



Municipality of Norristown, Pennsylvania
Department of Buildings & Code Enforcement

Strategic Code Enforcement

From Blight to Bright – Focusing on Montgomery County
December 5, 2019

Presented By:

Amrinder Singh, CCEA, MCP, CBO
Code Enforcement Manager & Building Code Official



2019
Municipal Council 2

Municipal Officials



Honorable Sonya D. Fisher Sanders
Council President



Honorable Heather Lewis
Council Vice-President



Honorable Olivia Brady
Councilwoman



Honorable Valerie Scott Cooper
Councilwoman



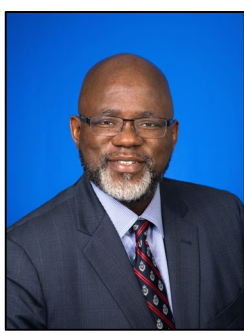
Honorable Hakim Jones
Councilman



Honorable Derrick Perry
Councilman



Honorable Rebecca Smith
Councilwoman



Crandall O. Jones
Municipal Administrator



Amrinder Singh
Code Enforcement Manager
& Building Code Official



About the Department of Buildings & Code Enforcement

The Department of Buildings & Code Enforcement has five Divisions:

- **Administrative**
Responsible for administrating and enforcing all Administrative sections of Municipal/State Codes. Responsible for administering and supporting the following Boards/Committees: Board of Code Appeals, Historical Architectural Review Board, Housing Code Review Committee, Shade Tree Commission. Responsible for providing support services for all departmental activities such as including but not limited to issuance of registrations, licenses, certificates, reports, etc. Support following: human resources / payroll, staff development / training, finance / budget, procurement, equipment and office supplies, property records management, and overall general support.
- **Buildings**
Responsible for administrating and enforcing the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Act 45, Pennsylvania Construction Code Act/Uniform Construction Code. Issuing Permits and Performing Inspections for when an owner or authorized agent intends to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, demolish or change the occupancy of a residential or commercial building, structure and facility or to erect, install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert or replace any electrical, gas, mechanical, or plumbing system regulated by the Uniform Construction Code.
- **Code Enforcement**
Responsible for administrating and enforcing the Municipal Property Maintenance Code, the Solid Waste Code, the Streets & Sidewalks Code, and numerous others such as Boarding & Enclosing of Buildings, Graffiti, Littering, Numbering of Houses & Property, Snow & Ice Removal, Weeds, etc. Responsible for ensuring that land and buildings, once constructed, are maintained in a code compliant manner over time. To ensure that physical attributes and properties remain compliant with Municipal code thereby contributing to the health, safety, quality of life and economic stability of our community.
- **Housing**
Responsible for administrating and enforcing the Municipal Rental Property (Registrations & Inspections) Code, the Overcrowding of Dwelling Units Code, and numerous others. Responsible for ensuring health, safety, and welfare of those living in or near rental housing, prevent & eliminate substandard or deteriorating rental housing, and preserve residential rental properties, prevent property deterioration, help increase property values, and raise quality of life in neighborhoods.
- **Property Transfers**
Responsible for administrating and enforcing the Municipal Property Transfer / Change of Use & Occupancy Codes, etc. Responsible for protecting and promoting the public health, safety, and welfare of its citizens and to establish the rights and obligations of owners of real property with respect to the transfer of real property.

Purpose

- To Protect the Health, Safety, and Welfare of All Who Live, Work, Play, Learn, Visit, and Invest in the Municipality of Norristown, PA by ensuring that life and property within the Municipality are protected by enforcing State and Municipal Laws, Ordinances, Codes, and Resolutions in a consistent, uniform, and fair manner.

Mission Statement

- The Mission of the Department of Buildings & Code Enforcement is to serve all constituents (Property Owners, Business Owners, and Residents) of the Municipality of Norristown, PA by ensuring compliance with all State and Municipality Codes through providing:
 - Professional Public Contact
 - Education of Codes & Ordinances
 - Building Cooperative Partnerships Throughout Our Community
 - Enforcing the Law in a Fair, Consistent, and Impartial Manner.

Vision

- Our vision is to create a positive image of Code Enforcement in our community and our allied Municipal Departments by fostering a culture that is helpful, approachable, knowledgeable and of the highest integrity.

Core Values

- Accountability
- Customer Focused
- Efficiency
- Integrity
- Professional Culture
- Results Driven

Goals

- Promote Public Health, Safety, and Welfare
- Enhance the Quality of Life in our Neighborhoods
- Protect Investments by Eliminating Blight
- Educate Property Owners, Business Owners, and Residents.
- Eliminate the Perception About Code Enforcement "Red-Tape"
- Provide Quality Customer Service

Customer Service Statement

- It is the goal of the Department of Buildings & Code Enforcement to provide responsive and expedient service, present a professional attitude and image at all times, and provide accurate and clear information.

Municipality of Norristown, PA Department of Buildings & Code Enforcement Demographic Overview

Municipality Ranking:	28 out of 2,561 (Population)
	13 out of 2,561 (Population Density)
Population:	35,000 (Per 2010 Census)
Properties:	10,434 (Tax Parcels)
	13,864 (Housing Units)
2019 Assessed Value:	\$1,037,201,009
	\$151,888,975 (Exempt Properties)
Coverage Area:	3.61 Square Miles (2,310 Acres)
Rental Properties:	3,552 (7,960 Housing Units)
2018 Budget & Revenue:	\$1,180,801 (Budget)
	\$1,467,276 (Revenue)
Employees:	11 (All Full Time)



Department of Buildings & Code Enforcement Team



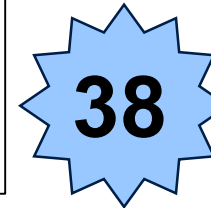
Amrinder Singh, the Code Enforcement Manager & Building Code Official Holds the Distinguished Master Code Professional (MCP) Certification – The MCP is the Highest Level of Certification for Code Officials. Amrinder is only 1 of 84 in Pennsylvania and Less Than 1,000 Worldwide To Hold Such Credential.

Amrinder Singh Also Holds The Following Notable Credentials:
Certified Code Enforcement Administrator (CCEA) – The First & Only in PA (115 Worldwide)
Certified Sustainability Professional (CSP) – The First & Only in PA (36 Worldwide)
Housing & Zoning Code Specialist (HZCS) – The First in PA (1 of 12 in PA & 153 Worldwide)
Master Code Enforcement Professional (MCEP) – The First & Only in PA (17 Nationwide)



The Municipality of Norristown is a proud member & supporter of the International Code Council.

The Municipality of Norristown is also a proud member & supporter of the Pennsylvania Association of Building Code Officials and the Pennsylvania Building Officials Conference.



Combined the Department of Buildings & Code Enforcement Staff Hold 38 Different Types of ICC/AACE/PA L&I Certifications!



Combined Our Team Holds The Following ICC/AACE & PA Department of Labor & Industry Certifications:

- Accessibility Inspector/Plans Examiner
- Building Code Specialist
- Building Code Official
- Building Inspector
- Building Plans Examiner
- Certified Building Official
- Certified Code Enforcement Administrator
- Certified Sustainability Professional
- Combination Inspector
- Commercial Building Inspector
- Commercial Combination Inspector
- Commercial Electrical Inspector
- Commercial Energy Inspector
- Commercial Mechanical Inspector
- Commercial Plumbing Inspector
- Electrical Inspector
- Fire Inspector I
- Fire Plans Examiner
- Green Building - Residential Examiner

- Housing and Zoning Code Specialist
- ICC/AACE Property Maintenance and Housing Inspector
- ICC/AACE Code Enforcement Administrator
- ICC/AACE Code Enforcement Officer
- Master Code Professional
- Master Code Enforcement Professional
- Mechanical Inspector
- Permit Specialist
- Permit Technician
- Plumbing Inspector
- Plumbing Plans Examiner
- Residential Building Inspector
- Residential Combination Inspector
- Residential Electrical Inspector
- Residential Energy Inspector/Plans Examiner
- Residential Mechanical Inspector
- Residential Plans Examiner
- Residential Plumbing Inspector
- Zoning Inspector

Top Row: John Mateja, Samuel Rodriguez, Keith Gordon, Aaron Stasiw, Amrinder Singh
Bottom Row: Lynn Bixler, Marquetia Bufkin, Debbie VanAllen, Iyeesha Castellanos, Asa Watts

The Norristown Department of Buildings & Code Enforcement Team is dedicated in our desire to deliver services through outstanding customer interaction and with the highest level of integrity.

Experienced: Combined Our Team Has Experience of Over 132+ Years in Construction/Trades, Building Safety, & Code Enforcement.

Multilingual: Languages Spoken By Our Staff - English, Spanish, Punjabi, & Hindi.

Knowledgeable: Combined Our Staff Hold 38 Different Types of Certifications!

Professionals: We Have Experts & Specialists on our Team!



What is code enforcement ?

Responsible property ownership and maintenance is at the heart of neighborhood stability. While property ownership confers important rights, it also confers equally important responsibilities on the owner. While most owners meet their obligations – maintaining their properties and complying with codes so they do not cause harm to their occupants, their neighbors and their communities – many do not. In those cases, local government, such as the Municipality of Norristown have the task of encouraging negligent owners to carry out their responsibilities, and if they do not, take action to minimize the harm to the community. This is the role of code enforcement.

