



**ERIE**  
SPIRITUAL  
COALITION

**COMMUNITY  
HOUSING  
SOLUTIONS**

# WELCOME

**Who We Are; Why Housing  
15 minutes**

**Tenant Bill of Rights  
25 minutes**

**HUD Funding  
35 minutes**





# Erie Spiritual Coalition



Grounded in spiritual principles, we strive to bridge the gap between people, organizations, and government by advocating for policies that foster human flourishing and thriving communities

# Collaborating for Common Good

Every person has inherent value, worth, and dignity. Because this is so, all governance and societal structures should aim to support human wellbeing. We believe goodness is abundant and that our life together need not be competitive. We can seek the good of all people and live well together.

# Striving for Integrity

**We honor relationships by practicing accountability in all community spaces. Transparency, honesty, and clarity are values that help us to understand issues and one another. We understand that truth-telling and appropriate vulnerability build trust.**

# Pursuing Sustainable Solutions

**We go to and involve the folks most impacted by issues to help create cultural and systemic change. Solutions are found by seeking solidarity with those impacted by problems, overcoming the rush to quick fixes that are not sustainable, and navigating around partisanship.**

# Fostering Openness

**We take a posture of sacred listening, desiring to create space for courageous conversations, sharing truths, developing actions, and engaging diverse people and groups. Spaces where people can share their truths and experiences with honesty and receive respect matter; those are times when we all stand together on holy ground.**

44%

CHILD POVERTY  
RATE

50%

EVICCTIONS FOR  
HABITABILITY

15%

GROWTH IN  
HOMELESSNESS

12.3%

HOUSING STOCK ARE  
POOR OR UNSOUND

48%

RENTER DOMINANT



# Up Next

Tenant Bill of Rights

HUD Funding



# What Rights?

Historical Roots of Rights

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Declaration of Independence

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Flourishing and Citizenship

# The Challenge

**Rights v. Responsibilities**

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**Having v. Getting Rights**

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**Assertion and Enforcement  
Dependent**

# Tenant Bill of Rights

Safe | Healthy

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Stable | Reliable

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Benefits Overall Wellbeing

# Tenant Bill of Rights

Pragmatic Function

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Educational Function

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Explanatory Function

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Expansive Function

# The Right to Safe and Sanitary Housing

Renters should have access to safe and sanitary housing; renters should not have to live in dangerous or insecure conditions. Landlords are responsible for providing a “warranty of habitability.”

*Pugh v. Holmes*

# The Right to Reasonable Accommodation

Tenants have the right to be reasonable accommodated for people with disabilities so they can enjoy their housing.

*Fair Housing Act*

# The Right to a Returned Security Deposit and Apartment Application Fee

Landlords must return security deposits and/or fees to hold apartments to those who are not the final renter. Additionally, landlords may collect up to two months' rent as a security deposit during the first year a tenant lives in a property. After a tenant has resided in that property for two years, only one month's rent may be held as a deposit. After two years, the tenant has the right to receive interest on the security deposit.

*Pennsylvania Statutes Title 68 P.S.  
Real and Personal Property § 250.511a*



# The Right to Clear and Fair Leases

Leases should be understandable to landlords and renters,  
not subject to change after leases have been agreed.

*Pennsylvania Plain Language Act, 73 P.S. §§ 2201 et seq.*

# The Right to Transparent and Fair Utility Costs

Heat, water, sewer, gas, and electric services must be provided at all times during a lease. A landlord may never bill a tenant more than the utility or water/sewer company and may not require a tenant to pay for utilities used by others, including common areas. A utility company may not terminate service provided to a tenant because the landlord has failed to pay the bill without first giving the tenant the opportunity to pay the bill for the last thirty days and deduct the payment from the rent.

*Utility Service Tenants Rights Act*

# The Right to Residential Privacy

Landlords cannot come into rental properties unannounced or interrupt the privacy of renters. Landlords must provide substantial notice before entry, generally 24 hours, and entry must be for a specific reason, such as repairs, inspections, or showing the property to potential renters or buyers. Renters also have the right to visitors without extra charge or surveillance.

