



# City of Hartford \* County of Van Buren \* State of Michigan

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**TO:** Mayor Hall and the Hartford City Commissioners

**FROM:** Nicol Brown, City Manager

**DATE:** October 28, 2024

**RE:** **APPROVE AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE “ANTI-BLIGHT” DIVISION IN CHAPTER 91 OF THE HARTFORD CITY CODE TO PROVIDE UPDATED REGULATIONS AND PENALTIES PERTAINING TO PROPERTY MAINTENANCE**

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## **ITEM BEFORE THE COMMISSION:**

The item before the Commission is to approve an Ordinance amending the “Anti-Blight” Division in Chapter 91 of the Hartford City Code to provide updated Regulations and Penalties Pertaining to Property Maintenance.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The City Attorney, Nick Curio, drafted an amendment to the city code's “Anti-Blight” ordinance.

The summary of the changes:

- More comprehensively define blight violations than the current ordinance, giving the code enforcement officer more specific provisions to point to.
- Change violations from misdemeanors to civil infractions. This is consistent with a general move toward decriminalizing property-related ordinances across the country. It also provides for a more streamlined prosecution process if violators are taken to court.
- Creates an administrative process for enforcement that satisfies due-process requirements and thus allows the City to avoid going to court altogether. In particular, it allows the City itself to abate violations if the owner fails to correct them or file an appeal (to the City Manager) within 10 days of issuing the correction notice. The City can then bill the owner for the cost of abatement.
- If the owner fails to pay the bill, the ordinance says that the City could specially assess it and place the special assessment on the tax rolls. However, the City would need to adopt a separate single-lot special assessment ordinance to do this. (More on this below).

The City Manager will work with the City Attorney to draft a special assessment ordinance for your review and approval at the November city commission meeting.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Hartford City Commission approves an Ordinance to Amend The “Anti-Blight” Division in Chapter 91 of the Hartford City Code to provide updated Regulations and Penalties regarding Property Maintenance.