

**Alexander County Minimum Housing Code
An Ordinance Establishing Minimum Housing Standards**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF ALEXANDER COUNTY

158.001 PURPOSE OF ARTICLE

Pursuant to G.S. 160A-441, it is hereby declared that there exist in the County dwelling units and accessory structures which are unfit for human habitation due to dilapidation; defects increasing the hazards of fire, accidents and other calamities; lack of ventilation, light and sanitary facilities; and other conditions rendering such dwellings unsafe or unsanitary, dangerous and detrimental to the health, safety and morals, and otherwise inimical to the welfare of the residents of the County.

In order to protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents of the County as authorized by Part 6 of Article 19, Chapter 160A-441 of the General Statutes, it is the purpose of this ordinance to establish minimum standards of fitness for the initial and continued occupancy of all buildings used for human habitation, as expressly authorized by G.S. 160A-444.

158.002 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions shall apply in the interpretation and enforcement of this ordinance:

BASEMENT shall mean a portion of a dwelling that is located partly underground, having direct access to light and air from windows located above the level of the adjoining ground.

CELLAR shall mean a portion of a dwelling that is located partly or wholly underground having an inadequate access to light and air from windows located partly or wholly below the level of the adjoining ground.

DETERIORATED shall mean that a dwelling is unfit for human habitation and can be repaired, altered, or improved to comply with all of the minimum standards established by this ordinance at a cost not in excess of fifty percent (50%) of its value, as determined by finding of the Inspector.

DILAPADATED shall mean that a dwelling is unfit for human habitation and cannot be repaired, altered, or improved to comply with all of the minimum standards established by this ordinance except at a cost in excess of 50% of its value, as determined by finding of the Inspector.

DWELLING shall mean any building, structure, or part thereof, that is wholly or partly used or intended to be used for living, sleeping, or habitation by human occupants and shall include any outhouses and appurtenances belonging thereto or usually enjoyed therewith. "Temporary housing," as hereinafter defined, shall not be regarded as a dwelling. This term shall include within its meaning the terms "rooming house" and "rooming unit," as hereinafter defined.

DWELLING UNIT shall mean any room or group of rooms located within a dwelling and forming a single habitable unit with facilities that are used or intended to be used for living, sleeping, cooking, and eating.

EXTERMINATION shall mean the control and elimination of insects, rodents, or other pests by removing or making inaccessible materials that may serve as their food; by poisoning, spraying, fumigating, or trapping; or by any other recognized and legal pest elimination methods approved by the Inspector.

GARBAGE shall mean the organic waste resulting from the handling, preparation, cooking, and consumption of food.

GENDER Words having a masculine gender shall include the feminine and neuter genders

HABITABLE ROOMS shall mean a room or enclosed floor space used, or intended to be used, for living, sleeping, cooking, or eating purposes, excluding bathrooms, water closet compartments, laundries, heater rooms, foyers, or communicating corridors, closets, and storage spaces.

INFESTATION shall mean the presence, within or around a dwelling, of insects, rodents or other pests in such number as to constitute a menace to the health, safety, or welfare of the occupants or the public.

INSPECTOR shall mean the Building Inspector of the County or any authorized agent of the Inspector.

MULTIPLE DWELLING shall mean any dwelling containing more than two dwelling units.

OCCUPANT shall mean any person, living, sleeping, cooking or eating in, or having actual possession of a dwelling, dwelling unit or rooming unit.

OPERATOR shall mean any person who has charge, care or control of a building, or part thereof, in which dwelling units or rooming units are let.

OWNER shall mean any person who alone, jointly, or severally with others:

- (a) Shall have title to any dwelling, dwelling unit or rooming unit, with or without accompanying actual possession thereof; or
- (b) Shall be a mortgagee of record for any dwelling, dwelling unit or rooming unit; or
- (c) Shall have charge, care, or control of any dwelling, dwelling unit or rooming unit, as owner or agent of the actual owner, or as assignee or heir of the actual owner, or as a person acting as power of attorney when the actual owner is incapacitated, or as executor, executrix, administrator, administratrix, trustee or guardian of the estate of the actual owner. Any such person thus representing the actual owner shall be bound to comply with the provisions of this ordinance, and of rules and regulations adapted pursuant thereto, to the same extent as if he were the owner.

