



CITY OF IOWA CITY MEMORANDUM

Date: September 23, 2015

To: Tom Markus, City Manager

From: Stan Laverman, Senior Housing Inspector
Tracy Hightshoe, Neighborhood Services Coordinator

Re: Housing Code Amendments

Two goals of the 2014-15 Strategic Plan are to foster healthy neighborhoods and a strong urban core. In the spring of 2015, the staff, mayor and mayor pro-tem toured the University impacted neighborhoods to determine other possible enforcement changes that would assist with neighborhood stabilization. These changes were presented and discussed at the August 18, 2015 Council work session. Council gave direction and following the work session the proposed changes were presented at the September 9, 2015 Neighborhood Council meeting and at the September 22, 2015 Greater Iowa City Apartment Association meeting. Both groups were receptive to the changes. Outlined below are proposed housing code amendments to address the items of concern.

Housing Code Amendments

1. ***The storage and use of furniture on surfaces 30" above grade without guardrails.***
This change will regulate and prohibit furniture on roofs of residential dwellings while still allowing their use on properly designed exterior areas. Furniture placed/used on a roof is unsafe and contributes to the appearance of overall property neglect.
2. ***Exterior Surfaces.***
 - a. Exterior painted surfaces will be required to be painted in a uniform, color consistent, and complete fashion. All painted surfaces will be required to be properly prepped to allow for paint to adhere and remain painted regardless if items are subject to decay or deterioration. This change raises the minimum maintenance standard for the exterior appearance of residential properties and would protect against their decay and deterioration.
 - b. All exterior surfaces, regardless of material composition, will be required to be maintained in a good, safe, and sanitary condition. This change allows staff to address maintenance issues as it relates to decay and deterioration (e.g. siding covered in mold/mildew will be required to be cleaned).
 - c. In historic and conservation districts bare treated lumber shall not be an approved finish for wood surfaces visible from the street. Approved coverings for lumber will include colored stains and paints. This change brings consistency with existing building & zoning codes as they pertain to historic and conservation districts.
3. ***Exterior Screening.*** Porches and decks less than 5' off grade visible from the right of way, in historic and conservation districts, will be required to have under porch and under deck screening. The screening will be required to be complementary to the dwelling as approved by the City. Areas under decks and porches have a tendency to collect trash, debris and incidental storage. Proper screening will help with the control of this nuisance.

4. **Solid Waste Facilities Screening.** All dumpsters/ recycling facilities located on existing multi-family dwelling sites will be required to be screened with materials that are complementary to the dwelling and as approved by the City. This is a new requirement for existing uses and would mirror the current Iowa City zoning code screening requirements for new development. This proposed change will bring older multi-family sites into compliance with current screening standards. Enclosing dumpsters and recycling facilities will contain trash and debris in a controlled area and reduce the amount of nuisance litter in a neighborhood. This requirement will be enacted in tandem with the anticipated changes in Iowa City's solid waste ordinance, which will require recycling facilities for all multi-family dwellings, over a four year period.
5. **Outdoor Storage.** The storage of landscaping, construction, and compost material will not be permitted in areas visible from the street facing right of way.
6. **Exterior Area Maintenance.** Fences, screening, and retaining walls will be required to be maintained in a safe & structurally sound manner. All wood or painted surfaces will be required to be painted and or stained in a uniform, color consistent, and complete fashion. All other surfaces will be required to be maintained in a uniform, color consistent, and complete fashion. This change will raise the minimum maintenance standard and address the issues of dilapidation, decay, and deterioration. Landscaping timbers and other related items as approved by the City may be exempt from this regulation.

Additional Housing Code Amendments related to dwelling safety

The following housing code amendments are being recommended to improve dwelling safety and mirror current requirements for newly constructed dwelling units.

7. **GFCI protected outlets.** All receptacles in kitchens and bathrooms shall have ground fault circuit-interrupter for personnel. The requirement for GFCI protected outlets in kitchens and bathrooms has been in the building code since the late 80's and has proven to be effective in protecting occupants from electrical shock in wet locations. This housing code change will bring this proven safety feature to many older dwellings built prior to this requirement.
8. **Carbon Monoxide Detector Required.** Since 2010 Iowa City has required all newly constructed residential dwelling units with fuel burning appliances or an attached garage with an opening that communicates with the dwelling unit to have carbon monoxide detectors installed. This code change will bring this requirement to all residential dwellings regardless of their age.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends amending the Housing Code as stated. These changes are designed to address the goal of neighborhood stabilization, and increase the safety of housing in Iowa City.

cc: Doug Boothroy, Director Neighborhood and Development Services