

City of Sugar Land

Residential Rental Property License & Inspection Program

A Guide for Tenants, Landlords and the Community



Community & Environmental Services Department
2700 Town Center Blvd. N.
Sugar Land, TX 77479
281-275-2785
281-275-2771 fax

Rental Property Owners and Tenants:

With the goal of preserving and improving the City of Sugar Land's rental properties and, in turn, its neighborhoods, we are pleased to present you with this guide of useful and important information. The information in this guide will help the City of Sugar Land staff work together with tenants, landlords and the community to keep properties in good condition, protect individual and business investments, and make properties continually attractive and healthy for residents and visitors to enjoy. We encourage all landlords to understand and abide by the city codes related to their properties and to be aware of their responsibility in ensuring the integrity of our valued neighborhoods. At the same time, we encourage all tenants to understand their rights and to carry through with their responsibilities to properly maintain the properties in which they live and their obligations to their landlord and to the neighborhood as a whole. We each have a very important role in making our city One of America's Best. Please read the material in this guide to understand your rights and responsibilities while learning how you can keep the neighborhoods safe and attractive.

Thank you in advance for helping realize the City's Goal of Livable Neighborhoods.

**Mike Goodrum
Community & Environmental Director**

Table of Contents

	PAGE
Contact Information	4
How The Program Works – written version	5
How The Program Works – graphic version	8
Special Note on Applying for Water Service	10
Preparing for Licensing Inspections	11
FAQ's	13

Contact Information

To request an application, ask questions relating to this program or schedule an inspection, contact us at the numbers below during our regular business hours, 8-5 Mon-Fri.

By Phone: 281-275-2785

By Fax: 281-275-2771

Email: rentalprogram@sugarlandtx.gov

Website: www.sugarlandtx.gov (click on Department, then Community & Environmental Services, then Rental Licensing)

In Person: City Hall, 2700 Town Center Blvd. N.
Monday through Friday 8:00 am – 5:00 pm

How the Program Works – Written Version

The Residential Rental Property License and Inspection Program is a two-part process that requires the owner of a rental property to obtain a License annually as well as receive interior and exterior inspections. Each unit will have an exterior inspection annually and will have an internal inspection when: There is a change in occupancy; An inspector notes an exterior code violation that indicates a potential critical or life safety violation; or as requested by the occupant.

Application Process:

Rental Property owners are required to apply for and obtain a License annually.

Step 1: Apply for License

Applications are available:

1. By Mail
2. At City Hall
3. Online at www.sugarlandtx.gov (click on Department, then Community & Environmental Services, then Rental Licensing)

Applications can be submitted along with payment to the City by:

1. Mail
2. In person at City Hall
3. Online w/ Credit Card

Applications received without the required fee will be considered incomplete and will not be processed until payment is received.

Application Review:

1. Applications will be checked for general compliance with City ordinances.
2. If clear, an inspection will be scheduled

Step 2: Property Inspection

After the City has reviewed your application for a license or license renewal, we will schedule an exterior inspection of the property for which the license is sought.

The Exterior Inspection is intended to provide an estimation of the general condition of the property, and will consist of an assessment of the property's structures and grounds. Here are some of the things that we'll be looking for during the Exterior Inspection:

1. Grounds:

- High Weeds & Grass (Must be shorter than 9")
 - Unsanitary Conditions (Stagnant water, refuse, garbage, etc.)
 - Junk Vehicles (inoperable, no registration or inspection, etc.)
 - Pools/Fences (Pools must be sanitary or properly drained/ covered if not in use; Fences must be in good repair, not leaning or collapsed, etc.)
2. Structure:
- Exterior Finishes (Peeling paint, rotten/missing siding, unfinished surfaces, etc.)
 - Windows & Doors (All windows and doors must be secured and weather tight, i.e. no broken or missing windows & doors.)
 - Roof (Damaged/missing shingles, sagging rafters, etc)
 - Foundation (Significant settling or cracks {cracks greater than 1/8th could be a sign of serious foundation problems})

In addition to the Exterior Inspection, the City will conduct an Interior Inspection every time there is a Change of Occupancy (new renter), Probable Cause (a condition on the exterior that indicates serious health or safety issues may exist inside the dwelling unit), or at the request of the tenant.