PARTY OR PARTIES IN INTEREST shall mean all persons who have interests of record in a dwelling, dwelling unit, or rooming unit, and any persons who are in possession thereof.

PERSON shall mean any individual, corporation, firm, partnership, association, organization or other legal entity of any kind.

PLUMBING shall mean and include all of the following supplied facilities and equipment: gas pipes, gas burning equipment, water pipes, mechanical garbage disposal units (mechanical sink grinders), sewage disposal pipes, water closets, sinks, installed dishwashers, lavatories, bathtubs, shower baths, installed clothes washing machines, catch basins, drains, vents, and any other similar supplied fixtures, together with all connections to water, sewer or gas lines.

PUBLIC AUTHORITY shall mean the any officer who is in charge of any department or branch of the government of the County of Alexander or the State of North Carolina relating to health, fire, building regulations, or other activities concerning dwellings in the County.

ROOMING HOUSE shall mean any dwelling, or that part of any dwelling containing one or more rooming units, in which space is let by the owner or operator to three or more persons who are not husband or

wife, son or daughter, mother or father, or sister or brother of the owner or operator.

ROOMING shall mean any room or group of rooms forming a single habitable unit used or intended to be used for living and sleeping, but not for cooking or eating purposes.

RUBBISH shall mean non-organic waste materials. The term shall include paper, rags, cartons, boxes, wood, excelsior, rubber, leather, tree branches, yard trimmings, tin cans, metals, mineral matter, glass, dust, and inorganic trash of any kind or nature.

SUPPLIED shall mean paid for, furnished, or provided by, or under the control of, the owner or operator.

TEMPORARY HOUSING shall mean any tent, trailer, or other structure used for human shelter which is designed to be transportable and which is not attached to the ground, to another structure, or to any utilities system on the same premises for more than thirty (30) consecutive days.

UNFIT FOR HUMAN HABITATION shall mean conditions exist in a dwelling, dwelling unit, rooming house or rooming unit that violate fitness or one or more of the requirements established by this ordinance.

WORDS HAVING CERTAIN MEANING Whenever the words “dwelling, dwelling unit, rooming house, rooming unit, premises” are used in this ordinance, they shall be construed as though they were followed by the words “or any part thereof.”

158.003 MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR FITNESS OF DWELLINGS AND DWELLING UNITS

Every dwelling and dwelling unit used as a human habitation, or held out for use as a human habitation, shall comply with all of the minimum standards of fitness for human habitation and all of the requirements of Section 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 of this ordinance.

No person shall occupy as owner-occupant, or let to another for occupancy or use as a human habitation, any dwelling or dwelling unit which does not comply with all of the minimum standards of fitness for human habitation and all of the requirements of Section 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 of this ordinance.

158.004 MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR STRUCTURAL CONDITION

The following standards shall constitute the minimum standards for structural condition of a dwelling or dwelling unit:

- (1) Walls or partitions or supporting members, sills, joists, rafters, or other structural members shall not list, lean, or buckle and shall not be rotted, deteriorated, or damaged and shall not have holes or cracks that might admit rodents.
- (2) Floors or roofs shall have adequate supporting members and strength to be reasonably safe for the purpose used.
- (3) Foundations, foundation walls, piers, or other foundation supports shall not be deteriorated or damaged.
- (4) Steps, stairs, landings, porches, or other arts or appurtenances shall be maintained in such condition that they will not fail or collapse.
- (5) Adequate facilities for egress in case of fire or panic shall be provided.
- (6) Interior walls and ceilings of all rooms, closets, and hallways shall be finished of suitable materials, which will, be used of reasonable household methods promote sanitation and cleanliness, and shall be maintained in such a manner so as to enable the occupants to maintain reasonable privacy between various spaces.
- (7) The roof, flashings, exterior walls, basement walls, floors, and all doors and windows exposed to the weather shall be constructed and maintained so as to be weather and watertight.
- (8) There shall be no chimneys or parts thereof that are defective, deteriorated, or in danger of falling or in such condition or location as to constitute a fire hazard.
- (9) There shall be no use of the ground for floors and there shall be no wood floors on the ground.

158.005 MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR BASIC PLUMBING, HEATING AND ELECTRICAL

Equipment and Facilities.

- (a) Plumbing System.

