

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE Laws Help Create an ATTRACTIVE COMMUNITY and Happier Neighbors

BY AMY BOBB / ASSISTANT EDITOR

IF PLANNING IS THE ARCHITECT OF A COMMUNITY

and building codes the carpenter, think of property maintenance ordinances as the custodian, making sure a township stays appealing and properties are in tip-top shape. These laws allow townships to be proactive about homeowners' property upkeep while protecting residents and reducing neighbor conflicts at the same time.



“You want to make sure **homeowners are bringing up the property values** and not degrading the neighborhood.”

Neshannock Township sits on the outskirts of the City of New Castle in Lawrence County. Over the past eight years or so, the community of nearly 10,000 has watched blight from the city creep over the borders into the township.

“We are seeing more properties that are not maintained,” township supervisor and secretary-treasurer Leslie Bucci says, citing such problems as high grass, overgrown landscapes, junked cars, and homes in need of repair.

When the township tried to remedy the situation using its grass and junkyard ordinances, the laws, which date back to the 1980s, proved cumbersome and difficult to enforce.

“Until we went through the official process and timeline, it could take 60 days to get someone to cut their grass,” Bucci says. “If a neighbor calls in June to complain, it might be August before anything is done.”

All that time, the grass keeps growing. Likewise, the township’s junkyard ordinance was just as ineffective.

“Because the fines weren’t high, people would simply pay it and not fix the problem,” she says. “This was just not acceptable to many of our residents. They look at us and ask how we can allow this to happen.”

Tired of not having the proper tools to obtain compliance and worried about what deteriorating properties might mean to the overall community, the Neshannock Township Board of Supervisors last month adopted the 2018 International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) establishing minimum

requirements for maintaining existing buildings and property.

To enforce the new law, the supervisors also hired a part-time code enforcement officer.

“We are hopeful that we now have the teeth we need to get homeowners to clean up their properties,” Bucci says.

The strategy has already proven effective. Even before the IPMC was enacted, homeowners responded when the new code enforcement officer began knocking on the doors of homes with high grass or falling-down awnings. Lawns have been cut, and repairs are being made.

“Sometimes, it’s just a matter of going out and talking to residents without even issuing a citation,” she says. “When they see we mean business, they will clean it up.”

A growing problem

Neshannock Township joins a growing list of municipalities across the state dealing with property maintenance issues and using code enforcement to tackle them. The goal of these efforts is to keep a community well-maintained and safe, PSATS Policy and Research Director Holly Fishel says.

“Property maintenance laws help to keep blight out and provide the tools to address it,” she says.

Think of property maintenance ordinances as the custodian of the township, making sure properties are kept tidy and the community stays attractive.



Blighted and abandoned properties, after all, can lower property values and reduce tax revenues. They also become targets for vermin and vandals, pose a danger to the public's health and safety, and send a negative message about a community.

"Every township is dealing with at least one property maintenance issue — it doesn't matter how rich or poor you are," Fishel says, "and it has the potential to lower the property values of everyone else."

Samuel Wiser Jr., an attorney with Salzmann Hughes, P.C., in Chambersburg, represents 30-some municipalities around the state. He estimates that about a third of his practice deals with code enforcement, primarily around property maintenance.

"It is becoming a more common issue," he says.

He believes some of the reason that property maintenance complaints have been on the rise is that residents today have higher expectations of the role of local government.

"Citizens have become more demanding of the services they feel municipalities should provide, and they often ask townships to be proactive in addressing certain issues," he says.

Neglectful property owners have also become a bigger problem as residents

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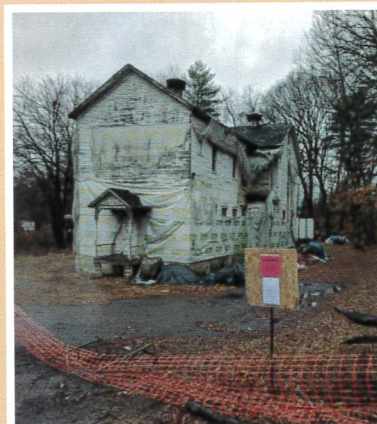


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Property maintenance ordinances help to encourage residents to clean up their properties before they become blighted or abandoned.





age or face health issues that may leave them unable to properly care for their homes.