Here are some of the things that we'll be looking for during the Interior Inspection:

1. Safety Devices: If required, must be operable
 - Locks
 - Latches
 - Smoke Detectors
2. Health & Sanitation: Conditions must not constitute a threat to health and safety of tenants
 - Mold
 - Water penetration
 - Insects
 - Rodents
3. Foundation: Look for indications of foundation failure
 - Sticking Doors/Windows
 - Cracks in walls, door frames, floors, etc.
4. Structure: Conditions must not constitute a threat to the health and safety of tenants
 - Obvious structural failures
 - Holes in walls/ceilings
 - Buckling floors/ceilings
5. Plumbing: All plumbing must operate efficiently to protect tenant health and safety
 - Check traps
 - Check water heater
 - Test drains
6. Electrical: All electrical wiring and circuits must be installed safely and in conformance with all applicable codes
 - Check Outlets for proper GFCI protection
 - Check Outlets for reverse polarity
 - Check for appropriately installed breakers

If the property fails either the Exterior or Interior inspection, the **PROPERTY OWNER** is responsible for ensuring that noted violations are corrected with the following timeframes:

1. Life Safety Violations (immanent threat of injury or death): Must be immediately isolated from the tenant and repaired within a reasonable period of time.
2. Critical Violations (potential threat to health or safety): Must be isolated from the tenant within 72 hours and repaired within a reasonable period of time.

If the property fails the inspection, the Owner will be given time to correct the violation as outlined above. After the violation is corrected, the City will re-inspect the property to verify that the violation has been corrected. The initial inspection and the first re-inspection are provided at no cost to the applicant. Second and subsequent re-inspections will be assed a fee of \$50.00 and \$100.00 per inspection, respectively.

Step 3: Issue License

If the application and property pass all required screenings and inspections, the City will issue the property owner a license to operate the property as a rental unit. The license is good for one year from the date of issue. If at any time during the year the owner leases the property to new tenants, the City must be notified so that a Change of Occupancy inspection (interior) can be arranged.

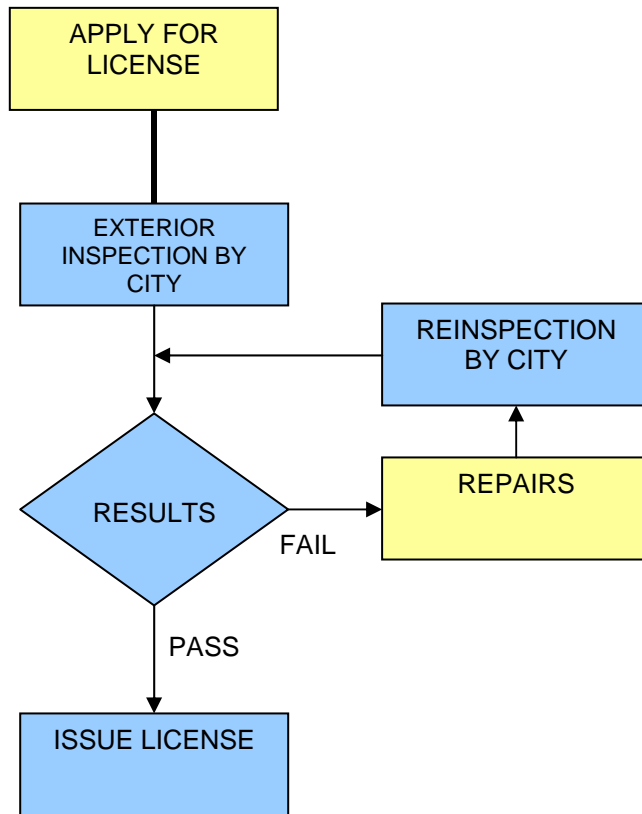
Step 4: License Renewal

All licenses are valid for one year from the date of issue. Please check your license periodically to ensure that it is current and that it is not about to expire. We encourage licensees to apply for renewal at least 30 days before license expiration. The City will accept renewals up to 60 days in advance of license expiration. Properties with expired licenses can be fined up to \$500.00 per day.

