PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

13-049-O

ORDINANCE NO. _____

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 10-3 OF THE DULUTH CITY CODE, 1959, AS AMENDED, REGARDING NOTICE OF DEMOLITION ORDERS.

CITY PROPOSAL:

The city of Duluth does ordain:

Section 1. That Section 10-3 of the Duluth City Code, 1959, as amended, is hereby amended as follows:

Sec. 10-3. Demolition procedure.

(a) General. Whenever it comes to the notice of the building official that any building or structure is in a damaged, dilapidated or dangerous condition, it shall be his or her duty to make an inspection of such building or structure. It shall be unlawful to repair or alter any building or structure located in the city if, in the opinion of the building official based upon information documented in the official file and records, such building or structure has been damaged or deteriorated from any cause to the extent that the building official's good faith, reasonable estimate of the cost of repairing and restoring the building is more than 60 percent of the current fair market value of the building, as shown in the records of the city assessor or as adjusted by the assessor for accuracy, and all such buildings or structures so damaged or deteriorated shall be torn down and removed when so ordered by the building official; provided, however, that the building official, or the building appeal board in cases appealed to it, may allow such a damaged or deteriorated building to be repaired, for good cause shown related to the use, location or unique characteristics of the building, when the owner shows that he or she has dedicated sufficient funds to pay for the repair, have entered into a valid contract to have the repair completed, and will

complete all the repair and restoration work within a reasonable time, not to exceed 18 months;

(b) Orders for demolition and assessment of costs. All orders for the demolition of a dangerous, defective or deteriorated building, or for repairs to the same, shall be in writing, signed by the building official, and shall allow not less than 30 days in which to comply with said order. Each order shall identify the structure, state the legal basis of the order, the date of the order, the fair market value of the building, the building official's good faith, reasonable estimate of the cost of repairs, the calculation that forms the basis for the opinion that the damage requires that the building be demolished, the time and procedure for appeal, and other information deemed relevant by the building official. Should any such order not be complied with within the time allowed therefor or, should the structure constitute an immediate threat of bodily harm to the public, or the appeal provided for in Section 10-5 of this Chapter not be taken, the building official shall, in writing, communicate such information to the city council. The city council may direct the building official to proceed with the work ordered, or to contract to have the work done. In case of the demolition of a building, should the sale of the salvage from such building exceed the cost of the demolition, the balance in excess of the cost shall be paid to the owner of said building or to such other persons as may by law be entitled thereto. A statement of the cost of such work shall be transmitted to the city council which may cause the same to be charged against the land on which the building existed as a municipal lien, which lien shall be recorded with the register of deeds or registrar of titles as a lien against such land, or to be recovered in a suit at law against the owner, or to cause any or all of such costs to be assessed

against the property from which such removal takes place. If the city council decides to assess the cost of demolition against the affected property, such assessment shall be made by resolution of the council, and such resolution shall state a time by which such assessment shall be payable, which time shall be not less than 30 days after publication of such resolution and service of notice of the assessment upon the property owner. Notice of such assessment and the time within which it shall be paid, shall be served on the owner of such property in the manner provided in Subsection (c) of this Section below, except that it shall not be necessary to post such notice on the affected property or to publish such notice other than to publish in the regular manner the resolution by which such assessment is made. Delinquent assessments shall be certified to the county auditor of St. Louis County for collection in the same manner as other assessments, pursuant to Section 70 of the Duluth City Charter;

(c) Notice to owner. Except as otherwise provided for in Subsection (b) above, service of all orders provided for in this Section shall be made as follows:

(1) Upon an individual owner, residing within the city of Duluth, by delivering a copy to him or her personally or by leaving a copy at his or her usual place of abode with some person of suitable age and discretion then residing therein. If the owner does not reside within the city of Duluth, by sending a copy of such order by ~~registered~~ <u>certified</u> mail to his or her last known address, and in addition a copy of such order shall be posted in a conspicuous place in the building to which it relates. Such mailing and posting shall be deemed adequate service. If it should come to the attention of the building official that the owner, as shown by the land records of the register of deeds or the registrar of titles

of the county of St. Louis, Minnesota, is deceased, such order shall be sent by ~~registered~~ certified mail to the known heirs of the deceased owner if the building official is reasonably able to ascertain such heirs. In addition, a copy of the said order shall be posted in a conspicuous place on the building to which it relates, and said order shall be published in the official newspaper of the city of Duluth for one day in each of two consecutive weeks during the period to which the order relates. Such mailing, posting and publication shall be deemed adequate service;

