



April 30, 2026

Neighborhood Planning and Development Committee
Mayor Pro Tem Ryana Parks-Shaw, Chairperson
4th District Councilmember Eric Bunch, Vice Chairperson
1st District Councilmember Nathan Willett, Committee Member
3rd District At Large Councilmember, Melissa Patterson-Hazley, Committee Member
Supplemental Copy to City Clerk at public.testimony@kcmo.org

Re: Ordinance No. 260399 — Mothballing and Securing of Vacant Buildings

Dear Chair and members of the Committee,

Historic Kansas City appreciates the opportunity to speak in support of Ordinance No. 260399, establishing minimum standards for the securing and mothballing of vacant buildings. As City Council recognized in adopting Resolution No. 250912, demolition by neglect is a systemic issue that cannot be addressed solely at the point of demolition. It is the result of prolonged vacancy, deferred maintenance, and the absence of consistent oversight—conditions that allow buildings to deteriorate over time until demolition is presented as the only viable outcome. Mothballing standards are an essential tool for addressing this problem earlier in the life cycle of a building. When properly implemented, they provide a clear framework for stabilizing vacant structures: maintaining roofs and drainage systems, securing openings, and solidifying building envelopes against further deterioration. These are not extraordinary measures; they are basic steps that prevent everyday issues like water infiltration from escalating existential, structural threats.

In partnering with City staff over recent months, following the October Council resolution on the issue of “demolition by neglect,” Historic Kansas City has been supportive of strengthening requirements for mothballing—as well as the City’s capacity for monitoring—as among the most effective “upstream” intervention to prevent unnecessary building demolitions. Without this concerted effort, buildings are left vacant and unsecured for extended periods, accumulating damage that could otherwise have been avoided through routine stabilization measures.

Additional priorities identified through the City Manager’s process remain to be addressed. This trio of ordinances goes a long way to resolve issues of demolition by neglect, and they satisfy most of the recommendations from the City Manager’s Office (requested by the October 2025 Council Resolution), there are yet more recommendations worth considering as follow-up items. This includes addition of a city staff position of Historic Properties Special Inspector, or sustained engagement of independent consultants to assist in dangerous building determinations in scenarios of hostile property owners. The report from the City Manager’s Office also encouraged establishing a training partnership with a local preservation organization to promote training the necessary building trades to support maintenance of historic structures. This ordinance represents meaningful progress, but the work of addressing demolition by neglect is ongoing. Historic Kansas City looks forward to continued collaboration with City Council and City staff to advance these efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vicki L. Noteis".

Vicki Noteis, President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ethan Starr".

Ethan Starr, Executive Director