
MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Steve Dush, AICP

Date: August 13, 2012

Subject: **Discussion of Abandoned and Vacant Properties**

ITEM DESCRIPTION

At the June 25, 2012 City Council Meeting, Council had requested that staff provide an overview of the City's process as it relates to Abandoned/Vacant properties and how some peer cities address the same.

BACKGROUND

Process Summary

The City of Dunwoody process normally starts by staff being contacted about a property maintenance issue, e.g.: grass too tall, debris, broken windows, etc. Following a complaint, staff will visit the site, assess the situation, and determine if there is a violation. If there is a violation, staff will place a hang tag on the door, and depending upon the issue, may issue a citation, normally after a 10 day period to remedy the violation. The process of seeking compliance by providing a period to remedy is typically the most effective and efficient, as the citation/court process can be quite extensive. Staff's experience has shown that providing an initial period of time to remedy a violation before issuing a citation produces better results in court.

When it is evident that a home is abandoned/vacant and compliance to remedy a violation is not being achieved, staff works to identify the property owner through public records to send certified letters and also notifies our Police Department so they are also aware of the situation and can monitor accordingly. During this time, code compliance staff monitors the property. Many times a mailed notice is sent back because the property ownership may not be current, which is typically a foreclosure situation. The monitoring of the property by Staff often times produces a contact when a real-estate listing agent places a sign in the yard. When this contact is made, staff will work with the agent to remedy the violation. As of the writing of this memorandum, there are currently 21 homes that staff is monitoring.

In summary, compliance in the timeliest manner is our objective, recognizing that each case is unique and discretion to address the uniqueness is exercised to achieve the objective.

Peer City Review

Staff had reached out to Sandy Springs, Johns Creek and the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement (GACE) to see how other municipalities are addressing abandoned/vacant

properties. For instance, Sandy Springs has 29 homes on their vacant list and of those 29, five had code violations. In summary, from our review, the peer cities and GACE resources are following a very similar process as Dunwoody's. This is due in large part because of the limitations placed upon municipalities entering and conducting work on private property. Anecdotally, the compliance objective that Dunwoody employs is more unique and is a best practice for the approach of achieving compliance with contextual discretion begins with a spirit of partnership and cooperation.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

No action is recommended by Staff at this time.