

IMPACT REPORT

PRESERVING TALLAHASSEE



2019



CITY OF
TALLAHASSEE

CODE ENFORCEMENT

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A MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM

Allow us to reintroduce ourselves. We are the City of Tallahassee Code Enforcement team, and we are at your service to build a beautiful, safe, and resilient community. We are pleased to present this 2019 Impact Report, the first of its kind for the division, which provides a glimpse into a very productive year of change and progress.

In January 2019, Code Enforcement was reorganized into a new department with a focus on sustainability and community resilience. While maintaining the core functions of traditional code enforcement, our team is now laser-focused on the community priorities of public safety, environmental stewardship, and economic vitality.

To achieve results that matter to our community, we are more proactive and more engaged. We will pursue every opportunity to resolve cases. We are committed to partnering with all residents to build a safe and sustainable community.

SHARED MISSION & VISION

The City of Tallahassee is on a mission to be the national leader in the delivery of public service. We envision a creative capital city of vibrant neighborhoods that protects our natural resources and preserves our unique character.

Code Enforcement supports this mission and vision by enforcing City of Tallahassee codes and ordinances in order to improve public health and safety, protect our natural and built environment, and sustain a high quality of life in our community.

A LOOK BACK

2019 brought big changes to the City of Tallahassee, including combining the Code Enforcement, Sustainability, and Resilience functions to help future-proof the city's built environment. The reorganization of this division led to a revamp of officer classification, a more proactive approach to enforcement, and nearly double the amount of community engagement and outreach efforts.

MEET THE TEAM

The City's Code Enforcement team is comprised of officers and administrators who are passionate about building a safe and vibrant community.

Chief Resilience Officer directs the Code Enforcement Division and leads the City's long-range planning and implementation of initiatives related to community resilience.

Resilience Officers, previously known as Code Enforcement Officers, inspect properties to ensure compliance with City codes to improve public safety, environmental health, and quality of life.

Code Enforcement Supervisor manages the day-to-day field operations associated with the enforcement of City codes.

Compliance and Abatement Coordinators prepare cases to appear before the Code Magistrate or Municipal Code Enforcement Board.

Customer Service Representatives and Community Advocates are frontline staff that receive citizen requests and engage neighborhoods and stakeholders on how to keep their properties up to code standards.



7,836

Total number of inspections in 2019

5 full-time Resilience Officers



573

Total number of cases per officer

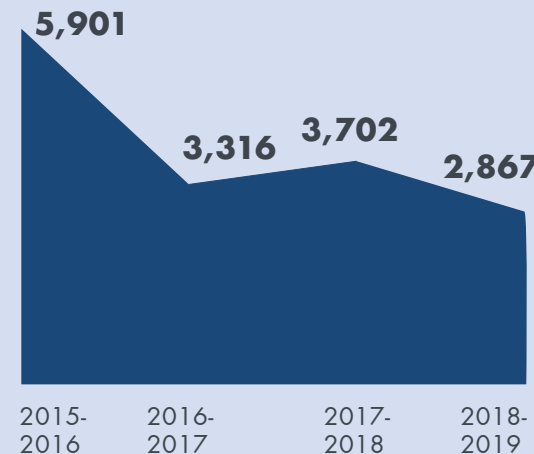


103.5

Total square miles within the City of Tallahassee

BY THE NUMBERS

TOTAL OPEN CASES



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT



\$650 thousand

2018-2019 Operations

\$4.60

Average cost per citizen, one of the lowest in Florida

HAZARD ABATEMENT ACTIONS



6
Number of demolitions



5
Number of emergency boardings



21
Lot clearings

PROACTIVE ENFORCEMENT



68%
of cases brought into compliance in 2018-2019



49%
of cases brought into compliance before formal notice given in 2018-2019



64
Average number of days to achieve compliance



4
Average number of days from complaint to first inspection in 2018-2019



0.1%
Percentage of properties with active code violations

BUILDING A MORE RESILIENT COMMUNITY



A key part of the City's Code Enforcement strategy includes educating the public, and a large portion of that job resides with the City's Resilience Officers.

The City's Resilience Officers interact with Tallahassee's residents as they help enforce the City's codes. While the traditional function of the Code Enforcement Officer still exists, they were reclassified in 2019 as Resilience Officers because their role has been substantially expanded to help address hazards in the community, whether that's an extreme weather event or any other vulnerability.

This year, the entire team completed FEMA training on emergency preparedness and post disaster damage assessment. The team is designated as essential personnel during disasters and supports other first responders in the aftermath of a disaster. Our officers are much more proactive in seeing ways that a building or

neighborhood might be vulnerable and can help coach residents through solutions. They can also be change agents for initiatives that bring multiple departments together to address issues at the neighborhood and city-wide level.