"Some of the property maintenance issues we see are a direct result of mental health problems," Wisner says. He notes that this reality is compounded by today's lack of community, where folks no longer look out for one another. "Unfortunately, aging individuals and those who don't have the mental capacity to live on their own are left to themselves in many cases."

All of this can result in more run-down properties and an increasing num-

"If you can keep the grass cut and minor things in check, **you have a better chance of preventing larger issues.**"

ber of complaints from residents. It's a phenomenon that Bucci of Neshannock Township has observed during her 30-plus years with the township. When she first started in 1987, the township received maybe three property maintenance complaints in a year. These days, she estimates getting 200 to 300 calls annually from residents, mainly griping about the condition of their neighbors' property.

"People seem unhappier today," she says, noting that decades ago, neighbors would try to settle their differences themselves. Still, when the township goes out to investigate complaints, probably half the time the concerns are valid.

Property upkeep issues are especially magnified in summer when grass and

weeds are growing and people are outside more to notice problems.

"Grass mowing is the number-one complaint we hear all summer long," Amy Farkas, manager of Harris Township in Centre County, says. "People are very concerned about their neighbor's yard."

And perhaps rightfully so. High grass, if left unchecked, could be a symptom of a larger worry: Poorly maintained buildings and yards lead to declining property values and eventually crime and vandalism.

Not only can a derelict property be aesthetically aggravating — who wants to sit on their porch and look out at an unkempt yard? — but it can lower property values as much as 5 to 10%, according to home sale experts. ➤

What about BLIGHT?

Blight refers to deteriorating property conditions that have detrimental effects on a neighborhood and community. While property maintenance ordinances are designed to prevent blight or nip it in the bud, what happens if conditions at a property have already seriously declined? Thanks to a 2010 state law, municipalities have options.

Under the Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization Act, townships have the authority to go after the owners of blighted properties and hold them accountable. Municipalities may recover financial damages, including the cost of repairs or demolition, from owners with unpaid taxes or multiple blight violations by placing a lien against all their assets, not just the blighted properties.

A property owner cited for serious violations in one community also can be denied licenses and approvals, including building and zoning permits, in another. In addition, out-of-state owners can be extradited to Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Land Bank Act of 2012 created another tool for fighting blight. The law authorizes counties and municipalities with populations of 10,000 or more to establish land banks for taking ownership of vacant, abandoned, and tax-

delinquent properties so they can be turned back into productive use that benefits the community.

To learn more about blight and how you can fight it, visit the websites of the Pennsylvania Housing Alliance at housingalliancepa.org and the Center for Community Progress at communityprogress.net. The state Department of Community and Economic Development also has a website, pablightlibrary.com, devoted to resources addressing blight, including the guidebook *From Blight to Bright: A Comprehensive Toolkit for Pennsylvania*.





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In a 2017 study, the Institute for Public Policy and Economic Development at Wilkes University in Wilkes-

Barre measured the economic impact of blight in Luzerne County and reported \$1.8 million in direct lost tax revenue and \$35 million in indirect lost value and revenue.

Another study done in Berks County found a direct correlation between property maintenance laws and the level of crime an area was experiencing, according to Glenn Kraft, the owner of Kraft Code Services in Shillington.

"If you can keep properties maintained, it's less likely that crime will

take root," he says.

Andrew Holter, the founder of Strategic Municipal Group, which provides code enforcement services to municipalities, uses the "broken window" metaphor to explain how visible signs of decay can send a signal that a neighborhood is uncared for, which in turn, can lead to bigger problems.

"If you can keep the grass cut and minor things in check, you have a better chance of preventing larger issues," he says. "That's why it's best to be proactive and stay on top of things. Without a way to take your foot off the gas pedal, it can be hard to keep it from spiraling out of control."

Maintaining character

For township supervisors tasked with the health, safety, and welfare of a community, property maintenance ordinances provide a means for maintaining the character of an area while also helping to keep residents safe.

"It's the municipality's responsibility to provide a safe community for those who live and work there," Holter says, pointing out that code enforcement is just one piece of a multi-pronged approach, which includes public works and public safety, for providing well-maintained, safe neighborhoods.

Although code enforcement requires a commitment of time and money to administer and enforce, many communities see it as an investment. People want to move into desirable neighborhoods, which in turn helps to keep property values high and provides tax revenue to the township.

