

Frequently Asked Questions

General

What is the reason for the ordinance?

The County of Riverside has become increasingly concerned with the growing number of abandoned and distressed residential properties, and the threat this poses to public peace, health, and safety of the citizens of the county. These properties, left unmaintained, can lead to a decline in property value, danger to children as attractive nuisances, opportunities for secretive criminal conduct including gang and drug crimes, squatters and real estate fraud.

The Board of Supervisors has passed an emergency ordinance, Ordinance Number 880, effective May 13, 2008, affecting residential properties in the unincorporated areas of the county.

How do the residents and investors benefit from this ordinance?

Residents and visitors to the county benefit from safe and secure neighborhoods, and the elimination of potential health and safety hazards posing risk to themselves and their children. Abandoned property attracts squatters, drugs and leads to neighborhood blight.

Investors, residents, visitors and businesses benefit from the on-going maintenance of neighborhood standards through sustained levels of marketability.

How serious is the problem with foreclosures in Riverside County?

Riverside County has one of the highest rates of foreclosure activity in the nation. Riverside County has approximately 770,000 residential properties, of which more than 28,000, or 4%, are presently in foreclosure. All areas of the county are affected, with some communities reporting foreclosures as high as 9% of total residential properties.

Why is a sign required to be displayed in the front window?

Riverside County covers over 7,300 square miles, of which 90% is unincorporated. In order to provide coverage throughout these areas, we must call upon all of the citizens to identify and report problems to the local maintenance representatives.

How do I determine if property is located in an unincorporated area?

Refer to your property tax assessment or on-line via the [Riverside County Land Information System](#)

What is the difference between an abandoned and a distressed residential property?

A distressed property is a residential property that is legally occupied and in the foreclosure process, that is, under a current

- *Notice of Default*
- *Notice of Trustee's sale*
- *Pending Tax Assessor's Lien Sale*
- *Foreclosed upon by the trustee*
- *Conveyed to the beneficiary/trustee*

If the property becomes vacant, or shows evidence of vacancy, then it is considered an abandoned property.

Property Lender, Trustee, Beneficiary

Who is required to register?

The trustee or other beneficiary must register within 10 days of the property inspection when the property becomes vacant or shows signs of vacancy.

What property is subject to registration?

Residential property located in an unincorporated area of the county is subject to registration by the trustee or other beneficiary within 10 days of the property inspection, and the property is vacant or shows signs of vacancy.

What is the standard of care needed for a residential property?

Abandoned properties shall be maintained in a manner comparable to the neighborhood.

At a minimum, abandoned properties shall be:

- *Free of evidence of vacancy*
- *Free of graffiti, tagging or similar markings (must match paint to color of exterior)*
- *Landscape maintenance of visible front and side yards*
- *Pools and spas either (a) in working order so the water remains clear and free of pollutants and debris, or (b) drained and kept dry*

Property must be secured.

When do the trustee/lender responsibilities start?

Prior to recording a Notice of Default, an inspection of the property is required.

What inspections are required and how often?

Prior to recording a Notice of Default, an inspection of the property is required.

Inspections must be performed monthly until property in default/foreclosure is remedied or property becomes vacant or shows signs of vacancy. Registration required if property becomes vacant or shows signs of vacancy.

What are the lenders or trustees responsibilities for a distressed property?

Prior to recording a Notice of Default, an inspection of the property is required. Inspections must be performed monthly until property in default/foreclosure is remedied or property becomes vacant or shows signs of vacancy. Registration required if property becomes vacant or shows signs of vacancy.

What does evidence of vacancy mean?

Any condition that on its own, or combined with other conditions present, would lead a reasonable person to believe that the property is vacant. Such conditions might include but are not limited to:

- *Overgrown and/or dead vegetation, dry brush, weeds*
- *Accumulation of newspapers, circulars, flyers, notices and/or mail,*
- *Past due utility notices and/or disconnected utilities*
- *Accumulation of trash, junk, building materials and/or debris*
- *Discarded personal items, including but not limited to furniture, clothing, large and small appliances*
- *The absence of window coverings such as curtains, blinds, and/or shutters,*
- *The absence of furnishings and/or personal items consistent with residential habitation*
- *Observations by neighbors, passersby, delivery agents, government employees or others that the property is vacant*

What are the lenders or trustees responsibilities for an abandoned property?

To maintain the property to the standard of the neighborhood, and to secure from potential public health or safety risks due to the distressed or abandoned status. Responsibilities are considerable, and include, but are not limited to inspections, maintenance, security, and registration and property signage as required under the ordinance.

Is there a fee for registering a property?

Yes, subject to approval of the Board of Supervisors. The fee will be posted here after its adoption July 1, 2008.

Is there a process for registering several properties?

Yes. The details will be released soon.

When do I need to renew my registration?

Annually, after January 1st, and prior to January 31st.

Is there a penalty for late registration?

Not at this time. However, you may be subject to civil and administrative penalties and costs under the ordinance.

How long is the registration good?

Until December 31st of the year registered.

If property is located in an incorporated city, does this ordinance apply?

No, but similar city ordinances may apply.

Concerned Neighbor

Why is a sign required to be displayed in the front window?

The purpose of the sign is to provide public notification of the maintenance contact in the event of a potential hazard, including unauthorized persons or less than neighborhood standard conditions.

How do I report a problem with an abandoned or distressed property?

If there is a sign posted, contact the number and report the concern. If there is no sign or an inadequate response, then contact the local Code Enforcement office.

What should I do if I see a property in my neighborhood that appears to be abandoned and is deteriorating?

If there is a sign posted, contact the number and report the concern. If there is no sign or an inadequate response, then contact the county through the Code Enforcement website's [Report a Violation online form](#).