

## Common questions about abandoned structures & demolition in the City of Alexandria:

**Q: Who do I call if there is an abandoned house that is collapsed or burned near my home?**

A: Call the City's Community Development Department at 318-449-5071. Be prepared to provide a specific address to the structure so they can verify whether or not they already have a file on the structure.

**Q: Who do I call if there are vagrants at an abandoned house near my home?**

A: Contact Alexandria Police Department at 318-449-5099. They will be able to remove the vagrants if there is a *No Trespassing Sign* or *Uninhabitable Structure Placard* posted on the exterior of the house. If there is no signage, the Police can ask the vagrants to leave but cannot force them to leave.

**Q: Who do I call if there is grass, litter and abandoned cars on a property near mine?**

A: Call the City's Public Works Division, Code Enforcement Department at 318-441-6011. They can send an Officer to investigate and issue citations as needed.

**Q: Does the City have a mobile app to report problems?**

A: Yes. You can download the app for AlexConnects for free from your app store. You can enter a Service Request from that app and get feedback as it moves through the process.

**Q: Where can I view the process for a complaint about an abandoned structure and/or demolition in the City of Alexandria?**

A: On the City's Community Development webpage, there is a flow chart explaining the process of how an abandoned, blighted structure complaint is handled. It covers the field inspection, notices to the Owners and demo steps. There is also a link to the *Code Enforcement and Demolition Program Guidelines* which further explains things in greater detail. Go to [www.cityofalexandria.com/community-development](http://www.cityofalexandria.com/community-development).

**Q: What does it mean if I received a Deficiency Assessment letter recommending demolition on property I own?**

A: As the City's Community Development office performs field inspections of abandoned and blighted structures, they will rank the severity of the structure and give it a blight score. Notices will be sent to the Owner, who then has the option to demo or repair the property themselves within a certain timeframe. In either case, a Permit is required. Please call the Community Development office at 318-449-5071 for more information.

**Q: Is a Permit required for demolition if the Owner is performing the work themselves?**

A: Yes. The City does require a Demolition Permit for anyone who plans to demolish a structure. A Demo Permit costs \$50.

**Q: How long is a Demolition Permit valid for?**

A: Thirty (30) calendar days to complete all work, including removing the debris from the site.

**Q: What is the main purpose of the Demolition Permit?**

A: To ensure that utilities are disconnected prior to the start of work and to ensure that the debris is removed from the site after the work is complete. Even if you think utilities are disconnected, we must confirm they are from each Utility Department before the Permit can be issued. It takes an average of 10 business days to confirm disconnects for the Permit to be issued so plan accordingly.

**Q: There is an Uninhabitable Structure Placard posted on a property I own. What does it mean?**

A: Once the City inspects an address and determines that the structure is unsafe for occupancy, the will post an *Uninhabitable Structure Placard* on the building. This means that no one should be inside the house since the building is structurally unsafe. This also gives APD the authority to remove anyone who may be inside the structure. The Owner should consider demolishing the house as soon as possible to avoid possible injury lawsuits from vagrants.

**Q: What is a severity ranking and blight score and why does the City use it?**

A: The severity ranking and blight score are used to identify the condition of the structure at the time of initial inspection. It ranks them from worst (#1) to best (#5). This helps the City prioritize which houses need to be demolished first with such limited funding. This also means that just because there is an abandoned structure near your property, it may not meet the City's evaluation criteria to be demolished. However, the Owner of every property that is inspected receives a letter informing them of the City's recommendation to rehab or demo and provides them with a list of the items in violation. For example:

- *Severity Rank #1 & Blight Score of 50-100*: these are the worst structures that are either burned and/or collapsed and in urgent need of demolition
- *Severity Rank #2 & Blight Score of 35-49*: these structures may have significant holes in the roof, failing structural members, busted doors & windows and need to be demolished
- *Severity Rank #3 & Blight Score of 26-34*: these structures has structural disrepair and it would be more cost effective to demo rather than rehab
- *Severity Rank #4 & Blight Score of 13-25*: these structures may have minor structural issues like busted windows & doors, needs repainting or roof repairs but are recommended to be rehabbed
- *Severity Rank #5 & Blight Score of 0-12*: these are buildings that are structurally sound but may have minor cosmetic issues that need to be repaired

**Q: Why doesn't the City demolish more of these abandoned structures?**

A: There are a couple of reasons:

1) the City has to put the Property Owner on notice of the issues. The Owner has the right to remedy those issues first. Unfortunately, most of the abandoned structures are heir property where no legal succession has been executed and/or the Owner/heir does not have excess income to pay for the maintenance or demolition of an inherited property.

2) the City must use general funds to pay for any City demolished properties. Based on annual sales taxes and revenue deficits, there is not much money available to earmark for these services.

Additionally, the City can only use a maximum of 30% of HUD CDBG funds on demolition work which is generally used to cover soft costs related to the demolition work.

**Q: How much does it cost for the City to demolish a privately owned residential structure?**

A: It is more expensive for the City to demolish private property than for the Owner to demolish the structure themselves. The average total cost for the City to demo an average 1200 square foot wood frame structure is \$15,000. An Owner can have it done for about \$3,500.