This year, officers were also trained on crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), which equipped them with the knowledge and certification to help property and business owners use landscape and design to reduce public safety risks.

Having this certification will allow our Resilience Officers to enhance the design review process and help a property owner invest in the appropriate landscape and design elements that can reduce potential hazards. Resilience Officers are taking their role around public safety hazard mitigation and environmental health and safety to another level.

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS, HELP YOUR NEIGHBORS

As fellow members of the Tallahassee community, each officer has a personal stake in helping to bring properties into compliance with codes. A 15-year veteran with the Code Enforcement division, Resilience Officer Lesa Vause learned early in her career that one of the best ways to help residents is through honest and open communication.

"When I first started this job, there were some landlords who were combative," she says, "but I learned that if you really work with them and talk to them, explain what the goals are, you can get a lot accomplished. Mutual respect is key."

"We would rather work with residents," she continues. "Our goal is not to end up at a hearing."

According to Jeanie Green, Special Projects Coordinator, a common misconception is that the City wants to impose fines that owners cannot afford and eventually take their property for not paying.

"That's just not the case," says Green. "Our goal has always been compliance, and we strive to offer folks multiple options to comply. We can always help steer them to other City departments and partner agencies that can potentially help, such as our Housing Division. We are always looking for the best possible solution to an issue."

Vause agrees, noting that she and her fellow officers keep an eye out for situations that might qualify a homeowner for a program that provides assistance to make repairs. For example, there are grants for Storm Mitigation and Emergency Home Repair worth up to \$12,500 for homeowners who are income eligible. For those homeowners who need to address minor code violations, they could receive up to \$2,500 based on income.

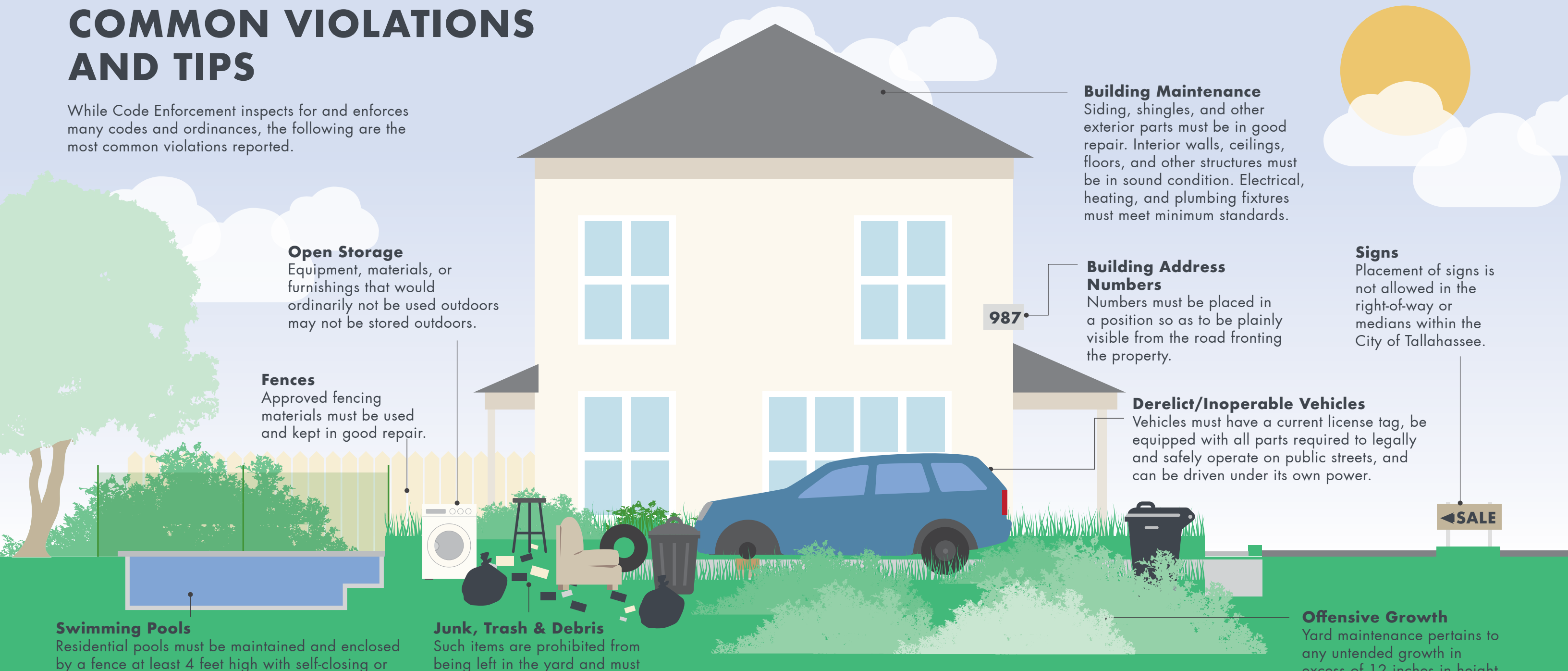
Vause says the best part of her job is helping a resident resolve the issue.



