

Strategic Code Enforcement 101

Center for Community Progress VAD Academy
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Overview

- What is code enforcement?
- What are the problems with traditional code enforcement?
- What is strategic code enforcement?
- How can I learn more?



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What is Code Enforcement?

Code Enforcement

Housing and building code enforcement is:

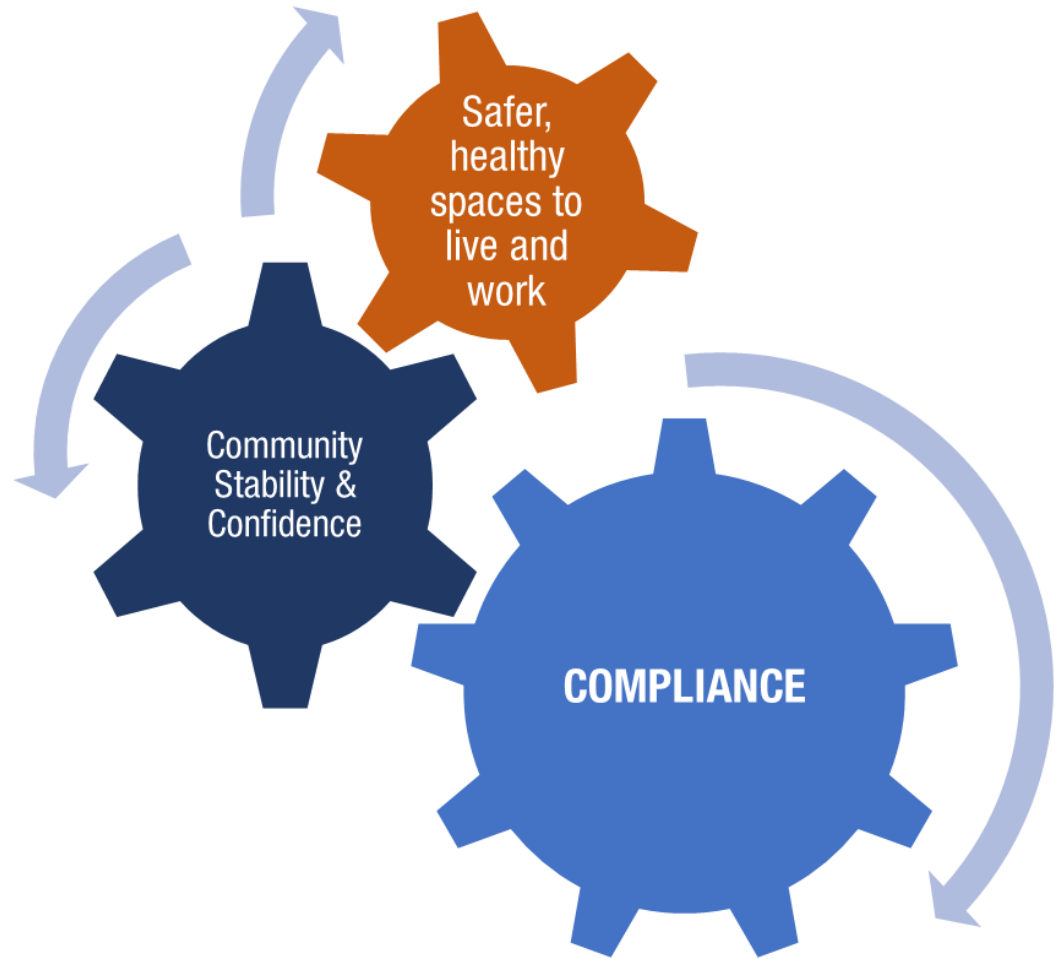
- a system of laws and policies
- used by a range of local governments and other public and private partners
- to seek compliance with minimum property standards
- in support of safe and healthy neighborhoods for all.



Goals

Compliance with property standards, through a process that is:

- effective,
- efficient, and
- equitable.



