

## **"GET TOUGH" POLICY/PROCEDURE: YARD MAINTENANCE**

An increasing problem in City neighborhoods is some owners' failure to maintain their properties cleanly by keeping their grass and weeds cut regularly and their yards free of trash & debris.

Unkempt yards cause a blighting impact on a neighborhood and, in some cases, on surrounding neighborhoods. Negative impacts can also include the possible erosion of property values and the deterioration of other property owners' attitudes to maintain their yards. There is also the potential for increased crime, public safety issues, and the erosion of the quality of life for City residents and neighborhoods' stability.

The City has adopted a **strict** enforcement policy for property owners who fail to maintain their yards.

### **HIGH GRASS & WEEDS and TRASH & DEBRIS**

The procedure for citing high grass & weeds and or trash & debris is as follows:

The assigned inspector will regularly survey his/her area to identify properties that violate the Code for high grass & weeds and or trash & debris. A high grass & weeds violation is when growth exceeds ten inches. A trash & debris violation is one cubic yard or more of such materials or, in the inspector's judgment, less than one cubic yard, but is loose and or scattered and, as such, creates a blighting impact on the street.

When violations of either high grass & weeds or trash & debris are found, the inspector will take one of the following courses of action:

- 1) Suppose the property in question involves a vacant structure. In that case, the inspector will open a case via the inspection system, citing the relative violation, GT113 for Trash & Debris, or GT126 for High Grass & Weeds. The inspector will inspect the expiration of the notice and order. If the violation remains, a ticket will be requested, and the appropriate work order will be completed and sent to contract. Suppose the applicable violation is already on an open case and has been ticketed. In that case, the inspector will send the appropriate work order to correct the violation for the remainder of the season.
- 2) For occupied properties where the violation has not already been cited, the inspector will open a case via the inspection system, citing the relative violation GT112 for T/D and GT125 for HG&W's. The inspector will inspect the expiration of the notice and order. If the violation remains, a ticket will be requested, and the appropriate work order will be completed and sent to contract.

**Note:** For all occupied properties, once the violation has been corrected, it must be abated. In situations involving vacant structures, once ticketed, these violations will remain open for the duration of the season as long as the ownership has not changed. There will only be one ticket issued per violation for each case in this vacant structure scenario; from that point on, any time the violation reoccurs, it will be sent to contract and the owner will be charged for the service. If the property has changed ownership, the notice and order must be reissued to the new owner before ticketing and or sending it to contract.

Whenever there is a violation involving trash and debris, the inspector will list a brief description of what the debris is and where it is located on the property. For example: (Furniture and other loose debris in the rear yard) This information will be placed in the

comment section after selecting the violation.

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## PROCEDURES FOR "GET TOUGH" HG&W'S AND T&D TICKETING

1. Inspector inspects the property when the five-day N&O expires. (13 days following the issue date)
2. If the violation remains, the inspector takes a photo marking the date, time, and case number on it and selects the violations to be ticketed in the inspection system. The inspector will electronically sign the ticket utilizing the inspection system, completing the Affirmation statement requirement, and an electronic Right of Entry form shall be completed if the property is not vacant or if the inspection was not conducted from the right of way.
3. Once a ticket has been issued, the inspector will submit the appropriate work order, according to procedures outlined in Document number 5, and send it to contract. For T/D, the work order is sent to DES; for HG&W's, the work order is sent via e-mail through the Buildings and Zoning support staff to the private contractor. All billing will be performed by Administrative staff.
4. The Buildings and Zoning support staff will check the tickets for accuracy and enter the computer's ticket information. If both HG&W's and T/D are selected, the violations will appear on the same ticket. Tickets are printed the next day.
5. The Buildings and Zoning support staff will mail the ticket to the property owner and reschedule the case for the inspector to return seven days from the date the ticket is mailed.
7. The Building and Zoning support staff will distribute the Affidavit for the inspector to sign, sign the portion as the commissioner of deeds, then scan the signed document back into share-point. Any necessary hearing package will be prepared by MCVB utilizing the share-point system. If assistance is required, the Buildings and Zoning support staff will provide it. MCVB will advise the Code Enforcement Unit of any scheduled hearings. Any subpoenas will be forwarded to the appropriate inspector for an appearance at MCVB.