

Appendix – C – Proactive Code Compliance Programs

1) Citizens Granted Injunction Power to Enforce Code Provisions – Baltimore, MD

“The city empowered their citizens by granting citizen groups the right to seek injunctions to enforce code provisions when the city does not act.”¹

2) Handyman Program – Clayton County, GA and Sunnyvale, CA - (only cited in the reports, no city cited as operating)

“The handyman could be on call to immediately (or in a relatively quick manner) help citizens that have been cited for graffiti, overgrown weeds, a broken window, small yard junk items, fence repair, and so forth. The handyman could even help reduce the paperwork by having code enforcement officers refer minor problems to the handyman rather than citing the individual. Disabled and senior citizens could especially benefit from such a program.”²

3) Impact Teams – Durham, NC

The City of Durham has its own house cleanup crew for properties and graffiti. This crew is used to turnaround requests for clean ups quickly. City of Durham’s website says the following about the Impact Team, “The department’s rapid responders, known as the Impact Team, remediate non-compliant housing properties; abate public nuisances, such as litter, graffiti, illegal dumping, and abandon shopping carts; and conduct neighborhood service projects.”³

4) Increase the Cost of Owning Properties with Code Violations – Louisville, KY

“The metro government charges a higher property tax rate for vacant properties with unresolved code violations. The tax rate for properties considered “abandoned” is around three times as much as the taxes would be otherwise.”⁴

5) Make Serious Nuisances a Felony – Phoenix, AZ

“Property nuisance code violations are a felony under municipal code. The city’s code enforcement officers will first cite individuals for code violations and give them an appropriate amount of time to correct the problem. If the nuisance is not corrected, the city can charge the property owner with a felony crime for failing to abate a serious nuisance.”⁵

6) Multi-Departmental Response Teams/Targeting Efforts/Windshield Survey – Baltimore, MD; Sunnyvale, CA; and San Antonio, TX

“San Antonio does multi-departmental sweeps of certain neighborhoods. Once the neighborhood is identified community meetings are done to figure what proprieties need to be the focus (e.g. street repair, vacant lot clean up, brush collection, and code inspections).”⁶

¹ City Auditor’s Office. “Performance Audit Neighborhood Preservation Division.” City of Auditor’s Office of the City of Kansas City, MO. September 2012.

² Bracco, Frank. “An Incremental Approach to Improving Code Enforcement and Compliance in Clayton County, GA.” Carl Vinson Institute of Government. 2010.

³ ibid

⁴ City Auditor’s Office. “Performance Audit Neighborhood Preservation Division.” City of Auditor’s Office of the City of Kansas City, MO. September 2012.

⁵ ibid

⁶ ibid

In order to spur redevelopment Baltimore targets “its enforcement efforts not on the areas with the worst problems, but rather on transitional or relatively healthy neighborhoods with scattered vacant properties.”⁷

“A windshield survey works by having one or two individuals assigned to a car; the car will drive around the community, road by road, and look for violations. When violations are found they are noted and can even be cited at the time. Multiple teams can be used to break down the community by geographic areas. The survey can also be done on an annual basis, or can be broken up on a rolling basis where certain geographic areas are done each year.”⁸

7) Neighborhood Plans and Citizen Inspectors – Arvada, CO

“The City of Arvada, Colorado has 2 proactive elements. *Code Officers* help neighborhoods develop community plans, they meet with neighbors to ascertain needs/problems and adopt plans. *Citizen Inspector* program, where citizens are trained to understand the muni code and compliance process. They are allowed to “patrol” their neighborhood for code violations and begin the compliance process.”⁹

8) Police Assistance – Memphis, TN

“In Memphis, the police have the authority to write up property owners with nuisance charges, making them effectively part of the code enforcement team.”¹⁰

9) Programs that Help Tenants in Substandard Housing – Los Angeles, CA

“The city established an escrow account program, a utility management program, an urgent repair program, and contracts with community-based organizations to provide outreach to tenants living in substandard housing. The program uses a financial “stick” approach, allowing renters to pay into the city’s rent escrow account while property owners have outstanding housing code violations, and allowing tenants rent reduction for each month. When housing conditions are so dire as to be life-threatening and the property owners refuse to make repairs, the city steps in and fixes the problem.”¹¹

10) Public Shaming and Aggressive Enforcement – Toledo, OH

“The city provides the location, a picture of the property, and the name of the owner of properties contributing to neighborhood blight to the news media and publishes it on the city’s website. A team of inspectors from several city departments converges on the properties, performs a thorough inspection, and issues citations and orders.”¹²

⁷ ibid

⁸ Bracco, Frank. “An Incremental Approach to Improving Code Enforcement and Compliance in Clayton County, GA.” Carl Vinson Institute of Government. 2010.

