

# Memorandum

**TO:** Planning Commission

**FROM:** Fidel Gamboa, Chief of Code Enforcement *JG*

**DATE:** June 9, 2015

**SUBJECT:** Fiscal Year 2014/2015 Operational Status of the Code Enforcement Division

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Code Enforcement's mission is to proactively protect the City's residential and business communities from blighted and deteriorated conditions that negatively impact neighborhoods' property values and encourage social disorder.

The City has continued to be committed to meeting this mission through the buildup of staff, the introduction of new technology, and focusing on high priority proactive enforcement.

## STAFFING

In this past fiscal year the City moved forward with the recruitments of new Code Enforcement personnel to fill two fulltime vacant CDBG funded positions, two part-time positions and the position of the Chief of Code Enforcement.

As of May of this year the staff structure of the Code Enforcement division is as follows:

### **Chief of Code Enforcement**

Fidel Gamboa **Promoted 2/22/2015**

### **Full Time Code Enforcements Officers**

- |                  |                                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Barbara Zwart | 4. Apolinar (Paul) Ramos (CDBG)* | <b>Hired 1/11/15</b> |
| 2. Rene Macias   | 5. Robert Cravens (CDBG)*        | <b>Hired 4/01/15</b> |
| 3. David Saito   |                                  |                      |

### **Part Time Code Enforcement Officers**

1. David Goates
2. Angelina Pierini **Hired 5/04/15**
3. Open – **unfilled position**

### **Clerical Staff**

1. Betty Garcia (CDBG)\*

\*These positions are either fully or partially funded by the Community Development Grant (CDBG) program

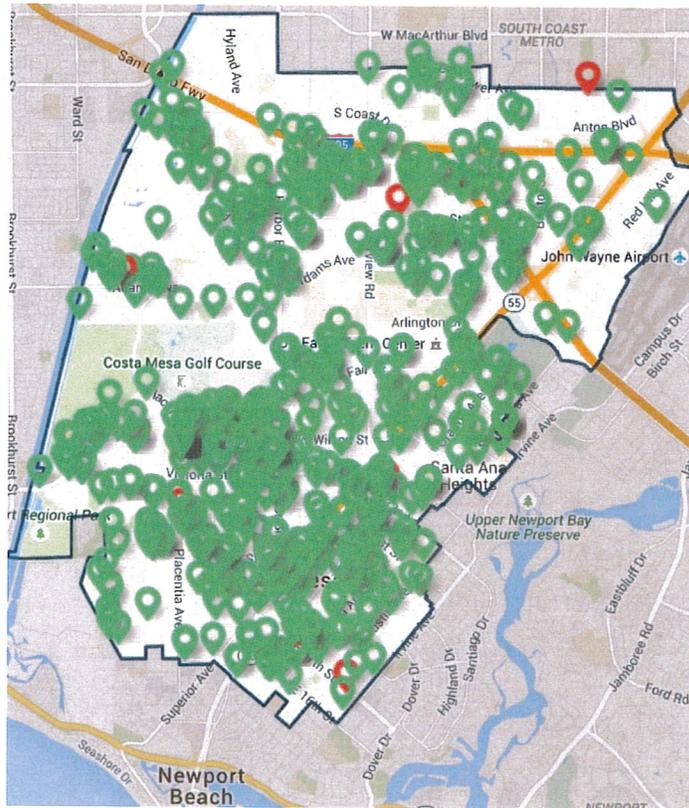
## NEW TECHNOLOGY

In March of 2014, the City launched a new online tool, the Costa Mesa Connect application. This application was developed to help residents conveniently access City services. This application has become the primary method for reporting Code Enforcement issues.

This new tool can be found in the following formats:

1. Smart phone app – Available for both Android and Apple devices.
2. Online City website – Found at the following link:  
[https://iframe.publicstuff.com/#?client\\_id=639](https://iframe.publicstuff.com/#?client_id=639)

Some of the helpful features of the Costa Mesa Connect application is the ability to keep track of the complaints in a list format as well as an overlay on a City map. This allows for the visualization of the ongoing efforts of the Code Enforcement Staff:



In addition to this new avenue for reporting Code Enforcement violations, the public still has access to more traditional methods for reporting their concerns by using the 24 hour Code Enforcement Hotline at 714.754.5607 and/or filing a complaint in person at our public counter located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of City Hall in the Development Services Department during regular business hours.