"You want to make sure homeowners are bringing up the property values and not degrading the neighborhood," says Michael Crotty, a partner in Siana Bellwoar, a law firm in Chester Springs.

Ultimately, township supervisors must decide, based on the character and philosophy of a community, whether to enact and enforce property upkeep ordinances. The Second Class Township Code provides the authority for townships to deal with property issues by addressing nuisances (Section 1529) or enacting a property maintenance code (Section 1704(a)).

"Some townships won't touch it with a 10-foot pole," Crotty says. "Others,



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especially if they have some densely packed development, are stricter and will take immediate action if they feel someone is not maintaining their property."

He advises townships to strike a balance by being respectful of property owners' rights while going after the more egregious, obvious cases.

"It's a quality-of-life issue for residents," Wisner says. To anyone who complains that property maintenance infringes on a resident's personal rights, he asks a simple question: "How does having tall grass or a yard strewn with junk also affect the neighbors' personal property rights and freedom?"

In Millcreek Township, a mostly rural community of almost 4,000 in Lebanon County, the board of supervisors has so far shied away from an overall property maintenance ordinance. For now, it relies on ordinances governing refuse, burning, and weeds and grass to go after problem properties.

"We send out letters requesting

cooperation with our ordinances," says secretary Lorie Kupp. In about 8 out of 10 cases, the residents will comply. "It's the couple who don't that create the biggest issue. Without a better ordinance, sometimes our hands are tied."

Heidelberg Township in Lehigh County also has chosen not to adopt a property maintenance code. To deal with any property issues that come up, zoning officer Dawn Didra uses the township's weed, solid waste, and nuisance ordinances.

"Because our residents don't want more oversight, we try to use the tools we have," she says.

In her experience, having a conversation with the owner of a problem property — whether in person or by phone — usually does the trick. If it doesn't, she will send a friendly warning letter before following up with a formal violation notice. If the issue remains unresolved after the second notice and a posting of the property, she will talk to the township supervisors and solicitor about how to proceed.

"I'll see how far they want to take it," she says.

In the two years she's been doing the job, she has only been to the district magistrate once. Unless the property issues pose a danger to the homeowners or others, the township prefers to work with residents on a resolution.

"We try to be sensitive," she says. ➤



"Grass mowing is the number-one complaint we hear all summer long. People are concerned about their neighbor's yard."



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"Our goal is compliance, not to kick them out of their home or fine them."

Getting started

Townships considering property maintenance enforcement should start with a self-analysis of what they hope to accomplish and how. First, look at any ordinances already in place.

"A lot of municipalities have outdated ordinances that don't address modern concerns," Wiser says. For example, an ordinance may list 12 inches as the maximum grass height, which most residents would consider too high in a more densely packed neighborhood.

As part of this analysis, townships should also review recent complaints it has received and decide what common issues an ordinance should address.

"Really take a good look at the problems you're having and what you want to do about them," Holter says. Obtain community input on the topic, too. He advises seeking feedback at public gatherings, using surveys, and discussing the

"The idea would not to be a hammer on residents, but if there's a problem, we would have a way of dealing with it."

issue at township meetings.

Next, figure out the best approach for your community. Nuisance ordinances allow townships to deal with such specific issues as high grass or junked cars, but communities seeking a jump on bigger, more widespread problems may want to adopt and tailor their own comprehensive property maintenance ordinances.

A good place to start is with the International Property Maintenance Code, a model code published and periodically updated by the International Code Council.

"It's comprehensive and covers everything, but it's completely up to the township supervisors to decide what they want to adopt," Kraft says.

If your township decides to use the IPMC, review it with your enforcement officer and solicitor to pick and choose areas to adopt and enforce.

"The International Property Maintenance Code is big and gives a lot of broad power and authority to the municipality and code officer," Holter says. "It can be a lot to adopt in its entirety, and townships might not want that en-

forcement burden."

Whatever you decide to enact, Crotty suggests making the language as objective as possible, putting specific limits in place, and tying it back to the health, safety, and welfare of a community.

Townships should also keep in mind that the IPMC provides a municipality with more tools and enforcement remedies, Wiser says. "It allows for more expeditious enforcement than the nuisance ordinance process," he says.

