

Introduced: July 19, 2021
Adopted: August 16, 2021
Effective: November 1, 2021

CITY OF CHARLOTTE
ORDINANCE NO. 2021-09

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 14 – BUILDINGS AND BUILDING REGULATIONS –OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF CHARLOTTE BY AMENDING ARTICLE III RESERVED TO ESTABLISH A RENTAL REGISTRATION AND INSPECTION PROGRAM.

Councilmember _____ moved that the following ordinance be approved upon public hearing held August 16, 2021:

THE CITY OF CHARLOTTE ORDAINS:

SECTION 1. ESTABLISHING A RENTAL REGISTRATION AND INSPECTION PROGRAM.
Chapter 14, *ARTICLE III RESERVED*, Title and Sections listed below shall hereby be amended.

Article III – Rental Dwelling Registration

ARTICLE III RENTAL DWELLING REGISTRATION

Section 14-56 - Definitions.

The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this article, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

Building inspector means the official who is charged with the administration and enforcement of this Code, or any duly authorized representative by the city manager.

Hotel, motel, boardinghouse, rooming house mean a building held out to the public as a place for lodging for a nightly, weekly or monthly rate, including bed and breakfasts.

Occupant includes all tenants, lessees and persons residing within a rental dwelling or rental unit.

Owner means any person, firm, corporation or other legal entity having a legal or equitable interest in the premises. If more than one person or entity owns the subject real property or if more than one person or entity is a land contract vendee of the subject real property, property owner refers to each person or entity holding any portion of that interest in the property, and the property owners' obligations in this article are joint and several as to each property owner.

Owner's representative means a person or representative of a corporation, partnership, firm, joint venture, trust, association, organization or other entity designated by the owner of the premises as responsible for operating such property in compliance with all the provisions of the city's ordinances.

Rental building or structure means any building containing one or more rental units.

Rental dwelling unit means any portion of a rental building in the city that contains living facilities, including provisions for sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation, which is occupied by a person other than a property owner or the parents or children of a property owner. The definition of rental unit includes a single-family dwelling, or a unit in a multifamily or multipurpose dwelling, or a unit in a condominium, or any room or group of rooms located within a dwelling and forming a single unit with facilities that are used or intended to be used for living, sleeping, cooking or eating.

Sec. 14-57. - Purpose of standards.

The city recognizes a compelling interest in establishing standards for the maintenance of sanitary and safe residential rental structures in the city as an important factor for the general health, safety and welfare of all of its citizens. This article is designed to promote the continued maintenance of quality and safe rental properties and to enhance and maintain property values by adopting legislation which will be applicable to all rental housing units.

Sec. 14-58. - Applicability; exclusions

This article shall apply to any rental dwelling unit, or part thereof, which is occupied by persons pursuant to any oral or written rental or lease agreement or other valuable compensation. No person shall lease or rent a rental dwelling unit unless they have registered their property.

This article does not apply to jails, hospitals, nursing homes, convalescent homes, foster homes or temporary group shelters provided by legal nonprofit agencies which are inspected, certified and/or licensed by the state. This article does not apply to a hotel, motel, boardinghouse, or rooming house as defined herein.

Sec. 14-59. - Registration.

Compliance required. All rental dwelling unit owners in election District 1 are required to register their rental dwelling units within 90 days of the effective date of this ordinance, and every two (2) years or biennially, thereafter. All rental dwelling unit owners in election District 2 are required to register their rental dwelling units between 90-180 days of the effective date of this ordinance, and every two years, or biennially, thereafter. All rental dwelling unit owners must abide by the registration process and procedures of this article and shall comply with the following:

1. All existing rental dwelling units shall be registered within one hundred eighty (180) days of the effective date of the ordinance.
2. All newly constructed buildings which will be used as rental dwelling units shall be registered prior to any use or occupancy as a rental dwelling unit and every two (2) years thereafter.
3. Any existing registration may be transferred to the new owner. The new owner shall register the transfer of ownership within thirty days of the date of the date of closing. A license which has been transferred upon sale of the property shall be valid until its expiration or revocation for noncompliance with city codes and ordinances.
4. Any existing building which is converted to a rental dwelling unit shall be registered prior to the date on which the unit is first occupied for rental purposes and every two (2) years thereafter. Failure to comply will result in penalties as described in this article or by resolution.

Applications for registration, renewal, and notice of transfers shall be made in such form and in accordance with such instructions as may be provided by the building inspector designated by the city manager and shall include at least the following information:

1. The name, address, telephone number, and email address of the owner (no post office box shall be accepted).
2. The name, address, telephone number, and email address of the owner's representative or responsible local agent, if the rental property owner has chosen to appoint a representative.
3. The authorization appointing a local agent, signed by both the owner and the local agent, as designated.
4. The address of the rental unit(s).
5. The number of dwelling or rooming units in each building on the premises

Upon registration, the owner shall be responsible for notifying the building inspector of any change of address of either the owner or owner's representative.

A renewal registration shall require a satisfactory inspection being completed before a renewal certificate shall be issued.

Section 14-60. - Inspections.

The City employee assigned to inspect a particular rental unit shall give notice by email or by first class mail to the local agent and the tenant within seven days of the scheduled inspection, which shall occur during regular city business hours. The landlord, the tenant and/or the agent shall permit the inspection by the City inspector as notified or at the time otherwise agreed to by the parties.

The City inspector may, at the request of the owner, tenant, or agent, inspect the property. If the inspector is invited to inspect the property, no notice shall be required to be given.

A reinspection notification shall be given by email, first class mail, or telephone within seven days of the scheduled reinspection.

Sec. 14-61. - Responsible Local Agent.

