



PROFILE | City of Worcester

The **City of Worcester** has created an excellent example of a comprehensive approach aimed at dealing with vulnerable properties and protecting the local housing stock. “SAVE (Stabilize – Assist – Value – Enforce) Our Neighborhoods,” focuses on four areas:

Education and Outreach

The NeighborWorks Homeownership Center of Worcester was designated as a foreclosure counseling center as part of the National Hope Hotline (888-995-HOPE) and the Worcester City Council has re-allocated CDBG block grant funds to support staffing at the Homeownership Center.

Worcester Community Housing Resources, a nonprofit development corporation, has partnered with the city to start a receivership program. Receivers are court appointed to bring properties up to code where the owners have been unable. In return, the receiver gets a lien on the property and is repaid. The receivership arrangement is intended to ensure responsible management of the properties, allowing tenants to remain, until the property is transferred to a new owner.

Interdepartmental Collaboration

A new inspectional services agency set up to monitor private property has been created. The new entity, the Department of Inspectional Services, enforces state Building Codes, Housing and Sanitary Codes and public health laws as well as city ordinances that preserve the condition of private property and the safety of Worcester residents. The Department includes the following existing City Divisions: Division of Buildings and Zonings, Division of Housing, and the Division of Health Inspections and is headed by a Commissioner of Inspectional Services, a Cabinet-level position reporting directly to the City Manager.

Code Enforcement

Under the direction of the Commissioner of Inspectional Services the Property Review Team (PRT) tracks properties flagged by inspectional services due to public safety concerns, deteriorating condition and/or negative neighborhood impacts. The PRT will work with the Department of Inspectional Services, the Worcester Police Department, Worcester Fire Department, the License Commission, the Divisions of Economic and Neighborhood Development, the Law Department, the Treasurer’s Office and the Department of Public Works and Parks.

Data Collection and Analysis

The Worcester Division of Technical Assistance has developed a Property Analysis Database that is a single repository for permitting, inspection, public safety, legal, and financial information from City Departments. The PRT can use this database to review at-risk properties, including information about properties that have been foreclosed on or are about to be foreclosed.

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