Lot Maintenance Standards

Lot standards include the lot the building stands on and the surrounding public way and shall meet the following:

- All grass and weeds on the premises including abutting sidewalks, gutters and alleys shall be kept below 9 inches in height and all dead or broken trees, tree limbs or shrubbery shall be cut and removed from the premises.
- Any public sidewalk adjoining the lot shall be shoveled clear of snow so as to comply with Chapter 79-13 MCO.
- Junk, rubbish, waste and any material that creates a health, safety or fire hazard, including but not limited to any mail or flyers that have been delivered to the building, shall not be permitted to accumulate on any portion of the exterior lot of the building.
- No portion of the lot nor any structure, vehicle, receptacle or object on the premises shall be maintained or operated in any manner that causes or produces any health or safety hazard or permits the premises to become a rodent harborage or is conducive to rodent harborage.
- The lot shall be maintained so that water does not accumulate or stand on the ground.
- All fences and gates shall be maintained in sound condition and in good repair.

Exterior Maintenance Standards

The exterior of the building shall be enclosed, secured and maintained to meet the following:

- Foundations, basements, cellars and crawlspaces shall be maintained in sound and watertight condition adequate to support the building and protected against the entry of rodents or other animals.

- Exterior walls shall be free of holes, breaks, loose or rotting boards or timbers, and any other conditions which might admit rain or dampness to the interior portions of the walls or the interior spaces and shall be protected against the entry of rodents or other animals.

- Exterior windows and doors shall be maintained in sound condition and good repair and prevent rain from entering the building, or the opening shall be secured in accordance with Chapter 275-32-7 MCO. The windows and doors shall be equipped with hardware for locking and the locking mechanism shall be maintained in properly functioning condition. All points of possible ingress and egress shall be secured to prevent unauthorized entry.

- The roof shall be adequately supported and maintained in weathertight condition; the gutters, downspouts, scuppers and appropriate flashing shall be in good repair and adequate to remove the water from the building.

- Chimneys and flues shall be kept in sound, functional, weathertight condition and in good repair.

- Every outside stair or step shall be maintained in sound condition and in good repair; every porch, stoop, deck, veranda, balcony and walk shall be maintained in sound condition for its purpose.

Interior Maintenance Standards

Interior of any building shall be maintained in accordance with the following:

- It is prohibited to accumulate or permit the accumulation of junk, trash, debris, boxes, lumber, scrap metal or any other materials that may produce any health, fire or safety hazard, or provide harborage for rodents or other animals.

- Every foundation, roof, floor, wall, stair, ceiling or other structural support shall be safe and capable of supporting the loads associated with normal usage and shall be kept in sound condition and repair.

- Any plumbing fixtures shall be maintained with no leaking pipes, and all pipes for water shall either be completely drained or heated to resist being frozen.

- Every exit door shall be secured with an internal deadbolt lock, or with a locking mechanism deemed equivalent or better by the department, and every exit door shall be capable of being opened from the inside easily and without the use of a key or special knowledge.
- Interior stairs shall have treads and risers that have uniform dimensions, are sound, securely fastened and have no rotting, loose or deteriorating supports.

- Every owner shall be responsible for the extermination of insects, rodents and other vermin in or about the premises.

Can I Suggest an Alternate Plan?

Upon written application by an owner or an owner's agent, the commissioner may approve a modification of any provision of this section, including the requirement for inspections and fees, provided the spirit and functional intent of the section will be observed and the public health, welfare and safety will be assured. The decision of the commissioner concerning a modification shall be made in writing and the application for a modification and the decision of the commissioner concerning such modification shall be retained in the permanent records of the department.

Other DNS Programs Building Owners Should be aware of

All non-owner occupied property in Milwaukee is required to be registered with the Property Recording Program. The owner's contact information or their agent, must be on file within 15 days of the sale or transfer of the property's title. For information call **Property Recording** at 414-286-8569.

Do you own residential rental property? You may be required to register the ownership if in certain parts of the City. Call 414-286-8824 to inquire about the **Residential Rental Inspection** program.

If selling a property you may be required to have a Code Compliance check before the property is sold. Call the **Code Compliance** section at 414-286-3838.

Make your buildings talk to you! Register them for free on **E-notify** at **www.city.milwaukee.gov**. E-mails will be sent to you any time code related matters involve your property. Be the first to know when something happens.

DNS Residential Enforcement 286-2268
DNS Commercial Enforcement 286-3874

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Department of Neighborhood Services
841 N. Broadway Rm 104
Milwaukee WI 53202
(414) 286-2268

VACANT BUILDING REGISTRATION ORDINANCE

City of Milwaukee

Department of Neighborhood Services

DNS-29A_V1H TNW 04/27/2010

Milwaukee's New Vacant Building Code

For many years, Milwaukee's code allowed an owner to keep a building vacant and boarded as long as it was reasonably well maintained. However, a boarded building sends a negative signal about a community. These buildings can attract criminal activity. Often the buildings must be re-boarded at city expense and can make it difficult for neighbors next door to get fire insurance. The presence of a boarded building can bring down the value of other properties in the area.