With a nuisance ordinance, violations are argued before a magisterial or district judge, who then decides if the township has proven its case, whether it's arguing that the grass is indeed more than 10 inches high or a weed is, in fact, noxious and not an ornamental plant.

"It's a longer process and somewhat more difficult to enforce," Wiser says.

With the IPMC, however, due process is already built in through appeals to the community's building code board of appeals, a body of qualified professionals already in place under the statewide Uniform Construction Code. If an offender decides not to appeal, which

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The trifecta of trouble

High grass, trash, and junked cars are three of the most cited problems when townships are dealing with neighbor complaints.

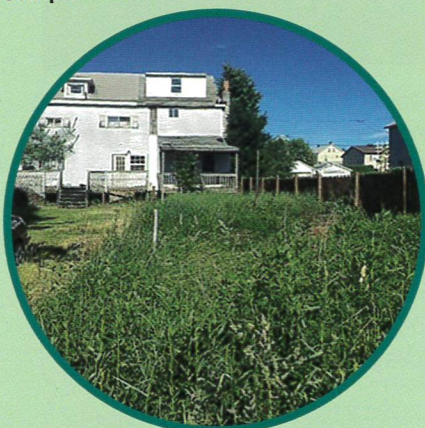


PHOTO CREDIT (top to bottom): Strategic Municipal Group; Heidelberg Twp., Lehigh Co.; Salzmann Hughes.

“It could help us stay ahead of blight and make the **community a more pleasant place to live.**”

Wiser says happens in nine out of 10 cases, the violation becomes conclusive, and the case proceeds to the judge to assess a fine or remedy.

“With this due process built in, it removes any argument by the time a case gets to the judge,” he says.

When weighing the pros and cons of a property maintenance code, townships should recognize that a day will come when they will appreciate having an enforcement mechanism in place. Don’t wait until you need it, Kraft says, because then it will take several months to adopt.

“Something is better than nothing,” Holter agrees. “Just make sure it’s meaningful.”

At a minimum, he recommends that townships adopt an ordinance to provide options for dealing with abandoned properties. (See the box about blight on page 12.)

“It gives the township a legal pathway to condemn a property and take appropriate administrative action,” he says. “Without it, you’re stuck.”

Carrots and sticks

Rice Township in Luzerne County has just recently begun exploring the idea of adopting a property maintenance ordinance.

“The problem we face now is we have a hodgepodge of ordinances passed over the decades to deal with things,” secretary Jeff Beck says, “and we are finding that a 50-year-old ordinance does not anticipate the conditions of today.”

A comprehensive property maintenance code could prove to be a cleaner and clearer option for managing issues, he says, and having the rules in a consolidated, up-to-date format would also make it easier for residents to understand what is expected of them.

“The idea is not to be a hammer on residents, but if there’s a problem, we would have a way of dealing with it,” Beck says.

New Milford Township in Susque-

hanna County has also been considering a property maintenance code in the wake of dealing with two abandoned buildings.

“It could help us stay ahead of blight and make the community a more pleasant place to live,” secretary Mary Jo Westin says.

So far, the supervisors and code enforcement officer have approached the idea carefully, recognizing that proper enforcement is the key to making it work.

“Do we have the time, staff, and money?” Westin says. “What’s the point, after all, of adopting an ordinance if we don’t have the tools and staff in place to enforce it?”

In the end, each township must decide for itself how to tackle property maintenance issues.

“A program can be administered in different ways as long as it’s done consistently across the municipality,” Kraft says. “Some municipalities will only respond to complaints, some want us out patrolling a community looking for issues, and some only want us to address the truly bad situations.”

No matter how a township decides to proceed, enforcement must be applied evenly to avoid any claim of discrimination. With many townships these days hosting a mix of development, from farms to million-dollar golf course communities, property expectations are going to vary.

“Folks in rural settings where neighbors are farther apart are not going to be bothered by the same things that those who live in a more densely populated community will,” Wiser says.

To deal with this issue, he recommends enforcing property maintenance on a complaint-driven basis.

“If you get complaints, follow up on them,” he says. “What you will probably find is that complaints are primarily coming from a specific community within the township.”

Townships should also remember that enforcement does not always mean punitive. Most townships, in fact, use a



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“carrot and stick” approach to property maintenance, striving to work with homeowners to obtain compliance before pursuing violations and citations only when necessary.

