

## CITIZENS GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE HOUSING CODE

### CODE INTENT

The objective of the housing/ property maintenance code is to bring correction or remedy of any building feature or condition that threatens safety, health, sanitation and the general welfare of the habitants. In general, the Code concerns structural strength, stability, sanitation, adequate light and ventilation, and safety to life and property from hazards. It applies to construction, alteration, repair, removal, demolition, use or occupancy of residential buildings and their accessory structures.

### HEALTH & SAFETY

Inhabited buildings must be maintained and kept in a safe and sanitary condition. Devices and safeguards required by the Code in effect when the building was built, repaired or modified must also be maintained in good working order, by the owner or the tenant. A **bathroom** must be located within the dwelling, accessible to all occupants, and properly connected to an approved water and sanitary disposal system, free from leaks, defects and obstructions. It must contain a lavatory, toilet and tub or shower. Bathrooms must afford privacy to the user and be accessible from within the building. A **kitchen** must provide sanitary food preparation surfaces, food and utensils storage areas (cabinets, drawers, etc.), a freestanding **cook stove** (no portable cooking equipment), and mechanical **refrigeration** for the storage of perishable food. All **plumbing fixtures** must have an adequate supply of both **cold & hot water** distributed through an approved plumbing system with safe drains. Each dwelling must have properly operating **heating facilities** capable of safely and adequately heating all habitable rooms and bathrooms. Every dwelling unit must have adequate **garbage** disposal facilities or garbage storage containers of a type and in a location for sanitary, temporary storage of household garbage. Dwellings must comply with **fire prevention** features of the Code, and must have an installed **smoke detector** that provides an audible alarm. The detector shall be tested in accordance with and meet the requirements of UL 217 (1989), Single and Multiple Station Smoke Detectors.

### VENTILATION

**Windows** must be watertight, weather tight and rodent resistant. All windows in bedrooms must provide egress openings. **Screens** are required on all windows and exterior doors used for ventilation, unless the dwelling has central air conditioning. **Windows** providing **ventilation** must be easy to open. **Bathrooms** need not have operable windows if a working exhaust fan ventilates the room.

### ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS

Habitable rooms must have at least two separate and assessable **electrical receptacle** outlets. Bathrooms and laundry rooms require one outlet. Bedrooms, kitchens, and bathrooms also require a wall or ceiling light controlled by a wall switch. Other habitable rooms or enclosed areas require a wall or ceiling lighting outlet not necessarily controlled by a wall switch. All **electrical** features must fully comply with the National Electric Code.

In **multi-family** buildings, every common hall and inside stairway shall be adequately lighted at all times. Every **electrical outlet and fixture, and all electrical wiring and equipment** shall be installed, maintained and connected to a source of electric power in accordance with the provisions of the electrical code.

### **STRUCTURE INTERIOR & EXTERIOR**

**Exterior walls and roofs** must be free of defects that admit water or dampness to the interior and must be kept in good repair to prevent leaks. Open **porches, landings and walkways** over 30" above ground level must have **protective railings**, as must stairs with over three risers. This requirement also applies to **interior stairs, landings and balconies** (as measured to the next lower level). **Interior floors, walls & ceilings** must have structural integrity, be rodent proof and in sound condition. Floors in rooms with water outlets must be water resistant, clean and sanitary. **Interior & exterior doors** must be properly operating and have all hardware to permit opening, closing and securing. **Doors** must be weather tight, watertight, rodent and insect resistant when the door is closed.

### **DWELLING SPACE**

To limit overcrowding, all dwellings must provide a minimum of 120-sq. ft. of **habitable space** for one or two occupants, at least 250 sq. ft. for 3-5 occupants, and at least 310 sq ft for 6 or more occupants.

**Sleeping rooms** must have at least 70-sq. ft. for one occupant and 50 additional sq. ft. for each additional occupant. **Ceilings** must be at least 7 ft. high, on the average, above floor level within each room. The low edge of any sloped ceilings must be at least 5 ft. above floor level.

### **SANITATION**

It is unlawful for the owner or occupant of a residential building, structure, or property to utilize the premises for the **open storage** of any inoperable motor vehicle, ice box, refrigerator, stove, glass, and building material, building rubbish or similar items. It is the responsibility of every such owner or occupant to keep the premises and yard of residential property clean and to remove from the premises all such abandoned items as listed above, including but not limited to weeds, dead trees, trash, garbage, etc. Every occupant of a single dwelling building (and every owner of a building containing two or more dwelling units) is responsible for the extermination of insects, rodents, or other pests within the building or premises. But extermination of termites is the responsibility of the building owner in all cases.

### **LEGAL PROCEDURES**

**Correction of Violations** Upon observance of a code violation the **housing inspector** will give notice to the person(s) responsible. These warnings will be in writing stating the noncomplying condition, setting forth the time allowed for correction, and advising the responsible person(s) that correction is required or legal action may begin for **violation** of the code. Continual violation may bring penalties to **\$250.00 per day** of continuing violation. Voluntary compliance is always sought but fines can be imposed through criminal prosecution if necessary.