

Springfield city councilors are considering adding to city code a program that allows people to live in RVs on private property. Credit: Lillian Schrock-Clevenger / Lookout Eugene-Springfield

SPRINGFIELD

Springfield City Council considers use of RVs on private property

BY **LILLIAN SCHROCK-CLEVENGER**



June 27, 2025

Manage consent

QuickTake:

The council talked about making permanent a free program that allows people to live in RVs on private property as an affordable housing measure. City staff say adding the program guidelines to city code would make it easier to enforce rules.

The Springfield City Council is discussing writing into city code a free program that allows people to live in recreational vehicles on private property.

The council first allowed RVs to be used as temporary housing in 2020 to respond to displacement caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Holiday Farm Fire and the regional housing shortage, said Jeff Paschall, the city's Community Development Division director, at a June 16 work session.

"It was intended to be a temporary stopgap measure to help people stay housed during the time of crisis," Paschall said.

According to city documents, the council has reviewed and extended the program multiple times and has agreed to explore writing the allowance into city code.

"This will provide us a clear enforcement tool and also more stable framework," Paschall said.

The measure passed by the council five years ago stated the city would "temporarily suspend enforcement of the prohibition of recreational vehicle occupancy if the host property owners and recreational vehicle occupants" follow a set of guidelines.

The program requires property owners to **register with the city** at no cost and provide contact information for the RV occupant. City staff say they require the registrations to help them understand how the temporary program is being used. According to data from Development & Public Works, 43 property owners have registered.

"We know from the complaints we've gotten and just driving around the city that there's a lot more than that," city engineer Stan Petroff told Lookout Eugene-Springfield.

As for an estimate of how many people are living in RVs in the city, Petroff said, "I just don't think we have that number, but it's significantly more than the amount that we have registered."

The guidelines

Residents of RVs must **comply with guidelines**, which include that the RV is parked in a legal parking area or behind the house and needs to be drivable or towable. The RV occupants need to keep all personal items in the RV or screened from the public. They must also have access to sanitation facilities and garbage service.

Property owners may not charge rent, but may ask the RV occupants to contribute toward utilities.

As part of the registration process, property owners are asked to provide contact information for the RV residents, and city staff send each occupant a link for a voluntary

survey to better understand their living circumstances. The results are anonymous. Staff say 24 RV occupants have completed the survey.

“A lot of the folks who are taking advantage of the RV occupancy say that they would have no other place to go if this program didn’t exist,” Paschall said.

Among other survey statistics: Two people said they were displaced by the Holiday Farm Fire; a majority of respondents consider themselves Springfield residents; more than half reported that they do not pay rent to stay on the property; and the majority report having access to clean water, sanitation services, garbage service, and electricity.

City staff track **complaints** related to the allowance. Complaints staff noted included sanitation-related issues, such as possible illegal wastewater discharge and garbage accumulation, and privacy and noise concerns. Paschall said most of the complaints the city receives are for unregistered RVs.

City staff say that writing the program into city code would make it easier for code enforcement staff to apply the requirements of the RV occupancy guidelines, because they would have specific code language to cite.

“We have guidelines, but it’s not really adopted in any code,” Paschall said. “So it just kind of leaves code enforcement with their hands tied.”

City councilors generally were in favor of continuing to allow people to live in RVs on private property as an affordable housing measure. Many councilors, however, spoke about needing to add more framework before the policy is added to city code, such as how to make sure people know they need to register and are aware of the guidelines.

Councilor Alan Stout said that if the council moves forward with making the program permanent, it needs to revisit how the system is working.

“I’ve met a lot of people that their only option was to live in an RV next to their parents’ home or something like that,” Stout said. “I understand that, and I feel that, and I think it’s really important to keep that in mind. I also think that the overall livability and general upkeep of neighborhoods is also very important.”

Mayor Sean VanGordon said he is concerned about how the city will pay to enforce the program.

“Because we don’t really have the code enforcement staff,” VanGordon said. “What’s the revenue source for those (full-time employees)?”

Paschall told the council he would take their feedback to city staff, who will work with the city attorney’s office to draft the code. He will then bring that back to the council at a work session for more discussion.

Further discussion for staff could include modifying guidelines and establishing an expiration period for a permit, documents to the council show.

Affordable housing

According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Springfield has a housing vacancy rate of about 3%, making housing hard to find. Data from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development shows that **one-third of people** in Springfield spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing costs. City staff have said these figures illustrate that

Springfield has a significant need for more housing, especially for people with low incomes.

In response to an **Oregon law enacted in 2023**, the Lane County Board of Commissioners in January **adopted new code** allowing rental RVs on rural properties. Commissioners say they passed the measure to provide more affordable housing opportunities.

Eugene city code allows residents to have one occupied RV or camper on their private property, so long as the property owner is not compensated and provides bathrooms, garbage service and a storage area that is not visible from the street.

© 2025 Lookout Eugene-Springfield. All Rights Reserved
Powered by Newspack