## **ENFORCEMENT STATUS**

Armed with the Costa Mesa Connect application the citizens of Costa Mesa have been empowered to express to staff as to what they deem as important Code Enforcement priorities. In this past fiscal year, approximately 75 percent of the work load has been generated through the Costa Mesa Connect application, thus creating a more reactive enforcement operation. The remaining 25 percent of the work load is made up of proactive enforcement directly related to high priority projects assigned by the CEO's office.

Currently, assigned priorities relate to the blighted conditions of both commercial/industrial and residential properties. On the commercial/industrial side, staff has been addressing the property maintenance issues of several locations throughout the City with a high concentration along the West 19<sup>th</sup> Street corridor. This is in an effort to address conditions that create a nuisance, by attracting unwanted behavior (trespassing, homeless camping, illegal drug use and prostitution) that occurs after business hours. Some of the conditions that have been addressed include inoperative security lighting, unsecured trash dumpsters, illegal land use, trash and debris.

### ***Illegal donation/collection boxes***



Staff currently working with property owner (the victim) to remove collection boxes.

Staff has been conducting early morning/late evening inspections, as well as coordinating a close partnership with the Police Department. As part of this effort, staff has urged area property owners to be more vigilant after business hours and have also recommended the hiring of security personnel as a more permanent solution to prevent these unwanted behaviors.

On the residential side, the two new CDBG code enforcement officers are focusing proactive enforcement on the residential tract that runs west to east between Placentia Avenue and Harbor Boulevard and south to north between West Wilson Street and the Costa Mesa Golf Course/Joann bike trail. Within this residential tract there are approximately 232 parcels containing both single and multi-family homes. The scope of work in this residential area is not

only to address basic property maintenance issues, but to also identify those parcels used as rentals and address any quality of life/substandard issues that exist within the units.

***Illegal roof storage/blue tarps***



Staff currently working to address these issues.

***Unmaintained building exteriors***



Staff currently working to address these issues.

These proactive priorities are planned to be long term projects so staff can not only conduct traditional code enforcement, but also apply new strategies to develop a partnership with the property owners to help enhance the capital improvements the City has already undertaken.

**MOVING FORWARD**

As the City continues to grow, the dynamics have created challenges for the traditional Code Enforcement approach. These new challenges require that staff better arm themselves with

additional education and new tools to help them become more efficient and “out of the box” thinkers.

Currently, members of staff have been receiving additional education through organizations like CACEO (California Association of Code Enforcement Officers). This organization offers statewide training from the basics to best practices approaches of Code Enforcement. In addition, it is one of the best resources for learning what other Code Enforcement agencies are doing to combat similar issues.

Along with continued education, staff was asked what else they needed to help complete the mission. Staff expressed concern over the amount of time spent in the office with paperwork verses the time they could dedicate to visit the complaint locations. Given this feedback, new field laptops have been purchased for the Code Enforcement Officers. These new laptops are equipped with a docking feature that allows staff to utilize them as their primary office computer, but with the added benefit of portability so they can take them out to the field where information can be entered once verses multiple times maximizing the work product.

The Code Enforcement Division Team continues to reevaluate itself on a constant basis in an effort to meet the demands of what citizens, City Council and the Planning Commission deem to be high priorities and to complete the mission.

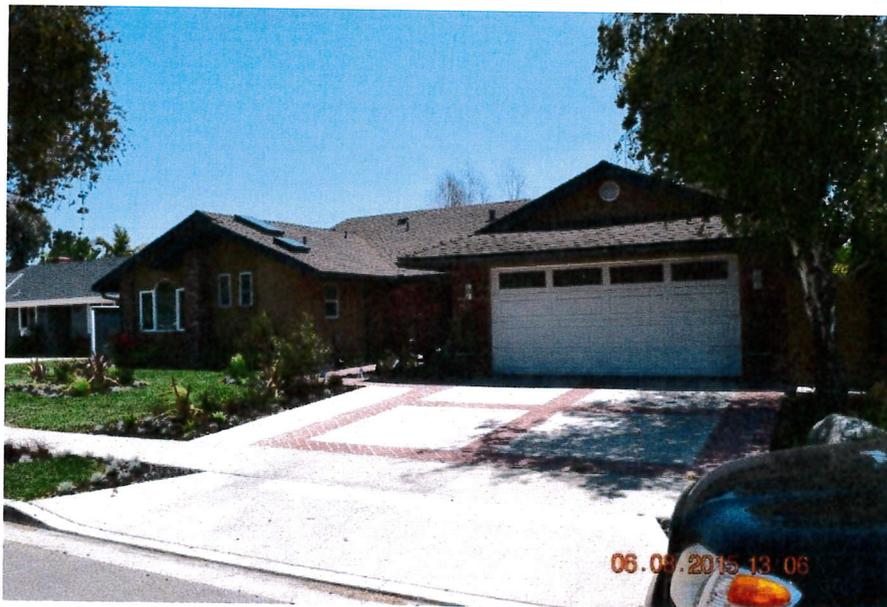
Below are only a few examples of some recently completed Code Enforcement cases.

