



Looking at Quality of Life Issues from an Enforcement Perspective

*What's on the "full plate?"
How can we work together?*

What Are We All Looking For?

- A “good” quality of life?
- Healthy and productive communities...
- Freedom to “build” our lives and families forward.



How can we all work effectively together to achieve this?

The Quality of Life “E-Quad”

■ The BIG Picture:

- Education
- Engagement
- Effective
Neighborhood
Governance
- Enforcement



Prince William County as seen
from the Space Shuttle

Why Enforce on Q of L Issues?

Our primary mission in property code enforcement is to:

- **Ensure** the Health, Safety and Welfare of our citizens.
- **Improve and enhance** the quality of life in Prince William County.
- **Prevent** deterioration of neighborhoods and associated loss of home value throughout the county.



So what *exactly* are we talking about when we talk “codes”?

- Just some examples of the Quality of Life issues we work on through property code enforcement activity. What we hope is that Neighborhood leaders can help us identify these challenges before they become major problems for the community:
 - IOVs (Inoperative Vehicles)
 - Prohibited Vehicles
 - Parking on an unimproved surface (i.e. grass)
 - Trash & Debris
 - Outside Storage
 - Non-permitted home-based businesses
 - Farm animals (that don't live on a farm!)
 - Overcrowding
 - Tall Grass & Weeds
 - Building Maintenance Issues
 - Graffiti
 - Illegal Signs (in yards OR in the right of way.)
 - Spot Blight
 - Hoarding



Inoperative vehicles



Inoperative vehicles





Inoperative vehicle



Prohibited Vehicles



Prohibited vehicles



**Prohibited vehicle –
construction equipment**



Parking on grass (unimproved surface)



Parking on grass (unimproved surface)



Trash and debris – Dump heap

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Outside storage - Bricks



Outside storage - Commercial



Outside Storage (demolition debris pile)



Operating a Business from home without permit



Farm Animals in suburban backyards?



Overcrowding

Trash, Garbage, Refuse, Litter and Other Substances....

- Prince William County Code -Chapter 22
Article V
- Once the issue is identified and verified by inspection a notice is sent.
- Once cited, the owner must abate or the County can abate the violation.
 - A lien would be placed on property to recover cost if the County is involved.
- Again it is NOT always that easy.



Refuse - Debris

Example of a Gray Area

- Some areas of Q & L enforcement are harder for citizens to interpret.
- EXAMPLE: Trash cans
 - Where to store them between pickups?
 - When is it considered "Left out at the curb too long?"
 - Major source of "neighbor angst" and NSD complaints!



Tall Grass & Weeds

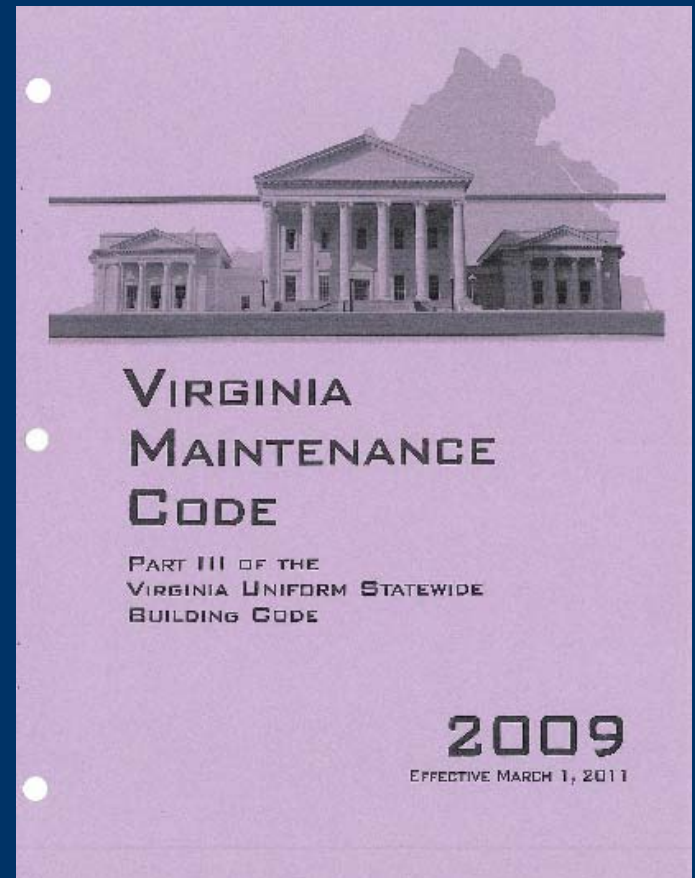
- Section 29-17
- 12 inches tall is the guideline
- Properties less than or equal to 2 acres
- Over 2 acres
 - 150 from edge of state maintained road
 - 200 feet from a building or structure
- Notice sent to owner – if not abated our contractor cuts the grass and a lien is placed on the property to recover costs.
- Sometimes however it is NOT that easy!



