Vacant and Abandoned Buildings: Toolkit for Town Officials

Guidance for towns on forming a vacant and abandoned building committee, conducting an inventory of buildings, and seeking a path to resolution and/or rehabilitation for such buildings.
Vacant and abandoned buildings can burn a hole in the pockets of town governments. The root of the problem of abandoned or distressed houses may seem beyond the control of local governments. But taking no action can allow the problem to grow and worsen.

- Some bigger towns in rural western MA track properties
- Greenfield has a distressed property registry through their building inspectors
- Montague and Athol have active distressed housing rehab program
- Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority assists towns with housing rehab through Community Development Block Grants.

Our smaller towns need manageable strategies to deal with their vacant and abandoned buildings – such as the ones described in this toolkit.
How big is this problem? Abandoned and distressed houses can be found in all our towns and cities.

In fact, the MA Attorney General's Office's Abandoned Housing Initiative has received over 1,400 distressed property referrals in over 90 cities and towns throughout the state.
Developing a Plan for your town to address abandoned or distressed properties problem is the first step in dealing with this challenging issue.
While commercial and industrial properties can go through a similar process, this presentation is focused on RESIDENTIAL HOUSING.
Commercial or industrial properties fit better in a Brownfields program, where there could be a greater potential for redevelopment.

Learn more at https://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Brownfields2014.pdf or contact Jessica Atwood, FRCOG Economic Development Program Manager, at jatwood@frcog.org or 413-774-3167 x123
Abandoned homes can be a magnet for vandals and people looking for a place to hang out. Squatters may start fires to stay warm – causing fire hazards.
Potential impacts on your town from abandoned or distressed properties: FIRE

The US Fire Administration reports that over 12,000 fires in vacant structures are reported each year in the US, resulting in $73 million in property damage annually. Fires are likely in vacant properties because of the potential for squatting, lack of maintenance, faulty wiring, flammable materials/debris, and animal infestations.
Potential impacts on your town from abandoned or distressed properties: HUMAN HEALTH HAZARDS

Infestations of rodents and insects are among the many human health hazards that abandoned and distressed properties might include.
Potential impacts on your town from abandoned or distressed properties: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH HAZARDS

Leaking and improperly disposed of chemicals can pose human and environmental health hazards.
### Other potential impacts on your town from abandoned or distressed properties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost of municipal services</td>
<td>In the case of properties with absentee owners, municipal police and fire can end up bearing the responsibility of responding to issues and emergencies at the property, costing the town in first responder wages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased property values &amp; tax revenues</td>
<td>Vacant properties can reduce tax revenues in the following ways. They are often tax delinquent; their low value means they generate little in taxes; and they can depress property values across an entire neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other health hazards</td>
<td>For people living near or coming in contact with an abandoned or distressed house, health hazards include exposure to hazardous materials, asbestos, leaking storage tanks, rodent infestations, mold proliferation, and injury from unstable structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>In neglected neighborhoods, abandoned homes can become the site of illicit activity. Adequately securing vacant properties can address this, but only in the short term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire hazard</td>
<td>Abandoned and distressed buildings are more likely to be subject to fire due to poor maintenance, faulty wiring, combustible debris, and arson.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regulations related to abandoned or distressed houses

