



Ascent Monthly Newsletter

Code Compliance Updates from Across the Nation

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Code Compliance Feature: A fresh initiative to handle blight brought on by vacant and abandoned properties is moving forward in Cleveland, OH

Across the Nation: Bay City, MI, dangerous homes dealt with; Mentor City, MI, registration begins

Renewal Information: Kansas City, MO; Menifee, CA; Orange Township, NJ, Irvington, NJ

Code Compliance Feature: Cuyahoga County plans for demolitions

When vacant and abandoned properties become too much of a blight, demolition can become a city's most viable response. Cleveland, OH, is moving forward with such a plan for blight alleviation.

Ed Fitzgerald, Cuyahoga County Executive, introduced legislation April 22 to create a county property demolition fund.

An estimated cost for the demolition project involving up to 15,000 abandoned homes littering the county is some \$50 million, though no specific dollar amount has been officially issued as financial review remains underway.

During a press conference with Fitzgerald, a house with standing water and roof damage was used as an example. The home was appraised at \$50,000 with costs to repair in the tens of thousands. Due in part to that cost, demolition of the property could be seen as a more effective solution than the pricy repairs.

"We need to send a message to people on this street and in these neighborhoods that there is a chance for things to come back," said Frank Ford, Vacant and Abandoned Properties chairman, from the press conference on Cudwell Avenue, "We just need to address these blighted homes."



"It's the local cities, the local city administrations that need to decide how it makes sense for their community."

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In addition to demolishing homes, the suggestion was made to distribute part of the funds raised for the county project to rejuvenate some homes, so as to avoid a demolition spree.

When mortgage holders walk away from a home, property values of the other homes in the area decline due to crime elements and safety concerns plaguing the empty homes; which can encourage others in financial trouble to simply walk away from their own mortgages.

Initiating repairs to some of the buildings not too far in the red could be of more benefit to returning people to neighborhoods, because non-empty lots and homes being improved upon can encourage others to invest in repairs in a chain reaction similar to how people departing neighborhoods, should problems not be addressed, can incite further abandonment.

While the county would have most of the say in what homes were to be demolished, Fitzgerald said input identifying buildings for demolition would come primarily from residents.

"I see us as empowering local communities," said Fitzgerald. "It's the local cities, the local city administrations that need to decide how it makes sense for their community."



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Across the nation: Code compliance news briefs

Bay City, MI: Porches sinking into the ground with cracked boards and peeling paint. Windows boarded up and trash strewn about an overgrown lawn. That is only a portion of the picture being painted by some 80 homes in Bay City.

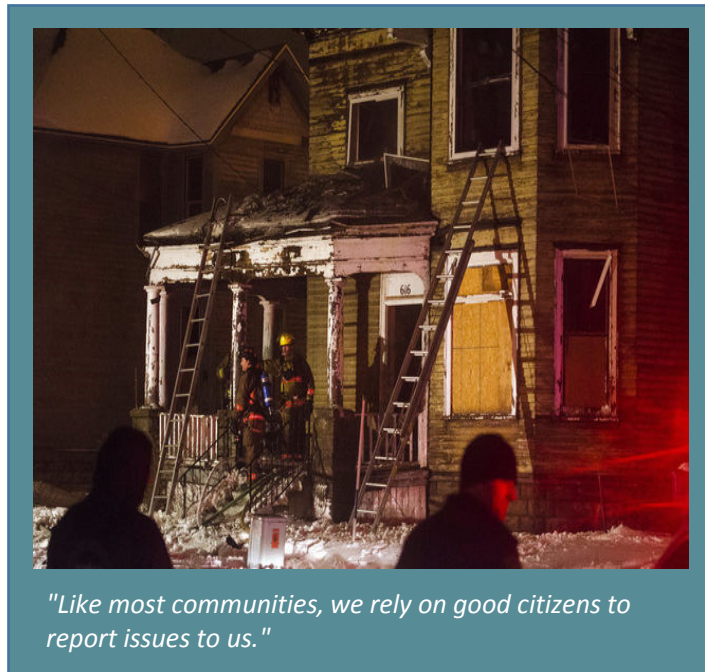
Some are scheduled for demolition, while others remain occupied or are under repairs of some sort. Though efforts are underway to eliminate the dangers brought on by the structures, the timeline for removing the problems is unclear due to hundreds of different violations causing the dilapidation of the homes, as well as the necessary time for notification for code compliance and further paperwork to deal with homes in need of removal.

"Our staff is always looking at houses, but like most communities we rely on good citizens to report issues to us," said Jim Galford, city code enforcer.

Mentor City, OH: In order to assist in identification of vacant residential properties, as well as the owners/managers of those properties, Mentor City has approved its Vacant Dwelling Registration Program.

According to the legislation, the program is a response to the estimated 250 abandoned and vacant homes left in the wake of the recent recession.

Ken Filipiak, city manager, said, "What this will allow us to do is register the properties that are vacated; require them to provide us with the information on who the responsible party is and who will be taking care of it; provide us with a plan on addressing it; allow us to post information on the property itself as to who the contact person is; and allow us, in general, to better follow up."



Property Renewal Reminder:

5.1.2014 Kansas City, MO
7.1.2014 Menifee, CA

7.1.2014 Irvington, NJ
7.1.2014 Orange Township, NJ