



Providence, Rhode Island

Recommendations to Promote Equitable Code Compliance for Substandard Rental Properties

Memorandum

TO: **James Moore**, Director of Inspections and Standards, City of Providence; **Priscilla De La Cruz**, Director of Sustainability, City of Providence; **Emily Freedman**, Director, Housing and Human Services, City of Providence; **Alice Cintron**, Grants Manager, City of Providence

FROM: **Nora Daly**, Associate Director, Technical Assistance, Center for Community Progress; **Sara Toering**, Senior Fellow, Center for Community Progress

DATE: October 17, 2025

RE: Recommendations to Promote Equitable Code Compliance for Substandard Occupied Rental Properties

Code enforcement is one of the most important tools a local government has at its disposal to protect public health and safety and stabilize neighborhoods. In May 2025, the Center for Community Progress (Community Progress) awarded the City of Providence (the City) a Code Enforcement Technical Assistance Scholarship to assess the City's code enforcement approach for deteriorating, occupied rental properties and recommend improvements to advance equitable outcomes with a focus on prevention and compliance. As part of this engagement, Community Progress:

- Reviewed relevant state and local laws, data, reports, program descriptions, and other documentation;
- Met biweekly with the local project team;
- Completed a two-day site visit; and
- Conducted virtual and in-person interviews with diverse stakeholders including leadership and staff from multiple City departments, the Mayor's Chief Policy Officer, and community advocates and residents (see Appendix A for the list of interviewees).

This memo summarizes Community Progress' key findings and recommendations from the engagement. We found:

- The Department of Inspections and Standards (DIS), which houses the City's code compliance team, has undergone significant internal culture change in recent years to make serving the community its core mission;
- Providence is home to a community of highly engaged housing justice advocates working in partnership with local government to achieve community goals; and
- The City has a wide range of tools to achieve code compliance, ranging from repair assistance for single family and small multifamily buildings to legal enforcement.

Despite these strengths and assets, the City and DIS still face challenges. These include:

- Negative perceptions of the department among residents based on interactions with previous staff and leadership;
- Lack of accessibility, especially for residents seeking to engage with the department online; and
- Fear of government, particularly among vulnerable residents.

To better support residents living in substandard rental properties and lower-income landlords without resources to make repairs, we encourage DIS to:

- Expand its visibility and accessibility in the community;
- Deepen existing and grow new partnerships in local government and the nonprofit sector; and
- Build support and capacity for a proactive rental inspection program that will protect the health and safety of tenants, prevent property deterioration, and strengthen neighborhoods.

DIS and other City departments should consult local legal counsel before relying upon or adopting any recommendations herein.

Background

The City of Providence experienced a more than 7 percent population increase between 2010 and 2020. As of the 2020 Census, nearly half of the city's residents (43.9 percent) identified as Hispanic, up from 38.1 percent in 2010.¹

Like many cities across the United States, Providence faces a housing affordability crisis. In 2025, the city was ranked the least affordable metro area for renters when comparing median asking rent to median renter income.² More than half of the city's population (58.8 percent) rent their homes, and 43.8 percent of renter households are cost burdened, paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing costs.³ During the site visit, community advocates also shared that the city's unhoused population is increasing steadily.

Providence faces several unique challenges with its housing market and tax revenue. Foremost among these is that the city is home to multiple tax-exempt entities: Three higher education institutions (Brown University, Rhode Island School of Design, and Providence College) and several nonprofit health systems. Beyond reducing the amount of taxable real estate, the universities in particular strain the rental market. Stakeholders shared that a cottage industry has emerged converting older housing stock into large, multi-unit student housing. Students are willing to pay high prices to live in a shared rental unit, which contributes to rising rents citywide.

¹ PolicyMap, (webpage), accessed October 16, 2025, <https://plcy.mp/205pP16k>

² Nish Kohli, "Redfin ranks Providence as the least affordable metro area for renters. Here's why," Providence Journal, February 19, 2025, <https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/local/2025/02/19/providence-is-the-least-affordable-metro-area-for-renters-redfin-ranks/79069023007/>.