*Landlord-Tenant Act of 1951 504-A; Right of Quiet Enjoyment*

# The Right to Service Maintenance and Surprise Inspection

Landlords must ensure the habitability of housing, which includes basic things like plumbing, sewage, heat, absence of vermin, usable floors/cabinet/appliances, absence of leaks, regardless of the lease. Tenants have the right to withhold payment if the housing has conditions that render it unsafe or unsanitary. With this, tenants have the right to request surprise code inspections to ensure landlords are in compliance. Tenants also have the responsibility to report maintenance issues when they occur, so the landlord has a reasonable opportunity to make repairs.

*City Rent Withholding Act of Jan. 24, (1966) 1965, P.L. 1534, No. 536; Pugh v. Holmes*

# **The Right Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation**

**Tenants have the right not to be denied housing or offering different lease terms because of their age, race, religion, physical or mental disability, source of income, sexual orientation, gender identity, number of children, or status as a victim of domestic violence. Sexual harassment by landlords is illegal. Retaliation aimed at tenants who raise issues of discrimination, sexual harassment, or code issues is illegal.**

***Fair Housing Act of 1968;***

***Erie City Council File No. 16,391 Ordinance No. 66-2023***

# The Right to Adequate Notice of Rate Increases or Eviction

Tenants should receive at least two month's notice of any rental rate increases or the possibility of lease nonrenewal, providing enough time for the tenant to find adequate housing solutions.

*Erie City Council File No. 16,391 Ordinance No. 66-2023*

# **\*\*The Right to Just Cause Eviction**

**Tenants should not fear removal from their housing for arbitrary or improper reasons. The City of Erie will work expeditiously to ensure that tenants who are in compliance with their lease obligations can remain stably housed. Owners or landlords can evict tenants only for certain specific reasons, such as the failure to pay rent or for a violation of the lease terms.**

***\*\*This is the only suggested law in the proposed tenant bill of rights. This specific right would be expansive, adding a key right to local law.***

# The Right to a Fair Hearing

Tenants have the right to present their case and defend their rights in court, which includes fair timeframes in regards to eviction and payments and due process under the law.

*The Landlord and Tenant Act of 1951; Article III*



# The Right to Organize

**Within Pennsylvania, all tenants have the right to organize and should not be subject to intimidation or any form of punishment or retribution against them for collectively organizing.**

***The Landlord and Tenant Act of 1951; Section 205***

**Comments/  
Questions**

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**5 minutes**

**Comment tables**

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# Up Next

HUD Funding



# Why HUD funding?

**Largest Local Investment in  
Affordable Housing**

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**Direct Impact from Public  
Input**

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# Federal Funding 101

- **Source:** US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- **Recipient:** State, County, and City Departments of Community and Economic Development
- **Amount:** Between \$4-5 million annually
- Community Development Block Grant Program (**CDBG**), HOME Investment Partnership Program (**HOME**), and Emergency Solutions Grant Program (**ESG**)



# Investment Intentions

- **CDBG:** to develop viable communities through the provision of modest housing and a suitable living environment, to expand economic opportunities geared to low-and moderate-income individuals, and to improve infrastructure critical to community health and welfare
- **HOME:** to provide municipalities with grant and loan assistance to expand and preserve the supply of decent and affordable housing for low- and very low-income residents



# Local Planning

- Coordinated effort between City DCED and the Mayor's Administration with final approval by City Council
- Current 5-year plan ends in 2025
- New annual plan released every January
- Public input sessions every March/April
- For a copy of the annual and 5-year plan, visit the City's site ([ecode360.com/ER3969](https://ecode360.com/ER3969)) or pick up hard copies at City Hall (626 State Street)



# Local Goal #1

To provide decent housing by preserving the affordable housing stock, increasing the availability of affordable housing, reducing discriminatory barriers, increasing the supply of supportive housing for those with special needs, and transitioning homeless persons and families into housing





# Local Goal #2

To improve the quality of life and living environments for people with low- to moderate incomes through community reinvestment and improvements to public facilities and infrastructure



