



April 30, 2026

Neighborhood Planning and Development Committee
Mayor Pro Tem Ryana Parks-Shaw, Chairperson
4th District Councilmember Eric Bunch, Vice Chairperson
1st District Councilmember Nathan Willett, Committee Member
3rd District At Large Councilmember, Melissa Patterson-Hazley, Committee Member
Supplemental Copy to City Clerk at public.testimony@kcmo.org

Re: Ordinance No. 260400 — Dangerous Building Review and Preservation Oversight

Dear Chair and members of the Committee,

In October 2025, City Council adopted Resolution No. 250912, directing the City Manager to develop minimum maintenance standards and policy recommendations to address demolition by neglect. Historic Kansas City was supportive of that resolution and worked with City staff in the months that followed to review recent cases, evaluate policy options, and provide recommendations based on best practices from across the nation. Throughout that process, one issue remained central: reform of the City’s dangerous building designation process—and the demolition loophole it creates—must be treated as the first-order issue in any meaningful response to demolition by neglect.

As currently structured, Kansas City’s dangerous building process has allowed demolition of historically significant buildings without following established preservation review procedures. For properties listed on the Kansas City Register of Historic Places, exterior changes and demolition proposals are subject to Historic Preservation Commission review through the Certificate of Appropriateness process. Designation of a building as “dangerous” allows for circumventing this process and voids the prerogative of the Commission to review technical and economic feasibility of rehabilitation.

Dangerous building determinations have, increasingly, relied on owner-selected and owner-paid engineers. In this scenario, an owner allows a property to deteriorate, then hires an engineer to opine that preservation or stabilization is not feasible. In the absence of City-employed or third-party inspectors with equivalent qualifications, the building is deemed dangerous, and demolition follows. This dynamic effectively allows demolition by neglect to bypass preservation review and undermines public confidence in the City’s regulatory framework.

The need for reform is reflected in recent cases. At 31st and Main, the Jeserich Building and Ward Building—locally designated in 2022—were demolished following prolonged deterioration and a dangerous building designation that overrode historic protections. In the Valentine neighborhood, four apartment buildings were demolished while a local historic district nomination was under consideration. This was following a determination that the buildings were dangerous, a label not wholly supported by the structural assessment procured by the property owner and, initially, rebutted by city inspectors. At 4301 Jefferson, the Temple Slug Building, a 1912 corner commercial structure, was designated “dangerous” despite conditions indicating the need for only modest stabilization work. These cases demonstrate how dangerous building determinations have been used to bypass established review processes.

Ordinance No. 260400 directly addresses this procedural gap. It requires Historic Preservation Commission “Certificate of Appropriateness” review prior to demolition of structures listed on the KC Register of Historic Places, even where a dangerous building designation has been issued, except in cases of immediate emergency where no reasonable alternative to demolition exists. For National Register-



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listed buildings, the “demolition delay” review procedures enacted by Council in 2024 are restored, providing the Commission an opportunity to hold a public hearing for non-emergency situations to ensure alternatives to demolition are considered before irreversible action is taken.

As noted in the ordinance itself, current provisions exempt dangerous buildings from preservation review and incentivize property owners to allow historic structures to deteriorate until demolition can occur without that review. This ordinance closes that loophole. As reflected in our discussions with City staff, it has clear implications for restoring the function of the Certificate of Appropriateness process for locally listed buildings.

This is a measured reform. It preserves the ability to act in true emergency conditions while ensuring that demolition of historic buildings is not undertaken without the standard review processes established by City Council. Historic Kansas City supports Ordinance No. 260400 as a necessary step in addressing demolition by neglect and appreciates the Committee’s consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vicki L. Noteis".

Vicki Noteis, President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ethan Starr".

Ethan Starr, Executive Director