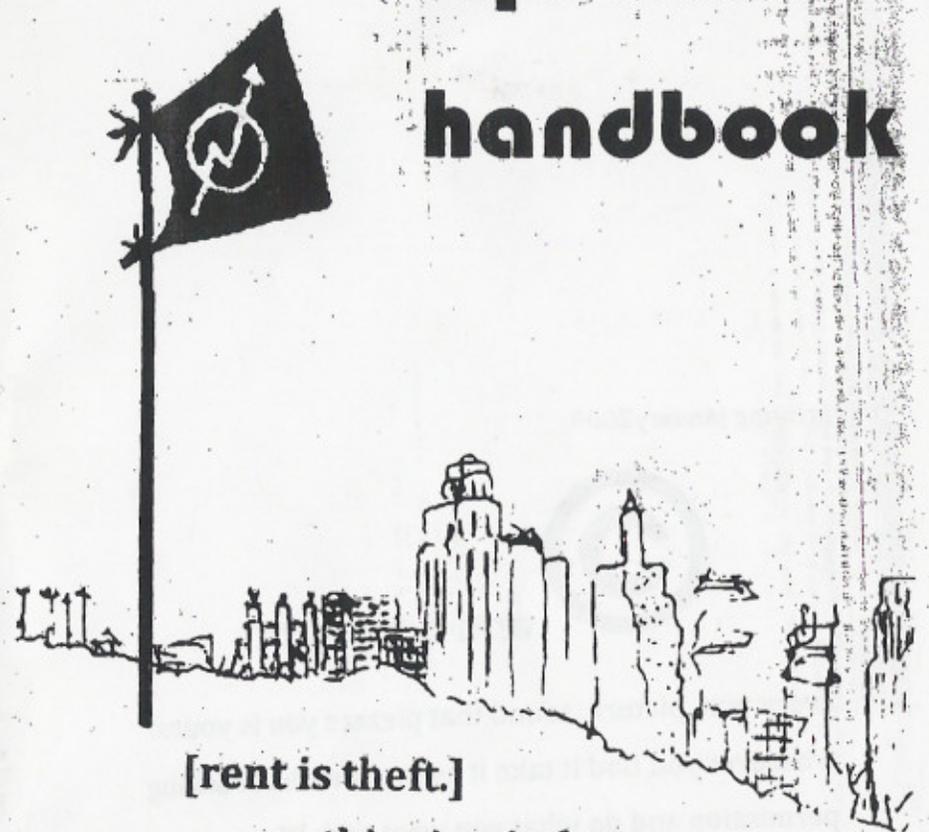




3109 troost, kansas city, mo 64109

kansas city

squatters' handbook



[rent is theft.]

this zine is free.

first printing january 2009



anti-copyright

every text, picture, sound that pleases you is yours!
wherever you find it take it as yours without asking
permission and do what you want with it!

Landless Worker's Movement (Brazil):

<http://www.mstbrazil.org/>

Squat Zine Survival Without Rent

<http://zinelibrary.info/files/squat.pdf>

Crimethinc Anarchist Cookbook (squatting p. 507):

[http://www.rorta.net/textfiles/crimethinc.recipes.for.d
isaster.an.anarchist.cookbook.pdf](http://www.rorta.net/textfiles/crimethinc.recipes.for.d
isaster.an.anarchist.cookbook.pdf)

Liberate Space: A Squatters Handbook

Legal Aid of Western Missouri (on eviction):

http://www.lawmo.org/law_llt.htm

**KCPD Procedural Instructions (section 07-2 concerns
squatting):**

<http://www.kcpd.org/masterindex/masterindex.html>

references/resources

KC Dangerous Buildings and Vacant Properties

Operations Divisions:

<http://www.kcmo.org/neigh.nsf/web/dangerous?openDocument>

KC (Privately-Owned) Vacant Properties List:

<http://webfusion.kcmo.org/coldfusionapps/brp/proplist.cfm>

Jackson County Land Trust:

<http://www.jacksoncountylantrust.org/>

Jackson County Tax information:

[https://ascendweb.jacksongov.org/ascend/\(ckzaxo552dilpg452i2zoff2\)/search.aspx](https://ascendweb.jacksongov.org/ascend/(ckzaxo552dilpg452i2zoff2)/search.aspx)

KC Neighborhood and Community Services Department:

