
Public Testimony in Opposition to Ordinance 260401

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To Public Testimony <Public.Testimony@kcmo.org>

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Mayor Lucas and Members of the City Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Ordinance 260401.

I am a housing operator and property renovator who works with properties throughout the Kansas City area. My work frequently involves identifying properties with unrealized potential, evaluating whether they can be restored to productive use, and determining whether the cost and risk of rehabilitation are financially feasible.

I understand the impact that genuinely neglected and deteriorating properties can have on neighborhoods. I support reasonable, targeted intervention when properties have been abandoned, allowed to become hazardous, or are creating measurable negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhood without any meaningful plan for maintenance or improvement.

However, I respectfully oppose Ordinance 260401 in its entirety because I do not believe the proposed fee structure adequately recognizes the complexity of property ownership, redevelopment, and reinvestment.

A vacant property is not necessarily a neglected property.

Many of the properties being targeted are not held by large, well-capitalized investors. They are often inherited by individuals or families who simply do not have the financial resources, construction knowledge, or access to capital required to redevelop them. Even a modest cosmetic rehabilitation can easily exceed \$50,000, and many of these properties would require significantly more investment than that.

It is important to ask: how many individuals realistically have access to that level of funding? And for those who do, how are they expected to repay loans when the after-repair value, rental income, or resale market may not fully cover the cost of renovation? In many cases, the economics simply do not work, even when the owner is willing.

Imposing recurring fees on top of these already difficult situations is unlikely to produce the outcome the City is hoping for. Instead, it risks adding financial pressure to owners who are already struggling, without actually creating a viable path toward redevelopment.

This also raises a broader question: what makes it the City's responsibility to impose additional financial penalties on every property owner in these circumstances, especially when those owners are already paying property taxes? If taxes are being paid, the City is already receiving revenue. If taxes are not being paid, the existing tax sale process already provides a mechanism for the City to recover the property and return it to productive use.

Before implementing a new layer of fees and administrative enforcement, it may be more effective to first understand why these properties are vacant or abandoned in the first place. In many cases, the answer is not neglect, but financial limitation, inheritance complications, market conditions, or redevelopment costs that exceed what the property can realistically support.

Starting with that understanding may lead to more practical and targeted solutions, rather than a broad policy that creates administrative burdens for both property owners and the City without meaningfully addressing the underlying issues.

Kansas City is competing with other communities for private capital and local reinvestment. Policies that increase costs on already distressed or underutilized properties may unintentionally discourage the very redevelopment activity the City is trying to encourage.

I encourage the Council to step back from Ordinance 260401 and pursue a more targeted, collaborative approach. That could include focusing intervention on properties that present documented health or safety hazards, clarifying what constitutes true abandonment, and creating clear pathways for owners to demonstrate active efforts toward rehabilitation, sale, or redevelopment.

The City should also engage housing providers, neighborhood representatives, property owners, developers, REALTORS®, and local investors in developing a policy that addresses genuine neglect without penalizing financial hardship or discouraging reinvestment.

The challenge Kansas City is trying to address is real, but a broad recurring fee on vacant commercial properties and unimproved parcels is not the most effective solution. A more informed, case-by-case approach would better serve both the City and its residents.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Council to oppose Ordinance 260401 and work with stakeholders to develop a more precise and workable solution.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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