***Unmaintained residential property***

Worked with the resident to gain compliance



Before



After

***Unmaintained bank owned/foreclosed property***

Worked with Fannie Mae to have squatters removed from property and have the home placed back on the market



Before



After

***Unmaintained blighted public telephones***

Staff is working with commercial property owners citywide to have them removed.



Before



After



Before



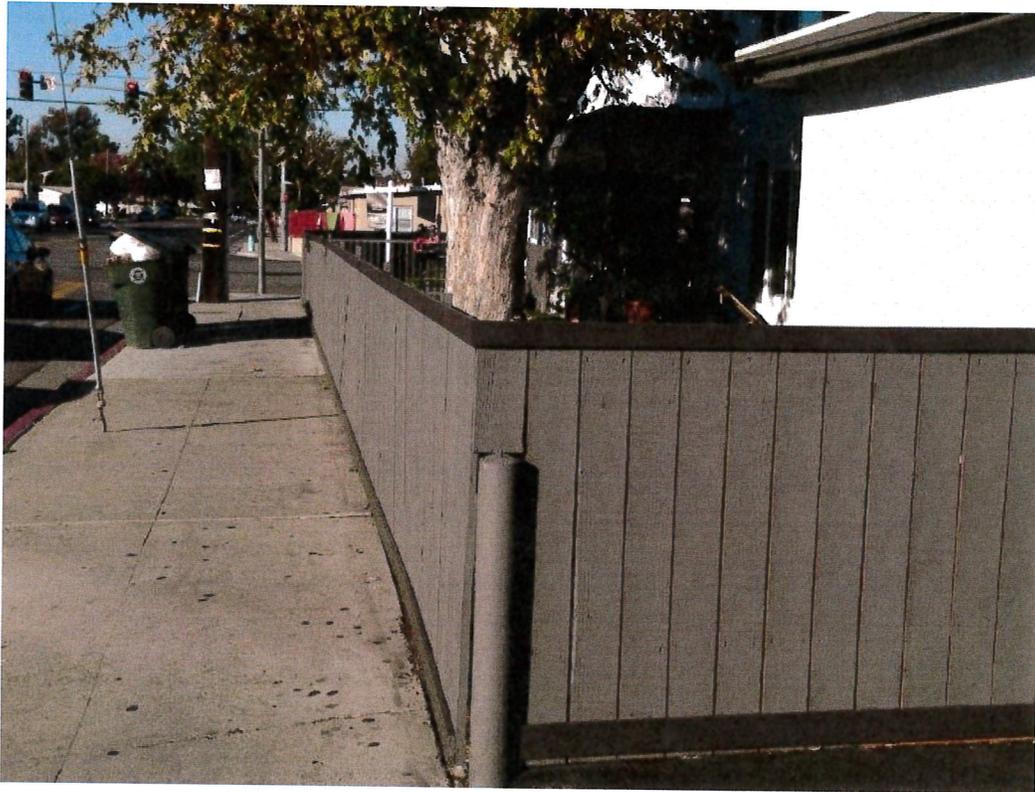
