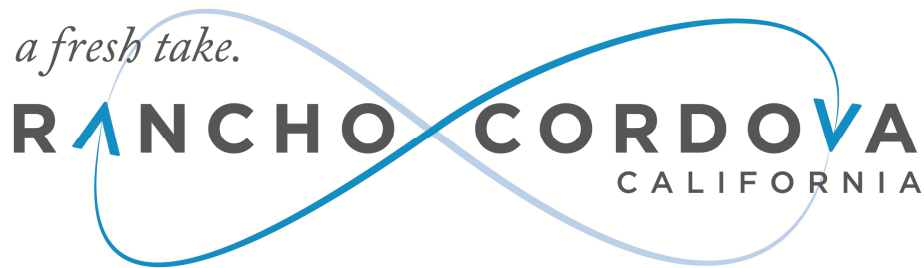


CITY OF RANCHO CORDOVA



CONCURRENT MEETING CITY COUNCIL/SUCCESSOR AGENCY TO THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CRA)/RANCHO CORDOVA FINANCING CORPORATION (RCFC)

City Hall
2729 Prospect Park Drive, Rancho Cordova

Tuesday, September 13, 2016

5:30 PM – Special Meeting
American River Community Room North

AGENDA

1. WORK SESSION - CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Council Members Budge, McGarvey, Skoglund, Terry and Mayor Sander.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

At a special meeting, citizens wishing to address the Council for any matter on the agenda may do so at the time the matter is discussed. Under the provisions of the California Government Code, the City Council is prohibited from discussing or taking action on any item not on the agenda.

3. SPECIAL MEETING ITEM

- 3.1 **Subject:** Update on Neighborhood Services Strategic Plan and Priorities.

4. ADJOURNMENT

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need a disability-related modification or accommodation, including auxiliary aids or services, to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk's Office at (916) 851-8720 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

CERTIFICATION OF POSTING OF AGENDA

I, Mindy Cuppy, MMC, City Clerk for the City of Rancho Cordova, declare that the foregoing agenda for the Tuesday, September 13, 2016 Special Meeting of the Rancho Cordova City Council/Successor Agency to the CRA/RCFC was posted and available for review on Thursday, September 8, 2016 at City Hall of the City of Rancho Cordova, 2729 Prospect Park Drive, Rancho Cordova, California, 95670. The agenda is also available on the city website at www.cityofranhocordova.org.

Signed Thursday, September 8, 2016 at Rancho Cordova, California.


Mindy Cuppy, MMC, City Clerk

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 13, 2016
TO: Honorable Mayor and Council Members
FROM: Kerry Simpson, Neighborhood Services Manager
SUBJECT: Update on Neighborhood Services Strategic Plan and Priorities



The City of Rancho Cordova retained Code Enforcement Solutions, a consulting firm, to review the status of the Neighborhood Services Division. Mr. Doug Leeper spent the week of February 29 through March 4th, 2016 in Rancho Cordova to document the “current state” of the Neighborhood Services Division and conducted interviews with members of the City Council, City staff and residents to better understand their opinions of the Neighborhood Services Division.

The resulting report documented findings, identified strengths, areas of concern and suggested potential areas of improvement for increased efficiency and effectiveness. Staff will present key highlights from the report, and some of the recommendations made by Mr. Leeper. Staff is seeking input from Council on some of the suggested programs, including a method of identifying and prioritizing code enforcement tasks/projects.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Strategic Plan
2. Power point presentation

City of Rancho Cordova
Neighborhood Services Division Review
2016



Conducted and Drafted by
Doug Leeper
Code Enforcement Solutions

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1. Introduction of Reviewer/Author
2. Explanation of Engagement
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7. Observations & Recommendations:
 - a. Education and Outreach (internal and external)
 - b. Improved Tools
 - c. Possible Programs /Ordinances Amendments
 - d. Policy Updates
 - e. Miscellaneous
8. Organizational Charts
9. Interview Notes

ATTACHMENT 1

Introduction of Reviewer/Author

Mr. Leeper has 28+ years' experience in public safety as a firefighter, police officer, code enforcement officer, code enforcement manager. For or over twelve of those years he served as code enforcement manager/director for the cities of San Bernardino, Riverside and Chula Vista CA. In addition he has performed code enforcement process and efficiency evaluations for the several cities across the country. As a nationally recognized code enforcement expert he has been a speaker, panelist and instructor at numerous local, state and national conferences and training seminars for public employees as well as members of the mortgage lending and real estate industries. Mr. Leeper testified before the Congressional Sub-committee on Domestic Policy and the California State Assembly Banking/Finance and Judiciary committees regarding the negative impact of vacant unmaintained properties and the need for effective, efficient code enforcement to help stabilize neighborhoods. In 2009 he received the League of California Cities Helen Putnam Award for Excellence in Internal Administration, and was a finalist at Harvard University – Kennedy School of Democratic Governance – Innovations in American Government Awards.

In addition to ordinances, programs, policies, training materials and articles, Mr. Leeper is currently co-authoring the second edition of *"Code Enforcement: A Comprehensive and Strategic Approach"* with Diane Silva-Martinez and Joe Schilling. This new edition is slated for publication in 2015.

In his role as a code enforcement manager/director/consultant he has developed and managed the following programs:

Reactive/Pro-Active Code Enforcement	Business License Inspection/Enforcement
Unfair Business Practices Enforcement	Distressed Property Receivership
Dangerous Building Inspection/Abatement	Lead Paint Inspection/Abatement
Rental Housing Inspection	Mobile Home Park Inspection
Multi-Family Housing Inspection	Hotel/Motel Inspection
Substandard Housing Tenant Relocation	Zoning Enforcement
Crime Free Rental Housing Education	Landlord/Tenant Mediation
Abandoned Housing Rehabilitation	1 st Time Home Owner Education
Owner-Occupied Improvement Grants	Exterior Accessibility Grant Program
Neighborhood Revitalization /Stabilization	Commercial "Façade" Improvement
Recordation/Lien/Tax Assessment	Program Full Cost Recovery
Illegal Sign Abatement	Abandoned Vehicle Abatement
Hazardous Weed/Illegal Dumping	Graffiti Abatement
Abandoned Property Registration	Code Enforcement Volunteers
CE Lien Foreclosure	Compliance Covenant/Agreement

ATTACHMENT 1**Explanation of Engagement**

This engagement focused on documenting the "current state" of Neighborhood Services Division, aka "code enforcement", the opinions and impressions held by elected officials, administration, staff and the public. This report documents findings, identifies strengths, areas of concern and suggest potential areas of improvement for increased efficiency and effectiveness.

Process Steps and Key Components Reviewed

- Interview Mayor, Council Members, City Manager and department heads recording thoughts, opinion, goals and direction for the Code Enforcement Division.
- Interview community leaders/stake holders, as identified by City staff, capturing general thoughts as to effectiveness as well as goals and objectives in the coming years.
- Interview code enforcement staff documenting general thoughts as to current operations – areas of concern, gaps and redundancies as well as goals and objectives in the coming years.
- Engage the community at large via an open "Town Hall" meeting. Perform a SWOT type analysis from the community's perspective.
- Review Policy and Procedure Manual providing input and suggestions for additions, revisions and improvements as may be needed.
- Review Code Enforcement existing processes mapping, providing suggestions and input for increased efficiency and identifying other processes that will benefit from process mapping
- Review code enforcement data/case management systems providing input and suggestions as to its efficiency, thoroughness and ease of use.
- Inventory and review of code enforcement responsibilities and corresponding code enforcement remedies (actions) providing general observation and guidance for increased efficiency and/or additional remedies as needed.

ATTACHMENT 1**Overview of Onsite Week**

Monday – February 29, 2016

Initial meeting with Curt Haven, Director of Economic Development and Neighborhood Services and Kerry Simpson, Manager of Neighborhood Services
Interview council members and various department heads

Tuesday – March 1, 2016

Interview council members, various department heads, code enforcement staff.
Begin review of code enforcement processes
Complete interviews of elected officials, City Manager and department heads
Facilitate public meeting/SWOT analysis

Wednesday – March 2, 2016

Interview Problem Oriented Policing/Probation Officers
Begin interviews with code enforcement staff
Begin review of code enforcement Policy & Procedure Manual
Ride along with code enforcement officer observe data management system in the field

Thursday – March 3, 2016

Ride along and observe housing/street vendor/storm water inspections
Continue interviews with code enforcement staff
Observe data management system in the office

Friday – March 4, 2016

Complete interviews with code enforcement staff and citizens
Continued review of Policy & Procedure Manual
Debrief with Curt Haven and Kerry Simpson

ATTACHMENT 1**Individuals Interviewed**

Mayor David Sander
 Vice Mayor Donald Terry
 Council Member Bob McGarvey
 Council Member Linda Budge
 Council Member Dan Skoglund

City Manager Cyrus Abhar

Curt Haven, Director of Economic Development & Neighborhood Services
 Joe Cuffe, Interim Building Official
 Tony Ingalls, Business License Account Technician
 Amanda Norton, Economic Development
 Aaron Busch, Community Development Director
 Derek Casebeer, Deputy Probation Officer
 Angel Ball, Volunteer in Neighborhood Services

Kerry Simpson, Code Enforcement & Animal Services Manager
 Ryan Taylor, SR Code Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector
 Keith Boucher, Code Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector
 Russell Ducharme, Code Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector
 Michael Rodriguez, Code Enforcement/Animal Services Officer
 Junior Lee, Code Enforcement Officer
 Scott Sparks, Code Enforcement Officer
 Krista Stover, Code Enforcement Officer
 Walid Shah, Code Enforcement Officer
 Krystle Judish, Animal Services Officer Trainee
 Jessica Crone, Accounting Technician
 Heather Cook, Customer Services Representative

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Community Engagement/SWOT Evaluation Strategic Plan

On Tuesday evening, March 1, 2016, 36 residents of Rancho Cordova participated in a public meeting to discuss their experiences opinions and impressions of the Neighborhood Services Division of the City of Rancho Cordova. The following is a list of their thoughts and opinions as to the strengths, areas of concern, opportunities and threats.

