Landlord's Guide

Fair Housing & Rental Compliance

Housing & Community Development Department

City of Salisbury, Maryland – 2025 Edition

Housing & Community Development Department
207 W. Main St, Suite 102, Salisbury, MD 21801
(410) 341-9550 | hcdd@salisbury.md

Landlord's Guide

City of Salisbury
Fair Housing Guide Series

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Section 1: Introduction & Overview

Welcome to the Landlord's Guide. This guide, targeted at landlords and property managers in the City of Salisbury, untangles your responsibilities and the steps needed to stay compliant with local, state, and federal housing statutes. It walks through registration and inspection procedures, clarifies code-compliance expectations, and enumerates housing regulations.

The Housing and Community Development Department (HCDD) oversees registration, conducts inspections, and grants licenses for every property within the city's limits. Its core mission is to ensure that each rental home remains safe, habitable, and equitable for all residents.

As a landlord or property manager, you sit on the lines of preserving the quality of life in the neighborhoods we call home. This guide hands you the tools and know-how to:

- Wrap your head around the responsibilities that sit on your plate
- Make sure you stay compliant with the housing codes
- Foster positive relationships with tenants

We can build a vibrant, inclusive, and thriving Salisbury.

Section 2: Definitions & Key Terms

Understanding the terminology used in Salisbury's rental housing regulations is essential for compliance and communication. Below are key definitions that will help you navigate the registration, inspection, and licensing processes.

What is a Rental Property?

A **rental property** in the City of Salisbury is defined as any housing unit that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- **Currently occupied** by individuals who are not immediate family members of the owner, under a written or oral agreement, with or without monetary compensation.
- **Intended to be occupied** by individuals (including non-immediate family members) under a written or oral agreement, with or without monetary compensation.
- **Advertised to the public** or previously registered with the City as a rental property.

Immediate Family includes:

- Sibling
- Parent
- Grandparent
- Child
- Grandchild

Types of Dwelling Units

Understanding the dwelling you own or manage is vital for proper registration and inspection.

- **Dwelling Unit**: A single unit providing complete independent living facilities for one or more persons, including provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation.
- **Single-Family Dwelling**: A structure containing one dwelling unit.
- **Duplex**: A dwelling joined to another dwelling on one or more sides by an approved fire separation wall.
- **Multi-Family Dwelling**: A structure containing two or more dwelling units not designed or constructed as an apartment building.
- **Apartment Building**: A single residential structure designed and constructed to contain three or more separate dwelling units.

Section 3: Registration & Licensing

Now Powered by OpenGov

The City of Salisbury has transitioned its rental licensing and registration processes to OpenGov, a modern cloud-based platform that streamlines applications, payments, and communication for landlords and property managers.

Rental Owner's License

All rental property owners must obtain a **Rental Owner's License** before registering any rental units.

What You'll Need:
- Business name and structure
- Owner(s) information and ownership percentages
- Property manager details (if applicable)
- Resident agent information (if applicable)

Fees:
- **New License**: $120 (first year)
- **Annual Renewal**: $75

📍 **Apply Online:**

👉 [Rental Owner's License Application](#)

Rental Unit Registration

Once you have a Rental Owner's License, you must register **each rental unit** under that license.

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📋 **What You'll Need:**

- Property address
- Unit number (if applicable)
- Number of bedrooms and bathrooms
- Square footage
- **Lead Certificate** (if built before 1978)

You must register **all properties** under the license at once. If you manage multiple businesses or LLCs, each must have its own license and registration.

Fees:

- **New Registration**: $120 per unit (first year)
- **Annual Renewal**: $75 per unit

📍 **Register Online:**

👉 [Rental Unit Registration Form](#)

Renewal Process

- Renewal alerts and emails are sent via OpenGov starting **January 15**
- Four reminders are sent before the **March 1** deadline
- Once paid, licenses and receipts are available for download in your OpenGov account.

Renewal Steps

1. Click the link in your email. (This will take you directly to your renewal.)

2. Where you will be in the renewal depends on your properties.
   a. No properties before 1978:
      i. Review basic information.
      ii. Acknowledge a few things, then sign and date.
   b. Properties before 1978:
      i. Review basic information.
      ii. Upload any new Lead Paint Certificates. *See note*
      iii. Acknowledge a few things, then sign and date.
3. Make your payment.
   a. New feature – if you have or manage multiple licenses, you can submit each renewal and check out with a shopping cart.
4. Your Landlord License and Rental Registration Receipt will be available for download.

