



**Franklin County Municipal Court  
Environmental Division  
Judge Stephanie Mingo**

# **Vacant & Abandoned Property**

A change in weather can also bring new code enforcement challenges. The neighbor who refuses to mow his lawn; the person down the street who always puts the trash out two days before collection day; the family around the corner who has cars parked in the yard or works on cars in their garage. These challenges, left unaddressed, can lead to neighborhood decline.

The "Broken Windows" theory suggests that small, isolated nuisances, if ignored, can lead to larger neighborhood problems. That, in theory, if a window is broken and left unrepaired, people will conclude that no one cares and no one is in charge. Left alone, more windows will be broken, and the sense of disorder will spread, sending a signal to the community that criminals can do as they wish.

Many of these issues are addressed within the Environmental Court; armed with information about the law, and what our concerned citizens can do to help will keep our neighborhoods in compliance, before the broken windows become a broken community.

These nuisances can be abated quickly and efficiently, before leading to worse criminal activity- if the community acts.



# SIGNS OF DETERIORATING STRUCTURES

## Chimney

Missing brick, stucco or mortar joints can cause carbon monoxide and water to enter back into the structure.

## Windows & Doors

Glass must not be broken and the glazing putty should be undamaged. If damaged these openings will allow water and insects to destroy wood elements.

## Gutters & Downspouts

Without adequate guttering, water can damage the edges of a roof or enter through the foundation walls.

## Porches and Stairs

When damaged and unmaintained these vital components directly impact the safety of the occupants as well as the public who may venture onto them.

## Roof

Damaged coverings and flashing allow moisture to rot, mold and damage wood structure elements.

## Exterior Walls

Missing, loose or damaged siding allows water, insects, and vermin to enter a structure: causing damage.

## Foundations

The foundation supports the structure. Missing pieces or deteriorated mortar joints allow easy access to vermin, water, and insects.

## Accessory Garages

Garages and other outbuildings have the same maintenance requirement as explained for the other areas of a structure.



In addition to reporting the violations of these Code provisions to the appropriate department for criminal prosecution, you may also contact your councilperson or City Attorney's office to file a civil action.

For more information on nuisance abatement tools, community contact information, and brochures please visit the Environmental Court's website.

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