Strengths

- Graffiti Removal
- Communication among Departments/ Cross functional across departments
- Nice Detail Responses to an email/ Good Follow up/ Good Communication
- Very Responsive
- Rental Housing Program
 - Meet with owner/ Occupant on site
 - Great Communication of the Process
 - Follow Up
- Online Reporting (Fresh-Connect)
 - Quick Response time
 - Animal Issues
- Relocating Homeless
- Responding to Illegal Dumping
- Street Cleaning
- Illegal Vehicle Response time
- Vacant Homes
- Willing to Explain Due Process
- Volunteers in Neighborhood
- Come to Neighborhood watch meetings
- Connection to the SSPCA
- Accessible & Friendly
- Help People that can't comply
- Working Well with Businesses
- Beautification
- Interactive
- Reaching a live Person
- Thorough and Understanding
- Works well with POP Officers

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- Focus is on Compliance not bottom Dollar

Concerns

- Trees/ Dead Trees
- Blight/ Debris – patrols/ Patrolling Neighborhood
- Burned Houses
- Doing a 360° when responding to a complaint or violation
- Educating People about what code enforcement does/is responsible for
- Marketing piece to rental homes
- More Attention to converted Garages (Cars parked on the street)
- Street Lights/ Signs Covered
- Business should be Maintained by the owners
- Better feedback on Cases
- Rental Outreach
- Ease of finding Fresh Connect on the new Website
- County Coordination for wild life issues
- Work with Businesses to keep their shopping carts on their property
- Proactive Approach to major ongoing issues
- Post results of cases to the public
- Due Process on Burnt/vacant homes in a public forum
- Vehicles- street/ Lawn Parking
- 12" Grass height is too high
- Garbage Cans
- Education of Code violations
- Information- illustrations- photo flyers
- No Code Enforcement Volunteer Program
- Addresses not being labeled on homes
- Pan Handling
- Same Day Responses
- Full time General Blight Officer
- Process for escalation
- Perception that neighborhood isn't bad that it doesn't need as much attention
- Minor issues Ignored, while focus is placed on major issues leading to slow decline overall

ATTACHMENT 1

- When calling in- perception is that residents need to know the code violation, opposed to what seems to be a blight and neglect issue

Opportunities

- Use Volunteers/ More Volunteers
- Educating the public/ Events- Education/ Participation
 - How to Reach Others
 - More Staff/ Staff growth
- Homelessness/ churches
- Embracing all cultures
- Community Youth Center
- P Bid's (Property Based Improvement District)
- Website Education
- Instill sense of Community pride- stories
- Brochure to new Residents with Basic Codes/ Violation handout
- On- Going tracking (Fresh Connect)
- Citizen/ neighborhood code Watch
- Coordinate with Folsom- Olsen- Zinfandel
- Graffiti Strike Force Team
- Dedicated Funding
- Reserve Program
- Community Meetings on the off month of RCPD
- Owners Self-policing- Vacant/ Burnt

Threats

- Lack of funding/ Budget
- Retaliation of making complaint
- Lack of new Volunteers
- Lack of new Personnel
- Buildings for homeless
 - Education
 - Live in people to assist in Management
- Heavy traffic
- Lack of Information to new Owners

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- Due process
- Legalities
 - Court Rulings
 - Not being able to release information on situation
- Lawsuits
- Evolving Technology
- Bugs with Mobile App
- Clearer Categories for mobile app for non-Government residents
- Failure to define mission & communicate to neighborhood
- Police Department/Fire/code Enforcement - passing the buck
- Unified message between departments and agencies

NOTE: Items in “blue” were mentioned by more than one working group at the public meeting.

ATTACHMENT 1**Synopsis**

The goal of code enforcement is to persuade people to do what they NEED to do, but may not WANT to do. This can be challenging to accomplish without being perceived as too lenient or too forceful. It has been said, “You can please some of the people” With that in mind, I feel the best way to describe the Neighborhood Services Division in the City of Rancho Cordova is to use a statement made by one of the inspectors; “We’re good . . . but headed for great!”

The reputation of the division within city government, the community and the code enforcement profession can be described as “highly regarded”. They are perceived as responsive and innovative. The members of the division are positive and cooperative, creative and caring. They consider themselves as “helpers” more than “enforcers” and see their role as that of facilitators, assisting to provide a stable and ever increasing quality of life within residential neighborhoods and business districts in the City of Rancho Cordova. This is reflected in their attitude as well.

This is admirable and not always the case within code enforcement divisions across the country or even the State. It can be said that division staff members “see the big picture” and work as a team to help effect it. Their attitude is one of constant cooperation in the face of a tremendous workload. That being said, they are at, or near, their limit state and can’t take on much more without a possible negative impact on their morale and productivity. In my interviews with the staff of Neighborhood Services, I found a frustration level just under the surface of their day to day tasks. It is important to recognize this issue before it becomes a problem. Many of the underlying, and often unstated frustrations, seem to be the unintended byproduct of their own success. In short, because they are successful and cooperative, it is assumed they can be more successful, more productive and given additional responsibilities.

The following observations and recommendations sections will seek to explain this in more detail and provide ideas to address issues.

Copious notes from personal interviews were obtained during this process. The comments were synthesized into themes under the group subheadings of those interviewed, without identifying any individual by name.

Observations & Recommendations

Observation

General Management

It was evident from the onset that the Neighborhood Services Division is well respected throughout the City of Rancho Cordova. As I walked the halls of city offices with Manager Simpson she was always welcomed and often times commended for some task she had completed that helped another department, division or section.

While visiting the Neighborhood Services offices I did notice that Manager Simpson was in great demand. Nearly every staff member had an issue that they needed her to review and/or address. This isn't to say that staff isn't capable or Manager Simpson micro manages them, there is simply a high volume of work product moving through the division. It should be noted that the higher the level of output, the greater the likelihood to experience complex or high priority cases. This results in an elevated need for review, approval and/or direction.

Simply put there is too much for her to manage. The division has grown in size and responsibility and as such many of the day to day inquiries and decisions get placed on the "back burner" until Manager Simpson can find time to "catch-up." This can create a bottleneck that results in issues/cases being inadvertently placed "on-hold" leading to longer time frames for compliance and closure. The recent addition of a code enforcement supervisor will facilitate smoother case management and provide field Staff with a higher level of support. But it is not the only improvement suggested.

A high volume of cases has demanded Manager Simpson's time in providing penalty review at the request of the resident. Manager Simpson accommodates reviews that are often time consuming and unwarranted. While Manager Simpson accommodates these requests as a means of providing excellent customer service, placing this responsibility on the desk of the Manager may create two specific results; 1. A bottleneck that stalls cases, placing more work on the Manager while increasing time frames for compliance and slowing down staff. 2. An environment where violators may learn to "sidestep" their case officer and the standard process to go directly to Manager Simpson – which could ultimately lead to #1 and the cycle, continues.

I think it is important to reiterate that this is not done out of malice, a lack of trust in staff or a need to micromanage and "control" but a true and heartfelt desire to help, accommodate and

ATTACHMENT 1

provide excellent customer service. There are about ten requests received a month, 50% of which are fines issued in error and the request is coming directly from staff.

Further discussion with Manager Simpson revealed that City Staff had been authorized by an internal policy to rescind fees under set conditions in order to gain compliance. In addition, case review occasionally led to fines being reduced due to inadequate case documentation. In addition, if case notes and/or photographs did not support the fines Manager Simpson would clarify ongoing documentation expectations to staff. Ryan Taylor has already implemented a robust continual training program which includes field staff reviewing policy and procedures with their peers.

Recommendation

Manager Simpson needs to continue training her supervisors and line staff in the documented policies/procedures of the division. This continued training will bring about more consistency and allow her to delegate more of her day-to-day "routine" issues. It is also suggested that Manager Simpson allow line staff to sit in while she evaluates the various requests for leniency she receives. This will allow staff to gain more insight into "when and why" these requests may be granted. This shadowing training works, not only with this issue, but may prove invaluable in gaining a more complete "buy-in" or understanding to the mission of code enforcement.

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Observation

Field Staff

The Neighborhood Services field staff appears to be well trained and proficient in their assigned tasks. They work well together and understand the purpose and goal of code enforcement – voluntary compliance. During my ride-alongs, I witnessed several interactions with the public and found their demeanor professional, approachable, knowledgeable and helpful. They were always respectful and understanding even when the individual they were interacting with was not.

In explaining the purpose of my visit to a few apartment managers, I was informed that the staff “cares about the community”. This is a great reflection, not only on the field staff, but management and administration as well. It was obvious the City cares for and treats their employees with respect and concern. The level of appreciation toward staff was impressive and creates an atmosphere allowing them to excel.

Staff members are willing to ask for help or guidance and spoke well of each other. This is a reflection of the leadership provided, not only by Manager Simpson, but the entire administration and elected officials.

Staff expressed concern regarding increased workloads and the ability to sustain the level of productivity. This was especially true in Animal Services. They all felt that taking on more responsibility and cases will inhibit their ability to take the time needed to manage cases into compliance. Additionally, they believed this may result in a reduction of the public’s perception of being “helpful and understanding.”

Recommendation

As noted in the Community Engagement/SWOT section as well in the topics listed under Mayor and Council there are numerous “priorities” listed. Administration and management must take inventory of what they, the elected officials and the community expect of them. They must then come to an agreement and a method of prioritization of the long list of expectations. The idea that the current division can address all of these topics/issues with the same sense of urgency is an unattainable goal and is having a negative impact on the morale. Leaving this one issue unaddressed will, in the long run, cause greater stress and burnout of the dedicated code enforcement staff. Greater stress and burnout will result in a reduce level of professionalism and customer service which in turn will reduce voluntary compliance rates.

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Observation

Support Staff

The Neighborhood Services support staff is also well trained and proficient in their assigned tasks. They too work well together and understand the purpose and goal of code enforcement – voluntary compliance.

As with field staff, support staff conveyed concerns about workloads and ability to maintain the high level of customer service currently provided. In addition, the support staff has a broad range of responsibilities. Sometimes critical tasks, such as recordation of Code Enforcement Certificate of Nuisance, are often set aside for less important details, such as Animal License Renewal Notices -1st, 2nd and 3rd. Misplaced priorities allow for longer term non-compliant cases to fall into the crack of property transfer resulting in additional cases on a single property. Anything that has to wait runs the risk of becoming stale, outdated or completely lost in the shuffle of the day to day only to become a panicked priority later.

Recommendation

Adding a front counter “receptionist” position and moving the two support staff away from the high volume counter will allow them to better manage their workload without constant interruption. This will allow for timelier task/case processing. In addition Manager Simpson should consider capping fines and penalties on certain case types that generate a large volume of work and traffic for little gain. For example: pet licenses could be capped after two or three administrative citations and the case closed so staff is not spending excessive time and budget dollars attempting to collect a \$15 pet license. With the high percentage of tenant occupied properties pet license forms should include documentation of “owner/tenant” occupancy. Pursuit of an un-renewed pet license of a tenant occupied property might be suspended after one attempt as there is a greater likelihood that neither the tenants nor the pet are still at the address.

Additional reviews of the various issues that are routinely addressed at the front counter should be conducted and steps taken to reduce the level of traffic by offering alternative methods of payment, registration, etc.