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What are the Challenges with Traditional Code Enforcement?

Traditional Code Enforcement

- Complaint
- Inspection
- Citation
- Reinspection:
 - Case closed (if repaired)
 - Extension (if progress)
 - Legal case filed (if no progress or repairs)



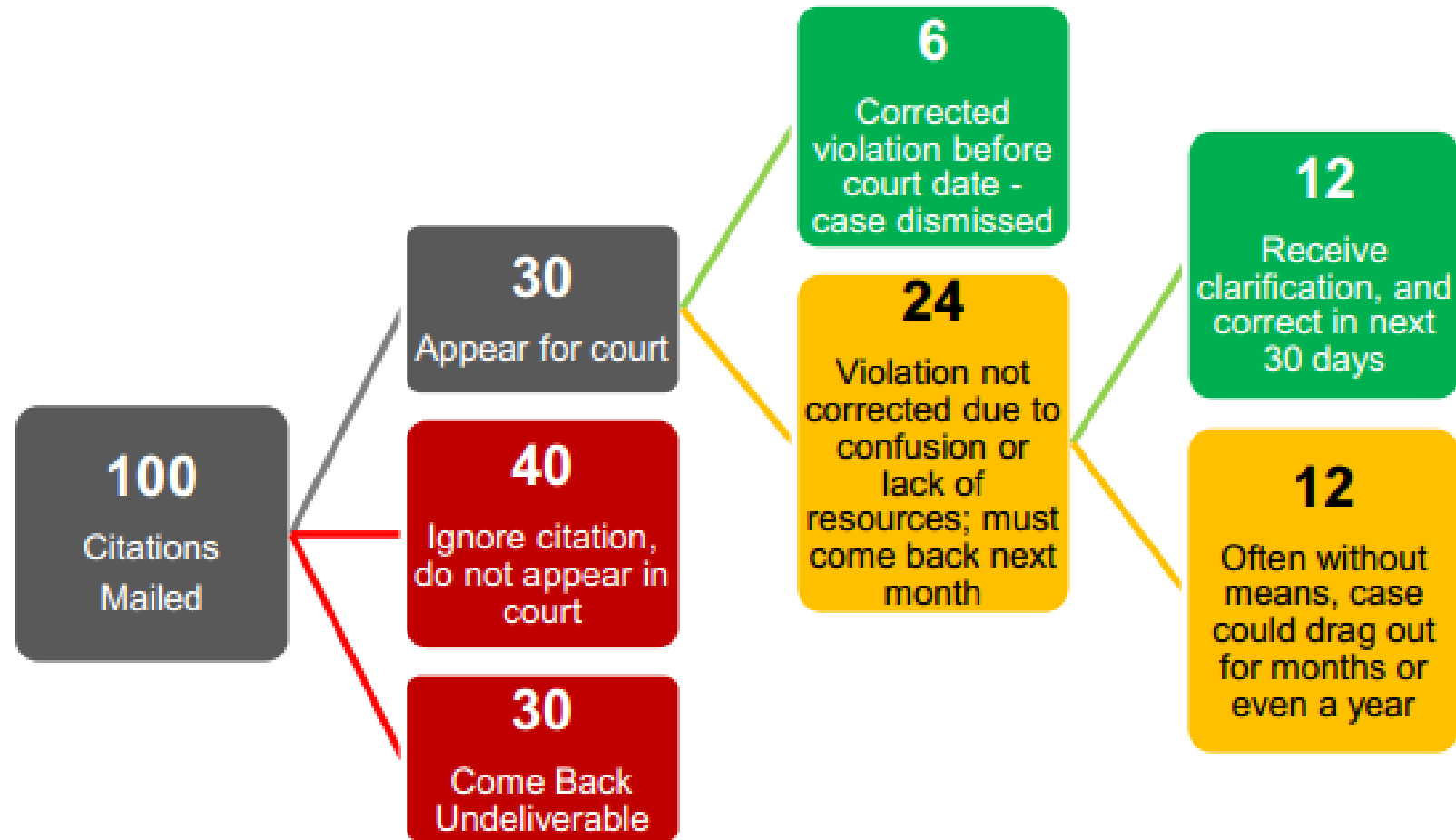
Traditional Code Enforcement

- Effective?
 - LLCs?
 - Low-income homeowners?