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ City Auditor’s Office. “Performance Audit Neighborhood Preservation Division.” City of Auditor’s Office of the City of Kansas City, MO. September 2012.

¹¹ ibid

¹² ibid

11) Receivership Program – Cleveland, OH

“The city appoints a community development corporation (CDC) as a receiver of distressed properties. As receiver, the CDC is charged with turning the properties back to productive use.”¹³

12) Rental Inspection and Registration Program – Virginia Beach, VA

“The city created a Certificate of Compliance program, which requires certain rental properties throughout the city to be certified by the city through registration and inspection.”¹⁴

13) Resource Guide – Clayton County, GA - (only cited in the report, no city cited as operating)

“Provide a ‘resource guide’ to violators that provides them with quick solutions to violations and names of companies that can help.”¹⁵

14) Search and Track Violations Online – Clayton County, GA - (only cited in the report, no city cited as operating)

“Allow the community to search current violations online and track a violation’s status. Community members are able to search if a problem property in a neighborhood has been reported. Community members are able to follow the progress of a reported property through the code enforcement process.”¹⁶

15) Short Term Loan for Minor and Moderate Repairs – Malden, MA and Sunnyvale, CA

“The cities offer short-term, low interest financing to low-income individuals who need to perform property improvements in order to come into compliance.”¹⁷

16) Vacant Property Demolition – Minneapolis, MN

“The city can fine and demolish a vacant property after it has been boarded up for 60 days or more.”¹⁸

17) Vacant Property Fees – Cincinnati, OH

“The city increases fees charged for vacant properties based on the number of years a property has been vacant. The city can collect unpaid fees by putting a lien on the property. These fees can strengthen the incentive for owners to return properties to productive use rather than holding them for speculation.”¹⁹

18) Vacant Structures Back into Productive Use – San Diego, CA

“Owners of vacant properties in San Diego are required to submit for approval a ‘Statement of Intent’ to bring vacant structures into productive use. The Statement of Intent must include the following: 1) expected period of vacancy; 2) maintenance plan during the period of vacancy; and 3) a plan and time line for the lawful occupancy, rehabilitation, or demolition of the structure.”²⁰

¹³ ibid

¹⁴ ibid

¹⁵ Bracco, Frank. “An Incremental Approach to Improving Code Enforcement and Compliance in Clayton County, GA.” Carl Vinson Institute of Government. 2010.

¹⁶ ibid

¹⁷ ibid

¹⁸ ibid

¹⁹ ibid

²⁰ ibid

19) Volunteer Inspectors – Atlanta, GA

“In Atlanta, the city trains volunteer ‘neighborhood deputies’ who patrol the neighborhood and send notices of potential code violations to property owners and occupants. If the conditions are not corrected, the deputies refer the case to the city enforcement department.”²¹

20) Youth Engagement Program to Fight Graffiti – South Bend, IN

The South Bend Weed & Seed Alliance is cited as having great success with their engagement program. South Bend Weed and & Seed Alliance selected middle schools, a high school, and local church groups to paint community murals over sites that were repeat victims of graffiti. The youth involved would take pledges to stand against graffiti, be able to paint the community murals, and winners would be selected to receive savings bonds; winning murals would also be displayed on billboards. The efforts of the alliance have resulted in a 60% decrease in graffiti and 80 sites remain graffiti free.”²²

²¹ Way, Heather K., Michelle McCarthy, and John Scott. The University of Texas School of Law. Building Hope: Tools for Transforming Abandoned and Blighted Properties into Community Assets. Austin: The University of Texas School of Law, 2007. Web. 28 Nov 2009. <<http://www.utexas.edu/law/academics/clinics/community/buildersofhope.pdf>>.

²² ibid