Observation

Animal Services

It was reported that several years ago, animal services included two full time animal service officers with Code Enforcement Officer Michael Rodriguez providing back up support. For different reasons, four animal service officers left the organization requiring Rodriguez to take on part time animal services. As a result of the economic downturn and the city losing other staff due to budget concerns, the “new” division structure remained in place.

Recommendation

Staffing for Animal Services should be improved in a number of ways:

- Option One: Hire a second animal service officer to assist the one full time officer and allow current staff relief from overtime.
- Option Two: Hire or promote a senior. This would alleviate some of the important but low level decisions from rising to the supervisor and/or manager.
- As stated in the Support Staff section pet licenses could be capped after two or three administrative citations and the case closed so staff is not spending excessive time and budget dollars attempting to collect a \$15 pet license.
- With the high percentage of tenant occupied properties pet license forms should include documentation of “owner/tenant” occupancy. Pursuit of an un-renewed pet license of a tenant occupied property might be suspended after one attempt as there is a greater likelihood that neither the tenants nor the pet are still at the address.
- Each area of responsibility within Animal Services must be reviewed and process mapped as with the other sections. Streamlining the process by removing redundancies or frivolous pursuits will provide additional time for the priority issues within the section.
- It is also important to factor in how much overtime could be saved if processes and schedules could be realigned.

This will also be covered under the Organizational Structure and Enforcement Remedies sections.

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Observation

Organizational Structure

The administrators interviewed were very complementary of the Neighborhood Services Division but echoed some of the concerns expressed by the elected officials. One additional observation shared by several of the directors/managers was that they feel the Division may be “too flat” in its supervision structure. They shared a common concern for Manager Simpson’s ability, due to the time involved, to properly manage “everything the Division does.”

Recommendation

I was asked to recommend a “proper organizational structure for the Division” and can make some recommendations. These recommendations will be an “educated guess” based on my observations and experience. To provide a more accurate recommendation for field staffing levels a data specific statistical analysis must be completed to determine percentages of types of violations and how long the average case takes to bring from complaint into compliance and how many are addressed each year.

Adding “staff” is not an answer unto itself. Adding the RIGHT staff in the RIGHT positions is a detailed process as noted above. Some staff augmentations do not require the analysis noted above. The benefits of positions such as the front counter receptionist can be realized on several levels if the job description is board enough to allow multiple assignments.

The recent addition of a Supervising Code Enforcement Officer position will reduce the workload on Manager Simpson previously noted. Supervisor Taylor has already tackled one of the most important and overlooked aspects of an efficient effective code enforcement division – process mapping addressed on page 31 & 32. Documenting these processes will help reduce the workload on Manager Simpson but will not completely eliminate the issue. Supervisor Taylor should complete the process maps for the code and housing sections and then move to the animal services section. The addition of decision trees within each process, where applicable, will assist in empowering the field staff to make more consistent decisions without asking for a supervisors input.

As noted in the Animal Control Staff section adding additional staff should be a priority to help reduce the workload, backlog and burnout that is beginning to emerge in the section.

Neighborhood Services Division consists of:

(1) Neighborhood Services Manager

(1) Neighborhood Services Supervisor

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(6.5) Code Enforcement Officers - Code Enforcement Officers are both proactive and reactive and have two fields of discipline;

- (3) Rental Housing & Dangerous Buildings
- (3.5) General Nuisance Enforcement.

(.5) Animal Services Officers

(1) Animal Services Officer Trainee

(1) Account Technician

(1) Customer Service Representative and part-time Intern/Customer Service Representative.

(1) Customer Service Intern (1,000 hours)

See “Current” and “Proposed” organizational charts page 55 A and B.

Observation

Rental Housing and Dangerous Buildings Inspection

The Neighborhood Services Division, Housing & Dangerous Buildings Enforcement consists of (3.5) Code Enforcement Officers. The main focus of this group is to run a Proactive Rental Housing Inspection Program (RHIP). The RHIP inspectors have the multi-family properties rotating inspection every 3 years and single family properties are rotated by neighborhood every 5-6 years. This group is also responsible for the case management of dangerous buildings to include after the fact structure fires and or other hazards relating to structures. One day a week the group rotates into assigned zones to help with general nuisance enforcement.

Recommendation:

The RHIP is an important program and staff assigned should be dedicated to that task. If assistance is required in the general nuisance enforcement section on a weekly basis, it indicates a need for additional staff within that section.

To relieve the Manager from constant day to day oversight of the RHIP it is suggested that a Senior Housing Inspector be promoted within the group to provide immediate oversight and assistance to field staff.



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Observation

Volunteers

The Volunteers in Neighborhood Services (VINS) are a group of residents who have provided input and assistance to the City since 2007. Historically, they have reviewed ordinances, performed cleanups and assisted with a variety of events. Several staff suggested that they should continue to be utilized for Community Engagement and Outreach.

Recommendation

Seek out areas where the VINS can assist the field staff with routine duties that require a minimum of training or expertise. Such areas may include;

- Assisting at the public counter
- Answering phones and basic information requests
- Calling on un-renewed pet licenses
- Filing
- Cursory inspections/reinspections of reported “curbside” or “drive-by” blight/violations.
- Ownership research (This is only suggested if a volunteer has the required level of experience in title research etc.)

As with any group of people performing assigned tasks, volunteers, must to be trained and supervised. A training program and minimum level of commitment will be required if the VINS are to be counted as a reliable asset to the Division.

- Set up a pre-volunteer Ride-Along program so potential volunteers can get an idea of what they will be expected/allowed to assist the Division
- Set minimum levels of commitment ie: 4 to 8 – hours a week etc.
- Set routine and weekly schedule and attendance parameters
- Set levels of volunteerism
 - Critical – Daily/weekly needs
 - Casual – As needed for special events
- Establish a basic training program
 - Basic systems – phone, computer, data management etc.
 - Basic customer service
 - City and Divisional policies
 - Operational limits – what they can and can’t do
 - Field safety – IF they will be in the field

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In many instances volunteer staff require may more supervision than full time staff. This is, in part, due to infrequent performance of tasks. It is important to gauge the level of benefit a volunteer provides to the division vs. the level of management and supervision they require. A volunteer that is consistent, retains their training and requires little to no supervision, is an asset. A volunteer that is unreliable, does not retain their training, does not complete tasks, steps outside their level of responsibility and/or authority, is a liability. As with full time employees, volunteers should be evaluated, coached as needed and removed when required. Volunteers are not needed to drive the City and locate violations to report to an already tasked Division. This is a very common, misguided focus in volunteer programs. Field staff are more than capable of working proactively as time allows. Volunteers can assist in providing filed staff that additional time to be proactive by taking on the mundane, routine office tasks that take them out of the field.

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Observation

Communications – Interdepartmental/Community/Administrative/Elected Officials

Improved communication with the public at large was a constant thread throughout the engagement with the community, staff, administrators and elected officials. It was stated that “the big things make the news” but the day to day activities don’t reach the neighborhoods or the Council.

More pro-activity in the “general” side of code enforcement was suggested by both the elected officials and administration. They feel that simply responding to complaints does not address the needs of the neighborhood at large. A proactive approach, in their view, may require additional staff. They also wanted to be sure that officers are “calling out” all the violations observed when they inspect a property.

There was a clear disconnect between different stakeholders perception of what the Division is doing and what functions are actually being performed. Further time with staff revealed that Council/Administrations concerns regarding the current state of code enforcement might be alleviated through further information sharing. For example, ride-alongs would clarify two Council concerns. The rental housing program has already expanded to include single family homes. In fact, of the 5,702 single family homes and duplexes registered to the program, over 50% percent have already been through a first round of inspection with the remainder scheduled to be completed by 2018.

Rental housing staff used to receive the rental housing registration form that was received with the business license. They no longer get the forms which contains “emergency contact information” for landlords. A former code enforcement staff member tried to maintain the data in an access file which was cumbersome and too difficult to maintain.

General code enforcement staff routinely inspects all violation on a cases rather than just the concern reported. In addition, they have implemented a policy to address violations on adjacent properties.

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Recommendation

Provide targeted outreach to City Council and Administration. My interviews revealed that these stakeholders were not aware of the depth of some programs. For example, some thought Rental Housing did not cover single family homes while others were not aware that general code enforcement are proactive as well as reactive.

Although “larger” issues/projects are included in the “Friday Memo” code enforcement needs to “sell their success on the smaller everyday issues”. Neighborhood Services must to be better about reporting “victories” and successes.

The Neighborhood Services Division must take every opportunity to share, not only their successes, but their struggles. It isn’t enough to simply present reports providing the total number of complaints received, cases worked and cost recovery. A clear nexus should be made demonstrating the outcomes, benefits and costs associated with voluntary long-term compliance vs. short term compliance and repeat offenders or “de facto property management.”

These opportunities should go beyond traditional council meetings to include planning commission, public safety committee, chamber of commerce, realtors and neighborhood association meetings to name a few. In addition to the “statistics” mentioned above, the Neighborhood Services Division must share their duties, responsibilities and authority. All too often administrators, elected officials, other departments and the public at large have an unrealistic view of code enforcement and their ability to address “every issue” they feel should be resolved. Manager Simpson must educate each of these groups to the abilities and restrictions of the Neighborhood Services Division.