"When you have a particular project that is a dangerous situation, I can help them get those grants to provide for repair or emergency relocation. I really like helping make that happen," she says. "I also really like when we can actually bring a landlord and tenant together and resolve the issue. You'd be amazed how much a civil conversation can accomplish."

COMMON VIOLATIONS AND TIPS

While Code Enforcement inspects for and enforces many codes and ordinances, the following are the most common violations reported.



Open Storage

Equipment, materials, or furnishings that would ordinarily not be used outdoors may not be stored outdoors.

Fences

Approved fencing materials must be used and kept in good repair.

Swimming Pools

Residential pools must be maintained and enclosed by a fence at least 4 feet high with self-closing or self-latching devices on gates or doors.

Junk, Trash & Debris

Such items are prohibited from being left in the yard and must be disposed of properly.

Building Maintenance

Siding, shingles, and other exterior parts must be in good repair. Interior walls, ceilings, floors, and other structures must be in sound condition. Electrical, heating, and plumbing fixtures must meet minimum standards.

Building Address Numbers

Numbers must be placed in a position so as to be plainly visible from the road fronting the property.

Derelict/Inoperable Vehicles

Vehicles must have a current license tag, be equipped with all parts required to legally and safely operate on public streets, and can be driven under its own power.

Signs

Placement of signs is not allowed in the right-of-way or medians within the City of Tallahassee.

Offensive Growth

Yard maintenance pertains to any untended growth in excess of 12 inches in height.

REPORT AN ISSUE

You can report a violation by calling the Code Enforcement Hotline at 850-891-CODE (2633) or by downloading the DigiTally app on your phone.

The applicable regulations for all violations may be found at Talgov.com/Code

DID YOU KNOW?

Some common issues that are NOT handled through Code Enforcement:



Tree removal services
(contact a local certified arborist)



Parking violations and broken meters
(contact the City's Customer Operations at 891-4968)



Food safety concerns
(contact Leon County Dept. of Health at 895-8360)



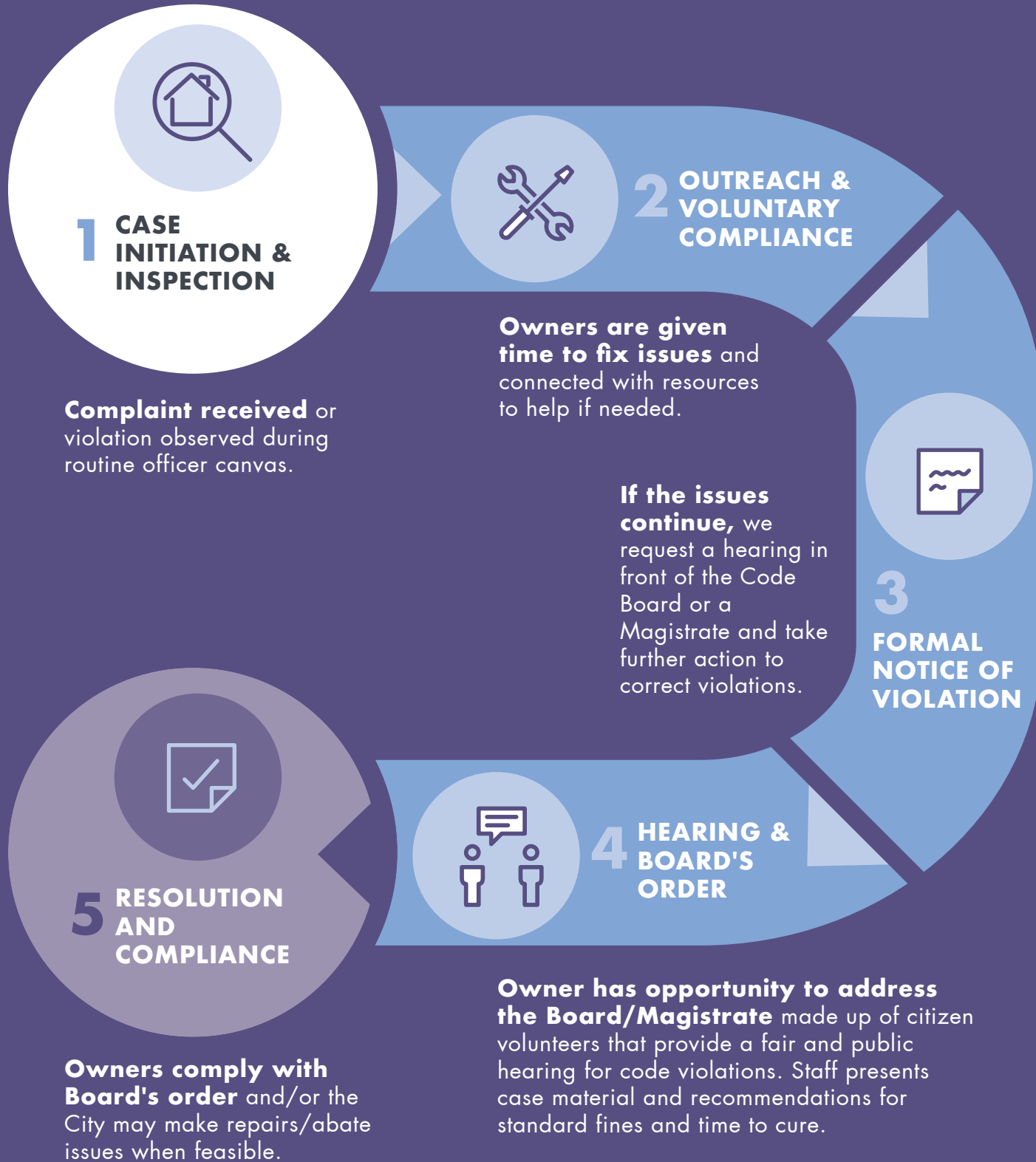
Fire safety and venue overcrowding
(call Tallahassee Fire Department at 891-6600)



