



# Ascent Monthly Newsletter

*Code Compliance Updates from Across the Nation*

*May 2014*

*Volume 1*

*Issue 5*

**Code Compliance Feature:** Brookhaven, NY, creates app to allow citizens to report suspected vacant properties to the city from their home computer or mobile phone

**Across the Nation:** 9.7 million homeowners owe more on mortgages than their homes are worth

**Renewal Information:** Menifee, CA; Orange Township, NJ, Irvington, NJ, Baltimore, MD

## Code Compliance Feature: Brookhaven instigates online VPR

No community is improved by run-down homes or buildings in need of basic touchups to lawns, siding repairs, or window replacement, or other structural problems that create health and safety hazards.

So it is all the more frustrating for citizens to see homes in their neighborhood, or even family and friend's neighborhoods, in states of continued dilapidation, keeping those structures from positive attention on the market.

To assist beautification and reclamation efforts of an estimated 3,000 vacant homes, the town of Brookhaven, NY, has had an app created to allow citizens to report suspected vacant properties.

The app is available at the Town of Brookhaven's website – [www.brookhaven.org/vacanthouse](http://www.brookhaven.org/vacanthouse) – and can be downloaded to a mobile phone; citizens can also call in to report a suspected structure.

The instigation of the mobile app is the city's latest effort to deal with eyesores in the town, following legislation unanimously approved in December 2013 making it mandatory for all owners of vacant property to register and provide a local point of contact for the entity in charge of maintenance.



*"The mobile apps will allow people who are directly affected by these buildings to report these buildings to the law department."*

**Web:** [www.ascentres.com](http://www.ascentres.com)

**Ph:** 303-578-6160

**Em:** [info@ascentres.com](mailto:info@ascentres.com)

© Ascent Real Estate Solutions



*"The instigation of the mobile app is the city's latest effort to deal with eyesores in the town."*

Any owner of a home that has been vacant for more than 120 consecutive days must report to the town clerk and is assessed a \$250 registration fee, with the fee increasing each year the property remains vacant.

Non-registration within 30 days of triggering the vacancy requirement faces a \$1,000 to \$15,000 fine depending on situation.

Edward P. Romaine, town supervisor, said, "The mobile apps will allow people who are directly affected by these buildings to report these buildings to the law department."

The app allows users to enter an address in a search box that then zooms in on a map of the city to verify the property. A pop-up

window then has the user click to "Add to Vacant Property Registration," then verify all information entered and submit the form. The app will allow investigators to track down owners of abandoned properties through use of real estate and tax records.

Pew Research Center's "Mobile Technology Fact Sheet" shows that as of January 2014, 58 percent of adults in the United States own smartphones, with 42 percent owning a tablet computer. Those mobile technologies make such apps another option for governments to connect with their citizens to address blighted property challenges facing communities; technologically-driven options likely to spread to other areas of the country as mobile communication becomes more the norm for citizens.



## Across the nation: Code compliance news briefs

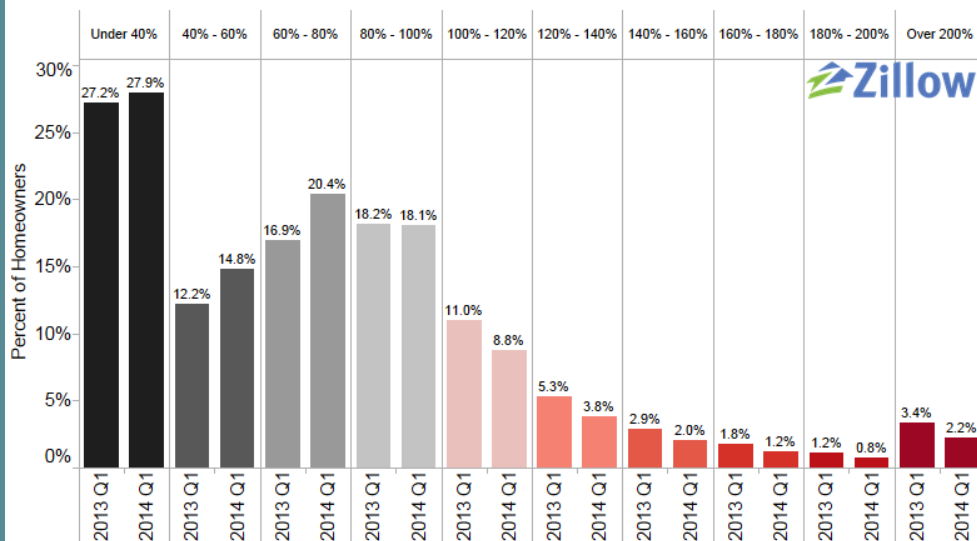
**Nationwide:** Zillow's 2014 first quarter "Negative Equity Report" was released, and it has 9.7 million Americans owing more on their mortgage than their homes are even worth; roughly 18.8 percent of homeowners paying on mortgages. That number is down about 100,000 homes from the fourth quarter 2013 report.

Zillow also found 30.2 percent of homes in the lower third of home values in the United States have an increased negative equity rate, while the upper third has only 10.7 percent and the middle third 18.1 percent.

In brief, those homeowners are saddled with the daunting challenge of selling their homes without the likelihood of being able to afford the downpayment on their future residence, and the problem does not appear to be going away any time soon.

Though estimates do put the negative equity rate at 17 percent in first quarter for 2015, that percent continues a near one-in-three of homeowners being in a negative equity rate for their mortgages.

**Figure 6: Loan to Value Distribution for Homeowners with a Mortgage  
2013 Q1 vs. 2014 Q1 - United States**



"It's hard to overstate just how much of a drag on the housing market negative equity really is, especially at the lower end of the market, which represents those homes typically most affordable for first-time buyers," said Stan Humphries, chief economist at Zillow.

### Property Renewal Reminder:

7.1.2014 Menifee, CA  
7.1.2014 Orange, CA

7.1.2014 Irvington, CA  
9.1.2014 Baltimore, MD