

Community Focus Statement E: Improve public safety.

Action Statement E.4: Design and promote materials to educate about identifying and reporting illegal dumping activities.

E4

Benchmarks: Code enforcement materials specific to the Crest Forest communities are easily accessible by all community members.

Champion: Volunteer group or person or can be identified by the community

Estimated Cost: \$2,000–\$10,000



Community volunteers can help document and report potential code violations, such as abandoned cars. Image source: Curtis Perry.

Code violations are actions that break property-related regulations intended to protect the public’s health, safety, and welfare in the Crest Forest communities. Code violations may include failing to maintain buildings to proper safety standards, abandoning vehicles, failing to clean up piles of trash on private property, and installing illegal signs, among others. In San Bernardino County, code violations are addressed by the County’s Land Use Services Department’s Code Enforcement section, which employs professional code enforcement staff. Community policing programs can support these efforts by recruiting local community members to be on the lookout for code violations in the Crest Forest communities and to report these violations to the Code Enforcement section. Recent fires in the mountain region resulted in installation of license plate recording cameras. This additional information has proven useful. In coordination with the Sheriff’s Department and Code Enforcement, placement of additional cameras, recording devices and signs may be the most effective method for deterring or enforcing illegal dumping in this area.

A Code Enforcement Committee could work closely with the County’s Land Use Services Department and other County departments to develop a guide that educates volunteers on how to identify and document code violations and assist in gaining compliance. Volunteer code enforcement members could help in addressing simple violations such as trash or illegal parking. This frees up professional code enforcement staff to address more serious and complicated issues, helping to conserve resources and ensure more complete coverage of the Crest Forest communities. In order to carry out these duties, volunteers must be familiar with what constitutes a code enforcement violation. Volunteer code enforcers should participate in an introductory training session to identify the primary code enforcement issues present in the Crest Forest communities, as well as other issues that come up less frequently but which volunteers should be aware of. Program organizers should also run recurring training programs to provide refreshed and updated information. Volunteers should know how to document observed suspected violations, including taking pictures and filling out any forms. While volunteers are not responsible for serving notices or otherwise confronting property owners, they should receive training in how to interact with property owners and diffuse any tensions that may arise in the course of their duties. Volunteer code enforcers should meet regularly with professional code enforcement staff and law enforcement officers, building enhanced

trust and connections. In accordance with the principles of community policing, volunteers should be visible members of the community. Volunteers can participate in community events and serve as liaisons between code enforcement staff and other members of the public.

When establishing a volunteer code enforcement program, the Crest Forest communities should consider how often to provide training and what material should be covered. Volunteers will require adequate resources, including equipment needed for documenting violations and any appropriate identification. As with other community policing efforts, it is critical that the volunteers are representative of the Crest Forest communities. It is best if volunteers can participate in the program for at least six continuous months (and ideally more than a year if at all possible), as individuals with a longer-term presence may be viewed as more trustworthy. It is also very important that there be a process in place for members of the community to provide feedback on the volunteer code enforcement participants and that any identified issues are addressed quickly. If the community views the volunteer program as flawed or untrustworthy, the benefits from such a program may erode.

Case Study: City of Monterey Park, Code Enforcement Volunteer Program

<http://www.montereypark.ca.gov/224/Code-Enforcement-Volunteer-Program>

Action	Action Leader	Timeline	Resources
1. Establish a committee to create code enforcement pamphlets and other educational materials.	Champion	Month 1	San Bernardino County, Code Enforcement http://cms.sbcounty.gov/lus/CodeEnforcement/CodeEnforcementHome.aspx Center for Community Progress: Community Code Enforcement Partnerships http://www.communityprogress.net/tool-3--community-code-enforcement-partnerships-pages-269.php
2. Coordinate with the County Land Use Services Department to ensure code enforcement materials are consistent with regulations.	Code enforcement committee	Months 2–6	
3. Use online resources, newsletters, and presentations at homeowner’s association/CSD meetings to distribute educational materials to community members.	Code enforcement committee	Months 6–12	
4. Establish a mechanism to gather ongoing feedback from community members on code enforcement materials.	Code enforcement committee	On-going	
5. Revise the code enforcement educational materials to ensure that information is current and up to date.	Code enforcement committee	Annually	