³ PolicyMap, (webpage), accessed August 15, 2025, <https://plcy.mp/2c42N3jG>.

The City's revenue is further strained by a settlement with the state over past underfunding of Providence public schools. Providence agreed to pay the State of Rhode Island \$15 million over two years, including \$11 million in fiscal year 2026 alone. At the same time, Providence is taking back fiscal responsibility for the public school system, which was under temporary state stewardship since 2019.

Despite citywide budget constraints, elected officials, City staff and leadership, and community advocates are working diligently to improve resident quality of life. In 2019, the City released a nationally recognized Climate Justice Plan,⁴ which includes recommendations that center equity alongside sustainability and resilience, such as preventing resident displacement when landlords make energy efficiency improvements and ensuring cost savings from these improvements are passed on to tenants via reduced housing costs. Additionally, DIS is working to shift to a more community-centered, service-oriented culture (described in detail in subsequent sections), which should help build trust with residents and increase access to code enforcement services. Outside of local government, a vibrant nonprofit and advocacy community works alongside engaged residents to advance housing quality and affordability across the city.

About the Department of Inspections and Standards

DIS has a 36-person team, including six code compliance inspectors. The department is tasked with promoting both public safety and economic development in the City. DIS' core functions include helping residents navigate building and zoning requirements, conducting routine exterior inspections, and responding to emergency violations and resident complaints.⁵ In Providence, housing and building code violations are enforced as civil actions rather than criminal actions, which we recommend as the most effective and equitable approach to achieve code compliance.

Under the current director's leadership, DIS is moving toward a proactive approach to identifying exterior code violations. Inspectors drive through neighborhoods on a regular basis to identify code violations, rather than solely responding to complaints. The department has also taken steps to improve response time when a violation is reported, working toward a goal of responding to all complaints within 48 hours. Partners from other City departments expressed appreciation for DIS' quick and consistent responsiveness to residents' needs. DIS leadership have also worked with the Mayor's Office to expand access to funding for homeowners who are willing to repair their properties but lack sufficient resources to do so. We applaud these efforts to improve code enforcement processes in Providence.

Despite notable progress in recent years, the department can take additional steps to improve its approach to enforcement for occupied, substandard rental properties. These improvements will help ensure the health and safety of lower-income renters while preserving critical, naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH). Specifically, DIS can move toward a proactive approach to *interior* inspections, mirroring its current approach to identifying exterior violations.

⁴ *Climate Justice Plan* (City of Providence, 2019), <https://www.providenceri.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Climate-Justice-Plan-Report-FINAL-English-1.pdf>.

⁵ "Inspections and Standards," City of Providence, (webpage), accessed August 19, 2025, <https://www.providenceri.gov/inspection-standards/>.

However, the department still relies on a “complaint-based” system to identify potential interior violations. Relying on complaints to identify violations can produce inequitable outcomes, especially for lower-income tenants who struggle to find affordable housing and may be hesitant to report code violations for fear of retaliation by their landlord or being displaced because the unit is deemed uninhabitable.⁶ For occupied rental properties, Community Progress instead recommends a proactive approach to code compliance that includes the following components:

1. Mandatory registration of rental properties;
2. Regular inspections;
3. A combination of incentives for responsible owners and penalties for owners who fail to comply; and
4. Programs and policies that support and protect tenants.

This approach removes the burden of reporting code violations from tenants while still protecting tenant health and safety, promoting neighborhood stability, and preventing property deterioration and neglect.⁷

The state's efforts to promote healthy housing also provide an opportunity for the City to move toward proactive rental regulation. In 2023, Rhode Island established a statewide rental registry, administered by the Rhode Island Department of Health. Landlords are required to register their properties to promote transparency and accountability in the rental market. Rental properties built before 1978 are also required to obtain a certificate of lead conformance to reduce the incidence of childhood lead poisoning.⁸ The statewide registry adds to extensive local data DIS tracks in partnership with Tolemi, a software company that also manages the state registry. The City could leverage these two datasets to proactively regulate rental properties in Providence.