- (1) Each dwelling unit shall be connected to a portable water supply and to a public sewer or other approved sewage disposal system.
 - (2) Each dwelling unit shall contain not less than a kitchen sink, lavatory, tub or shower, water closet, and adequate supply of both cold water and hot water. All water shall be supplied through an approved pipe distribution system connected to a portable water supply.
 - (3) All plumbing fixtures shall meet the standards of the State Plumbing Code and shall be maintained in a state of good repair and in good working order.
 - (4) All required plumbing fixtures shall be located within the dwelling unit and be accessible to the occupants of same. The water closet and tub or shower shall be located in a room or rooms affording privacy to the user.
- (b) Heating System. Every dwelling and dwelling unit shall have facilities for providing heat in accordance with the following:
- (1) Central and electric heating systems. Every central or electric heating system shall be of sufficient capacity to heat all habitable rooms, bathrooms, and water closet compartments in every dwelling unit to which it is connected with a minimum temperature of seventy (70) degrees Fahrenheit measured at a point three feet (3') above the floor during ordinary winter conditions.
 - (2) Other heating facilities. Where a central or electric heating system is not provided, each dwelling and dwelling unit shall be provided with sufficient fireplaces, chimneys, flues, gas connected to heat all habitable rooms with a minimum temperature of (70) degrees Fahrenheit measured three feet (3') above the floor during ordinary winter conditions.
- (c) Electrical System.
- (1) Every dwelling and dwelling unit shall be wired for electric lights and convenience receptacles. Every habitable room shall contain at least two floor or wall-type electric convenience receptacle, connected in such a manner as determined by the State. In any bathroom water closet room, laundry room and furnace room there must be at least one supplied ceiling or wall-type electric light fixture. In the event wall or ceiling light fixtures are not provided in any habitable room, then each such habitable room shall contain at least three floor or wall-type electric convenience receptacles.

- (2) Every public hall and stairway in every multiple dwelling shall be adequately lighted by electric lights at all times when natural daylight is not sufficient.
- (3) All fixtures, receptacles, equipment and wiring shall be maintained in a state of good repair, safe, capable of being used and installed in accordance with the State Electrical Code.

158.06 MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR VENTILATION

General Every habitable room shall have at least one window or skylight facing directly to the outdoors. The minimum total window area, measured between stops, for every habitable room shall be ten percent (10%) of the floor area of such room. Whenever walls or other portions of structures face a window or any room and such from the window and extend to a level above that of the ceiling of the room, such a window shall not be included as contributing to the required minimum total window area. Whenever the only window in a room is a skylight-type window in the top of such room, the total window area of such skylight shall equal at least fifteen percent (15%) of the total floor area of such room.

Habitable Rooms Every habitable room shall have at least one (1) window or skylight which can easily be opened or such other device as will adequately ventilate the room. The total openable window area in every habitable room shall be equal to at least forty-five percent (45%) of the minimum window area size or minimum skylight-type window size as required or shall have other approved equivalent ventilation.

Bathroom and Watercloset Rooms Every bathroom and water closet compartment shall comply with the light and ventilation requirements for habitable rooms, except that no window or skylight shall be required in adequately ventilated bathrooms and water closet rooms equipped with an approved ventilation system.

158.007 MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR SPACE, USE AND LOCATION

- (a) Room Sizes Every dwelling unit shall contain at least the minimum room size in each habitable room as required by the State Residential Building Code.

Every dwelling unit shall contain at least one hundred and fifty (150) square feet of habitable floor area for the first occupant, at least one hundred (100) square feet of additional habitable area for each of the next

three occupants, and at least seventy-five (75) square feet of additional habitable floor area for each additional occupant.

In every dwelling unit and in every room unit, every room occupied for sleeping purposes by one occupant shall contain at least seventy (70) square feet of floor area, and every room occupied for sleeping purposes by more than one occupant shall contain at least fifty (50) square feet of floor area for each occupant twelve (12) years of age and over and at least thirty-five (35) square feet of floor area for each occupant under twelve (12) year of age.

- (b) Ceiling Height At least one-half (1/2) of the floor area of every habitable room shall have a ceiling height of not less than seven feet and six inches (7'6").
- (c) Floor Area Calculation Floor area shall be calculated on the basis of habitable room area. However, closet area and wall area within the dwelling unit may count for not more than ten percent (10%) of the required habitable floor area. The floor area of any part of any room where the ceiling height is less than four and one-half feet (4'6") shall not be considered as part of the floor area for the purpose of determining maximum permissible occupancy.
- (d) Cellar No cellar shall be used for living purposes.
- (e) Basements No basement shall be used for living purposes unless:
 - (1) The floor and walls are substantially watertight;
 - (2) The total window area, total openable window area and ceiling height are equal to those required for habitable rooms;
 - (3) The required minimum window area of every habitable room is entirely above the grade adjoining such window area, except where the window or windows face a stairwell, window well, or accessway.

