



June 2009

Crime Prevention through Code Enforcement

The "broken window" theory as published by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling suggests that a certain sequence of events can be expected in deteriorating neighborhoods: evidence of decay (broken windows, accumulated trash, deteriorated building exteriors) which remains in the neighborhood for a reasonably long period of time causes people who live and work in the area to feel more vulnerable and to begin to withdraw. They become less willing to intervene to maintain public order (for example, to attempt to break up groups of rowdy teens loitering on street corners) or to address physical signs of deterioration. As more windows break, some vandals may become bolder and intensify their harassment and vandalism. This makes residents even more fearful and less likely to participate in community upkeep. Offenders now may come in from outside the area, sensing that the neighborhood has become a vulnerable and less risky site for crime.

Applying the "broken windows" approach, Hillsborough County Code Enforcement takes steps to prevent crime through Code Enforcement by conducting routine and proactive enforcement of County Ordinances, and by strengthening partnerships with surrounding enforcement agencies and community organizations. This proactive approach to the enforcement of property maintenance codes has been shown to slow, or even reverse, declines in community values and increases in criminal activity. June's edition highlights some of Code Enforcement's crime prevention efforts.

S.A.F.E. (Safe Areas For Education)

The Safe Areas For Education initiative is designed to proactively identify and eliminate conditions that create a nuisance and could, or actually do, create a harborage for criminal activity near schools. Sweeps are scheduled near public schools, where Code Enforcement Investigators search vacant lots and structures for overgrown conditions, unsecure and unsanitary pools, unsecure structures, and other conditions that harbor potentially harmful objects or environments or that are conducive to criminal activity and foster an unsafe environment for our children.



Graffiti Abatement

Graffiti is used as a gang signal to mark territory or to serve as an indicator or "tag" for gang-related activity. Code Enforcement joined

forces with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office and the County's Public Works department to identify graffiti and to quickly remove it from publicly owned property. Graffiti that is found on private property is a violation of Hillsborough County Ordinance. When found on private property, Code Enforcement issues a notice to the property owner to have the violation removed. If the property owner fails to take action there may be fines assessed.

False Alarm

In 2003, Hillsborough County Sheriff's deputies responded to 60,427 false security alarms. Although security system can greatly reduce the chance of having an unwanted intruder in your home, systems that aren't working properly or have been accidentally set off by users, are a waste of Law Enforcement's precious time and effort. As a result, in October 2004, the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners approved a security alarm ordinance where Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office and Code Enforcement work in partnership to reduce the number of false alarm calls. As a result, false alarm calls have decreased more than 50 percent, allowing law enforcement more time to respond to legitimate emergency calls.



Special Operations

Hillsborough County Code Enforcement partners with the Sheriff's Office, Animal Services, and agencies such as Tampa Electric in initiatives such as Operation "Big Bite" and Operation "Boomerang" to fight crime by proactively addressing nuisance conditions and properties. Such operations recognize that crime increases in neighborhoods where nuisance violations occur and go unmaintained. From a Code Enforcement perspective, such operations are aimed at breaking crime cycles in run-down neighborhoods through code enforcement and by educating owners of run-down properties to clean up and make the neighborhood less attractive to criminals.

Quick Links

- [Code Enforcement Homepage »](#)
- [Tip of the Month Homepage »](#)
- [Online Services »](#)

- [Land Development Code »](#)
- [Minimum Code Ordinance »](#)
- [Alarm Ordinance 04-16 »](#)

- [Common Residential Violations »](#)
- [Top Twelve Code Violations »](#)
- [FAQs »](#)

