



C I T Y O F
RENO

Memorandum

DATE: March 5, 2026


TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Jackie Bryant, City Manager

FROM: Lance Ferrato, Director of Licensing and Code Enforcement
Ashley Turney, Assistant City Manager

DEPT: Licensing and Code Enforcement Department

SUBJECT: Code Enforcement Process Updates



This memorandum provides an overview of the City’s current Code Enforcement process and outlines the steps taken to ensure compliance with Reno Municipal Code (“RMC”). It explains the progressive enforcement framework, associated legal requirements, and current challenges, while also presenting potential strategies to strengthen compliance and address persistent issues.

Enforcement Process Overview

The current Code Enforcement process is designed to promote compliance through a structured and progressive approach. It begins with a Courtesy Notice informing property owners of identified violations, followed by a Warning of Violation if corrective action is not taken within 14 days. Continued noncompliance triggers an escalating citation schedule, with increasing fines at regular 14-day intervals as permitted under Department Policy, Reno Municipal Code, and Nevada Revised Statutes (“NRS”). This framework ensures fairness while providing clear timelines and consequences to encourage timely resolution of violations. The process, timeline, and limitations are delineated by jurisdiction as follows:

Department Policy

- Notice/Citation Timeline
 - Courtesy Notice: Issued upon identification of a violation.
 - Warning of Violation (WOV): Sent after 14 days if unresolved.
 - Citations: Sent every 14 days until compliance is met.

Reno Municipal Code

- Citation Schedule

- 1st Citation: \$100.
- 2nd Citation: \$250.
- 3rd Citation: \$500.
- Subsequent Citations: \$1,000.

Nevada Revised Statutes

- Maximum Daily Penalties
 - Residential Properties: Up to \$500 per day.
 - Commercial Properties: Up to \$1,000 per day.

Challenges with Unpaid Citations and Liens

When violators fail to comply, the City may continue issuing citations or record a lien under NRS Chapter 108 and RMC Chapter 1.05; however, both approaches have disadvantages.

Key Challenges

- Continued Fines: Issuing additional monetary citations without lien action can be counterproductive.
 - May not compel corrective action and may further delay resolution.
 - Extreme accumulation of fines could become infeasible to the property owner making payment implausible.
- Liens: Once recorded, enforcement activity stops, leaving properties in disrepair.

Implications

- Liens secure the City's financial interest but do not mandate repairs.
- Continued fines increase debt but may not lead to compliance.
- Properties may remain blighted for extended periods under either approach.

Legal Framework

- NRS Chapter 108
 - Authorizes liens for unpaid fines and abatement costs.
 - Enforceable through foreclosure but does not require repairs.
- RMC Chapter 1.05
 - Governs citation escalation and lien recovery.
 - Sets maximum fine limits in compliance with state law.

Immediate Strategies

1. Abandoned Nuisance Commercial Properties

Effective March 3, 2026, to address some of Council's concerns, the department policy to notice and cite on the schedule noted above will be amended for abandoned nuisance commercial properties as follows:

- Day 0 – Courtesy Notice will be issued upon identification of a violation.

- Day 14 – Warning of Violation will be issued if unresolved.
- Day 28* – Citations will be sent every day until compliance is met or until an actionable plan is implemented. Citations will still follow the prescribed amounts and sequence provided in RMC, i.e., \$100, \$250, \$500, \$1,000, etc.

**RMC Sec. 8.22.090 allows 30 days to abate a nuisance that is not an immediate danger to the public health, safety or welfare and that which was caused by the criminal activity of a person other than the owner.*

2. Special Assessments

Pursuant to RMC Sec. 8.22.250, code allows for the creation of special assessments when certain criteria are met. This assessment is collected like ordinary county taxes and follows the same penalties, procedures, and enforcement rules as county taxes as long as:

- At least 12 months have elapsed after the date specified in the notice by which the owner must abate the condition or the date specified in the order of the governing body or court by which the owner must abate the condition, whichever is later.
- The owner has been billed, served, or otherwise notified that the penalties are due; and
- The amount of uncollected civil penalties is more than \$5,000.

Historically, this process has never been used for fine collection; however, staff is working with the Washoe County Treasurer's Office and appropriate internal departments to set up a process to implement special assessments on applicable cases as soon as possible.

Additional Strategy for Consideration

To address gaps in current enforcement practices, particularly the limitations of liens and escalating fines, Council could consider legislative advocacy for strategies that offer alternative approaches to improve compliance, expedite property remediation, and strengthen the City's ability to protect community standards. Examples of possible amendments to NRS include:

- NRS could be amended to lower the criteria for special assessments, e.g., from 12 to six months and/or from \$5,000 to \$2,500.
- NRS could be amended to increase the maximum fee allowed per citation.
- New provisions could be created to implement court appointed management in extreme situations.