**Q: Why is it so much more expensive for the City to demolish a privately owned structure?**

A: As of fall 2023, LDEQ & EPA regulations require a municipality to perform asbestos testing and abatement if they are demolishing a privately owned structure. However, both are trying to add some leniency to this rule but we are not sure when it will be passed. EPA studies have proven that a minimal amount of asbestos is in a traditional residential structure, therefore, since individual residential structures are performed randomly, there is not enough asbestos released into the air to harm the neighboring properties. The City wets the demolition activity to minimize dust and potential asbestos released into the air and performs air monitoring to validate the amount, if any, asbestos that may have been released. On residential structures, an Owner is not required to test, abate, wet or air monitor the structure if they are doing the work or if they hire someone to do the work for them.

**Q: How long does it take for the City to receive a complaint about an abandoned structure and get it demolished?**

A: This is an incredibly long process so pack your patience. The City can only demo about 20-25 houses per year with very limited funding. On any given day, the City is managing a list of over 600 addresses every day, with over 225 of them ranking as #1. The math proves that this is an unsurmountable issue.

**Q: If the City does perform the demolition, how does it get reimbursed?**

A: The City will request City Council approval for the authority to file a lien for all costs incurred for the City to perform the demolition work. The lien is filed against the annual City taxes for that property. The Owner is expected to pay the lien with their tax bill. Or, if the property is sold, the City is reimbursed from the sales proceeds. Unfortunately, most liens are not ever repaid. The City is investigating options on other ways to collect the lien repayment.

**Q: Is commercial demolition required to perform asbestos testing and abatement?**

A: Yes. The demolition of any commercial structure requires asbestos testing, abatement by licensed Contractors, wet & air monitor the work. This is regardless of who is performing or hiring someone to do the work – the City or a private Owner. Of course, a Demo Permit is still required too.

**Q: Is an Owner required to hire a State Licensed Contractor to perform the demolition work?**

A: No. Ordinance #133-2020 adopted the , Phase One, Article III, #9 notes that “it is *preferred* that the Owner hire a State Licensed Contractor...”. This is because both Owners and Councilmen noted that most Owners wanted to comply but cannot afford a licensed Contractor and for residential demolition, a licensed Contractor is NOT required by the State Contractor’s licensing law. However, we do encourage it because all debris must be removed from the site and hauled to a landfill, which most people do not have the equipment to do.

**Q: Where does an Owner haul the demolition debris to?**

A: If it is a residential structure, IESI Progressive Waste Solutions is the closest dump transfer station on Hwy. 165 South that will typically accept the debris. Please check with IESI first before starting demolition work. Their number is 318-448-9752.

**Q: What is a *certified* landfill and where is it?**

A: A certified landfill is where all “regulated” asbestos containing materials must be disposed of if it does not meet the NESHAP Exempt criteria or if it contains transite siding or transite roofing materials because those materials do have asbestos. The debris is separated according to the type of hazardous material it contains. The closest *certified* landfills are:

- Timberlane in Oakdale (318-335-9500)
- Schamerhorn in Leesville (337-239-9455)

**Q: Who do we need to call if someone is not performing testing and abatement on a commercial structure demolition?**

A: The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality has a satellite office in Pineville and the number is 318-487-5656. They can usually get to the project site within a couple of hours.

**Q: What happens if the Owner or Contractor does NOT haul the debris off the site?**

A: Once the Demo Permit has expired after 30 calendar days, if the debris is still onsite, you may call the City's Code Enforcement office at 318-441-6231. They will coordinate with the City Sanitation Department to schedule the debris removal and the City's Code Enforcement Department will charge a lien to the Property Owner for all costs incurred to remove the debris. This is normally much more expensive than if the Owner hauls the debris off. A litter fee of \$500 per day, in accordance with Municode Section 1.8, can also be charged to the Owner.

**Q: What are my options if I own property that has been Condemned by City Council?**

A: Once City Council issues a Condemnation Order for a property, the only thing that can be done after that time is demolition. The Owner is allowed 30 days after the Condemnation Order is issued to demolish the structure with their private funds. If the Owner does not take action after 30 days, the City's Community Development Office will begin the procedure for demolition. A lien will be filled against the property for all costs associated with the address.

**Q: What if I buy a property at Sherriff's Tax Sale and it is already condemned?**

A: Before purchasing any property, the potential buyer should perform a title search. Any Deficiency Assessments or Condemnation Orders will be recorded at the Parish Court House and will appear on a title search. The potential buyer should then call Community Development office to understand their options prior to making the purchase. However, if the property is already condemned, the Owners only option is to demolish any structures remaining on the property.

**Q: Can I donate a blighted property to the City?**

A: No. The City does not generally want ownership of private lots. The Owner is welcomed to reach out to area Non-Profits and Churches because they may be willing to accept property donations.

For any additional questions, please call the Community Development Program Manager at 318-449-5071 or email [cda@cityofalex.com](mailto:cda@cityofalex.com) .

