



Guide to Commercial Code Enforcement in Baltimore City

The structure must be made fit for human habitation within 30 days. In the interim, the building should be kept clean, closed and free of high grass and weeds. The Building may not be reoccupied until the Building Official has issued an occupancy permit.

SIGNS

All signs, even temporary signs, require permits. The sign type (ie., freestanding or flat), size, location, and zoning district all have a bearing on whether or not a sign is legal. The most commonly issued citations/notices for signs are:

- Work without permit or outside scope of existing permit, plans or drawings. (§105.1, §105.1.4, & §113.14 BFRCBC, Building Code)
\$500 Environmental Citation; \$1000 Administrative Surcharge; Criminal Misdemeanor punishable by a \$500 fine and up to 90 days in Jail
- Signs or other items advertising alcoholic beverages or cigarettes are not permitted in any publicly visible location, including windows, building exteriors, or freestanding signboards. These signs may be placed in windows if set back 12" from the window. (§11-207, §11-208, 17-508 & 17-509 Zoning) Exceptions to this section are listed in sub-section c of §11-207 and §11-208 of the Zoning Code. **\$1000 fine.**

Additional regulations which may generate notices:

- Window Coverage. At least 50% of the window area on each side

of the building must be free of signs. (§11-410 Zoning)

- Wind Signs. Wind signs, such as series of banners, flags or other objects fastened so they move when subjected to pressure by wind or breeze are not permitted. (§11-409 Zoning)
- General Advertising Signs. No new general advertising signs are permitted. General advertising signs are posters, billboards or signs which advertise a business, commodity, service or event that is sold, offered, or conducted somewhere other than on the premises on which the sign is located; or sold, offered, or conducted on the premises only incidentally. (§11-206 Zoning)

PERMITS

Work Without Permit (§105.1, §105.1.4 §113.14 BFRCBC, Building Code) \$500 Environmental Citation

- Work done or being done without a permit, outside the scope of a permit, or inconsistent with the approved permit, is not permitted. This includes erecting signs. Remove all work done without a proper permit. Secure proper permit before any work is started.

ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS

If your building is in a historic district or an Urban Renewal Plan area, additional regulations may apply. To find out if your building is in one of these areas, go to <http://www.baltimorecity.gov/government/planning/plansMapsPublications.php>, and review the citywide maps (found in the section titled "Maps," subtitled "Districts").



Important Phone Numbers

Housing Code Enforcement Offices

- Headquarters 410-396-4170, 417 E. Fayette St., Room 202
- Northeast District Office 410-545-7550, 5225 York Road
- Northwest District Office 410-396-7736, 3939 Reisterstown Road
- Southeast District Office 410-545-6521, 3411 Bank Street
- Southwest District Office 410-545-1851, 501 N. Athol Avenue
- Other Baltimore Housing Numbers
- Demolitions 410-396-3512, 417 E. Fayette St., 3rd Floor
- Code Enforcement Legal Section 410-396-4140, 417 E. Fayette St., Room 202
- Multiple Family Dwelling License 410-396-3575, 417 E. Fayette St., Room 202
- Permits & Building Inspections 410-396-3470, 417 E. Fayette St., 3rd Floor
- Permit Inquiries "One Stop Shop" 410-396-3360, 417 E. Fayette St., Room 100
- Property Registration 410-396-3575, 417 E. Fayette St., Room 202
- Vacant Lot Registration 410-396-3575, 417 E. Fayette St., Room 202



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Taking care of your commercial property – whether you rent or own – is a sound business practice, as customers are more likely to patronize attractive, well-maintained businesses than those in poor condition. In turn, healthier businesses translate into a stronger property market and better property values.

Property maintenance is not just good for the bottom line, however; it is a legal requirement.

In an effort to help business and commercial property owners adhere to City law, Baltimore Housing and the Baltimore Development Corporation prepared this summary of requirements with respect to exterior property maintenance; sanitation; signs; and use and work permits.

Please note that although we have tried to be as thorough as possible, this list does not include every City regulation that businesses must abide by. Moreover, if your business or property is located in an Urban Renewal Plan area or a historic district, additional regulations may apply.

This is provided for information purposes only and is not a legal document. For exact language, consult the Baltimore City Code

(<http://cityservices.baltimorecity.gov/charterandcodes/>).

Responsibility

Property owners are responsible for maintaining the building in a sound and sanitary condition, and for ensuring that the exterior premises, including abutting sidewalks, gutters, and alleys, is kept in a clean, safe, and sanitary condition.

The occupant of a single-unit building must maintain the exterior areas, including abutting sidewalks, gutters, and alleys. The occupant of a unit with exclusive use of an exterior property area must maintain that exterior property area.

The Difference Between Citations and Notices

Code enforcement officers may issue violation notices or environmental citations.