How the Program Works – Graphic Version

Application & Licensing Process

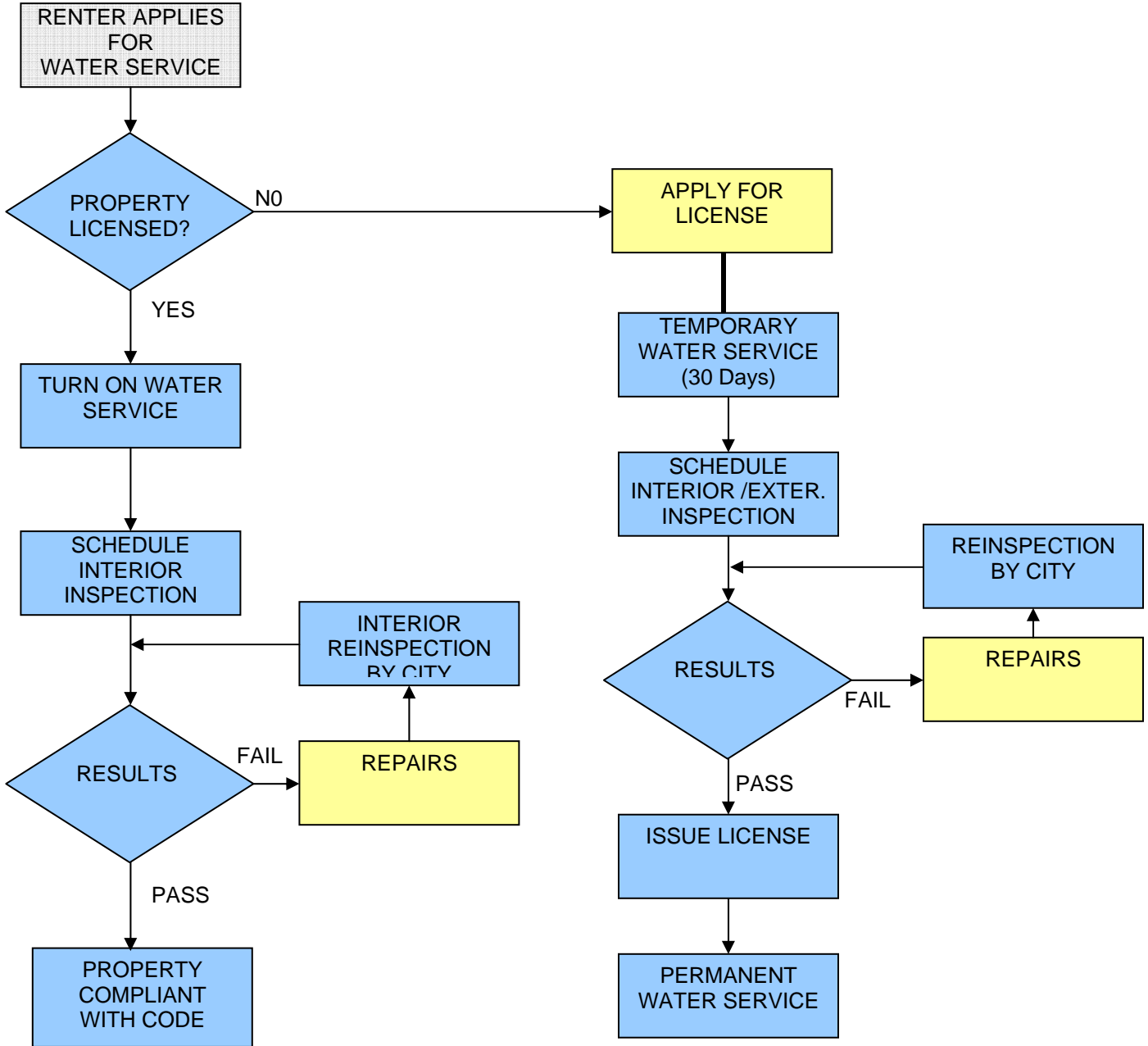
Rental Property License & Inspection Program Process for Obtaining a License



How the Program Works – Graphic Version

Rental Property License & Inspection Program

Process for Change of Occupancy



SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT APPLYING FOR WATER SERVICE FOR RENTAL UNITS

The City of Sugar Land will not provide permanent water service to any rental property that has failed to obtain a Residential Rental Property License. Tenants and Property Owners should be aware of the following conditions relating to water service:

1. When renting to new tenants, the property owner should notify the City and arrange for a Change of Occupancy Inspection (interior). Ideally, this should be completed after the old tenants have moved out but before the new tenants have moved in. If this is not arranged beforehand, when the new tenants attempt to apply for water service (i.e. “put the bill in their name”), they will be denied water service until the property owner applies for a license and pays the license fee. At the time the owner applies for a license and pays the fee, the tenants will only be allowed to receive Temporary Service. Temporary Service lasts for up to 30 days. To receive water service beyond 30 days, the property owner must arrange for the property to receive its Change of Occupancy Inspection. The City will make its best efforts to ensure that the inspection is conducted in a timely manner, but it is the responsibility of the property owner to ensure that inspections are arranged in time to prevent service interruption.
2. The property owner only needs to schedule a Change of Occupancy Inspection when new tenants have arranged a lease agreement. If the previous tenants have moved out, but no new tenants have been secured, the property owner can place the water service in their own name without obtaining a Change of Occupancy Inspection. The Inspection should be scheduled at the time that new tenants have been secured.

SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT RESTRICTIONS ON RENTING TO REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS

Under the City of Sugar Land Code of Ordinances, Chapter 3, Article XI, Sec. 3-183, it is unlawful for a property owner to rent a residential property to a registered sex offender if the residential property is located within 2,500 feet of any schools, playgrounds, youth centers, video arcade facilities, public swimming pools, public parks, private recreational facilities, skate parks, or youth athletic fields. **BOTH** the **OWNER** and the **TENANT** can be fined up to \$500.00 per violation per day for violating this ordinance. It is the responsibility of the owner of the property to properly screen potential tenants to ensure compliance with these regulations. Please consult the ordinance or the Sugar Land Police Department at 281-275-2500 if you have any questions.