At the discretion of the property owner, a responsible local agent may be designated. The responsible local agent shall be a person or representative of a corporation, partnership, firm, joint venture, trust, association, organization or other entity, and shall be designated by the owner of the premises as responsible for operating such property in compliance with all the provisions of this Code. All official notices of the city may be sent to the responsible local agent, and any notice so sent shall be deemed to have been delivered upon the owner of record.

Sec. 14-62. - Certificate of Compliance.

No person shall operate, lease, rent or occupy a rental unit unless there is a valid certificate of compliance issued by the building inspector in the name of the operator and issued for the specific rental unit. The certificate shall be issued for each building containing a rental unit and shall be displayed in a conspicuous place. The certificate shall be issued after registration with the city upon satisfactory inspection by the building inspector. The certificate shall state that the unit or units inspected comply with the provisions of this Code and state law. A certificate of compliance is valid for a period of two years from its date of issuance and must be renewed in conformity with the registration provisions of this article. The name, address and telephone number of the property owner or the designated responsible local agent shall be posted on the certificate of compliance.

Sec. 14-63. - Requirements for Issuance

The building inspector shall not issue a certificate of compliance unless a current housing registration is submitted, the responsible local agent, if any is properly designated, any fees for registration plus applicable penalties are paid in full, and

inspection of each unit has determined that compliance has been secured with the minimum standards listed herein and other applicable provisions of the City Code.

As it pertains to multiple unit dwellings, the building inspector may, after inspection, issue a certificate of compliance for a portion, but not all, of the units in a multiple unit dwelling. All noncomplying units may not be leased or allowed to be occupied. Owners of noncomplying units may appeal the decision of the Building Inspector through the procedures listed in section 14-68.

Sec. 14-64. - Applicable standards.

The standards used to determine rental property and dwelling unit compliance with city codes and ordinances shall be the International Property Maintenance Code, as adopted and amended by the city council.

Sec. 14-65. - Noncompliance with code.

In addition to the inspections required with the registration process, the building inspector may enter rental dwelling units under any of the following circumstances:

1. Upon receipt of a written complaint from an owner, owner's representative, or occupant that the structure and/or premises are in violation of this article.
2. Upon receipt of a report or referral from the police department, fire department, public or private school, or another public agency, of failure to comply with this article.
3. Upon evidence of an existing ordinance violation observed by the building inspector.
4. At the request of the owner to determine compliance with the International Property Maintenance Code.

The building inspector may make an appointment with the owner or owner's representative of the rental dwelling unit regarding a complaint pursuant to the inspection process in Section 14-60 unless an emergency requiring 24 hours' notice or less exists.

The building inspector shall issue a written report noting any violations of this article or any other provision of the city's ordinances and shall provide a copy of the report to the owner or owner's representative. The building inspector shall direct the owner or owner's representative to correct violations within the time set forth in the report. A reasonable time for correcting violations shall be determined by the building inspector in light of the nature of the violations and all relevant circumstances, which shall not exceed sixty (60) days, unless correction of the violation within a 60-day period is impossible due to seasonal considerations. Upon request of the person responsible for correcting violations, the building inspector may extend the time for correcting violations, but not to exceed an additional thirty (30) days.

Whenever the building inspector finds that the operator of any rental unit has failed to comply with a notice of violation or compliance order issued pursuant to this Code, the certificate of compliance may be revoked.

Upon revocation of a certificate of compliance and/or a determination that a rental unit is unfit for human habitation, the owner or operator of the unit shall immediately vacate the unit; and no person shall thereafter occupy the unit for sleeping or living purposes until the unit is in compliance with this article.

Sec. 14-66. - Fees.

Fees for registration, inspection and reinspection of rental units, and penalties shall be established by resolution of Council. The fee schedule shall be available to the public from the City Clerk. Such fees may be changed by resolution of Council.

Reinspection fees for violations shall be assessed after the original inspection and one reinspection. There will be no exceptions or extensions for immediate health, safety and life-threatening violations. Following is a list of reasons that a reinspection fee may be charged: failure to appear for inspection; failure to comply with violation notices; and failure to permit inspection.

Sec. 14-67. - Violations.

Any owner or owner's representative of a rental dwelling unit who violates any section of this article shall be responsible for a municipal civil infraction as provided for in this Code with the fines as stated in subsection (a) below.

- a. The fines for municipal civil infractions for violating this article shall be: Two hundred dollars (\$200.00) for the first offense; four hundred dollars (\$400.00) for the second and any subsequent offenses. Each day that a violation continues shall be a separate offense.

The building inspector, building official, code enforcement officer and any other person designated by the city manager are authorized to issue municipal civil infraction citations for violations of this article.

In addition to any penalties imposed by law, upon a finding of responsibility by the court for a violation of this article the city shall be entitled to immediately revoke any existing certificate of compliance and shall entitle the city to seek a court order compelling the eviction of all persons and property upon the premises until a certificate of compliance is issued by the city.

If the owner or owner's representative does not correct a violation of any provision of this article, the building inspector may bring an action to seek the enforcement of this article by any appropriate legal remedy.

Any structure not in compliance with this article is deemed a nuisance.

Sec. 14-68. - Appeals.

Any person whose registration to rent or lease a dwelling or to operate a rental unit has been denied, or whose certificate of compliance has been revoked, may appeal to the Circuit Court.

Sec. 14-69 through 14-85. - Reserved.

SECTION 2. EFFECTIVE DATE. This ordinance shall become November 1, 2021.

Second, _____ () Yeas. () Nays.

Dated: _____

Michael Armitage, Mayor

Mary LaRocque, City Clerk