Note You are required by Maryland Law to have a Lead Paint Certificate for each new tenant. We are required to collect these by the State of Maryland during the registration and renewal process.
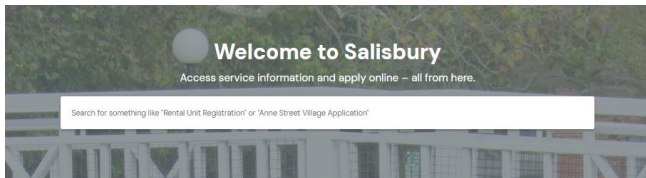
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City of Salisbury
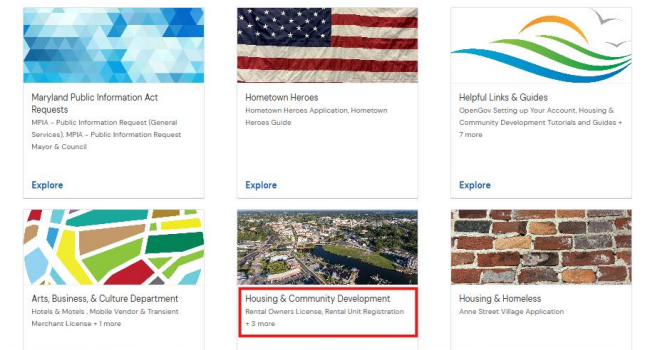*Fair Housing Guide Series*

Inspections

- New units require inspection before approval
- You'll receive alerts and emails to schedule inspections
- Once passed, you'll be prompted to pay and receive your license

Navigating OpenGov
salisburymd.portal.opengov.com/

Welcome to Salisbury
Access service information and apply online – all from here.

Search for something like "Rental Unit Registration" or "Anne Street Village Application"

Discover Online Services
Choose below to browse services by department

Maryland Public Information Act Requests
MPIA - Public Information Request (General Services), MPIA - Public Information Request Mayor & Council

Explore

Hometown Heroes
Hometown Heroes Application, Hometown Heroes Guide

Explore

Helpful Links & Guides
OpenGov Setting up Your Account, Housing & Community Development Tutorials and Guides + 7 more

Explore

Arts, Business, & Culture Department
Hotels & Motels , Mobile Vendor & Transient Merchant License + 1 more

Housing & Community Development
Rental Owners License, Rental Unit Registration + 3 more

Housing & Homeless
Anne Street Village Application

Select Housing & Community Development

First-time landlords should select the **Rental Owner's License**. Once the license is obtained, you can select **Rental Unit Registration** to register your units.

If this is your first time using OpenGov or you need a refresher, click the **Open – Landlord License and Registration Guide for a step-by-step guide**.

Housing & Community Development

Welcome to the Housing and Community Development Portal

This page is your central hub for our community's essential property-related registrations and forms. Whether you're a landlord, property owner, or a resident looking to contribute to our local environment, we've made it easy to access the tools and resources you need.

Here, you can:
- Register for a Landlord License
- Register a Rental Unit
- Register a Vacant or Foreclosed Property
- Submit Property Affidavit Forms
- Sign Up for Pocket Pollinator Meadow Registration

We aim to support responsible property management and environmental stewardship while making the process as straightforward as possible. Click on the links below to get started.

Apply Online

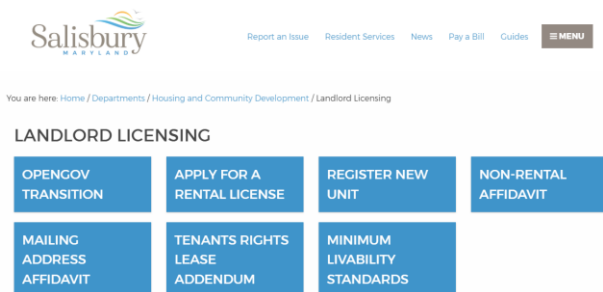|	
Rental Owners License	Select
Rental Unit Registration	Select
Vacant Building and Foreclosed Property Registration	Select
Property Affidavit Forms This form is required if a property will no longer be a rental.	Select
Pocket Pollinator Meadow Registration Residents who choose to participate in Salisbury's Meadow Program will need to first register for the program and abide by a few rules in order to be exempt from property code violations.	Select

