

Inspections

Giving New Meaning to C.E.O.:

Code Enforcement Officer

Thinking back to Career Day in school, there was never a Code Enforcement Officer presenting. Come to think of it, not once do I recall hearing a child say, "I want to be a Code Enforcement Officer when I grow up." Truth is, most people have never heard of a Code Enforcement Officer until they have one knock on their door. Hence, Code Enforcement remains a confusing and misunderstood profession that most people know very little about. So who are Code Enforcement Officers and why do we need them?

Code Enforcement performs a variety of functions related to their role as public servants. They must be problem solvers, communicators, mediators, researchers and educators. Code Enforcement Officers address sign ordinances, zoning issues, nuisance concerns and property maintenance. They handle code violations which, while important, are often neglected. In some cities, Code Enforcement Officers are dubbed as "The Curb Appeal Task Force." I know what you're thinking... they just focus on the aesthetics. Well not necessarily. While having a neat and clean neighborhood is nice to look at, it also benefits the residents by protecting your property value and decreasing crime. Statistics show that crime is higher in blight areas. Now we're not talking about break-ins or petty theft, we're talking about drug crimes, graffiti, vandalism and even prostitution. All of which are very real in any city.

Every community and neighborhood

faces the struggles of vacant houses, tall grass, weeds, trash and inoperable vehicles or vehicle parts scattered about. All of which can become quite an eyesore. Not to mention, bringing in unwanted pests like snakes, bugs, rodents and even mosquitoes. Controlling these pests enable disease control. Taking into consideration the safety & wellbeing of the public includes general property standards. Code Enforcement Officers provide intangible benefits which can profoundly impact and enhance our safety, health and overall quality of life. They provide the first line of action in making sure these issues are managed in a responsible and effective way.

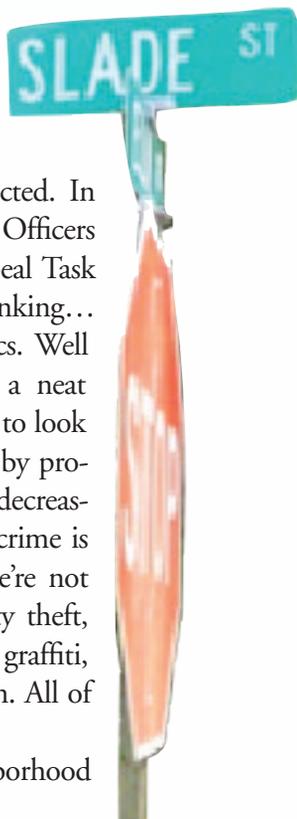


So who do you call when there's an overgrown bush or tree obstructing your view at a stop sign? Yes, Code Enforcement does that too. When it comes to safety of our citizens, it goes beyond police officers and firefighters. Preventing an accident by simply trimming back

some limbs is just as important as those who help you after the accident has occurred. How about when you call for emergency assistance? Sometimes, in the event of an emergency, every minute and second counts; therefore, it's important to have your house number clearly within view on the front of your house so the emergency personnel can find you quickly. If for no other reason, your life is important enough to have a code which requires such.

Code Enforcement Officers are the ones who enforce that code to prevent any hesitation that could save your life.

Now that we've covered who we are and why we do it, let's get to the nuts n' bolts of how we do it and what are we looking for. Hinesville's code enforcement cases are generated by complaints received or by observation in assigned neighborhoods. So if you haven't seen us in your neighborhood yet, you will. During September 2014 through January 2015, Code Enforcement handled 568 cases. Of which, 35% were residential parking violations. The City of Hinesville Code of Ordinances Chapter 16, Article III, covers all of those restrictions, to include acceptable places



to park your personal vehicle, recreational vehicle or even your commercial vehicle. This section also informs you of the maximum number of vehicles you can park on your property and how to legally park on the street. As with this section and all other ordinances, you can view them online at www.cityofhinesville.org and click on the 'government' tab or at www.municode.com. So take a look at how Hinesville has established ordinances that can directly affect you.



During the warmer months, the most common violation is overgrown properties. Our city ordinances cover not only tall grass and weeds, but it also covers overgrown shrubs and vines. Keeping vegetation maintained on your property will ensure you don't have a Code Enforcement Officer knocking on your door just to let you know you need to mow your grass and trim the vines growing over the roof of your house.

Polycarts (trash containers) are also a common violation. Believe it or not, leaving your polycart at the road can cause a number of issues. It can lead to scattered trash, blockage of drainage, and even obstruction of the roadway. Many times, empty polycarts are blown over by the wind directly in the way of traffic. Drivers having to bob-n-weave their way around polycarts can be avoided. The City of Hinesville Code of Ordinances states we must keep our polycarts next to our house except for



your scheduled trash collection day. Polycarts may be placed by the road after 5pm the day before collection and must be pulled back to our homes by 6:30am the day following collection.



Other common violations include inoperable vehicles or vehicle parts, trash, accumulation of junk and improper storage, stagnant water (swimming pools, tires, buckets, etc.), and basketball goals at the street.

It is the officer's duty to address the violation(s) by notifying the occupant or owner of the property, let them know what they need to do to correct the violation and allow a reasonable time to do so. Hinesville issues courtesy notices allowing the resident or owner to correct the violation without penalty. Some cities issue citations imposing an immediate fine for certain local ordinances like illegal parking. However, those who fail to comply after receiving notices from Code Enforcement may be summoned to appear in municipal court even for a simple violation such as parking incorrectly or leaving their polycart roadside.

We all have rights & responsibilities... whether as a local government, property owner or tenant. We all need to work together as a community to support, protect and even enhance our quality of life in Hinesville. Our principles and values affect where we live, work and play. May we each do our part to better Hinesville whether it is home for a day or a lifetime.