

Town of Littleton
Condemnation of Unsafe Buildings
R-2019-011

§ 160A-426. Unsafe buildings condemned in localities.

(a) Residential Building and Nonresidential Building or Structure. - Every building that shall appear to the inspector to be especially dangerous to life because of its liability to fire or because of bad condition of walls, overloaded floors, defective construction, decay, unsafe wiring or heating system, inadequate means of egress, or other causes, shall be held to be unsafe, and the inspector shall affix a notice of the dangerous character of the structure to a conspicuous place on the exterior wall of the building.

(b) Nonresidential Building or Structure. - In addition to the authority granted in subsection (a) of this section, an inspector may declare a nonresidential building or structure within a community development target area to be unsafe if it meets both of the following conditions:

- (1) It appears to the inspector to be vacant or abandoned.
- (2) It appears to the inspector to be in such dilapidated condition as to cause or contribute to blight, disease, vagrancy, fire or safety hazard, to be a danger to children, or to tend to attract persons intent on criminal activities or other activities that would constitute a public nuisance.

(c) If an inspector declares a nonresidential building or structure to be unsafe under subsection (b) of this section, the inspector must affix a notice of the unsafe character of the structure to a conspicuous place on the exterior wall of the building. For the purposes of this section, the term "community development target area" means an area that has characteristics of an urban progress zone under G.S. 143B-437.09, a "nonresidential redevelopment area" under G.S. 160A-503(10), or an area with similar characteristics designated by the city council as being in special need of revitalization for the benefit and welfare of its citizens.

(d) A municipality may expand subsections (b) and (c) of this section to apply to residential buildings by adopting an ordinance. Before adopting such an ordinance, a municipality shall hold a public hearing and shall provide notice of the hearing at least 10 days in advance of the hearing. (1905, c. 50-6, s. 15; Rev., s. 3010; 1915, c. 192, s. 15; C.S., s. 2773; 1929, c. 199, s. 1; 1969, c. 1065, s. 1; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 2000-164, s. 1; 2001-386, s. 1; 2006-252, s. 2.19; 2009-263, s. 2.)

§ 160A-427. Removing notice from condemned building.

If any person shall remove any notice that has been affixed to any building or structure by a local inspector of any municipality and that states the dangerous character of the building or structure, he shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. (1905, c. 506, s. 15; Rev., s. 3799; C.S., s. 2775; 1969, c. 1065, s. 1; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1993, c. 539, s. 1093; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c).)

§ 160A-428. Action in event of failure to take corrective action.

If the owner of a building or structure that has been condemned as unsafe pursuant to G.S. 160A-426 shall fail to take prompt corrective action, the local inspector shall give him written notice, by certified or registered mail to his last known address or by personal service:

- (1) That the building or structure is in a condition that appears to meet one or more of the following conditions:
 - a. Constitutes a fire or safety hazard.

- b. Is dangerous to life, health, or other property.
 - c. Is likely to cause or contribute to blight, disease, vagrancy, or danger to children.
 - d. Has a tendency to attract persons intent on criminal activities or other activities which would constitute a public nuisance.
- (2) That a **hearing will be held before the inspector** at a designated place and time, not later than 10 days after the date of the notice, at which time the owner shall be entitled to be heard in person or by counsel and to present arguments and evidence pertaining to the matter; and
- (3) That following the hearing, the inspector may issue such order to repair, close, vacate, or demolish the building or structure as appears appropriate.

If the name or whereabouts of the owner cannot after due diligence be discovered, the notice shall be considered properly and adequately served if a copy thereof is **posted on the outside of the building or structure in question at least 10 days prior to the hearing and a notice of the hearing is published in a newspaper having general circulation in the city at least once not later than one week prior to the hearing.** (1969, c. 1065, s. 1; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 2000-164, s. 2; 2009-263, s. 4.)

§ 160A-429. Order to take corrective action.

If, upon a hearing held pursuant to the notice prescribed in G.S. 160A-428, the inspector shall find that the building or structure is in a condition that constitutes a fire or safety hazard or renders it dangerous to life, health, or other property, he shall make an **order in writing, directed to the owner of such building or structure, requiring the owner to remedy the defective conditions by repairing, closing, vacating, or demolishing the building or structure or taking other necessary steps, within such period, not less than 60 days,** as the inspector may prescribe; provided, that where the inspector finds that there is imminent danger to life or other property, he may order that corrective action be taken in such lesser period as may be feasible. (1969, c. 1065, s. 1; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1973, c. 426, s. 68; 1977, c. 912, s. 13.)

§ 160A-430. Appeal; finality of order if not appealed.

Any owner who has received an order under G.S. 160A-429 may **appeal from the order to the city council** by giving notice of appeal in writing to the inspector and to the city clerk within 10 days following issuance of the order. In the absence of an appeal, the order of the inspector shall be final. The city council shall hear and render a decision in an appeal within a reasonable time. The city council may affirm, modify and affirm, or revoke the order. (1969, c. 1065, s. 1; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1973, c. 426, s. 69; 2000-164, s. 4.)

§ 160A-431. Failure to comply with order.

If the owner of a building or structure fails to comply with an order issued pursuant to G.S. 160A-429 from which no appeal has been taken, or fails to comply with an order of the city council following an appeal, he shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. (1905, c. 506, s. 15; Rev., s. 3802; 1915, c. 192, s. 19; C.S., s. 2774; 1929, c. 199, s. 2; 1969, c. 1065, s. 1; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1993, c. 539, s. 1094; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c).)

§ 160A-432. Enforcement.

(a) [Action Authorized.] - Whenever any violation is denominated a misdemeanor under the provisions of this Part, the city, either in addition to or in lieu of other remedies, may initiate any appropriate action or proceedings to prevent, restrain, correct, or abate the violation or to prevent the occupancy of the building or structure involved.

(a1) Repealed by Session Laws 2009-263, s. 1, effective October 1, 2009.

(b) Removal of Building. - In the case of a building or structure declared unsafe under G.S. 160A-426 or an ordinance adopted pursuant to G.S. 160A-426, a city may, in lieu of taking action under subsection (a), cause the building or structure to be removed or demolished. The amounts incurred by the city in connection with the removal or demolition shall be a lien against the real property upon which the cost was incurred. The lien shall be filed, have the same priority, and be collected in the same manner as liens for special assessments provided in Article 10 of this Chapter. If the building or structure is removed or demolished by the city, the city shall sell the usable materials of the building and any personal property, fixtures, or appurtenances found in or attached to the building. The city shall credit the proceeds of the sale against the cost of the removal or demolition. Any balance remaining from the sale shall be deposited with the clerk of superior court of the county where the property is located and shall be disbursed by the court to the person found to be entitled thereto by final order or decree of the court.

(b1) Additional Lien. - The amounts incurred by the city in connection with the removal or demolition shall also be a lien against any other real property owned by the owner of the building or structure and located within the city limits or within one mile of the city limits, except for the owner's primary residence. The provisions of subsection (b) of this section apply to this additional lien, except that this additional lien is inferior to all prior liens and shall be collected as a money judgment.

(c) [Nonexclusive Remedy.] - Nothing in this section shall be construed to impair or limit the power of the city to define and declare nuisances and to cause their removal or abatement by summary proceedings, or otherwise. (1969, c. 1065, s. 1; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 2000-164, s. 3; 2001-386, s. 2; 2001-448, s. 2; 2002-118, s. 2; 2003-23, s. 1; 2003-42, s. 1; 2004-6, s. 1; 2007-216, s. 2; 2008-59, s. 2; 2009-9, s. 2; 2009-263, ss. 1, 3.)