Emergency life safety issues (call 9-1-1)

CODE ENFORCEMENT CASE FLOW

Our common goal is to keep our community safe, resilient against threats, and beautiful. Therefore, our approach is to work with residents to voluntarily bring properties into compliance without an extensive legal process. We give owners the chance to fix issues and connect them with resources to help if needed.



PROPERTY OWNER RESOURCES



In the interest of public health and safety, the City may correct hazards directly but also connects homeowners with resources to assist in correcting violations.

\$2,500 in a forgivable loan is available to assist income-eligible homeowners who have received a notice of code violations to make the necessary repairs to bring their home into compliance.

Eligible repairs may include the following:

- Exterior painting
- Rafters, soffit and fascia repair
- Window glass and screens
- Railings and stairs
- Landings and porches
- Yard maintenance and debris removal when done in conjunction with repairs to the home

Graffiti

The City's Graffiti Abatement Program is designed to rid Tallahassee of unsightly graffiti. City departments collaborate with community partners and business owners to remove graffiti as soon as possible.

Lot Mowing

The City is authorized to correct the uncontrolled growth of weeds or grass on a private property by clearing vacant lots after the required legal notification is made to the owner. Associated costs are assessed against the property through a special assessment lien.

Code Enforcement Repair

The Code Enforcement Repair Program assists low-income owners of homes that are owner-occupied to eliminate exterior code violations. Up to

Storm Mitigation Grant

The Storm Damage Mitigation Program provides grant assistance to low-income homeowners to be proactive and help protect their property from damage during storms and flooding. Up to \$12,500 is available for income eligible homeowners to:

- Trim and/or remove trees that have been determined to pose a risk to the home in a storm event

- Elevate at-risk water heaters and HVAC units in flood prone areas, and
- Make other specific improvements that will harden the home against storm damage.

Emergency Home Repair

The Emergency Home Repair Program (EHRP) is designed to make emergency repairs and accessibility improvements to homes owned and occupied by income-eligible persons. The goal of the EHRP is to improve the living conditions of low-income homeowners by removing health and safety hazards and/or architectural barriers from their homes. Up to \$12,500 is available for income-eligible homeowners.

Board and Seal

Structures, which are open and unprotected as a result of the omission or disrepair of enclosures, are required to be temporarily secured or boarded to prevent further damage to the structure

and to prevent unauthorized entry. Structures may be boarded to City specifications for up to one year or as ordered by the Municipal Code Enforcement Board. If an owner does not comply with the Board order, the City is authorized to implement the boarding and sealing of the property and assess the associated costs to the property owner through a special assessment lien.

