

# CITY OF LONGMONT

## Top Code Violations

### 1. YARD MAINTENANCE STANDARDS



Yard maintenance standards are the responsibility of every property owner and include the maintenance of plant material in any right-of-way abutting the property. No

weeds, grasses or other unsightly vegetation is allowed to grow over 12 inches in height. Hedges and shrubs must be maintained at a height of 36" or less in the sight distance triangle at intersections. Hedges, shrubs and trees must be trimmed to a minimum of 8 feet above a sidewalk and 15 feet above the street. Vegetation and trees must be trimmed so as not to impair or obstruct the travel of pedestrians on public walks.

### 2. JUNK/INOPERABLE VEHICLES



A junk/inoperable vehicle is a vehicle that does not bear valid, unexpired plates, and does not appear to be of a type that is exempted from motor vehicle licensing by the laws of the State

of Colorado. Or the vehicle may be wrecked, damaged or substantially dismantled to the extent that such vehicle is inoperable, or if designed to be capable of moving itself when in proper repair, is incapable of being moved under its own power in its existing condition; or may have any number of flat tires. Vehicles with any combination of these conditions may not be parked or stored on the public street for any length of time and are subject to immediate removal. Only one junk/inoperable vehicle may be stored on private property if it is stored inside a garage or completely covered with an opaque car cover.

### 3. JUNK, TRASH AND DEBRIS



Junk, trash and debris cannot be left in the yard and must be properly disposed of. This includes auto parts, appliances, furniture, building materials, tires, discarded

paper, cardboard, plastics, tree trimmings and fallen limbs.

### 4. OUTDOOR STORAGE



Outdoor storage is prohibited. Generally, any equipment, materials or furnishings that would ordinarily not be used outdoors may NOT be stored outdoors. For

example, you may NOT keep indoor, upholstered furniture, household appliances, auto parts or building materials outside. You may store barbecue grills, lawn furniture, garden hoses, garden tools, and outdoor play equipment for children or lawn mowers outside in an orderly fashion. It is unlawful for any person to place, leave, dump or permit to accumulate any materials, junk, debris or garbage that may afford food or harborage for rats.

### 5. ILLEGAL DWELLING UNITS

Dwelling units that have been added to the interior or exterior of a structure without proper permits are illegal, regardless of how long the units have existed. The City will require closure of such units

### 6. COMMERCIAL/RECREATIONAL EQUIPMENT



Generally, commercial equipment and commercial vehicles are allowed to be in a residential area for up to 72 hours at a time.

Overweight commercial vehicles are restricted from residential areas unless in the process of deliveries and must otherwise stay to the approved truck routes in the city. Recreational vehicles and equipment may not be parked on the street for more than 72 hours and may not be parked within 20' of the sidewalk in the front yard or side yard on a corner lot.

### 7. PROHIBITED BUSINESSES

Most businesses are not allowed to operate in residential areas. "Home occupation" means an incidental accessory use of a dwelling unit for gainful employment of the residents therein, which use does not change the essential residential character or appearance of the dwelling unit. This means that car repairs or other activities that are not normally carried on in a residential district are prohibited, except that you may work on your own car or other vehicle provided the activity does not disrupt the nearby residents. Home Occupations that do not comply with the regulations will be shut down.

### 8. PARKING

Parking is permitted for passenger vehicles and motorcycles in residential lots only on a legal driveway or parking area. A driveway must be constructed with approved parking surfaces, such as concrete or asphalt. Auxiliary parking areas may be surfaced with concrete, asphalt or gravel. Only 50% of the front yard may be developed for parking areas, the remaining yard area is to be maintained with live vegetation.

### WHAT DO I DO WITH...?

#### What to do with that unwanted vehicle?

##### Donate it !

National Kidney Foundation	303-761-0112
Mountain States Children's Home	303-776-6841
American Council for the Blind	800-767-9510
Longmont Ending Violence Initiative	303-774-4534
Longmont Humane Society	303-684-8112x25

#### What to do with those tires?

Snowy River Tire Recycling	970-535-0535
4450 Mulligan Dr, Mead CO	
Tire Mountain	303-573-5744
Hudson, CO	

#### What to do with that trash?

Landfill Republic	303-828-9400
Hwy 52 & County Rd 5	
Denver Regional Landfill	303-673-9431
Hwy 52 & County Rd 5	
City of Longmont Solid Waste	303-651-8416
✓ Rent-A-Dumpster	
✓ Large Item pickup	
✓ Stop and Drop Days	

#### What to do with that appliance?

City of Longmont Solid Waste	303-651-8416
✓ Fee involved – call for details	
Eco-Cycle	303-772-7300
✓ will take everything but a refrigerator	

- ✓ Check the Yellow pages under Appliance–Major-Used. Some businesses will haul away unwanted appliances for a fee.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL THE CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION AT:  
303-651-8695 Or 303-651-8321**



# Good Neighborhoods = Individual Property Owner & Tenant Responsibility

**City of Longmont  
Community Development Department  
Code Enforcement Division  
350 Kimbark St.  
Longmont CO 80501**

**303-651-8695 / 303-651-8321**

As we age, we take steps to maintain and improve our health. The neighborhoods and structures in Longmont likewise require maintenance to stay in good health as they age. Individual structures and neighborhoods that are not maintained not only deteriorate beyond a usable point, they also lower property values for all of us. If property values fall, vandalism and crime occur more frequently and neighborhoods become noisy, dirty and uncomfortable.

There is a simple solution to maintaining good neighborhoods – Individual Property Owner and Tenant responsibility. Unfortunately, many people are not responsible owners or renters. That is why citizens band together to ask government to create minimum standards for housing, yards, parking, etc. These standards protect surrounding property owners and tenants, who might otherwise suffer substandard conditions.

This brochure has been developed to explain some of Longmont's minimum housing and neighborhood standards. Look at the Property Checklist below and use it to evaluate your own property. On the reverse side are descriptions of the most common code violations. Please review this information and take steps to be a responsible property owner or tenant.

