

City of Amarillo

Citizen Guide to Keeping Neighborhoods Attractive and Safe



Many residents want to keep their neighborhoods attractive and safe, but have questions about what the City's regulations are, and how the City can help them accomplish their goal. This guide is intended to help citizens understand their responsibilities under the City's regulations, and to provide helpful information about who to call when there are concerns about:

- **Tall weeds, grass, junk and debris.....378-4237**
- **Junk vehicles.....378-3006**
- **Unsafe, substandard buildings.....378-6259**
- **Permits.....378-3533**
- **Rental Housing Units.....378-6259**
- **Zoning regulations.....378-4223**

Tall Weeds, Grass and Junk and Debris

The weeds, junk and debris abatement program is based on the City's fire safety and nuisance ordinances. Your help is needed to promote safer and cleaner neighborhoods.

You can help by doing the following:

- 1.** Mow all uncultivated, overgrown vegetation such as weeds and tall grasses. Generally, weeds and grass over 12 inches tall are considered nuisances and must be mowed. All of the property will need to be mowed from the street curb or edge of the street paving, to the edge of the paved or unpaved alley, and from one side to the other.

- 2.** Keep your property clear of trash, junk, debris and similar items.

- 3.** Do not store the following items outside. Instead, remove them from the property or keep them inside a building.
 - Inoperable appliances, such as refrigerators, stoves, washers and dryers and similar items.

 - Furniture and household items designed for indoor use.

- 4.** Neatly stack lumber and firewood 12 inches off the ground to help prevent bug and rodent infestation.

- 5.** Dispose of old tires at an authorized tire disposal facility; not in an alley, or a vacant lot.

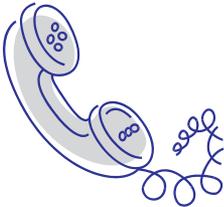
Tall Weeds, Grass and Junk and Debris

When weeds, junk and debris violations exist, the City sends a violation notice to the property owner.

The notice states when the violation must be corrected. If the owner has a question about the notice, or if more time is needed, please contact the Code Enforcement Department.

If the property has not been mowed and cleaned up by the date stated in the violation notice, the City will hire a contractor to mow and clean up the property. The City will bill the property owner for the contractor's fee, plus a \$50.00 administrative fee and sales tax.

If the invoice is not paid within 60 days, an interest-bearing lien will be filed on the property in the county deed records. The lien must be paid when the property is sold to obtain a deed free of liens.



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Please contact the Code Enforcement Department, Neighborhood Services at 378-4237 with any weeds, junk and debris questions you may have.
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Junk Vehicles

Junk vehicles are nuisances that have a negative impact upon neighborhoods.

The term, “Junk Vehicles” is a legal term used in the State Laws regarding vehicles. The term is not meant to be degrading but it does includes a vehicle that:

Does not have a current registration and current inspection sticker, and that is either:

- Wrecked, dismantled, partially dismantled, discarded, or burned; or
- That has been inoperable for more than 30 days.

Vehicles that meet these conditions cannot be stored on residential and most commercial properties within sight of a street, alley or any adjoining properties.

To prevent a vehicle from being considered a Junk Vehicle and being removed by the City, a person can do one of the following:

- 1.** Obtain a current registration or inspection sticker for the vehicle, and place it on the vehicle.
- 2.** Remove the vehicle from the property and take it to an authorized auto storage location, or to an auto salvage yard.

Junk Vehicles

- 3.** Store the vehicle inside a garage, or enclose it within a sight-restricting fence so that it cannot be seen from any other property, including the street and alley.

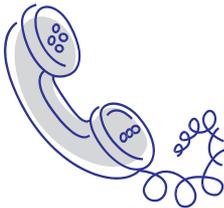
- 4.** If you have only one Junk Vehicle on your property, cover it with a tight fitting car cover made for that vehicle. The car cover must be in good condition and completely cover the vehicle. Tarps, plastic sheet, torn car covers, or covers that only partially cover the vehicle do not count. Multiple vehicles covered in this way are generally not accepted by the Municipal Court Judges.

When the City identifies a Junk Vehicle, a violation notice is mailed to the last registered owner of the vehicle, the property owner where the vehicle is located, the occupant of the property if it is rented or leased, and any lien holders listed on the vehicle registration. The notice will list a date for a Municipal Court Hearing on the vehicle. The date is usually 60 days from when the notice is sent. To keep the vehicle, the owner must either take one of the 4 actions noted above, or appear at the Court Hearing to plead their case to the Municipal Judge if the vehicle is not in compliance by the hearing date.

At the hearing, the Municipal Court Judge will either declare the vehicle Junk and order its removal, or the Judge may rule in favor of the vehicle owner and specify what may be done to retain the vehicle. If the Judge orders the vehicle to be removed, the City will have it towed from the

Junk Vehicles

property at no cost to anyone. If the vehicle is removed, the owner has one week from the original hearing date to request a re-hearing with the Municipal Judge to have the vehicle returned. If the Judge rules for the vehicle owner, the vehicle will be returned under conditions stated by the Judge. If the Judge denies the request, the State vehicle registration number is canceled, and the contract wrecker service hired by the City has possession of the vehicle. The contract wrecker service can sell parts from the vehicle, crush the vehicle and sell it for scrap, or any combination of the two. The vehicle cannot be sold as a whole vehicle or made to operate on the streets again.



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**Please contact the Code Enforcement
Department, Neighborhood Services at
378-3006 with any junk vehicle
questions you may have.**
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Unsafe, Substandard Buildings

Buildings that are vacant, open, and abandoned attract vagrants and stray animals who use them for shelter. Vandals and children are attracted to abandoned buildings, as well as people involved in illegal drug related activities. Many of those buildings may be fire damaged, dilapidated, run down, or damaged in other ways that make them unsafe and unsanitary. Usually, there is also an accumulation of junk, debris, and trash around those buildings, as well as tall weeds and grass. All of those conditions are extremely detrimental to a neighborhood.