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Tips for Success

- Create your OpenGov account early and keep your profile updated
- Upload current **MDE Lead Certificates** annually for qualifying units
- Use the **search by address or parcel ID** feature to avoid duplicate entries
- For apartment complexes, register the primary address and enter unit details later

On the City's website, navigate to www.salisbury.md, then select Menu > Departments > Housing and Community Development, then select the Landlord Licensing button, and your page will look like this:

Section 4: Inspection Process

Ensuring Safe and Habitable Rental Housing

All rental units in the City of Salisbury must meet minimum livability standards. Inspections are a critical part of the registration and licensing process and are now integrated into the OpenGov platform.

When Are Inspections Required?
- New Rental Units: Must be inspected before a license is issued.
- Existing Units: May be inspected during renewal or in response to complaints.
- Multi-Unit Properties: Units in buildings with four or more rentals are inspected jointly with the Fire Marshal.

Inspection Workflow (via OpenGov)
1. Submit Rental Unit Registration
   After applying for your Rental Owner's License, register each unit.
2. Inspection Notification
   If an inspection is required, you'll receive:
   - An alert in OpenGov
   - An email with scheduling details

3. Schedule & Complete Inspection
   HCDD or the Fire Marshal will conduct the inspection based on unit type and size.

4. Pass or Fail
   - If passed, you'll receive a notification to proceed with payment.
   - If failed, you'll receive a Corrective Action Letter and must address violations.

5. Reinspection (if needed)
   - Once corrections are made, contact HCDD to schedule a reinspection.
   - A $100 reinspection fee may apply.

6. License Issuance
   After passing inspection and submitting payment, your license will be available for download in OpenGov.

Inspection Preparation

To prepare for inspection, review the following resources:
- **Minimum Livability Standards & Criteria**
- **https://salisbury.md/departments/housing-community-development/landlord-licensing**

Important Notes
- Existing Tenants: If you've purchased property with tenants, provide them with at least 24 hours' notice before inspection.
- Annual Renewals: Lead Certificates must be uploaded again for properties built before 1978.

Section 5: Code Compliance

Maintaining Safe, Clean, and Lawful Properties
The City of Salisbury's Housing and Community Development
Department (HCDD) is committed to ensuring all rental housing
is safe, healthy, and habitable. Landlords and property managers are
responsible for maintaining their properties in compliance with
the Salisbury Municipal Code and applicable building standards.

Governing Codes
- Salisbury Municipal Code
- International Residential Code (2021 Edition)

Landlords must comply with several Titles of the Salisbury
Municipal Code that govern property maintenance, safety, and
occupancy:
- **Title 6 – Animals**: Regulates animal control, including
  nuisance and dangerous animals.
- **Title 8 – Health and Safety**: Covers overgrowth (8.08), tree
  trimming (8.09), nuisances (8.24), and fire safety (8.11).
- **Title 12 – Streets and Public Places**: Addresses sidewalks
  and adjacent public areas maintenance.
- **Title 15 – Buildings and Construction**: Includes the
  Building Code (15.04) and Rental Housing Code (15.26).
- **Title 17 – Zoning**: Regulates land use and occupancy,
  including the "4-to-2 Ordinance."

These codes ensure rental properties are safe, lawful, and well-
maintained. For full details, visit salisbury.md.

Common Violations

Violation Type	Description
Brush, Weeds, and Overgrowth	**Excessive vegetation or unmaintained landscaping (Chapter 8.08)**
Abandoned or Inoperable Vehicles	**Vehicles left on property without tags or in disrepair (15.24.1260)**
Rubbish and Trash	**Accumulation of garbage or improper disposal (15.24.1320, 15.24.1340)**
Interior Furniture Outdoors	**Use of indoor furniture on porches or lawns (15.24.570)**
Zoning Violations	**Unauthorized use or occupancy of property (17.04.100)**
Vacant Building Violations	**Failure to register or maintain vacant properties (15.22.040)**

Corrective Action Letters (CALs)

When a violation is identified:
- A Corrective Action Letter is issued
- The letter includes the violation, code reference, and a deadline for correction
- Multiple violations may result in multiple letters with different deadlines

