



Code Enforcement  
Standard Operating Procedure  
Housing Violations

I. Purpose

- a. The purpose of this procedure is to provide direction and a process to properly identify, document, report, effectually serve notice of, and abate housing violations as defined by the 2018 International Property Maintenance Code (IMPC) as codified as Ordinance 1441 of the latest version of the code of the city of Columbus, Kansas, hereafter referred to as the "Code".
- b. It is the policy of Code Enforcement to identify, document, report, notify and abate housing violations through a documented process that includes the collection of evidence, case management, data entry, and the service of legal notification as stipulated by the Code and Kansas State Statues.

II. Definitions

- a. Abandoned Property – "Any residential real estate for which taxes are delinquent for the preceding two years and which has been unoccupied continuously by persons legally in possession for the preceding 90 (ninety) days or commercial real estate for which taxes are delinquent for the preceding two years and which has a blighting influence on surrounding properties." (KSA 12-1750)
- b. Bathroom – "A room containing plumbing fixtures including a bathtub and shower." (IMPC 202)
- c. Code Official – "The official who is charged with the administration and enforcement of this code, or duly authorized representative." (IMPC 202)
- d. Commercial Real Estate – "Any real estate for which the present use is other than one to four residential units or for agricultural purposes." (KSA 12-1750)
- e. Dwelling Unit – "A single unit providing complete, independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation." (IMPC 202)
- f. Easement – "That portion of land or property reserved for present or future use by a person or agency other than the legal fee owner(s) of the property. The easement shall be permitted for use under, on or above a said lot or lots." (IMPC 202)
- g. Exterior Property – "The open space on the premises and on adjoining property under the control of owners or operators of such premises." (IMPC 202)

- h. Imminent Danger – “A condition which could cause serious or life-threatening injury or death at any time.” (IMPC 202)
  - i. Habitable Space – “Space in a structure for living, sleeping, eating or cooking. Bathrooms, toilet rooms, closets, halls, storage or utility spaces, and similar areas are not considered habitable spaces.” (IMPC 202)
  - j. Housekeeping Unit – “A room or group of rooms forming a single habitable space equipped and intended to be used for living, sleeping, cooking and eating which does not contain, within such a unit, a toilet, lavatory and bathtub or shower.” (IMPC 202)
  - k. Occupant – “Any individual living or sleeping in a building or having possession of a space within a building.” (IMPC 202)
  - l. Owner – “Any person, agent, operator, firm, or corporation having legal or equitable interest in the property; or recorded in the official records of the state, county, or municipality as holding title to the property; or otherwise having control of the property, including the guardian of the estate of any such person, and the executor or administrator of the estate of such person if ordered to take possession of real property by a court.” (IMPC 202)
  - m. Person – “Individual, corporation, partnership or any other group acting as a unit.” (IMPC 202)
  - n. Premises – “A lot, plot or parcel of land, easement or public way, including any structures thereon.” (IMPC 202)
  - o. Property – A lot, plot or parcel of land, easement or public way, including any structures thereon. This term is intended to be synonymous with the term “Premises”, as used in the Code.
  - p. Public Way – “Any street, alley or similar parcel of land essentially unobstructed from the ground to the sky, which is deeded, dedicated or otherwise permanently appropriated to the public or public use.” (IMPC 202)
  - q. Rooming House – “A building arranged or occupied for lodging, with or without meals, for compensation and not occupied as a one- or two-family dwelling.”
  - r. Structure – “That which is built or constructed or a portion thereof.” (IMPC 202)
  - s. Toilet Room – “A room containing a water closet or urinal but not a bathtub or shower.” (IMPC 202)
- III. Applicable Codes
- a. Exterior Structure – “The exterior of a structure shall be maintained in good repair, structurally sound and sanitary so as not to pose a threat to the public health, safety or welfare.” (IMPC 304.1)
  - b. Interior Structure – “The interior of a structure and equipment therein shall be maintained in good repair, structurally sound and in a sanitary condition. Occupants shall keep that part of the structure which they occupy or control in a clean and sanitary condition. Every owner of a structure containing a rooming house, housekeeping units, a hotel, a dormitory, two or more dwelling units or two or more nonresidential occupancies, shall maintain, in a clean and sanitary condition, the shared or public areas of the structure and exterior property.” (IMPC 305.1)
  - c. Method of Service – Methods of service are described in IMPC 107.3, as amended by Ordinance 1441.

- d. Notices – Notices are described in IMPC 107, as amended by Ordinance 1441.
- e. Violation, Abatement, Fees – Violation prosecution, penalties, abatement, and fees are described in IMPC 106, as amended by Ordinance 1441.