The Amarillo Municipal Code Section 4-3-3, Abatement of substandard structures, provides a process whereby such buildings can be ordered to be repaired or to be demolished.

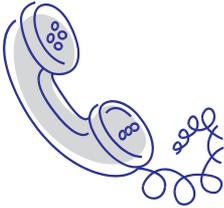
When the City discovers these buildings, the owner is notified of the problem and given a certain amount of time to either correct the problems, if that is possible, or to demolish the building.

If the owner does not take the appropriate action, the City Commission may declare the building unsafe and order its demolition. The City will award a contract to demolish the building. The costs will be billed to the owner, and if unpaid, a lien will be filed on the property in the county deed records.

Unsafe, Substandard Buildings

To avoid this action, an owner must:

- 1.** Make sure that the building is secured to prevent entry of unauthorized persons.
- 2.** Keep the property clean and clear of uncultivated vegetation, junk and/or debris.
- 3.** Remodel or repair the structure to make it safe and sanitary. This will require permits before work is started.
- 4.** If the building is not salvageable, obtain a permit to demolish the building.



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Please contact the Code Enforcement Department, Neighborhood Services at 378-6259 with any unsafe building questions you may have.
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Rental Housing Units

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Rental housing units, either houses or apartments, are necessary in any neighborhood. Rental units that are maintained in accordance with state and city regulations promote attractive, clean and safe neighborhoods. With that goal in mind, tenants and landlords both have responsibilities under state and city laws for the use, maintenance, and cleanliness of rental units.

Tenants' responsibilities include:

- Keeping their house or apartment clean.
- Minimizing damage to the interior and exterior of the unit.
- Using their unit only as a dwelling and not for commercial purposes, or illegal activities.
- Keeping their yard clear of junk, debris and trash
- Mowing their lawn unless the landlord has agreed in the lease to mow it.
- Removing junk vehicles or make them operable (see previous section on Junk Vehicles).
- Reporting damages, failures, unsafe or unsanitary conditions to their landlord in a timely manner.
- Allowing the landlord access to the unit to make the necessary repairs.
- Allowing a reasonable amount of time for the repairs to be made.

Rental Housing Units

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Landlords are generally responsible for:

- Maintaining a safe, sanitary, and secure housing unit .
- Responding in a timely manner to reasonable requests from their tenants for repairs and maintenance.
- Responding immediately to requests for repair or maintenance that are likely to affect the safety or health of the tenant.

Unsafe Rental Units:

Sometimes requests from tenants to their landlords are ignored, or delayed resulting in unsafe conditions for the tenant. If that occurs;

- The tenant may contact the Code Enforcement Department to have their unit inspected.
- The tenant must be willing to have an inspector enter their unit for an inspection.
- The inspector will look for unsafe and unsanitary conditions.
- Unsafe or unsanitary conditions will be reported to the landlord. He or she will be expected to make the necessary repairs.
- If the landlord does not make the repairs, a case against the landlord may be filed with the Municipal Court.

In any case, if the landlord does not respond appropriately, or quickly enough, or the City's actions may seem to take too much time, **a tenant must always take the appropriate action to protect their family first.**



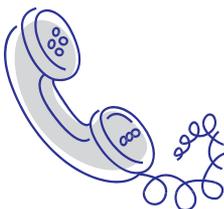
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Please contact the Code Enforcement Department, Neighborhood Services at 378-6259 with any questions you may have about unsafe rental units.
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Permits

Before starting any repairs, improvements, or additions to a building, please call the Code Enforcement Department first to determine whether a permit is required, and what kinds of permits are required. You can also find out what rules and regulations you have to follow. Depending upon the work, licensed contractors may be required to do the work. In nearly all cases, periodic inspections of the work are required. The types of permits include those for:

- **Building**
- **Manufactured Homes**
- **Roofing**
- **Electrical**
- **Plumbing**
- **Moving a building**
- **Demolition**
- **Sign installations**
- **Heating and air-conditioning**

A building permit is required for additions to a building including carports and porches. A permit is also required for substantial improvements and repairs to a building, and for building detached storage buildings over a certain size. If a building permit is required, you may be required to submit drawings of the proposed work, together with a site plan or survey of your property.



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Please contact the Code Enforcement Department, Neighborhood Services at 378-3533 with any permit questions you may have.
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Zoning Regulations

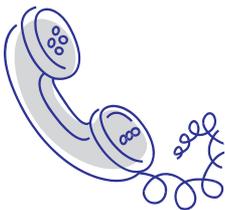
There are many zoning regulations that affect how you can use your property, and that affect how your neighborhood is developed.

Zoning regulations include:

- How land may be used
 - How land may be subdivided
 - Setbacks from the property line for buildings
 - How much of a lot can be covered with buildings
 - Heights of buildings
 - Fence heights and locations
 - Off street parking requirements
 - Sign types, locations, height, and area
 - Landscaping on commercial properties
 - Other similar regulations
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Zoning regulations apply to all properties in the City. Residentially zoned areas are generally limited to residential uses only. Businesses, commercial and industrial uses are generally prohibited in residentially zoned areas with some exceptions. On the other hand, residences may be located in commercial zones.

Before starting any business, commercial, institutional, educational, daycare, religious, entertainment, or industrial facility please find out if that is an allowed use in your area. Find out what other zoning regulations may apply. Even businesses operated from the home, or use of your land for non-residential uses may be limited.



Please contact the City's Planning Department at 378-4223 with any questions you may have.