Citations & Fines

If violations are not corrected:
- A municipal citation may be issued
- Fines range from $25 to $500 per day
- Unpaid fines may result in a lien on the property

Abatements

If violations persist:
- The City may abate (correct) the issue at the owner's expense
- Costs are billed to the property owner
- Unpaid abatement costs may also result in a lien

Inspections for Code Compliance
- May be triggered by tenant complaints, routine checks, or court orders
- Courtesy inspections are available upon request
- Administrative warrants may be obtained if access is denied

Section 6: Regulations

US Federal Regulations

Fair Housing & Avoiding Discrimination

🏛 Understanding the Fair Housing Act (FHA)

The **Fair Housing Act of 1968**, as amended, is a federal law that prohibits housing discrimination based on:

- **Race**
- **Color**
- **National Origin**
- **Religion**
- **Sex** (including gender identity and sexual orientation)
- **Familial Status** (e.g., presence of children under 18)
- **Disability**

These protections apply to **all aspects of housing**, including:

- Renting or selling property
- Advertising
- Tenant screening
- Lease terms and conditions
- Evictions and renewals
- Mortgage lending and insurance

🚫 Examples of Discriminatory Practices to Avoid

Landlords must ensure that their policies and practices do not directly or indirectly discriminate. Here are some **common pitfalls** to avoid:

- Refusing to rent to someone because of their race, religion, or family status
- Charging higher rent or security deposits based on a protected class

- Steering tenants to certain units or neighborhoods
- Using discriminatory language in advertisements (e.g., "no kids," "Christian tenants only")
- Failing to accommodate tenants with disabilities (e.g., denying a service animal or refusing a reasonable modification)

♿ Reasonable Accommodations & Modifications

Under the FHA, landlords must make **reasonable accommodations** in rules, policies, or services for tenants with disabilities. Examples include:

- Allowing a tenant to install grab bars in the bathroom
- Permitting a service or emotional support animal, even in a "no pets" building
- Providing a reserved parking space close to the entrance for a tenant with mobility issues

🔔 Best Practices for Fair Housing Compliance

- **Use consistent screening criteria** for all applicants
- **Document all interactions** and decisions related to applications and tenancy
- **Train staff** on fair housing laws and inclusive practices
- **Avoid assumptions** about a person's background, ability, or family structure
- **Review advertising** to ensure it's inclusive and neutral

📨 If a Complaint is Filed

Tenants or applicants who believe they've been discriminated against can file a complaint with:

- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**
  - 📞 1-800-669-9777
  - 🌐 hud.gov/reporthousingdiscrimination
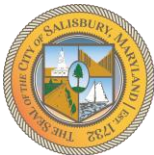
Maryland State Regulations

Lead Paint Compliance

Properties built before 1978 must:

- Be registered with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)
- Undergo lead risk reduction inspections
- Provide tenants with:
  - Lead Certificate
  - EPA's "Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Home" pamphlet
  - Notice of Tenants' Rights

MDE Rental Property Owner Requirements

🌐 https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/land/leadpoisoningprevention/pages/rentalowners.aspx

Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarms

1. **Carbon monoxide (CO) alarms are required in all residential dwellings** that:
   - Contain fossil fuel-burning equipment (e.g., gas furnaces, water heaters, fireplaces, stoves), or
   - Are attached to a garage.
2. **Placement Requirements**:
   - Outside of each sleeping area.
   - On every level of the home, including basements.

- Within 5 to 20 feet of fossil fuel-burning appliances (depending on manufacturer instructions and local code enforcement).

3. **Additional Notes**:
    - CO alarms may be battery-powered, plug-in with battery backup, or hardwired, depending on the age and renovation status of the property.
    - Combination smoke/CO alarms are permitted if they meet both standards.

Housing Discrimination

In addition to federal protections under the Fair Housing Act, Maryland law provides robust safeguards against housing discrimination. The **Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR)** is the state agency responsible for enforcing these protections. Landlords may not deny housing, set different terms, or treat tenants unfairly based on race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status. If a tenant or applicant believes they have experienced discrimination, they can file a complaint directly with MCCR.

- **Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR)**
    🌐 mccr.maryland.gov/pages/intake.aspx

City of Salisbury Regulations

Occupancy Limits – "4-to-2 Ordinance"

- In R-5, R-8, and R-10 zones, rentals are limited to 2 unrelated adults unless exempted.
- Exemptions allow for 3 or 4 unrelated people in specific properties.