Mass General Law, the State Sanitary Code, Building Code, tax law, fire code and many more regulations can come into play when dealing with an abandoned or distressed property.
Regulations related to abandoned or distressed houses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulation</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Sanitary Code enforcement (including Conditions Deemed to Endanger or Impair Health or Safety)</td>
<td>Local boards of health enforce DPH’s Sanitary Code, which defines a minimal list of Conditions Deemed to Endanger or Impair Health or Safety (105 CMR 410.750). Conditions include those related to water supply, heat, emergency exits, infestations, asbestos and many more. See <a href="http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/regs/105cmr410.rtf">www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/regs/105cmr410.rtf</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building code enforcement</td>
<td>The Building Commissioner enforces M.G.L. including Chapters 143, Section 9: Dangerous or abandoned structures removed or made safe by local inspector; costs; penalty; use of structure. See <a href="https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXX/Chapter143/Section9">https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXX/Chapter143/Section9</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire code</td>
<td>Local fire chiefs enforce fire code, including National Fire Protection Association Section 10.12, NFPA 1, Fire Code related to vacant buildings which in part calls for owners to “remove all combustible storage, waste, refuse, and vegetation and is required to lock, barricade, or otherwise secure the building or premises to prohibit entry by unauthorized persons.” The code also states that the building “must be kept secure by placing substantial barricades on all doors, windows, and other openings at all levels where access can be gained.” See <a href="https://community.nfpa.org/community/nfpa-today/blog/2017/02/06/nfpa-1-requirements-for-seasonal-and-vacant-buildings-firecodefridays-monday-edition">https://community.nfpa.org/community/nfpa-today/blog/2017/02/06/nfpa-1-requirements-for-seasonal-and-vacant-buildings-firecodefridays-monday-edition</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Regulations related to abandoned or distressed houses (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulation</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criminal law</strong></td>
<td>Local police have the authority to respond to incidents of vandalism, squatting and other activity sometimes associated with abandoned properties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Property tax law</strong></td>
<td>Local tax collectors collect taxes and maintain tax records as dictated by MGL c.60: Collection of Local Taxes. Assessors are also given the authority to collect unpaid property taxes using warrants to collect, hearings, liens and other means. See <a href="https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleIX/Chapter60">https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleIX/Chapter60</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board and Secure orders</strong></td>
<td>BOH, building inspectors and fire chiefs can issue “board and secure” orders to property owners. This is to reduce the risk of arson and issues sometimes related to squatters. See p 36 for links.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local vacant property bylaws</strong></td>
<td>Individual towns may have bylaws and/or registries regulating abandoned and vacant houses. Towns may require owners of abandoned or vacant houses to register the property with the Town. Bylaws may also require securing the doors and windows and/or posting no trespassing signs on the building. Bylaws may also include fines and enforcement, and may call for additional action if owners do not comply. Local town bylaws vary. An example is Athol’s Bylaws, which include Chapter XIII: Vacant And Abandoned Buildings. See <a href="http://atholma.vts.net/sites/atholma/files/file/file/town_by-laws.pdf">http://atholma.vts.net/sites/atholma/files/file/file/town_by-laws.pdf</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are first steps your Town can take to address abandoned and distressed properties?

- Raise awareness
- Involve Town boards and committees
- Form a committee or task force
- Follow a standard/written process
- Conduct an inventory
- Prioritize properties for enforcement
- Follow a process for resolution (see upcoming slides)
Ideally, an abandoned and distressed property committee should be comprised of as many of the people listed below as possible. However, in the early stages of addressing abandoned and distressed properties, as few as one or two people can conduct the initial inventory of properties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFFILIATION</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOARD OF HEALTH</td>
<td>Sanitary code enforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUILDING INSPECTOR</td>
<td>Building code enforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRE CHIEF</td>
<td>Fire code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLICE CHIEF</td>
<td>Vandalism; squatting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECT BOARD</td>
<td>Forming a board of survey*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOWN ASSESSOR</td>
<td>Property condition knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLANNING BOARD</td>
<td>General and zoning knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAX COLLECTOR</td>
<td>Property tax status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOWN COUNSEL</td>
<td>Housing court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOLUNTEERS</td>
<td>Local knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* [https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter41/Section73](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter41/Section73)
Goal: Voluntary compliance

But...if voluntary compliance fails, a property owner may end up in court. Conducting an inventory helps a town to gather evidence.

- In order to follow any kind of enforcement process the process has to be well-documented and evidence-based.
- Following a standard process will save the town time later.
- This type of data collection could help a town apply for funding, such as Community Development Block Grants, housing rehab program and others.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of collector</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPS coordinates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Name / #</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roofing</strong></td>
<td>Visible holes; sagging/collapsing roof; patches of missing roofing materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Windows and doors / interior floors</strong></td>
<td>Broken and/or missing windows or window panes; broken or missing doors; unsafe or collapsing interior floors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Porches and stairs</strong></td>
<td>Sagging or collapsing porches; broken or missing stairs or railings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundations and chimneys</strong></td>
<td>Cracked, leaning or otherwise damaged foundations; Flooded cellars/basements; Cracked, leaning or otherwise damaged chimneys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exterior walls</strong></td>
<td>Sagging or collapsing walls; broken or missing walls or wall sections; missing or deteriorating wall siding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health and safety</strong></td>
<td>Deteriorating asbestos siding or roofing; strong odors or petroleum/chemical spills; likely fire hazard; odors or signs of animal, rodent, or insect infestation; source of blight or impact on adjacent properties or neighborhood character; evidence of probable hoarding; unmaintained swimming pools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Other property conditions
Debris piles; junk/unregistered vehicles or trailers (excluding farm equipment if active farm); deteriorating/leaking above ground storage tanks; known underground petroleum storage; deteriorating outbuildings;

