

Presentation for the Management Study of the Code Enforcement Process

City of Little Rock, Arkansas

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

matrix #
consulting group

Project Scope of Work

- ◆ Document current workload and service demands.
- ◆ Evaluate service levels.
- ◆ Evaluate the role of the department, current practices and activities, and emerging issues.
- ◆ Evaluate the organization of the department and the staffing requirements.
- ◆ Comparison of existing services to “best practices”.

Project Methodologies (1)

- ◆ All staff involved in the code enforcement process were interviewed and surveyed.
- ◆ Existing code enforcement service levels were documented.
- ◆ Focus group meetings were held with citizens, landlords, and neighborhood representatives.
- ◆ Services provided were compared to 'best management practices'.

Project Methodologies (2)

- ◆ The project team reviewed interim findings and results with the project steering committee consisting of representatives of the:
 - Affected Departments (Neighborhood Programs, Legal, Police)
 - Alert Center Review Committee

Strengths of Code Enforcement Process in Little Rock

- ◆ Utilization of the CAP Team to target areas in the community facing greatest need.
- ◆ Use of a centralized complaint monitoring system (though recommendations are made to improve system).
- ◆ Dedication level exhibited by staff throughout the department to providing high levels of service to the community.
- ◆ Performance of graffiti removal and boarding of buildings by Code Enforcement Staff (resulting in high level of service to community).
- ◆ Utilization of bilingual materials for the public.

Strengths of Code Enforcement Process in Little Rock (2)

- ◆ The utilization of a dedicated Court Team and Rental Team.
- ◆ Frequent interaction with neighborhood associations.
- ◆ Ability to file complaints over the internet.
- ◆ Placement of staff throughout the community in various Alert Center locations.

Improvement Opportunities: Automated Code Enforcement System

- ◆ A comprehensive and dedicated software solution is needed in order to automate the code enforcement process and provide relevant information regarding workloads and staff performance.
 - ➔ Develop RFP and seek proposals to evaluate all automated code enforcement software systems that are available.
 - ➔ Choose system that will best integrate with existing software utilized in the City of Little Rock, enable laptop utilization in the field, and provide enhanced internet access for the public.

Improvement Opportunities: Automated Code Enforcement System

- ◆ Enhance the utilization of the automated code enforcement system in the following areas:
 - All individuals involved in processing, commenting on, and acting on code enforcement complaints should utilize the system;
 - Tracking of critical dates to enable monitoring of the service levels being provided;
 - Storing all historical inspection data, notices of violation, and prior actions regarding a property.
- ◆ Implement laptops to enable Code Enforcement Officers to enter inspection results while on site and print notices of violation in the field.

Improvement Opportunities: Policies and Procedures (1)

- ◆ Establish Strategic Plan for Code Enforcement outlining mission, goals and objectives and strategies for accomplishing priorities.
- ◆ Conduct City wide risk assessment to identify most critical needs within the community to enable a tailored response to be provided throughout the community.
- ◆ Enable Notices of Violation to be Issued via certified mail rather than requiring personal service. All notices to be issued to the property owner.

Improvement Opportunities: Policies and Procedures (2)

- ◆ Establish initial inspection targets tied to the severity of the complaint (and prepare monthly reports of actual performance against these targets):
 - Priority 1 Emergency (sewage, unsafe bldg): 1 day
 - Priority 2 Most critical (interior housing violations): 3 days
 - Priority 3 Important (exterior housing violations): 4 days
 - Priority 4 Litter, Graffiti, Weeds, etc.: 5 days
- ◆ Increase the time in the field for Code Enforcement Inspectors by relieving them of office or administrative functions (such as paperwork) through the addition of four administrative personnel.

Improvement Opportunities: Policies and Procedures (3)

- ◆ Enhance public education efforts regarding requirements of City's codes and providing assistance in voluntarily complying with the codes.

Improvement Opportunities: Staffing Related

- ◆ Require Staff to acquire Property Management Certifications within one year of hire.
- ◆ Cross-train all Code Enforcement Inspectors to enable reallocation of staff based upon community needs.
- ◆ Develop training plans for all staff - targeting maintenance of certifications, safety issues in the field, and changes in policies and procedures.
- ◆ Maintain separate Rental, CAP, and Court Teams.
- ◆ Fully staff CAP team with four dedicated personnel (required hiring two additional Code Enforcement Officers).

Improvement Opportunities: Staffing Related (2)

- ◆ Implement a realignment of the geographical approach currently utilized to:
 - Increase accountability of the Senior Code Enforcement Inspectors for all aspects of an assigned area (premise and housing);
 - Enable cross-utilization of staff based upon need of the district; and
 - Increase interaction between neighborhoods and code enforcement staff due to the assignment of staff to specific areas of the community.

Improvement Opportunities: Rental

- ◆ Rental Inspection frequency should be adjusted to a more realistic cycle time - such as every six to eight years.
- ◆ All rental properties should be registered with the City of Little Rock. Registration provided at no cost. Penalty of \$250 for properties identified as unregistered.
- ◆ Initial rental inspection should be limited to life safety issues. Failure of this inspection would prompt more comprehensive inspection currently performed.
- ◆ Properties failing two consecutive rental inspections should be charged a reinspection fee (\$50 to \$75) to cover the actual costs of the City in performing the inspection.

Improvement Opportunities: Rental

- ◆ Properties that pass the initial inspection with no violations should be granted a certificate of compliance that is valid for one to two years longer than normal.
- ◆ Rental inspections should be based upon age of property and size of property to enable greatest impact with the existing staff. For example, new apartment complexes would not need to be inspected for an established period of time since they have recently been inspected by the City through the building inspection process. Focus should be on older properties.

Project Conclusions

- ◆ The City is currently providing a good level of service to the public but existing systems and procedures limit the effectiveness of their efforts.
- ◆ Recommendations are focused on enhancing that level of service, simplifying and streamlining the process, expanding services provided over the Internet, and ensuring consistency and transparency in the process.

Project Conclusions (2)

- ◆ The major opportunities for improvement include:
 - Expanded use of automated code enforcement system
 - Enhanced accountability for service delivery
 - Reallocation of staff by geographic areas with increased accountability and responsibility for Senior Code Enforcement Officers
 - Minor changes in staffing levels
 - Several adjustments to the Rental Program to enhance services provided and provide incentives for owners to voluntarily comply