Observations and Recommendations

The following section details strengths, assets, challenges, and opportunities that impact DIS and its local government partners, and outlines recommendations to encourage code compliance and protect the health and safety of tenants occupying substandard rental housing. These observations and recommendations are based on research, review of relevant data and documentation, and a two-day site visit where the project team had the opportunity to engage with City staff and leadership, community advocates, and residents.

I. Changes in Department Culture are Not Visible to the Community

DIS staff and leadership have made significant strides in shifting the culture of the department. These steps are physically represented by the director's office, which is arranged so visitors feel as though they are sitting in a living room. DIS has concrete plans for a welcoming set-up

⁶ *Reevaluating Code Enforcement: A New Approach to Addressing Problem Properties* (Center for Community Progress, 2024), <https://communityprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2024-02-reevaluating-code-enforcement.pdf>.

⁷ Community Progress, *Reevaluating Code Enforcement*.

⁸ "RI Rental Registry," State of Rhode Island Department of Health, (webpage), accessed August 19, 2025, <https://health.ri.gov/lead-poisoning/ri-rental-registry>.

in the new headquarters, which will open in fall 2025, to make the department feel “like a coffeeshop instead of a DMV.”

The director also made staffing changes. Strong customer service skills are now prioritized for new hires, even if they require additional training in the City’s building codes. Key internal staff who demonstrated excellent community engagement skills have been promoted to expanded roles. These changes are significant and recognize the critical, community-facing nature of code compliance as a function of local government. However, additional steps are needed to make these developments more visible to the public. During the site visit, stakeholders shared that many residents still associate DIS with negative experiences that occurred when the department was under different leadership.

Lack of accessibility on the department website is another barrier to communicating changes in the department’s culture to the public. Stakeholders shared that the current website is challenging to navigate, especially for non-English speaking users and those who need accessibility accommodations. Translation and accessibility menus are available by clicking small icons on the bottom lefthand side of the screen, but the purpose of these icons is not readily apparent. The translation menu is also written entirely in English, rather than translating the name of each language for non-English speakers.

Additionally, stakeholders reported that the violation notices DIS issues are overly complex and technical, and translated versions are not easily accessible. DIS should explore updating its printed notices to use simplified language, and provide copies to households in not only English, but Spanish and other languages commonly spoken by Providence residents.

Beyond meeting with City staff and leadership during the site visit, we met with 26 residents at the Olneyville Resilience Hub. The Olneyville Resilience Hub is a City-run facility that has served as a site of consistent resident engagement since its opening two years ago. Meeting participants shared that they rarely see inspectors in their neighborhoods—but would like to, as this would show the City is invested in the infrastructure and upkeep of their community.

While meeting participants reported wanting a greater DIS presence in their communities, other stakeholders shared that, as in many cities across the US, fear of government among undocumented and mixed-status households impedes public participation and access to resources. This well-justified hesitancy to engage with government at any level poses an additional challenge to DIS as the department seeks to increase its visibility and provide greater support to the city’s most vulnerable renters. Building trust is a critical first step for DIS to take to ensure increased visibility of the department and its staff is seen as reassuring to community members.

Recommendations

1. Update the DIS website to more clearly communicate DIS’ mission and values.

Strategic changes to the department’s website would help shift public perceptions of the code compliance team and their work. Making the accessibility and translation menus clearer and more visible would help residents access all available information on the website. Beyond modifying these menus, we recommend reducing the amount of text and adding more color and images to break-up the text and create a more

engaging experience for users. DIS may also consider featuring informal, scripted one-to-two minute video introductions from key staff members explaining why they serve the community as a member of the DIS team and what their typical workday looks like. These video introductions also present an opportunity for staff to highlight their unique skills and experience. For example, three of the six code compliance inspectors employed by DIS are bilingual in English and Spanish. This fact is not widely known to the community but could be highlighted through their introduction videos. The website should also include a video message from the director articulating the department's mission and values.

