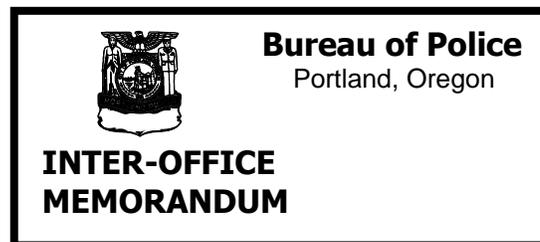


DATE: March 8, 2016
TO: Knowledge Base
FROM: Sergeant Randy Teig #21689
East Precinct
SUBJ: East Precinct Distressed Property Response



Situation

Neighborhoods are suffering diminished livability due to residential and commercial properties that become vacant through foreclosure, probate and abandonment. These properties attract transient populations that utilize the properties for shelter and as a location where they engage in illicit drug activity and other criminal conduct to include sex crimes, theft, narcotics trafficking, human trafficking and other criminal activities that stress neighborhoods and undermine community confidence. In many cases these properties become dumping grounds for trash, human waste and other forms of rubbish. They attract vermin and other infestations that infiltrate neighboring properties. As a result these properties are the subject of ongoing concern from community members who are concerned their neighborhood will fall into blighted condition (ORS. 457.010) due to Dangerous and Derelict Structures (City Code 29.40) and the criminal activity that is frequently associated with such properties.

Neighborhood Response Team Response

The East Precinct Neighborhood Response Team officers take action on distressed properties when they become the subject of neighborhood livability complaints. Generally they do not seek out locations, but will take reasonable steps if they become aware of a property before it becomes a neighborhood problem.

Goal

Timely, effective response to patrol and neighbor complaints associated with distressed dangerous properties.

Strategy

East Precinct Neighborhood Response Team Officers utilize best practices and governance provided by the United States Department of Justice Problem Oriented Policing program, recommended strategies presented by the United States Conference of Mayors, Oregon Statutes, Portland Municipal Codes, Police Bureau Policy and particularized knowledge obtained through the officer's experience and training. With knowledge gleaned from these resources officers establish strategic alliances with numerous partners: including but not limited to; Community Members, Bureau of Development Services, Bureau of Environmental Services, County Health, Office of Neighborhood Involvement, Portland General Electric, Portland Water Bureau, Multnomah County Corrections. Finally, Neighborhood Response Team officers maintain a database of houses that are the subject of intervention by team members and track the effectiveness of their tactics in affecting positive change in the neighborhood.

Tactics

Upon receiving information that a specific property has reached a condition where it is impacting neighborhood safety and livability, Neighborhood Response Team officers utilize the following tactics to secure neighborhood safety and place the property on a path where the problems related to the property can be resolved through a series of strategic alliances.

- A. Identify the party responsible for the property (if possible).
 1. Let the responsible party know the property is the subject of complaints.
 2. Determine if the responsible party is willing or able to abate the problems.
 3. Obtain formal trespass agreements if appropriate.
 4. Inform the responsible party that they are liable for the cost of city interventions required to make the property safe.
 5. Inform the responsible party they may be fined for inaction and be subject to liens against any sale of the property.
- B. Identify the impact on neighborhood livability and the threat to community safety.
 1. Visually inspect the property from the street.
 2. Talk with neighbors to determine if they are aware of crimes committed on the premises, or other unsafe conditions that may require intervention.
- C. Investigate the condition of the property and determine if the property is occupied.
 1. Access the property to determine if there is illegal dumping or other situations that create dangers to the health and safety of the community.
 2. Clear the structure of squatters who may be trespassing and committing crimes on the premises.
 3. Examine the interior of the property for conditions that are a threat to the health and safety of the community.
 4. Determine if the property is being damaged by criminal acts.
- D. Examine the property for evidence of vacancy.

The property must not have a legal occupant, and then one of the following must apply:

1. Subject to foreclosure, or
2. Windows and or doors are boarded up, or glass broken out of the windows, or
3. The doors are smashed, broken, or unhinged, or
4. The water, gas or electricity has been shut off, or
5. There are accumulations of trash, rubbish or other debris within the structure or on the surrounding property, or
6. There are police reports documenting crimes on the premises or crimes to the property (i.e. vandalism, trespass), or
7. There has been at least one documented Title 79 violation cited.

- E. Examine the reported history of the property through VCam and PPDS.
- F. Photo document the condition of the property
 - 1. Photograph conditions that represent a threat to the health of the community.
 - 2. Photograph dangerous structural elements (i.e. bare electrical wires).
 - 3. Photograph evidence of criminal conduct on the premises (drugs paraphernalia, stolen property, and graffiti).
- G. Secure the location with a board up to prevent ongoing criminal damage to the property, deny access by trespassers to public health hazards contained inside the building, and prevent trespassers from exposure to dangerous building conditions.
- H. Post the location with an informational bulletin that informs neighbors and responsible parties that the locations has dangerous conditions present at the location and provides contact information for East Precinct Neighborhood Response Team officers.
- I. Document both conditions and actions taken by police concerning the property.
 - 1. Write police reports documenting conditions and actions taken at the location to protect the community and the property.
 - 2. Enter the address in the East Precinct Neighborhood Response Team database for problem locations.
 - 3. If known, contact the responsible party and notify them of the dangerous conditions and potential consequences of inaction.
 - 4. Place all photographic evidence into the NRT/BDS shared folder.
 - 5. Notify the Bureau of Development Services of the conditions and circumstances surrounding the subject property.
- J. Assist the Bureau of Development Services.
 - 1. Cooperate with documenting dangerous conditions at the property.
 - 2. Accompany BDS officers during inspection, clean-up, and vacate warrants.
 - 3. Meet with BDS officials to discuss strategies and ways to improve actions.
- K. Notify the neighbors and district officers of actions taken at the property.
- L. Utilize Strategic Services to monitor the effectiveness of tactics.
 - 1. Monitor crime trends before and after securing locations (500 to 1000 foot radius).
 - 2. Obtain periodic graphic documentation to for district officers to utilize neighborhood meetings.

Non-Police Actions

The “draft code” and Vacant Property Registration Program plan created by the City of Portland Revenue Bureau Office of Management and Finance outlines a program that would dovetail directly into current actions. This plan is illustrative of best practices throughout the United States. Based on our experiences in dealing with these properties from our role in the Neighborhood Response Team it seems like the VPR program would make things much more effective and orderly.

The following charts depict potential impact on calls for service and reported crimes, believed to impact community livability. An immediate impact area of 500 feet in all directions from the distressed property was examined for overall reduction in perceived crime leading to calls for service. The statistical information tracks the 12 months preceding and following the application of the East Precinct Neighborhood Response Team's strategy for distressed properties.