(2) If the owner is confined to a state institution, by serving also the chief executive officer of the institution;

(3) If the owner be an infant under the age of 14 years, by serving a resident guardian, and if he or she has none, then by serving the person having control of such infant or with whom he or she resides;

(4) If the owner be a partnership or association, by delivering the order to a member or the managing agent of the partnership or association;

(5) If the owner be a domestic or foreign corporation, by delivering the order to an officer or managing agent. If such corporation be a foreign corporation and has no such agent in the city of Duluth, then service may be made upon any such agent of the corporation within the state;

(d) In addition to other provisions of the Code, this Section 10-3(d) is enacted;

(1) Policy. Pursuant to authority provided in Minnesota Statutes, Section 463.26, permitting cities to enact and enforce ordinances on hazardous buildings, and in order to enhance the livability and preserve the tax base and property values of buildings within the city, and based upon the findings contained in

Section (2); and because of the need to assure that buildings which are capable of rehabilitation are promptly rehabilitated and buildings which are not capable of rehabilitation be promptly demolished, the city hereby declared that it is the policy of the city to promote rehabilitation of vacant and unoccupied buildings, and to assure a prompt process for demolition of hazardous buildings through a procedure fixing appropriate responsibility in accordance with due process requirements;

(2) Findings. The city council finds, determines and declares that buildings which remain vacant and unoccupied for any appreciable period of time become an attractive nuisance to children, a harborage for rodents, and invitation to derelicts, vagrants and criminals as a temporary abode, and an increased fire hazard, and that the unkempt grounds surrounding such property invite the dumping of garbage and rubbish thereon; that such buildings are permitted to become dilapidated since such buildings are often economically obsolete and the owners of such buildings are unwilling to expend the necessary funds to repair or raze the buildings; that such buildings contribute to the growth of blight within the city, depress market values of surrounding properties to the detriment of the various taxing districts and require additional governmental services; that the use and maintenance of property in such condition and manner endangers the public safety and health, constitutes an unreasonable use and condition to the annoyance, discomfort and repose of a considerable number of the public, is detrimental to the public good and to the common welfare; and renders a considerable number of the public insecure in the use and enjoyment of their property, and thus may constitute a nuisance condition. Adequate protection of public health, safety and welfare, therefore, requires the establishment and enforcement of

the means by which such nuisance conditions may be abated;

(3) Securing vacant buildings;

(A) In general, if any building becomes vacant or unoccupied and is deemed hazardous due to the fact that the building is open to trespass and has not been secured and the building could be made safe by securing the building, the building official may order the building secured and shall cause notice of the order to be served upon the owner of the premises. Such notice may be served personally or by mail. Service by mail is complete upon mailing a copy of the order to the owner at the last known address. If the owner fails to comply with the order within six days after the order is served, the building official shall cause the building to be boarded up or otherwise properly secured;

(B) Emergency. When it is determined by the building official or the chief of police, or the fire chief that an emergency exists with respect to the health or safety of persons in the community, and immediate boarding and securing of a building is required, and where danger will exist to children, transients or others in the absence of an immediate boarding or securing of the building, the building official or the chief of police, or the fire chief may waive all requirements herein and immediately board or otherwise secure the building, provided that:

1. The conditions showing the existence of an exigency are documented in writing by the building official or the chief of police or the fire chief or their designees;

2. Notice be mailed immediately by the department invoking this Section to the address of the owner and taxpayer, and, if recorded on the assessor's rolls, the address of the mortgage holder, of the date of boarding or otherwise securing and the reasons therefore;