All landlords must provide tenants with the City of Salisbury Tenant's Rights Lease Addendum, which outlines:

- Occupancy limits
- Anti-retaliation protections
- Legal aid resources

Download the Addendum (PDF)
https://salisbury.md/departments/housing-community-development/tenants-rights-lease-addendum

Section 7: Resources & Contacts

Who to Contact for Help, Guidance, and Support

City of Salisbury Departments

Housing & Community Development Department (HCDD)

Oversees rental licensing, inspections, and code compliance

📍 207 W. Main St, Suite 102, Salisbury, MD 21801

📞 (410) 341-9550

✉ hcdd@salisbury.md

🌐 salisbury.md/housing-community-development

Fire Marshal's Office

Fire safety inspections and code enforcement

📞 (410) 548-3120

✉ ecramer@salisbury.md

🌐 Salisbury.md/fire

Finance Department

Processes payments for licenses, taxes, and citations

📞 (410) 548-3110 (Taxes)

📞 (410) 548-3115 (Utilities)

🌐 salisbury.md/finance

Infrastructure & Development (DID)

Zoning, permits, and development review

📞 (410) 548-3170

✉ infdev@salisbury.md

🌐 salisbury.md/infrastructure-development

Community Partners

Salisbury Area Property Owners Association (SAPOA)

Advocacy and resources for local landlords

📞 (410) 742-5577

📧 SAPOA@FSEcommunities.com

🌐 sapoa.us

Coastal Association of REALTORS® (CAR)

Support for real estate professionals in the region

📞 (410) 641-4409

📧 info@coastalrealtors.org

🌐 coastalrealtors.org

Salisbury University – Student Affairs

Off-campus housing support and student engagement

📞 (410) 543-6080

📧 StudentAffairs@salisbury.edu

🌐 salisbury.edu/student-affairs

Appendix

Quick Reference Materials & Resources

Rental Registration Checklist

Before submitting your application in OpenGov, make sure you have:

For Rental Owner's License:

- ☐ Business name and structure
- ☐ Owner(s) names and ownership percentages
- ☐ Property manager contact info (if applicable)
- ☐ Resident agent info (if applicable)

For Rental Unit Registration:

- ☐ Street address and unit number (if applicable)
- ☐ Number of bedrooms and bathrooms
- ☐ Square footage
- ☐ Lead Certificate (if built before 1978)
- ☐ Rental Owner's License number

Fee Summary

Item	Fee
Rental Owner's License (New)	**$120**
Rental Owner's License (Renewal)	**$75**
Rental Unit Registration (New)	**$120 per unit**
Rental Unit Registration (Renewal)	**$75 per unit**
Reinspection Fee	**$100**
Vacant Building Registration (Residential)	**$200/year**
Vacant Building Inspection Fee (Residential)	**$100/year (after year 1)**

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Common Code Violations & Penalties

Violation	First Offense	Second Offense	Notes
Grass/Weeds	$25	$50/day (up to $500)	Daily fines may apply
Rubbish	$100	$100/day	May result in abatement
Interior Furniture Outdoors	$100	$200/day	
Zoning Violations	$500	$500	Civil zoning infraction
Trash Can Violations	Warning	$25	$50 service fee for container removal
Vacant Building	$500	Daily fines	Each day is a separate offense

Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Rental Property	A housing unit that is rented or offered for rent to individuals who are not immediate family members of the owner, with or without compensation.
Immediate Family	Includes a sibling, parent, grandparent, child, or grandchild of the property owner.
Dwelling Unit	A single unit provides complete independent living facilities, including living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation provisions.
Single-Family Dwelling	A structure containing one dwelling unit.
Duplex	A dwelling joined to another dwelling on one or more sides by an approved fire separation wall.
Multi-Family Dwelling	A structure containing two or more dwelling units that is not designed or constructed as an apartment building.
Apartment Building	A residential structure designed and constructed to contain three or more separate dwelling units.
Rental Owner's License	A license is required for any individual or business that owns rental property within the City of Salisbury. It must be renewed annually.

