

TO: City Council  
FROM: Kelly Adams, Assistant City Administrator  
DATE: June 9, 2026  
SUBJECT: Code Enforcement Presentation

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1) Recommended Action:

No action requested. This is an opportunity for discussion on the topic.

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2) Background:

Code enforcement is the City's process for ensuring compliance with adopted municipal codes and regulations that protect public health, safety, and quality of life. Through education, voluntary compliance, and, when necessary, enforcement actions, the City works to address code violations in a fair, consistent, and transparent manner. The goal of code enforcement is not punitive, but to help maintain safe neighborhoods, preserve community standards, and ensure that properties and activities within the city meet established legal requirements.

Currently, code enforcement activities are initiated on a complaint basis. Complaints from the community are received by multiple departments, including the Police, Fire, Community Development, and Water Resources and Sustainability Departments.

This overview of Code Enforcement in Tumwater shares perspectives from the Police Chief, Fire Chief, Community Development Director, Water Resources and Sustainability Director, and the Mayor's administrative leadership. Staff advises that unresolved code violations, such as unsafe structures, nuisance properties, or environmental compliance issues, often escalate into significant public health risks without timely, coordinated intervention which requires increased resources. Staff recommend exploring a more strategic code enforcement approach that emphasizes interdepartmental coordination; consistency and transparency in enforcement practices; and prioritization based on public safety impacts.

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3) Policy Support:

**Environment**

We strive to safeguard and enhance our community's natural environment and social fabric through sustainable practices and long-term stewardship.

**Partnership**

We work in partnership with residents, businesses, community organizations, and governments to address challenges and advance shared goals.

**Learning**

We learn from experience, embrace innovation, and seek new ways to enhance City services and strengthen our community.

**Excellence**

With excellence, integrity, and efficiency, we deliver timely and responsive City services — empowering staff, stewarding public resources, and fostering civic trust.

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4) Alternatives:

- Continue the complaint-based code enforcement approach.
- Direct staff to explore other models of code enforcement.

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5) Fiscal Notes:

Code enforcement programs incur a range of costs, including personnel, training and certifications, legal and hearing-related services, inspections and field operations, abatement and remedial actions, software and case-management systems, and public education efforts.

To address immediate public safety priorities associated with noncompliant properties that present ongoing risks, a budget amendment within the current biennium will be necessary.

To support a more robust code enforcement program in the future—including potential reorganization and centralization—development of a budget enhancement for the next biennium will be required.

Based on City Council direction, any future programmatic or funding recommendations would be brought forward separately for Council consideration.

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6) Attachments:

None