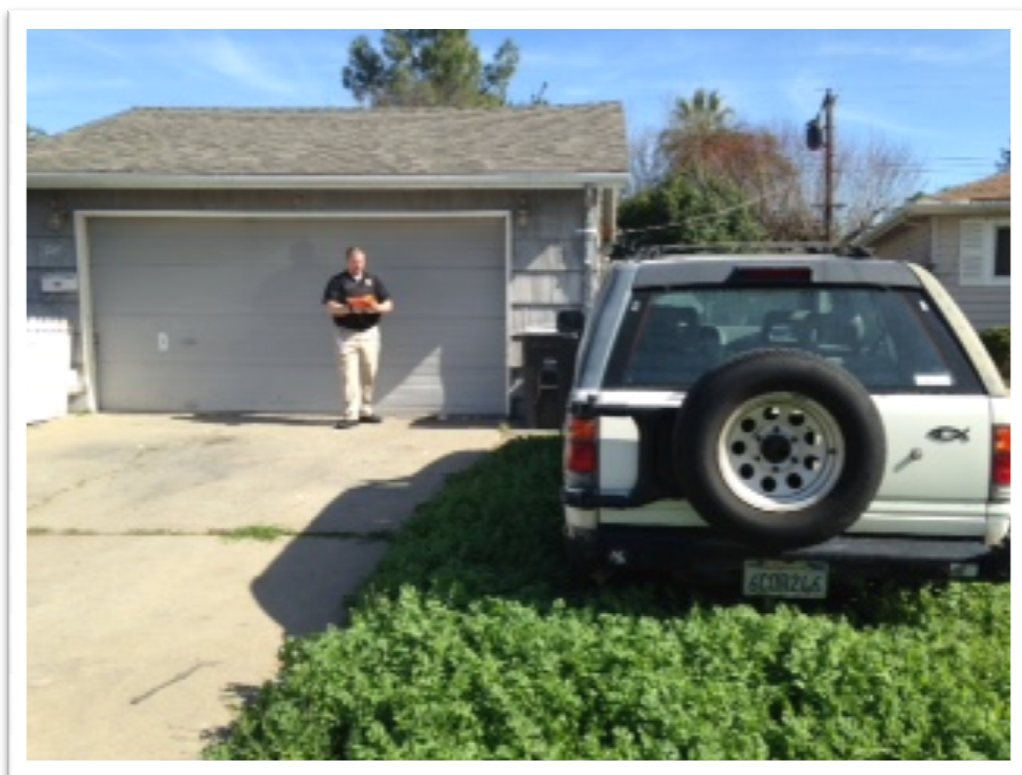
Many of the benefits of a well-staffed, properly managed code enforcement program are not always tangible or measurable through traditional status reporting. Manager Simpson should communicate the “unseen” benefits enumerated in the Cost vs. Benefit and Return on the City’s Investment in Code Enforcement section on page 25 & 26.

In addition, create a “Spend-A-Day” program for other departments that interact with code enforcement that allows them to spend a day with code enforcement staff.

This recommendation is in line with the Growing Strong Neighborhood Initiative and could include other departments and divisions.

ATTACHMENT 1

Work with the IT Department to coordinate information/data systems so that any information – business license, building permits, planning and zoning submittals/reviews – are accessible to Neighborhood Services and/or other personnel that require the information to perform their duties.



Observation

Neighborhood Stabilization

There are many variables that go into the “livability” of a neighborhood. Blight and crime often run hand in hand. Reduce one and you will have an impact on the other. As such, reporting the benefits of efficient effective code enforcement program should include the any or all of the following:

1. Reduction in calls for service
 - a. Law enforcement
 - b. Medical aid
 - c. Abandoned vehicles on public streets
 - d. Illegal dumping
 - e. Graffiti
2. Higher percentage of home ownership
3. Higher average home sales prices
4. Fewer days on the market
5. Fewer tax delinquent properties
6. Fewer vacancies
7. Fewer evictions
8. Better school attendance rates
9. Increased sales rates at local businesses
10. Increase sales and property taxes

These items should be considered when reviewing the cost benefit analysis of funding the Neighborhood Services Division. Reducing calls for service is a budgetary savings, while increasing sales and property taxes are an increase in revenue. When calculating the return on Rancho Cordova’s investment in funding the Division, it is important to look past fees, fines and penalties collected. Additional considerations should include budgetary savings and increased revenue directly and indirectly gained through the diligent work of the Neighborhood Services Division. The Division may very well be close to “paying” for itself but must be able to demonstrate this through the reporting of data not traditionally kept by code enforcement.

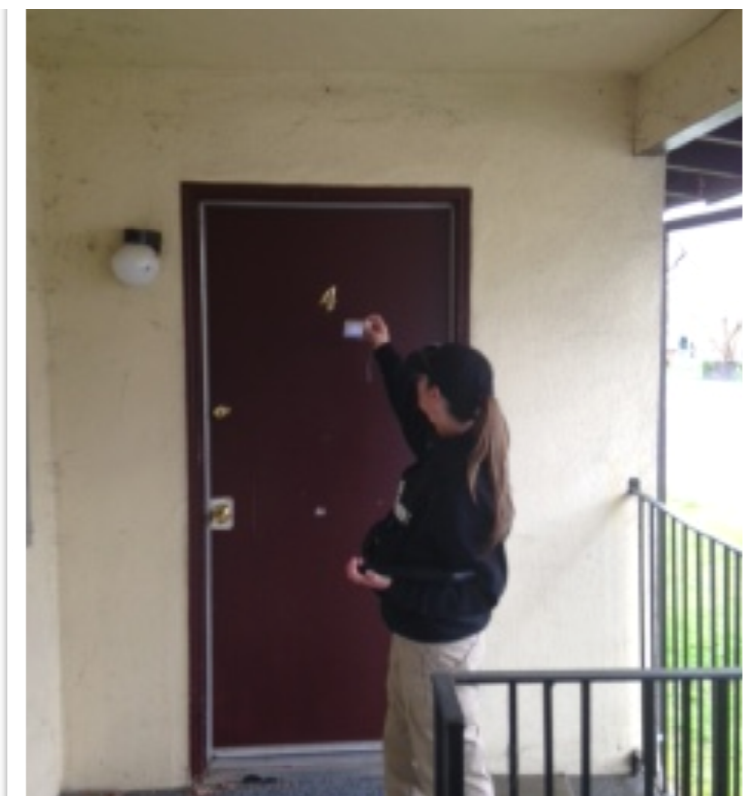
This will be a near impossible task without the proper in-house data management systems as well as access to data from other agencies, departments and divisions that address the topics enumerated above.

ATTACHMENT 1

Recommendation

The City's data system and GIS applications must be able to overly various statistically information such as law enforcement calls for service, tenant vs. owner occupied property rates/percentages, real estate data such as days on market and sales price, tax assessor delinquency rates. Proactive code enforcement, when properly applied and supported can help to stabilize neighborhoods which will have a positive impact on each of the topics listed above. The Neighborhood Services Division must be able to demonstrate they are an important part of the neighborhood stabilization puzzle – if they don't know one else will.

Accessing the analyst staff within the City Manager's Office could be a solution to capturing, qualifying and quantifying this data.

**Observation****Enforcement Remedies Cost/Revenue Recovery**

ATTACHMENT 1

The Neighborhood Services Division is well trained and motivated. Many of their cases comply without any “enforcement action” beyond a Notice of Violation. However, in those cases where voluntary compliance is not gained the Division has a limited number of options = “tools” or “remedies” available to use to motivate compliance. Although there are and have been other tools at their disposal many have been dormant for a time and others are not properly or adequately supported by legal staff.

Recommendation

Continue to use Code Enforcement liens when fines fees penalties not paid – use collection service for smaller amounts.

At different points in the division’s history, staff had the ability to issue criminal citations. Due to the reduction in the District Attorney budget, that ability is not currently available. While fines/fees are usually very effective, the ability to issue a criminal citation as a means to gain compliance is critical to the ongoing success of the program. Other alternative legal remedies such as abatements, daily fines, attorney driven injunctions, receiverships and civil are important tools to have at the ready when needed.

As previously noted, Manager Simpson should consider capping fines and penalties on certain case types. For example: pet licenses could be capped after two or three administrative citations and the case closed so staff is not spending excessive time and budget dollars trying to collect a \$15 pet license. Other caps on actions or fines could be implemented on non-life threatening issues such as fence heights etc. A “Record and Suspend” policy could be developed that allows for a violation to be recorded against a non-compliant property, via a Lis Pendens or Notice of Pendency, and active enforcement suspended. The violation would have to be corrected before the property could be sold or refinanced. Other criminal and/or civil remedies should be implemented and applied as deemed appropriate on a case by case basis as set out in documented Decision Trees attached to each enforcement policy and procedure. A good rule to follow is – Same property? Same problem? Same person? Next step.

Observation

Data/Case Management System – Goals & Metrics

ATTACHMENT 1

Code Enforcement is directly related to public safety. Without code enforcement blight breeds or encourages crime. Growing Strong Neighborhoods Initiative will assist code enforcement in making lasting changes within the older “first-tier suburbs” neighborhoods.

Code Enforcement has an inadequate data-management system. It is time consuming to enter data – too many screens and repetitive entries. Staff seems to “work for the system” rather than the system working for the staff. The system shuts down when it rains. Field tablets are hard to see in the sun and slow to upload photographs and inspection results. Some programs are well publicized and received but may be under-performing as data cannot . This raises the question “how success is being measured”.

Recommendation

The data-management system and the general ability to measure goals and quantify results must be improved. Additions and upgrades to the current system are a priority. If the current system cannot be brought up to meet the needs of the Division is should be replaced with a system that has a better code enforcement platform and better customer service reputation. End users – field staff MUST be brought into the evaluation and selection process.

Observation

Policy and Procedures Manual

ATTACHMENT 1

The policy and Procedures Manual is the foundation of the Division's operations. When properly developed and implemented a policy-procedures manual provides staff with the information to act decisively, consistently and legally. It also promotes confidence and professional conduct amongst staff. The Neighborhood Services Policy and Procedures was recently updated. The manual went from a very basic outline to a comprehensive step by step procedure for almost every function within the Division. This new and improved manual was written over the last year. Manager Simpson and Supervisor Taylor are aware that there are a few processes that a need to be completed and it is a work in progress. The manual is very detailed and includes comprehensive information on the 4th Amendment and officer Safety.

Recommendation

Complete the remaining policies and procedures – listed below. Continue to review these policies and procedures with staff. Allow staff to participate in drafting and implementing when appropriate. Implement a process that allows updates to be captured in a central location for implementation on an ongoing basis. A “master” on-line version accessible through the city’s website would be one consideration.

Policies to be written:

- Rental Housing Inspection Program
- Vacant Building Monitoring Program
- Blight Busters Program
- Focus 50 program
- Repeat Nuisance Calls Program
- Weed abatement program

Each of these is an important function of the Neighborhood Services Division and should be well documented.

Observation

Process Mapping

ATTACHMENT 1

A structural analysis of a process flow by distinguishing how work is actually done from how it should be done, and what functions a system should perform from how the system is built to perform those functions. This graphic representation allows an observer to 'walk-through' the whole process and see it in its entirety. This process provides the ability to locate inefficiencies in a process.

As is seen in the Process Mapping Matrix below, several of the key functions of code enforcement have been mapped in their current state. There are many more to go, but this is an impressive start. The next, and more difficult step, will be to identify the gaps and redundancies that exist in the current state processes and address them.

