Code Enforcement

Effective February 18, 2016, the Code Enforcement Division became a part of the Community Development & Housing Department.  In an effort to address the comprehensive development and revitalization efforts of the City, particularly in the Core City, this division realignment is a natural fit and progression to focus on such efforts.  This realignment is expected to increase our efforts and focus on nuisance abatement as a tool for neighborhood improvement.

It is the responsibility of the Local Codes Enforcement section to provide for clean, healthy livable neighborhoods through the enforcement of the minimum housing code, public nuisance code, zoning and vehicle ordinance.  It is accomplished through the investigation and inspection of citizen and public official complaints and through the targeted enforcement neighborhoods.

**Public Nuisance Violations - The Enforcement Process**

Enforcement involves our inspecting the property and filing a report about whether we found a violation. If a violation is found, the owner is requested by certified and first class mail to correct it within a specified number of days.  If the property owner does not agree with the application of the ordinance to his property, he may appeal to the director for a hearing.  If the owner does not appeal within the allowed time period of 15 days, the violation stands and is required to be corrected.

**The Nuisances We Regulate**

***Tall Grass & Weeds.*** Tall grass and weeds taller than 12 inches are a public nuisance because of their potential health hazards rather than their appearance. Grass and weeds grow where people have cleared or cultivated land. Thick growths provide food and shelter for mosquitoes, ticks, flies, mice and rats.To prevent these problems, mow grass and weeds regularly or plant a ground cover that doesn't grow too tall.

***Rubbish, Trash & Junk***

Storing rubbish, trash, junk, mattresses, boxes, old clothes, rags and combustibles in concentration is a public nuisance because they create fire hazards. They accumulate water which becomes stagnant and provide habitat for insects and rodents. Rubbish and trash should be placed in an approved garbage cart for pickup.

***Animal & Vegetable Matter***

Animal and vegetable matter in concentration are a public nuisance because they provide food and shelter for pests. Flies, mice and rats are attracted to animal matter or waste. For example, dog lots provide food and water for flies and rodents.  Dog lots should be cleaned and spread with lime to control odor on a daily basis.

Piles of grass clippings, leaves or other vegetable matter can also provide habitation for mice or rats, unless you dispose of them in a compost pile. Because of their heating and rapid decomposing action, compost piles do not provide habitat and their odors are minimal.  Composting should be done in an acceptable bin or other container approved for that use.

To help you deal with these problems, the City provides a weekly pick-up of organic matter and solid waste. Animal matter, such as pet droppings, should be placed in a plastic bag in your garbage cart. Organic matter, such as tree trimmings, can be recycled at the City's composting yard, 3001 Ingleside Dr. or you can put it in clear plastic bags and place it at the curb on your regular solid waste collection day.

***Open Storage***

Storing large appliances such as refrigerators and freezers outside, as well as building materials and rubbish, is a public nuisance because it is dangerous and provides habitat for insects and rodents. Children can become trapped and suffocate in appliances if their doors are left attached. Appliances also collect water, providing breeding habitat for mosquitoes.

Outside storage of building materials and firewood provides habitat for insects and rodents, but particularly encourages termites. These items may be stored outside if they are stacked and are elevated a minimum of six inches off the ground.

***Fallen Trees***

Any accumulation of fallen, dead trees or any accumulation of limbs should be removed from the property. This can create breeding ground for rodents, insects and snakes. Fallen trees can attract termites. This does not apply to natural accumulations on parcels that are predominately wooded.

***Open Structures or Buildings***

Any unsecured or open building or other structure, commercial or residential, which can contribute to the blight of neighborhoods by allowing entry for vagrancy, alcohol or illegal drug use, prostitution or other criminal activity. Depending upon the history of crime in the neighborhood, different standards apply for proper securing. In high crime areas, all doors, windows and other openings such as crawl spaces doors should be covered with plywood and attached by screws. Low crime area structures can be secured by simply making sure all doors and windows are closed and properly locked.

***Structures Damaged due to Disaster***

If a structure or any portion of the structure is damaged as the result of fire, wind, flood or other disaster, and allowed to remain in an unrepaired state for a period of 30-days, the owner should repair or remove the structure from the property. A damaged structure can have glass, metal or other sharp objects that may pose a safety hazard. The structure may be deemed unstable and possible collapse causing injury.

***Swimming Pools***

Certain conditions for the upkeep of swimming pools are addressed in the Public Nuisance ordinance. If the pool is not properly maintained the water can become stagnant and result in mosquitoes during the summer months. Swimming pools can develop structural deficiencies and should be repaired. If a violation is noted the property owner may be required to drain, repair or remove the pool from the property.

**Health Department Regulations**

Violations of Guilford County's health regulations are considered violations of the City's public nuisance code, too. You are required to:

* fill or secure abandoned or open wells, pits, and septic tanks;
* eradicate rats on infested property; and
* Control mosquitoes by removing accumulated water in puddles, ponds, depressions, ditches, containers, etc. (*This does not apply to farm irrigation or watershed and erosion ponds.*)

**Closing and Securing**

The City of High Point has a Housing Code to prevent the decay and deterioration of dwellings to protect the general public, and occupants from unsafe and unhealthy conditions. Dwellings found substandard are ordered to be either repaired or vacated and closed or, demolished depending on the conditions.