Code enforcement, defined broadly to include all of the elements involved in obtaining compliance from private owners of problem properties, is a critical element in fighting neighborhood decline, preserving sound neighborhoods and restoring distressed areas. Few residents and public officials fully understand or appreciate the role that code enforcement plays as the first responders to vacant and foreclosed homes and the policy value that code enforcement can offer in protecting neighborhoods and stabilizing property conditions. When used proactively, code enforcement can help local governments identify, halt and reverse the negative impact of vacant, abandoned and problem properties.

Strategic Code Enforcement

The first step in understanding code enforcement is looking beyond the individual with the clipboard. Code enforcement inspectors are indispensable, but are just one of the critical pieces of a complex puzzle. A code enforcement department is only as good as the regulatory tools it employs to achieve policy driven solutions, and the systems it has in place to use those tools as productively as possible. This is particularly important in today's environment of scarce local government resources.

To be successful, a code enforcement program must be defined broadly to weave regulation, policy, cost recovery and carrots and sticks into a comprehensive strategy to improve communities through responsible property ownership. A successful code enforcement system offers incentives for responsible ownership along with disincentives or penalties for irresponsible behavior or property abandonment.

Strategic Code Enforcement

The goal of any program is to encourage private owners to maintain their property and use it productively. When a city cannot achieve compliance, it should have systems in place that can enable it to “gain control” over the property in a timely fashion, abate the hazardous condition and return the property to productive use.

Cleveland attorney and housing advocate Kermit Lind suggests these principles to guide thinking about code enforcement:

- See code compliance in terms of a whole system that ends with stable residential neighborhoods sustained by the resources of those who own properties, not public subsidies from taxpayers. Make changes with the whole system in mind.
- Apply authority and resources strategically to abate contagious blight quickly and deploy cost-mitigating prevention of serious violations before owners and occupants lose the will and the means to take responsibility for their property.
- Code compliance systems should include residents and neighborhood-based organizations as engaged partners rather than as adversaries, problems or obstacles.
- Match enforcement programs and projects with the resources and capacities available to operate them. Unenforced ordinances and violations without meaningful penalties only invite a culture of defeat, despair and abandonment.

It is important to remember that code enforcement can only accomplish so much. The ability to gain compliance is more a function of the economics of the property and the neighborhood as of the effectiveness of the code enforcement system. No system can substitute for a healthy neighborhood economy and housing market.

What makes code enforcement strategic?

Even if the city may not own the properties, it owns the problem.

The threshold questions are:

What are the community's goals and priorities?

What are the problems that need solving in order to achieve the goals?

What are the tools that are available to the city?

What are the resources and capacity that is available to the city?

What makes code enforcement strategic?

No two cities or towns will have common goals, tools or capacity. The following are some areas to take into consideration in shaping or reshaping a community's system for regulating privately-owned properties:

- **Be strategic.** Define success and set short-term, achievable goals, based on the resources that are available, and understand what you can and cannot impact with code enforcement. Identify the tools you have, and those you need, to be successful, and target resources for maximum results.
- **Measure and evaluate.** Establish benchmarks that reflect outcomes, not outputs, and reflect the community's goals and priorities. Reward results and create systems to hold everyone to high levels of accountability.
- **Build capacity.** Ordinances are only as good as the city's ability to enforce them. Build capacity at the management level, apply available technology to improve efficiency and accountability and design systems and programs that work. Form partnerships with CDCs, neighborhood residents and others to leverage limited local government capacity.
- **Work across silos.** Success depends on information sharing with a multitude of city departments and stakeholders outside government. Code enforcement cannot be successful if it is not part of the larger system of community development and neighborhood stabilization. Identify the departments and non-governmental partners necessary to make code enforcement a success and build coalitions.
- **Know the territory.** Develop a comprehensive, reliable and accessible real property database, and maintain it so that it remains current and usable.
- **Focus on neighborhoods.** Develop strategies that reflect neighborhood conditions and capacities, with different approaches for strong but at-risk neighborhoods and distressed areas, and build neighborhood morale through visible enforcement. Engage neighborhood residents, organizations and CDCs to become part of the solution.
- **Deploy resources for maximum results.** Use targeted approaches rather than focusing on complaint-driven inspections. Focus on frequent violators, and create interagency task forces to address the full range of neighborhood property-related issues. Establish working relationships with mortgage lenders and servicers to deal with properties in foreclosure and REO properties.

What makes code enforcement strategic?

In the end, the success of code enforcement is measured at two levels: the extent to which property owners comply with codes, maintain and improve their properties and the extent to which, as a result, neighborhoods become stronger, more stable and better places to live. It is critical never to lose sight of those goals.

Strategic code enforcement is the sum of many different pieces:

The right ordinances;

Effective organizational systems and procedures to ensure results;

An effective system for targeting resources and maximizing results;

Solid partnerships between city agencies and between the city and community organizations;

Good data and monitoring systems; and

Effective leadership and well-trained, motivated personnel.

Maximizing Capacity for Strategic Code Enforcement

Strategic code enforcement is a system where legal tools, human and technology resources and effective strategies are aligned to maximize compliance with codes and responsible standards by the owners of property in the community. Many cities devote only limited resources to code enforcement. In recent years, as a result of fiscal pressures, those resources have dwindled even further. To create an effective system, cities must use their resources as efficiently as possible, deploying them in a way that creates the greatest impact on properties and neighborhoods.

Key steps toward maximizing capacity include looking at the following elements:

Technology

Technology can be deployed to maximize the amount of time inspectors are in the field, speed the flow of information between city agencies, prosecutors and the courts, foster accountability and track results.

Human resources

Building staff capacity – not just knowledge of codes, but skills at customer relations and their ability to use technology – is critical. When hiring new inspectors and other staff, managers should look for individuals with advanced skill sets in those areas.

Organizational systems

Put systems in place to maximize effective management of staff resources, to establish a speedy and seamless system by which cases move through the enforcement process and to ensure that code enforcement activities are coordinated with the activities of other city departments and agencies.

Targeting and priorities

Put systems in place to focus resources around target areas and categories, and to determine which problems will be given priority.

Community partnerships

Build strong working relationships with neighborhood residents, organizations and CDCs to capitalize on their abilities and resources and leverage public resources.

Information

Build an information system that tracks properties and neighborhoods is a critical tool for rational decision-making and priority-setting, as well as ensuring accountability and measuring results.

Self-Evaluation Checklist for an Effective Strategic Code Enforcement System

Review these objectives and assess 1) how your city rates against them, and 2) the actions needed to meet the objectives.

1. The city's current housing, property maintenance, health and other relevant ordinances effectively further the city's goals and strategies.
2. The city's codes effectively address all priority issues and concerns; where city uses model codes, they are well-tailored to the city's conditions.
3. The city has in place current and well-drafted ordinances to address the full range of community property conditions and issues, such as vacant property registration ordinances, lender responsibility ordinances, etc.
4. An efficient system for enforcing code compliance has been put in place (such as a dedicated housing court or administrative compliance process) with close working relationships between code enforcement staff, municipal attorneys/prosecutors and judges/hearing officers.
5. The organizational structure of code enforcement works effectively to ensure accountability and an efficient process flow through the system.
6. The city has developed and implemented a strategic and market-based targeting approach for code enforcement incorporating different strategies and priorities for different areas and property types.
7. Effective procedures for targeting code enforcement resources (by neighborhood, by property type, to "bad apples", etc.) are in place.
8. An efficient and timely system for abating nuisance conditions and securing properties, from grass cutting to boarding and demolition, is in place.
9. An efficient system to maximize cost recovery from nuisance abatement, including use of liens and in personam judgments, is in place.
10. The city provides "good landlord" incentives for responsible property ownership.
11. The code enforcement agency has strong working relationships with other city agencies that link code enforcement with other relevant activities, such as drug enforcement, fire prevention and neighborhood improvement programs.
12. The code enforcement agency has strong working relationships with neighborhood organizations and CDCs to capitalize on their abilities and resources and leverage public resources.
13. A real property information system that provides the code enforcement agency and its partners with reliable and timely information on individual properties is in place and is integrated with decision-making and resource allocation systems.
14. The code enforcement agency makes effective use of technology to maximize the efficiency and accountability of the process.
15. Where efforts to obtain compliance are unsuccessful, the process by which the city can obtain control of the property are clearly established and well-integrated with the code enforcement system.