<http://www.kcmo.org/neigh.nsf/web/home?openDocument>

KC Neighborhood Groups/Associations Database:

<http://webfusion.kcmo.org/ColdFusionApps/neighborhoods/search.cfm>

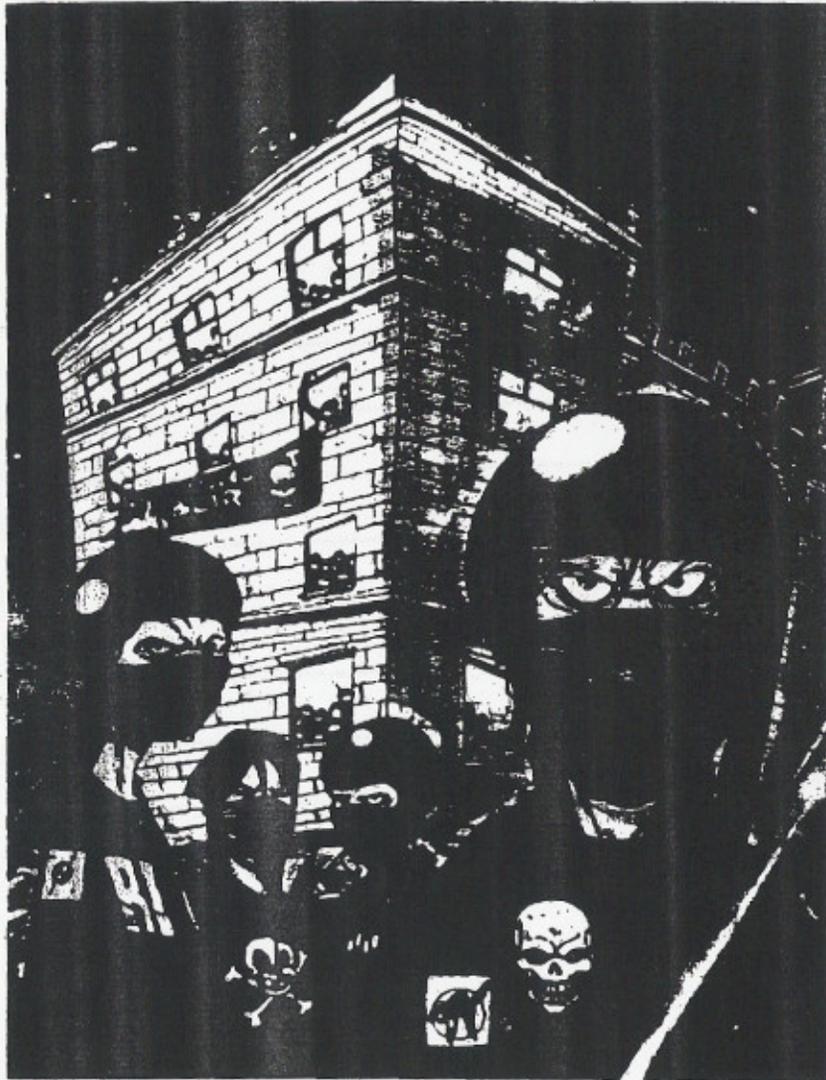
Take Back the Land (Miami):

<http://takebacktheland.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.takebacktheland.net/>

table of contents

introduction.....	5
forming a Group.....	8
finding a building.....	9
getting in/securing a building.....	15
cleaning up/basic setup.....	19
legal information.....	21
eviction.....	23
references/resources.....	26



Ungdomshuset (Copenhagen) Eviction Defense Propaganda

If you miss your court date and have a judgment entered against you, you may receive by mail another notice to vacate, perhaps this time drafted and signed by a public official or judge, which will notify you of your date of eviction (should it actually be executed by the sheriff and/or landlord). If you lose your case in court, the judge may give you verbal notice of when to vacate your building, possibly accompanied by a written notice to vacate. It is unclear as to what is the standard length of time given to vacate the premises, but it seems to be from between five and thirty days.

Another line of defense might be to organize a group of supporters to physically block the eviction process on the day of the eviction, although this strategy could lead to other legal matters and is probably more appealing to groups engaged in overt political protest and/or confrontation.

