



# Code Enforcement Training Guide

A Strategic Curriculum for Local Practitioners  
Nationwide

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Cover Photo: A man takes a photo of a boarded up property in Gary, Indiana. (Photo by Community Progress)

#### **About the Center for Community Progress**

The Center for Community Progress helps people to transform vacant spaces into vibrant places. Since 2010, their team of experts has provided urban, suburban, and rural communities looking to revitalize vacant properties with the tools and resources needed to address those properties at the policy and systems level. As the only national nonprofit dedicated to vacant property revitalization, Community Progress drives change by uncovering and disrupting systems that perpetuate entrenched vacancy and property deterioration. Community Progress has delivered customized, expert guidance to leaders in over 300 communities and provided hundreds of hours of free educational resources as well as leadership programming to help policymakers, practitioners, and community members across the country return properties to productive use. To learn more and get help for your community, visit [www.communityprogress.org](http://www.communityprogress.org)

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# About this Resource

The Center for Community Progress developed this comprehensive training curriculum to support communities in shifting from traditional, punitive code enforcement to a strategic, compliance-based approach.

Housing and building code enforcement is one of local governments’ most important tools to protect public health and safety and stabilize and strengthen neighborhoods. However, our experience working with hundreds of diverse communities across the country has shown that the traditional approach to code enforcement is due for urgent review and reevaluation. A shift to strategic code compliance yields outcomes that are more equitable, effective, and efficient, especially in communities with high levels of vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated (VAD) properties. A compliance-based approach to code enforcement also supports broader community development goals like resiliency, housing security, neighborhood safety, and racial and economic justice.

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# Training Curriculum Framework Overview

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to code enforcement training. Every community has different resources, capacity, infrastructure, and priorities dictating what their code enforcement teams need.

Many departments train inspectors in-house on basic technical skills and expertise, like recognizing violations, understanding construction requirements, and so on. This is often supplemented by trainings from national and state organizations like the American Association of Code Enforcement (AACE), and private and nonprofit entities. Very few departments however take a comprehensive approach to training code enforcement staff that focuses on why code enforcement is critical to achieve community health, safety, and stability, and how consistent across inspections and enforcement decisions can be achieved.

## Assumptions

The following assumptions guided the development of this curriculum:

1. The curriculum is primarily geared toward new inspectors working in property maintenance and housing code compliance.
2. The curriculum does not cover tailored recommendations for more senior inspectors or those responsible for new construction and/or permitting inspections.
3. The curriculum encourages participation from other relevant local government departments in each module. Communities are encouraged to develop written policies and procedures (or Standard Operating Procedures) and to identify additional training on other tasks that may be supported by other departments, like how to conduct title searches and skip tracing.

## Scope

The curriculum is geared towards inspectors focused on inspecting and enforcing property maintenance and housing code violations who are working in mid-size to larger code enforcement departments. However, smaller code enforcement departments may also draw valuable lessons from this curriculum. While Community Progress provides these recommendations, we recognize that capacity constraints and ever-shifting priorities and processes will require code enforcement departments to prioritize their implementation. We encourage local governments to implement the training curriculum in close consultation with their attorneys.

## Curriculum Structure

The curriculum emphasizes voluntary compliance and consists of five modules:

- 01** Establishing the Purpose of Code Compliance
- 02** Technical Knowledge, Codes, and Processes
- 03** Critical Skills Development: Problem-solving, Conflict Resolution, Equity, and More
- 04** Coordinating with Internal Government Partners
- 05** Coordinating with Other Public and Community Partners

Each module includes goals, frequency, audience, and other key information for impactful training.

Module 01

# Establishing the Purpose of Code Enforcement

# 01



# Establishing the Purpose of Code Enforcement

This module helps code enforcement teams understand the core purpose of their job.

Code enforcement departments should establish shared goals and expectations for how inspectors will work to achieve those goals. For example, while compliance is the ultimate goal, the approach to achieve it will vary based on key factors like property ownership, market conditions, and occupancy status. Inspectors must be able to apply different strategies and enforcement tools accordingly.



