

Time-of-Sale (TOS) Housing Inspection Program

Scope:

The Time-of-Sale (TOS) Housing Inspection Program provides potential purchasers with information about the condition of a dwelling and requires the correction of immediate hazards by the seller or assumption of hazards by the new buyer. The time of sale program plays an important role in maintaining the value and quality of the housing stock in Columbia Heights.

As part of the TOS Program both a Time-of-Sale Housing Inspection and a sewer line televising must be completed prior to the sale or transfer of all single, two, and three family dwellings, condominiums, townhouses, and mobile homes. Multi-family rental buildings of four (4) or more units are not included. A Time of Sale Inspection application will need to be filled out, and the fee paid before an inspection can be scheduled. Any home listed prior to the enactment of the ordinance on May 22nd, 2024, is exempt from the Time of Sale Program.

Housing inspections take, on average, 45 minutes to an hour per unit to complete. Scheduling the inspection as soon as possible is important as the inspection schedule can fill up quickly. Final inspections after corrections are made take around 30 minutes.

During the inspection, the building inspector looks for items in the home that present safety or maintenance concerns. Following the inspection, the homeowner receives a “fix it” list that spells out the repairs that will be needed to bring the property into compliance with city codes. The home seller must make the specified repairs and have the home re-inspected before a Certificate of Property Maintenance will be issued for the completion of the sale. The initial and final inspections are covered by the application fee. A \$65.00 charge will apply for each inspection needed thereafter.

Immediate Hazardous Items:

Nine items not meeting current codes or standards have been identified as immediate hazards which are conditions or defects **likely to cause injury to a person or property if not corrected.**

1. Heating systems that are unsafe due to burned out or rusted heat exchangers; burned out, rusted, or plugged flues; no vent; connection with unsafe gas supplies; or incapacity to adequately heat the living space. (requires certification from a licensed contractor may be omitted if appliances have been replaced recently)
2. Water heaters that are unsafe due to burned out or rusted heat exchangers; burned out, rusted, or plugged flues; no vent; connection with unsafe gas supplies; or lack of temperature and pressure relief valves. (requires certification from a licensed contractor may be omitted if appliances have been replaced recently)
3. Electrical systems that are unsafe due to dangerous overloading; damaged or deteriorated equipment; improperly taped or spliced wiring; exposed uninsulated wires; temporary distribution systems; ungrounded systems; or extension cords used with permanent

appliances (e.g., garage door openers and window unit air conditioners). (requires certification from a licensed contractor)

4. Plumbing systems that are unsanitary due to leaking waste systems, fixtures, or traps; lack of an operating toilet; lack of washing and bathing facilities; cross connection of municipal water supply with fixtures or sewage lines; or the lack of water.
5. Structural systems, including walls, chimneys, ceilings, roofs, foundations, floor systems or decks which are not capable of carrying imposed loads.
6. Exterior roofs, walls, chimneys, and foundations that are not weather tight and watertight to the extent that it creates an immediate hazard.
7. Abandoned fuel tanks.
8. Refuse, garbage, human waste, decaying vermin or other dead animals, animal waste, vermin infestation or other materials rendering residential buildings and structures unsanitary for human occupancy.
9. Lack of properly located and operational smoke detectors.

Correcting Hazardous Conditions or Buyer Assumes Hazards:

When hazardous items are identified by the TOS Evaluator, a TOS re-inspection must be scheduled with the City of Columbia Heights to follow up and determine whether the hazardous condition has been corrected.

If an immediate hazard exists, it must be corrected, and if the dwelling is occupied, corrective action must be taken by the owner or the owner's agent. If the dwelling is vacant, it cannot be occupied until all hazards are corrected.

If the owner / seller cannot or will not undertake corrective action, the buyer may elect to assume the immediate hazards identified in the *Time-of-Sale Housing Evaluation Report*. A buyer intending to assume the hazards must first obtain written consent from the City of Columbia Heights Building Official by signing, in person, a Hazard Correction/Responsibility form.

Proof of a financial guarantee in the form of a cash escrow at least equal to the determined valuation of repairs must be posted with an attorney, closing company, or title company to ensure the completion of the necessary corrections. The minimum escrow amount is \$500. The city does not hold escrow checks.

The owner or the owner's contractor(s) must obtain the necessary permits from the City of Columbia Heights and the dwelling is subject to City of Columbia Heights re-inspection of all open permits prior to occupancy.

Sewer Line Inspection:

As part of this program the seller is required to have the sewer line of the house televised. Proof of the inspection (Sewer Inspection Cover Letter and a copy of the televising video) must be submitted to both the building official and any potential buyer of the property. Unlike other hazards or corrections, the seller or buyer are not required to fix the sewer line, and proof of escrow is not required.

General Time of Sale Inspection Timeline:

1. Owner submits the Application for Time of Sale Inspection to the inspections department and schedules the inspection.

2. The city inspector inspects the property highlighting any required fixes if there are any applicable.
3. The homeowner completes the required fixes or presents the inspections department with proof that funds for the repairs are held in escrow.
4. At the same time the homeowner hires an inspector to conduct a sewer inspection submitting the results to the inspections department alongside the Sewer Inspection Cover Page.
5. Once all repairs are complete/proof of escrow is received, and all documentation is submitted the Inspector will issue the homeowner the Certificate of Property Maintenance, allowing the home to be sold.