

Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of Regulatory Services

Date May 23, 2006

To Public Safety and Regulatory Services Committee, The Honorable Don Samuels, Chairperson

Referral to Ways & Means/Budget Committee, The Honorable Paul Ostrow, Chairperson

Subject Proposed Amendment to Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, Title 12 Chapter 249 relating to Housing; Vacant Dwelling or Building, Nuisance Condition.

Recommendation

None

Previous Directives

None

Prepared or Submitted by Thomas Deegan, Manager of the Problem Properties Unit, 673-3310.

Approved by: _____
Rocco Forte, Assistant City Coordinator

Henry Reimer, Director of Inspections

Presenters in Committee

Steve Heng, Attorney
Tom Deegan, Manager of Problem Properties Unit

Financial Impact (Check those that apply)

No financial impact (If checked, go directly to Background/Supporting Information).

Action requires an appropriation increase to the Capital Budget or Operating Budget.

Action provides increased revenue for appropriation increase.

Action requires use of contingency or reserves.

Business Plan: Action is within the plan. Action requires a change to plan.

Other financial impact (Explain):

Request provided to department's finance contact when provided to the Committee Coordinator.

Community Impact (use any categories that apply)

Neighborhood Notification – NO

City Goals – Maintain the physical infrastructure to ensure a safe, healthy, and livable city.

Comprehensive Plan – NO IMPACT

Zoning Code – NO IMPACT

Other

Background/Supporting Information Attached

Over the past several years, the city has experienced an increase in the number of buildings open to trespass and in need of City authorized boarding. In 2004, City Housing Inspections boarded 150 properties, in 2005 the City authorized the board-up of 280 properties (an 86% increase) and as of May 2006, we are boarding at a rate more than twice that of 2005.

This increase is due in part to a more streamlined inspection approach to identifying property open to trespass; and possibly a disinvestment in certain areas of the City resulting in a greater abandonment of properties. Moreover, staff analysis supports that we are experiencing an increase in the number of times we are required to re-board a property due to unauthorized break-ins.

It has been very important to neighborhoods and neighbors to ensure that the buildings are properly secured and remain secured. According to a study on the impact of vacant buildings by *The National Vacant Properties Campaign* "More than 12,000 fires break out in vacant structures each year in the US, resulting in 73 million dollars in property damage annually." To ensure public safety, it is necessary to restrict access to vacant properties.

This proposal would permit the Director of inspections to board any and all openings of a property that meets the requirements outlined in Chapter 249.25 of the MCO. At this point, the City only boards access points on the 1st floor and those openings above the 1st floor that are accessible, Chapter 249 need not be amended in order to board second or additional floors.

Cost Analysis

In 2005, Housing Inspections spent \$145,720 on boarding properties that were open to trespass. The average cost per structure was \$600.

In 2006, the City allocated \$125,000 for boarding costs authorized by Housing Inspections. According to staff analysis, we have boarded 101 properties to date and project that we will board between 200-250 properties between now and the end of the year. At this rate, we will meet or exceed our current budget allocation.

With the addition of the second story boards, we estimate it will increase the cost by an average of \$700 per structure and require an additional \$175,000 to implement this proposal; however the cost of board-ups is recovered through an assessment to the property. The cost will not be completely recovered until 2008 or beyond when the assessment revenues are received from the County.

Note: This ordinance change will not impact the Police/Fire Emergency Board-Up process or contract. Police and Fire personnel will continue to board only the accessible openings that were damaged during a Police or Fire incident.

In 2005, there were 544 MPD boarding's at a cost of \$133,881. So far there have been 184 properties boarded by the MPD in 2006. The MPD Emergency Board-Ups are expected to exceed last year's numbers by over 10 percent, for an annual total of 600 buildings boarded by Police.