## MODULE OVERVIEW

### GOAL

Inspectors understand how property types, ownership, markets, neighborhood conditions, and other factors influence enforcement decisions

### AUDIENCE

Code enforcement inspectors

### TRAINING STAFF

Senior code enforcement inspectors and staff with three or more years of experience

*For larger code enforcement departments, we recommend having one full-time trainer. Absent that, we recommend that at least one senior staff member who either is or has previously served as a code enforcement inspector supervise training inspectors as all or a significant part of their primary duties.*

### TIMING

At onboarding (60-75 minutes) and biannual refresher course (30-45 minutes, focused on examples)

### TOPICS

Mission, goals, and values of code enforcement team; factors that influence decisions related to enforcement approaches and tools

### MATERIALS

Presentation, pictures from actual cases for examples

## Key Training Components

### 1 Align on the Department's Mission, Vision, and Goals

**Establish consensus around mission, vision and goals**, and infuse those into training. For example, the mission, vision, and goals language could include:

- The mission of [department name] is to ensure safe, healthy neighborhoods for all.
- To accomplish our mission, we use an equitable, efficient, and effective approach to encourage and compel private property owners to comply with state and local property standards.
- To ensure our approach to code enforcement is equitable, efficient, and effective we are committed to the following activities:
  - Proactively educating property owners on how to comply with state and local property standards.
  - Directing financially constrained property owners to resources for critical health and safety repairs.
  - Abating immediate dangers to protect homeowners, tenants, and neighbors.
  - Holding owners of vacant property or those who refuse to comply accountable, using tools to quickly ensure compliance or transfer of the property to a new, responsible owner.

### 2 Understand Code Enforcement's Role in the Broader Context

**Help inspectors see their role within broader systems** that address vacancy, abandonment, and deterioration. For example:

- Highlight the work of other local government departments (e.g., police, fire, community



### Field Spotlight: Baltimore, Maryland

The City of Baltimore requires code enforcement officers to deeply understand and even memorize the department's mission. This emphasis is a cornerstone of the onboarding process and reinforces a commitment to customer service throughout an inspector's tenure. The mission statement of the Baltimore City Code Enforcement department reads:

*To enforce the building, fire, and related codes of Baltimore City to ensure the integrity of the permit process, safe buildings, habitable housing and decent neighborhoods, while providing prompt and courteous service to those citizens and clients that desire the same.*

development) and private partners (e.g., community development corporations, neighborhood-based nonprofits) that help owners repair or maintain property

- Demonstrate how public data systems, code enforcement, delinquent property tax systems, and land banks can be coordinated to steer vacant properties towards reuse in support of community goals.

### 3 Train Inspectors on Dynamics that Impact Compliance

**Equip inspectors to assess varied economic circumstances**, ownership challenges, and other factors that impact an owner's willingness or ability to comply. Some of those factors include:

- *Economics*: If the cost of repairs to bring a property into compliance exceed the value of the property, owners may be inclined to forgo the needed maintenance.
- *Ownership challenges*: Tangled titles or LLC ownership complicate accountability. For



example, **heirs' properties** that do not have clear title may be ineligible for grants or private financing, and strict enforcement could put a family on the path to losing generational wealth. Conversely, code enforcement tools are often ineffective against negligent property owners who hide behind LLCs.

- *Lack of ability or resources:* Elderly, disabled, or low-income owners may not have the physical or financial capacity to make the repairs.
- *Historic lack of, or inconsistent, enforcement:* Inconsistent actions by a local government on code violations reduces owner compliance.



## A Deeper Dive: Fines

When fines are the only enforcement tool and those fines are either extremely low (e.g., far less than the cost of repairs) or not enforced consistently (e.g., low priority lien only enforced upon sale of property), savvy owners will either pay off the fines and not make the repairs or simply ignore them.

Overly aggressive enforcement of high fines coupled with the inability or unwillingness to direct more vulnerable owners (or owners acting in good faith) to resources to help make repairs can encourage owners to avoid compliance or abandon the property.

## Economics of Compliance

If the cost of repairs is more than a property is worth, some owners may not think repairs are worth it. Let's run the numbers on this hypothetical property:

Fair market value	\$50,000
Outstanding mortgage/liens	-\$25,000
New roof and window and structural repairs	-\$31,000
<b>Potential Negative Equity</b>	<b>-\$6,000</b>



An owner may be unlikely to repair given their inability to recover the investment.