To reduce the cost of this website overhaul, DIS should leverage existing relationships between other departments and agencies, such as the Sustainability Department, and local colleges and universities to identify students who are able to complete this work at low- or no-cost.

The website for the Code Enforcement Division of the City of San Jose, California provides a model for Providence DIS to follow.⁹ The San Jose Code Enforcement Division website features images of common services and programs, clearly states the division's mission, and provides a list of issues the division does and does not address. It also provides referrals to other resources, such as 311, that can help address challenges the division cannot help with. DIS could also update its website to clarify the department's scope of work and link to resources for lower-income tenants and homeowners. The website should also link to resources for current and prospective landlords of small two-to-five-unit affordable rental properties, such as the regular statewide trainings offered by the Housing Network of Rhode Island.¹⁰

2. **Simplify and translate notice letters.** In addition to changing its website, DIS should simplify its notice letters to ensure information is delivered to the public in succinct, easy-to-understand language. The department should also ensure access to notices in the many languages spoken by Providence residents.
3. **Invest in increased, in-person engagement outside of the inspection process.** To help combat the negative impression some community members have of DIS, staff should seek opportunities to engage with residents outside the inspection and enforcement processes. During the site visit, we encouraged department leadership to increase their physical presence in Providence neighborhoods through regular "office hours" sessions at locations throughout the city. Events like these provide an opportunity for staff to teach residents about the services they provide and clarify what falls outside of their scope. For example, some residents who participated in the community meeting during our site visit raised concerns about road conditions, which fall outside DIS' purview. These events also help DIS staff to learn about residents' top concerns and priorities.

9 "Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement," The City of San Jose, (webpage), accessed August 21, 2025, <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/planning-building-code-enforcement/code-enforcement>.

10 "Thinking about purchasing a multi-family home and becoming a landlord?," Rhode Island Housing, (webpage), accessed August 21, 2025, <https://www.rihousing.com/landlord-property-owner-education/>.

Since our site visit, the department has already taken steps to schedule office hours at the Olneyville Resilience Hub. We recommend DIS expand these sessions to other neighborhoods throughout the city. The department could follow a similar model to the rollout of the City's new 311 system by the Mayor's Center for City Services. The center partnered with libraries, neighborhood and merchant associations, senior centers, and nonprofit organizations to host trainings on how to use the new system (see Appendix B for a complete list of community partners that hosted 311 demonstrations). Engaging bilingual code compliance inspectors and support staff in this effort will be critical to effectively reaching non-English speaking residents.

Another avenue to reach diverse community members is the City's Department of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB). DEIB runs an Ambassador Coalition Program (CoPAC). CoPAC engages members of the city's diverse racial and ethnic communities in five ambassador groups: the African American Ambassador Group, the Latino Ambassador Group, the Cape Verdean Ambassador Group, the Asian American and Pacific Islander Ambassador Group, and the American Indian Ambassador Group. Through regular meetings with the mayor and other City staff, these groups tangibly impact City policy and practice. These ambassador groups could provide substantive insight to DIS as it seeks to improve code compliance among substandard, occupied rental properties.

4. **Track and report on community engagement as a measure of success.** DIS leadership should highlight the department's community engagement activities when reporting to the mayor, city council, and other stakeholders on the department's impact. Possible metrics could include the number of community events held; the number of residents engaged; and the number of external speakers brought in to educate residents about topics related to housing and building code enforcement, such as the state rental registry, and services available through the City, such as those offered by 311.

II. There is Opportunity to Standardize and Improve Enforcement Procedures for Occupied, Substandard Rental Housing

As noted above, DIS uses a proactive approach to identify exterior housing and building code violations but still relies on a complaint-based system for interior violations. Implementing a proactive approach to achieve interior code compliance for occupied rental properties would remove the burden of reporting from tenants, who may be reluctant to report violations due to fear of retaliation and/or displacement.