When it becomes necessary to close such a dwelling the code requires that proper maintenance be provided to protect the public from hazards. The property owner is responsible for taking any actions necessary to keep the structure secured against illegal entry, and also maintenance of the grounds. The property owner shall promptly (within five calendar days from the date the dwelling is vacated) cause the dwelling to be secured.

Dwellings ordered closed by the City must be secured to the minimum standards provided by the Department of Inspections. The Order to Vacate and Close will identify if the property location is considered within a low or high crime area. The standard for securing is different for each area and must be followed for compliance.

**Low Crime/Vandalism Areas**

Exterior Doors: All exterior doors, including doors to basement or crawl space areas, shall be securely locked. Any opening in the doors, such as missing/broken glass or panels, shall be closed by applying 1/2" CDX plywood or equivalent cut to fit tightly into the opening. Secure plywood to the opening with 16D spiral shanked galvanized nails, or equivalent, spaced 12" on center around the exterior edge of the plywood. All equivalent methods must be pre-approved by the code enforcement officer.

**Windows:** All windows accessible from the ground level or from porches, steps, or landings shall be locked, nailed shut, or secured adequately from the inside to resist entry. All openings shall be secured in the manner as required for doors.

**Accessory Buildings:** All accessory buildings which are enclosed shall have all openings locked or secured in the manner required for doors. Open sheds and open accessory buildings shall have all hazardous and/or flammable materials such as gasoline, paint, paint thinner, kerosene, paper, etc., removed to prevent the possibility of these materials being used to start fires or vandalism. Accumulations of trash and debris shall also be removed from open buildings.

Dwellings located in low crime/vandalism area that continue to experience forced entry or damage can be required to secure as required for a high crime/vandalism area.

**High Crime/Vandalism Areas**

In areas where past experience indicates that there is a high probability the dwelling will be a target of vandalism, or forced entry, the property owner shall ensure that the dwelling is secured and maintained as follows:

**Exterior Doors:** All exterior doors except one entrance, which shall be the entrance most visible from the street, shall be secured from the inside by nailing a minimum of three 2"x 4" boards with 16D spiral-shank nails across the door casing or covering the entire door opening. Covering the entire door opening shall be accomplished by applying 5/8" CDX plywood, or equivalent, cut to fit tightly into the cased openings. Plywood shall be mechanically fastened from the interior with 5/8" carriage bolts through 2"x 4" braces, one placed near the top and one placed near the bottom of the door opening. Exterior doors with glazed areas, or panels must be secured by covering the entire door opening. The entrance door most visible, if of solid construction, may be secured with a deadbolt type lock, or hasp and lock. Also, the crawl space opening must be secured to prevent entry.

**Windows:** All windows accessible from the ground level or from porches, steps, or landings shall be secured. Secure windows by applying 5/8" CDX plywood, or equivalent, cut to fit tightly into the cased openings. Plywood shall be mechanically fastened from the interior with 5/8" carriage bolts through 2"x 4" braces, one placed near the top and one placed near the bottom of the window opening. All equivalent methods must be pre-approved by the assigned code enforcement officer.

**Accessory Buildings:** All accessory buildings which are enclosed shall have all openings locked or secured in the manner required for doors. Open sheds and open accessory buildings shall have all hazardous and/or flammable materials such as gasoline, paint, paint thinner, kerosene, paper, etc., removed to prevent the possibility of these materials being used to start fires or vandalism. Accumulations of trash and debris shall also be removed from open buildings.

**Non-Residential Structures:** Non-residential structures, that are vacated or ordered secured by the City, shall follow the applicable standards for the type of area or openings, as required by these standards.

 Structures found not in compliance with these standards will be ordered secured. Owners failing to comply with an Order to Secure will be billed for the cost incurred by the City to secure the structure.

**Maintenance of Grounds**

Maintenance of grounds is required periodically to insure that no violations of the City's Public Nuisance Code occur. The Public Nuisance Code prohibits the following:

* Grass and weeds exceeding 12 inches in height.
* Vines, weeds and brush which provide habitat for pests.
* Piles of leaves or vegetation.
* Standing water providing breeding ground for mosquitoes.
* Storage of rubbish, trash, junk and combustibles.
* Outside storage of large appliances such as refrigerators.
* Rodent or insect infestation.

The property owner of closed dwellings with any of these conditions will be ordered to correct the nuisances within a specified time. Owners failing to comply with an order to correct a nuisance will be billed for the cost incurred by the City to correct the violation.

These codes and actions are necessary to protect our city and neighborhoods. A closed dwelling may remain closed indefinitely, provided it complies with the Housing and Nuisance codes. Should you have any questions or need assistance, please contact our office at 883-8575.

**Everyone Wants Clean and Safe Neighborhoods...** achieving them requires the efforts of city government and each resident.

City government maintains streets and utilities and enforces codes to ensure that all property is maintained properly.