Effective January 1, 2010, the City's new Vacant Building Registration (VBR) ordinance Chapter 200-51.7 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances (MCO) takes effect. The new VBR ordinance requires owner(s) of residential and commercial property left vacant for 30 days or more to register the property with the Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS) and take steps toward assuring the property is secure, properly maintained and not creating a hazard for the surrounding community.

What buildings are impacted?

This code applies to all residential and commercial buildings that have been vacant for more than 30 days. The following properties are exempt from the VBR requirements:

- A property currently in foreclosure and subject to the requirements of the City's Preforeclosure Ordinance Chapter 200-22.5 MCO. Note: Properties which have cleared the foreclosure process and are still vacant are required to comply with the VBR ordinance and register the building with DNS.
- A property that is undergoing an active renovation or rehabilitation and all required permits have been obtained.
- A property that is vacant as a result of a natural disaster and covered by emergency response requirements issued by the commissioner.
- A residential single family home or owner-occupied 2-family property that has been used as a residence by the owner for a period of at least 3 months within the previous 9 months and the owner intends to resume residing at the property.
- Residential condominium and rental units in buildings whose vacancy rate does not exceed 95%.
- A property that is currently part of an estate that is in probate and is not subject to bankruptcy provided the personal representative or executor resides in the 7 county area as defined in Chapter 200-51.5-2-j MCO.

What do property owners need to do?

If your property is vacant and meets the vacant building registration requirements, you must:

- Enclose and secure the building. See maintenance and board-up requirements.
- Maintain the building in a secure and closed condition until the building is again occupied or demolished.
- The owner of any vacant building shall within 30 days after the building becomes vacant or within 30 days after assuming ownership, whichever is later, file a registration statement for each such building with the department on forms provided by the department. There is no registration fee for the first 6 months. Registrations must be renewed every 6-months until the building is reoccupied.

- The owner shall renew the registration every 6 months as long as the building remains vacant and shall pay a registration renewal fee as prescribed in Chapter 200-33-64 MCO for each registered building.

- Acquire or otherwise maintain liability insurance in an amount not less than $300,000 for buildings designed primarily for residential use and not less than $1,000,000 for any other building, including, but not limited to, buildings designed for manufacturing, industrial, storage or commercial uses. The liability insurance shall provide covering for any damage to any person or any property caused by any physical condition of or in the building. Evidence of this insurance shall be available at the request of the commissioner.

What Does it Cost to Register?

Each vacant building registration certificate shall be issued and shall be valid for 6 months from the date the certificate is issued. There is no fee for the first 6 month registration period. If the building remains vacant longer than 6 months, the owner must renew their vacant building registration and pay a renewal fee of $250. Each subsequent registration renewal will cost $250 provided the owner has properly maintained the property and there are no outstanding code violations. Properties with outstanding code violations will be subject to an escalating renewal fee of $500. Registration fees for properties in violation of the requirements of this ordinance at subsequent renewals will be charged a fee in increasing increments of $250 up to $1000.

Vacant building inspection fees shall be charged against the real estate and shall be assessed and collected as a special charge.

How do I register my vacant property?

The registration form can be found at the Department of Neighborhood Services web site at:

www.milwaukee.gov/dnsforms

Simply go to the Forms and Applications page to print the application. More detailed instructions are also posted on the site with the form. Any questions regarding this program or building related issues can be answered by calling (414) 286-8824 or visiting the DNS offices at 841 N. Broadway, RM 105 or 4001 S. 6th St., 1st floor.

Owner must provide access for an inspection

Following reasonable notice, the department of Neighborhood Services inspector will conduct an interior and exterior inspection of the vacant building to determine compliance with this ordinance. A minimum of one inspection will be conducted during the initial registration period and each subsequent rental period. Owners are required to provide access to the interior of the building for these inspections.

Maintenance is required after registration is filed

In addition to any other applicable requirements, vacant buildings shall comply with the following requirements:

Building Security Standards

All vacant building openings shall be closed and secured, using methods and materials so as to comply with the requirements of Chapter 275-32-7 MCO.

- If a building has been vacant for 6 months or longer, or upon any renewal of the registration statement, the building owner shall implement and provide proof satisfactory to the department that in addition to complying with the security standards, the building remains secured. If the building fails to be secured as determined by the commissioner or the commissioner's designee, then the building shall be boarded in accordance with Chapter 275-32-7 MCO.
- If the owner has provided proof that a building is secured and based on an inspection by the department the building is found to be in violation, the commissioner shall send by first class mail a written notice of the violation to the person responsible for day-to-day supervision and management of the building or to the authorized agent for service of process or to the owner of record.

- Within 30 days of the mailing of the notice of violation, the owner shall be required to either comply with the board up requirements in Chapter 275-32-7 MCO or restore the building to a secured state and also install and maintain a working alarm system. The alarm system shall connect to all areas of the building subject to unauthorized human entry, including but not limited to, all exterior doors, windows or other readily accessible openings. The alarm system shall, upon detecting unauthorized entry, send an automatic signal to a licensed alarm business that has 24-hour live operators who will monitor the system and contact the building owner or designated agent.