### Vacancy status
Vacant; obvious signs of squatters

### # of housing units
Check with Town Assessor

### Do not enter status
This can be obtained from police or fire

### Water or sewer shut off?
This can be obtained from municipal water or sewer district

### Property tax delinquency
This can be obtained from tax collector

### Overall rating
See next page

### General comments

### Photos

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*Note: Data Fields and rating criteria based on Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant FY2017 Application Guidance*
**How do I determine what the overall rating should be?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall rating</th>
<th>Summary description*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor:</td>
<td>At least 50% of property has defective conditions or deficiencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair:</td>
<td>25% to 50% of property has defective conditions or deficiencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good:</td>
<td>Cosmetic deficiencies or early signs of aging and wear only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent:</td>
<td>Little or no exterior work needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* More detailed descriptions of each rating are available on page 40-42

**Why use an overall rating system?**

- To have a consistent method of determining rating
- To be fair and impartial
- To avoid arbitrary and capricious decisions
How to conduct an inventory: 1. Choose inventory area

Communities should choose a manageable area to start with, such as their downtown or more densely populated areas. However, if committee members know of several distressed properties located throughout town, starting with those properties could be a good strategy as well.

Note: Built into the existing BOH housing code (105 CMR 400) is a provision for systematic area inspections – a town can designate an area and conduct street by street inspections.
How to conduct an inventory: 2. Choose an inventory tool

- Smartphone or Android device
- Manual data entry
- Automatic data upload

Paper method
Simple Paper Inventory

Fill out paper form in the field and enter data into spreadsheet when you get back to your desk. Download this form: https://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Abandoned-and-Distressed-Properties-Inventory-Form.pdf
Aggregate field data sheets into a spreadsheet

Data from your paper inventory can be entered into this spreadsheet. Download the spreadsheet: [https://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Abandoned-and-Distressed-Properties-Inventory-Template.xlsx](https://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Abandoned-and-Distressed-Properties-Inventory-Template.xlsx)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street Number</th>
<th>Street Name</th>
<th>ROOFING</th>
<th>WINDOWS AND DOORS</th>
<th>PORCHES AND STAIRS</th>
<th>FOUNDATION AND CHIMNEYS</th>
<th>EXTERIOR WALLS</th>
<th>HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Main St</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Main St</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Main St</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Main St</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Main St</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Main St</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Main St</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Main St</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>Main St</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Main St</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>Main St</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Medium tech inventory method with aggregation

GOOGLE FORM (requires Wi-Fi or cellphone connection for data collection)

See p 38 for link and instructions
High-tech inventory method using a shareable database

MEMENTO DATABASE
- Android only (does not require internet connection during data collection)

See p 39 for link and instructions
Prioritize properties

• Address properties that are the worst first – those that have the greatest threat to public health and environment.

• And because the town/committee has limited resources and time.
We’ve conducted our inventory. Now what?

Follow a process: Informal first. Then formal. Start with the least restrictive alternative.

Informal: Start dialog with homeowner; let them know we are striving for voluntary compliance first*; explain what the formal process is if the informal process doesn’t work

Formal: Conduct a code inspection (any code enforcement officer); inspection report; issue notice of code violation and order to correct; order to vacate; order to board and secure; reasonable timeframe for compliance; condemnation hearing (BOH); or board of survey

*this approach can be quite successful!
What are the typical paths the process might take?

The next few pages illustrate the different paths to resolution for a vacant or abandoned building.
Path 1: Voluntary Compliance

Key points:

- Voluntary compliance is achieved
- This is the path that the vast majority of cases follow
- On this path, granting extensions may sometimes be necessary to help the homeowner succeed
- Questions to ask when evaluating whether this path is working:
  - Is reasonable progress being made?
  - Is a good faith effort being made?
Path 2: Court Appointed Receiver

- Private homeowner issued letter by BOH or Building Inspector
- Homeowner does not respond
- Committee requests BOH to turn case over to the Attorney General
- Attorney General goes through their formal process
- Receiver gets money back and/or owns the property
- Homeowner pays lien or the court issues a foreclosure
- Receiver finances the rehab (or demolition) in exchange for a priority lien
- May result in compliance or in receivership

Key points:
- AG’s office does the legal work, saving the town the cost of town counsel
- Sometimes just the threat of turning the case over to the AG’s office results in compliance
- Receivership may also result in demolition of properties not deemed to be salvageable
**Path 3: Housing Court Enforcement**

- Private homeowner issued code violation letter by BOH or Building Inspector
- Homeowner does not respond
- Committee requests the BOH file a complaint in housing court
- Court typically issues a court order, affirming BOH order
- Court assumes case management
- If homeowner doesn’t comply, they are in contempt of court
- Fines or jail could follow

