

Early in April this year, the Bellevue City Council and the East Bellevue Community Council passed a new Ordinance prohibiting rooming house rentals in single family zoned neighborhoods. Many folks from the Spiritwood neighborhood and beyond were involved in asking the City to keep our single family neighborhoods as true single family neighborhoods. So many people were involved that it would be hard to mention them individually without risking leaving someone out. They showed up, spoke up and made a difference. This was a true case of a grass roots effort. There were people who researched the current city ordinances. And people who worked with Land Use Attorneys. And people who wrote lively and informative communications bulletins. And people who spoke to the media (sometimes without their make-up on). There were people who hosted meetings and provided treats. There were people who researched public records. And most importantly, there were people who showed up at City meetings to tell their stories and let the city know what could happen without a more robust single family zoning ordinance. It is important to mention that the City Council, East Bellevue Community Council and the Planning Commission all listened to the concerns of the Spiritwood residents and supported the change.

Below is Barb Benson's summary (with a couple of edits) of the rooming house and family defining ordinances:

BELLEVUE SINGLE ROOM/HOUSE RENTALS in Areas Zoned as Single Family

New Ordinance

Main Points:

- Home rentals to related families will continue with no limit on the number of occupants (subject to fire code and other city codes), provided all residents are related by blood, marriage or adoption.
- Single room rentals ("Rooming Houses") will only be allowed in Multi-Family or Mixed Use Zones, must be registered with the City, and be subject to stringent regulations.
- Up to two rooms may be rented to up to two people in Single-Family Zones ("Boarding Houses"), provided the owner resides there. These must also be registered with the City, and are subject to restrictions, such as providing off-street parking.
- Home rentals will be limited to 4 unrelated adults on a single lease (no individual room rentals), if there is in excess of 4 adults, they must operate as a "Single Housekeeping Unit" (signing one lease, sharing living space, utility bills, etc.). This exception must be approved by the City's Director of Planning.
- This Ordinance is in effect NOW. There will be a year's grace period (until April 2016) for conformance; however, current rooming houses in Single-Family Zones cannot replace renters who leave prior to April 2016, or whose lease expires in the grace period.

The City of Bellevue's Code Compliance department is "report based" which means it will not investigate UNLESS an infraction is reported to them. If you perceive a problem with rooming houses in your single family neighborhood, report it to Code Compliance, which will investigate and, if needed, take action. Compliance is initially voluntary but penalties will be imposed if landlords do not comply.

City of Bellevue Code Compliance Contact Information

Code Compliance

450 110th Ave. NE
P.O. Box 90012
Bellevue, WA 98009
Phone: 425-452-4570

E-mail: Codecompliance@bellevuewa.gov

Business Hours: 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Online Complaint Form:

http://www.bellevuewa.gov/code_compliance_complaint.htm

Full text of the definition of family in the new ordinance ([http://www.codepublishing.com/wa/bellevue/20.50.020 F definitions/](http://www.codepublishing.com/wa/bellevue/20.50.020_F_definitions/)):

Family. Not more than four adult persons, unless all are related by blood, marriage, or legal adoption, living together as a single housekeeping unit. A group of related persons living in a household shall be considered a single housekeeping unit. Provided: a group of more than four unrelated adult persons living together in a dwelling unit may also be included within the definition of "family" if they demonstrate to the Director that they operate in a manner that is functionally equivalent to a family. Factors that shall be considered by the Director include whether the group of more than four unrelated persons:

- A. Shares the entire dwelling unit or acts as separate roomers;
- B. Includes minor, dependent children regularly residing in the household;
- C. Can produce proof of sharing expenses for food, rent, or ownership costs, utilities, and other household expenses;
- D. Shares common ownership of furniture and appliances among the members of the household;
- E. Constitutes a permanent living arrangement, and is not a framework for transient living;

- F. Maintains a stable composition that does not change from year to year or within the year;
- G. Is not a society, fraternity, sorority, lodge, organization or other group of students or other individuals where the common living arrangement or basis for the establishment of the housekeeping unit is temporary; or
- H. Can demonstrate any other factors reasonably related to whether or not the group of persons is the functional equivalent of a family.

The Director shall issue a written determination of whether a group of more than four unrelated adult persons are operating in a manner that is functionally equivalent to a family.

For purposes of this definition and notwithstanding any other provision of this Code, children with familial status within the meaning of Title 42 United States Code, Section 3602(k) and persons with handicaps within the meaning of Title 42 United States Code, Section 3602(h) will not be counted as unrelated persons. (Ord. [6223](#), 4-6-15, § 7; Ord. [5001](#), 7-7-97, § 4)