Demolition

The City can address unsafe residential buildings through demolition under the Land Development Code. When a structure is determined to be dangerous and not suitable for rehabilitation, Code Enforcement may order a review. A recommendation will be made to the Municipal Code Enforcement Board to issue a final order. If the owner does not demolish or remove the structure within the time set forth in the order, the City may implement the demolition order and assess the associated costs to the property owner through a special assessment lien.

Neighborhood Clean Up

Neighborhood clean up projects can be the first step in ensuring all residents recognize the importance of community maintenance. This can improve the quality of life for residents. The City of Tallahassee's Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Affairs Department will help you organize a neighborhood cleanup and provide garbage bags and pickup sticks as requested. Any City-registered Neighborhood Association can participate in this program as long as there are at least 10 volunteers that will participate in the clean up.

Adopt A Street

Since 2010, the City has partnered with Keep Tallahassee Beautiful, a local non-profit organization dedicated to keeping the community litter-free, to implement Adopt A Street. Community

volunteers including groups, businesses, and organizations, drive the program's efforts. Community participation helps keep litter off City streets and out of rivers, lakes, and streams where it can affect wildlife and the water we use. Volunteers are a vital part of Adopt A Street's efforts to keep our area clean and attractive. The dedication that volunteers show to the program and the leadership they demonstrate makes the Adopt A Street program a true community endeavor.

If your organization would like to volunteer, visit KeepTallahasseeLeonCountyBeautiful.com and click on the Adopt A Street link under the Resources tab. Once your organization is signed up, you will be provided with a starter kit of supplies including safety vests, trash grabbers, and trash bags. An Adopt A Street sign with your organization's name on it will also be provided at the end of the street you adopted.

NEIGHBORHOOD RESOURCES

These resources may be helpful for neighborhood leaders that are looking to build and strengthen neighborhood engagement.

Community Garden Program

The City of Tallahassee is happy to assist citizens in the development of community gardens. From victory gardens during World War II to the creation of the Florida A&M University Orange Avenue garden, Tallahassee has a long history of urban agriculture. Today, a new energy about local food and healthy living has swept the nation.

The City encourages citizens to work with their neighbors to build, cultivate, and maintain gardens on public lands. The benefits are numerous, from strengthening community relationships to enhancing public safety.



Vacant to Vibrant

The City partners with neighborhoods and property owners to turn blighted vacant lots into vibrant new community amenities that support neighborhood beautification, discourage crime, promote healthy environments, and spur economic development. Projects come in different forms (urban farms, community gardens, green infrastructure for stormwater control, passive recreational areas, etc.) and are implemented through volunteers and community partnerships. City Farm TLH's pilot project will provide the opportunity for local entrepreneurs to operate urban farms on select, vacant City-owned lots. The project will launch in the fall of 2020 with the opening of a training farm located on a once-vacant neighborhood lot.

FACING THE FUTURE AND ITS CHALLENGES

Tallahassee is a creative capital city that supports a strong community with vibrant neighborhoods. Like many communities, we will be challenged by a changing climate, economic vulnerabilities, and public safety concerns. As we strive to be the national leader in the delivery of public services, Code Enforcement will continue to be a critical part of building a healthy, safe, and resilient community. Together with our partners, our goal is to take care of our natural and built resources and preserve the best parts of our community.



Future-proof Environment

We will encourage the community to future-proof our built environment through proactive hazard mitigation and by incorporating sustainable and resilient design standards into new buildings.

This will help our community to:

- **Reduce our vulnerability** to future climate-related threats.
- **Reduce the assistance needed** after disasters and reduce burdens placed on individuals and households.
- **Reduce environmental impacts** associated with traditional construction and development while helping to conserve resources and provide safer, healthier, and more productive environments.
- **Support stronger social and cultural resilience** through initiatives aimed at preserving existing buildings and assisting low-income households with hazard mitigation.



Organizational Effectiveness

We will build our team's capacity to meet the needs of the community with fair, efficient, and cost-effective services. We will use every tool at our disposal to increase timely code compliance.



Impactful Engagement

We will continue to educate neighbors about Code Enforcement's role and the many programs that are available to help residents and business owners with their properties. With a focus on the poor and vulnerable, we will connect residents with resources to remove economic barriers.



Creative Collaborations

With a shared sense of responsibility and leading with integrity, we will continue to work with residents and other agencies to make Tallahassee a creative and inclusive community with beautiful spaces.



Public Safety

We will support the City's holistic approach to a safer, resilient, and inclusive community. Training on crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) equips Resilience Officers with the knowledge and certification to help property and business owners implement landscape and design solutions to reduce public safety risks.



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Talgov.com/Code