**Key points:**

- This path requires more leg-work by the BOH
- Depending upon town or health agent, this path may require the assistance of town counsel
- This path could also result in the demolition of the property if the code violations continue uncorrected for at least a year – and the BOH petitions the court for a demolition order (also known as “clean and lien”)
- Expense for demolition and/or property clean-up would be a lien on the property
Path 4: Tax Taking

Private homeowner owes back taxes and is issued letter by tax collector → Homeowner does not pay back taxes → Town takes house for back-taxes → House is auctioned, demolished or rehabbed

Key points:

• This is really the tax collector’s job, not the committee’s
• **Potential Liability:** The town should carefully consider information collected by the committee to determine whether they really want to end up owning the property by taking it for back-taxes
• Considerations include:
  • Does the town have financing to demolish the property
  • Are there contamination or other potentially costly issues
  • Can the town afford to assume the liability of such a property?
• Potential resource: Brownfields site investigation (potential FRCOG funding)
• Potential partners: Land trusts, state agencies
Key points:

• Bank or loan servicing company typically has a property preservation division

• Property preservation division’s job is to maintain the value of the property

• The threat of condemnation will usually motivate the property preservation division to act – including removing junk cars and other hazards and boarding and securing property
Resources
Resources

105 CMR 410.000: Minimum Standards of Fitness For Human Habitation (State Sanitary Code, Chapter II):
www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/regs/105cmr410.rtf

CHAPTER 111, Section127B: Dwellings unfit for human habitation; order to vacate or to abate nuisance; removal of occupants; demolition expense, lien; inspection reports; code violations; notices; enforcement proceedings, jurisdiction; appeal: https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXVI/Chapter111/Section127B/

M.G.L. Chapter 143, Section 9: Dangerous or abandoned structures removed or made safe by local inspector; costs; penalty; use of structure: https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXX/Chapter143/Section9


MA Property Tax Law: https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleIX/Chapter60


FRCOG’s Brownfields Program: jatwood@frcog.org

Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority: www.fcrhra.org/

MA Attorney General's Abandoned Housing Initiative: www.mass.gov/ago/ahi
Using a Google Form to Conduct Your Inventory

Copy Google Form
1. Open this link in your browser: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1KpWXb3xqv2Ik3aeD4palhnM20xOSqNssaCr3IvbxyOg/edit?usp=sharing
2. Select “Sign In”. If you do not have a gmail account, select “More Options” and “Create Account”
3. Fill out the fields in Create Account and select “ok”
4. Select “Proceed to Google Docs”. You should now see the form. You must create your own copy of the form.
5. Click on at the very top right of your screen and select “Make a copy”
6. Fill in a name for the new copy and select “okay”
7. You will get a message titled “Missing file upload folders”. Select “Restore”
8. Click on the button at the top right and enter your email address. Click “send”
9. Sign out of all Google windows you have open

Conduct Inventory
1. Go to your email and click on . The form will open. Select
2. Once signed in, you will see your form
3. Fill out a new form for each property by selecting “Submit another response”
4. To see all your responses in one form, select “See previous responses”
5. Click on the icon in the top right hand corner. Select the “Response” tab and select the icon
6. This will bring you to the spreadsheet containing all your data. You can select “File” and “Download” to download the data into excel.

Note: Requires Wi-Fi or cell phone connection
Using a Memento to Conduct Your Inventory

Install Memento
1. Load Memento Database onto your Android device. Go to your App Store, select Memento Database and select “Install”. Close out of the App Store. Databases are called “Libraries” in Memento.

Open Memento Library
1. In a separate browser, open this link: http://libs.mobi/s/eUEgrQZfw
2. Select “Open with Memento Database”
3. Select “Open library Open local copy”

Create a Copy of Library
1. Click on the at the top right of the library
2. Select “Copy” then “Structure only”
3. Delete the initial library.
4. On copy of Library, click the and select “Edit”
5. Select the MAIN tab and change the name of the Library
6. When done click on ✓

Conduct Inventory
1. Click on + to add a property to the database
2. Enter information into each field.
3. When all your property information is complete, select ✓
4. Repeat previous three steps to enter additional properties

Export Data to Spreadsheet
1. In Memento, go to My Libraries and click on Select “Link to Google Sheets”. Select “Link to new document”
2. Open Google Sheets. Click on the spreadsheet created by Memento. Select “File” then select “Download as” and select “Microsoft Excel”
3. Your data is now available to you to sort and share with others
Links to Other Inventory Tools


Note: When you open the spreadsheet, you may see the following message. Click on “Enable Editing” to use the spreadsheet.
Overall Rating Definitions

See page 20 for how these ratings fit into the inventory

**Poor:** A determination of poor for a building component means that the extent of defective conditions or deficiencies applies to a least 50% of the component.