Lastly, technically only individuals with names on the eviction order can be evicted, so try to have as many individuals as possible living in the building obtain official looking documents that demonstrate proof of residency. If the sheriff cannot move out these individuals, you may be able to move back in later.

usually tells you when and where to appear in court, and what the owner of the property is demanding. If you do not appear at your court date, a default judgment may be entered against you, which will probably mean an eviction.

If you are occupying your building with a group, you should decide well before the initiation of an eviction process if you are going to try to fight it. If you're fighting the eviction in court (the first step), you'll probably need a lawyer or at least legal advice, although the very fact of your appearance at court and contesting of the lawsuit could drag the process out. You might argue that although there is no written agreement between you and the property owner, the vacancy of the building as you found it, as well as the work you've done to fix up the building, demonstrate an *implied* contract. You could further argue that under this implied contract you traded manual labor, structural and/or aesthetic improvements, as well as securing the property from theft or vandalism, for residency in the building. It is extremely unlikely, however, that a judge will find this defense compelling enough to rule in your favor.

introduction

The recent housing "crisis" is neither new as a social phenomenon nor is it an isolated instance of "poor decision-making" or "risky investment strategy" on the part of captains of the financial and housing industries. Rather, these incidents—the creation and "collapse" of the housing "bubble," the implosion of lending and mortgage companies, and the mass homes foreclosures and disenfranchisement of the poor—are merely the most recent chapters in a long history of systemic oppression of the majority populous by an elite ruling class.

The current capitalist economy—wherein a select few individuals and institutions reap an overwhelming majority of the profits—is sustained by the perpetuation of a culture of private property, the prohibition *by force* of the democratic use and reallocation of land and housing, and the class of wage slaves that results as a consequence of these two former conditions. Further, the specific phenomenon of the seizure and holding of homes by banks and other financial institutions for speculation—that is, *class-war profiteering*—is totally outrageous and unacceptable.

Because unfettered access to land and housing is essential to any meaningful individual or collective liberty, autonomy or self-determination, we completely reject these conditions.

As of Dec. 2nd, 2008, the Jackson County Land Trust, which holds and catalogues properties seized for delinquent taxes and not sold at auction, reports that there are over 2,300 vacant properties "owned" by Jackson County; and according to the Kansas City Neighborhood and Community Services Department, there are over 2,900 "privately"-owned, vacant properties in Kansas City, Missouri. Thus, the combined databases list over five thousand vacant properties in either Kansas City or Jackson County, Missouri. Yet, thousands of individuals are forced to spend much or most of their meager incomes on rent, or, unable to pay, many are forced into crowded city shelters or under interstate overpasses. The time has long passed that we stop deferring to government programs and/or non-profit entities to "provide" us with "affordable" housing. The only housing problem is access, and we have the means, the power, and *we grant ourselves the authority* to solve it.

eviction

Unfortunately, if you're squatting a building long enough, chances are you'll encounter an attempt by a property owner or manager to evict you. Getting legal documents in the mail or delivered to you can be stressful, but evictions are not overnight processes, and you'll probably have plenty of time to get your things out of the building. You cannot legally be thrown out of your building by the property manager or owner, only by a Jackson County Sherriff with a signed eviction order after a judgment has been rendered against you in civil court.

The first notice you'll probably receive in an eviction process is a "notice to vacate." This is merely the first step in an official eviction process; it is NOT an eviction order, and cannot be used to forcibly remove you from your building. It is often written-up by the owner or property management company (rather than a county official), and may precede or accompany a "Petition and Summons." A Petition and Summons document means that the property owner/manager has begun the legal process of evicting you, the first step of which is filing a lawsuit in the county in which the building resides. The Petition and Summons

police department's "legal" purview, is relatively simple.

According to the KCPD Procedural instruction manual:

A party who is not on a written lease, but appears to have legitimately established residency, and has possessions; e.g., clothing or personal items, in the residence, is considered to have established residency and is therefore a tenant.

And (therefore)...

The trespass ordinance is not applicable in landlord/tenant disputes.

Thus, theoretically, to establish residency/tenancy to a police officer, and to escape the possibility of trespassing charges, the KCPD procedural handbook states that at minimum an individual show personal possessions within the building (clothing, furniture, appliances, etc). **A written lease is NOT required.** Other, possibly more compelling proofs of residency could include: mail, a voter registration card, utility bills for the building, and other forms of personal identification with the building's address and your name on them. Proof of residency moves your legal standing as a squatter from the criminal realm to the civil realm, and is supposed to fall outside the jurisdiction of the KCPD.