Traditional Code Enforcement

- Effective?
- Efficient?



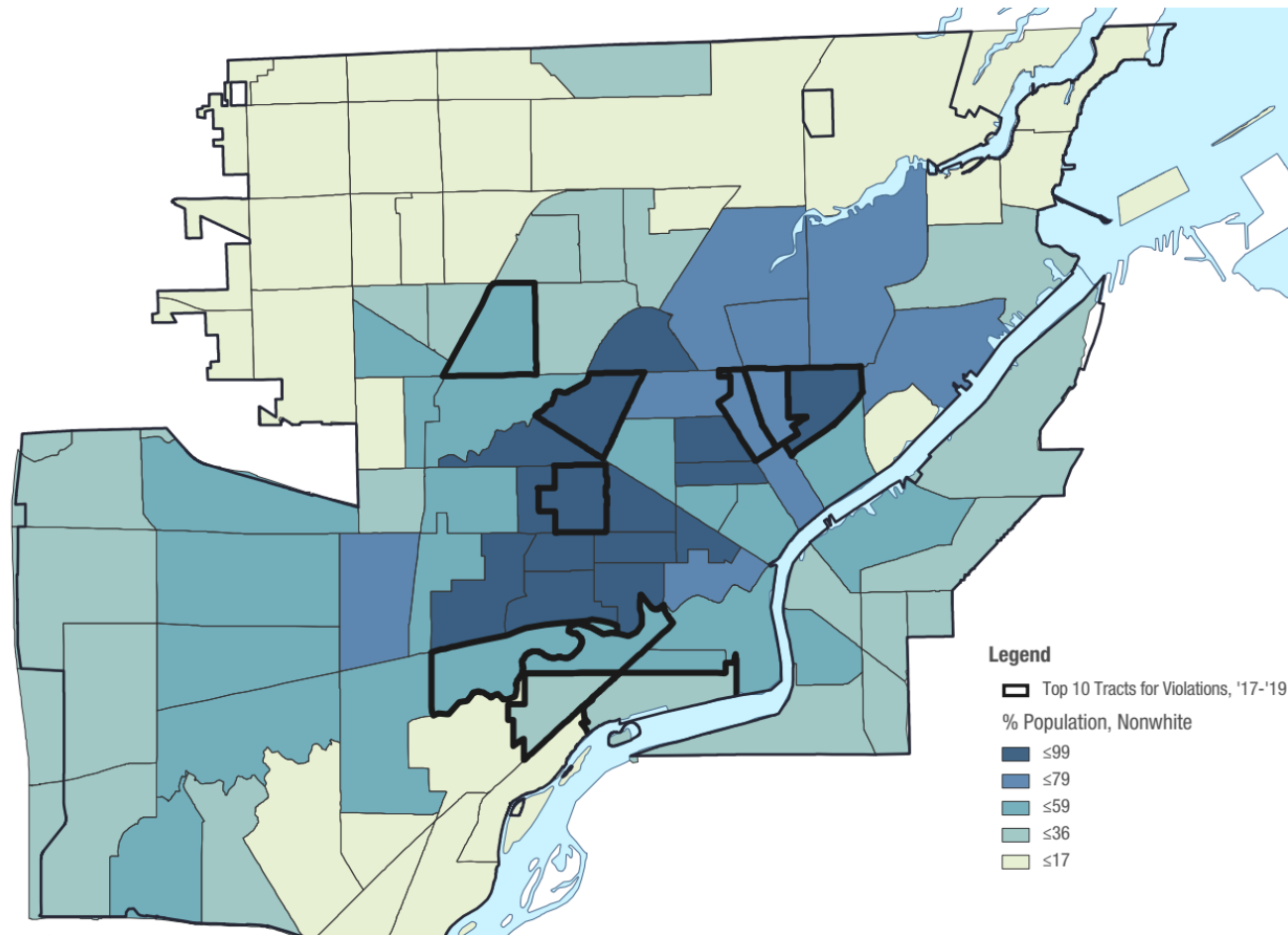
Estimates of case outcomes in Gary, Indiana based on interviews with city staff.