## PROPERTY CHECKLIST

### STRUCTURES

Repair rotted wood, broken or missing boards, siding, shingles and make all exterior parts weather tight, rodent proof and sound. Exteriors must be resistant to the elements and be protected with paint, siding or brick that is in good condition. Inspect: the following for damage or decay:

- ✓ exterior walls
- ✓ roof flashings, gutters, downspouts and drains
- ✓ roof covering
- ✓ railings on stairs, elevated landings, porches & decks
- ✓ fences (should be of legal height)

**Keep housing safe, sanitary, in good repair and sound condition. Inspect both interior and exterior:**

- ✓ Walls, ceilings, floors free of holes, peeling paint or cracks
- ✓ Plumbing pipes and fixtures in sound condition
- ✓ Windows and screens are in operable condition & unbroken

**Make sure that:**

- ✓ Address numbers are permanently attached to house and clearly visible from the street and alley. When new numbers are installed, they must be at least 4 inches high.
- ✓ Garbage is properly disposed of
- ✓ Insects and rodents are exterminated
- ✓ There are no areas where stagnant water collects and breeds mosquitoes

### YARD MAINTENANCE

- ✓ Mow the lawn & any weeds
- ✓ Edge or remove growth from sidewalks, curblines and gutters to give pedestrians clear access
- ✓ Trim all shrubs at intersections to a height of three feet or less.
- ✓ Trees over the public right-of-way and sidewalks must be trimmed up to a height of eight feet.

- ✓ Trees over the street or alley must be trimmed up to a height of 15 feet above the street or alley surface.

### STORAGE

- ✓ Store furniture, building materials, junk, disabled or untagged automobiles, refrigerators, freezers and auto parts **inside of a legally constructed, fully enclosed structure.**
- ✓ **No parking of domestic equipment** (boat and trailer, utility trailer, camper, recreational vehicle) is permitted on the street or the City right-of-way. Some storage may be permitted in private yards under special conditions. Check with a Code Enforcement Inspector for details.

### PAVING/PARKING

- ✓ Driveways, steps, sidewalks and other paved areas must be in good repair and free of debris.
- ✓ Vehicles in front yards must be parked on legally recognized and approved parking surface. Parking on the lawn or dirt is not allowed.
- ✓ Commercial and recreational vehicles and RV equipment may never be parked or stored anywhere in the front yard or driveway area for more than 72 hours, or in the side yard adjacent to the street on a corner lot.

### BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

- ✓ It is unlawful to hold a garage sale for more than 3 consecutive days, or for more than 12 days in a year.
- ✓ Home occupations (any business conducted from your home) must be properly licensed and must meet strict criteria. No traffic or outside display may occur and the occupation must be clearly secondary to the use of the property as a home.
- ✓ Any other business activity in a residential area is not permitted unless specifically exempted by the Land Development Code.

### IF YOU RECEIVE A NOTICE OF VIOLATION:

Find out how to correct the problem and do so promptly. You may ask for additional time provided you are making progress on the violations. Some problems are serious and correction must not be delayed. There may be assistance available to low-income homeowners in the form of low-interest loans, free paint, or volunteer labor. Please contact your Code Enforcement office for suggestions. Remember to get all proper permits that may be required for some repairs.

If you are unwilling to take prompt actions to correct the problems, there are several possible consequences. The City may arrange for a lot to be mowed or for a vacant, open structure to be boarded. The cost is then billed to you. If legal action becomes necessary, you will be served a summons and must appear in the Longmont Municipal Court. You must explain your case, and ultimately correct the violations in order to avoid fines and liens.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL THE  
CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION AT:  
303-651-8695 or 303-651-8321**

## **Hello Historic Eastside and Kensington**

### **Neighborhood Residents!**

As part of the neighborhood revitalization grant initiated in the Kensington neighborhood in 2003 and the HENA neighborhood in 2006, Julie A. Pink, City of Longmont Code Enforcement Officer, will be enacting a neighborhood wide code compliance sweep of these two neighborhoods.

In the paperwork provided you will find an explanation of the top ten code violations in the City of Longmont. Please take the time to read over the list and take the steps needed to ensure that your property meets the minimum housing and neighborhood standards.

In two to four weeks a code compliance officer will return and let you know if your property has passed inspection or the list of code violations that need to be corrected. The first notice is just a warning and there will be no fines attached to the notice and the property owner will have two weeks to bring to violations into compliance before code officer returns. If the violations still exist, then a code violation will be given for the property.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact:

**Julie A. Pink**

**Code Enforcement Officer**

**City of Longmont**

**303-774-4573**

## Warning

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

A Code Enforcement Inspector has found there is a violation of the following municipal codes at the above address:

- Yard Maintenance Standards  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Inoperable Vehicles  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Junk, Trash and Debris  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Outdoor Storage  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Illegal Dwelling Units  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Commercial/Recreational Equipment  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Prohibited Business  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Parking  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please take the time to find out how to correct the problem/s. This notice is just a warning and there will be no fines attached to this notice. You will have two weeks to bring ~~to~~ violations into compliance before a Code Enforcement Inspector returns and issues an official notice of violation for the above code violations.

If you have any questions please call the Code Enforcement Inspector

\_\_\_\_\_  
303-774-4573

# closeUP

Volume 1 No. 3

November-December 2004

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**A H E A D**

**Feb. 7-11**

*EduCode, New Orleans Hotel in Las Vegas. Check [www.educode.us](http://www.educode.us) for details!*



## Pack Rat Tales

By Al Dennis

**M**ost veteran Code Enforcement Officers could nominate someone from their community for King or Queen of the Pack Rats. It would appear compulsive hoarding knows no geographic, economic or ethnic boundaries. Hoarders tend to be over fifty and live alone, although there are notable exceptions. Research indicates over four million Americans may be afflicted with obsessive-compulsive disorder.<sup>1</sup>

Code enforcement officials generally have an easier time abating a hoarding problem in rental units. Owner-occupied junkaholic properties present a thornier or shall I say "more cluttered" path toward compliance. Judges require convincing evidence before deeming a person's castle what in reality it has become ... a junk yard or giant dumpster. Getting the exterior of an owner-occupied compulsive collector's property cleaned up is less difficult than the interior.

Perhaps you are thinking, "Why would code officials be concerned about the interior of an owner-occupied parcel?" There may be minor children living in the muddle. Junk horders may also be animal horders, creating nasty odors that waft downwind toward neighbors. Accumulation of reeking garbage also causes

problems. Insect and rodent harborage in the jumble creates an extermination nightmare. Fire hazards from papers stacked against space heaters and stoves threaten not only the owner but also adjacent houses. Inability to use the structure as designed produces other health and safety issues.

Often the call for enforcement comes from paramedics, firemen or police who enter the structure on an emergency call. In one local case an elderly man's evacuation was delayed due to the inability to get a stretcher into the kitchen where he had fallen. The fire department had to remove double hung windows from the frame to get him out! The man died. A real threat of collapse upon rescue personnel from teetering floor-to-ceiling stacks of newspaper and junk existed. A court-ordered clean-out filled ten forty-yard dumpsters!