## 4 Teach Using Real-World Examples

Use real or hypothetical properties to show how various factors influence decision-making and demonstrate strategies that reach compliance while considering an owner's particular circumstances. Here is an example workshop structure:

### A Select Sample Properties

Select three to five real or hypothetical properties with code enforcement actions. Property types can include:

- Single family, owner-occupied property
- Three-unit residential, tenant-occupied
- Vacant lot, absentee owner
- Vacant single family, owned by heirs of deceased family member
- Strip mall with one or two vacancies and deferred maintenance, reports of criminal activity
- Large apartment building that is occupied and has façade issues



### B Craft Detailed Case Examples

#### Example 1

Ms. Smith is a widow who owns a single-family home and lives on a fixed income. A neighbor reported her home for falling gutters, a couple of broken windows, and her overgrown sidewalk, filled with rubbish, has become completely impassable. What are the most equitable, efficient, and effective approaches to reach compliance to ensure Ms. Smith lives in a safe home and to maintain neighborhood health and safety?

**How might strategies to address the property change if...**

- the property is in a stable neighborhood and it is the sole eyesore on the block.
- the property is in a weak market neighborhood where many homes have deferred property maintenance and code violations.
- the property is owned by an out-of-state LLC.



*Example 2*

A tenant called to complain about a broken furnace and water damage in their apartment in a three-unit property. The out-of-state property owner has a history of being unresponsive to violation notices. Operating under an LLC, the landlord will at times pay fines at the conclusion of enforcement action but often fails to make the needed repairs or does only the bare minimum. What are the most equitable, efficient, and effective approaches to reach compliance to improve neighborhood health and safety?

**How might strategies to address the property change if...**

- the owner is local, owns only a few properties, and provides rents to households surviving on or around \$30,000/year or less.
- the owner is willing to make repairs but does not have access to cash or the needed financing.
- one of the tenants, who has limited income, expresses a fear that if they report violations, their landlord will retaliate against them.



## C

## Facilitate Discussion

Facilitate a discussion to determine the most equitable, efficient, and effective approaches in each case to reach compliance. Consider tools, resources, and actions such as:

- Providing owners with clear directions on which violations must be addressed and how they might do so.
- Providing a list of local contractors or companies that do the type of work needed.
- Providing the owner more time to comply.
- Issuing civil tickets.
- Initiating other court action.
- Abating the conditions and billing the owner.
- Directing the owner to public or private resources for repair.
- Referring the matter to another local government department or public agency.
- Identifying if unpaid fines/liens (or unpaid taxes) could be used to compel a transfer of the property (e.g., lien foreclosure, tax foreclosure) and whether a local land bank might be a good partner.

## Additional Resources

- [A Message from Code Enforcement Officers](#), City of Baltimore
- [Report: Reevaluating Code Enforcement](#), Community Progress
- [Webinar: Strategic Code Compliance 101](#), Community Progress
- [Webinar: The State of Strategic Code Enforcement](#), Strategic Code Enforcement Management Academy (SCEMA) and Community Progress
- [Webinar: Using Data to Understand Markets](#), Community Progress
- [Example job posting](#), City of Peoria

## Implementation Steps

### Short Term

1. Refine mission statement, values, and goals.
2. Work with inspectors to select example properties for discussion.
3. Identify key third party resources and webinars to share.
4. Consider creating a map with demographics by neighborhoods, council districts, or other relevant boundaries that includes homeownership rate, household income, and/or poverty rate, and posting in various locations in the office as a quick reference point for inspectors.

### Long Term

1. Identify opportunities for more senior inspectors to modify and teach this module to provide ownership of training and leadership development opportunities.



Module 02

# Technical Knowledge, Codes, and Processes

# 02





# Technical Knowledge, Codes, and Processes



All Code Enforcement teams need to understand the basics of how to do their jobs.

Inspectors must have a strong understanding of state and local codes, as well as clear processes for intake, inspection, and engagement with owners and the community. Inspectors may be required to obtain state certification and subsequent continuing education. Even if certification is required, local governments should ensure inspectors understand the nuances of local codes and stay up to date on changes to state and local law. In addition, code enforcement departments should have clearly articulated policies and procedures to guide the day-to-day activities and decisions of inspectors and other staff.