158.008 MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR SAFE AND SANITARY MAINTENANCE

- (a) Exterior Foundation Wall and Roofs Every foundation wall, exterior wall and exterior roof shall be substantially weathertight and rodent proof; shall be kept in sound condition and good repair; shall be capable of affording privacy; and shall be safe to use and capable of supporting the load that normal use would cause to be placed thereon. Every exterior wall shall be

protected with paint or other protective covering to prevent the entrance or penetration of moisture or the weather.

- (b) Interior Floors, Walls and Ceilings Every floor, interior wall, and ceiling shall be substantially rodent proof; shall be kept in sound condition and good repair; and shall be safe to use and capable of supporting the load that normal use would cause to be placed thereon.
- (c) Windows and doors. Every window, exterior door, basement or cellar door and hatchway shall be substantially weathertight, watertight, and rodent proof and shall be kept in sound working condition and good repair.
- (d) Stairs, porches, and appurtenances. Every outside and inside stair and porch, and any appurtenance thereto, shall be safe to use and capable of supporting the load that normal use would cause to be placed thereon and shall be kept in sound condition and good repair.
- (e) Bathroom floors. Every bathroom floor surface and water closet compartment floor surface shall be constructed and maintained so that it will be reasonably impervious to water and will permit such floor to be easily kept in a clean and sanitary condition.
- (f) Supplied facilities. Every supplied facility, piece of equipment, or utility that is required under this ordinance shall be so constructed or installed such that it will function safely and effectively and shall be maintained in satisfactory working condition.
- (g) Drainage. Every yard shall be properly graded in order to obtain thorough drainage and to prevent the accumulation of stagnant water.
- (h) Noxious weeds. Every yard and all exterior property areas shall be kept free of species of weeds or plant growth which are noxious or detrimental to health.
- (i) Egress. Every dwelling unit shall be provided with adequate means of egress as required by the State Residential Building Code.
- (j) Lead Based Paint.
 - (1) All interior surfaces must be either free of cracking, scaling, peeling, chipping, and loose paint or be adequately treated or covered (as discussed in 3 below) to prevent the exposure of the occupants to lead based paint hazards.

- (2) All exterior surfaces (such as stairs, decks, porches, railing, windows, and doors) that are accessible to children under seven years of age must be free of cracking, scaling, peeling, chipping, and loose paint or be adequately treated or covered (as discussed in 3 below) to prevent the exposure of such children to lead base paint hazards.
- (3) All surfaces to be treated must be thoroughly washed, sanded, and scraped or wire-brushed so as to remove all hazards before repainting with at least two coats of suitable nonleaded paint. All surfaces to be covered must have had the paint removed or covered with material such as gypsum wallboard, plywood, drywall, plaster or other suitable material. Simply painting over surfaces requiring treatment or covering as an abatement method is not an acceptable means of compliance.

158.009 MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR CONTROL OF INSECTS, RODENTS AND INFESTATIONS

- (a) Screens. In every dwelling unit, for protection against mosquitoes, flies and other insects, every door opening directly from a dwelling unit to outdoor space shall be equipped with screens and a self-closing device. Every window or other device with openings to outdoor space, used or intended to be used for ventilation, shall likewise be equipped with screens.
 - (1) Dwelling buildings containing central heating, furnaces, and air-conditioning equipment for mechanically ventilating the building year around are not required to have screens on doors or window openings. Window type air-conditioning units are not included in this exception.
- (b) Rodent Control. Every basement or cellar window used or intended to be used for ventilation, and every other opening to a basement which might provide an entry for rodents, shall be equipped with screens or such other approval device as will effectively prevent their entrance.
- (c) Infestation. Every occupant of a dwelling containing a single dwelling unit shall be responsible for the extermination of any insects, rodents, or other pests therein on the premises; and every occupant of a dwelling unit in a dwelling containing more than one dwelling unit shall be responsible for such extermination. If infestation is caused by failure of the owner to maintain a dwelling in a rodent proof or reasonable insect proof condition, extermination shall be the responsibility of the owner. Whenever infestation exists in two or more of the dwelling units in any dwelling or in

the public parts of any dwelling containing two or more dwelling units, extermination shall be the responsibility of the owner.