In another case Property Standards received a call from the fire department at the address of a suspected junk hoarder. We constantly battled Mr. A over stuff he deposited around the exterior of his two-unit building. An occasional open garage door revealed a swollen structure about to burst from excess junk and we presumed the house was the same. Mr. A hadn't been

See **PACK RATS**, page 2

# AACE Code of Ethics

*I will uphold the constitutional property rights of all citizens to ensure due process with fairness and consistency.*

*I will seek to improve the quality of life within my jurisdiction by enforcing all laws in an exemplary manner.*

*I will strive to inspire public confidence and trust in my profession by performing my duties with honor, integrity, truthfulness and fairness.*

*I will carefully avoid conflicts of interest, or appearance of impropriety, and will not accept, nor offer, any form of gift for the performance of my duties.*

*I will strive to become more knowledgeable of my profession through continuous training and education.*

*I will not permit personal feelings, prejudices nor influences (political or otherwise) to interfere, prohibit or delay the process of enforcement.*

## PACK RATS, from page 1

able to rent out the second unit for years as it was occupied by junk. I instructed the inspector responsible for the area to arm himself with extra film as I anticipated discovering a mother lode of junk. What we encountered was amazing!

Mr. A had so loaded the stairway to the upper unit that it was impassable. Knowing he had a little open space left in the attic, the elderly fellow climbed a forty-foot ladder and cut a hatchway into a small flat area on the roof and began depositing junk in the attic from above. His activity on the roof caused it to leak so he obtained a five-gallon pail of roofing tar. The tar was stiff so he placed the metal container on the stove to warm it up and thin it out! He got distracted and the tar ignited.

When I entered the front door the firemen were perched on six to eight foot piles of junk in the living room. The rooms had sixteen-foot ceilings. I said, "Gentlemen, welcome to the twilight zone!" as I observed their astonished expressions. Typically, compulsive hoarders have paths through their houses to get to and from the bathroom. In Mr. A's case, you had to dig to find the path! My fellow inspector

hypothesized the owner must be part mountain goat, as we had to climb through the place rather than walk!

The flexibility of a contortionist was required to sit on the first floor toilet as the junk piled around its base went to the ceiling at a forty-five degree angle from just below the lip of the bowl. One large room contained a host of more than 100 broken upright vacuum cleaners. There were collections of yellowed and damaged lampshades, broken pieces of furniture and frayed remnants of carpeting and padding. The rooms from basement to attic were stuffed with you-name-it, rendering them all unusable for living. How could anyone possibly have time and energy enough to collect so much junk? What madness drives people to junk themselves out of house and home?

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health defines hoarding as the excessive collection and retention of things or animals until they interfere with day-to-day functions such as home, health, family, work and social life. Severe hoarding causes safety and health hazards.<sup>2</sup>

See PACK RATS, page 3

## Board of Trustees

Dan Peterson, President  
Kathy Davis, 1st Vice President  
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Gail Bosgieter, Secretary  
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Blaine Smith, Sergeant-At-Arms  
Cecelia Copeland, Immediate Past President

*Code Compliance Closeup* is the bimonthly publication of the American Association of Code Enforcement (AACE). Contributions that are timely, newsworthy and of interest to our members are welcome. Dated material should be submitted according to our deadlines below. Submitted articles of 500 words or less in length should be sent by email to [aace@aace1.com](mailto:aace@aace1.com). Articles that include images will receive first consideration. (Black and white images must be scanned at 300 dpi and saved as an attachment (\*.tif file)). The author's name, position, and employer's name and city must be included to ensure proper credit. Shorter articles and announcements of 100-150 words are also welcome.

For information about advertising opportunities, call 614-552-CODE (614-552-2633).

### 2005 Production Dates

Submission Deadline	Issue/Publication Date
Nov. 15, 2004	Jan/Feb - Jan. 1, 2005
Jan. 15, 2005	Mar/Apr - March 1
March 15	May/June - May 1
May 15	July/Aug - July 1
July 15	Sept/Oct - Sept 1
Sept. 15	Nov/Dec - Nov. 1
Nov. 15	Jan/Feb - Jan. 1, 2006

# Community problem solvers

By Dan Peterson

**A**s I am sitting watching the gold, red and chestnut colored leaves fall and drift to the ground on a beautiful Indian Summer day, I am reminded that as the seasons change so do the demands on the code enforcement professional.

The regional challenges that we face can be daunting. Adequate heat and exterior weather conditions become an issue in the cold weather climates. In areas with seasonal residences, what happens when the property is vacant and there are maintenance issues? How does one tell a single mother with small children that they have to vacate their home due to lack of heat? Do you force out the disabled senior citizen who has broken windows with no family or resources to fix them to keep the rain and snow out? Do we take a hard line stance and "strictly" enforce the codes, or are we the community advocate?

I believe it is our job to be the advocate and resource to assist the residents of our jurisdictions in addressing these challenges. We are the community problem solvers and as such need to be prepared to handle the issues that we are going to face in the course of our day. As professionals we need to be a walking yellow pages, a resource guide for the community. How do we get to be this resource?

By taking advantage of and utilizing YOUR association!

AACE is a veritable encyclopedia of knowledge, experience and information that can assist you in handling the challenges in your community.

AACE's newsletter, *Code Compliance Update*, the website bulletin board, attendance at conferences, contacting your board and networking with other code enforcement professionals are all benefits of membership.

AACE has members in 42 states and

can assist in connecting you with information or people in your area that can be of assistance to you.

The board has made a commitment through the strategic plan to be that resource for both our individual members and for our state affiliates. This will ensure that at every level — local, regional and

national — we will be able to address code enforcement issues.

This is AACE working locally to reach globally. ♡

*Dan Peterson,*  
president,  
AACE, works



for B & F Tech Code Services in Hoffman Estates, IL; 847-490-1443; [dpeterson@bfttechcs.com](mailto:dpeterson@bfttechcs.com).

## PACK RATS, from page 2

Another working definition of hoarding is the steady and often-compulsive acquisition of things that appear to be useless or of limited value, coupled with a failure to discard them, with living spaces so cluttered that their use is impaired or impossible, and significant distress or impairment in functioning as a result of clutter.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. A and other "collectors" are often observed one-step-ahead of the waste haulers, carting home another "treasure." A compulsive hoarder 'always acquires; but never discards.' A pack rat has 'enormous emotional difficulty throwing things away'. Chaos results because the hoarder typically has a 'high level of disorganization.'<sup>4</sup>

Magazines, newspapers, unopened bulk mail and old clothing are typical items found in the hoarder's nest. One local elderly lady had an estimated six tons of newspapers and magazines, some dating back forty years. When I asked her why she was hanging on to them she replied, "I'm going to cut out the recipes!" Her

stove, table and kitchen sink were completely buried.