## MODULE OVERVIEW

<b>GOAL</b>	Build foundational knowledge of state and local codes, stay informed of recent changes to codes, and learn basic enforcement approaches and department processes
<b>AUDIENCE</b>	Code enforcement inspectors and staff
<b>TRAINING STAFF</b>	Law department/municipal solicitors and senior code enforcement inspectors/staff
<b>TIMING</b>	Onboarding (3-4 hours over two days, with half of the training on codes and the other half on processes) Annual refresher course (1 hour total depending on ordinance or process changes); periodic trainings on process/protocol updates as needed
<b>TOPICS</b>	Applicable state and local codes, including recent changes; internal enforcement processes and protocols
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Presentations, summary of state and local codes for reference, policies and procedures manuals for inspectors and staff

## Key Training Components

### 1 Regular Training on Codes and Laws

**Provide periodic training on applicable state and local codes, including recent changes.** The training should cover how to recognize violations and build an enforcement case. It should review the most-cited or trending code violations. In partnership with a senior code enforcement inspector, the local law department should provide a periodic refresher on common ordinances or codes, for example:

- State and local building codes
- International Property Maintenance Code, if applicable
- Local housing code
- Local zoning code

In addition to providing an overview of the plain language of the code, the training should:

- Cover enforcement tactics, such as documenting violations with photographs and forms or software.
- Include legal definitions for key terms in the code (e.g., “window” or “weed”) and standards needed for potential legal action.

### 2 Guidance on Frequent Legal Considerations

**Ask your local law department to provide guidance on common questions** inspectors have related to their legal authority and enforcement limitations on private property. While a training cannot cover every scenario, a few common questions to answer could include:

- What does ownership mean in terms of state and local law (e.g., who is responsible for violations—current or prior owner, landlord or tenant), and what forms can ownership take

(e.g., LLCs) and how might that impact the use of particular enforcement tools?

- What is the source of the local government’s enforcement powers (e.g., police powers) and what limits exist on those powers exist (e.g., Fourth Amendment searches)?
- Can inspectors walk on to any part of a property during an exterior inspection?
- How can inspectors justify not treating every property the same (e.g., different approaches for occupied versus vacant properties)?

### 3 Written Policies and Procedures

Develop policies and procedures—for both new and senior inspectors—to set expectations for inspectors’ day-to-day enforcement activities. Components could include:

#### How to use case management and data systems

- Overview of how cases/properties are assigned, how to log information, how to see history of code activity or other enforcement actions specific to properties and/or owners.
- Overview of public data sources to help identify or find contact information for owners (e.g., tax records).

#### How to conduct inspections and record findings, including how to access or seek permission to access different property types for inspections

- Review how to schedule inspections for all property types, including strategies to contact owners ahead of time or obtain consent to inspect properties.
- Review how to record inspection findings (on paper or using a case management system), as well as take pictures or otherwise consistently document violations.

- If not already developed, the department may develop and train inspectors on checklists to ensure they cover all areas for specific types of inspections. For example, see the [simple proposed checklist](#) developed by Community Progress for Detroit's rental inspection program (page 34).

### **How to determine appropriate enforcement approaches using data and other decision-making tools**

- Provide a framework (e.g., decision-making matrix), for employing enforcement actions based on property type, owner status, and violation severity (see Module 1). See an example [decision-making tool](#) (pages 43-45) in Community Progress' recommendations for Toledo's code enforcement program.
- Summarize available data and systems and what they might tell inspectors (e.g., municipal or county data, neighborhood market data).
- Use data tools to inform decisions about case history, when to escalate, or when to explore alternative actions if prior attempts were ineffective (e.g., violations have been issued multiple times with no response from the current owner).

### **How to research property ownership**

- Explain how title searches for properties are conducted, when, and by whom.
- Ensure staff responsible for this task understand how to determine property ownership and identify contact information.

### **How to issue preliminary warning letters or notices/civil tickets**

- Provide guidance around when to issue a preliminary warning letter versus a civil ticket, when to elevate issues for legal proceedings, and when to initiate abatement action.

### **How to identify, initiate, and support appropriate legal proceedings**

- Overview and explanation of when various legal tools are appropriate and useful.
- A checklist for all evidence and information needed for the law department to file and successfully prosecute matters in court.
- Procedures for how inspectors can support hearings, including how to provide testimony at a hearing or conduct a reinspection.
- Communicating and determining how to move forward if the owner fails to appear at, or respond to, legal proceedings.
- Overview of how and when a lien can be filed against the property for unpaid costs, and how that lien could be leveraged.

### **How to engage local government departments or external partners**

- Guidance on which local government departments or external partners might have programs or resources for specific owner types (e.g., weatherization grants for low-income homeowners) or property types (e.g., rental property repair loans).
- Who to contact on the code enforcement team or in local government departments for different scenarios.