As stated earlier, staff has already made strides in process mapping. However several critical areas of focus and remain

Recommendation

Complete Process Mapping of all programs and hearings as soon as possible. Set annual review of processes (policies and procedures) and update as needed/required

Current Programs Mapped:

- Rental Housing Inspection Program
- Rental Housing Permit
- Vacant Building Monitoring Program
- Blight Busters Program
- Focus on 50 program
- Repeat Nuisance Calls Program
- Weed abatement program
- Foreclosure Program
- Marijuana Enforcement
- Business licenses
- Massage Ordinance
- Zoning
- Property maintenance
- Chicken Ordinance
- Commercial Sidewalk Enforcement
- Weed abatement
- Commercial enforcement
- Storm Water
- Health and Safety
- Pet Licensing/rabies suppression
- Animal cruelty

ATTACHMENT 1

Additional Projects to be Mapped

- Probation Partnership
- Navigator Program
- Sacramento Abandoned Vehicle Authority (SAVSA)
- Graffiti Abatement
- Tree Abatement

Matrix of Processes Mapped

CITY OF RANCHO CORDOVA NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

OFFICER	SUBJECT (mapping shall include steps in INFOR if applicable)	DATE/TIME
Rental Housing Inspection program		
Ducharme, Russ	Process Mapping - Rental Housing Inspection Program	Complete
Boucher, Keith	Process Mapping - Rental Housing Permit	Complete
Stover, Krista	Process Mapping - Relocation Benefits	Complete
Shah, Walid	Process Mapping - Rental Housing Inspection Program Hearing	Complete
Cook, Heather	Process Mapping - RHIP scheduling	Complete
Ducharme, Russ	Process Mapping - Rent Escrow Account Program	
Boucher, Keith	Process Mapping - RHIP registration	
Stover, Krista	Process Mapping - Rental Property General Business License (R26)	
Shah, Walid	Process Mapping - Rental Housing Education Workshop	
General Nuisance Program		
Rodriguez, Mike	Process Mapping - General Nuisance	Complete
Lee, Junior	Process Mapping - General Nuisance Hearing	Complete
Vacant Building Monitoring Program		
Lee, Junior	Process Mapping - Vacant Building Monitoring Program	Complete
Rodriguez, Mike	Process Mapping - Vacant Bldg. Monitoring Program Hearing	
Sparks, Scott	Process Mapping - Vacant Bldg. Securement & Abatement	

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Commercial Enforcement Program		
Sparks, Scott	Process Mapping - Commercial Enforcement Program	In progress
Business Licensing		
Sparks, Scott	Process Mapping - Commercial Business License	Complete
Graffiti		
Lee, Junior	Process Mapping - Graffiti Abatement Program	Complete
Weed, Junk abatement program		
Rodriguez, Mike	Process Mapping - Weed, junk abatement program	
Sacramento Abandoned Vehicle Authority		
Shah, Walid	Process Mapping - SAVSA	Partial
Lee, Junior	Process Mapping - vehicle abatement	
Focus 50		
Taylor, Ryan	Process Mapping - Focus 50 Program	Complete
Blight Busters 2.0		
Taylor, Ryan	Process Mapping - Blight Busters 2.0	Complete
Neighborhood Clean-Up Program		
Taylor, Ryan	Process Mapping - Neighborhood clean-up program	

Observation**Data/Case Management System**

ATTACHMENT 1

Staff has ongoing concerns with the data-management system (INFOR). While it is not uncommon for organizations to rely on enterprise systems, they come with a particular set of challenges. Firstly, the program is usually built for one department and required customizing for others. Secondly, all departments must use the program for it to be able to share information. In the case of INFOR, it appears the program was built for public works project management.

Staff shared concerns about some aspects of the program including:

- Loss of connectivity
- The more systems added as a solution the worse the systems perform – too many “glitches” and too many screens that do not “self-populate” and require redundant entries.
- Staff requires more training to be able to “get the best out the system”.
- Not enough information is shared from other departments in the INFOR system.
- INFOR is “editable” - allows anyone with access to the system to changes comments, notes and other entries without “permission” or generating a report.
- No time stamping feature on photo app.
- Office systems shut down/crash when it rains.
- Mobile service features on devices present network errors and timeout in the field.

Code Enforcement vehicles are well equipped for case data entry and printing of documents in the field however loss of connectivity and data have been a constant issue. Due to data processing issues in the field, staff has gradually opted to perform most of the data entry in the office.

Recommendation

Code Enforcement Division requires a data-management system that is accurate and customized to meet its needs. Ordinances change, programs within the ordinances change and the data-management system in which they are tracked and managed should have the structure to change.

Information Technology (IT) must work closely with Neighborhood Services staff as team to resolve the issues. This could include IT staff shadowing Neighborhood Services staff to see the concerns of connectivity, data input etc. in real time. In addition, field staff should keep a detailed, comprehensive log of issues that are noted and submitted to IT and the Baker Crew who implement resolutions when possible. Should issues not be resolved, Manager Simpson and IT must determine whether INFOR is a viable long term option or whether alternatives should be researched.

ATTACHMENT 1

**Observation**

Vacant Lots

In addition to Neighborhood Services responsibility for illegal dumping on private property Sacramento Metro Fire has recently abandoned their participation and enforcement regarding vacant abandoned property. This has left an additional burden on the field staff.

ATTACHMENT 1

Staff indicated that until about a year ago, they had support from the Sacramento County Probation Work Program. In 2015, the demands on the program reduced their availability. Since that time, contractors and occasionally staff perform abatements.

Recommendation

Manager Simpson is innovative and resourceful but will require assistance in this area. Alternate labor sources, such as volunteers, community and faith based group might augment staffing in this area but should not be the sole source of abatement. In addition to any volunteer labor/efforts the city should establish an ongoing cost effective way to complete abatements using some of the additional abatement funds approved by City Council. This may require issuing an RFP and bidding for services. Standards for securing vacant abandoned properties are generally taken from the HUD regulations.

Other cities have created entry level code enforcement positions, such as a code enforcement technician, and used these staff members to address the smaller dumping/weeds issues. They could also be used as a volunteer coordinator maximizing their efforts,

Observation

Collaboration with other Departments

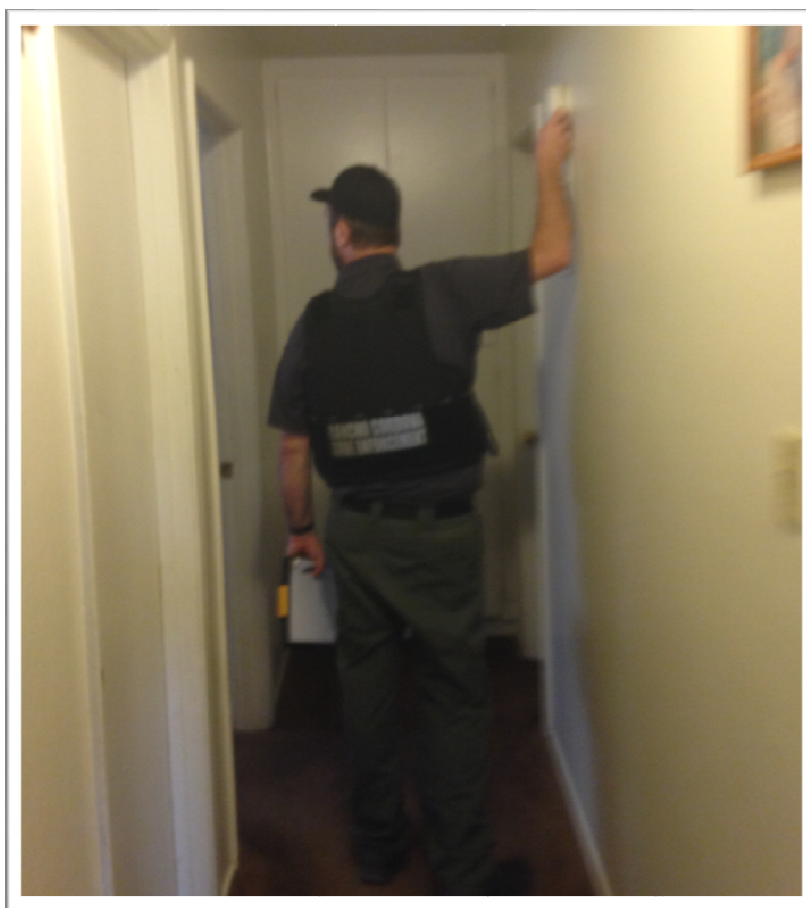
Further conversations with Neighborhood Services staff revealed a concern about the ongoing collaboration with planning and finance staff. Neighborhood Services staff have a solid understanding of the zoning code and feel comfortable making basic interpretations. In recent

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months, there appears to be a concern that the planning division is not consistent in interpreting the zoning code and in some instances there have been new decisions contrary to former interpretations. They also indicated that business licenses are issued without on sight inspections and when an error occurs Neighborhood Services staff have to “unwind” the error.

Recommendation

Provide a forum for the staff from all Division's to discuss these issues as they arise to improve communication and consistency. These meetings would be in line with those currently being held with Building and Safety.



Observation

Appeals and Administrative Hearings

Current ordinances and practices call for non-refundable fees and/or deposits (See Fig 1.) to appeal a code enforcement action, fine or penalty. In addition.

ATTACHMENT 1

The “Hearing Officer” is the Director of Information Technologies – a City employee.

Fig 1.

Deposit or fee for hearing

Program	Amount	Refundable
Animal Services	\$100	No
General Nuisance	\$150	No
Rental Housing	Equal to fine	Yes

Recommendation

Although there is no hard fast rule or law that disallows a City employee from sitting as the Hearing Officer it can provide the appearance of bias. In response the case Hass v San Bernardino County, many jurisdiction have moved away from a staff member serving as the Hearing Officer and are contracting the service out or asking a staff member from another jurisdiction to provide the service. Others use an appointed board of local residents – I do not suggest this as it can be difficult to gain a quorum when hearings are needed and conflicts of interest often arise.

Some of these mandatory non-refundable fees make it impossible for low income residents to receive a hearing. It is my understanding that past Finance Directors did not want to have to administer a Hardship Policy. This makes it difficult for the manager and supervisor when they are dealing with making sure there is equal access to being heard. Manager Simpson should review the various appeal and hearing processes and deposit requirements within the Municipal Code as it relates to code enforcement functions and/or revisit hardship waivers with the new Finance Director. This may require Council action.

Observation

Neighborhood Services Division front counter staff are the first to greet residents as they enter the building at 2880 Gold Tailings Ct. Front counter staff consist of an Account Technician, Customer Service Representative and a part-time Customer Service Intern. The front counter

ATTACHMENT 1

staff can be overwhelmed given the level of service required at the front counter. Some of the regular and routine items processed at the counter such as pet license renewals and paying of fines could potential be done through an online payment system. Administrative staff estimates that 50-60% of customers processed at the counter simply come in to “make a payment.”

Recommendation

It would be beneficial to research on line payment options in order to facilitate superior customer service and alleviate administrative staff time. In turn, this would allow clerical staff to focus on more pressing issues such as addressing resident concerns and supporting field staff. It would also give them time to focus on special projects such as lien confirmation hearings. If the online payment option does not successfully reduce the level of activity at the counter it may be advisable to add a dedicated receptionist to address the need.