While moving toward a proactive approach, it is critical that DIS continue taking steps to protect vulnerable landlords and tenants. For tenants, this means helping to alleviate fears around engagement with local government and/or landlord retaliation. One suggestion from local housing justice advocates was to allow tenant organizers or other trusted community partners to report violations and be present for inspections in lieu of the tenants themselves. In addition, to support lower-income landlords and protect Providence's remaining NOAH, the City should provide equitable off-ramps for property owners who are willing to make repairs but lack the resources to do so (see observation III).

Recommendations

5. **Transition to a proactive approach to interior inspections.** We recommend DIS adopt a proactive approach to interior inspections for rental housing, mirroring its approach to identifying exterior violations. We recognize this shift will not be possible overnight or without the allocation of additional staff and resources. However, the recently established statewide rental registry provides a critical piece of infrastructure to support the gradual transition to a proactive approach. Through its partnership with Tolemi, DIS may be able to import some publicly available data from the state rental registry to enhance its existing parcel data.

In the short term this could support strategic proactive outreach. For example, DIS could use data to identify whether a landlord who owns a property with multiple violations owns any other properties in the city and proactively inspect those properties. In the long term the department should move toward a comprehensive proactive approach. If staffing and funding allows, DIS should require all landlords to undergo regular inspections to acquire a certificate of habitability from the City.

6. **Develop an equitable rubric to ensure civil fines and penalties are enforced consistently while differentiating between property types.** DIS should establish and adhere to a transparent fee structure for property owners who fail to abate housing and building code violations despite having the resources to do so. However, to preserve NOAH and support lower-income landlords, fees may vary based on property type. For example, large multifamily buildings may be subject to higher fees than one-to-four-unit properties. If an owner refuses to remedy the violation, pay civil fines and penalties stemming from it, or reimburse the City for tax dollars spent remediating violations, DIS should work with the Law Department to explore alternate means of enforcement.
7. **Acknowledge and incentivize compliance.** As part of ongoing efforts to expand the visibility of the department in the community, DIS should also take steps to acknowledge landlords and homeowners who comply with local housing and building codes or respond quickly upon receiving a notice of violation. One approach used successfully by other communities is sending thank you notes to owners who remediate violations on their properties after receiving a warning or first notice of violation. Once the proactive rental inspection program is in place, an incentive for landlords could be going longer between inspections after one or more inspection where no violations are identified. Additional recommendations and examples from other communities that designed performance-based rental regulations can be found in the Community Progress report: *State Policy and Problem Property Regulation*.¹¹

III. Limited Support is Available to Help Owners of Single Family and Small Multifamily Properties Achieve Code Compliance

In 2022, DIS staff and staff from then-Mayor Elorza's Office successfully advocated for state policy change to allow DIS fines and fees to be used to offset the cost of home repairs for income-eligible property owners. This led to the creation of the DIS Home Repair Program in

¹¹ Alan Mallach, *State Policy and Problem Property Regulation* (Center for Community Progress, 2022), <https://communityprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/State-Policy-Property-Regulation.pdf>.

2023. The program is currently managed by the nonprofit Providence Revolving Fund (PRF), offering five-year forgivable loans to owners of one-to-four-unit properties with multiple code violations who earn at or below 100 percent AMI. The program is unique in that properties do not need to be owner-occupied to receive assistance. PRF administers the program, inspects properties, hires contractors, and oversees construction on behalf of homeowners, who are not required to pay out-of-pocket to participate.¹²

Since launching in 2023, the program has served as a valuable resource for one-to-four-unit property owners throughout the city. The City's decision to leverage \$3 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding along with fines and fees collected by DIS helped amplify the program's impact. Unfortunately, the ARPA are now expended, and the fines and fees collected by DIS are insufficient to sustain the program. The program is currently on hiatus, but its success is evidenced by the state's decision to replicate the program in qualified census tracts across Rhode Island.¹³

The Providence Department of Housing and Human Services (HHS) also administers a home repair program that provides no-interest loans to repair owner-occupied properties for residents who meet income and other eligibility criteria. However, because this program leverages federal Community Development Block Grant funding, the eligibility criteria are less flexible than the DIS Home Repair Program.

