



October 7, 2024

City Council
929 N Front St.
Wilmington, NC 28401
Via Email

Re: Building Façade Inspections

Dear Mr. Mayor and Council Members:

It has come to our attention that for the second time this year, the City of Wilmington has experienced a building failure. The first was a façade failure along a row of buildings on Grace Streetⁱ, and the second was the roof collapse of a building located at 205 Princess St., according to news reportsⁱⁱ. The two incidents are a signal that it is time for the Council to consider a façade inspection program for commercial buildings.

The International Institute of Building Enclosure Consultants (IIBEC) is an international association of professionals who specialize in roofing, waterproofing, and exterior wall design and specification. IIBEC was founded over 40 years ago in Raleigh, NC, to advance the profession of building enclosure consultants. IIBEC recommends regular inspections, not to exceed every five years, of exterior building facades and appurtenances based on age, material, construction, and environmental conditions in accordance with ASTM E2270 to ensure the safety of the public, maintain performance, and protect value.

IIBEC recognizes there is not a one-size-fits-all inspection program that would adequately apply to all localities, however, ASTM E2270, *Standard Practice for Periodic Inspection of Building Facades for Unsafe Conditions*, provides a framework for local officials to build a program around. ASTM E2270 describes methods and procedures for inspection, evaluation, and reporting for periodic inspection of building facades for unsafe conditions and is used by the cities listed in the next paragraph.

Numerous localities have already established inspection programs that meet their jurisdiction's needs, many of which include all or most of ASTM E2270. Currently, the U.S. cities of Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Detroit, Milwaukee, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, and St. Louis have ordinances requiring periodic inspections.

While design construction requirements have seen increasing and more rigorous building codes and standards, time and the elements may eventually necessitate corrective action. A well developed inspection program can be one way to improve the public health and safety. At the end of 2021, the average U.S. commercial building was 53.03 years old, according to

research done by Stuart A. Feldstein at SMR Research Corp. While commercial buildings are expected to last for decades, the increasing age suggests additional maintenance and repair will become necessary for many buildings in the coming years.

In addition to protecting the public, regular inspections can also benefit building owners, residents, and the community at large by protecting financial investments and maintaining market values. According to Facilities Management Insights, "...the façade inspection can identify more nuanced water infiltration issues or other façade deficiencies for the building owner. This allows building owners to be proactive in their maintenance efforts and eliminate small problems before they become large problemsⁱⁱⁱ." The article concludes by noting that regular inspections can, "reduce the cost of associated insurance premiums for the property.^{iv}" Periodic façade inspections are a win for tenants, owners, and the community: residents and tenants are sheltered, critical equipment is safeguarded, and market values are maintained.

More importantly, as I am sure we will all agree, these inspections help ensure the safety of the public. There have been notable cases where falling building material claimed the lives of people that unfortunately happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time^v and many more cases where falling material could have seriously injured or killed pedestrians had they been at that location^{vi}.

According to a guide the city provides to property owners, residents, and contractors, "Wilmington has one of the state's largest historic districts, which was established to help protect and maintain the historic fabric of the community, as well as to ensure that new development is compatible with our historic character.^{vii}" A façade inspection program may help the community maintain its historic fabric well into the future as well as protect the residents and visitors exploring the historic city.

As fellow residents of the great State of North Carolina, we stand by ready to be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Brian Pallasch, CAE
CEO/EVP



Nicholas Tribble, RRO
Director of Region II



Scott Singleton, PE, RRC
President, Carolinas Chapter

ⁱ <https://portcitydaily.com/local-news/2024/03/07/front-of-building-collapses-on-grace-street/>

ⁱⁱ <https://portcitydaily.com/local-news/2024/08/09/downtown-building-condemned-after-roof-collapse-city-opens-case-to-track-situation/>

ⁱⁱⁱ How to Ensure a Successful Façade Inspection.

<https://www.facilitiesnet.com/windowsexteriorwalls/article/How-to-Ensure-a-Successful-Fa%C3%A7ade-Inspection--18518>

^{iv} *ibid*

^v <https://www.chicagotribune.com/1999/10/09/skyscraper-glass-falls-kills-mother/>

^{vi} <https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/paterson-press/2024/07/17/paterson-nj-health-office-building-facade-collapses/74439079007/>

^{vii} <https://www.wilmingtonnc.gov/files/assets/city/v/1/development-amp-business/documents/historic-preservation/historic-districts-brochure.pdf>