# Local Goal #3

To generate economic opportunities by supporting sustainable development activities that promote long-term community viability and the empowerment of people with low to moderate incomes to achieve self-sufficiency



# Local Uses

- Homebuyer Program, Homeowner Rehabilitation, Rental Rehabilitation, and New Construction
- Grants to non-profits serving low-to-moderate income residents
- Examples: home repair grants administered by the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Erie (RACE), general salary support to Erie City Mission and St. Martin's Center, and youth programming at community centers and the Police Athletic League (PALS)



# Intended Outcomes

- Provide decent, affordable housing
- Provide a suitable living environment
- Increase homeownership
- End chronic homelessness

*How are we doing?*



**Comments/  
Questions**

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**5 minutes**

**Comment tables**

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# Observations from City Council

- DCED office going above and beyond for outreach
- Wake up call at the regular City Council meeting on Wednesday, April 19th, 2023
- Approximately \$900,000 transferred from unspent HUD funds to street reconstruction and paving

That the following amounts be [transferred](#) in the **Community Development Block Grant**

Transferred from:			Transferred to:		
Amount	Account	Title	Amount	Account	Title
\$ 3,324.68	501-1227-2018-4072	Handicapped Curb Cuts	\$ 3,324.68	501-1237-2018-4075	Street Reconstruction

That the following amounts be [transferred](#) in the **Community Development Block Grant**

Transferred from:			Transferred to:		
Amount	Account	Title	Amount	Account	Title
\$41,194.85	501-5017-2020-4451	GECAC Re-Entry Services	\$ 116,194.85	501-1237-2020-4075	Street Reconstruction
\$75,000.00	501-1251-2020-4452	COE-Façade Renovation			

That the following amounts be [transferred](#) in the **Community Development Block Grant**

Transferred from:			Transferred to:		
Amount	Account	Title	Amount	Account	Title
\$ 2,832.55	501-5014-2022-4520	BTW Center - SR	\$ 157,307.09	501-1237-2022-4075	Street Reconstruction
\$ 5,732.54	501-5015-2022-4520	MLK - SR			
\$ 50,000.00	501-5047-2022-4702	Paramount Pursuits-SBA			
\$ 98,742.00	501-1227-2022-4072	Handicapped Curb Cuts			

That the following amounts be [transferred](#) in the **Community Development Block Grant**

Transferred from:			Transferred to:		
Amount	Account	Title	Amount	Account	Title
\$ 9,191.70	501-1227-2021-4072	Handicapped Curb Cuts	\$ 658,493.57	501-1237-2021-4075	Street Reconstruction
\$11,131.63	501-5015-2021-4435	MLK-HR			
\$ 700.00	501-1238-2021-4056	COE Tree Removal			
\$10,527.59	501-5014-2021-4435	BTW Center - HR			
\$ 24,968.71	501-5016-2021-4435	JFK Center - HR			
\$ 384.64	501-5021-2021-4435	Youth Leadership Inst.			
\$11,915.15	501-5025-2021-4435	Boys & Girls Club - HR			
\$ 6,252.18	501-5044-2021-4435	MCRC-HR			
\$ 12,447.75	501-1251-2021-4704	City Housing Services			
\$214,464.13	501-1253-2021-4102	Community Improvements			
\$ 638.29	501-1255-2021-4033	City Summer Rec-Opr. Sup			
\$107,805.00	501-1264-2021-4059	Demolition - Admin			
\$ 22,209.23	501-1264-2021-4102	Demolition-Other Svc/Chrg			
\$ 7,680.39	501-5119-2021-4435	UECDC - HR			
\$ 3,248.05	501-5138-2021-4435	St. Martin Center - HR			
\$ 2,482.95	501-5168-2021-4435	YMCA-Downtown Teen Ctr			
\$159,628.90	501-5004-2021-4582	ERA - Housing Rehab.			
\$ 52,817.28	501-5004-2021-4606	ERA – LEAD Rehab.			