“There should never be a case where the first interaction a resident has with a code enforcement officer is a citation,” Wisner says. “You should only go after the flagrant offender — those who don’t care or won’t comply — in this manner.”

Kraft agrees. As a code enforcement officer for various municipalities, he prefers spending time upfront educating homeowners. His first objective is to make contact with the person and ask for voluntary compliance.

“We treat everyone with the utmost

“We try to show compassion by understanding their situation and what caused it and figuring out a way to resolve it.”

respect no matter who it is or what the condition of their property,” he says. “The best way to get compliance is to get them to understand why.”

By focusing on public health, safety, and welfare, he tries to explain how a person’s property conditions may be creating a health risk or causing consternation in the neighborhood.

“We tell them that what they’re doing is not fair to the neighbors who keep their property nice and are concerned about the negative impact on property values,” he says.

Typically, this approach works: Homeowners usually comply.

“Of course, there are always people who would rather thumb their nose at us,” Kraft says. “These are the ones who usually end up with violations.”

Many townships with an egregious property maintenance issue may find they are dealing with a homeowner

with an underlying issue, whether it’s a mental or physical illness, a family crisis such as a divorce, or limited financial means.

“We understand that people have problems from time to time. Instead of fining and slapping them with violations, we look for creative solutions,” Kraft says. “We try to show compassion by understanding their situation and what caused it and figuring out a way to resolve it.”

In a hoarder case in Lower Heidelberg Township, Berks County, where Kraft is the zoning and code enforcement officer, he has been working with the property owner, setting up meetings every couple of weeks and applying gentle pressure to set targets for resolving the problem. In recent months, the resident has held a yard sale and rented a dumpster to start throwing things away.

“Positive reinforcement has helped with this case,” manager Pamela Stevens says. “We try to work with the homeowner and are content when we see improvement.”

Kraft also will reach out to social service and volunteer agencies, such as the county aging office, veterans’ groups, or local churches, to get the additional help residents may need to address property maintenance issues.

In Franklin County, Guilford Township has worked with neighbors and even used its maintenance staff to clean up a few properties where homeowners had known medical problems.

“The township tries to give the property owner the benefit of the doubt and is proactive about working with community members,” says Wisner, the township solicitor.

The long haul

Therein lies a key component of successful property maintenance: While enforcement is important, so is working with homeowners to obtain compliance.

“No one wins when you go to enforcement,” Crotty says. “You may get fine money, but that’s not worth the cost and time of pursuing it.”

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Instead, he says, communicate early and often with landowners and be clear and consistent in your dealings.

"The number-one complaint I hear from property owners is they didn't know what was expected of them, were confused by the process, or tried to comply but the township didn't get back to them," he says.

Connie Kline, the secretary and code enforcement officer for North Centre Township in Columbia County, has found that a gentle-yet-firm-when-necessary approach works best for her.

"We follow up on all complaints, and if there is a problem, I first talk to the homeowners about it," she says. "Sometimes they may puff up and push back, but I'm always polite and kind to them, and that helps."

As long as the homeowners are acting in good faith and making progress, the township is willing to work with them, she says. If not, she will proceed with the next step in the township's building and property maintenance ordinance: providing written notice and filing violations as necessary. Occasionally, maybe once or twice a year, a case will go all the way to the district justice, but so far, the township has always prevailed.

"We make sure we have documented everything and followed the enforcement part of our ordinance," Kline says.

Persistence, time, and effort

As summer heats up and neighbor complaints rise, keep in mind that an effective property maintenance program is a process, one that takes persistence, time, and effort to see results.

"By being proactive, you are trying to catch problems before a property gets so bad that it faces demolition," Wiser reminds townships.

At the end of the day, it comes down to keeping the public safe, says Stevens of Lower Heidelberg Township, which enacted the IPMC in 2004 when it also adopted the Uniform Construction Code. "We want to maintain property values and have a beautiful community where people want to move in and stay."

At a recent meeting of the Neshannock Township Board of Supervisors, a resident unaware that the township was in the process of enacting a property maintenance code stood up to complain.

"He said he was thinking of moving because he was tired of seeing blight from the city coming to our community," supervisor Buccini says.

