

**CITY OF SEATTLE**  
**ORDINANCE** 127249  
**COUNCIL BILL** 121006

AN ORDINANCE relating to chronic nuisance properties; allowing, under certain circumstances, an off-property nuisance activity to count toward determining that a property is a chronic nuisance; increasing penalties; clarifying the City's remedies relating to chronic nuisance properties; amending Sections 10.09.010, 10.09.030, 10.09.050, 10.09.060, and 10.09.080 of the Seattle Municipal Code.

WHEREAS, on November 30, 2009, the City Council adopted Ordinance 123188, commonly referred to as the Chronic Nuisance Properties Ordinance, to address specific properties that present serious health, safety, and welfare concerns, interfere with the quality of life, and impose a financial and operational burden on city government due to the numerous calls for emergency services related to illegal activities that repeatedly occur on or adjacent to such properties. The Mayor signed Ordinance 123188 on December 3, 2009; and

WHEREAS, in the 16 years since its adoption, the City has effectively and prudently utilized the Chronic Nuisance Properties Ordinance only 17 times to compel property owners to abate the nuisance activities occurring on their property, thereby reducing criminal behavior and enhancing public safety; and

WHEREAS, successful abatement of chronic nuisance activities has occurred at commercial and residential properties, including motels and nightclubs, where homicides, assaults, prostitution, robberies, weapons violations, and ongoing drug trafficking have taken place; NOW, THEREFORE,

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:**

Section 1. The City finds and declares:

A. Providing safe, peaceful, and accessible neighborhoods, including public streets and sidewalks, is a vital priority of city government.

B. Ordinance 127037, passed in 2024, expanded the Fire Chief's authority to address public safety risks created by abandoned or neglected buildings, but it did not address the risks associated with ongoing nuisance activities at active commercial and residential properties.

C. Additional regulatory tools are needed to address the negative community impacts and very real public safety risks associated with residential properties that have become chronic nuisances to their neighborhoods.

D. Nuisance activities, as defined in Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 10.09, including homicides and aggravated assaults, have occurred on or near specific properties in the city, including recently in the Pioneer Square neighborhood on March 13, 2025, May 4, 2025, May 10, 2025, and May 17, 2025.

E. Currently, a high frequency of nuisance activities only leads to a chronic nuisance property declaration if those activities occur directly on the property. This creates situations where a property is connected to nuisance activities around it but cannot be classified as a chronic nuisance property, meaning the city government cannot pursue abatement of the nuisances through the authority and procedures of the Chronic Nuisance Properties Ordinance.

F. To maintain the peace and welfare of the city and to abate chronic nuisance activities, it is necessary to expand, under some circumstances, the geographic area to which this ordinance applies.

Section 2. Section 10.09.010 of the Seattle Municipal Code, last amended by Ordinance 126098, is amended as follows:

**10.09.010 Definitions**

For purposes of this Chapter 10.09(~~(, the following words or phrases shall have the meaning prescribed below))~~):

\* \* \*

“Abate” means to repair, replace, remove, destroy, or otherwise remedy a condition ~~((which))~~ that constitutes a violation of this Chapter 10.09, or that constitute public nuisances that create risk to public health, by such means and in such a manner and to such an extent as the Chief of Police determines is necessary in the interest of the general health, safety, and welfare of the community.

“Chronic nuisance property” means:

1. A property on which three or more nuisance activities as defined in this Section 10.09.010 exist or have occurred during any 60-day period or seven or more nuisance activities have occurred during any 12-month period(~~(, or)~~) . A nuisance activity off the property, except as otherwise specified in this definition, may be considered in determining that a property is a chronic nuisance if it:

a. Occurs adjacent to or in proximity to the property; and

b. Involves a person associated with the property, including either a person in charge of the property, or a guest or invitee of the person in charge, and facts and circumstances establish a clear nexus between the property and the nuisance activity.

A nuisance activity off the property may not be considered in determining that a property is a chronic nuisance if the property is owned or operated by a nonprofit entity whose primary purpose is providing social or health services, including but not limited to providing low-income housing, food, or domestic violence support, on the property

2. A property which, upon a request for execution of a search warrant, has been the subject of a determination by a court two or more times within a 12-month period that probable cause exists that illegal possession, manufacture or delivery of a controlled substance or related offenses as defined in chapter 69.50 RCW has occurred on the property.

\* \* \*

“Nuisance activity” (~~includes~~) means any of the following activities, behaviors, or conduct that result in a police incident report describing a criminal violation:

1. A “most serious offense” as defined in chapter 9.94A RCW;
2. A “drug related activity” as defined in RCW 59.18.130;
3. Any of the following activities, behaviors, or criminal conduct:
  - a. Assault, fighting, menacing, stalking, harassment, or reckless endangerment, as defined in Chapter 12A.06 or in RCW provisions adopted by Chapter 12A.09;
  - b. Promoting, advancing, or profiting from prostitution as defined in chapter 9A.88 RCW;
  - c. Prostitution, as defined in Section 12A.10.020;
  - d. Permitting prostitution, as defined in Section 12A.10.060;
  - e. Obstructing pedestrian or vehicular traffic, as defined in subsection 12A.12.015.A.4;
  - f. Failure to disperse, as defined in Section 12A.12.020;

g. Weapons violations, as defined in Chapter 12A.14; ~~((or))~~

h. Gang related activity, as defined in RCW 59.18.030(13)~~((-))~~;

i. Liquor offenses, whether violations of chapter 66.44 RCW or Chapter 12A.24;

j. Possessing stolen property and trafficking in stolen property offenses as defined in chapters 9A.56 and 9A.82 RCW, or in Sections 12A.08.090 or 12A.08.160; or

k. Violations of chapter 16.52 RCW (Prevention of cruelty to animals).