# Observations from City Council

- Held a DCED Committee Meeting on July 25, 2023 with full video on YouTube
- 3/4 of housing programs were not open yet advertised as open on the city website
- Attributed much of the dysfunction of distributing the funds to the lack of local lead-based inspectors and qualified/available contractors
- Constituent stories of inquiring and applying for home repair funds for years on end with no assistance

# Reimagining Possibilities

- It is our moral duty as a community to demand best use of these HUD funds
- Other communities in Pennsylvania serve as examples of how to effectively and efficiently administer these funds, such as Allentown and Pittsburgh
- This call is non-partisan, inclusive, and justice-minded

# Leveraging Opportunity

**These funds are the largest federal block grant to state and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households.**

*We cannot wait.*

# Increasing Public Engagement

**This year's only public input sessions are scheduled for Monday, March 4 at 10am and 6pm at City Hall at 626 State Street.**

*We need your voice.*

# Playing the Long Game

**Organizing begins now as next year will bring additional public input sessions over the course of several months to set the 2025-2029 5-year plan for the City of Erie.**

*We must flip the script.*

**Comments/  
Questions**

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**5 minutes**

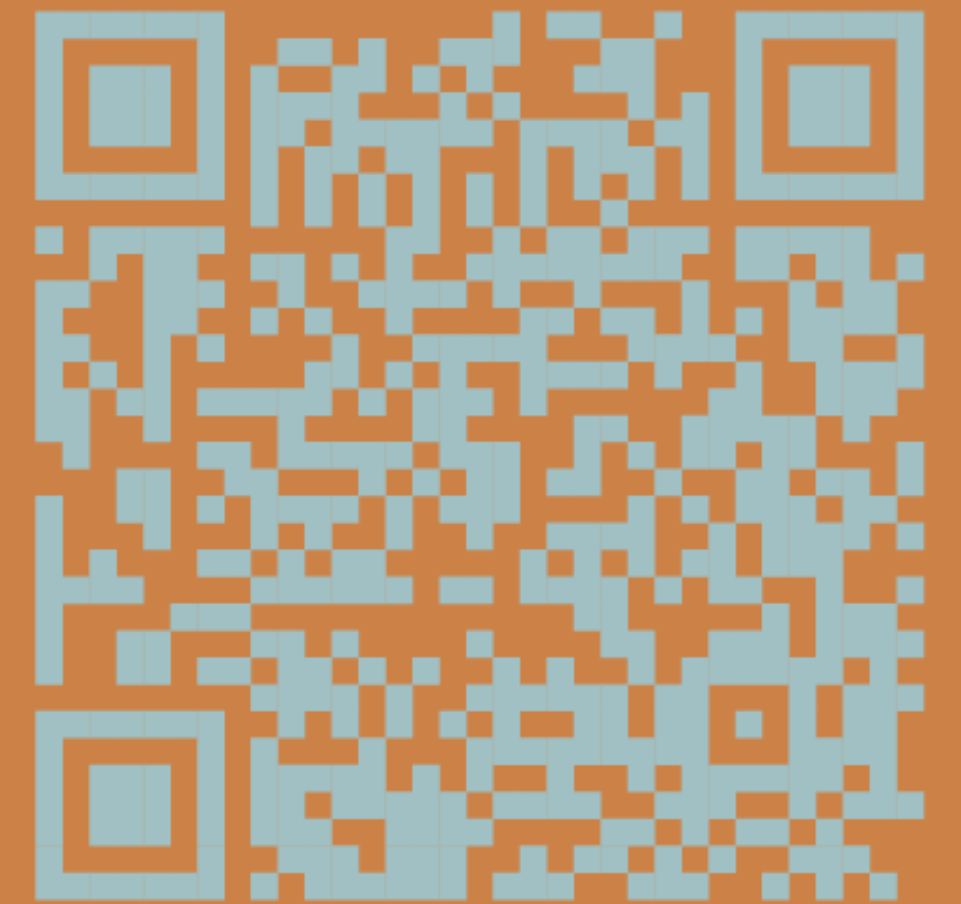
**Comment tables**

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# Let's Keep in Touch

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# Comment tables



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