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?
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.
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

- Effective?
- Efficient?
- Equitable?
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
## Tenet 1: Use Data and Engage Residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parcel Data</th>
<th>Market Data</th>
<th>Social Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delinquent property taxes</td>
<td>Foreclosure rates</td>
<td>Regular resident input on top problem properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid code or other public liens</td>
<td>Sales volume, if any</td>
<td>Neighborhood needs/ goals for land &amp; services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency &amp; volume of code violations</td>
<td>Sales prices</td>
<td>Neighborhood racial &amp; ethnic history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuisance &amp; police calls</td>
<td>Purchaser types (e.g. individual, LLC, etc.)</td>
<td>Identity of community-based orgs &amp; partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility shut-offs</td>
<td>Number of cash sales</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupancy status</td>
<td>Assessment values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure conditions</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Tenet 2: Different Properties, Different Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vacant</th>
<th>Owner-occupied</th>
<th>Rental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Create mechanism to identify</td>
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<td>• Create mechanism to identify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Abatement</td>
<td>• Pre-inspection warning letters</td>
<td>• Proactive rental inspection programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Code lien foreclosure</td>
<td>• Resources lists and provide repair resources</td>
<td>• Relocation assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Property tax enforcement</td>
<td>• Housing navigators or social workers</td>
<td>• Tenant rent escrow programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Code inspector soft skills training and hiring</td>
<td>• Partner with legal aid, tenant organizers, and homelessness prevention organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
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:

Reach out!