

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
**CITY OF NEW ORLEANS**

**HELENA MORENO**  
MAYOR

August 18, 2026

**VIA CERTIFIED MAIL AND ELECTRONIC MAIL**

Randy Waesche  
Steve Dwyer, Esq.  
3000 W. Esplanade Avenue, Suite 200  
Metairie, LA 70002

**Re: Plaza Tower, 1001 Howard Avenue — Demand for Immediate Security and Abatement Measures**

Dear Sirs:

You are no doubt aware that on August 15, 2026, a group of teenagers bypassed the security fence surrounding the blighted Plaza Tower and gained access to the building through an inadequately secured entrance. Tragically, a 17-year-old young man fell to his death in a stairwell without safety railings.

This senseless tragedy is the latest in a troubling series of incidents at Plaza Tower, which has long been one of the most dangerous blighted properties in New Orleans. Several years ago, falling debris forced the monthslong closure of surrounding streets after a piece of the building struck a bicyclist. In 2023, a man fell to his death at the property. Fires and break-ins have occurred all too regularly.

What makes last week's events especially disheartening—beyond the needless loss of life—is that my administration has actively encouraged the successful redevelopment of Plaza Tower. We recognize the extraordinary potential of this property and have supported efforts to return it to productive use as part of the continued revitalization of downtown New Orleans. But the City cannot continue supporting redevelopment efforts while the property is inadequately maintained by the private owner in a condition that endangers the public.

Effective security is an immediate and essential condition for redevelopment. Continued trespassing threatens not only public safety, but also our shared opportunity to realize a transformative project at this important site.

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Securing the property is also a legal requirement. Section 26-444 of the Code of the City of New Orleans provides that it is the owner's responsibility to maintain a vacant structure "so secured and in such condition that ingress into the structure or building by unauthorized persons is prevented." In addition, vacant structures and premises must be maintained in a clean, safe, secure, and sanitary condition so as not to adversely affect public health or safety. New Orleans City Code § 26-156(c).

These requirements are particularly important at Plaza Tower—the object of sustained interest for trespassers and a palpable risk of catastrophic injury or death to any authorized person who enters. The building's history of vandalism and unauthorized occupancy is well known. Under these circumstances, the August 15 tragedy cannot reasonably be treated as an unforeseeable or isolated event.

Recent events also cast serious doubt on the property owner's claims that there is adequate on-site security. We have been apprised of repeated instances when no security personnel were visible or present at the property. More tellingly, a group of teenagers was able to breach the perimeter, enter the building, and ascend multiple floors without being detected or stopped. Whatever security measures are currently in place, they are plainly insufficient.

Whether the failure lies with the security contractor, staffing levels, fencing, access controls, monitoring, or some combination of those measures is ultimately immaterial to the City's demand. The legal obligation rests with the property owner, and the present system is not preventing unauthorized entry.

Accordingly, the City hereby demands that ownership immediately undertake the following measures:

1. **Permanent perimeter security.** Install a substantial permanent security fence or comparable engineered barrier around the entire property sufficient to prevent climbing, removal, displacement, or circumvention. Temporary construction fencing, movable barricades, or fencing that can readily be separated, lifted, cut, or bypassed will not satisfy this demand.
2. **Hardening of every point of entry.** Inspect and securely close every door, window, garage entrance, service entrance, opening, stairwell entrance, roof-access point, and other potential means of entering the structure. Every potential point of entry must be secured against easy breach.
3. **Continuous on-site security.** Maintain actual, continuous security coverage at Plaza Tower 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Any representation that the property has "24-hour security" must mean that qualified personnel are physically present and actively monitoring the property at all times—not merely available on call or conducting intermittent patrols.
4. **Electronic surveillance and intrusion detection.** Install and continuously operate cameras covering the full perimeter and principal access points, together with intrusion-detection or comparable monitoring capable of promptly identifying a breach. Systems should be remotely

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monitored whenever practicable and, to the extent feasible and permitted, integrated with the City's Real Time Crime Center.

5. **Lighting and visibility.** Maintain adequate security lighting around the perimeter, entrances, parking areas, and other locations susceptible to unauthorized access, and eliminate physical conditions that materially impede security personnel's ability to observe the perimeter.
6. **Daily documented inspections.** Conduct and document daily inspections of the perimeter, fencing, locks, boarding, entrances, surveillance equipment, and other security measures. Any breach or deterioration must be repaired immediately.
7. **Immediate notice of future breaches.** Promptly notify NOPD and the appropriate City departments whenever unauthorized entry, attempted entry, vandalism, or a material failure of the property's security system is discovered.
8. **Proof of security coverage.** Within 48 hours of receipt of this letter, provide the City with the name of the security company providing coverage, the operative contract or other documentation establishing the scope of that coverage, and the number of personnel assigned to the property during each shift.
9. **Written security and abatement plan.** Within five calendar days, submit a comprehensive written plan identifying all existing and proposed physical and operational measures to prevent unauthorized entry, together with a schedule for implementation and identification of the person responsible for ensuring compliance.
10. **Vegetation and visibility.** Trim bushes, hedges, and other vegetation abutting Loyola Avenue and Julia Street to improve lines of sight and eliminate areas that facilitate concealment, trespassing, or unauthorized occupancy.
11. **Expedited completion.** Unless the City expressly approves another schedule in writing, installation of the permanent perimeter barrier and permanent securing of all points of entry must begin immediately and proceed on an expedited basis through completion.

We sincerely hope no further enforcement action will be necessary. But the status quo is unacceptable. A vacant and hazardous high-rise that has repeatedly attracted unauthorized entrants cannot be secured through measures that merely appear adequate from the street. The relevant measure is whether the security system actually prevents unauthorized entry. The events of August 15 demonstrate that the existing system does not.

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The City expressly reserves all rights and remedies available under the Code of the City of New Orleans, state law, and any prior administrative orders or judgments relating to the property, including further code-enforcement proceedings, emergency abatement measures where legally authorized, recovery of costs incurred by the City, and any other action necessary to protect the public.

The death of a teenager inside this building should be the last such tragedy at Plaza Tower. The City expects immediate action commensurate with the seriousness of the danger.

Further communications with the City concerning this matter should be directed to Deputy Mayor Jeffrey Schwartz ([jeschwartz@nola.gov](mailto:jeschwartz@nola.gov)) with a copy to City Attorney Charline Gipson ([Charline.Gipson@nola.gov](mailto:Charline.Gipson@nola.gov)).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'H' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line.

Helena Moreno  
Mayor  
City of New Orleans