This category includes buildings that appear not to have been maintained for at least 10 years and have components which are beyond the end of their useful life. Exterior trim is missing altogether. One or more major building systems may be in danger of failure. The roof may be sagging with areas of extensive wear, exposed sheathing, and evidence of leaks over at least 50% of surfaces. Roofline trim, flashing, and chimneys exhibit levels of deterioration specific to this category. At least 50% of doors and windows may be rotted, broken, missing, and/or boarded up, with peeling paint or deteriorating vinyl or other surfaces. Exterior walls have at least 50% of surfaces with missing, broken, or otherwise deteriorated siding; painted surfaces rotted or in advanced state of peeling paint or brick or other masonry surfaces needing repair or repointing. At least 50% of porches, stairs, and decking exhibit hazardous and unsafe conditions including sagging, rotted, and missing components, and separation from the main structure. Foundations are extensively cracked with missing stone or masonry over at least 50% of areas; indications of structural instability, and may require replacement and shoring up, including sill work. Storefronts and signage are nearing end of useful life with original or old replacement materials which are extensively deteriorated over at least 50% of their surfaces.

Public Improvements: Infrastructure, including parks, playgrounds, and parking facilities, show advanced stages of deterioration and appears not to have been maintained for an extensive period of time. Streets and sidewalks and other paved surfaces are rutted, cracked, heaving, and appear to require full reconstruction. Curb reveals are minimal or nonexistent. Conditions may pose hazards to pedestrian and or vehicular travel. Some surfaces are severely deteriorated and infrastructure is generally antiquated, undersized, or obsolete. Regular street flooding occurs due to poor drainage.
Fair: A determination of fair for a building component means that the extent of defective conditions or deficiencies applies to a least 25% of the component.

Buildings with this designation show clear signs of deterioration indicative of a property that has not been maintained for 5 to 10 years. Some building components may be nearing the end of their serviceable life. Small wood and metal trim pieces of buildings may be lifting away from primary surfaces. At least 25% of roofing and related surfaces, including roofline, trim, flashing, and chimneys may be brittle, curled, cracked, and missing, with overall signs of aging, and exhibit levels of deterioration specific to this category. At least 25% of doors and windows may be old and worn, loose, ill-fitting, drafty, and otherwise energy inefficient and may have peeling paint or deteriorating vinyl or other surfaces. Exterior walls have at least 25% of surfaces with missing, broken or otherwise deteriorated siding, painted surfaces in progressed state of peeling, or brick surfaces needing repointing. At least 25% of porches, stairs, and decking show early signs of deterioration including worn, cracked, and warped components affecting components such as treads, balusters, rails, jousts, and support posts. Foundations have cracks and voids over at least 25% of surface area. Storefronts and signage are aging, with architectural features that may have been covered with sheet metal, asbestos, asphalt, or other materials from renovations of earlier decades. These covering materials, as well as any exposed original surfaces, are now showing signs of deterioration over at least 25% of their surfaces.

Public Improvements: Infrastructure, including parks, playgrounds, and parking facilities, is older and needs regular maintenance and repair. Streets and sidewalks are cracked, uneven, patched, and not conducive to convenient pedestrian and or vehicular travel. Slow drainage causes some ponding to occur during heavy rains.
Overall Rating Definitions (cont.)

**Good:** Buildings that have cosmetic deficiencies or other early signs of aging and wear.

Building components appear to meet code, but energy efficiency improvements such as storm doors and windows and caulking may be needed. Decorative features may need to be secured, but items are in place. Materials do not need replacement, but do need some minor maintenance and repair. For example, roofs may be of older composition, but not yet deteriorated or leaking; siding may need spot painting or other “touch-up”; foundations and chimneys appear structurally sound but may show beginning signs of voids or loose mortar joints.

Public Improvements: Infrastructure such as streets and sidewalks show minor cracks, unevenness and patching. No visible or known evidence of deficiencies with water, sewer, or drainage systems.

**Excellent:** Buildings that require little or no exterior work.

Buildings that are in excellent condition may be of any age or style. They demonstrate consistent, planned maintenance and repair, components appear to be code-compliant and energy efficient.

Public Improvements: Infrastructure is newer and/or improved and updated to meet current need and demand, is compliant with all applicable codes and requirements, and has no visual or physical evidence of deterioration or needed repair.