

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 2 OF THE CITY CODE TO CREATE A LANDLORD ENGAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

#0230

Sponsor:

**Council
Member
Darby**

WHEREAS, the City of Wilmington seeks to ensure safe, affordable, and well-maintained rental housing for its residents; and

WHEREAS, effective landlord engagement is critical to improving compliance with licensing and housing codes, preventing evictions, and fostering investment in City neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, Wilmington has already demonstrated national leadership by serving as a participant in the National League of Cities (“NLC”) Landlord Engagement Lab, which brought together cities across the country to test new strategies for improving landlord-tenant relationships and strengthening rental housing stability; and

WHEREAS, insights gained from Wilmington’s participation in the NLC Landlord Engagement Lab included the value of proactive landlord outreach, structured fora for communication, and city-led partnerships to support responsible rental housing management; and

WHEREAS, building upon this successful national initiative, the City now seeks to institutionalize a permanent Wilmington Landlord Engagement Advisory Board to sustain and expand this work locally; and

WHEREAS, a permanent Landlord Engagement Advisory Board will provide a structured, ongoing forum for landlords, tenants, City officials, and housing advocates to collaborate on solutions to rental housing challenges.

**NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON
HEREBY ORDAINS:**

SECTION 1. Chapter 2 of the City Code is hereby amended by repealing Chapter 2, Division 4 (“Task Force on Downtown Housing”), Sections 2-96 through 2-100 in their entirety.

SECTION 2. Chapter 2 of the City Code is hereby amended by adding the following underlined language.

DIVISION 4. – CITY OF WILMINGTON LANDLORD ENGAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD.

Sec. 2-96. – Establishment; Membership; Meetings.

(a) **Establishment.** There is hereby established a standing advisory body known as the Landlord Engagement Advisory Board. The Board’s purpose shall be to advise the Mayor, City Council, and relevant City departments on policies, procedures, and potential legislation related to landlord-tenant relationships in the City, providing critical support for safe, secure rental housing.

(b) **Composition.** The Board shall be composed of nine (9) voting members. Five (5) members shall be appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of City Council. Four (4) members shall be appointed by the President of City Council, with no more than two (2) members recommended by any single Councilmember. Non-City appointees shall not do business with the City.

1) City Representatives

- i. One (1) Wilmington City Councilmember, appointed by the President of City Council.
- ii. One (1) representative from the Department of Licenses and Inspections, appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of City Council.

2) Landlord and Property Manager Representatives

- i. One (1) small-sized landlord (1-4 rental units owned), appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of City Council.
- ii. One (1) medium-sized landlord (5-20 rental units owned), appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of City Council.
- iii. One (1) large landlord (21+ rental units owned), appointed by the President of City Council.
- iv. One (1) Section 8 participating landlord, appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of City Council.
- v. One (1) licensed property manager, appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of City Council.

3) Community and Partner Organization Representatives

- i. One (1) representative from a local landlord association, appointed by the President of City Council.
- ii. One (1) representative from a housing, fair-housing, or tenant-support organization, appointed by the President of City Council.

(c) **Terms.** Members shall serve staggered terms. Three (3) Mayoral appointees shall serve a three (3) year term; and two (2) Mayoral appointees shall serve a two (2) year term. Two (2) members appointed by the President of City Council shall serve a three (3) year term; and two (2) members appointed by the President of City Council shall serve a two (2) year term. Members may be only reappointed once.

(d) **Vacancies.** Vacancies shall be filled by the original appointing authority, in the same manner as the original appointment.

(e) **Public Notice.** All Board member nominations shall be subject to public notice and public hearing laws pursuant to the Delaware Freedom of Information Act.

(f) **Leadership.** The Board shall annually elect a Chair and Vice Chair from among its voting members.

(g) **Meetings; quorum.** The Board shall meet no fewer than six (6) times annually, with additional meetings as needed. All meetings shall be subject to applicable open meeting and public notice requirements. A quorum shall consist of a majority of voting members.

(h) **Staff support; Law.** The Department of Licenses and Inspections shall appoint an employee to provide scheduling, coordination, and recordkeeping duties. An attorney from the Law Department shall provide legal advice to the Board.

Sec. 2-97. Duties and Responsibilities; Reports.

(a) The Board's duties and responsibilities shall include:

- 1) Advise on rental licensing requirements, code enforcement process, and property maintenance standards;
- 2) Collaborate with the City on the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Landlord Education and Accountability Program, including assisting with curriculum creation and recommending facilitators;
- 3) Provide recommendations on water and utility billing policies that affect rental properties, including protocols for protecting tenants from shutoffs caused by landlord nonpayment;
- 4) Identify challenges faced by landlords of all scale and propose solutions to support compliance and reduce housing instability;
- 5) Recommend legislative, administrative, or regulatory reforms that promote safe, high-quality rental housing;

- 6) Serve as a communication bridge between landlords and City departments, improving responsiveness and clarity;
- 7) Review data on code violations, rental licensing compliance, and landlord education outcomes, and make policy recommendations based on emerging trends;

(b) **Rules.** The Board shall promulgate its own bylaws, subject to Administrative Board approval as required by section 4-200 of the Charter.

(c) **Reports.** The Board shall submit an Annual Report to City Council and the Mayor outlining its findings, recommendations, and progress.

Secs. 2-98 – 2-110. – Reserved.

SECTION 3. This Ordinance shall take effect upon passage by City Council and signing by the Mayor.

First Reading.....May 7, 2026
 Second Reading.....May 7, 2026
 Third Reading.....

Passed by City Council,

 President of City Council

ATTEST: _____
 City Clerk

Approved as to form this 6th day
 of May 2026



 Acting City Solicitor

Approved this ___ day of _____ 2026.

 Mayor

SYNOPSIS: This Ordinance amends Chapter 2 of the City Code by deleting a defunct Task Force on Downtown Housing and creating a permanent Landlord Engagement Advisory Board.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT: This Ordinance establishes a Landlord Engagement Advisory Board to advise on landlord-tenant policy, rental housing practices, and related City policies, operations, and initiatives, including rental licensing, housing code enforcement, landlord education and accountability initiatives, and water utility billing policies affecting rental properties. The direct fiscal impact associated with the creation and operation of the Board is expected to be minimal and will be absorbed within existing departmental budget appropriations. The Department of Licenses and Inspections and the Law Department will provide administrative and legal support using existing staff, and any associated workload increases are expected to be manageable within current resources.

The duties of the Board are advisory in nature and include reviewing data, collaborating on existing programs, and developing policy recommendations. These activities may require staff time and interdepartmental coordination; however, no additional personnel or expenditures are anticipated at this time.

While the Board itself is not authorized to expend funds, its recommendations may result in future legislative, programmatic, or operational changes that could have material fiscal implications. Any such impacts would be evaluated and considered through the City's budget and appropriation processes. Accordingly, this Ordinance's overall immediate fiscal impact on the City's General Fund is *de minimis*.