

Regulatory and Compliance Framework for Multi-Tenant (Rooming) Houses



Multi-tenant houses (commonly known as rooming houses) are found across the city and are an important part of Toronto's affordable rental housing stock. The City licenses multi-tenant houses to ensure that they are safe and well-maintained.

The City is proposing the creation of a new city-wide regulatory framework for multi-tenant houses. This framework is the first City of Toronto policy to be developed using a human rights lens since the adoption of the [HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan](#). The Action Plan includes the new Toronto Housing Charter, which recognizes the progressive realization to the right to adequate housing.

This information sheet provides an overview of the proposed framework for multi-tenant houses and describes opportunities for the public to participate in the engagement process.

What is multi-tenant housing?

A multi-tenant house, commonly known as a rooming house, is where people rent individual rooms as their main living accommodation and share a kitchen and/or washroom. Multi-tenant houses provide single-room accommodation to diverse tenants including students, seniors, new immigrants and residents with a low/moderate income. Personal care multi-tenant houses provide additional support services beyond a typical multi-tenant house.

Why do we need a regulatory framework for multi-tenant housing?

Under the current zoning bylaws, multi-tenant houses are only permitted in the former city of Toronto and some parts of the former cities of York and Etobicoke. Despite these regulations, unlicensed multi-tenant houses exist in other areas, which may result in inadequate and unsafe living conditions. The pathway to achieving safe, liveable and affordable multi-tenant houses starts with legalization city-wide, which will enable regulatory oversight and effective enforcement.

The proposed regulatory framework has four parts:

1 Enhanced operator licensing requirements to promote health and safety

The City is recommending a new and enhanced framework for the licensing and regulation of multi-tenant houses (including personal-care multi-tenant houses) in order to improve the living conditions for tenants, streamline applicable regulations to help operators better understand and comply with expected standards, and support neighbourhood integration.

2 An enforcement and compliance program

- Inter-divisional efforts, made up of a dedicated enforcement team from Municipal Licensing and Standards, along with Toronto Fire Services, Toronto Building, Toronto Public Health and other divisional staff as needed.
- Education and outreach to identify unlicensed operators and notify them of bylaw requirements, and to provide education and support for tenants and communities on the process to submit a complaint.
- Compliance strategy including annual inspections of licensed multi-tenant houses and investigations of unlicensed multi-tenant houses.
- Enforcement strategy including increased fines, a modernized housing tribunal and remedial action.

3

City-wide zoning standards that permit the use across the city

The proposed zoning approach would establish consistent definitions and establish city-wide permissions to allow multi-tenant houses in all zones where residential uses are permitted. It would also establish zone-specific regulations (such as maximum number of rooms, minimum parking, minimum number of washrooms). The proposed maximum number of dwelling rooms in a multi-tenant house is six for most residential areas of the city.

4

Initiatives to support tenants and maintain affordability of housing

The new framework will require that operators conform with the City's licensing requirements which in some cases would require renovation work. While the work would be necessary to ensure occupant safety, there is the potential for significant cost impacts on some operators. The City is taking the following actions to mitigate against these costs and increase certainty in the building permit process:

- Developing a package of compliance options for operators to choose from to meet the Ontario Building Code requirements.
- Looking at ways to support tenants' safety and security by maintaining affordability of multi-tenant houses. This includes incentive programs for eligible landlords to undertake building retrofits.

We Want Your Feedback!

City staff are organizing public engagement meetings in April and May to introduce the proposed framework, answer questions, and seek feedback on the recommended changes. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the consultation process will be virtual and will include:



Public meetings (May 4 & May 11)



Stakeholder workshops with groups such as tenants, owners and operators of multi-tenant houses, post-secondary schools and students, and housing-related agencies/organizations



An online and phone questionnaire



Do-it-Yourself meeting toolkits



You can also ask questions or submit feedback to the engagement team by:

Email: MTHreview@toronto.ca

Phone: 416-392-8788



To learn more about the consultation and to share your feedback, please visit:

[Toronto.ca/MTHreview](https://toronto.ca/MTHreview)