After

***Unmaintained multifamily structure***

Staff worked with the owner to bring property into compliance



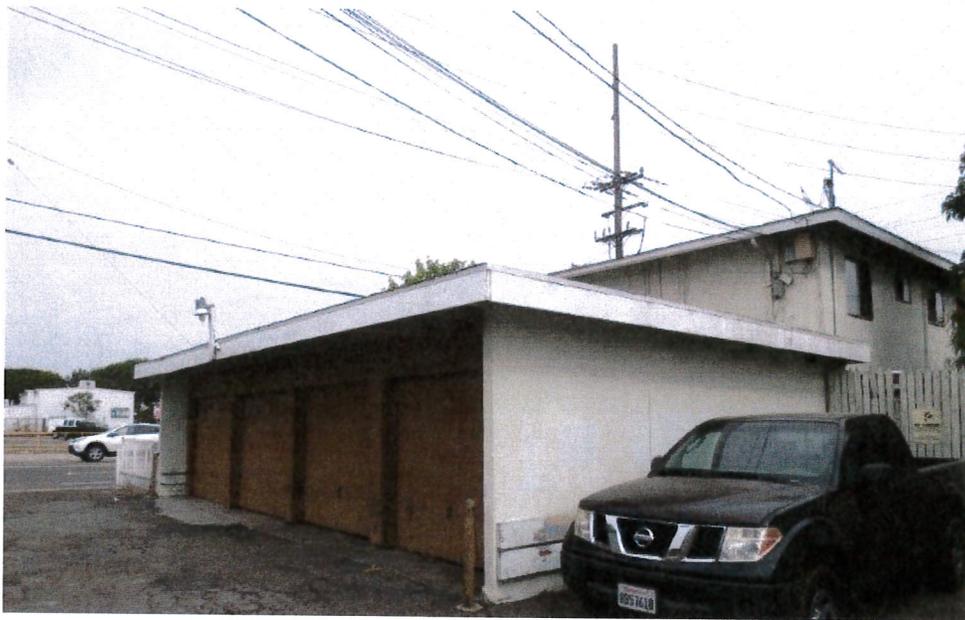
Before



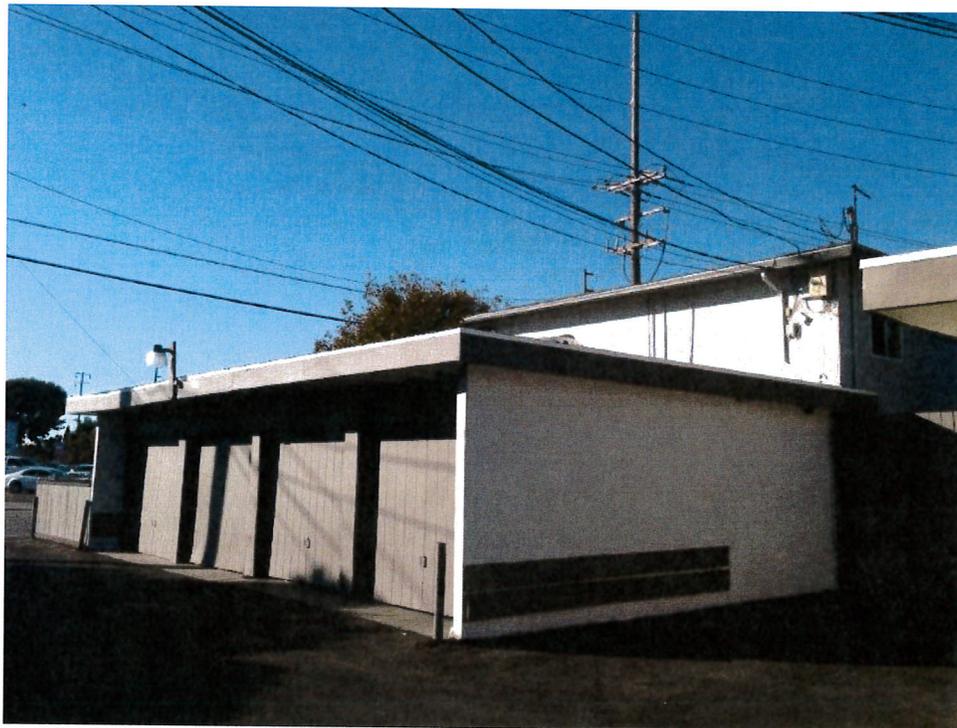
After

***Unmaintained multifamily structure***

Staff worked with the owner to bring property into compliance



Before



After

***Potential dangerous situation adjacent to public sidewalk with dying tree***

Staff worked with the resident to have tree removed



Before



After