



**CITY OF SUNNYSIDE PRESS RELEASE  
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**Sunnyside City Council Moves to Formally Discontinue Dormant  
Crime-Free Rental Housing Program (CFRHP)**

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SUNNYSIDE, Yakima County, 28 July 2025 – In a decisive move aimed at modernizing Sunnyside’s Municipal Code, the Sunnyside City Council has voted to formally discontinue Chapter 5.02 and, in turn, officially terminate the dormant Crime-Free Rental Housing Program (CFRHP), which has been inactive since 2019.

The Washington state-created program, intended to address crime issues and proactively improve the safety of neighborhood rental properties is being abandoned by the city due, in part, to its ineffectiveness.

The city of nearly 16,500 residents abandoned the enforcement of its CFRHP in 2019 after being named (along with individual employees) in a lawsuit brought by then Attorney General (AG) Bob Ferguson’s Civil Rights Division, which alleged the city’s operation of the program resulted in unlawful evictions, an allegation the city disputes.

The city maintains that the State is ultimately responsible for the program’s demise. "The State signed the state-wide CRFHP into law in June of 2010 and offered no training or support for local cities, then the State sued the city for using the program it created" said George Mix, the attorney representing the city of Sunnyside. "The reality is Sunnyside abandoned the program six years ago, and the council’s action formally removes it from the municipal code."

According to Mix, none of the individually-named defendants work for the city anymore. Despite this, the State continues to pursue its lawsuit against the small central Washington city, where approximately 90 percent of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino, according to the latest census data.

“The city of Sunnyside is dealing with a well-publicized \$4 million dollar budget deficit and the State’s aggressive pursuit of this lawsuit over an ordinance that has been dormant since before COVID further burdens a city that is already struggling economically,” explained Mix.

“It is important to note that none of the individual tenants allegedly affected ever filed a claim against the city. This lawsuit was filed only after the AG’s office cold-called the tenants,” he added.

The case has been dismissed twice, and the State has spent approximately 8,000 hours of billable time, using multiple attorneys, pursuing this case. At the end of the day, should the state ultimately prevail, the taxpayers of Sunnyside may be financially obligated to pay the state’s legal fees even though the state’s attorneys are public servants funded through taxes.

Public records requests show the State has used 13 assistant attorneys general, five paralegals, and two investigators to pursue this lawsuit against the City of Sunnyside.

“Frankly, the lawsuit is a profound waste of taxpayers’ dollars, which are funding both the State’s pursuit of this case and the city’s defense,” said Mix.

Mix emphasized the city remains dedicated to fostering a safe and supportive environment for all its residents, ensuring that their voices are heard and their rights protected.

“The Civil Rights Division of the Attorney General’s Office should not be in the business of pushing Washington cities into financial hardship, especially toward potential bankruptcy. We are looking forward to presenting our case to the jury in January when this lawsuit goes to trial,” said Mix.

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