(C) After a vacant or unoccupied building has been boarded or otherwise secured under this section, should the owner fail to maintain the building in a secured condition until such time as it has been repaired and reoccupied, the building official shall resecure any openings into the building whenever it again becomes open to trespass, without further notice to the owner. An administrative fee shall be set in accordance with Section 31-6(a) of this Code and all other costs incurred by the city for boarding or otherwise securing a building under this Chapter, including, but not limited to the actual costs for boarding, posting and monitoring the building, building and housing code compliance inspections, police or fire department inspection, response, or protection; public health and safety investigation; control of people or property wrongfully on the premises shall be assessed as provided in Duluth City Code Section 10-3. The above fees, when collected, shall be dedicated to the use of the department(s) that administer(s) the enforcement actions. Owner, for the purposes of this Section, shall mean the person who is listed as the contact person on the current rental licensing application on file with the city, if any; or, if none, the person listed as owner by the city assessor on the homestead record; or, if none, the taxpayer as shown by the records of the city assessor;

(4) Vacant building registration;

(A) The owner of a residential building or building located in a residentially zoned area shall register the building with the building official within 30 days after it becomes a vacant building. In this Section, a vacant building is at least one of the following:

1. Condemned;

2. Unoccupied and unsecured for 30 days

or more;

3. Unoccupied and secured by means other than those normally used in the design of the building for 30 days or more;

4. Unoccupied and has multiple housing maintenance, fire or building code violations existing for 30 days or more;

(B) The registration shall be submitted on forms provided by the building official and shall include the following information supplied by the owner:

1. A description of the premises;

2. The names and addresses of the owner or owners;

3. The names and addresses of all known lien holders and all other parties with an ownership interest in the building;

4. The period of time the building is expected to remain vacant; and a plan and timetable for returning the building to appropriate occupancy or for demolition of the building;

(C) The owner shall submit a plan and timetable that must comply with the guidelines adopted by the building official. The guidelines are adopted for purposes of preventing nuisance conditions and maintaining compliance with this Code. These guidelines shall be made available to building owners. The plan shall be submitted at the time of registration, or within a reasonable period of time thereafter to be determined by the building official;

(D) The owner shall comply with all applicable laws and codes. The owner shall notify the building official of any

changes in information supplied as part of the vacant building registration within 30 days of the change. If the plan or timetable for the vacant building is revised in any way, the revisions must meet the approval of the building official;

(E) The owner and the subsequent owners shall keep the building secured and safe and the building and grounds properly maintained until the rehabilitation or demolition has been completed;

(F) Failure of the owner or any subsequent owner to maintain the building and premises that result in abatement completed by the city shall be grounds for revocation of the approved plan and shall be subject to any applicable penalties provided by law;

(G) The new owner(s) shall register or re-register the vacant building with the building official within 30 days of any transfer of an ownership interest in a vacant building. The new owner(s) shall comply with the approved plan and timetable submitted by the previous owner until any proposed changes are submitted and meet the approval of the building official;

(H) The building official shall include in the file any property-specific written statements from community organizations, other interested parties or citizens regarding the history, problems, status or blighting influence of a vacant building;

(I) Vacant building fees:

1. The owner of a vacant building shall pay an annual fee, which shall be set in accordance with Section 31-6(a) of this Code. The fee is imposed to defray the administrative costs for registering and processing the vacant building registration form and for the costs of the city in

monitoring the vacant building site;

2. The first annual fee shall be paid no later than 30 days after the building becomes vacant. Subsequent annual fees shall be due on the anniversary date of initial vacancy. The fees shall be paid in full prior to the issuance of any building permits, with the exception of a demolition permit;

3. Unpaid fees shall be levied and collected as a special assessment against the property as provided for under Section 10-3, with interest at the rate set in accordance with Section 31-8 of this Code per annum on the unpaid balance thereof. Upon transfer of ownership, the new owner(s) shall be responsible for all unpaid and subsequent annual fees;

(J) A building owner shall provide access to all interior portions of an unoccupied building in order to permit a complete inspection for the purpose of enforcing and assuring compliance with the provisions of this Chapter.

Section 2. That this ordinance shall take effect 30 days after its passage and publication.

Approved:

Department Director

Approved for presentation to council:

Chief Administrative Officer

Approved as to form:

Attorney

Approved:

Auditor

CONST SERV WR:cs 7/29/2013

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: This ordinance amends Section 10-3 of the Duluth City Code, 1959, as amended, changing the service requirements for delivery of demolition orders from registered to certified mail.

This change increases work efficiency for city staff, eliminating the need to go to a post office to post registered mail. Certified mail can be processed and mailed through the city Clerk's office. Additionally, certified mail provides documentation of when a notice is delivered and the name of the person accepting the mail.