- (d) Rubbish Storage and Disposal. Every dwelling and every dwelling unit shall be supplied with approved containers and covers for storage of rubbish as required by County ordinance, and the owner, operator or agent in control of such dwelling or dwelling unit shall be responsible for the removal of rubbish.
- (e) Garbage Storage and Disposal. Every dwelling and every dwelling unit shall be supplied with an approved garbage disposal facility, which may be an adequate mechanical garbage disposal unit (mechanical sink grinder) in each dwelling unit, or an approved outside garbage can as required by County Ordinances.

158.010 MINIMUM STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO ROOMING HOUSES, EXCEPTIONS;

All of the provisions of this ordinance, and all of the minimum standards and requirements of this ordinance, shall be applicable to rooming houses and to every person who operates a rooming house, or who occupies or lets to another for occupancy, any rooming unit in any rooming house, except as provided in the following paragraphs:

- (1) Water Closet, Hand Lavatory, and Bath Facilities. At least one (1) water closet, lavatory basin, and bathtub or shower properly connected to an approved water and sewer system and in good working condition shall be supplied for each four (4) rooms within a rooming house wherever these facilities are shared. All such facilities shall be located within the residence building served and shall be directly accessible from a common hall or passageway and shall be not more than one (1) story removed from any of the persons sharing such facilities. Every lavatory basin and bathtub or shower shall be supplied with hot and cold water at all times. Such required facilities shall not be located in a cellar.
- (2) Minimum Floor Area for Sleeping Purposes. Every room occupied for sleeping purposes by one (1) occupant shall contain at least seventy (70) square feet of floor area, and every room occupied for sleeping purposes by more than one (1) occupant shall contain at least fifty (50) square feet of floor area for each occupant twelve (12) years of age and over and at least thirty-five (35) square feet of floor area for each occupant under twelve (12) years of age.
- (3) Sanitary Conditions. The operator of every rooming house shall be responsible for the sanitary maintenance of all walls, floors, and ceilings, and for the sanitary maintenance of every other part of the rooming house.

He shall be further responsible for the sanitary maintenance of the entire premises where the entire structure or building within which the rooming house is contained is leased or occupied by the operator.

- (4) Sanitary Facilities. Every water closet, flush urinal, lavatory basin, and bathtub or shower required by paragraph (1) of this section shall be located within the rooming house and within a room or rooms that afford privacy; shall be separate from the habitable rooms; shall be accessible from a common hall; and shall be accessible without going outside the rooming house or through any other room therein.

158.011 RESPONSIBILITIES OF OWNERS AND OCCUPANTS

- (a) Public Areas. Every owner of a dwelling containing two or more dwelling units shall be responsible for maintaining in a clean and sanitary condition the shared or public areas of the dwelling and premises thereof.
- (b) Cleanliness. Every occupant of a dwelling or dwelling unit shall keep in a clean and sanitary condition that part of the dwelling, dwelling unit, and premises thereof which he occupies and controls.
- (c) Rubbish and Garbage. Every occupant of a dwelling or dwelling unit shall dispose of all his rubbish and garbage in a clean and sanitary manner by placing it in the supplied storage facilities. In all cases, the owner, operator or agent in control shall be responsible for the availability of rubbish and garbage storage facilities.
- (d) Supplied Plumbing Fixtures. Every occupant of a dwelling unit shall keep all supplied plumbing fixtures therein in a clean and sanitary condition and shall be responsible for the exercise of reasonable care in the proper use and operation of same.
- (e) Care of facilities, equipment, and structure. No occupant shall willfully destroy, deface, or impair any of the facilities or equipment, or any part of the structure of a dwelling or dwelling unit.

(Note: The respective responsibilities of landlords and tenants under rental agreements for dwelling units and further enumerated in State Law, G.S. Chapter 42, Article 5.)