IV. Procedure

- a. Surveys and Complaints – The Code official shall regularly survey the city for housing violations and within forty-eight (48) hours, review all housing complaints that are received by Code Enforcement.
- b. Documentation of Violations
  - i. The Code Official shall appropriately document for housing violations.
  - ii. Photographs shall be taken, notes from personal observations shall be made and other relevant evidence shall be collected from a place the Code Official has the legal right to be located.
    - 1. This can be from areas where the public has a legal right to be without consent.
    - 2. This can be from a public way or private property, if consent is established.
    - 3. The Code Official shall seek to obtain written approval from the owner or occupant of a premises having a violation prior to entering any part of that premises where he does not have a legal right to be without consent.
    - 4. If consent cannot be established, the Code Official shall determine if an Administrative Search Warrant is required to legally enter the property.
      - a. An Administrative Search Warrant is not required if the property is vacant and unsecured, unless it has “No Trespassing” signs or locked gates.
      - b. An Administrative Search Warrant is not required if the property is abandoned, unless it has “No Trespassing” signs.
  - iii. The Code Official shall document his personal observation, as appropriate.
- c. Opening a New Case
  - i. The Code Official shall open a new housing violation case in the database.
    - 1. The Code Official shall identify the location of the housing violation by the correct parcel and assigned address number (if an address number has been assigned). This will apply to common address, as well as legal address.
    - 2. The Code Official shall determine if there is an existing open housing violation case for the particular property to ensure there is no duplication of effort.
  - ii. The Code Official shall attach all documentation associated with the particular housing violation, including photographs, notes, etc., which will be used as evidence to substantiate the violation.
- d. Inspection
  - i. The Code Official has the discretion to:
    - 1. Place the property on monitor for a period not to exceed thirty (30) days.

2. Cause a notice to be sent to the property owner.
  3. Deploy a door hanger with relevant information to inform the occupant of the violation and remedies.
- ii. If a door hanger is utilized, the Code Official shall take one up-close photograph of the door hanger and a second photograph of the door hanger and the background of the posting for identification purposes.
  - iii. If a door hanger was utilized or the property is being monitored, the Code Official shall re-inspect the property following the date specified.
    1. If the violation has been abated or no longer exists, the Code Official shall take photographs of the current condition of the property and close the case. The photographs shall be submitted as evidence to justify closing the case.
    2. If the violation still exists, the Code Official shall take photographs of the current condition of the property and attach them to the case. The photographs shall be used as evidence when generating a written notice of violation.
- e. Courtesy Notice
1. Due to winter weather, starting November 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, the Code Official shall generate a courtesy notice in lieu of a notice of violation for painting violations.
  2. The Code Official has the discretion to include minor housing violations in the in the courtesy notice rather than simultaneously issuing a courtesy notice and a notice of violation on the same property.
  3. The courtesy notice shall contain all the following relevant information.
    - a. Description of the real estate sufficient for identification.
    - b. A statement that includes a description of the conditions and identifies the violation.
    - c. A statement requesting that the property owner abate the violation in the time period specified in the courtesy notice.
      - i. Courtesy notices generated during the month of November will give the property owner 120 days to abate the violations.
      - ii. Courtesy notices generated during the month of December will give the property owner 110 days to abate the violation.
      - iii. Courtesy notices generated during the month of January will give the property owner 100 days to abate the violation.
      - iv. Courtesy notices generated during the month of February will give the property owner 90 days to abate the violation.
    - d. A statement that the Code Official is monitoring the case and will be re-inspecting the property at the expiration of the time specified in the courtesy notice.