Township officials explained how they were enacting a new code that would provide the tools necessary for cleaning up derelict properties.

"But we also told him it's going to be a crawl-walk-run," she says. The township has to first see how the ordinance holds up before the local magistrate. Then, as the names of violators appear

in the newspaper, officials are hopeful that enforcement will serve as a deterrent to other property owners.

She is optimistic that the new ordinance will eventually make a difference.

"We can never start out fixing everything, especially the more run-down properties, but it's a start," she says. "We will slowly work to get things cleaned up so that you can drive down any street and see a nice, clean community that shows it cares." ♦



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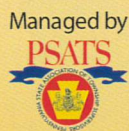
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Code enforcement officers and the law

A code enforcement officer is responsible for administering and enforcing various local laws ranging from storm-water management to the building code. Some of the specific duties related to property maintenance enforcement include investigating complaints, testifying at hearings, issuing citations, inspecting units, and enforcing rental ordinances.

Code enforcement officers should also be familiar with how their duties of enforcing property maintenance ordinances relate to the law and the Fourth Amendment, which provides protection against unreasonable searches and seizures. The following pointers from code enforcement experts will help to make sense of the law:

- **Fourth Amendment** — Protections granted under the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution generally prohibit the search of any property unless a warrant, supported by probable cause, has been issued. Exceptions to the Fourth Amendment include the plain-view doctrine and emergency situations.

- **Reasonable expectation of privacy** — A person can expect privacy in certain locations, such as inside a home or on their personal property. To search such places, a code enforcement officer will need either consent or a warrant.

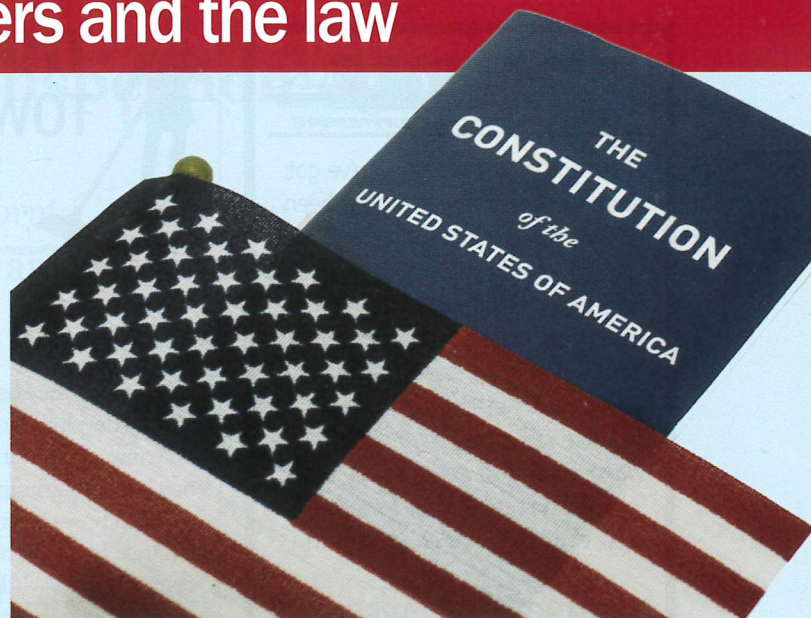
- **Consent** — The property owner, tenant, or other authorized adult must provide permission for a code enforcement officer to be on the property. Consent must be voluntary. If provided consent, try to get it in writing for evidence in any hearing before a district justice.

- **Warrant** — The code enforcement officer is seeking permission from a district justice to conduct a search of private property. Probable cause that a violation has occurred must be presented. Based on this evidence, the judge will decide whether to issue a warrant allowing a search.

- **Probable cause** — The Fourth Amendment requires reasonable evidence that a violation has occurred for a search to be conducted. This evidence is usually presented when seeking a search warrant. For property maintenance issues, this could be observations or credible third-party complaints about possible health hazards or blighted conditions.

- **Plain-view doctrine** — An exception to the Fourth Amendment is when evidence is visible from a public right of way, such as a sidewalk, street, porch, or approach to a building. Any place that is open to the public is also available to the code enforcement officer to gather evidence, including a walkway or porch that could be accessed by a delivery person, says Michael Crotty of Siana Bellwoar.