158.012 POWERS AND DUTIES OF BUILDING INSPECTOR

The Building Inspector is hereby designated as the officer to enforce the provisions of this ordinance and to exercise the duties and powers herein prescribed. The Building Inspector is authorized to exercise such powers as may be necessary or convenient to carry out and effectuate the purpose

and provisions of this ordinance. The Building Inspector shall have the following powers and duties:

- (1) To investigate the dwelling conditions; to inspect dwellings and dwelling units located in the County in order to determine which dwellings and dwelling units are unfit for human habitation; and for the purpose of carrying out the objectives of this ordinance with respect to the repair, closing or demolition of such dwellings and dwelling units as are unfit for habitation, deteriorated, or dilapidated;
- (2) To take such action, together with other appropriate departments and agencies, public and private, as may be necessary to effect rehabilitation of housing which is deteriorated;
- (3) To keep a record of the results of inspections made under this ordinance and an inventory of those dwellings that do not meet the minimum standards of fitness herein prescribed;
- (4) To administer oaths and affirmations, examine witnesses, and receive evidence;
- (5) To enter upon premises for the purpose of making examinations and inspections; provided, such entries shall be made in accordance with section 13 of this ordinance and State Law, and shall be made in such manner as to cause the least possible inconvenience to the persons in possession;
- (6) To appoint and fix the duties of such officers, agents, and employees as he deems necessary to assist in carrying out the purposes of this ordinance, and to delegate any of his functions and powers to such officers, agents, and employees;
- (7) To perform such other duties as may be prescribed herein or by the County Commissioners; and

158.013 INSPECTIONS; DUTIES OF OWNER AND OCCUPANTS

- (a) For the purpose of making inspections, the Inspector is hereby authorized to enter, examine, and survey at all reasonable times all dwellings, dwelling units, rooming houses, and rooming units, and the premises associated therewith. The owner or occupant of every dwelling, dwelling unit, rooming house, or rooming unit, or the person in charge thereof, shall give the Inspector free access to such dwelling, dwelling unit, rooming house, or rooming unit and its premises at all reasonable times for the purposes of such inspection, examination, and survey.

- (b) Every occupant of a dwelling, dwelling unit, rooming house, or rooming unit shall give the owner thereof, or this agent or employee, access to any part of such dwelling or dwelling unit and its premises at all reasonable times for the purpose of making such repairs or alterations as are necessary to effect compliance with provisions of this ordinance or with any lawful order issued pursuant to the provisions of this ordinance.

(Note: When permission to inspect a dwelling or its premises is denied, the Building Inspector must obtain a warrant to inspect. G.S. 15-27.2 provides for the issuance of warrants for the conduct of inspections authorized by law. The N.C. Court of Appeals, in In Re Dwelling, 24 N.C. App. 17 (1974), has held that the consent of the tenant-occupant who was in actual possession and control of the premises was sufficient to authorize an inspection without a warrant, notwithstanding the fact that the owner had objected to the warrantless search. When faced with a situation where permission to inspect is denied, building inspectors are advised to seek the advice of the County Attorney.)

158.014 PROCEDURE FOR ENFORCEMENT

- (a) Preliminary Investigation; Notice; Hearing. Whenever a petition is filed with the Inspector by a Public Authority or by at least five (5) residents of the County charging that any dwelling or dwelling unit is unfit for human habitation, or whenever it appears to the Inspector upon inspection that any dwelling or dwelling unit is unfit for human habitation, he shall, if his preliminary investigation discloses a basis for such charges, issue and cause to be served upon the owner of and parties in interest in such dwelling or dwelling unit a complaint stating the charges and containing a notice that a hearing will be held before the Inspector at a place therein fixed, not less than ten (10) nor more than thirty (30) days after the serving of the complaint. The owner or any party in interest shall have the right to file an answer to the complaint and to appear in person, and give testimony at the place and time fixed in the complaint. Notice of such hearing shall also be given to at least one of the persons signing a petition relating to such dwelling. Any person desiring to do so may attend such hearing and give evidence relevant to the matter being heard. The rules of evidence prevailing in courts of law or equity shall not be controlling in hearings before the Inspector. There shall be no continuances of the hearing date as noticed in the Complaint.
- (b) Procedure After Hearing. After such notice and hearing, the Inspector shall state in writing his determination whether the dwelling or dwelling unit is unfit for human habitation, and, if so, whether it is deteriorated or dilapidated.