Recommendations

- 8. Continue to pursue funding for the DIS Home Repair Program.** The DIS Home Repair Program is a critical supplement to HHS' Home Repair Program. Its flexible eligibility criteria and forgivable loan format provide more affordable home repair financing to a wider range of Providence residents. DIS should continue to advocate at the state and local levels for permanent funding to sustain the program. DIS should also explore alternative means to fund the program, such as engaging corporate or philanthropic donors.

Alongside efforts to secure more funding for the DIS Home Repair Program, DIS staff should provide residents with information on the HHS program and other equitable off ramps, such as funding from the nonprofit sector, to help homeowners and landlords remediate code violations when they lack the resources to do so. A first step is for the department to compile a list of available programs and eligibility criteria, which staff can have on-hand during office hours and similar community events. DIS could also organize trainings to ensure inspectors and other public-facing staff are familiar with all the programs and resources available to residents.

- 9. Explore creating a coordinated entry system for home repair.** We commend the City for leveraging all available funding to support homeowners and landlords who otherwise lack the resources to make necessary home repairs. However, the existence of multiple home repair programs run by the City may cause confusion for residents.

Assuming additional funding is identified to sustain the DIS Home Repair Program, the

¹² "Rhode Island Home Repair Program," Providence Revolving Fund, (webpage), accessed August 19, 2025, <https://www.revolvingfund.org/rihrp>.

¹³ Providence Revolving Fund, "Rhode Island Home Repair Program."

City should explore creating a single application process for residents seeking home repair assistance. This program should be run by HHS with support from DIS. The departments should work together to create a streamlined application collecting the minimum amount of information necessary to make an eligibility determination. HHS staff can then review applications, determine whether each applicant is eligible for the DIS Home Repair Program, the HHS Home Repair Program, or other resources available through the nonprofit sector, and follow up to obtain additional documentation (e.g., income certification) from residents as needed.

IV. There is an Engaged Network of Partners Working to Achieve Code Compliance

Partnerships are critical to increasing awareness of DIS programs and services and understanding the additional resources available to Providence residents. DIS is fortunate to have strong partnerships with multiple City departments, which enables department staff and leadership to better fulfill their roles and provide holistic support to community members.

The local project team for this engagement consisted of cross-departmental leadership from DIS, HHS, the Department of Sustainability, and the City's grants manager. Together these agencies share a commitment to achieving housing and building code compliance across the city in a manner that promotes equitable outcomes, prevents displacement of vulnerable lower-income residents, and ensures a diverse home repair workforce that is compliant with evolving environmental standards. We applaud this level of cross-departmental collaboration and commitment to public health and safety.

As with code enforcement practices elsewhere, municipal attorneys play a critical role helping to achieve code compliance and equitable outcomes. In Providence, local ordinances provide several legal tools the Law Department can leverage to encourage code compliance. These tools include the ability to hold mortgage holders (i.e., financial institutions) responsible when enforcing code liens, an approach which Law Department staff report has led to an increase in compliance.¹⁴

Beyond a broad network of local government stakeholders committed to supporting residents through equitable code compliance, Providence is home to a network of housing justice advocates dedicated to representing and advancing the interests of lower-income residents. This network includes legal aid attorneys, tenant organizers, and homeless service providers.