Lastly, this zine was written in response to ongoing systemic, rather than incidental, oppression; therefore, we advocate the creation of a sustained collective housing and land reappropriation project in Kansas City—one to outlast any so-called "economic recovery." The resources and information herein have been gathered from a variety of sources and are current to the time of the original publication. Any of the guidelines or suggestions in this zine should be applied only to the extent that they seem appropriate within the specific situations individuals or groups may encounter. People with real, dynamic living experiences (of squatting) are usually preferable to static texts, and should be sought out.



forming a group



If you're not planning to occupy a building by yourself, you should consider solidifying a group before finding a building. In addition to living with others, you'll also be dealing with high-stress situations, so choose carefully. Try to pick those with whom you are relatively intimate and share complementary if not identical goals—the basis for and extent of your group's affinity should be *very* clear. The people you choose to live with are as important as the building you choose.

heaters for heat; liquid-gas camping stoves for cooking; or a wood-burning stove for both.

legal information

"Historically, landlord/tenant matters have been viewed as civil in nature especially in connection with eviction actions. [KCPD Police] Officers do not normally become involved in these instances."

*—The KCPD Procedural Instruction Manual
Introduction to Landlord/Tennant Disputes*

As mentioned in the "getting in" section, entering and securing a squat is probably the riskiest step in the squatting process. The risk during this part of the process derives from the (usually slight) potential for neighbors, random passersby, or the owner(s) to see you entering or breaking and entering and the building calling the police. If the police department arrives and it appears that you've broken into the building and you can't materially demonstrate that you live there, you could be arrested and charged with trespassing and/or breaking and entering.

However, establishing your status as a legal (although potentially unwelcome) resident, and moving outside of the

pipes won't freeze and break. Even if you can't get the water pipes open, the sewage out pipe may still work. If you can't get any of the pipes working, you'll have to use five gallon buckets filled with sawdust for toilets, and set up a human compost system or dump your waste in storm sewage grates or on bourgie sedans and SUV's on the Plaza. If you can't find sawdust for the composting toilets, you can use any other organic matter--e.g., ash, shredded newspapers, hay, or grass clippings. You should be able to locate plenty of toilet paper rolls lying around public restrooms.

Other issues to consider are how you will heat the building and cook. If there are utilities running in the building, you may be able to hook-up appliances. You could either transfer the utilities to your name (which might help stall an eviction process), or try to use them without paying until and landlord notices or the utility company turns them off. Usually furnaces and stoves in vacant buildings are broken or missing, but you can use oil-filled electric space-heaters for heat, and hot plates, electric skillets and crock-pots for cooking. If you don't have access to or don't want to use gas or electricity, you could use kerosene or propane

Every group develops its own style and interests: some are more political, some like to party, some are very regimented—and some are just trying to get off the streets. Arrange meetings with your group to consider goals and potential issues. What are your reasons for squatting? Is your group's affinity built upon merely sharing living space, or engaging in other kinds of direct action? Are you hoping to stay in the building for a week, a month—the next ten years? What will the house rules be? Will they be written-down or verbal? Who will know you are squatting? Will there be a policy about bringing guests to the squat? How will the group make decisions about fixing up the house or accepting new squat members? Does everyone agree upon strategies and tactics for dealing with the property owner/manager and the police? How committed is your group to fighting an eviction process? Etc.

finding a building

Doubtless if you've lived in Kansas City for any considerable length of time, and haven't been completely geographically quarantined to south Kansas City, the Northland or Johnson County, you've seen some of the over five-thousand vacant industrial, commercial and residential

buildings mentioned in the introduction to this zine. Most of the "vacant properties" in Kansas City and Jackson County are empty lots, especially those owned by the city/county (and listed in online databases—see the "resources" section in the back of this zine), but a significant number contain structures of varying degrees of appeal from a squatting perspective.

