



Georgia Initiative for Community Housing

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## **Housing Code Enforcement**

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# Do the Gateways to Your Community Speak Before Your Leaders Do?



# Housing Code History

- Code has been around for many years and used in larger cities of the south and heavily throughout the north and west.
- LaGrange first started using part of the code about 1980 as a standard to assure indoor plumbing in all city residences.
- 1980 to 1983 concentrated phased in enforcement of indoor plumbing requirements.

# Housing Code History

- 1985 +/- council adopted (International Property Maintenance Code) full housing code, staffed for complaints only- no “patrol type enforcement.
- City staff took Mayor/Council on tour of City
- What they show made them outraged that conditions existed in city - 2002.
- Pledge was made to take actions to improve housing stock.
- City hired 2 housing inspectors.



Moble Home parks would always remain on the high priority List — needing inspection or pre-occupancy inspection





When units are left vacant for long period of time they devalue the entire neighborhood and become havens for rodents and unlawful acts.





Open unoccupied units become places of drug activity, arson and complaints from neighbors. Structures like these need to be repaired or torn down.



# Implementation of Code

- City wide housing assessment done (appox. 8,000 units inspected) 2002
- No distinction was made between investor owned & privately owned property
- Exterior assessment only (windshield survey)
- Seven categories were reviewed - windows, foundation, exterior doors, roof, walls, trash on property

# Implementation of Code

- Each category score in range of one (1) point to four (4) points – total 28 points.
- Inspection value loaded into computer system – transferred to Utility Division
- Properties scoring in highest quadrant flagged for a pre-occupancy inspection
- Only after property inspected is ownership known – investor or privately.

# Minimum Code Requirements

- Stairs, Porches appurtenances must be safe
- Roofs: no deterioration to any component
  - Structurally sound
  - No leaks or defects
  - Must have means of egress 7 ft. high
  - Rails on porches over 30" high
  - Foundation walls maintained & plumb

# Minimum Code Requirement (cont)

- Exterior doors in good repair and can be secured.
- Window must work and be in good repair.
- Ventilation- windows must work and have screens in good shape if no central A/C.
- No excessive trash, debris on property that could be beds for rodents.
- Structural members free of deterioration and support the load.

# How Does City Enforce Code?

- By using Ordinance(s) that are on the books.
- Utilization of International Property Maintenance Code Standards
- City provider of all utility services, i.e. water, sewer, electric, gas, sanitation
- Municipal Court – Cases presented by city inspector to the Judge he renders decision based on evidence
- Full Support of Mayor and Council Members – do not get involved in case decision

# What Happens Next?

- Level 1 property would be denied utility services until condition(s) is corrected.
- This would apply to occupied and unoccupied property.
- Property owner must work with the inspector to address issue(s).
- Property must pass a pre-occupancy inspection before utilities are turned on.

# How Are Complaints Filed?

- Tenant(s)
- Neighbor(s)
- City Inspector(s)
- City staff and Elected Officials
- Individual citizen(s)
- Landlord(s)

# Interior Inspections

- A functioning indoor bathroom with a sink toilet and shower.
- Hot and cold water to all sinks, tubs, showers.
- Hot water capable of 120 degrees.
- Heat system capable of maintaining room temperature of 68\*.
- Smoke detector.





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# Continued

- Secure wall outlets
- Ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) switch
- Visible signs of leaks
- Light wall receptacles
- Adequate lighting
- Free flow of traffic without obstruction

# Why Have A Code Enforcement Program?

- To assure housing is decent, safe and sanitary regardless of what community the property is located.
- Any housing code, regardless of who promulgates it, is basically a environmental health protection code.
- It is the area of environmental health that deals with man's most intimate living environment- his home and neighborhood.

# Why Have a Program?

- To ensure that properties that would constitute hazard to the health, safety, and welfare of the people of the city or state are maintained.
- Companies look at your housing stock and community when making a determination about locating in your town.
- Example: Pharmaceutical company chose not to locate in LaGrange because they said community didn't fit their image. (2001)

# Should You Expect Progress From Your Code Enforcement Program?

**These Photos tell the  
story for us**

What do your gateways say about Your Community?



# Pictures are worth a Thousand Words













10/12/2006





















# Questions and Answers ???