Tall Weeds and Grass

Building Maintenance

- Article IV under Chapter 5 of the Prince William County Code.
- Article IV adopts the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (VUSBC) part III – The Virginia Maintenance Code which adopts the International Property Maintenance Code.
 - Structural
 - Plumbing
 - Electrical
 - Mechanical
 - Fire Safety
 - Occupancy





Exterior property maintenance



Exterior Property Maintenance



Exterior disrepair



Swimming Pools – Barriers - Maintenance



Accessory Structures



Interior surfaces



Electrical issues



Second Kitchens



Second Kitchen – no approvals or permits

Second Kitchen



"Popsicle" Sign Enforcement

- Signs in VDOT right of way
 - State Law 33.1-373 and 375
 - Agreement between the Board of County Supervisor's and the Commissioner of Transportation
- Citizen reporters and proactive enforcement.
- Issue Summons with fine for each sign!





Out of Code Signs NOT in the Right of Way

Reflexology
MASSAGE
GOM
\$39
703-241-414

 CITY OF KANSAS CITY SIGN NO.	LOCATION Sudley Rd. @ Crestwood Dr.
	6 FT. #4 FROM PAVEMENT EDGE
1	DATE: 7-29-08
	TIME: 1:25pm
	INSPECTOR: KAS

**Popsicle Sign
Enforcement**

Graffiti & Abatement

- Prince William County Code Chapter 16- Section 56
 - Expressly declares the existence of Graffiti within the County to be a public nuisance.
- Enforcement
 - Identify and issue notice to property owner
 - If not abated the County proceeds with abatement process.
- Graffiti Abatement Volunteers
 - Informed & Engaged Citizens—Help identify and report (phone or PWC website) both the appearance of graffiti and the lack of swift abatement of existing graffiti.
 - County Volunteer corps
 - Partnerships with community organizations.
 - NSD Communication with utilities, VDOT, businesses.
- Litter Crew



Graffiti



Graffiti

Spot Blight

- Definition of “blight property” set forth in Virginia code Section 36-49
 - Vacant for at least 1 year
 - Documented complaints
 - No longer maintained for useful occupancy
 - Lacks normal maintenance and upkeep





Blight properties – Fire Damage

SPOT BLIGHT BEFORE ENFORCEMENT



17 separate cases over 12 years for spot blight, zoning, illegal signs, unsafe structure, vegetation, graffiti and property maintenance.

SPOT BLIGHT AFTER ENFORCEMENT



Although it took 12 years to abate this blight, the average spot blight case takes about two years from start to finish.

Structure has been completely renovated

SPOT BLIGHT BEFORE ENFORCEMENT



Structure was left vacant after owner died. Heirs lived out of state and were not interested in maintaining property.

Could not get personal jurisdiction over heirs for property maintenance violations, which at the time were criminal.

SPOT BLIGHT BEFORE ENFORCEMENT

Previous owner had been a hoarder and structure was full of household items, trash and debris.

Spot Blight team issued multiple notices and worked with heirs to try to keep property maintained.

Heirs listed property for sale and it eventually sold. New owner completely renovated interior and exterior.



SPOT BLIGHT AFTER ENFORCEMENT



Although this structure was purchased and repaired by the new owner, for most blighted properties, repair is too costly and therefore not always feasible.

Structure renovated by owner

SPOT BLIGHT BEFORE ENFORCEMENT



Residential structure vacant for over 10 years

SPOT BLIGHT BEFORE ENFORCEMENT



Neighborhood Services took action to have structure and open well secured and abate zoning and vegetation violations.

SPOT BLIGHT AFTER ENFORCEMENT



Although the County demolished this structure, the vast majority of blighted structures end up being demolished by the owner.

Structure was demolished by County after BOCS action

Emerging Issues: Hoarding

- Hoarding, known as “disposaphobia,” is the excessive collection and retention of things or animals until they interfere with day-to-day functions such as home, health, family, work and social life.
- Hoarding is a multi-faceted problem that has psychological, physical welfare, and public safety implications.
- As the County faces an overall population growth and an aging residency, there is a marked increase in the hoarding phenomenon.

HOARDING



1. Fire and health hazard for residents
2. Life and health hazard for first responders and rescuers
3. Community health concerns.

Fire situation in a home where hoarding was occurring. Elderly woman and firefighter injured as a result.

HOARDING

1. Unsafe living conditions for the resident.
2. Sanitary facilities, water, and electricity often fail.
3. Increased fire risk and encouragement of rodent and insect infestation.



Occoquan Magisterial District—Elderly couple unable to use kitchen

DEALING WITH THE ISSUE FROM BOTH A CODE AND A HUMAN PERSPECTIVE



Neighborhood Services' enforcement actions for blighted properties, unsafe structures and structures unfit for human occupancy deals only with problems *with the structure itself*.

Neighborhood Services must reach out to other local or state agencies and non profit organizations to identify help that may be available to those residents necessarily displaced by code enforcement related to severe hoarding.

These services may include behavioral counseling related to hoarding as well as temporary transportation, meals, lodging, financial assistance, and medical care.

Is this the objective for all suburban neighbors???

That's up to you in your neighborhoods...but the property codes we enforce are very clear on the "happy medium" of property maintenance that ultimately serves all of us

YOUR TURN! Questions? What are you seeing out there?

Emerging Neighborhood Q of L Issues?

Effective ways to work neighbor-to-neighbor to resolve issues BEFORE relying on PWC enforcement?

Issues with inspector responsiveness or methods?

Opportunities for future code enforcement discussion?

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**See the Prince William County Neighborhood Services
Division web pages at
www.pwcgov.org/neighborhoodservices**