### **Other activities to fulfill day-to-day responsibilities**

- While there could be one general manual for all inspectors, there may also need to be various written policies if there are specialized units within the department.



## Field Spotlight: Cincinnati, Ohio

Cincinnati has developed an innovative and comprehensive 48-week Building Inspector Training Academy for newly hired inspectors. The academy is primarily focused on the technical aspects of the job and helping academy attendees become state-certified inspectors. It has also expanded the pool of applicants for traditionally hard-to-fill positions and prepares them for long-term success. This robust training program is largely funded from a 3 percent fee added to City permits.

## Additional Resources

- [Building Inspectors Training Academy](#), City of Cincinnati
- [A More Strategic and Equitable Approach for Housing and Building Enforcement in Toledo, Ohio](#), Community Progress

## Implementation Steps

### Short Term

1. Work with the law department/local government attorneys to develop trainings on common code violations and the elements of each violation in partnership with senior code enforcement staff.
2. Work with administrative staff to document processes for navigating key websites to determine property ownership and identify contact information.
3. Begin outlining policies and procedures for the department as a whole and individual specialized units within the department.

### Long Term

1. Work with the law department/local government attorneys to create a “code manual” for inspectors with common codes cited, key elements, and example violations.
2. Complete policies and procedures for the department and, if applicable, individual specialized units within two years.
3. Explore creating a separate, in-house Inspector Training Academy, like that in Cincinnati, which could incorporate all aspects of training described in these modules.





Module 03

# Critical Skills Development: Problem-Solving, Conflict Resolution, Equity, and More

# 03



# Critical Skills Development: Problem-Solving, Conflict Resolution, Equity, and More



To support a more strategic and equitable approach to code compliance, code enforcement inspectors and staff must develop strong interpersonal and problem-solving skills.

Inspectors should be trained in mediating or diffusing tense situations, bias awareness, and effective communication to foster trust with community members and improve compliance rates. Identifying third-party subject matter experts to help provide this type of training may be necessary.

## MODULE OVERVIEW

<b>GOAL</b>	Enhance inspectors' interpersonal skills, including understanding and minimizing bias, de-escalation, communication, and problem-solving skills to better coordinate with property owners and neighbors
<b>AUDIENCE</b>	Code enforcement inspectors and staff
<b>TRAINING STAFF</b>	Third-party subject matter experts
<b>TIMING</b>	Initial training for current and new staff; provide targeted skills training annually (e.g., Year 1: problem solving; Year 2: implicit bias; Year 3: customer service, etc.)
<b>TOPICS</b>	Implicit bias and cultural competency; customer service; communication; problem-solving
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Any materials developed by external subject matter experts

## Key Training Components

### 1 Prioritize Key Skills for a Compliance-Focused Approach

Critical skills include:

- Customer service training focused on tactics for interacting with owners, neighbors, and other community stakeholders
- Implicit bias and cultural competency training to build awareness of how internal biases with respect to race, class, and other factors influence decision-making
- Communication training to strengthen facilitation and public speaking skills
- Mediation and de-escalation training to strengthen conflict resolution strategies

### 2 Engage Third-Party Experts for Specialized Training

For example, the national organization [Race Forward](#) provides a [Training for Government Employees](#) on racial justice values and how to challenge institutional racial inequities.

### 3 Learn from Leading Code Enforcement Organizations

Organizations that have existing content include:

#### [EduCode International Annual Conference](#)

- Conflict Resolution and Emotional Intelligence
- Leadership IMPACT – Coaching Skills & Leadership and Team Member Engagement
- Marketing Your Code Enforcement Department

#### [American Association of Code Enforcement Annual Conference](#)

- Building a Community Focused Code Enforcement Program
- Changing Public Perception
- Hiring the Right Employees



### Field Spotlight: Peoria, Illinois

Peoria's "code encouragement" approach—emphasizing relationship-building, positive reinforcement, and community education around addressing common violations—has led to higher compliance rates and greater trust among residents. The code enforcement department provides annual trainings led by the City's Chief Diversity Officer. They also engage an external consultant to provide customer service training every two years for their entire team.

Ensuring officers are community-minded is a foundational component of their hiring process. Peoria leaders are far more concerned with finding inspectors that demonstrate a commitment to public service rather than those who simply meet the technical job requirements.