Observation

Extension of Time on Open Cases

ATTACHMENT 1

It is not unusual for code enforcement staff to grant additional time for violations to be brought into compliance. Staff are always willing to work with responsible parties that will legitimately work with them. Many of these extensions are for minor issues and are of a short nature , less than one week. While it appears this often results in the positive outcome of voluntary compliance, there should be a policy in place as to what issues can be granted a “verbal” extension and what issues/violations/conditions should be memorialized in a written agreement between parties to ensure next steps are completed.

Recommendation

Establish a level of authority and approval for extensions of time on cases with larger more complicated, pressing issues such as housing, hoarding etc. In these cases the responsible party would work with the case officer to provide a “Schedule of Compliance” with specific items and dates of completion. The responsible party (property owner) would then enter into a written Compliance Agreement and be allowed to work toward compliance but held accountable to the schedule agreed upon. Should the responsible party fail to move forward as agreed upon the case officer could implement the next enforcement remedy, using the Compliance Agreement as evidence that the City cooperated with the violator.

This can also be implemented in cases where an individual is purchasing a property with an active code enforcement case.

Mayor and Council Comments/Concerns

ATTACHMENT 1

Although all the elected officials spoke very highly of the Neighborhood Services Division and were supportive of their efforts, each seemed to have a different understanding of the division's responsibilities and priorities. Each official had a differing opinion as to their overall effectiveness and lasting impact, but all expressed a desire for more frequent reporting in terms of productivity and need. This isn't to say that any of the elected officials were critical of the Division, they were not. They simply expressed a desire to be more informed on the day to day aspects of the Division – total number of cases – average time frames from notice to compliance – number of repeat offenders – total of fines issued/collected – anticipated needs – etc.

Observation

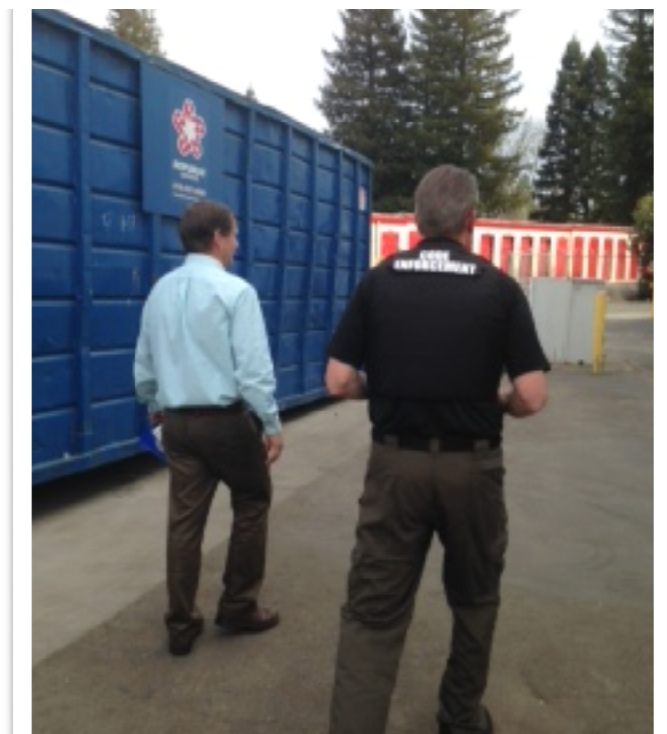
ATTACHMENT 1

Public Image

Neighborhood Services Division Manager and staff care about the community and their role in it. Our Code Enforcement is very active, resourceful and does not shy away from challenges. When Code Enforcement is called upon they fix it and they are diligent in their efforts. Code Enforcement works well and coordinates efforts with other departments and divisions. Field staff looks very professional in the community with their uniforms but the image may need to be softened.

Recommendation

A balance between recognition and the perception of “law enforcement” needs to be established. The introduction of softer uniform, wearing Kevlar vests under uniform polo shirt and wearing the “CODE ENFORCEMENT” jackets/vests only when assisting law enforcement should be considered to provide a friendlier image to the community.

**Observation****Additional Enforcement Efforts**

Some Neighborhood Services Division defined programs seem to be working well, such as the Rental Housing Inspection Program and award winning Blight Busters Program, but general

ATTACHMENT 1

nuisance issues, commercial areas and the indoor marijuana cultivation ordinance seem to be lacking in enforcement. Based on needs within the community Code Enforcement may be understaffed as it seems they are running in too many different directions that allow “less important issues” falling between the cracks.

Recommendation

Additional communication must be a priority as addressed in the Communications – Interdepartmental/Community/Administrative/Elected Officials section on pages 22 & 23. Much of the statement above is a perception issue as many of the areas of concern raised, commercial enforcement as an example, are being addressed.

As part of these communication efforts Manager Simpson should provide a venue for the City Council to prioritize the level of importance of issues/violations the Division. This will give staff clear direction while allowing administration to obtain a better overview of staffing needs. This would also be an opportunity for Council to discuss some of the items raised during the resident SWOT analysis exercise. NOTE: List of topics discussed appears on pages 7-10..

The City Council and Administration should be involved in setting goals for code enforcement. Neighborhood Services should receive direction from Council and Administration on goals and reportable metrics for quarterly review. They must decide on the measurable items they would like to see tracked within the different programs. These goals/expectations must be clear and concise.

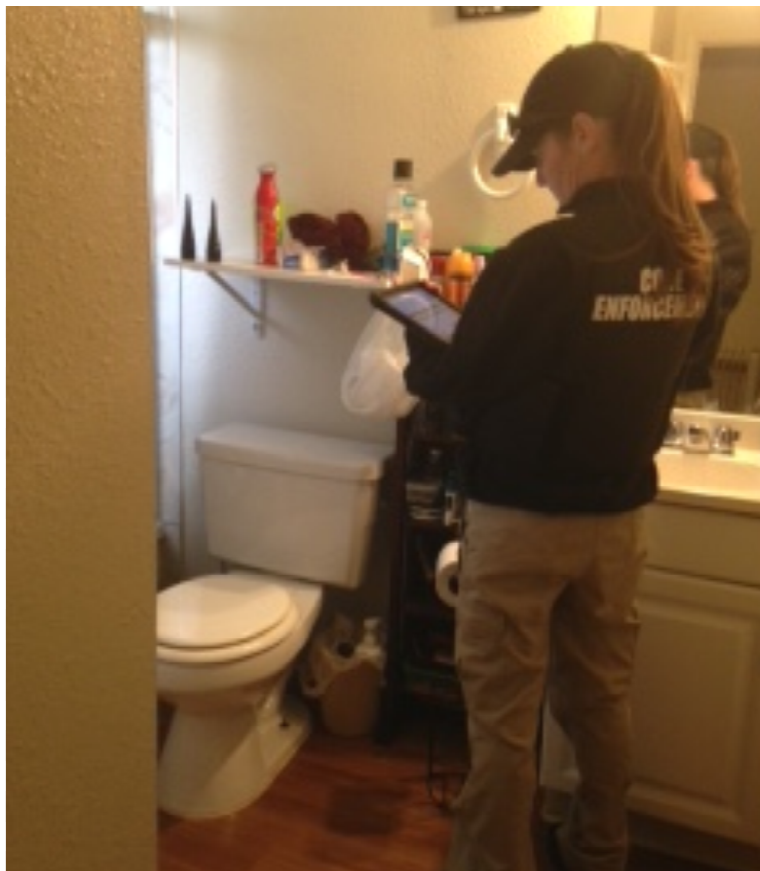
Code Enforcement Performance Measures must be:

- Definable
- Realistic
- Achievable
- Measurable

IT staff must work with the enforcement staff to ensure the desired information is captured in the INFOR database and then reported back on a regular basis.

Manager Simpson should implement a “Strategic Enforcement Calendar” for those items/violations that are cyclical in nature such as weeds, illegal dumping etc. and adjust staffing to respond – use volunteers or temporary employees to address such issues.

ATTACHMENT 1



Observation

Commercial Properties

Many of the main commercial areas– both older & newer – seem to be “under addressed.”

Recommendation

The commercial enforcement program should be enhanced and may require dedicated inspectors. The program should assist in business attraction and retention by addressing substandard and blighted commercial properties. A Commercial Enforcement Program, much like the Rental Housing Inspection Program, should be a pro-active annual endeavor. In addition to conditions or “blight” the program should also address zoning, outdated signage and should consider “functional obsolescence” and the loss of non-conforming status. It should work in concert with the Rental Housing and General Code enforcement programs as a deterrent to redevelopment of older business/commercial stock is the condition of the housing stock nearby.

ATTACHMENT 1

NOTE: Staff is already working commercial properties on a rotational weekend inspection program.



Observation

Rental Housing

Council was unanimous in their support the Pro-active Rental Housing Inspection Program (RHIP). It is a good program and should be staffed to address large complexes every three to five years. They did voice concern that single family rentals were not being provided the same amount of attention as the larger complexes. One Council Member stated, "A couple of bad, unmanaged and unmaintained rentals can negatively impact the entire neighborhood." They also suggested that the Rental Housing Inspection program be more aggressive enforcement on absentee landlords.

Recommendation

Single family rentals are part of the Rental Housing Inspection Program however, as with a few other issues the Division addresses, Council has not been made fully aware of the full extent of

ATTACHMENT 1

the program. It may be found, after a more detailed analysis, that additional attention and focus should be placed in single family neighborhoods. Additional attention to this area will can be attained by adding additional staff or reducing the number and frequency of the multi-family complex component of the program.

The recent implementation a community prosecutor will allow staff the flexibility of issuing criminal citations, receiverships and civil suits when administrative penalties are ineffective. In addition consideration should be given to increasing staffs ability to work with the City Attorney's office on additional alternative remedies such as abatement warrants, closure and relocation, Rent Escrow Account Program (REAP) etc.

Observation

Focus on 50/Blight Busters/Strong Neighborhoods Program

Council suggested that the Neighborhood Services Division implement Strong Neighborhood Program that defines a task force approach starting by educating the residents and business owners. The being to raise the quality of life in Blighted communities. It was stated that Blight Busters should be to be reinstated and improved as a vehicle or tool to for neighborhood enhancement and the program should fall under "Growing Strong Neighborhoods". The Focus on 50 programs has been developed to target the 50 worst properties in the City of Rancho Cordova and should pursue properties aggressively until they are in compliance. The Focus on 50 properties should be published showing addresses, owners and results. Neighborhood Services Division should increase "curb appeal" in residential neighborhoods by addressing visual blight - trash cans, dilapidation, overgrown vegetation, storage of trash/junk and wrecked

ATTACHMENT 1

vehicles. Move from reactive to proactive in the general unit – have officers drive dedicated “beats” or “routes” daily/weekly.