Term	Definition
Rental Unit Registration	The process of registering each rental unit under a Rental Owner's License. Required for all rental properties.
Lead Certificate	The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) issued a document certifying that a property built before 1978 meets lead safety standards.
Corrective Action Letter (CAL)	A formal notice issued by HCDD identifies code violations and provides a correction deadline.
Abatement	The City's process of correcting unresolved violations at the property owner's expense.
Vacant Property	A building that has been unoccupied for more than 180 consecutive days and is not actively used for residential or commercial purposes.
4-to-2 Ordinance	A local zoning rule that limits occupancy in certain residential zones to two unrelated adults unless an exemption is granted.
OpenGov	The City of Salisbury's online platform for rental licensing, registration, payments, and communication with landlords.

❓ Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Do I need a license for each property I own?
No. You need one Rental Owner's License per business entity (LLC, partnership, etc.). However, each rental unit must be registered under that license.

Can I register multiple units at once?
Yes. When registering through OpenGov, you can register all units under the same license in one session. Be sure to include accurate details for each unit.

How do I renew my license and registrations?
Renewals are managed through **OpenGov**. You'll begin receiving email reminders before January 15. All renewals must be completed by **March 1** each year.

What if my property was built before 1978?
You must upload a valid Lead Paint Certificate during registration and renewal. Maryland law requires this for all pre-1978 properties with new tenants.

When is an inspection required?
- **New units**: Before a license is issued
- **Existing units**: During renewal or if a complaint is filed
- **Multi-unit buildings**: Inspected jointly with the Fire Marshal

What happens if my property fails inspection?
You'll receive a Corrective Action Letter (CAL) outlining violations and deadlines. Once corrected, you must schedule a reinspection. A $100 fee may apply.

What is the "4-to-2 Ordinance"?
In R-5, R-8, and R-10 zones, no more than 2 unrelated adults may live in a rental unit unless an exemption is granted. This is enforced under Title 17 – Zoning.

How do I avoid discrimination in tenant screening?
Follow Fair Housing laws: treat all applicants equally, use consistent criteria, and avoid language or practices that could be seen as discriminatory.

What if I purchase a property that already has tenants?
You must still obtain a Rental Owner's License and register the unit. If an inspection is required, you must give tenants at least 24 hours' notice before entry.

What are common code violations I should avoid?
Frequent issues include:
- Overgrown grass or weeds
- Trash accumulation
- Indoor furniture used outdoors
- Inoperable vehicles
- Unregistered vacant buildings

What happens if I don't correct a violation?
If violations are not addressed by your Corrective Action Letter deadline, the City may issue citations, impose daily fines, or perform an abatement at your expense.

What if I need help using OpenGov?
If you're new to the system or need a refresher, visit the OpenGov portal and click on the Landlord License and Registration Guide for step-by-step instructions. You can also contact HCDD for assistance.

Building a Better Salisbury Together

As a landlord or property manager in the City of Salisbury, you play a vital role in shaping our neighborhoods' safety, quality, and character. This guide has equipped you with the tools, knowledge, and resources to:

- Understand your legal responsibilities
- Navigate licensing and registration through OpenGov
- Prepare for inspections and maintain code compliance
- Promote fair housing and tenant rights
- Access support from city departments and community partners

By staying informed and proactive, you help ensure that every resident—regardless of background—has access to safe, habitable, and equitable housing.

Let's continue working together to build a vibrant, inclusive Salisbury where everyone can thrive.

Need Help?

Reach out to the Housing & Community Development Department:

📍 207 W. Main St, Suite 102, Salisbury, MD 21801

📞 (410) 341-9550

📧 hcdd@salisbury.md

🌐 salisbury.md/housing-community-development

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Quick Reference & Contact Sheet

📋 Key Contacts

Housing & Community Development (HCDD)
📞 (410) 341-9550 | 📧 hcdd@salisbury.md

Fire Marshal's Office
📞 (410) 548-3120 | 📧 ecramer@salisbury.md

Finance Department
📞 (410) 548-3110 (Taxes) | 📞 (410) 548-3115 (Utilities)

Infrastructure & Development (DID)
📞 (410) 548-3170 📧 infdev@salisbury.md

SAPOA (Salisbury Area Property Owners Association)
📞 (410) 742-5577 | 📧 SAPOA@FSEcommunities.com

Coastal Association of REALTORS®
📞 (410) 641-4409 | 📧 info@coastalrealtors.org

Salisbury University – Student Affairs
📞 (410) 543-6080 | 📧 StudentAffairs@salisbury.edu