If you're desperate for shelter and your first priority is to avoid getting kicked out, you'll probably want a secluded place with low-visibility access. Consider neighborhoods or mixed-zoned areas (industrial/residential, commercial/residential, etc.) that appear "run-down." Areas that appear to be in a process of gentrification and/or renovation may present conflicts with neighbors/property owners. If you want to set yourself up in a homey situation, you should check out residential neighborhoods (where the majority of squatting opportunities in KC exist, especially on the East Side) where you can pass yourself off as a renter or somebody who bought the place cheap (i.e., from the city, county land trust, or private real estate auction/broker). If you're planning an overtly political, public action for which you want high visibility, you'll want a public, visible location

cleaning up/basic setup

It's a good idea to clean up the building soon after you move in. Cleaning up the building can make it feel like home, get rid of hazardous dust particles and improve relations with neighbors—whom you may come to need for support during an eviction. Also, making the place as "homey" as possible before the police arrive can mean the difference between getting thrown out without a hearing and forcing the landlord and city to go through the whole eviction process (more on this in the "legal" section).

The toilets may be smashed, full of unflushed fecal matter, or otherwise inoperable, but if the pipes are still there and are in good condition, you can get running water. You may be able to access the water pipes in the basement, if not on the back of the building. If they are in the basement, there will probably be a set of pipes coming in and out from the street; the larger pipe is probably for sewage, the smaller for water. You might be able to open these pipes with a wrench (be careful to avoid gas lines); if you succeed, look for leaks in the rest of the building, and leave the water on at a trickle in the winter if your building isn't heated so the

could borrow or rent a large truck or a U-haul (assuming you have anything like furniture you could fill it with). If you think there might be conflict with neighbors or an owner or property manager while you're moving in, do it at night or figure out other covert methods. Moving in personal possessions also helps secure your legal status as a resident/tenant, so even if you don't get a truck and/or do a daytime move-in, make this a priority. Also, consider sending yourself official-looking mail at the address, as this also helps secure your legal status as a resident (rather than a trespasser).

After you move in, try baking your neighbors food and talking with them about the neighborhood and what projects or changes they would like to see happen. Also, find out about neighborhood association meetings, and attend them to introduce yourself and/or collect information on people in the neighborhood. Throw a potluck or open-house to encourage further community building between your group and those in the area, possibly making it a regular event. Community gardening and food distribution projects can also help build community relations and support for your squat come eviction time.

(eg. Hyde Park), not to mention a plan for how to deal with the "authorities," whether they be self-interested neighbors, neighborhood associations, community policing organizations, or the cops.

Scope-out the building before moving in or even entering it, preferably over a period of at least a few weeks. It's good to get a sense of who's coming and going, if the owners or neighbors are checking up on the place, and what else is going on in the neighborhood-especially if you're new to the area. Talk to locals (but have a solid story ready in case they ask you so you don't raise suspicion): you'll need friends, especially among the people who hang out regularly on the block, if any do. Check to see if the power meter or water meters are running, and if there is mail in the mailbox. If you can't hang around to watch if whether anyone enters or leaves the building, leave a toothpick or twig wedged between the door and the frame, and check on it periodically.

Land Trust Properties

Found 2350 properties matching your criteria

Home		New search	
Property ID	Address	City	Lot Sq. Ft.
3228	CHESTNUT	SIBLEY	0
3229	SANTA FE ST	SIBLEY	0
3235	516 GARLAND AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3240	2201 LEXINGTON AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3241	316 Olive St.	KANSAS CITY	150
3246	95 WALNUT ST	KANSAS CITY	0
3249	1221 N MONROE AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3251	2900 N CHESTNUT	KANSAS CITY	0
3252	407 N BELMONT BLVD	KANSAS CITY	0
3253	N BELMONT BLVD	KANSAS CITY	0
3254	N BELMONT BLVD	KANSAS CITY	0
3255	N BELMONT BLVD	KANSAS CITY	0
3256	N BELMONT BLVD	KANSAS CITY	0
3257	339 N BELMONT BLVD	KANSAS CITY	0
3258	527 N WHITE AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3260	332 S WHEELING AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3261	528 N LAWNSDALE AVE	KANSAS CITY	896
3264	5202 SCARRITT AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3266	431 SPRUCE AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3268	531 JACKSON AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3272	135 S DRURY AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3276	TOPPING AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3277	SMART AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3281	502 TOPPING AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3290	400 CHESTNUT AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3291	3224 MORRELL AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3293	410 MONTGALL AVE	KANSAS CITY	0
3294	412 WITTE PL	KANSAS CITY	0
3304	427 MONTGALL AVE	KANSAS CITY	0

A screenshot from the Jackson County Land Trust online database.

door and on the other side of the doorframe and run a chain secured by a padlock through the holes. You may want to consider designating one entrance for regular use and one for escape.