Recommendations

As noted in previous sections, many of these issues, such as pro-activity, are currently being conducted by the Division although it may be on a smaller scale than the Council would like to see. The Division should be using field observations, GIS, Maps and Stats as a tool to identify emerging trends and problem areas. Council should receive reports regularly on efforts made to combat these problem areas.

Each of these programs, Focus on 50, Blight Busters and Strong Neighborhoods can have a very positive impact on the City. Each has been field tested in the past and proven successful. Implemented any one of these programs may require an additional staff member to coordinate and manage. Implementing all three will most certainly require at least one senior level code enforcement inspector to function as a “Special Projects Coordinator” and perhaps two journey level inspectors to perform the inspections and follow-up enforcement that will be required to guarantee success.

As it stands now, field staff is functioning at close to their maximum capacity. Adding any additional responsibilities, programs or functions will require that other areas of focus, such as the Rental Housing Inspection Program, be scaled back to accommodate the additional workload.

If it is decided to implement all of these programs it is suggested that they be scaled back and placed under a single program title and implemented on a smaller trail basis and then allowed to grow as they are successful. It is important to keep in mind that these programs will require long-term “monitoring.” With the high percentage rate of rental properties within the City neighborhoods that have been part of this program may slip back out of compliance as the tenant base turns over year to year. Implementing a pro-active post program patrol to monitor and address the issues that may arise after the program has “moved on” is imperative to the sustainable success of such a program.

ATTACHMENT 1



Observation

Homeless Concerns

The Council, as well as others interviewed, raised concern over the emerging and increasing homeless population in the City. Each placed some responsibility for addressing this issue on Neighborhood Services.

Recommendation

It is important to keep in mind that far and in large Neighborhood Services staff address issues with property and not people. Meaning, Manager Simpson and her staff may be able to address conditions on properties that may attract or encourage homeless encampments, such as abandoned accessible structures, overgrown vegetation, fences in disrepair, illegal dumping etc. however, they do not and should not address the homeless themselves.

ATTACHMENT 1

The City should create a citywide homeless strategy, including Neighborhood Service in the discussion and formation. The recent addition of a Sacramento Steps Forward Homeless Navigator is a good start to addressing the homeless issues that are a concern to City Council and residents alike. The program will facilitate the collection of data that in turn allows City staff to identify deficiencies in housing opportunities and address them.

- Areas of concern and focus
 - Are there conditions that encourage homeless persons to come to the City
 - Are there services encourage homeless persons to come to the City
 - Are there services that should be provided but aren't
 - Are enough shelters and if not what is the correct number
 - No recognized plan on how to address the chronic homeless
 - Property owners are often held responsible for the trash/damaged caused by the homeless
 - How can the City partner with property and business owners to address the conditions that may "attract" homeless persons
 - How can the City partner with property and business owners to address the conditions that may be caused by homeless persons

Observation

Outreach

Concern was raised that Neighborhood Services should be providing more of an outreach to the community – both residential and commercial/business. It was voiced, and is true, that education would prevent some of the blight issues that can be found in the City

Recommendation

Regardless of the addition of any programs or changes in focus Neighborhood Services should increase their education and community outreach programs. However, as previously stated, the Division is nearing or at its limit state and to develop and maintain a robust program will require time – time = staff = staff = budget dollars.

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A robust education and outreach program could include:

- Crime Free Rental Housing Management Training/Instruction and certification. Using this program will help expose novice housing providers (and professionals that may not care) to the requirements, tools and information they might not otherwise be exposed to. This program can be used in concert with the Rental Housing Inspection Program. Implementing this program addressing rental housing from both
- Creating a “Good Neighbor Guide” which lists, with photographic examples, the minimum standards but the benefits of compliance – higher property values, fewer crimes, etc. “The why behind the what.” The newly hired Public Information Manager will play a key role in this effort.
- Outreach to elementary schools in the City will help reach the next generation of tenants/owners/business owners.
- Education should also include an internal component – other departments and divisions need to know exactly what Neighborhood Services can and can not address.
- Rancho Cordova Police Department (RCPD) should be educated on the benefit of a strong code enforcement program. Law Enforcement needs to recognize Code enforcement IS related to public safety. Blight breeds or encourages crime. Address blight and you reduce crime. The recently implemented, robust Intelligent Led Policing (ILP) should be one vehicle for this process.
- Code enforcement, efficient and effective code enforcement, is cheaper – more cost effective than law enforcement.
- Implementing any or all of the special programs, Focus on 50, Blight Busters and/or Strong Neighborhoods will require and strong outreach program prior to implementation and throughout the course.
- Neighborhood Services needs better use of technology to reach and serve the residents and business owners. This includes access to a modern updated website with photographic examples and FAQ’s, the ability to conduct transactions and payments and the ability to see if pending enforcement action is occurring on a property and if so where it is in the process.

ATTACHMENT 1



Observation

Does Neighborhood Services have the right “tools”?

Beyond the issue of staffing and budget, Council Members and administrators were curious to know if the Division had the “tools” – ordinances – required to perform in an efficient and effective manner.

Recommendation

As with any code of ordinances created over several years/decades an inventory of the Rancho Cordova Municipal Code should be conducted to verify that it is current and cohesive. Items to look for and address include:

- Review and reconciliation of the code in its current state. Conflicts may exist which make enforcement difficult.

ATTACHMENT 1

- Inventory of regulations enforced by Neighborhood Services. Does the RCMC address all the issues the City faces?
 - Is it up to date with current and emerging trends?
 - Are there areas that are being addressed in neighboring jurisdictions that may be “pushing” new issues into the City?
 - Is it legal and Constitutional?
- Inventory of enforcement remedies or options. Code Enforcement needs the tools necessary to make the city a better place to live, work and conduct business. An important part of this, is the ability to use the best method available to gain the attention of a non-compliant property/business owner and motivate them to comply.

Observation

Mobile home parks and Title 25

Older parks are in need of repair/rehabilitation. State HCD provides little help and attention. Many residents are being displaced due to rising space rents. Need rent control provisions and they are much underserved.

Recommendation

These are issues faced by many jurisdiction that has mobile home parks within their housing inventory. State law allows for the local jurisdiction to, by ordinance, take over the responsibility for the inspection and enforcement of the regulations in Title 25. However, a jurisdiction that takes on this responsibility takes it on “as is” in that they are bound to the rules, regulations and enforcement tools contained in Title 25. The local jurisdiction is not allowed to use or add ANY

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local authority and simple acts as the “State HCD inspector.” The benefit to taking on such authority and responsibility is that the City, with additional staffing, can and will be more responsive to the needs of the residents of these parks.

If this is truly an issue the City Council would like to address it is suggested that an individual familiar with Title 25 conduct:

- Cursory inspections of the parks be conducted by an experienced Title 25 inspector to ascertain the possible workload the City may be taking on.
- Tenant meetings at each of the mobile home parks to gain background into the concerns at each individual park.
- Owner/Manager meetings with representatives from each of the parks to gain their perspective and evaluate any support or resistance they may provide.

The results of these actions, additional information on other jurisdictions that have implemented ordinances taking on Title 25 responsibility and the potential cost of such a program should be presented at a Council Workshop. The Council could then make an educated decision as to how to proceed, keeping in mind that returning the responsibility back to HCD takes Council action as well.

Rent control is an option allowed under State housing law and has been implemented successfully in numerous jurisdiction. As with taking on Title 25, much time, consideration and outreach must be conducted before proposal of such a regulations. Conferring with other jurisdictions that have taken on these issues will provide great insight as how best to proceed. It may be advisable to hire a firm that has performed such tasks successfully in the past.

Observation

Recreational Vehicles (RV) Parking/Storage

It was stated that an ordinance was “inherited” from the County and that in its current state is outdated and should be updated/amended. Very few if anyone has the RV they had when the city was incorporated – can the City implement a program to identify and start to reduce and eventually remove RV’s from R-1 zones? Many are occupied but hard to prove and enforce.

Recommendation

This is an issues that has plagued many jurisdictions and when addressed has caused much consternation and public debate. A review of best practices throughout the State will provide guidance as to how the City may want to proceed on regulating the parking of RV’s. As with any citywide issue public meetings with stakeholders = RV owners, should be held to gain an

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understanding of the issue from their perspective as well as sharing the concerns from the City's perspective.

Sun setting combined with current RV registration has been implemented in other jurisdictions and could be applied in Rancho Cordova. As with any new program, registration is a program, there is a cost in dollars and staff time.

The Planning Director should review RV parking as part of the overall zoning code update.

Addressing suspected occupied RV's could be made easier to enforce by limiting/regulating "hook-ups" to power, water and sewer. Adding to the definition section that, "Evidence of an occupied RV includes but is not limited to – connection to power and/or water, and/or sewage disposal system or external tank."

Observation

Two Rancho Cordova's

Council and a few community members discussed the idea that there are "two Rancho Cordova's" the older pre-incorporation city and the newer master planned HOA developments with HOA's city. They stated they felt it was also true within commercial zoning as well. They wondered how or if they could bring both together.

Recommendation

Newer developments are governed by CC&R's as well as HOA's and they have the obvious benefit of being "newer" so there is less neglect and deterioration. There is, as well, a higher rate of owner occupancy. Older neighborhoods are "older" so there may be additional neglect and deterioration and a lower owner occupancy rate.

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Older neighborhoods do not have the benefit of “private enforcement”, through CC&R’s and HOA’s. They rely on the minimum standards set in the RCMC which may be more lenient than most CC&R’s.

In newer neighborhoods, those with HOA’s, it is important that the Neighborhood Services Division have good working relationships with each HOA and encourage them to address issues of property maintenance and blight. This takes some of the burden from the Division which is time that can be spent in areas without HOA’s.

Expand owner occupant improvement efforts/programs in older neighborhoods utilizing funds from Measure H.

Create a “First Time Home Ownership Education and Assistance Program” as a means of increasing the percentage of owner occupied properties in the older neighborhoods. Assistance in this type of program can range from credit counseling to the basics of how to locate a home to home maintenance education to down payment assistance.

Streamline the home rehabilitation process through planning and building – make it “fast and easy.”

Collaborate with the Planning department to review current legal non-conforming procedures. In addition, review opportunities for requiring landscaping and façade standards on older commercial properties. This could be accomplished by providing landscaping assistance to commercial property owners when warranted and setting the improvement as a minimum standard for future enforcement. These remedies would require City Council action and approval.