How do we intervene as Code Enforcement Officers? Psychological research studies appear to verify what inspectors already know: Compulsive hoarders do not change their ways easily, often never, and frequently it gets worse.<sup>5</sup> Problem hoarders usually refuse help. In rental situations we must act swiftly to abate hazards to others in the structure. Generally the landlord will cooperate with our efforts unless he or she is the hoarder. In owner-occupied single-family cases, we may be limited to keeping the exterior in check until circumstances force us inside as illustrated above.

Hope for intervention lies in a collaborative effort with family (if possible), senior service agencies, mental health agencies, health department, animal control and humane society (if necessary) and the justice system. In severe cases that require legal action, take good photographs. Your lawyer should ask the court to make an on-site visit.

Judges rarely do that, but still ask. Locally, judges that see the mess first-hand have always brought more pressure for compliance and often ordered periods of follow-up monitoring to help restrain future accumulations. Once monitoring periods expire, the piles begin to re-appear. Your legal people should push hard for a long court-ordered monitoring period. ♡

*Albert J. Dennis is Housing Inspector Coordinator for the City of Aurora, Illinois*

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Genevieve Roja, "Collective Soul", *Metroactive*, 7.15.99.

<sup>2</sup> LA County Dept of Mental Health, "Hoarding Fact Sheet", p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Randy Frost, PhD, H. Edward and E. Israel; Smith College Psychology Dept., from "Are You A Hoarder?" AP, 5.25.01.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> Chris M. Kelly, "Confronting Compulsive Hoarding", *San Francisco Apartment Magazine*, 12.02.



Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health  
Countywide Older Adult Programs

## Hoarding Fact Sheet

### WHAT IS HOARDING?

Hoarding is the excessive collection and retention of things or animals until they interfere with day-to-day functions such as home, health, family, work and social life. *Severe hoarding causes safety and health hazards.* The collection of newspapers, magazines, old clothes and other items may cause fires while animal hoarding can spread contagious diseases. It is estimated that older adults represent a significant number of people who hoard.

### WHY DO PEOPLE HOARD?

The behavior of hoarding is seen in various illnesses. Because of that, it has been difficult to place in a diagnostic category. Time and/or age of onset are variable and the behavior differs from person to person. Frequently, older adults have been found to hoard for the following reasons:

- items are perceived as valuable
- items provide a source of security
- fear of forgetting or losing items
- constant need to collect and keep things
- obtaining love not found from people
- fear others will obtain their personal information
- physical limitations and frailty
- inability to organize
- self neglect
- stressful life events

### INTERVENTION

*Hoarding is recognized as both a mental health issue and a public health problem.* It is typically not an immediate crisis. The hoarding behavior usually has been occurring for a long time and hasty interventions will not resolve it. In addition, interventions without the older adult's cooperation can lead to the development of dangerous behaviors. Careful assessment of the individual situation is essential for a successful outcome. Therefore, it is recommended that intervention be collaborative involving the older adult, family and other agencies, i.e. mental health, adult protective services, code enforcement,

building & safety, animal control and criminal justice.

### TIPS

- DO contact the older adult face-to-face.
- DO use a soft, gentle approach and let the older adult tell his/her story.
- DO treat the older adult with respect and dignity.
- DO respect the meaning and attachment to possessions by the older adult, which may be as intense as affections to humans.
- DO remain calm and factual, but caring and supportive.
- DO evaluate for safety.
- DO refer for medical and mental health evaluation.
- DO go slowly and expect gradual changes.
- DO reassure the older adult that others will try to help and work with him/her.
- DO involve the older adult in seeking solutions.
- DO work with other agencies to maximize resources.
- DON'T hospitalize unless there is a clear plan for what this is to accomplish.
- DON'T force interventions.
- DON'T be critical or judgmental about the older adult's environment.
- DON'T use the older adult's first name unless he/she gives permission.
- DON'T press the older adult for information that appears to make him/her uncomfortable.
- DON'T make negative, teasing or sarcastic comments.
- DON'T talk about the older adult to others as if he/she is not present.

HASTY INTERVENTION

Negative results can occur when interventions are not carefully planned with a group of professionals with hoarding knowledge. Mr. Y was an 82-year-old male widower living in his friend's home. Mr. Y began collecting and hoarding tools, parts and other equipment. The living space became so limited they slept on chairs. The family called the police for assistance. Eventually, several agencies were independently involved with the family. The lack of collaboration and lack of knowledge about hoarding led the family to order dumpsters and discard the items. After his possessions were thrown away, Mr. Y was arrested because of the rage, anxiety, and delusions he developed.

PLANNED INTERVENTION

Ms. X was a 96 year-old female with poor vision. She lived alone with dozens of cats, dogs and parrots. In addition, some dead cats were found in the freezer. The house was filthy and foul smelling. Ms. X had several pending citations with heavy fines, eviction and faced possible jail time. A mental health assessment uncovered that Ms. X suffered from isolation, significant depression and moderate memory loss. After several weeks of building a relationship, a geriatric mental health professional, in coordination with the other agencies, developed an intervention plan. Ultimately, Ms. X received the support needed to feel safe enough to agree to have the house professionally cleaned and in keeping with laws and regulations, kept a couple of animals.

**RESOURCES**

Department of Mental Health – ACCESS Center  
**(800) 854-7771**

Information & Referral to local mental health system of care, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Adult Protective Services — (800) 992-1660**  
Investigation & Crisis intervention for elder and dependent adult abuse including self-neglect, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Hotline — (800) 339-6993; TDD (800) 660-4026**  
24-hour information & referral to human service agencies.

**Self-Help and Recovery — (310) 305-8878**  
Referrals to hoarding and other self help support groups. *May be recorded messages.*

**Local Resources**

**WEBSITES**

Randy O. Frost, hoarding researcher from Smith College has a site that includes an extensive bibliography of hoarding articles.  
<http://sophia.smith.edu/~rfrost/>

The Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation offers information and resources about obsessive compulsive disorder and hoarding. <http://www.OCFoundation.org>

Gary Patroneck, Director of the Center for Animals and Public Policy at Tuft University maintains an animal-hoarding site.  
<http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding.html>

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

Damecour, L. & Charron, M. "Hoarding: A Symptom, Not a Syndrome." Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, 1998.

Frost, R. & Hartl, T. "A Cognitive-Behavioral Model of Compulsive Hoarding." Behavior Research and Therapy, 1996.

Patroneck, G. "Hoarding of Animals: An Under-Recognized Public Health Problem in a Difficult-to-Study Population." Public Health Reports, 1999.

Thomas, D. "Hoarding: Eccentricity or Pathology: When to Intervene?" Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 1998.

**QUESTIONS & COMMENTS**

You may contact the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Countywide Older Adult Programs at (213) 351-7284.