- Notices give you time to address the violation before further enforcement action is taken, which may include court, where you may be fined. Typically, the responsible party has 10 days to correct sanitation violations and 30 days to correct other violations identified in the notice. The time allotted for correction may be less based on how it affects a person and/or property.
- Citations carry an immediate fine and do not require prior notice. When a code enforcement officer issues a citation, s/he also has the option of issuing a notice at the same time.

Acronyms and References

- Zoning – Zoning Code of Baltimore City
- BCBFRC – Baltimore City Building Fire and Related Codes – The BCBFRC is comprised of ten parts, two of which you will find references to throughout this document. The Building Code is Pt. II and the Property Maintenance Code (PMCBC) is Pt. VII.
- Article 01, Subtitle 40 of the Baltimore City Code covers information about the Environmental Control Board and citations.

Commercial Property Requirements

Note: A dollar figure highlighted in red lettering indicates that if you violate this particular law you can receive a citation and an immediate fine.

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE Repair and Maintenance of Structures (\$304, BFCBC, Property Maintenance)

- The exterior of a structure must be maintained in good repair and in a structurally sound and sanitary condition. Some common violations are:
 - Defective paint on exterior surface. (\$304.2 & §304.6)
 - Flaking or deteriorated paint on exterior doors, windows and/or trim. (\$304.2)
 - Defective paint on gutters and/or downspout. (\$304.2)

- Flaking or defective paint on cornice. (\$304.2)
- Defective paint on exterior walls. (\$304.2 & §304.6)
- Defective paint on fire escape. (\$304.2)
- Defective wall. (\$304.5 & §304.6)
- Defective gutter/downspout or missing gutter/downspout. (\$304.7)
- Defective cornice. (\$304.8)
- Defective trim. (\$304.8)
- Defective steps. (\$304.10)
- Defective rail. (\$304.10)
- Defective porch. (\$304.10)
- Defective door. (\$304.15)
- Door glass cracked or missing. (\$304.13; §304.15)
- Defective paving. (\$304.22)
- Defective accessory structure. (\$304.24)
- Defective fence. (\$304.24)
- Exterior surface of structure defaced by carving, marking or graffiti. (\$304.25)
- Cracked or missing window glass. (\$304.13)

Exterior Sanitary Maintenance – General (\$305, BFCBC, Property Maintenance; §5-702 & §5-703 Health Code of Baltimore City) \$100 Environmental Citation Fine

- The exterior premises, including abutting sidewalks, gutters, and alleys, must be kept in a clean, safe, and sanitary condition. The most commonly issued citations are:
 - High grass and weeds (grass and weeds may not grow higher than 8") (\$305.2)
 - Rat infestation and the conditions which attract pests. (\$305.4)

- Unregistered or inoperable vehicles. No motor vehicle or trailer may be parked, kept or stored on the exterior of any lot if it is inoperative, unregistered, or fails to display current registration tags, or if it is in a state of disassembly or in process of being stripped or dismantled. (§305.5)
- Motor vehicle parked, kept or stored on improper surface. Vehicles may only be stored on a dustless, all-weather surface paved with asphalt, brick, concrete, macadam or stone block. (§305.5)
- Additional regulations which may generate citations:
 - Outdoor storage must be neat and orderly, and stored objects must be elevated at least 1' off the ground to prevent rat harborage.

Exterior Sanitary Maintenance – Trash, Garbage, and Debris (\$306, BFCBC, Property Maintenance) \$100 Environmental Citation Fine

- All premises, including abutting sidewalks, gutters, and alleys, must be kept free of trash, garbage, and debris. The most commonly issued citations are:
 - Improper trash receptacle. Trash receptacles must be made of metal or other durable material; water tight, with tight fitting covers and handles; maintained in good repair; kept tightly closed; and have a capacity between 3 and 10 gallons, if used for trash,

- or between 3 and 20 gallons, if used for mixed refuse. (§ 306.6)
- Trash and debris. All premises, including abutting sidewalks, gutters, and alleys, as well as the interior of every structure, must be kept free of any accumulation of trash, garbage, and debris, including any animal waste, construction material, equipment, furniture, appliances, and similar objects and materials. (§306.1)

USE OF PROPERTY Use Permits (\$2-402 Zoning; §105.1 & §105.1.4 BFCBC, Building Code) \$500

- A use permit is required before any building may be occupied or ANY change is made to the authorized use of any land or structure. Even changing ownership of the business requires a new use permit. The specific use must be identified on the permit.

Prohibited Uses – Vehicles (\$3-107 Zoning) \$50

- Indoor and outdoor storage or maintenance of abandoned, junked, or derelict vehicles is prohibited in business districts. Derelict vehicles are those vehicles which exhibit a defect, damage, or deterioration sufficient to preclude proper operation on a road.

Vacant Building (§115.2, §115.4.3a & §115.4.3c BFCBC, Building Code)

- Buildings must be safe and fit for human habitation or other authorized use. If they are not, they must be vacated, cleaned, closed, and boarded. ▶