Recommendations

- 10. Convene a biweekly cross-departmental call with City leadership to discuss issues related to housing and building code compliance.** DIS should work with the mayor's chief of staff and chief operating officer to convene a biweekly call with

¹⁴ Although the maintenance of vacant properties with code violations is beyond the scope of this engagement, existing state law allows the City to seek placement of these properties under the control of a responsible owner ("receiver") if the current owner refuses to abate violations or reimburse the City for abatement costs. However, the effectiveness of this tool is limited by a lack of public funding and capacity to support mission-driven receivers. This has resulted in a network of receivers who are primarily motivated by profit, and are uninterested in taking responsibility for the vacant, deteriorated properties most in need of receivership. Other cities have effectively used receivership as a tool to address vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties by having a local government agency or mission-driven nonprofit step in as the receiver and allocating public funding to these entities to complete repairs. The City of Providence should explore this approach in the future.

leadership from departments affected by housing and building code compliance. This call could be modeled on HHS' housing support services coordination calls, which focus on addressing the needs of the city's unhoused population. Participants on this call can provide guidance, support, and resources to assist the department in advancing priorities such as moving toward a proactive approach to interior inspections, identifying permanent funding for the DIS Home Repair Program, and ensuring a diverse home repair workforce that complies with evolving environmental and sustainability standards. While DIS may take the lead in convening this call, active participation by the mayor's chief of staff and the City's chief operating officer is critical to help refine and advance policy priorities.

11. Uplift resources offered by other City departments. Updating the DIS website presents an opportunity to promote resources available through other City departments. This includes 311, which can assist residents with issues like potholes and noise complaints; 211, which connects residents to housing, food assistance, and other essential services; and HHS, which provides down payment assistance, home repair funding, funding to make homes lead-safe, and other resources. The DIS website could also share information about the City's Law Department and its goals, emphasizing that it does not want to evict tenants but rather keep residents safely and stably housed and ensure that tenants displaced due to substandard housing conditions receive relocation resources and support.

In-person community engagement is another opportunity for DIS to highlight the resources its partners offer. After the initial office hours focused on sharing the role of DIS with residents and better understanding community concerns, subsequent events could engage local government and nonprofit partners to share information about policies and programs that intersect with code compliance. During the community meeting, residents identified the statewide rental registry program and lead certification requirements as sources of confusion. Sharing information on these programs could be a great place to start. Staff from the Department of Sustainability, which helped to convene the community meeting, could also share information and resources on housing and building code requirements intended to mitigate environmental impacts or protect against weather-related hazards.

12. Expand network of external community partners. Beyond deepening its relationships with other City departments and agencies, DIS should seek to build partnerships with mission-aligned nonprofit organizations, including those advocating for housing justice. DIS should invite community partners—such as housing justice advocates—to join the cross-departmental call on housing and building code compliance on a quarterly basis. This would allow these partners to share their needs and concerns, learn about other resources to refer residents to, and spread awareness of their own programs and services to DIS and its partners.

Conclusion

The recommendations and observations provided herein are offered for review and consideration by the City's leaders and stakeholders and are subject to ongoing augmentation

and deletion at their direction. Community Progress is honored to provide support and guidance to local stakeholders as they seek to serve the residents of Providence. We remain a committed partner and resource to the City as it explores these recommendations, and we thank all those who contributed to the success of this engagement.

Appendix A: List of Interview Participants

Name	Title	Organization
James C. Moore, III	Director	Department of Inspections and Standards, City of Providence
Kevin Mahoney	Deputy Director	Department of Inspections and Standards, City of Providence
Carl Mello	Chief Housing Official	Department of Inspections and Standards, City of Providence
Priscilla De La Cruz	Director	Department of Sustainability, City of Providence
Sophie Worsh-Farnum	Sustainability Policy Associate	Department of Sustainability, City of Providence
Alyssa McDermott	Division Director	Department of Housing and Human Services, City of Providence
Rachel Ferera	Deputy Director	Department of Housing and Human Services, City of Providence
Leonela Felix	Assistant City Solicitor	Law Department, City of Providence
Belkis Arias	Assistant Legal Secretary	Law Department, City of Providence
Jasmin Checo	Prosecution Coordinator	Law Department, City of Providence
Norelys Consuegra	Director	Mayor's Center for City Services, City of Providence
Dr. Silas Otniel Rodrigues Pinto	Director	Department of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, City of Providence
Jennifer Wood	Executive Director	Center for Justice
Alexandra Steinburg	Policy & Research Manager	One Neighborhood Builders
Izzy Irizarry	Community Organizer	One Neighborhood Builders
Dominique Resendes	Associate Director of Community Infrastructure	One Neighborhood Builders
Anusha Venkataraman	Managing Director	Central Providence Unidos
Kinverly Dicupe	Staff Organizer	Tenants and Homeowners Association, DARE
Cherie Cruz	State Representative	Pawtucket
Courtney Hawkins	Chief Operating Officer	Office of Mayor Brett P. Smiley