**REVIEWERS**

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Jonnae Ostrom, LCSW – Orange County, California

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

*We would like to thank the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Older Adults System of Care Committee. It was through their continuous leadership and dedication this fact sheet was developed.*

Revised August 2002.

## Substandard Housing Case Examples

The Substandard Housing Inspection Program has uncovered a variety of issues that residents face, which require a collaborative approach toward resolution, not only internally but also with outside human services agencies. Many of the cases require significant staff time and resources. Below are three examples of cases that have come through the City's substandard housing program for inspection. These cases were chosen because they illustrate some of the human needs that City staff has to consider as part of the substandard housing inspection process. Many of the issues listed below are similar for rental and owner occupied housing, but the strategies for dealing with those issues are significantly different. Staff has outlined some of those human needs issues in the bulleted statements below.

- Mental health issues – City staff and other mental health agencies may not have the resources to be able to deal with these issues. The substandard housing conditions may be a direct result of these mental health problems and unless those mental health issues are dealt with, the housing issues can become a recurring problem.
- Occupants of substandard housing may not qualify for CDBG or other assistance. With owner occupied properties or rentals, income levels may such that owners do no qualify for assistance. This is often true where there are mental health issues that contribute to the substandard conditions.
- Occupants of substandard housing may qualify for assistance, but are unwilling to apply. Some people are concerned about taking assistance because of pride or are concerned that they will be going into increased debt or will have additional liens on their property.
- If a unit is a rental, the renter may be displaced and incur considerable relocation expense if they complain about substandard conditions. Many times a renter will report substandard conditions as they are leaving a rental. They are concerned that if they complain that there will be retribution from the property owner or the property will be posted no occupancy and they will be forced to move on short notice. I these cases the balance of the rent and security deposit may not be available to them in a timely manner. There is no reliable resource to help relocate these individuals and families.
- If a unit is owner occupied the residents may be displaced and there are no resources available to relocate these individuals or families.

### *Case Examples Involving Homeowners:*

**Case #1** – received a complaint from a neighbor that the property was not being taken care of and was a hazard to the occupants and the neighborhood. When inspected, the property was found to be unsafe and unsanitary. There was not adequate room in the house to make a safe egress (piles of junk and trash in the interior); there were multiple animals with their resultant deleterious droppings, etc. It was obvious there was an issue with hoarding by someone in the family.

**What We Did** - Over 18 visits were made by the Housing Inspector to ensure compliance; \$800 in CDBG funds was spent to help haul away junk and trash; the staff from Senior Services, Neighborhood Resources, and City Attorney was involved and Boulder County Adult Protection Services did an assessment.

**What We Can Do** - We can offer Housing Rehab assistance, however, the owner must be willing to apply for the program and must income qualify. Can issue a warrant and take to court. If the Judge is willing to set recurring re-inspections or requirements that must be complied with over a longer term, that can help offset a reversion to past practices when there are hoarding issues.

**What We Cannot Do** – Cannot eliminate hoarding practices by one clean-up. Mental Health must be involved and the owner or family member with the hoarding disorder must be willing or required to go to counseling. Because of current budgetary constraints, Boulder County Mental Health cannot provide mental health assessments unless the person goes to 72 hour lock-up. They also cannot provide consistent follow-up for persons with mental health issues.

**Case #2** – received information from Utility Billing that a person was in arrears by several hundred dollars and utilities were shut off in July. The home was posted No Occupancy in October, but the person was still living there. When the inspector went out, the owner was not living in the main part of the house and had no running water.

**What We Did** - Over 10 visits were made by the Housing Inspector to make contact and to try to seek compliance; significant number of visits and interaction by Community and Neighborhood Resources staff occurred; the Police were involved and ordered a 72 hour mental health hold on the individual, but the hospital did not agree, so a mental health assessment was not completed.

**What We Can Do** - We can sometimes find resources to get the utilities turned back on, but the owner must have some ability to keep current on not only utilities, but also on the mortgage.

**What We Cannot Do** – Because of current budgetary constraints, Boulder County Mental Health cannot provide mental health assessments unless the person goes to 72 hour hold. They also cannot provide consistent follow-up for persons with mental health issues. Mental health issues often evidence themselves when in casual conversations once a relationship is established, but not when Police or other “authority figures” are present. In addition, homeowners who have their utilities shut off often cannot get back on track due to a lack of sufficient income or unemployment, and community assistance is limited in these instances. In addition, if the homeowner is not able to find work in the short term or is unable to receive any type of financial assistance from human service agencies, the likelihood is that they will soon be back in default.

***Case Example Involving Renters:***

**Case #3** – received a tenant complaint that utilities at multi-unit building were in arrears by several thousand dollars. There were code issues in the units that the complaint came from. When inspector was out, he also observed a significant health issue that impacted the entire complex.

**What We Did** - Imminent shut off of utilities finally brought in payment by owner; issues on outside property are being addressed via 11 visits by Housing Inspection staff; issues in the unit about which the complaint was made have been followed up and are being rectified, slowly.

**What We Can Do** - We can inspect the complainant unit and anything on the property that can be easily observed.

**What We Cannot Do** – We cannot inspect other units that are highly likely to have the same issues as the complainant unit. We cannot require the landlord to relocate the renters to another unit or to another property while the unit is being repaired. This can impose a significant hardship to the renters if they are forced to live in the middle of construction. We do not have funds set-aside to provide relocation assistance.

With rental units, there are many examples of renters going from rental unit to rental unit where the units are known nuisance properties. They are nuisances by police standards, by code standards and by health standards. Often the renters are not causing the nuisances, but this is the only level of housing they can afford or obtain due to their circumstances. Methamphetamine labs and drug houses are other instances where the Police and Courts and Building Inspection could and should be working together to shut them down or otherwise force compliance in a concentrated fashion. Currently, except for “meth” houses, new renters can move in immediately to a drug property, even if the property was trashed by the previous renter. Hazardous materials or residue or other health violations could remain. A lot of the cases being seen have mental health issues involved. People with hoarding issues, people who see many real or imagined threats to their person or property, people who do not know how to maintain sanitary conditions. The city is now contracting with a private mental health provider to offer assistance in this area due to the budget constraints facing the Boulder County Mental Health Center. This contract has been funded with City one-time moneys, however, so an ongoing funding source will need to be secured.

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foreclosing on the american dream | part of an occasional series

## Shuttered homes, blighted blocks

By David Olinger and Aldo Svaldi  
Denver Post Staff Writers  
DenverPost.com

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The house is vacant, the lawn gone. Bare boards cover a broken front window and all the rear windows. Graffiti scars the house, the fence, the for-sale sign. A car battery and a discarded bottle of brandy litter the front yard.