Final Comments

Neighborhood Services provides preservation of existing housing stock and commercial properties. Increasing development will cause more need to preserve the developments in the future. Animal Services and Code Enforcement need better tools to measure success and the cost vs. benefit of that success. In order to achieve such analysis they need to implement and utilize technology that is customized to their needs.

Staffing should be evaluated based on needs against workload and process times. Code Enforcement and Animal Services spend a majority of their time working on cases involving 10-20% of recidivists. This requires an extraordinary amount of staff resources. The City Attorney's office or Community prosecutor can help by being more proactive in Code Enforcement and moving beyond repeat notices and actions. The recent position status change from Senior Officer to Supervisor will help, but Section Seniors/Leads should be implemented to add

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direction on programs and to have a more experienced field officer/staff member to help with questions from staff/volunteers.

The week spent with the City of Rancho Cordova was very productive. While there was a lot of good work being done in Neighborhood Services, always present is the opportunity for improvement. It is evident that the division grew fairly quickly and remained flat. The addition of a Supervisor has already increased efficiency. The review of programs, policies and procedures coupled with input from the community, elected officials and staff should be the catalyst for change. . . GOOD change.

As stated by one of the field staff, "We're good . . . but headed for great!"

Neighborhood Services Strategic Plan

City Council Workshop
September 13, 2016

Agenda

- SWOT Analysis
- Hot Topics
- Items for City Council input
- Priorities

Strengths

- A professional and regionally recognized program
- Well trained staff
- Assist people to gain compliance when appropriate~ Good communication
- Team players (RCPD, Probation, finance etc.)
- Engaged in community

Weaknesses

- Stakeholders have inconsistent understanding of Neighborhood Services roles and responsibilities
- Commercial enforcement
- Code Enforcement lacking appropriate administrative staff (resolved)
- Lack of services for homeless (In progress)

Opportunities

- Promote programs through education/outreach (in progress)
- Prioritize and set goals with reportable metrics
- More robust volunteer program
- Policy to ensure all violations addressed, not just the complaint (360 inspection in Progress)

Threats

- Lack of support on legal cases (resolved)
- Database (INFOR)
- Lack of appropriate measurables
- Flat Division ~ New supervisor position has improved “bottleneck” in management
- Lack of priorities~ everything is high priority

Hot Topics

In Progress

- Improved social media “telling our story”
- New educational handouts “Good Neighbor Guide”
- Online payments
- Outsourcing animal licensing
- Rental Housing Guide

Hot Topics

In Progress

- District Attorney for social nuisance
- Navigator collecting data for “gap analysis”
- Neighborhood Services Strategic Calendar

Hot Topics

Completed

- City Attorney civil issues ~ Receiverships, Abatements Warrants, rent escrow, & relocation
- Process mapping (completed)

Hot Topics

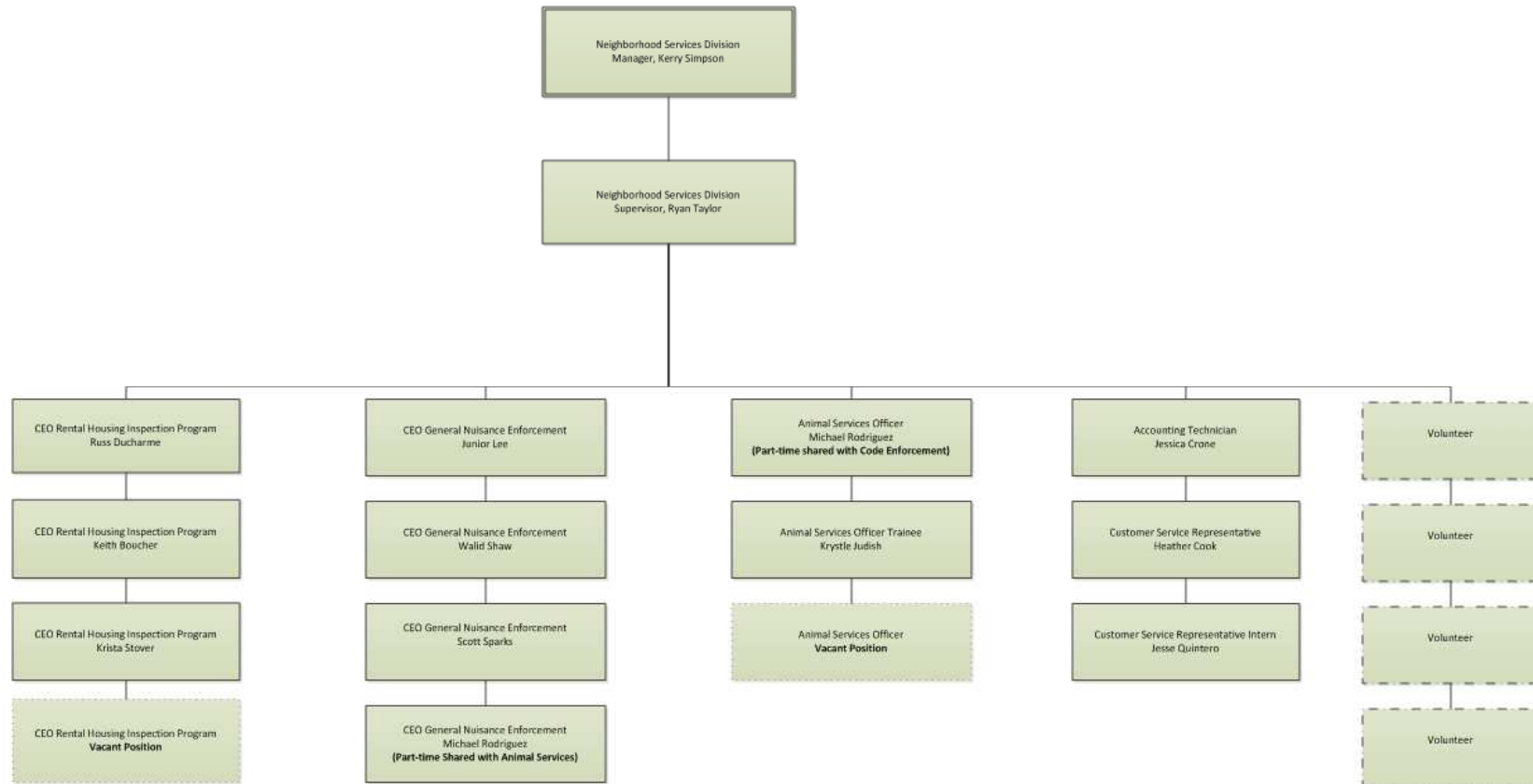
Future projects

- Reconcile/update ordinances
- Hearing/citation policies and procedures
- Educate stakeholders on roles & responsibilities (including limitations and due process)

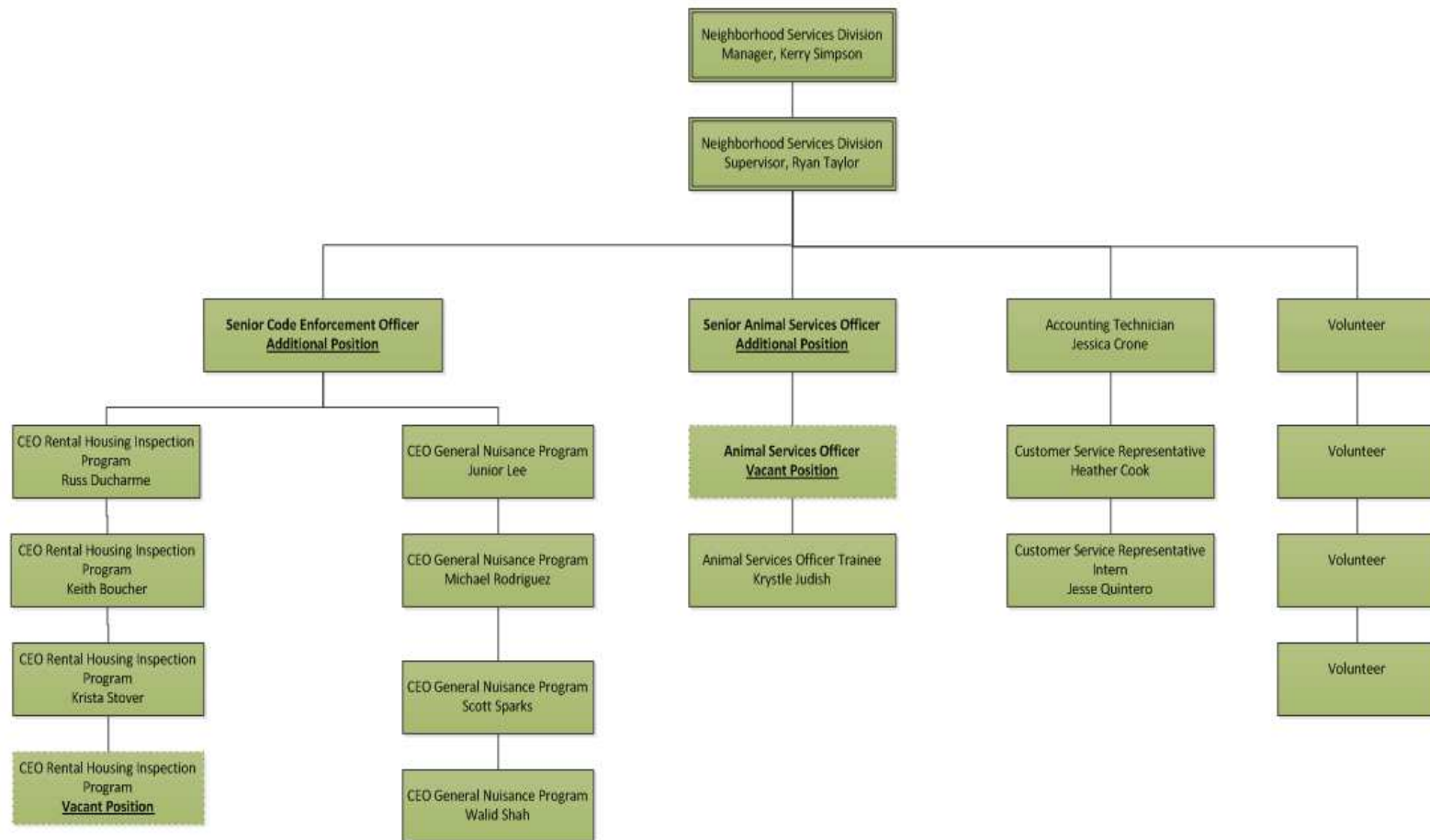
City Council Input

- Robust volunteer program
- Commercial education program
- Metrics
- Prioritization

Current Staffing



Proposed Staffing



Exercise



Final Thoughts or Questions