Norristown's

Approach for Using Code Enforcement To Reduce Blight

- Reviewed Department Operations to Create & Implement Standard Operating Procedures / Written Policies for Fair, Consistent, & Uniform Operations:
 - Reviewed Department operations (administrative, building permits & inspections, property transfers & inspections, property maintenance complaints & inspections, rental housing registration & inspections, etc.) to get indication on departments strengths and areas where improvement is needed. Reviewed with team our strengths & reviewed areas of improvement. Working on continuing to improve in areas where needed.
 - Reviewed Department processes & procedures. Performed a full review of “how” and “why” we conduct our operations & identified outdated practices and implemented new which made it easier for stakeholders to conduct business with Norristown.
 - The Department had no written standard operating procedures / written policies for operations. Worked with the team to go over all operations and we have created written standard operating procedures & policies for many of our operations / procedures.
- Created the Department of Buildings & Code Enforcement Mission, Vision, Purpose, Goals, Values, & Service Statement:
 - By creating & implementing a mission, vision, purpose, goals, values, and customer service statement, we have a concise explanation of our Departments reason for existence, describes our purpose, and overall intention. Department staff have a document informing and directing them of our purpose everyday and expectations that need to be met.
- Performed Comprehensive Ordinance & Code Review
 - Reviewed all Municipal Ordinances & Codes that Department Administers & Enforces.
 - Recognized that some ordinances are outdated & need to be updated.
 - Many inconsistencies.
 - Need to eliminate loopholes.
 - Strengthen existing ordinances.
 - Introduce new ones to better protect the health, safety, and welfare of all who live, work, play, learn, visit, and invest in Norristown.
 - Many meetings with Municipal Administrator & Municipal Solicitor. Discussed concerns and reviewed intent/purposes to confirm that enforcement is accurate.
 - Working on comprehensive ordinance update. Full review of every Municipal ordinance/chapter/code that Department administers/enforces was completed & recommendations memo is being drafted & will have recommendations for outdated language & also new codes.
 - Projecting that draft will be completed & submitted to Municipal Administrator & Municipal Solicitor by end of November / Early December 2019. Once review completed, will forward to Council for review & recommendation.
 - Once Council reviews & approves / recommends update follow the necessary process to formally adopt any/all ordinance updates.
 - Goal is to have the ordinance updates effective by end of 2020. Perform outreach to all stakeholders and update. Hold multiple outreach meetings & do mail outs

Norristown's

Approach for Using Code Enforcement To Reduce Blight

- Examples of a Few of the Ordinance / Code Updates:
 - Update the 2012 edition of the International Property Maintenance Code to the 2018 edition. Already working with ICC on licensing agreement. Will be able to use 2018 IPMC as base and create our own code by adding/modifying/tailoring code to fit our community. Will call it "Norristown Building Safety, Property Maintenance, & Housing Code". Will actually be able to provide printed copies & post online versions with licensing agreement. Not possible currently.
 - Create new vacant property registration ordinance. Require all vacant property to registered not just foreclosures.
 - Creating a Comprehensive Rental Housing Registration and Inspection Program.
 - Majority of our rental property ordinance language is from 2005. Need to do full update on language / update according to today's needs.
 - Going from "may" inspect rental housing to required inspections every 3 years.
 - Require all rental properties to be registered.
 - Property owners both individuals and corporations must obtain and provide us contact information for a person-in-charge / manager of property, if property owner does not live or have an office within 50 miles of Norristown. Also, no more P.O. Box mailing addresses. You must provide a physical address as the primary mailing address, you may use P.O. Box as a secondary mailing address. Properties not owned by an individual but businesses/corporations (Inc., LLC, LLP, etc.) would be required to declare an officer of the business/corporation who will be the designated care of / person-in-charge. If fines or citation need to be issued, it will include that care of / person-in-charge individual along with the business/corporation. No more hiding behind corporation name & po boxes / getting away with non-compliance. Individual name & physical mailing address required.
 - Rental housing registrations can be suspended or revoked for being in violation of certain codes which would prevent nuisance properties or properties in non-compliance from being rented/occupied.
 - Increase fines/penalties for non-compliance to hold landlords accountable.
 - Eliminate current loopholes in ordinance.
 - Emergency accommodations. If a rental property is not able to be used for a period of 8 hours and/or that it will not be accessible from 11pm to 7am and/or that it is declared unsafe to occupy due to the conditions of the property, the property owner, at no expense to the tenant, shall make accommodations for the tenants to be housed at an alternative location.
 - Tenant Accountability. Tenants will be held responsible and fined for violations for both interior and exterior conditions of the properties they occupy. Some of those items include: tampering with smoke detectors/fire extinguishers/carbon monoxide detectors, failing to maintain interior of properties (i.e. unsanitary conditions, hoarding, etc.), failure to maintain exterior of properties (i.e. high grass & weeds, accumulation of rubbish/garbage, storage of solid waste, animal waste, etc.). If property owner has complied with the rental housing registration & inspection ordinance (i.e. Register rental, passed inspection, submit up to date tenant info, etc.) if/when a violation is observed the tenant will be held responsible and fined (if same tenant occupies from passing of property inspection and listed as the up to date tenant). The invoice and/or citation for such violation/fine would then be sent to the tenant for payment/non-compliance, not the property owner. However, if the property owner fails to provide up to date info of the tenant, these instant fines/tickets for interior/exterior violations will be issued to owner.

Norristown's

Approach for Using Code Enforcement To Reduce Blight

- Updating of quality of life instant ticketing program. Currently only 3 types of violations receive instant tickets (litter control, snow & ice removal, tall grasses & weeds), that would increase to 15. Some of the new additions include:
 - Accumulation of rubbish or garbage.
 - Failure to obtain a certificate of appropriateness for any exterior work in Historic Districts.
 - Failure to obtain necessary building, mechanical, electrical or plumbing permits.
 - Failure to register dumpster.
 - Failure to register rental property.
 - Failure to maintain swimming pools/ponds.
 - Failure to post permit at conspicuous location.
 - Failure to remove animal waste.
 - Improper disposal of rubbish or garbage.
 - Outdoor placement of indoor appliances and furniture.
 - Storage of hazardous materials.
 - Storage of unregistered/unlicensed/uninspected/inoperable motor vehicles.
 - And many others. I am confident that by making these updates we will be able to make a substantial difference in improving the overall quality of life in our Municipality, increasing property values, improving our neighborhoods, holding property owners & tenants accountable.
- Obtaining Department Accreditation:
 - First in Pennsylvania to have an accredited Code Enforcement Program by the American Association of Code Enforcement.
 - To obtain this accreditation, code enforcement departments must successfully complete & submit an accreditation application packet which is reviewed by the AACE Accreditation Committee. The accreditation application packet includes the application itself along with providing information and supporting documents requested for review to confirm that the department meets the 59 accreditation standards. The accreditation standards review how a department operates and evaluate policies and procedures for functions such as general operations, personnel, case processing, punitive actions, inspections, codes & ordinances, and hearings & appeals. block, building by building, lot by lot, and performed exterior inspections & rated properties.

Norristown's

Approach for Using Code Enforcement To Reduce Blight

- Obtaining Department Accreditation:
 - Working on obtaining Accreditation by International Accreditation Service for our Building Department.
 - This will provide objective evidence that our department operates at the highest level of ethical, legal, and technical standards.
 - Currently only 25 Building & Code Enforcement Departments are Accredited Nationwide.
 - Only one other in Pennsylvania.
 - Will help demonstrate to builders, investors, developers, property owners, that our Department is serious about customer service. Will help eliminate perception of red-tape & that we are here to help facilitate development & growth.
 - We have contacted the International Accreditation Service to apply for accreditation status of our Department. This is a multi-yearlong rigorous and time consuming process, and if we achieve accreditation, Norristown will be recognized nationally & internationally for having a competent & reliable Building & Code Enforcement Department and has been evaluated for its technical competence and quality of service and has proven that it meets recognized standards.
- Updated Department Fee Schedule:
 - Upon reviewing our fee schedule it was determined that some fees were outdated and needed to reflect the true cost of performing such operations. Some of the updates/increases include:
 - Increased minimum permit fees for building, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, & demolition.
 - Increased permit fees for building, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, & demolition permits under certain self reported estimated construction cost / project valuations.
 - Increased permit re-inspection fees.
 - Updated the annual contractor licensing fee from yearly to pro-rated. Also increased fee.
 - Increased rental license fee.
 - Increased rental property re-inspection fee, no show/no entry fee, & stop work order/condemnation placard removal fee.
 - Will be updating fee schedule again in near future when the new codes/updates to existing ordinances get implemented/adopted.

Norristown's

Approach for Using Code Enforcement To Reduce Blight

- Created the BEST & PACE Teams:
 - Building Enforcement Safety Team (BEST) is in charge of pro-active enforcement of building/construction sites across Norristown. Confirm that projects have necessary permits, permits posted, work happening on site reflects permits obtained, work being done safely.
 - Pro-Active Code Enforcement (PACE) Team is in charge of pro-active enforcement of all General Municipal Codes in Norristown
 - Since the creation of the BEST Team the Department has:
 - In 2018, Issued 210 Stop Work Orders for Performing Work Without Permits. Increase of 108 More (105.88%) Than 2017.
 - Open Permits Project from 2013 to 6/11/18. There were 2,599 open permits and 2,132 have since been closed (82.03%). Only 467 Open Permits Remain.
 - Issued Notices / Followed Up on Unsafe Work Sites (62 in 2019)
 - In 2018, 2,278 additional violation notices issued at construction sites then 2017 (1,662.77% increase)
 - In 2019, Visited All Properties Where There Was An Open Permit Issued in 2018 and 2019. Over 700+ Sites Visited to Confirm Compliance.
 - Since the creation of the PACE Team the Department has:
 - In 2018, Issued 5,568 violation notices. Increase of 3,048 (120.95%) than 2017.
 - Issued more notices in 2018 than 2017 & 2016 Combined.
 - 2018 = 5,568 notices / 2016 + 2017 = 5,503 notices
 - These don't include the 7,853 inspections conducted under the Building/Property Survey. If you combine the 2018 notices along with the Building/Property Survey there was a total of 13,421 notices. That means more notices were issued in 2018 than the last 5 years combined.
- Key Programs to Tackle Blight
 - Registration Requirement for Banks / Foreclosure Properties
 - Rental Registration & Inspection Program
 - Property Transfer / Use & Occupancy Program
- Created the Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program. Started in October 2018.
 - For the first time in the Department's history, the Department implemented this strategic exterior inspection & rating program for all 10,430+ tax parcels / properties in Norristown.
 - Inspectors went block by block, building by building, lot by lot, and performed exterior inspections & rated properties.