Preparing for Licensing Inspections

General Requirements

All exterior surfaces must be protected from wind, rain, and other weather elements by painting, staining, sealing, siding, or the use of other weather tight materials to prevent deterioration.

All interior surfaces must have suitable finishes that are necessary for effective cleaning and sanitation. Finishes should be durable, smooth and impervious to water.

All repairs, maintenance work, alterations or installations shall be conducted in a workmanlike manner. Workmanlike is defined as executed in a skilled manner; generally plumb, level, square, inline, undamaged, and without marring adjacent work.

Exterior Maintenance

Grounds

Grounds free of high weeds and grass, unsanitary conditions, debris, junk vehicles, etc

Foundations / Roof / Gutters / Downspouts

Structurally sound without holes or gaps

Intact shingles and flashing that is structurally sound and free of leaks

Properly attached and unobstructed for discharge of drain water

Stairways / Porches / Decks / Balconies

Evenly spaced steps with firmly anchored hand and guard rails

Windows / Doors / Chimneys

Secure doorframe molding that is weather tight, rodent proof, free of loose, broken or deteriorated materials

Working hardware with readily operable locks that tightly secure exterior doors

Walls / Overhangs / Painted Surfaces

Weather protected and intact with non peeling, chipping or flaking paint that is free from rot

Visibly posted building and unit numbers

Yard / Fences / Accessory Structures

Grounds free unsanitary conditions, debris, junk vehicles, etc

Grass and weeds maintained less than 9" in height graded for proper drainage

Permitted and properly located with no damaged, missing or leaning sections

Electrical / Other

Adequate and properly installed wiring, fixtures and outlets with cover plates on all outlets and service panels

Property maintained free of rodent infestation and accumulated debris with adequate trash and/or recycling facilities

Interior Maintenance

Windows / Doors

Easily operable weather tight frames and windowpanes free of broken or cracked glass and loose or deteriorated materials

Walls / Ceilings / Floors

Minimum 7' ceiling height without water damage or defective surface conditions

Structurally sound and free of tripping hazards

Hallways / Stairs / Landings

Clear pathways capable of supporting imposed loads with securely attached hand and guard rails

Electrical / Mechanical / Plumbing

Properly installed service panel, outlets, plumbing and heating system free of electrical hazards with all unused gas lines adequately capped

Fire Protection

Properly installed and working smoke detectors in each room used for sleeping purposes, within close proximity to all sleeping areas and on each level

Sufficient fire resistant walls and floors with unobstructed egress

Kitchen

Properly connected and working plumbing, appliances, lighting and ventilation with suitable space and sanitary conditions

Adequate outlets free of electrical hazards

Bathrooms

Properly installed and operating facilities with hot and cold running water to each fixture

Water impervious flooring with proper lighting, ventilation and working outlets free of electrical hazards

Frequently Asked Questions

Q) When did the Residential Rental Property and Inspection Program begin?

A) The Residential Rental Property License Ordinance was adopted by the City Council on November 20th, 2007 (Ord. 1660)

Q) What is the benefit of this program?

A) This program provides a benefit to the tenant, owner and community. It ensures that tenants have safe and sanitary conditions to live in. The owner benefits from having maintenance issues addressed before they become serious costly repairs. Furthermore, owners that reside out of the area will benefit from having their properties inspected annually. The community will benefit because this will preserve and improve rental properties, and as a result our neighborhoods.

Q) Are my tax dollars paying for this program?

A) No. Rental Property owners pay a license fee that pays for all aspects of this program.

Q) Do I have to obtain a license and have my rental property inspected each year?

A) Yes, All rental properties must obtain a license and receive an exterior inspection annually.

Q) What happens if I fail to obtain my rental property license?

A) Rental properties without a license are subject to a fine up to \$500 per offense. Each day can be considered as a separate offense.

Q) Does this program apply to all rental properties?

A) At this time, this program only applies to single family dwelling units.

Q) Do I have to schedule the inspection?

A) Exterior inspections do not need to be scheduled. The City will coordinate interior inspections with the tenant or owner. Please contact the City at 281-275-2785 to schedule an interior inspection.

Q) Who is responsible for paying for the license and inspection?

A) The city will require the property owner to pay the license fee; however, payment will be accepted from anyone.

Q) The Application asks for information about several property owners. Does all of it need to be filled out? Yes, the application must be complete in order to be processed.