Appendix B: Community Outreach Demonstrations

Below is a complete list of community partners that hosted demonstrations to support the rollout of the City's new 311 system by the Mayor's Center for City Services. DIS could partner with some of these community partners to host office hours.

Libraries

- Mt. Pleasant, 315 Academy Avenue
- Washington Park, 1316 Broad Street
- Knight Memorial, 275 Elmwood Avenue
- Olneyville, 1 Olneyville Sq
- Rochambeau, 708 Hope St
- Fox Point, 90 Ives Street
- Smith Hill, 31 Candace St
- South Providence, 441 Prairie Ave
- Wanskuck, 233 Veazie St

Neighborhood Associations

- Smith Hill
- College Hill
- Elmhurst Neighborhood Crime Watch
- Trinity Square

Merchant Associations

- North End, DaVinci Center, 470 Charles St
- 02908 Merchant Association, 133 Douglas Ave
- TSDMA Board Meeting, 118 Waterman St, 2nd floor/Conf

Senior Centers

- St. Elizabeth's Place
- Hamilton House
- Aaron Briggs
- Fox Point Manor, 575 Wickenden St
- Wayland Manor
- Olmstead Garden Apartments
- Federal Hill House

Nonprofits

- Center for Southeast Asian, 270 Elmwood Ave
- DORCAS International
- Higher Ground International

Other Public Meetings

- CM Goncalves Ward Meeting
- CM Roias Ward Meeting
- City Council Meeting
- Neighborhood Associations Chairs
- Merchant Associations
- Providence Chamber of Commerce
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Human Relations Commission – Monthly Meeting
- Providence Schools Parent University /Janet Pichardo

Appendix C: Short, Medium, and Long-Term Action Steps

Short-Term (complete in less than one year)

- Update department website to make accessibility and translation menus more visible and easier to use
- Hold quarterly or more frequent office hours in partnership with other City departments and agencies, and nonprofits across Providence
- Include engagement metrics (e.g., number of events, number of residents reached) in impact reporting to mayor and City leadership
- Acknowledge owners who quickly comply and remediate violations upon receiving a first notice (e.g., by sending a thank you note)
- Compile a list of home repair resources available to Providence residents through the public and nonprofit sectors, including eligibility criteria to access these resources
- Organize annual or more frequent trainings on available home repair resources for DIS staff
- Convene biweekly cross-departmental calls with the mayor's chief of staff, the City's chief operating officer, and leadership from departments affected by housing and building code compliance, modeled on HHS' housing support services coordination calls
- Invite nonprofit service providers and housing justice advocates to participate in cross-departmental calls on housing and building code compliance on a quarterly basis

Medium-Term (complete in one to two years)

- Partner with a local college or university to record, edit, and publish introduction videos for each member of the DIS team on the department website
- Simplify violation notices and translate into multiple languages
- Establish a standard fee structure for property owners that fail to abate housing and building code violations despite having the resources to do so, and make this information publicly available on the DIS website
- Secure permanent, supplemental funding for the DIS home repair program
- Establish a single point of entry within city government for residents seeking home repair assistance
- Lift up other City programs and resources through the DIS website and regular office hours

Long-Term (complete in two years or more)

- Build on data available through the statewide rental registry to establish a proactive interior inspection program for rental units in the City of Providence