City Councilman Michael Hancock bends down, gingerly picking up the brandy bottle.

"This is a prime example of the things we started seeing this summer," he said.

He leans over a tattered fence, chatting briefly with the next-door neighbors. "They see people going in and out of the property," he said.

The house, at 5518 Sable St., is one of nearly 1,400 lost to foreclosure during the past three years in the two largest neighborhoods in Hancock's Denver district.

For years, he lived on this street.

"None of these homes is owned by the original owners," he said as he passed his old house. "Everyone's moved out."

In Colorado, the state with the nation's worst foreclosure rate, some neighborhoods have been spared the wave of house auctions. Others have been deeply wounded, and it is not just those losing their homes who get hurt.

In three years through August, 977 homeowners have lost their homes to foreclosures in the Montbello ZIP code and 414 in the adjoining Green Valley Ranch ZIP code, according to Foreclosure.com, a Boca Raton, Fla., company.

A computer-assisted Denver Post analysis, based on Denver Regional Council of Governments household estimates, shows that this area at the northeast edge of Denver suffered the worst home-loss rate in the metro area. Over the three years, more than one in 10 families here lost their homes.

When foreclosures overwhelm a neighborhood, homeowners anxiously watch their own property values decline as lenders unload houses at discounted prices. Many foreclosed homes sit vacant for months. Police get vandalism and vagrancy calls. Church leaders see membership fall while food-bank demands rise. School principals find two or even three families sharing single-family houses.

And community leaders fear something intangible but vital will be lost: neighborhood pride.

### Neighbors lose value

*Selling a home can be a long and frustrating experience when foreclosed properties nearby go for much less.*

In Montbello and Green Valley Ranch, existing-home values are falling as foreclosures spread. Burned-down houses sit abandoned for a year or more. For-sale signs carry notes of desperation. One offers a week-long Caribbean cruise to the buyer of a foreclosed house. "Zero down? Poor credit? First-time buyer? Call for a free two-minute pre-approval," another urges.

From August to October, the median sale price on existing homes in Green Valley Ranch was \$185,450, down from \$201,000 during the same months a year ago, according to real estate website Trulia.com. In Montbello, median sale prices dropped from \$175,385 to \$164,950.

By comparison, median home values were up 1.4 percent citywide during the same time span.

During the past five years, home values have stayed almost flat in Green Valley Ranch and dropped 4.2 percent in the Montbello area, according to Trulia .com's data.

In Montbello, Bernadette Ukolowicz waited seven months for one lucky knock at her door.

"Price reduced," the sign on her lawn pleaded. Three times she lowered it. Then she took the sign down. When most house sales in your neighborhood are foreclosure-related, it's hard to compete.

Ukolowicz has lived for 26 years in Montbello and serves as president of a neighborhood association. But after her mother entered a nursing home this year, she felt she did not need and could no longer afford the house they shared.

In seven months, six people looked at her three-bedroom house. Nobody has since September. For-sale signs abound on her street. Three houses on her block have been foreclosed in eight months. A fatal stabbing left a fourth empty.

"The house next door, it's been vacant six months, maybe longer. People across the street, they're trying to sell. Three homes down, it's vacant," Ukolowicz said. "Anyone trying to sell their home right now in the area is up against all the vacant homes. Why should I buy this house for \$175,000 when the bank will sell that one for \$130,000?"

Hancock, the councilman representing Montbello and Green Valley Ranch, calls the foreclosure epidemic Denver's most urgent problem.

"People who were once very proud of their blocks now see a decline," he said. "That's a greater threat to the vitality of our city than anything else. Because people will leave.

"Denver can build great monuments, parks, art museums and cultural attractions, but if we don't address the foreclosure rate, we aren't going to be proud of Denver."

### **Stuck with same value**

*The neighborhoods with the lowest-price housing are the most likely for foreclosures, keeping prices stagnant.*

In a Denver Tech Center office, foreclosure prevention consultant Dottie Melton has been studying house sales in Montbello, a racially diverse neighborhood where young couples and working-class families could buy a home within the city limits.

What she sees alarms her.

Melton negotiates "short sales" - sales that avoid foreclosures by getting lenders to buy houses for less than borrowers owe. In Montbello, she calculates that 70 percent of pending house sales and 68 percent of all sales in the past six months were either short sales or foreclosures.

"Where's the homeowners in this? They're not there," she said. "You have a home on the market, and you're going to compete with 70 percent of the sales?"

Across Colorado, neighborhoods with lower-priced homes have been hit hardest by foreclosures - condos, townhouses, single-family houses under \$200,000. The same is true in Denver. In neighborhoods with the lowest median house prices, thousands of families have lost their homes in the past three years while affluent neighborhoods were largely unaffected.

Melton sees a spreading belt of foreclosures, however, that is now reaching middle-class neighborhoods in Arapahoe and Jefferson counties where homes were overvalued and buyers borrowed 100 percent of the purchase price.

"It's on its way. It's in my backyard," she said.

Once a week, Councilman Hancock climbs into his gray Nissan Maxima for what he calls a "recon drive" in his district.

"The lawns are the first thing I noticed," he said on a recent drive through Montbello. On streets where lawns had been meticulously maintained, weeds grew in dry dirt. "Boarded-up windows here and there. Constituents complaining: 'Our neighborhood's going down the drain. What's going on? Why can't the city do something?' Unfortunately, the city can't do a lot."

On Crystal Way, a newer section "where a lot of folks find themselves in trouble," he counted seven for-sale signs around one loop.

On Crown Boulevard, he drove past the wreckage of two houses that burned in 2005, one now in foreclosure.

"If you don't think that impacts the neighbors...who's going to buy a house on a block like that?" he asked.

Last week, as two men gathered scrap metal from the burned house and loaded it into a pickup, next-door neighbor Linda Phillips stood on the sidewalk and applauded this hint of progress.

"You think you live in a nice neighborhood, and you have to tell people, 'I live next to the house that's burned up,'" she said. "Everyone knows right where that is."

In some ways, Montbello and Green Valley Ranch are dissimilar.

Montbello is an older, established neighborhood. Its home prices are slightly lower, and large apartment buildings complement its single-family houses and townhouses.

Green Valley Ranch, to the east, is still under construction. Its current developer, Oakwood Homes, envisions a community stretching from Denver into Aurora that ultimately could hold 20,000 homes.

Yet these neighborhoods share troubling foreclosure rates and stagnant house prices that trap many homeowners who try to sell.

In October alone, 65 more homes were foreclosed in the neighborhoods.