If a code enforcement officer has reason to be on a property, such as to post or serve a notice on the front door, and observes a violation from this vantage point, evidence obtained during this visit would fall under the plain-view doctrine. However, a code enforcement officer cannot go to extreme lengths, such as standing on a ladder or a car, to observe a violation on private property, says Andrew Holter of Strategic Municipal Group.



- **Emergency** — Another exception to the Fourth Amendment is a situation in which a true emergency, such as an immediate threat to human life, outweighs the privacy interest of the occupant. This should be used sparingly as courts have heavily scrutinized such claims, Holter says.

- **Abandoned building** — Courts have generally upheld warrantless inspections of abandoned buildings in extreme disrepair if it's impossible to obtain permission from the occupants or the owner is unreachable or unlikely to give permission, Holter says. If any doubt exists, seek a warrant or consult your solicitor.

- **Use of drones** — The use of drones to conduct surveillance in a private place is criminal with a few exceptions as spelled out in the law, including law enforcement conducting a lawful criminal investigation. In general, drones should not be used to access areas that are not in the public domain. Be sure to contact your solicitor before using a drone to gather evidence.

Aerial photography from such public sources as Google Maps, however, has so far held up as evidence in court.

- **Landlord-tenant issues** — Because the property owner is ultimately responsible for the upkeep of a property, enforcement of property maintenance should be targeted at the owner. However, consent to access a property should be obtained from both the landlord and the tenant.

Problems with properties tend to occur when owners live outside the community. A property maintenance ordinance can require a local property manager to be named if the owner doesn't live in the area. Also, by implementing registration and annual inspection of rental properties, townships can try to stay ahead of any potential problems with these properties.

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Keep in mind that the Fourth Amendment overrides local ordinances. As with any potential legal matter, townships should consult their solicitor when dealing with issues surrounding code enforcement and the Fourth Amendment.

Keep public spaces tidy, too

A visually appealing community increases property values, attracts residents and businesses, and improves the public image. Beyond property maintenance ordinances tackling the upkeep of private property, townships have a larger role to play in making sure the public spaces of a township stay in tip-top shape. From the municipal building to parks, townships can do their part to keep these public places neat, tidy, and, well, beautiful.

The Keep America Beautiful program and its affiliate Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful can help. Established in 1953, Keep America Beautiful provides expertise, programs, and resources to help people end litter, improve recycling, and beautify communities.

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful offers the following advice for improving communities:

- **Prevent it** — Research shows that trash attracts trash, and when a community is clean, it tends to stay clean. Townships should discourage littering, illegal dumping, and graffiti in the first place through education, prevention, and enforcement.

With support from the state Department of Environmental Protection, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful has launched Illegal Dump Free PA, a program that aims to curb illegal dumping through grants to municipalities for obtaining a surveillance kit, including concealable cameras, to identify persons who dump.



- **Clean it** — Townships can enlist volunteers and organizations to help clean up roadsides, parks, streambanks, and other areas where littering or dumping is a problem.

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful has a variety of resources, such as literature, safety videos, and technical assistance, to help with these efforts, including an adoption program in which volunteers can adopt roads, parks, neighborhood blocks, greenways, waterways, trails, and school grounds for trash and litter removal. Fresh Paint Days Pennsylvania is another beautification program in which municipalities and community groups are provided paint and supplies to renew a community structure. Applications are due in June.

The Great American Cleanup of PA, an annual initiative



launched the first day of spring as part of a nationwide effort, consists of thousands of events held across the state to clean up litter and trash along roadsides, streams, beaches, parks, forests, and neighborhoods. In 2018, more than 108,000 volunteers cleaned up 6.6 million pounds of trash and recycled 1.1 million pounds of materials along nearly 9,000 miles of roads, shorelines, and trails. These volunteers also planted roughly 11,000 trees, shrubs, and flowers and properly disposed of almost 20,000 tires.

- **Keep it** — The key to long-lasting success after a cleanup or beautification event is over is local involvement. Part of the mission of Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is to stimulate and increase community involvement so that areas stay clean.

Beautification and community greening efforts keep a cleaned site from becoming trashed again. Planting trees along streambanks and roads and in parks, for example, is one of the best and easiest ways to discourage littering while also helping the environment.



More information about these various enforcement and beautification programs is available at kab.org or keeppa-beautiful.org.