“Public health nuisance” means an act or omission that constitutes a nuisance under RCW 7.48.120 and endangers the health or safety of others.

\* \* \*

Section 3. Section 10.09.030 of the Seattle Municipal Code, enacted by Ordinance 123188, is amended as follows:

**10.09.030 Declaration of chronic nuisance property and procedure**

A. After consulting with the City Attorney and other City or King County departments with knowledge of potential public health nuisances, the ~~((The))~~ Chief of Police may declare that a property is a chronic nuisance property, as defined in this Chapter 10.09, when there are specific facts and circumstances documenting ~~(((1) the occurrence of three or more nuisance activities on a property within 60 days or seven or more nuisance activities within a 12-month period, or (2)))~~ activity ~~(((on a property)))~~ as described in subsection 1 or 2 of the definition for chronic nuisance property. The Chief of Police shall provide written notice of this declaration to the persons in charge of the property. The notice shall be sent by first class mail or personally served, and a copy shall be sent by certified mail. The notice shall contain:

1. The street address or a legal description sufficient for identification of the property;

2. A declaration that the Chief of Police has determined the property has become a chronic nuisance property with a concise description of the nuisance activities that exist or that have occurred, and documentation of any public health nuisances that may require abatement;
3. A notice that the owner and other persons in charge of the property are subject to monetary penalties as set forth in Section 10.09.050.
4. A demand the owner and other persons in charge respond to the Chief of Police within seven days of service of the notice to discuss a course of action to correct the nuisance activity and/or public health nuisance;
5. A notice that, if the person in charge does not respond to the Chief of Police as required in this Section 10.09.030, or if the matter is not voluntarily corrected to the satisfaction of the Chief of Police, the City may file an action to abate the property as a chronic nuisance property pursuant to Section 10.09.060 and/or take other action against the property or person in charge.

\* \* \*

Section 4. Section 10.09.060 of the Seattle Municipal Code, enacted by Ordinance 123188, is amended as follows:

**10.09.060 Commencement of Action—Enforcement**

Upon referral pursuant to Section 10.09.030, the City Attorney may initiate an action in any court of competent jurisdiction to abate a chronic nuisance property, to impose penalties pursuant to this Chapter 10.09, to seek alternative remedies under city or state laws and seek any other relief authorized by law. The City Attorney shall consider any documentation provided by the person in charge or the property owner that contests the designation as a chronic nuisance or

1 challenges the reasonableness of any specific abatement requested by the Police Chief, before  
2 initiating an action in court to abate a chronic nuisance property.

3 Section 5. Section 10.09.080 of the Seattle Municipal Code, enacted by Ordinance  
4 123188, is amended as follows:

5 **10.09.080 Remedies**

6 A. If the Court determines a property is a chronic nuisance property pursuant to this  
7 Chapter 10.09 the court may order any of the following: (1) order the person in charge to  
8 immediately abate nuisance activity and any public health nuisance from occurring on the  
9 property, (2) order that the Chief of Police shall have the right to inspect the property to  
10 determine if the court's orders have been complied with, (3) impose a penalty of up to (~~(\$500)~~)  
11 \$750 per day against the person in charge for each day from the date the notice pursuant to  
12 subsection 10.09.030.A was issued until the Chief of Police confirms that the property is no  
13 longer a chronic nuisance property, (4) make any other order that will reasonably abate nuisance  
14 activities and public health nuisances from occurring on the property, including authorizing the  
15 City to take action to abate nuisance activities and public health nuisances from occurring upon  
16 the property if other court orders are not complied with or do not abate nuisance activity and  
17 public health nuisances on the property and providing that the costs of such City action are to be

1 paid for by the person in charge of the property. Any unpaid costs of abatement shall become a  
2 lien upon the property and may be collected by the City as authorized by law.

3 B. If the court finds that an owner failed to take all reasonable steps requested in writing  
4 pursuant to Section 10.09.035, the court may impose a civil penalty up to ~~(((\$25,000))~~ \$37,500.

5 Section 6. Section 10.09.050 of the Seattle Municipal Code, enacted by Ordinance  
6 123188, is amended as follows:

7 **10.09.050 Penalties**

8 A. Except as provided in this Section 10.09.050, in addition to any other sanction or  
9 remedial procedure that may be available, the person in charge is subject to a penalty of up to  
10 ~~(((\$500))~~\$750 per day from the date of the notice issued pursuant to subsection 10.09.030.A until  
11 the Chief of Police confirms that the property is no longer a chronic nuisance property.

12 B. If the agreed course of action results in the abatement of nuisance activities to the  
13 satisfaction of the Chief of Police within 30 days of the notice issued pursuant to subsection  
14 10.09.030.A, or such longer period allowed by the Chief of Police pursuant to subsection  
15 10.09.030.D, the matter shall not be referred to the City Attorney and the person in charge shall  
16 not be subject to any penalty pursuant to this Chapter 10.09.

17 C. An owner who fails to comply with Section 10.09.035 is subject to a civil penalty  
18 of up to ~~(((\$25,000))~~\$37,500.



Section 7. This ordinance shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Sections 1.04.020 and 1.04.070.

Passed by the City Council the 15th day of July, 2025,  
and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this 15th day of  
July, 2025.



President \_\_\_\_\_ of the City Council

☒ Approved / ☐ returned unsigned / ☐ vetoed this 18th day of July, 2025.



Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor

Filed by me this 18th day of July, 2025.



Scheereen Dedman, City Clerk

(Seal)