Seventy percent of the foreclosed loans were approved in 2004, 2005 or this year. Nearly half refinanced previous home loans. And while the foreclosure process takes about 4 1/2 months in Colorado, half of those homes already appear vacant. At one, a real estate flier offers a seven-day Caribbean cruise to anyone who buys it.

### **Losing the down payment**

*One couple's home in Green Valley Ranch hasn't sold, and they could be out the \$24,000 they put down to buy it.*

One of the new foreclosure notices came to Anthony Neely and his wife, Thelma, who thought they were making all the right moves when they bought a two-story home in Green Valley Ranch in 2003.

They put \$24,000 toward the \$277,000 purchase price of their home on Ceylon Street, thinking they had a cushion to sell if they ever got in a bind or needed to move.

But their home isn't selling in a deflated market. Come December, the couple could lose every penny they've invested in it.

"We paid a high price, and we got a bad loan," said a dejected Neely. "We saved a long time to get that down payment."

Neely, a 44-year-old local truck driver, lost his job and hasn't found one that provides the weekends and evenings off he needs to take care of his special-needs child, he said.

Making matters worse, the couple's adjustable-rate mortgage has started escalating. Payments have risen from \$1,100 a month to more than \$2,000, beyond what his wife's salary as a registered nurse can cover, Neely said.

The home had only six showings in four months on the market, including a lowball offer of \$210,000.

"Even the bank is not going to take that," he said. "We are between a rock and a hard place."

Another October foreclosure notice came to Dee and David Holland.

A year ago, they escaped a mobile home park in Aurora where evening barbecues had given way to drug deals and sporadic gunfire. With a thousand-dollar down payment, they moved into a brand-new \$167,000 home on a quiet street in Green Valley Ranch.

Now, Dee is battling lung cancer as she loses her home. She has moved her bed to the kitchen because she breathes from an oxygen machine and can no longer get up and down the stairs. Her waitress days are over.

David suffers from high blood pressure but continues to work a 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. shift, baking bread for King Soopers.

He hunched on a living room couch, head in hands, wondering why they bought the first home they saw, wishing their mortgage payments were \$900 a month, not \$1,300.

"Really, I think we were kind of pushed. We weren't ready," he said. "We really didn't think."

When the Hollands realized they couldn't keep up with the mortgage payments, they responded to an offer from a Colorado Springs investor promising to buy their house in 10 days. Four months later they still own it, and their debts keep piling up.

"It's just sad. I sat here crying the other day. It's finally catching up to me. We have no place to go and no money," Dee said.

### **"A great time to buy"**

*A Green Valley Ranch developer offers buyers free advice on credit problems and homeownership.*

Oakwood Homes chairman Patrick Hamill said his company offers a free program to help buyers with credit problems and educate them about the responsibilities of home ownership.

He noted that most foreclosures have clustered in an older area of Green Valley Ranch, not the new Oakwood Homes developments.

Aside from that area, Green Valley Ranch's foreclosure rate "is not out of whack by any stretch of the imagination," he said.

Hamill said he has seen little, if any, decline in new-house prices at Green Valley Ranch, but "it's a great time to buy a home. There's been no better time in the last 20 years."

But those who already own homes are worried.

"People are getting stuffed into houses that are beyond their means," said Melvin Morford, a postal worker who lives in Green Valley Ranch and delivers mail in Montbello.

He learned the appraised value of his own home had dropped when he tried to refinance it - and blames the array of vacant homes and foreclosure sales.

"My house would have sold for \$220,000 a year and a half ago. I'd be lucky to get \$185,000 now," he said.

Foreclosures hurt those losing their homes and their neighbors most. But when hundreds of foreclosures surge through a neighborhood, the ripples reach from church pews to classroom doors.

At the United Church of Montbello food bank, "we've served record numbers over the last year and a half, and the number keeps increasing," said the Rev. James Foucher. More than 500 Montbello and Green Valley Ranch residents now show up regularly for food.

"I suspect it has a lot to do with the foreclosure rate," he said. "The overall pain factor is much higher here in Montbello because of the foreclosure rate. There are fewer people to participate in community events, not as stable a base of families."

He also notices the effect on Sundays.

"We have seen not just a drop in members, but also we get a higher number of church shoppers, if you will, the ones who come for a week or two. Or a month or two. When I go to call on them as pastor, the house is empty."

At Green Valley Elementary, school principal Deborah Johnson-Graham said, "We've noticed a higher than average mobility rate over the last three or four years, probably due to the foreclosures. That's changed the student population significantly.

"Groups of families have banded together to help save the home - two, sometimes even three, families," Johnson-Graham said, which caused some classes to bulge with children. She also saw the numbers of children qualifying for free or reduced-price lunches jump from 30 percent to 57 percent of the school in two years.

The foreclosures bring calls to city inspectors, who tack trash and weed violation notices on empty houses, and to police, who evict squatters.

"It's a crisis to the neighbors if you're living on a block with four houses in foreclosure," said Lisa Fair, a police commander in Montbello. "It invites broken windows. It invites graffiti. Trespassing, where an individual is living in this vacant house."

Dean Brown, a 38-year Montbello resident, sees an influx of immigrants and the popularity of 100-percent loans as two factors driving up the foreclosure rate in his community.

He points to a house across his backyard. One door won't close. The window screens are gone.

"You've had some unscrupulous real estate agents banking on immigrants," he said. "That's a one-family home. There's two or more families living there."

On a nearby street, Alejandro Teran also worries about the number of empty houses and their effect on his property value. But he blames a Colorado crackdown on illegal immigrants that prompted some families to cash out their home equity and others to flee to safer states.

"Seven years ago, all those people moved from California to here" because of a new anti-immigrant law, he said. Now they're leaving, to "Seattle, New Mexico, Texas."

Councilman Hancock, who moved from Montbello to Green Valley Ranch, said immigrant families dominate the housing market in his old neighborhood. But he doesn't blame them for its foreclosures, and he's not sure what a city official can do to make a difference.

He would like to see community-based groups offer loan counseling services for people planning to buy or refinance a home. He hopes Colorado legislators will hold those who sell bad loans more accountable.

"The immigration issue is a symptom of a problem," he said. "The problem is a predatory lending environment."

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*Computer-assisted reporting editor Jeffrey A. Roberts and staff writer Greg Griffin contributed to this report.*



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## Boarded Buildings

### Buildings may be boarded for 60 days.

City ordinance allows any building to be boarded for 60 days without penalty. After 60 days, if the owner has not removed the boards or taken out a permit to rehab the building, the building may be placed on the Chapter 249 list.

### Buildings on the Chapter 249 list need special inspections.

A building on the Chapter 249 list requires a [code compliance inspection](#) before any rehab work can begin. In addition, buildings on the Chapter 249 list are subject to teardown by Inspections as a nuisance condition. A proposal to demolish a building must be approved by the City Council.