## Additional Resources

- [Webinar: Strengthening Community Relationships to Achieve Equitable Code Enforcement](#), Community Progress and Peoria
- [Webinar: Advancing Equity in Enforcement](#), SCEMA
- [Report: Reimagining Code Enforcement and Equity](#), Hester Street
- [Report: The Power & Proximity of Code Enforcement](#), Hester Street

## Implementation Steps

### Short Term

1. Identify local government staff with expertise in racial and social justice (e.g., chief diversity, equity, and inclusion officer or similar) who can provide training to code enforcement staff.
2. Alternately, review local and/or national partners and develop budgets to engage third-party trainers.

### Long Term

1. Use third-party experts to provide training.
2. Establish an annual training budget for skills development. It may include funding for group trainings based on skill gaps identified by leadership, and for inspectors to choose up to one individualized training every two years from a list of approved topics and providers.





Module 04

# Coordinating with Internal City Partners

# 04



# Coordinating with Local Government Partners

Code enforcement departments need a strong understanding of how other departments operate and address similar issues, and how to collaborate effectively.



Many local government departments are working on issues that impact neighborhood health and safety. Strengthening coordination and relationships can help code enforcement departments reach their goals, like connecting property owners with home repair resources, or working with police to address activities on vacant properties that pose a public safety risk.

## MODULE OVERVIEW

### GOAL

Code enforcement inspectors and staff understand which other departments touch vacant and substandard properties and how to coordinate to address code compliance matters.

### AUDIENCE

Code enforcement inspectors and staff

### TRAINING STAFF

Designated internal partners; senior code enforcement staff and leadership

### TIMING

At onboarding (90 minutes) and at an annual refresher course for existing inspectors (90 minutes), could be done alongside onboarding; periodic trainings on process/protocol updates as needed

### TOPICS

Local government departments and programs that touch vacant and substandard properties; directions for how to contact and coordinate efforts to address problem properties

### MATERIALS

List of other departments and agencies with contact information and directions for how and when to contact

## Key Training Components

### 1 Identify Key Local Government Departments and Complementary Resources

Examples of local government departments or partners could include those involved with:

- Housing and/or community development
- Health and human services
- Police, fire, and public safety
- Economic development
- Mayor's office or executive leadership
- Managing publicly owned properties or land banking

### 2 Establish a Clear Communication Process

Work with the identified departments to systematize coordination.

- **Designate Contacts:** Identify appropriate points of contact at each department and clarify when inspectors should contact them.
- **Define Roles:** Determine whether any inspector can reach out or if only a senior inspector or department leadership should coordinate communication.
- **Develop Resources:** Identify what information inspectors can and should share with the property owner about other department's programs or services (e.g., one-page resource of housing repair/assistance programs).

### 3 Training and Knowledge-Sharing

**Local Partner Presentations to Inspectors:** Ask relevant departments to provide an overview of their role, how they interact with the types of properties and owners inspectors frequently encounter, and key programs and services they offer that could help inspectors achieve compliance.

**Coordination Between Departments:** Discuss the communication process for reaching out to the department for potential coordination.

**Onboarding Materials:** Ensure new hires receive training on different local government department roles during onboarding.



### Field Spotlight: Cleveland, Ohio

The City of Cleveland's Problem Properties Roundtable brings together relevant City departments to coordinate an approach on particularly vexing properties. The roundtable takes a multifaceted approach to resolving issues by combining tactics related to code enforcement, public safety, utilities, and community relations.

Formal and information groups, like Cleveland's Roundtable, may be a good starting point to identify how to better share information, refer matters between departments, and help to educate each other on how and when to make referrals to, or partner with, other departments.

## Additional Resources

- [Webinar: VAPAC: A Cross Sector Coalition of the Willing Attacking Problem Properties in Cuyahoga County](#), SCEMA
- [Community Ambassadors Program](#), City of Syracuse
- [Webinar: The Spirit of St. Louis: How Cross-Sector Partnerships and Collaboration Fuels Systems Change to Reclaim Vacant Properties](#), SCEMA

## Implementation Steps

### Short Term

1. Request departments playing an important role in providing resident services, like departments that manage grant programs for home repair or have resources for senior homeowners, to present on available programs.
2. Approach departments working on issues that impact neighborhood health and safety to explore their interest in and capacity to identify areas of partnership with the code enforcement department.