If the Inspector determines that the dwelling or dwelling unit is deteriorated, he shall state in writing his findings of fact in support of such determination and shall issue and cause to be served upon the owner thereof an order directing and requiring the owner to repair, alter, or improve such dwelling or dwelling unit to comply with the minimum standards of fitness established by this ordinance within a specified period of time, not to exceed ninety (90) days. Such order may also direct and require the owner to vacate and close such dwelling or dwelling unit until such repairs, alterations, and improvements have been made.

If the Inspector determines that the dwelling is dilapidated, he shall state in writing his findings of fact in support such determination and shall issue and cause to be served upon the owner thereof an order directing and requiring the owner either to repair, alter, or improve such dwelling or dwelling unit to comply with the minimum standards of fitness established by this ordinance, or else to vacate and remove or demolish the same within a specified period of time, not to exceed ninety (90) days.

(c) Failure to Comply with Order.

(1) In Personal Remedy. If the owner of any deteriorated dwelling or dwelling unit shall fail to comply with an order of the Inspector to repair, alter, or improve, or to vacate and close, the same within the time specified therein, or if the owner of a dilapidated dwelling or dwelling unit shall fail to comply with an order of the Inspector to repair, alter, or improve, or to vacate and close and remove or demolish the same, within the time specified therein, the Inspector shall submit to the Board of Commissioners at the next regular meeting a resolution directing the County Attorney to petition the superior court for an order directing such owner to comply with the order of the Inspector, as authorized by G.S. 160A-446(g).

(2) In Rem Remedy. After failure of an owner of a deteriorated or dilapidated dwelling or dwelling unit to comply with an order of the Inspector within the time specified therein, if injunctive relief has not been sought or has not been granted as provided in the preceding paragraph (1), the Inspector shall submit to the Board of Commissioners an ordinance ordering the Inspector to cause such dwelling or dwelling unit to be repaired, altered, improved, vacated, closed, removed, or demolished, as provided in the original order of the Inspector, and pending removal or demolition, to place a placard on such dwelling as provided by G.S. 160A-443 and Section 16 of this ordinance.

(d) Appeals from Order of Inspector. An appeal from any decision or order of the Inspector may be taken by any person aggrieved thereby. Any appeal

from the Inspector shall be taken within ten (10) days from the rendering of the decision or service of the order and shall be taken by filing with the Inspector or the Alexander County Board of Adjustment (hereinafter known as "Board") a notice of appeal which shall specify the grounds upon which the appeal is based. Upon the filing of any notice of appeal, the Inspector shall forthwith transmit to the Board of Adjustment all the papers constituting the record upon which the decision appealed from was made. When an appeal is from a decision of the Inspector refusing to allow the person aggrieved thereby to do any act, his decision shall remain in force until modified or reversed. When an appeal is from a decision of the Inspector requiring the person aggrieved to do any act, the appeal shall have the effect of suspending the requirement until the hearing by the Board, unless the Inspector certifies to the Board after the notice of appeal is filed with him, that by reason of the facts stated in the certificate (a copy of which shall be furnished to the appellant), a suspension of his requirement would cause imminent peril to life or property, in which case the requirement shall not be suspended except by a restraining order. Such a restraining order may be granted for due cause shown upon not less than one (1) day's written notice to the Inspector, by the Board, or by a court of record upon petition made pursuant to G.S. 160A-446(f) and Subsection (e) of this section.

The Board shall fix a reasonable time for the hearing of all appeals, shall give due notice to all the parties, and shall render its decision within a reasonable time. Any party may appear in person or by agent or attorney. The Board may reverse or affirm wholly or partly, or may modify the decision or order appealed from and may make such decision and order as in its opinion ought to be made in the matter, and to that end it shall have all the powers of the Inspector, but the concurring vote of four members of the Board shall have power also in passing upon appeals, in any case where there are practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships in the way of carrying out the strict letter of the ordinance, to adapt the application of the ordinance to the necessities of the case to the end that the spirit of the ordinance shall be observed, public safety and welfare secured, and substantial justice done.

Every decision of the Board shall be subject to review by proceedings in the nature of certiorari instituted within 15 days of the decision of the Board, but not otherwise.

- (e) Petition to Superior Court by Owner. Any person aggrieved by an order issued by the Inspector or a decision rendered by the Board shall have the right, within thirty (30) days after issuance of the order or rendering of the decision, to petition the superior court for a temporary injunction restraining the Inspector pending a final disposition of the cause, as provided by G.S. 160A-446(f).