### You may call to report a building or check the status of a building.

If you see a boarded building that is open to trespass or would like to find out the status of a particular building, call (612) 673-3310.

### You may get a list of buildings now on the Chapter 249 list.

The Chapter 249 list is available online. To receive a copy of the Chapter 249 list by mail, send a check or money order for \$5.00 to Housing Inspections, ATTN: Boarded Buildings, 250 S 4th St, Room 300, Minneapolis, MN 55415-1339. Be sure to include the name and address you want the list sent to. You may also purchase a copy of the list by visiting the office in person.

neighborhood because it invites squatters, can be a fire hazard, danger to children. Boards help prevent these hazards.

### Owner choice

Owner is not choosing to occupy the building at the moment, and use boards to keep it secure.

### Police

Police board-ups are generally done when there has been a raid and the building is now vacant, or if the police have observed un in a vacant building. This keeps the building secure.

For financial assistance for fixing up your building, check with your neighborhood association, or try [CityLiving](#).

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Date: July 17, 2006  
For Immediate Release

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### **MAYOR SCOTT W. LANG ANNOUNCES “BUILDING FOR A BETTER NEW BEDFORD” INITIATIVE**

**New Bedford, Massachusetts-** New Bedford Mayor Scott W. Lang was joined by representatives from the Office of Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas Reilly and city officials to announce the implementation of “Building for a Better New Bedford” a comprehensive initiative to address the problem of vacant and unsafe residential properties in New Bedford. During a press briefing the Mayor stated, “The City of New Bedford is taking important steps to address the problem of vacant, abandoned, and distressed properties. The city is continually seeking out new and innovative ways to remove the blighting, destructive influence that problem properties have on our neighborhoods”. The Building for a Better New Bedford Initiative is designed to identify the worst and most persistent offenders and force them to correct housing, building, and life/safety violations on their properties.

"I am proud to team up with leaders like Mayor Lang who are reinvesting in our cities and turning around our neighborhoods. This new initiative will be a catalyst for economic development and growth for New Bedford," Attorney General Tom Reilly said of the initiative. "Abandoned housing is a critical piece of neighborhood safety and quality of life. By addressing abandoned properties, safety, security and stability – and an overall improved quality of life – will follow."

New Bedford has a historic and architecturally significant housing stock. Approximately 70% of the current residential dwellings were built prior to 1930, with many dating to the nineteenth century. The housing stock is concentrated in the neighborhoods and consists of largely (60%) multi-family dwellings. Through aggressive

programs and selective demolitions, there has been success in eradicating the number of abandoned properties from a high of 475 buildings in 1990, to fewer than 50 presently. Despite a robust real estate market over the past several years, there remain pockets of neighborhood disinvestment comprised of abandoned and distressed properties, which hinder neighborhood revitalization.

In March of this year Mayor Lang established a Housing Task Force. The Task Force is focusing primarily on properties, which are abandoned, distressed, in tax title, pose a health/safety risk, subject to vandalism and used for illegal activities. The Task Force is comprised of city departments that deal with housing, safety, and neighborhood issues. The Task Force also includes a community advisory committee. The Task Force has been developing an integrated comprehensive database of problem properties; tax title, abandoned, code violations including property-based information. The Task Force is the impetus behind the Building for a Better New Bedford Initiative.

### **The Building for a Better New Bedford Initiative involves:**

- **Enforcement** – The Mayor has created an enforcement team designed to expedite the process of declaring an abandoned/derelict house a public nuisance. The team involves the Department of Inspectional Services, Police Department, Fire Department, and the Office of Housing and Community Development. The Team will assess a neighborhood block by block and concentrate on areas that demonstrate the greatest number of derelict properties. At the time of identification, a full exterior inspection is performed. Photographs are taken to further document the condition of the building. Each building then receives a rating based on the overall condition.

During the identification stages, all code violations are noted and entered into a database. Owners will be notified and required to address code violations and safety issues within a certain time period. Owners unable or unwilling to make the necessary investments in a timely manner will receive enforcement notices and bills for related charges. This initiative will involve the board up and securing of all ‘at risk’ buildings.

- **Training and Guidance** - The City, in partnership with the Attorney General’s office will convene several informational seminars to explain what is expected from property owners, why they expect owners to meet certain standards, and to assure owners that they have access to resources to address problem tenants and other issues.
  - ✓ The training will include: Police Department representative, Private Attorney, Housing Court Officials and New Bedford Code Enforcement Officials.
- **Tax Title - Aggressive pursuit of outstanding tax liabilities** – Over the past several months the city tax delinquency has gone from a total of 1,100 tax delinquent property owners in New Bedford to just under 900 resulting in **\$2.5**

million back on the tax rolls. This was accomplished through aggressive pursuit of tax delinquent property owners and a more comprehensive dedicated approach through the City Treasures office.

- ✓ The Reclamation and resale of tax title properties is another dedicated initiative. The City is changing the current City ordinance to allow tax title properties to be sold through a targeted RFP process to ensure that competent developers/owner occupants/ and first time homebuyers are able to acquire these properties and bring them back to productive use. Currently, the city can only dispose of tax title property through a public auction, which does not allow the city to determine the qualifications of potential buyers.
- **Attorney General "Abandoned Housing Program"** – The City has joined with Attorney General's Office to implement the Attorney General's Abandoned Housing Program. This Program is designed to assist cities and towns address abandoned houses that create blight in neighborhoods. Under the Program, residential properties with persistent, unremediated building, health and safety code violations are identified by the community for potential action. Unless absentee owners address their obligations, the program obtains receivers to rehabilitate the property and make it habitable. The Program is an effective, innovative way to remove the blighting and destructive influence problem properties have on our neighborhoods.
- **Vacant Building Registry** – The City is developing a mandatory Vacant Property Register. The Registry is being proposed to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public by establishing a registration process for vacant buildings. The process will require responsible parties to implement a maintenance plan for such buildings in order to remedy any public nuisance problems and prevent deterioration, unsightly blight, and consequent adverse impact on the value of nearby property. The ordinance requires owners to register their buildings with the City of New Bedford within 30 days of becoming vacant. Individuals that fail to register their property will be subject to fines and penalties.
- **Financial Incentives** - The Office of Housing and Community Development has a number of low interest loan and grant programs to assist qualified property owners with technical and financial assistance to make necessary improvements to their property.

In summary, Mayor Lang stated "The message is simple: The City of New Bedford will no longer bear the cost and responsibility of maintaining vacant and derelict private property at taxpayers expense; if a property owner is going to hold vacant non-code-compliant property, there will be a cost and other consequences, perhaps foreclosure of the property itself".