About the Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program

- The Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program was started in October 2018.
- For the first time in the Departments history, the Department implemented this innovative strategic exterior inspection & rating program for all 10,430+ tax parcels / properties in Norristown.
- Inspectors went block by block, building by building, lot by lot, and performed exterior inspections & rated properties.
- There are many reasons for why this program was started:
 - Help counter negative perception that many have about Norristown. We wanted to assist in countering the negative perception that has been fostered over the years that Norristown is blighted, vacant, properties owners not being held accountable, etc.
 - Promoting a positive image of our community. The truth is that the exteriors of many properties in Norristown are well maintained and are code compliant. Many property owners take pride in their properties and are dedicated and make the necessary investments whether it be time or money in maintaining them.
 - Understanding our current building / housing stock. How many properties have code compliant exteriors, how many have exterior code violations, if violations exist what type, etc.
 - Attempt to identify the number of vacant properties & lots.
 - Help increase Quality of Life of Neighborhoods by ensuring that the exteriors of all properties are code compliant.
 - Blocks & Neighborhoods with Properties with no exterior code violations are generally assessed and appraised for higher value during property sales which will help maintain and increase property values.
 - Building & Code Enforcement Departments across the country are developing new and innovative approaches to delivering code administration services as part of community risk reduction efforts. This is our first program and will be one of many over the next several years. We believe we are one of the first, if not the first, in Pennsylvania to perform this type of Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program.
 - Code enforcement is one of the five pillars of community risk reduction that include education, enforcement, engineering, economics and emergency response. Building and housing codes establish the minimum level of risk a community is willing to accept for the built environment, and organizations that enforce these codes are consistently challenged to adopt, modify, interpret and apply them in a manner that meets communities ever-changing demands.
 - This program is an innovative tool and technique for improving the effectiveness of code enforcement at reducing risk injury, fires, and other natural or manmade disasters.
 - This program that the Department created and implemented is a unique practice that enhances building & housing code compliance in our community. We will be sending letters/warning notices to property owners to educate them of the types of exterior code violations that exist at this properties.
 - This program will have a positive impact on general public, police, & firefighter safety, will have measurable reduction in resident injuries, property damage, and/or the quality, effectiveness or efficiency of code administration services. Properties that are found with nuisance, life/safety, and critical code violations were identified and letters/warning notices will be sent to the owners of such properties so that they can be educated on building and housing codes and can work on getting their property in compliance. The identified properties with life/safety and critical violations will be forwarded to the Norristown Fire Department & Norristown Police Department so that they are aware of the potential risks and code issues at such properties.
- Properties that were found with nuisance, life/safety, and critical code violations will be issued letters/warning notices which will be sent to the owners of such properties so that they can be educated on the building and housing codes violations that exist at their properties and can work on getting their property in compliance.
- Thank you letters and Certificate of Recognitions will be sent to property owners with no violations so that they can be recognized and know that the Municipality appreciates them.

Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program Results Summary

- 10,434 Properties Inspected
 - 5,628 Properties Found in Compliance At Time of Inspection (53.93%)
 - 4,806 Properties Found Out of Compliance At Time of Inspection (46.06%)
- 8 Inspectors Visited 10,434 Properties to Perform Inspections & Ratings
- Project Completed in 6 Months (October to April - 141 Business Days)
- 11,229 Exterior Code Violations Found
- 301 Possible Vacant Buildings (126) / Lots (175) Identified (2.88%)
- Identified 22 Properties That Should Be Demolished

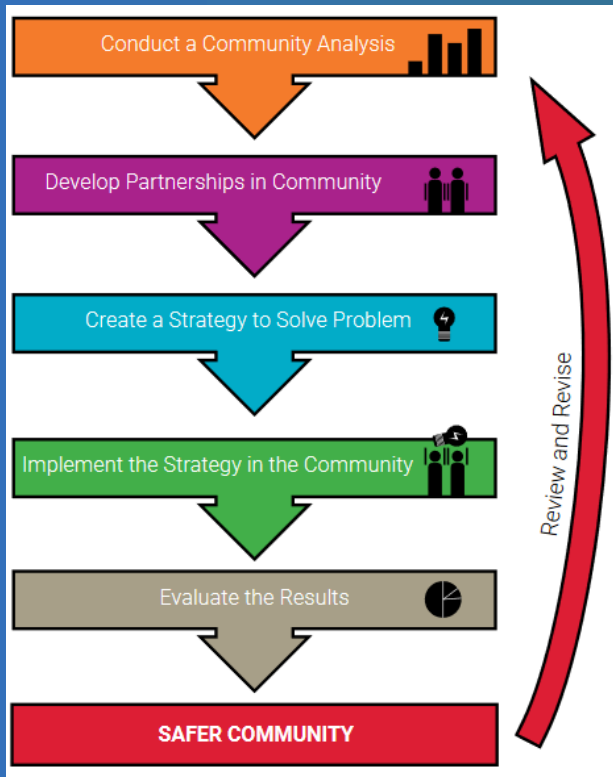
About the Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program

The Norristown Department of Buildings & Code Enforcement wanted to do its part in helping the Municipality / Norristown Fire Department with Community Risk Reduction.

What Is the Community Risk Reduction?

Community Risk Reduction is defined by the National Fire Protection Association as “Programs, actions, and services used by a community, which prevent or mitigate the loss of life, property, and resources associated with life safety, fire, and other disasters within a community.”

The Norristown Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program was created utilizing the 5 steps for Community Risk Reduction Plan Development:



Strategic and tactical development for the Norristown Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program was constructed by utilizing the Five E's of Community Risk Reduction. The Five E's are a combination of the original Three E's — education, engineering, and enforcement — noted by President Truman at The President's Conference on Fire Prevention in 1947. Two additional E's — economic incentive and emergency response — were added by the National Fire Academy due to their importance in Community Risk Reduction.¹⁵ The Five E's, are as follows:

Enforcement involves identifying whether stronger enforcement is necessary or if newer codes and standards need adoption. Enforcement reduces risks through enforcing legislation through inspections and fines for noncompliance. We have identified the need for newer codes as many of our codes/ordinances are outdated from many decades ago. The Code Enforcement Manager/BCO, Municipal Administrator, Municipal Solicitor, and Municipal Council are working on updating existing codes and introducing new ones. The Department also identified the need for stronger enforcement. It was unknown what the condition of all properties / buildings are in Norristown, which is why this program was created.

Education involves determining the appropriate type and mix of educational messages necessary to inform the public and effect behavioral change. Education influences audiences to refrain from risky or unhealthy behavior or take positive action to reduce risk. By the Department inspecting the exterior of all properties we have identified properties with exterior code violations, which is a risk. We will be sending letters/warning notices which act as an education tool for property owners to inform them of code issues/risks at their properties. If the letters/warning notices are ignored we will send notices of violations requiring compliance within a specific time.



Economic Incentives involve identifying whether financial incentives will improve compliance or aid in increasing awareness to community needs. Economic incentives are typically offered to encourage better choices and changes in behavior. Economic incentives may include fines and penalties for violations & non-compliance, having 3rd party contractors perform necessary repair/maintenance and charging property owner for such services, providing financial assistance for owner occupied properties via programs administered by the Planning/Zoning Department. Hopefully owners will comply and make the necessary repairs or will face fines/penalties for failure to comply.

Engineering involves determining whether there are any engineering or technological solutions available to address the identified risk. Engineering includes incorporating new products and technology to modify the environment to prevent or mitigate injuries and risk. There are many new solutions/products for property owners to make necessary repairs.

Emergency Response involves changes to emergency response protocols to better meet a specific risk or need. By the Building & Codes Department identifying possible vacant properties and properties with critical code violations and sharing such information with the Fire Department & Police Department it will have a positive effective on their emergency response as they will already know the conditions of such properties, have owner info, and/or know which properties are not safe to enter. Effective emergency response can mitigate the effects of unintentional injuries and save lives.