Your responsibility is to maintain your home or property in compliance with these codes to ensure good neighborhoods.

We hope this maintenance checklist will help you fulfill that responsibility.

**PROPERTY CHECKLIST**

**Your Home**

Repair rotted wood, broken or missing boards, siding or shingles and make all exterior parts weather-tight and rodent-proof. The exterior must be covered with paint or a weather- resistant covering. Inspect your home's:

* Exterior surfaces, walls and foundation.
* Roof covering, gutters and drains for proper removal of water.
* Stair and porch railings, decking and steps.

Keep your home safe and sanitary, in good repair and sound condition. Make sure:

* Exit ways are open; doors, halls and stairs are clear for emergency and safe movement.
* Windows open to give you an emergency exit, and screens are attached to keep out pests.
* Lights burn brightly at stairs and steps.
* Smoke detectors are installed outside bedrooms.
* Electrical system has no exposed wires, dead outlets, flickering lights, warm cover plates or smoke coming from appliances.
* Electrical fuse boxes aren't overloaded by using fuses that are too large.
* Electrical extension cords are used only when necessary.
* Gas, oil or kerosene appliances are installed and maintained safely.
* Heating appliance vents have no holes or block- age which can cause carbon monoxide poisoning.
* Portable heaters are used only to supplement your primary heating system.
* Street number is posted near the front door and is clearly visible from the street.
* Garbage is placed in your mobile totter.
* Insects and rodents are exterminated, and their habitat has been eliminated.
* The plumbing system doesn't leak.
* Flammable materials, such as kerosene, are stored away from heat, open flame or sparks.

**Your Yard**

* Mow your lawn so that grass is no more than six inches high.
* Remove vines, weeds, or brush which provide habitat for pests.
* Trim shrubs near the public right-of-way to avoid sight distance problems.
* Remove piles of leaves, grass or vegetation.
* Place yard waste in a yard waste totter, clear plastic bags or a cardboard box, or take it to the City's compost facility at 3001 Ingleside Drive.
* Place items too large for your totter at the curb for pickup on your garbage collection day.
* Remove standing water to prevent mosquitoes from breeding.
* Rent a trash trailer for large clean-up projects.
* Keep dog lots clean and dispose of waste in a plastic bag in your totter; store animal feed in a pest-proof container.

**Storage**

* Store furniture, appliances, auto parts and junk inside a fully enclosed structure.
* Store lumber or firewood off the ground a mini- mum of six inches.
* Do not park a large truck (more than 24 ft. long or 14,000 lbs. G. V. W.) on the street or on your private property, except when loading or unloading. (Unoccupied recreational vehicles are excluded.)
* Store only one disabled vehicle outside.

**Business Activities**

* Two yard sales may be conducted each year. They may last no longer than two days and must be limited to household goods. Post signs about the sale on site only.
* Your home occupation must be licensed and meet zoning criteria. Outside displays, including signs, and traffic are restricted.
* Any other business activity in a residential area is prohibited, except for non-conforming uses.

**Noise Ordinance**

To ensure public peace, the City enforces a noise ordinance. You are encouraged to call the High Point Police to complain about noise ordinance violations.

This ordinance prohibits anyone from making unreasonably loud, disturbing noises caused by:

* Radios, sound producing or amplifying devices that annoy or disturb, particularly between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.
* Pets or animals causing frequent or continuous noise.
* Motor vehicles creating loud, unnecessary noise.
* Building construction or demolition between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., except by permit.
* Loudspeakers or amplifiers used for commercial purposes.

**Permits**

You must get a permit before beginning:

* Construction, additions, alterations, repair or demolition of any single-family dwelling or accessory structure (except any repair or alteration costing less than $5,000 not involving load bearing structures) or changes in plumbing, HVAC or electrical wiring.
* Erection of fences and satellite dishes or accessory buildings, such as storage buildings, with a horizontal measurement exceeding 12 feet. (Smaller structures are still subject to the City's zoning ordinance.)
* Home occupations.

**Enforcement**

If you receive a notice that you have violated a City ordinance, find out how to correct the problem and do so promptly. Additional time may be granted if you are making progress on correcting it. However, some problems are serious and corrections must not be delayed.  
  
The City Department of Community Development & Housing may be able to provide financial assistance to homeowners with low incomes.  
  
If you are unwilling to take prompt action to correct the violation, the City will take one of the following actions.

1. Order a substandard dwelling closed, secured or demolished;
2. Arrange to mow, remove trash or junk and bill you for the cost; or
3. Take legal action by issuing a civil penalty or criminal summons.

**Need More Information?**

Building Permits (336) 883-3151   
Garbage and Trash Disposal (336) 883-3111   
Hazardous Materials Storage (336) 883-3160   
Housing Conditions (336) 883-3111   
Housing Repair/Financial Help (336) 883-3349   
Improper Parking (336) 883-3224   
Junk Vehicles (336) 883-3111   
Noise Violations (336) 883-3224   
Overgrown Lots (336) 883-3111   
Trash Trailer Rental (336) 883-3111   
Zoning Violations (336) 883-3111