158.015 METHODS OF SERVICE OF COMPLAINTS AND ORDERS

Complaints or orders issued by the Inspectors shall be served upon persons either personally or by registered or certified mail in the manner provided in Rule 4(j) of the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure. If the whereabouts of such persons are unknown and the same cannot be ascertained by the Inspector in the exercise of reasonable diligence, the Inspector shall make an affidavit to that effect, and the serving of such complaint or order upon such person may be made by publishing the same at least once no later than the time at which personal service would be required under the provisions of this ordinance in a newspaper having general circulation in the County. Where service is made by publication, a notice of the pending proceedings shall be posted in a conspicuous place on the premises affected by the complaint or order.

158.016 IN REM ACTION BY INSPECTOR; PLACARDING

After failure of an owner of a dwelling or dwelling unit to comply with an order of the Inspector issued pursuant to the provisions of this ordinance, and upon adoption by the Board of Commissioners of an ordinance authorizing and directing him to do so, as provided by G.S. 160A-443(5) and Section 14(c) of this ordinance, the Inspector shall proceed to cause such dwelling or dwelling unit to be repaired, altered, or improved to comply with the minimum standards of fitness established by this ordinance, or to be vacated and closed and removed or demolished, as directed by the ordinance of the Board of Commissioners, and shall cause to be posted on the main entrance of such dwelling or dwelling unit a placard with the following words: "This building is unfit for human habitation; the use or occupation of this building for human habitation is prohibited and unlawful." Occupation of a building so posted shall constitute a misdemeanor.

Each such ordinance shall be recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds in the county wherein the property is located and shall be indexed in the name of the property owner in the grantor index, as provided by G.S. 160A-443(5).

158.017 COST, A LIEN ON PROPERTY

As provided by G.S. 160A-446(6), the cost of any repairs, alterations, or improvements, or of vacating and closing, or removal or demolition, caused to be made or done by the Inspector pursuant to Section 16 of this ordinance shall be a lien against the real property upon which such cost was incurred. Such lien shall be filed, have priority, and be collected in

the same manner as the lien for special assessments established by Article 10, Chapter 160A of the General Statutes.

158.018 ALTERNATIVE REMEDIES

Neither this ordinance nor any of its provisions shall be construed to impair or limit in any way the power of the County to define and declare nuisances and to cause their abatement by summary action or otherwise, or to enforce this ordinance by criminal process as authorized by G.S. 14-4 and Section 20 of this ordinance, and the enforcement of any other remedy provided herein shall not prevent the enforcement of any other remedy or remedies provided herein or in other ordinances or laws.

158.019 CONFLICT WITH OTHER PROVISIONS

In the event any provision, standard, or requirement of this ordinance is found to be in conflict with any provision of any other ordinance or code of the County, the provision which establishes the higher standard or more stringent requirement for the promotion and protection of the health and safety of the residents of the County shall prevail.

158.020 VIOLATIONS; PENALTY

- (a) It shall be unlawful for the owner of any dwelling or dwelling unit to fail, neglect, or refuse to repair, alter, or improve the same, or to vacate and close and remove or demolish the same, upon order of the Inspector duty made and served as herein provided, within the time specified in such order. Each day that any such failure, neglect, or refusal to comply with such order continues shall constitute a separate and distinct offense.
- (b) It shall be unlawful for the owner of any dwelling or dwelling unit, with respect to which an order has been issued pursuant to section 14 of this ordinance, to occupy or permit the occupancy of the same after the time prescribed in such order for its repair, alternation, or improvement or its vacation and closing. Each day that such occupancy continues after such prescribed time shall constitute a separate and distinct offense.
- (c) The violation of any provision of this ordinance shall constitute a misdemeanor, as provided by G.S. 14-4.
- (d) In addition to the penalty established by subsection (c) above, and the remedies provided by other provisions of this ordinance, this ordinance may be enforced by an appropriate equitable remedy issued by a court of competent jurisdiction.

158.021 SEVERABILITY

If any provision of this ordinance is for any reason held to be invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, such provision shall be deemed a separate, independent provision and such holding shall not affect the validity of any other provision hereof, and to that end, the provisions of this ordinance are hereby declared to be severable.

158.022 EFFECTIVE DATE

This ordinance shall be effective on June 8, 2015

Chairman,
Alexander County Board of Commissioners

Clerk to the Board