Results for the Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program

Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program Results

All 10,434 Properties Were Inspected (Exterior Inspections)

- Rating 1 - [No Exterior Violations Found] 5,628 Properties (53.93%)
- Rating 2 - [Nuisance Violations Found] 2,761 Properties (26.46%)
- Rating 3 - [Life/Safety Violations Found] 2,023 Properties (19.38%)
- Rating 4 - [Critical Violations Found] 22 Properties (0.21%)
- Vacant Buildings Identified - 126 | Vacant Lots Identified - 175

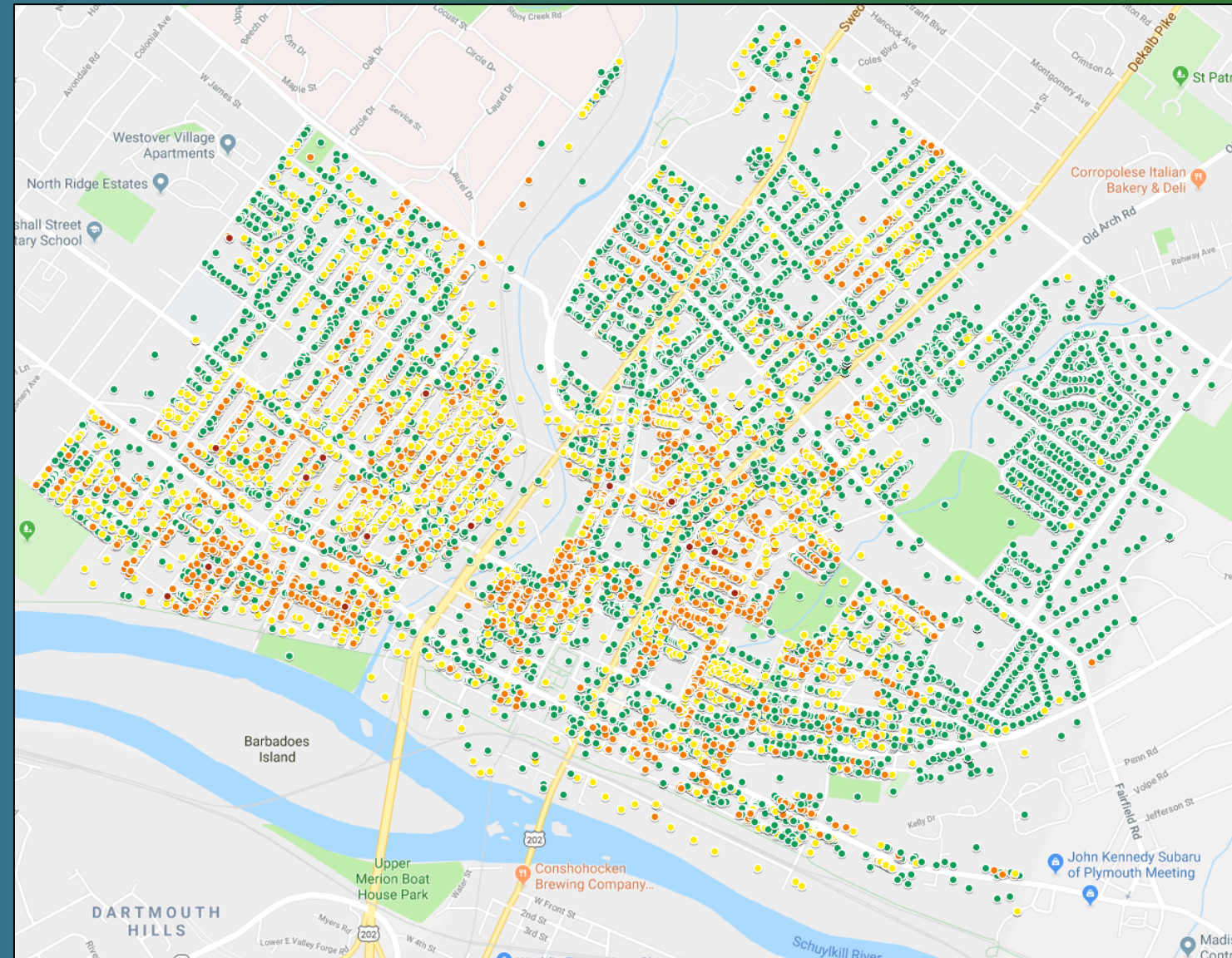
Number of Code Violations Found - 11,229

Top 10 Violations Found:

1. Protective Treatment / Exterior Walls
2. Premises Identification
3. Accumulation of Rubbish/Garbage
4. Sidewalks & Driveways
5. High Grass & Weeds
6. Handrails & Guards
7. Accessory Structures
8. Roofs & Drainage
9. Windows & Doors
10. Stairways, Decks, Porches, & Balconies

The 10 Code Violations Above Equal A Total of 10,541 Violations (93.87% of All Violations Found).

The Map Below Showcases all Exterior Property Inspections & Ratings:



Results for the Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program

Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program Results

All 10,434 Properties Were Inspected (Exterior Inspections)

- Rating 1 - [No Exterior Violations Found] 5,628 Properties (53.93%)

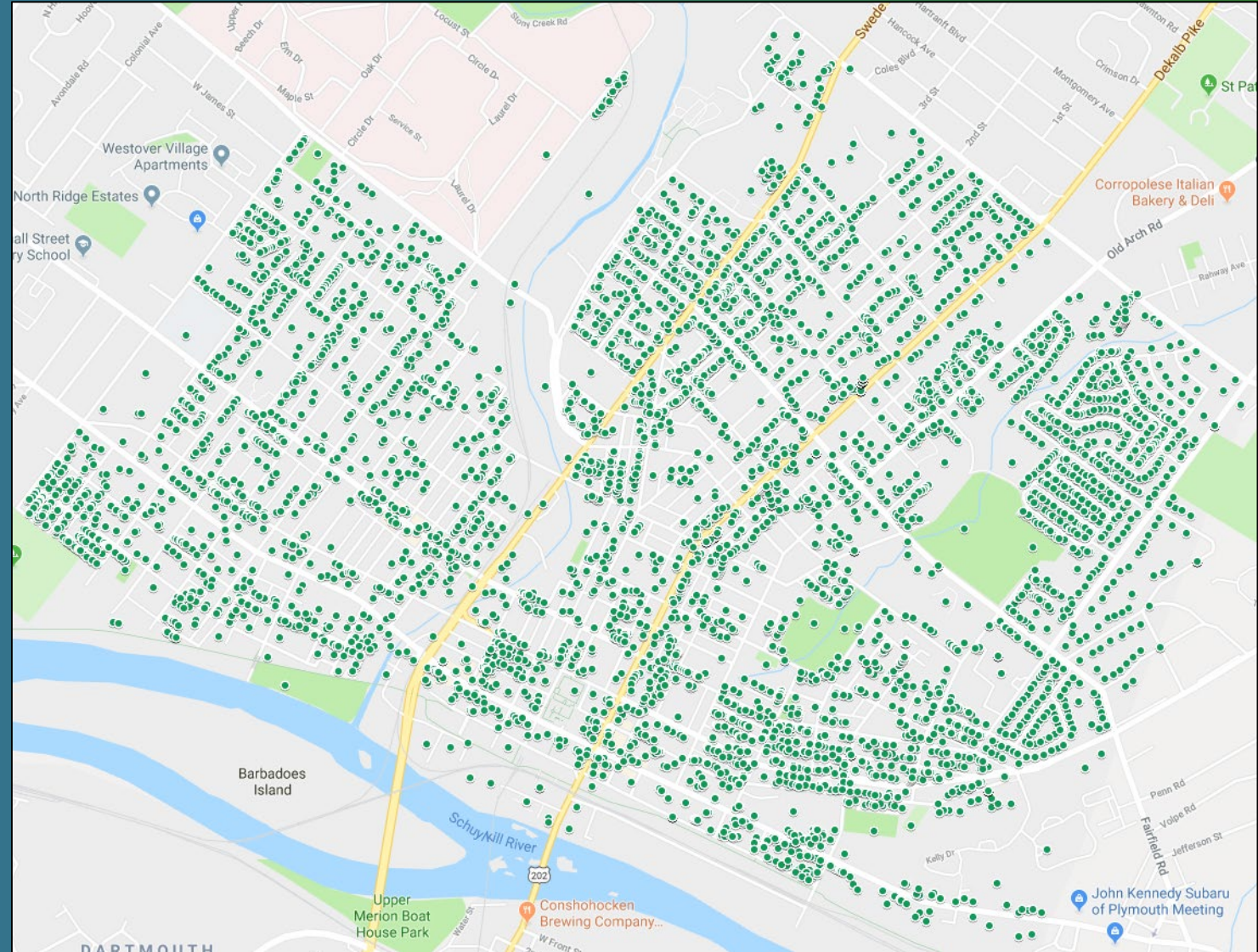
We will be recognizing the hard work and dedication of all the Property Owners, Business Owners, and Residents who voluntarily comply with Municipal Codes & maintain their properties. Their voluntary compliance is greatly appreciated and we hope others will follow in their path.



Thank You Letters & Certificate of Recognitions will be sent by the Buildings & Codes Department on Behalf of Municipal Council & Municipal Administrator to Property Owners Where No Exterior Violations Were Found.

Approx. 4,500 Property Owners own the 5,628 Properties that were designated as Rating 1 – No Exterior Violations Found. It is a positive sign that many property owners take pride in their properties and are dedicated and make the necessary investments whether it be time or money in maintaining them. Some own multiple properties in compliance.