Traditional Code Enforcement

FIGURE 8: Top Code Violations by Census Tract, Percentage Nonwhite *Source: DCE, U.S. Census*

- Effective?
- Efficient?
- Equitable?



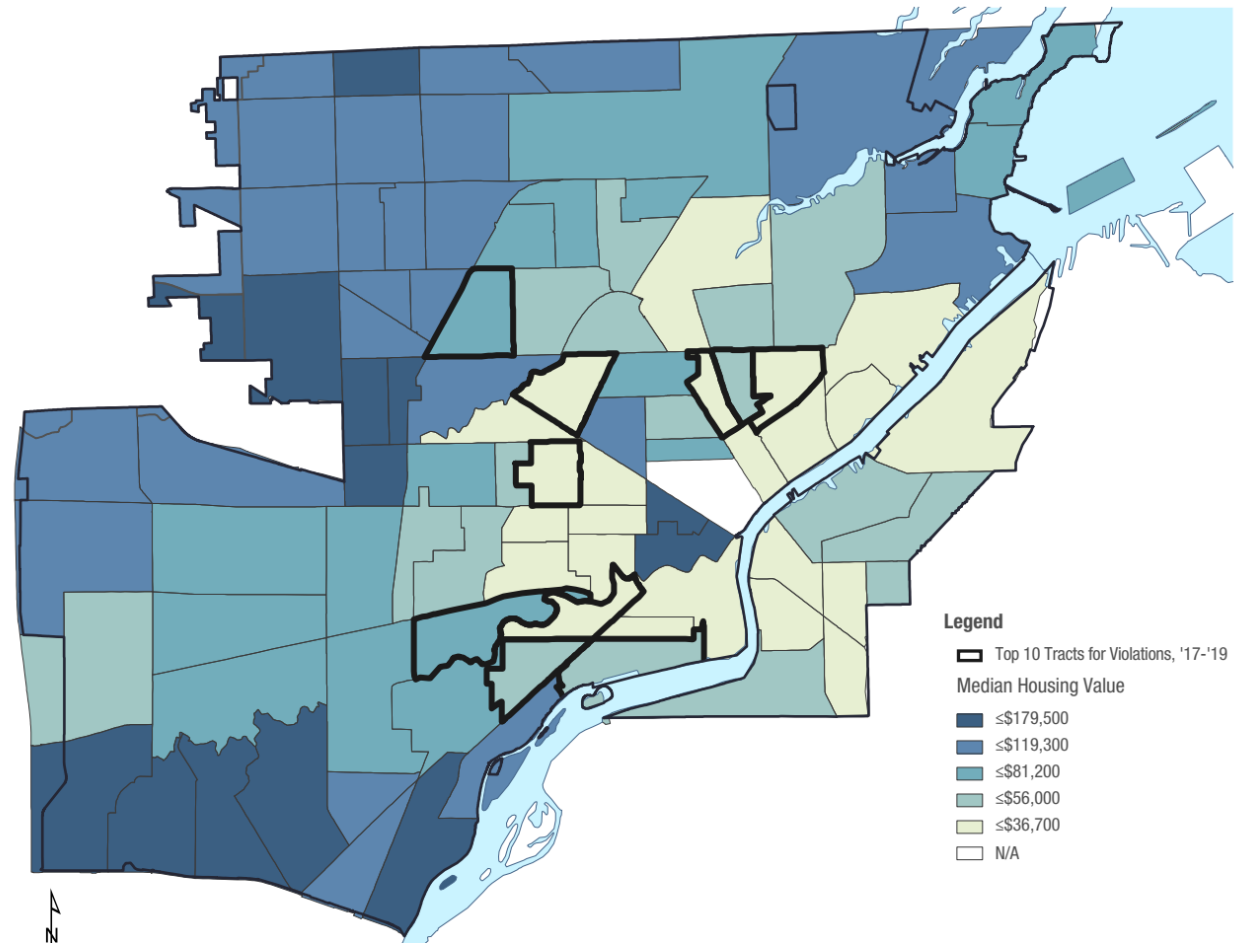
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What is Strategic Code Enforcement?