### Long Term

1. Establish a clear path for interdepartmental communication on specific matters—like a point person the code enforcement department can request help from or make referrals to. Consider creating a resource for inspectors that lists common situations that would warrant connecting with other departments.
2. Develop a comprehensive list of local government departments, programs, and initiatives relevant to the code enforcement department's work, and clear directions for how the code enforcement department can engage each one and in which situations.





Module 05

# Coordinating with External Public and Community Partners

# 05



# Coordinating with External Public and Community Partners

Community organizations, nonprofits, and resident associations can be great allies in achieving code compliance.



These organizations can offer insights on how to effectively engage owners and residents, provide additional capacity to support enforcement efforts, and offer critical knowledge about historical and cultural dynamics within a neighborhood. Strengthening relationships with these partners is essential to crafting an approach to compliance that is effective, equitable, and less likely to cause unintended harms like displacement.

## MODULE OVERVIEW

<b>GOAL</b>	Inspectors know which public, nonprofit, and community partners also deal with problem properties and can appropriately involve them in enforcement decisions/actions; inspectors understand important historic and current neighborhood context to make informed equity-focused decisions.
<b>AUDIENCE</b>	Code enforcement inspectors and staff
<b>TRAINING STAFF</b>	Designated external partners; senior code enforcement staff and leadership
<b>TIMING</b>	At onboarding (60 minutes) and at a refresher course every two years for existing inspectors (60 minutes, could be done alongside onboarding); periodic trainings on communication process/protocol updates as needed
<b>TOPICS</b>	Key partners (tailored to inspectors' geographic location, if applicable); directions for how to contact and coordinate efforts to address problem properties; important historic and current neighborhood context
<b>MATERIALS</b>	List of other governmental and community partners that includes contact information and directions for how and when to contact

## Key Training Components

### 1 Identify Key External Partners

Examples of potential partners could include:

- Community development corporations (CDC), especially CDCs that engage in code enforcement
- County or other outlying units of government
- Local, regional, or state land bank (if applicable)
- Housing justice advocates
- Legal aid organizations
- Tenant advocacy organizations
- Older adult advocacy organizations

### 2 Establish a Clear Communication Process

Work with partners to systematize coordination:

- **Designate Contacts:** Identify points of contact at each partner organization and clarify when inspectors should contact them.
- **Define Roles:** Determine whether any inspector can reach out or if only a senior inspector or department should coordinate communication.

### 3 Training and Knowledge-Sharing

**Partner Presentation to Inspectors:** Ask partner entities to provide an overview of their missions, how they interact with the types of properties and owners inspectors frequently encounter, and key programs and services they offer that could help inspectors achieve compliance.

**Coordination:** Discuss opportunities to interact with the code enforcement department and opportunities to coordinate services and funding to meet shared goals.

**Onboarding Materials:** Ensure new hires are trained on external partners during onboarding.

### 4 Understand Neighborhood Context

Prioritize partners that can provide critical historical and present-day context about neighborhoods. Inspectors often work in neighborhoods that have experienced economic hardship and disinvestment, the roots of which can be traced back to historic laws and policies based on race. Helping inspectors understand how history has shaped the neighborhoods where they work, and how those dynamics play out today, is critical to finding appropriate code enforcement strategies that help residents achieve compliance. Understanding neighborhood context includes:

- Neighborhood changes over time (e.g., racial, demographic, and market shifts)
- History of local policies and laws that have intentionally or unintentionally segregated, discriminated against, or otherwise targeted disinvestment in communities of color, and how these policies and laws have shaped neighborhoods today
- Current neighborhood needs as presented by neighborhood associations or resident representatives



### Field Spotlight: Syracuse, New York

In 2020, the City of Syracuse launched a program to fund positions within certain neighborhood nonprofits to serve as part-time Community Ambassadors. Ambassadors help educate community and neighborhood partners on how to report code violations and methods to bring properties into compliance. This program helps City officials and Code Enforcement leadership build relationships with various neighborhoods and constituencies. Ambassadors could potentially train inspectors on neighborhood history and cultural dynamics.