The Map Below Showcases Properties Where No Exterior Code Violations Were Observed:



Results for the Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program

Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program Results

All 10,434 Properties Were Inspected (Exterior Inspections)

- Rating 2 - [Nuisance Violations Found] 2,761 Properties (26.46%)

Rating 2 – One or More Nuisance Violations: High Grass & Weeds, Rubbish/Trash, Premises Identification, Accessory Structures, Graffiti, Motor Vehicles, Roofs/Drainage, Trees, Etc.

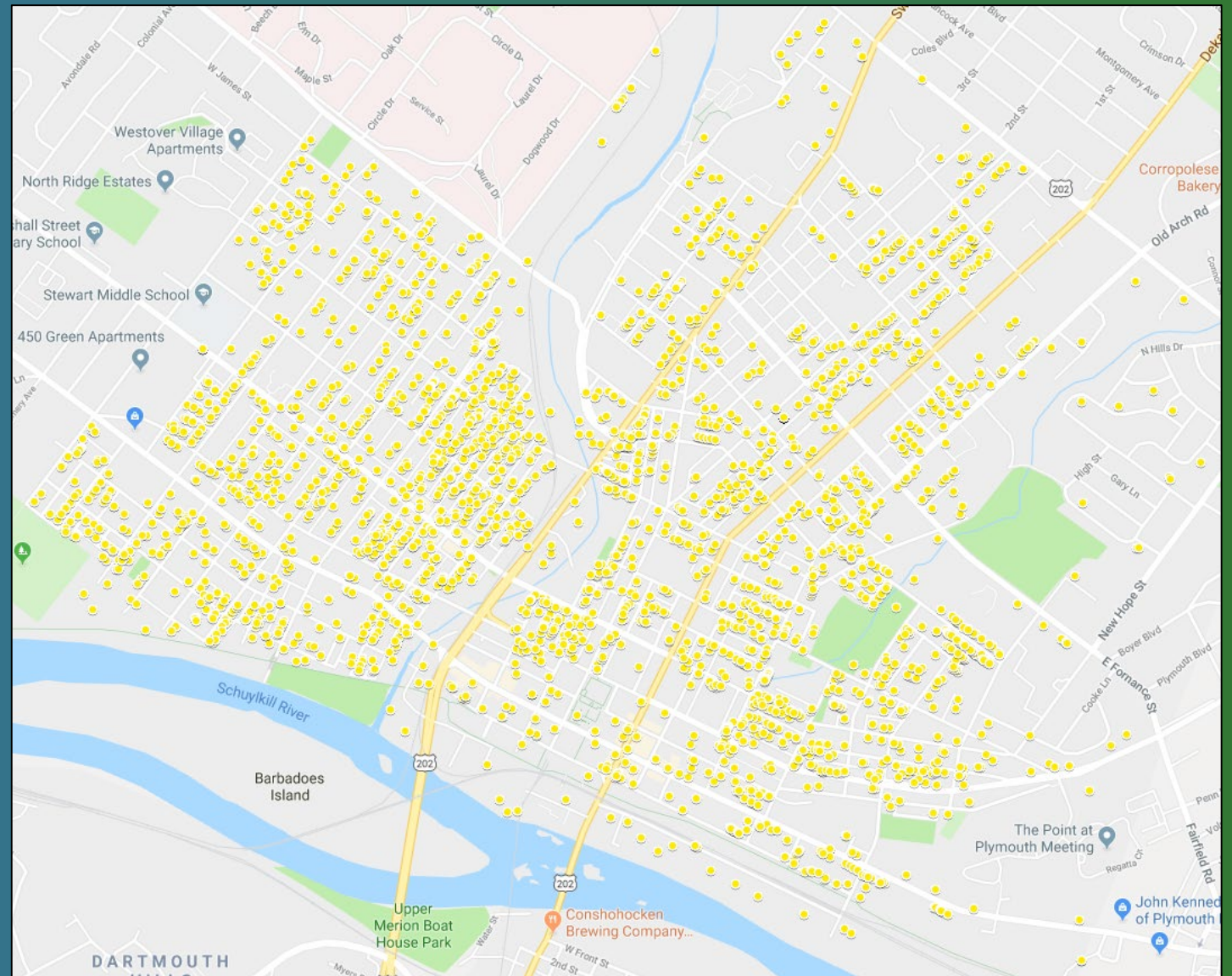
Top 10 Streets with Rating 2 Properties

1. Stanbridge St	112
2. Astor St	107
3. Arch St	107
4. Willow St	103
5. Powell St	102
6. Kohn St	93
7. George St	93
8. Chain St	85
9. Haws Ave	82
10. E. Basin St	73

The 10 Streets Above Contain 34.66% of all Rated 2 Properties.

We have also identified property owners who own multiple Rating 2 properties. Some even own Rating 3 properties. Approx. 180 property owners have multiple Rating 2 properties, about 584 buildings. Although we will be following up with all property owners with violations, we will be putting emphasis on following up with owners of multiple properties which are out of compliance so that they are aware of all of the deficiencies at their properties as they will be needing more time and possibly resources to get in compliance.

The Map Below Showcases Exterior Property Inspections Designated As Rating 2:



Results for the Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program

Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program Results

All 10,434 Properties Were Inspected (Exterior Inspections)

- Rating 3 - [Life/Safety Violations Found] 2,023 Properties (19.38%)

Rating 3 – One or More Life/Safety Violations: Protective Treatment / Exterior Walls, Sidewalks in Disrepair, Broken Windows, Chipping Paint, Handrail/Guardrail, Stairways/Decks, General Structural Issues, Swimming Pool Maintenance, Etc.

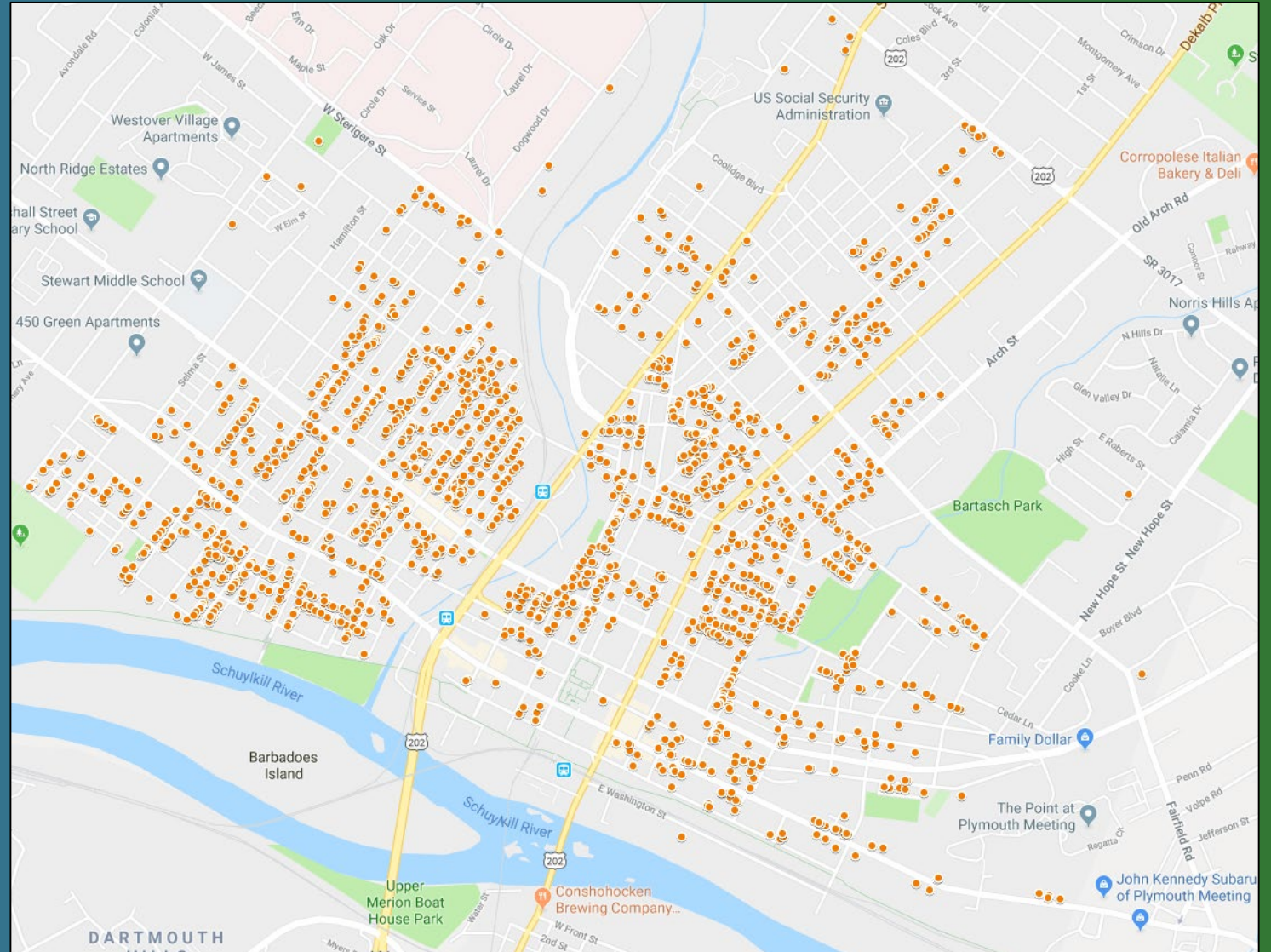
Top 10 Streets with Rating 3 Properties

1. Stanbridge St	122
2. Kohn St	108
3. Haws Ave	106
4. Noble St	104
5. Cherry St	91
6. Powell St	90
7. Buttonwood St	85
8. Arch St	79
9. Chain St	66
10. W. Lafayette St	65

The 10 Streets Above Contain 45.27% of all Rated 3 Properties.

