

Right to Air Conditioning Ordinance FAQ

What does the Right to A/C ordinance do?

- The ordinance eliminates Houston's window screen exemption and requires rental properties to provide and maintain operable air conditioning in habitable spaces.

Why is this ordinance needed?

- According to [2023 Census data](#) and [reporting](#), thousands of renters in the Houston metro area, disproportionately in Black and Latino neighborhoods, lack air conditioning. As Houston faces more frequent extreme heat, residents are at risk. At least [279 people](#) died due to heat in Texas in 2022, and Harris County Public Health reported more than [7,600 cases](#) of heat-related illness between 2019-2023 and found that indoor areas without air conditioning significantly increase the risk of heat-related health issues.

What do other cities do?

- Dallas, Denton, and Austin already require air conditioning in rental housing without Houston's window screen loophole. Houston renters deserve the same basic protection.

How would this impact affordable housing and development costs?

- There have not been any documented rent increases connected to A/C ordinances passed in Dallas, Denton, and Austin. An affordability [review](#) conducted by the Austin Housing Department determined that its air conditioning requirement would have a neutral impact on affordable housing and development costs

How will this ordinance be enforced?

- Similar to all other code violations in this section of the Code (Article IX. - Buildings Standards) and pursuant to [Section 10-366 Enforcement of minimum standards](#), following a tenant-driven 311 call, a city inspector would be sent to examine the complaint. Landlords would have an opportunity to cure any violation, and should they not comply, they would be issued an administrative citation or summons.
- Other requirements mandated by the existing code are heating equipment in rental properties, so this would parallel that requirement.

Where in Houston doesn't have A/C?

- Harris County Public Health published a [map](#) that estimates areas of the city without A/C access.
- *Under the layer filters, toggle all the layers off except for the "Access to Air Conditioning" layer.*

Would this ordinance require central HVAC in every rental property?

- No. Property owners could comply through central air, window A/C units, portable A/C units, or other refrigerated air equipment capable of meeting the standard.

Who is supporting this ordinance?

The following community organizations, including numerous low-income tenant advocacy organizations are supportive of this ordinance:

1. African American Health Coalition
2. Bayou City Waterkeeper
3. Coalition For The Environment, Equity, And Resilience (CEER)
4. Coalition of Community Organizations
5. Friends of Fonde Park
6. Gulfton Citizens Advisory Council
7. Houston Apartment Association
8. Houston Eviction Advocacy Center
9. Houston Food Bank
10. Houston LGBTQ+ Political Caucus
11. Houston Tenants Union
12. New Liberty Road Community Development Corporation
13. Prevention Institute
14. Project 8
15. Tahirih Justice Center
16. Texas Federation of the People Foundation
17. Texas Housers
18. South Union Proud Civic Association
19. Super Neighborhood 6 - Acres Homes
20. Super Neighborhood 13 - Independence Heights
21. Super Neighborhood 45 - Northside / Northline
22. Super Neighborhood 48 - Trinity / Houston Gardens
23. Super Neighborhood 52 - Kashmere Gardens
24. Super Neighborhood 55 - Greater Fifth Ward
25. Super Neighborhood 64 & 88 - Greater Eastwood, Lawndale, and Wayside
26. Super Neighborhood 71 - Sunnyside
27. Workers Defense Action Fund