## Additional Resources

- [Webinar: Strengthening Code Enforcement and Community Connections Featuring the City of Syracuse' Ambassador Program](#), SCEMA
- [Community Ambassadors Program](#), City of Syracuse
- [Residents Code Academy](#), City of Dallas

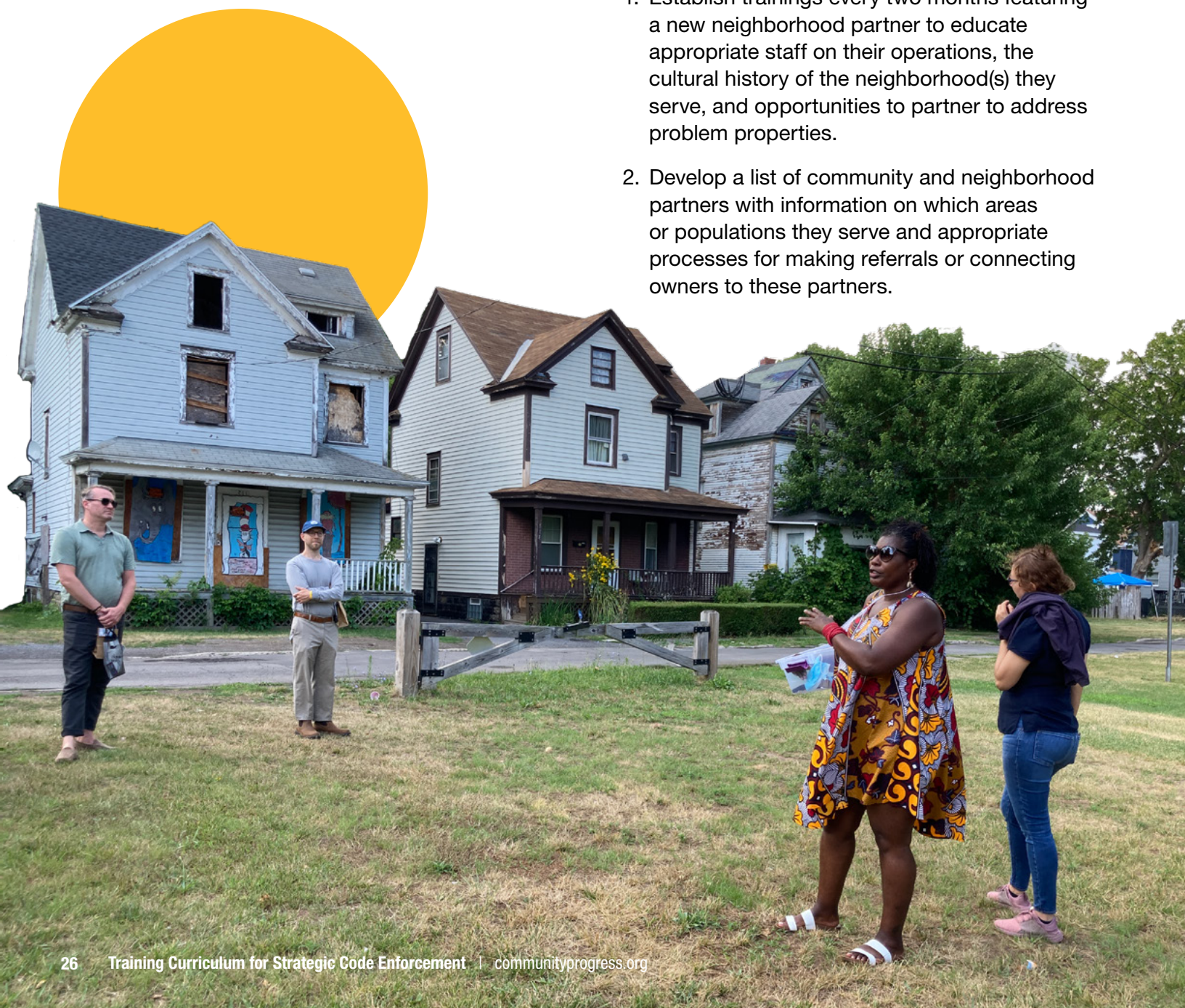
## Implementation Steps

### Short Term

1. Contact key external partners, like community organizations, nonprofits, and resident associations, to brainstorm how they or their neighborhood partners can present to code enforcement inspectors and staff about what they do, how they can support code enforcement work, and when and how to engage them.

### Long Term

1. Establish trainings every two months featuring a new neighborhood partner to educate appropriate staff on their operations, the cultural history of the neighborhood(s) they serve, and opportunities to partner to address problem properties.
2. Develop a list of community and neighborhood partners with information on which areas or populations they serve and appropriate processes for making referrals or connecting owners to these partners.





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