CITY OF JOPLIN
COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

ITEM:
Council Bill No. 2025-014 – AN ORDINANCE amending the criminal code of the City of Joplin Chapter 82 – Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions, Article V. - Offenses Against Health and Safety, by enacting a new section prohibiting the offense of criminal mischief; and establishing a time for this ordinance to become effective.

MEETING DATE
November 17, 2025

ATTACHMENTS
Council Bill No. 2025-013

REVIEWED BY
City Attorney Peter Edwards; Chief of Police Richard Pearson; and City Manager Nicholas Edwards.

SUMMARY
This council bill imposes a penalty punishable by section 1-5 of Chapter 82, for any person unlawfully occupying a residential structure that is property of another.

BACKGROUND
This ordinance adopts Revised Statute of Missouri 569.200, effective August 28, 2024, and modeled after Florida's "anti-squatter" law. The ordinance recognizes that vacant structure fires accounted 61% of fires in the city in 2023 and 44% of fires in 2024. This ordinance is designed to address the unlawful occupation effectively with the goal of improving health and safety in the community.

FUNDING SOURCE
N/A

RECOMMENDATION
Staff recommends this Council Bill be approved on First Reading.

COUNCIL BILL NO. 2025-014 ORDINANCE NO.

AN ORDINANCE amending the criminal code of the City of Joplin Chapter 82 – Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions, Article V. - Offenses Against Health and Safety, by enacting a new section prohibiting the offense of criminal mischief; and establishing a time for this ordinance to become effective.

WHEREAS, it is the desire of the City Council to amend the criminal code to address the issue of illegal occupancy of vacant properties in our community; and

WHEREAS, vacant structures accounted for 61% of fires in 2023 and 44% of fires in 2024 within the City of Joplin; and

WHEREAS, the illegal occupancy of vacant properties poses a danger to the health, life, safety and welfare of citizens; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the community to prohibit the illegal occupancy of properties in the City of Joplin; and

WHEREAS, this ordinance adopts Revised Statute of Missouri 569.200, effective August 28, 2024, and by adoption of this ordinance the City can provide for better enforcement.

BE IT ORDAINED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF JOPLIN, MISSOURI, as follows:

Section 1. That Chapter 82 – Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions, Article V. - Offenses Against Health and Safety, enact the following section:

"Sec. 82-214. Criminal mischief prohibited.

(a) A person commits the offense of criminal mischief if he or she unlawfully detains, occupies, or trespasses upon a residential dwelling that is property of another.

(b) "Property of another" shall mean any property in which the person does not have a possessory interest.

(c) Penalty. A violation of this section is punishable under Section 1-5."

Section 2. That this ordinance shall be in full force and effect twenty days (20) after its passage.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF JOPLIN, MISSOURI, this _____ day of _____, 2025, by a vote of _____.

_____
Keenan T. Cortez, Sr., Mayor

ATTEST:

_____
Holly Nagy, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

_____
Peter C. Edwards, City Attorney