We have also identified property owners who own multiple Rating 3 properties. Some even own Rating 2 properties. Approx. 200 property owners have multiple Rating 3 properties, about 561 buildings. Although we will be following up with all property owners with violations, we will be putting emphasis on following up with owners of multiple properties which are out of compliance so that they are aware of all of the deficiencies at their properties as they will be needing more time and possibly resources to get in compliance.

The Map Below Showcases Exterior Property Inspections Designated As Rating 3:



Results for the Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program

Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program Results

All 10,434 Properties Were Inspected (Exterior Inspections)

- Rating 4 - [Critical Violations Found] 22 Properties (0.21%)

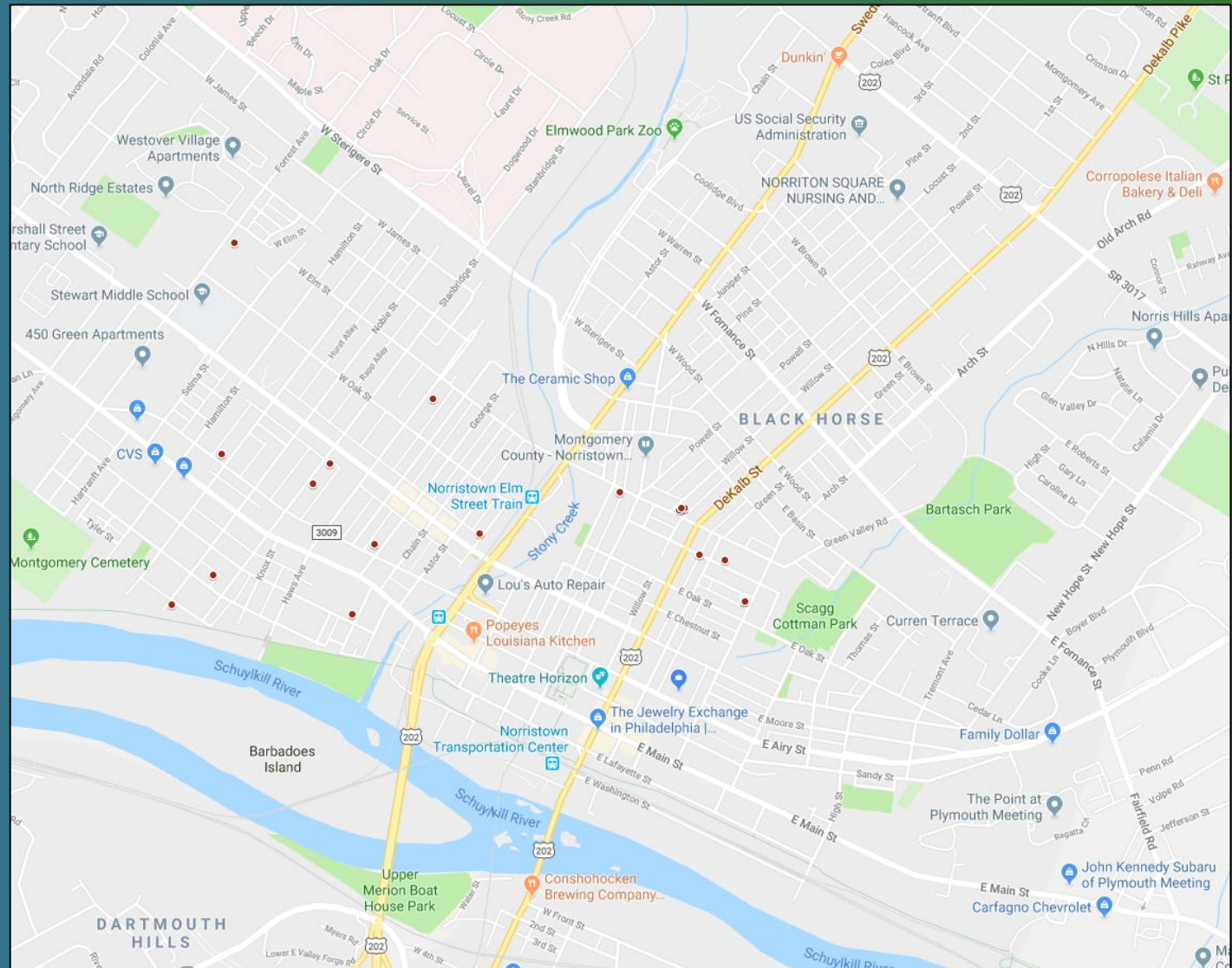
Rated Level 4 – Critical Structural Issues, Fire Damage, Possible Imminent Danger of Collapse, Etc.

Streets with Rating 4 Properties

1. Willow St	5
2. E. Jacoby St	2
3. Stanbridge St	2
4. Corson St	2
5. Minor St	2
6. Forrest Ave	2
7. Haws Ave	1
8. W. Elm St	1
9. W. Airy St	1
10. Yerkes Ave	1
11. George St	1
12. Jackson St	1
13. Chain St	1

We have also identified property owners who own multiple Rating 4 properties. Some even own Rating 2 & Rating 3 properties. Approx. 3 property owners have multiple Rating 4 properties, about 7 buildings. Although we will be following up with all property owners with violations, we will be putting extra emphasis on following up with owners of Rating 4 properties which are out of compliance so that they are aware of all of the deficiencies at their properties so that they can make the necessary repairs or demolitions as soon as possible. If owners fail to comply with notices of violations, the Department of Buildings & Code Enforcement will work with the Municipal Administrator & Municipal Solicitor in having the properties demolished and charging the owners of such properties for services. If services go unpaid we will follow up with further enforcement actions such as liens, and those available under Act 90, etc.

The Map Below Showcases Exterior Property Inspections Designated As Rating 4:



Results for the Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program

Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program Results

All 10,434 Properties Were Inspected (Exterior Inspections)

- Vacant Buildings Identified - 126 (1.20%)
- Vacant Lots Identified – 175 (1.67%)
- Registered Bank Owned / Foreclosures – 163 (1.56%)
- Approximately 464 Vacant Properties (4.44%)

