

# Strategic Code Enforcement

## How to Use Strategic Code Enforcement to Prevent Vacancy

Broken doors, high grass, or a sagging roof are more than just visual cues of vacancy. They pose serious health and safety concerns - and communities have the power to take action in response through code enforcement.

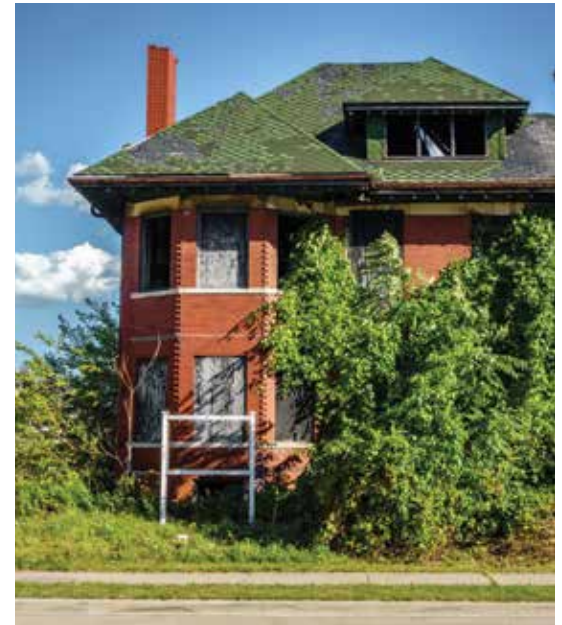
**Code enforcement**, defined broadly, includes all of the elements involved in obtaining compliance from private owners of vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties. Property ownership comes with important responsibilities, including maintaining properties in compliance with local codes.

### What is strategic code enforcement?

Strategic code enforcement focuses on maximizing compliance while minimizing intervention from local government. It's an approach to code enforcement that uses data and community input to make the most of limited resources to achieve a community's goals.

Strategic code enforcement often involves public, private, and resident partners. The best strategic code enforcement efforts are equitable, effective, and efficient.

**Equitable** code enforcement recognizes differences in circumstances and provides the necessary support and protections to property owners in more vulnerable positions. Equitable code enforcement mitigates individual hardship while still working to improve property conditions.



*Code enforcement that is used equitably, effectively, and efficiently is one of the most promising approaches to vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties.*



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**Effective** code enforcement results in an improved property that meets local standards. Property owners might comply voluntarily, or local governments can take action to abate the nuisance and recovery of costs or transfer ownership to a new responsible owner.

**Efficient** code enforcement achieves compliance in the shortest period of time and at the lowest public cost.

## Who is involved in strategic code enforcement?

Many different people are involved in a strategic code enforcement effort. Housing and building code enforcement officers are the individuals who inspect buildings for health and safety. They are responsible for responding to immediate and critical community needs. Department and division managers, attorneys, hearing officers and judges, and other public agency staff may also be involved. These individuals are collectively charged with finding ways to facilitate property owners to comply with necessary building and housing standards.

## What success looks like in strategic code enforcement

When developing an equitable, effective, and efficient strategic code enforcement program, consider the following important elements:

- Use proactive, data-driven interventions tailored to neighborhood market conditions
- Invest in the health and safety of residents
- Give code enforcement officers the ability to diagnose problems
- Accommodate and protect vulnerable property owners who want to comply
- Build and maintain trust with community members
- Empower staff who have excellent interpersonal and problem-solving skills
- Allocate limited financial resources thoughtfully
- Define, measure, and report success
- Coordinate efforts across departments

Strategic code enforcement is one important way your community can address vacant properties. By responding to code violations in ways that are supportive, not punitive, and working in partnership with property owners, communities can make the most of time and resources and improve conditions for an entire neighborhood.



## What are common issues that strategic code enforcement can address?

### EXTERIOR

- Broken windows
- Broken doors
- Loud noise
- Junk vehicles
- Trash and debris
- High grass
- Peeling paint
- Sagging roof
- Deteriorated porch
- Couches on porch

### INTERIOR

- Broken windows
- No fire alarms
- Mold
- Sewage backup
- No heat
- No water
- No vent plates
- Bug infestation
- Lead paint hazards
- No way to secure doors

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