units.

For students who have questions about their rights and responsibilities, a renter's handbook in the Legal Aid Office of Eugene is available for a donation of \$1. Students can visit Legal Services in EMU Room 334.



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- October 20, Monday: *Vigil*: Springfield City Hall, 225 5th St. 4:30 p.m.
- October 21, Tuesday: *Call-in* to local government. Ask: what are you doing to provide all-year legal places to sleep for places to sleep for homeless persons?
- October 25, Saturday: *Nonviolence Training* (Just in case) Eugene Friends Meeting House, 2274 Onyx St., 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. If interested, phone ASAP so we know how many to expect.
- October 27, Monday: *Vigil*: Eugene City Hall, 4:30 to 6 p.m.