Basic Tenets

- Use data and resident input to understand the problem and set priorities
- Develop data-driven, proactive strategies tailored to different types of owners, properties, and neighborhood markets and focused on compliance first
- Improve coordination within local government and develop external partnerships to leverage limited resources

FIGURE 7: Top Code Violations by Census Tract, Median Housing Values *Source: DCE, ACS 2018 5-year*



Tenet 1: Use Data and Engage Residents

Parcel Data

- Delinquent property taxes
- Unpaid code or other public liens
- Frequency & volume of code violations
- Nuisance & police calls
- Utility shut-offs
- Occupancy status
- Structure conditions

Market Data

- Foreclosure rates
- Sales volume, if any
- Sales prices
- Purchaser types (e.g. individual, LLC, etc.)
- Number of cash sales
- Assessment values

Social Data

- Regular resident input on top problem properties
- Neighborhood needs/ goals for land & services
- Neighborhood racial & ethnic history
- Identity of community-based orgs & partners



Tenet 2: Different Properties, Different Strategies

Vacant

- Create mechanism to identify
- Abatement
- Code lien foreclosure
- Property tax enforcement

Owner-occupied

- Create mechanism to identify
- Pre-inspection warning letters
- Resources lists and provide repair resources
- Housing navigators or social workers
- Code inspector soft skills training and hiring
- Partner with local hoarding taskforces, churches, Habitat for Humanity

Rental

- Create mechanism to identify
- Proactive rental inspection programs
- Relocation assistance
- Tenant rent escrow programs
- Partner with legal aid, tenant organizers, and homelessness prevention organizations



Tenet 2: Focus on Compliance

- Vacant
 - Fix it up, pay it up, or give it up
- Rental
 - Rental licensing, tenant escrow programs
- Owner-occupants
 - Resources for repairs



Tenet 3: Create Partnerships



- Internal:
 - Fire Department
 - Community and Economic Development
 - Health Departments
 - Housing Authorities
- External:
 - Land Banks
 - Habitat for Humanity
 - Social Service Providers
 - Neighborhood Associations
 - Law School Clinics/Legal Aid/Pro Bono Attorneys



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How Can I Learn More?

Community Progress Resources

Attend:

- [Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference](#), September 7-9, 2022, Chicago, Illinois

Watch:

- Cornerstone Webinar: [Strengthening Community Relationships to Achieve Equitable Code Enforcement](#), April 2022
- Cornerstone Webinar: [Prioritizing Repair Support for Financially Struggling Property Owners](#), April 2021

Read:

- Alan Mallach, [Neighborhoods by Numbers: An Introduction to Finding and Using Small Area Data](#), 2017.
- Matthew Kreis and Karen Black, [A More Strategic Approach to Housing and Building Code Enforcement in Toledo, Ohio](#), January 2021.
- Frank Alexander, [Alternative Strategies for an Equitable, Efficient, and Effective Code Enforcement System in Mobile, Alabama](#), June 2016.

Reach out!



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