There are other zines that describe more intensive methods of entering buildings—like sledge-hammering through cinder blocks—but these methods may take longer and draw more attention to you than the others mentioned, and are probably unnecessary due to the great number of probably more accessible vacant buildings around KC. However, check out the *Survival Without Rent/Squat Zine* listed in the resources section of this zine for further information.

Once you've changed the locks on the doors or otherwise physically secured the entrances, you should consider letting the building sit for a few days just to see if anyone has noticed your alterations. If it appears the coast is clear, you are ready to move in. Unless your building is very secluded or you think you can keep your neighbors in the dark about your residency, you might try to pull off a "legitimate"-appearing move in during the daytime. You

Entering a building is probably the riskiest part of the squatting process because at this point you are legally considered a trespasser (rather than an unwanted resident) and if you're caught on the property or breaking-in you could be arrested and face criminal prosecution. However, most of the strategies to avoid being caught are pretty straightforward and common sense.

If your building isn't wide open, you'll probably want to break in at night as quietly as possible. The back side of a building is often the least visible. Try opening entry-level windows first, if any are uncovered, or try to pick the lock(s) on the door(s) if you know-how. If this doesn't work, you could quietly try to break a window and climb inside, or unscrew and/or pry-off plywood boards that may be blocking your access. You may want to bring hammers, screw-drivers, crowbars, and/or bolt-cutters with you, although if you are caught with these items on the way to the building the cops could give you trouble.

Once you've entered the building, change the locks as soon as you can; if that's impossible, install your own front door and frame, or, failing that, at least punch a hole in the

You can search online city and county databases or contact the assessor's office to find out whether the building is owned by an individual, bank, or development corporation, and whether or not the taxes are paid up (see the "resources" section). The city takes possession of a building when its owner fails to pay taxes on it for at least three years, and then it is literally sold off the courthouse steps at a yearly auction (usually at the end of August). Properties unsold at auction are entered into the Jackson County Land Trust and held until sold. General wisdom on squatting is that it can be much difficult to be evicted from a city-owned building than from a privately-owned one, but personal accounts and/or local histories on this issue were either non-existent or unavailable at the time this zine was written. On the other hand, a private owner who pays the taxes but has otherwise totally abandoned a property might make a very desirable "landlord." As an alternate strategy, you might first look-up properties on city databases, creating a list to check-off as you make your rounds and compile information.

It's a good idea to go inside and inspect a building before you occupy it, to know what you're getting into:

whether the water and electricity work, how trashed the place is, if the copper piping has been stripped, and if other people are or were staying there. When exploring a building, calmly announce your presence as you enter, in case others have already squatted it. Look out for holes in the masonry too big to fix, signs of bulging or sagging in the walls (especially in the basement), significant water damage to floors and ceilings, wood rot in structural elements—these are all potential signs that you've picked the wrong place, if you're hoping to make a home there. Also, you'll want to be aware of asbestos, lead paint (many older buildings in the city contain both), and other toxic materials in the building. Asbestos and lead paint are generally not too dangerous if left alone or kept moist, but if you don't know how to identify these materials and/or how to dispose of them, try to find someone who does.

Finally, when making a decision about whether or not to move into a building, you'll want to consider your own and your group's skills, resources and environmental factors. If the building is in poor condition, do you desire to or have the skills to make physical improvements? Do you have or can you get access to construction tools? Consider the season

and the length of time you want to try to inhabit the building: If there are cold winters where you live, you'll need to consider whether or not the building has electricity or gas and if you want to use them; if the furnace is in working condition and if you can fix it if it's not; and whether you can build, acquire and/or properly set-up and maintain a wood-burning stove. You should also consider if you'll have access to water, and how you'll cook and store food.

Although you'll learn much about squatting "on the fly," doing your homework on a building can save you from a lot of trouble and frustration later on.

getting in/securing a building

Once you've formed a group and decided on a building you'll need to enter and secure it. Many of the vacant buildings around Kansas City are left wide open—meaning they remain unboarded-up and (if they have doors) unlocked; others are secured by locks, chains, plywood and screws, or by other means. If you've done your homework, you'll know ahead of time how your building is secured and what is required for entry.