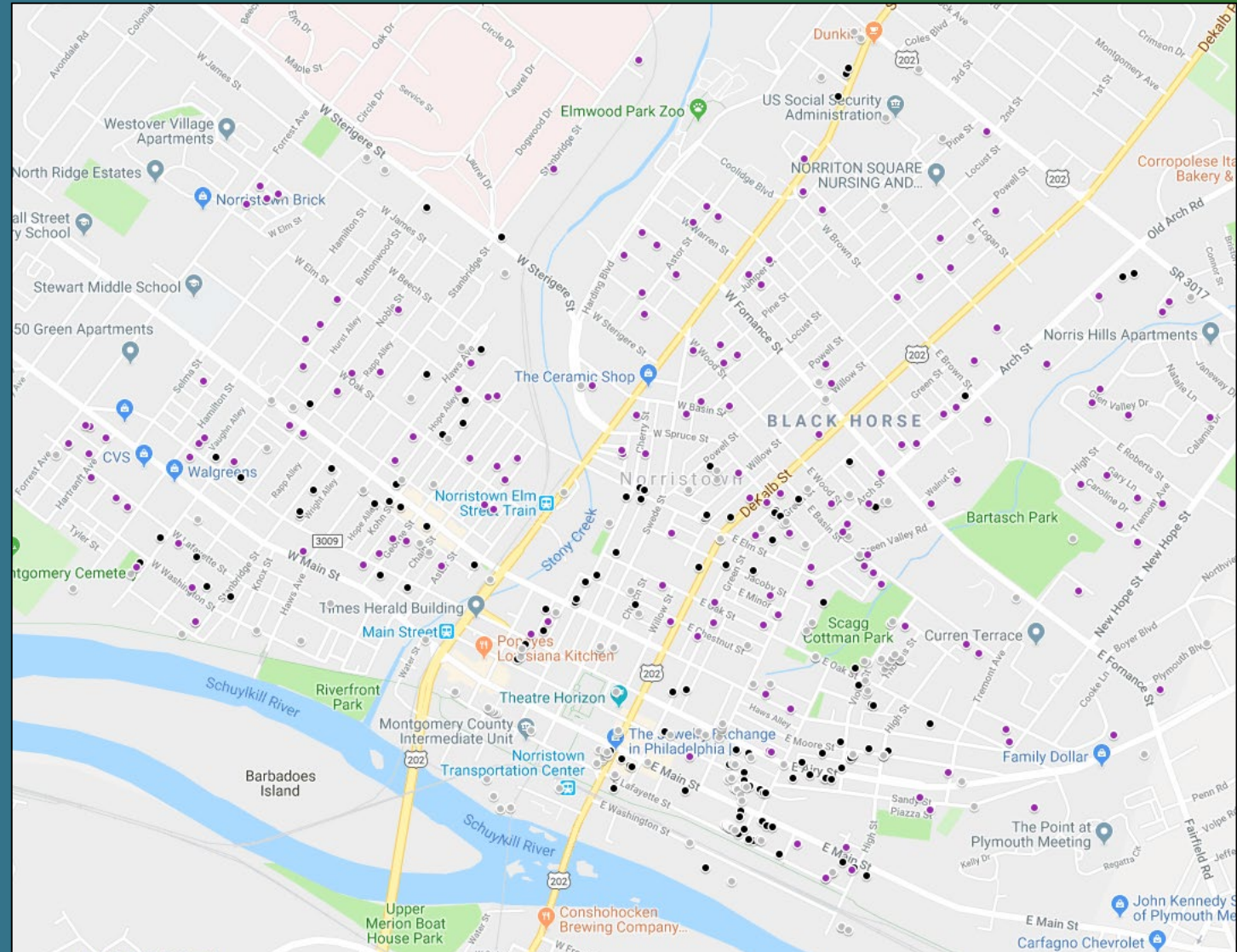
Top 10 Streets with Vacant Properties

1. E Main St	21
2. E Lafayette St	18
3. E Penn St	16
4. E Airy St	15
5. Moore St	14
6. Astor St	14
7. E Basin St	11
8. Dekalb St	10
9. Markley St	10
10. Green St	9

The 10 Streets Above Contain 29.74% of all Vacant Properties.

We have identified possible vacant properties along with also identifying property owners who own multiple vacant properties. Some even own Rating 2, Rating 3, and Rating 4 properties. Although we will be following up with all property owners with violations, we will be putting extra emphasis on following up with owners of vacant properties which are out of compliance so that they are aware of all of the deficiencies at their properties so that they can make the necessary repairs as soon as possible. If owners fail to comply with notices of violations, the Department of Buildings & Code Enforcement will work with the Municipal Administrator & Municipal Solicitor in having the properties have select work completed (cut high grass/weeds, remove trash, board up, shoring, graffiti removal, etc.) and charging the owners of such properties for services. If services go unpaid we will follow up with further enforcement actions such as liens, and those available under Act 90, etc.

The Map Below Showcases Vacant Properties (Buildings & Lots):



Results for the Exterior Property Inspection & Rating Program

Total Number of Violations Found - 11,229

Violations Found During Survey:

1. Protective Treatment
2. Premises Identification
3. Accumulation of Rubbish and Garbage
4. Sidewalks and Driveways
5. High Grass and Weeds
6. Exterior Handrails and Guards
7. Accessory Structures
8. Roofs and Drainage
9. Window, Skylight and Door Frames
10. Stairways, Decks, Porches and Balconies
11. Motor Vehicles
12. Vacant Structures and Land
13. Decorative Features
14. Trees
15. Graffiti
16. Closing of Vacant Structures
17. Structural Members
18. Gates
19. Chimneys and Towers
20. Overhead Extensions
21. Exhaust Vents
22. Electrical System Hazards
23. Means Of Egress
24. Swimming Pools, Spas and Hot Tubs

Percentage of Total Violations Found

Number of Violation Found by Type Divided by
Total Violations Found (11,229)

Percentage of Properties with Violation

Number of Violation Found by Type Divided by
Total Properties in Violation (4,806 Properties out of
10,434 – 46.06% of All Properties in Norristown)

Violation Type	Number of Violations Found	Percentage of Total Violations Found	Percentage of Properties with Violation
Protective Treatment	2,406	21.43%	50.06%
Premises Identification	2,334	20.79%	48.56%
Accumulation of Rubbish and Garbage	1,422	12.66%	29.59%
Sidewalks and Driveways	1,074	9.56%	22.35%
High Grass and Weeds	930	8.28%	19.35%
Exterior Handrails and Guards	588	5.24%	12.23%
Accessory Structures	526	4.68%	10.94%
Roofs and Drainage	491	4.37%	10.22%
Window, Skylight and Door Frames	478	4.26%	9.95%
Stairways, Decks, Porches and Balconies	292	2.60%	6.08%
Motor Vehicles	155	1.38%	3.23%
Vacant Structures and Land	116	1.03%	2.41%
Decorative Features	64	0.57%	1.33%
Tree Height	64	0.57%	1.33%
Graffiti	59	0.53%	1.23%
Closing Of Vacant Structures	48	0.43%	1.00%
Structural Members	39	0.35%	0.81%
Gates	35	0.31%	0.73%
Chimneys and Towers	30	0.27%	0.62%
Overhead Extensions	24	0.21%	0.50%
Exhaust Vents	15	0.13%	0.31%
Electrical System Hazards	15	0.13%	0.31%
Means Of Egress	14	0.12%	0.29%
Swimming Pools, Spas and Hot Tubs	10	0.09%	0.21%

What's Next?

- Properties that were found with nuisance, life/safety, and critical code violations will be issued educational letters/warning notices/notices of violation which will be sent to the owners of such properties so that they can be educated on the building and housing codes violations that exist at their properties. We will be giving property owners reasonable amount of time depending on which category their property is designated under to get in compliance.
- Thank you letters and Certificate of Recognitions will be sent to property owners with no violations so that they can be recognized for their dedication & efforts and know that the Municipality appreciates them.
- All Letters/Warnings/Certificate of Recognitions (10,434 Mailings) to go out by Mid-December 2019.
- Forward data to Police & Fire regarding properties that are vacant and also properties with life/safety and critical code violations.
- Continue to monitor properties for compliance. Follow up on all letters/warnings to confirm compliance within time given.
- Conduct another Exterior Property Inspection & Rating in Late 2020 to see results & progress. With letters/notices going out to all property owners with violations, we hope they will correct the ones we observed and issued notices for along with continuing to maintain the exteriors of their properties regularly. We hope that the Thank you letters and Certificate of Recognitions going out to property owners with no code violations will encourage them to continue to maintain their properties. We are confident that there will be a significant improvement in the number of properties that are code compliant.
- Continue to implement innovative practices, work diligently towards achieving Municipal Councils & Municipal Administrators goals, continue to build and improve our Department to become more efficient, productive, and customer service orientated and protect the health, safety, and welfare of all who live, work, play, learn, visit, and invest in the Municipality of Norristown, PA by ensuring that life and property within the Municipality are protected by enforcing State and Municipal Laws, Ordinances, Codes, and Resolutions in a consistent, uniform, and fair manner.

Protecting Building and Life Safety in Norristown Every Day

By enforcing Municipality of Norristown Ordinances, Codes, Resolutions, Regulations, and Statutes and those of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Municipality of Norristown

The Following Codes as Adopted/Amended

- Chapter 008 — Blighted Property Removal Committee
- Chapter 009 — Board of Code Appeals
- Chapter 031 — Historical Architectural Review Board
- Chapter 033 — Housing Code Review Committee
- Chapter 082 — Shade Tree Commission & Tree Regulations
- Chapter 120 — Building Permits & Floodplain Management
- Chapter 122 — Boarding & Enclosing of Buildings
- Chapter 125 — Landmark Buildings
- Chapter 128 — Change of Use & Occupancy
- Chapter 133 — Responsible Contractors
- Chapter 169 — Garage Sales
- Chapter 172 — Gas & Oil Burning Equipment
- Chapter 176 — Graffiti
- Chapter 188 — Housing Discrimination
- Chapter 194 — Junkyards
- Chapter 198 — Kerosene Heating Units
- Chapter 202 — Littering
- Chapter 203 — Distribution of Handbills & Unsubscribed Literature
- Chapter 219 — Numbering of Houses and Property
- Chapter 222 — Overcrowding of Dwelling Units
- Chapter 233 — Peddling & Soliciting
- Chapter 239 — Property Maintenance
- Chapter 241 — Property Transfers & Lateral Inspections
- Chapter 245 — Rental Property
- Chapter 247 — Rodent Control
- Chapter 251 — Building Contractors
- Chapter 258 — Sewers & Sewage Disposal
- Chapter 270 — Snow & Ice Removal
- Chapter 274 — Solid Waste
- Chapter 278 — Streets & Sidewalks
- Chapter 286 — Swimming Pools
- Chapter 295 — Trees
- Chapter 297 — Truss Construction
- Chapter 308 — Vending Machines
- Chapter 310 — Water
- Chapter 315 — Weeds

... and many others.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Construction Code Act

Uniform Construction Code

- Chapter 403 Administration

The Following Codes as Adopted/Amended

- International Building Code
- International Energy Conservation Code
- International Existing Building Code
- International Fire Code
- International Fuel Gas Code
- International Mechanical Code
- International Performance Code for Buildings & Facilities
- International Plumbing Code
- International Residential Code
- International Wildland-Urban Interface Code

... and many others such as the Carbon Monoxide Alarm Act.



Municipality of Norristown, Pennsylvania
Department of Buildings & Code Enforcement

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