- e. The Code Official shall send the courtesy notice by first class mail to the property owner, taxpayer, purchaser under contract (PUC), loan company and resident (occupant).
  - 4. The Code Official shall re-inspect the property at the expiration time specified in the courtesy notice to determine if the violation still exists.
    - a. IF the violation has been abated or no longer exists, the Code Official shall take photographs of the current condition of the property and close the case. The photographs shall be submitted as evidence to justify closing the case.
    - b. If the violation still exists, the Code Official shall take photographs of the current condition of the property and attach them to the case. The photographs shall be used as evidence when generating a written notice of violation.
- f. Notice of Violation
  - i. The Code Official shall generate a written notice of violation that contains all of the following relevant information as designated by the Code:
    - 1. Description of the property sufficient for identification.
    - 2. A statement that includes a description of the conditions and identifies the violation.
    - 3. A statement that the property owner must abate the violation by the date designated in the notice.
    - 4. A statement that any owner may request an appeal hearing.
      - a. The request shall be submitted to the Code Official on or before the date designated in the notice.
      - b. The scope of the appeal shall be limited to the following: (1) whether the provisions of the Code apply; (2) whether the Code Official has correctly interpreted the Code; and/or (3) whether the requirements of the Code can be adequately satisfied by other means.
    - 5. A statement that if the violation is not corrected or a hearing requested, the City may impose administrative penalties, abate the violation and assess the costs against the owner.
    - 6. A statement that failure to timely comply with the notice may result in prosecution in municipal court regardless whether an administrative hearing is pending.
  - ii. The Code Official shall determine the amount of time to be given the owner of the property to abate the housing violation, but not to exceed sixty (60) days.
    - 1. The date designated in the notice shall allow the amount of time given the owner of the property to abate the housing violation plus three (3) days for mailing the notice.
    - 2. The owner of the property shall abate the violation by the date designated in the notice.
  - iii. Administrative Staff shall send notice to the property owner by certified mail and/ or first-class mail.

1. Personal serve may be substituted for certified mail.
  2. A copy of the notice shall be sent by first class mail to the taxpayer, purchaser under contract (PUC), loan company and resident (occupant).
  3. If the certified mail or first-class mail that was sent to the property owner is returned and the envelope has a forwarding address, the Code Official shall revise the abatement due date and resend the notice.
- iv. In addition to the methods identified in this procedure, but not in lieu of, the Code Official may provide notice by other means, including, but not limited to, door hangers, conspicuously posting the notice on the property, personal notification, telephone and/or various means of electronic communication.
- g. Administrative Appeal Hearing
- i. An owner shall have the right to appeal the notice of violation provided that a written application is submitted on or before the date designated in the notice.
- h. Re-inspection
- i. The Code Official shall re-inspect the property after the date designated in the notice of violation to determine if the violation still exists.
    1. If the violation has been abated or no longer exists, the Coe Official shall take photographs of the current condition of the property and close the case. The photographs shall be submitted as evidence to justify closing the case.
    2. If the violation has not been abated and the notice was personally served, or if the certified mail that was sent to the owner was not returned, the Code Official shall take photographs of the current condition of the property and attach them to the case. The photographs shall be used as evidence when filing an administrative search warrant.
    3. IF the violation has not been abated, the notice was not personally served and the certified mail that was sent to the owner was returned without a forwarding address, the Code Official shall post a notice having a revised abatement due date in a conspicuous place on the property and take one up-close photograph of the notice and second photograph of the front of the structure with the property address and notice visible.
  - ii. If the notice was posted, the Code Official shall re-inspect the property upon the expiration of the compliance period stated in the notice to determine if the violation still exists.
    1. If the violation has been abated or no longer exists, the Code Official shall take photographs of the current condition of the property and close the case. The photographs shall be submitted as evidence to justify closing the case.
    2. If the violation has not been abated, the Code Official shall take photographs of the current condition of the property and attach them to the case. The photographs shall be used as evidence when filing a notice to appear.
- i. Case Management

- i. During the process of identifying, reporting, and managing a case, the Code Official shall pursue voluntary compliance above all other means to remedy the case.
- ii. The Code Official shall be available for correspondence concerning current and past cases during assigned working hours via cell phone, personal contact, email or other means of electronic communication.
- iii. The Code Official shall, upon request, provide the property owner or occupant with a list of resources for assistance.
- iv. The Code Official may allow one extension for a case, if requested by the violator, when there is a plan of action to address the issue, the requester exhibits good-faith, the responsible party can establish reputable means and resources to remedy the underlying violation and/or case in a timely manner or the Code Official observes significant progress is being made.
  - 1. If an initial extension is granted, the Code Official shall provide detailed reasoning for the extension in his case notes.
  - 2. Any subsequent extension must be approved by the Chief of Police or his designee and the reason for the additional requested extension shall be in writing.
- j. The Code Official has the discretion to file a Notice to Appear if the violation still exists.
  - i. The Code Official serve the Notice to Appear following the designated methods of service.
  - ii. The Code Official shall populate a case file, including, but not limited to notice of violation, photographs, notice to appear, and other appropriate case documentation to the City Prosecutor for review.
  - iii. If approved, the City Prosecutor will prosecute the case in Municipal Court.
  - iv. The Code Official shall attend the Court proceedings to assist the City Prosecutor
  - v. The Code Official shall conduct re-inspection as ordered by the Court.
  - vi. Closing the Case\_– The Code Official shall close the case when the violation has been abated or when directed to do so by the City Prosecutor.