

Response to Questions on the FY 2009 Advertised Budget Plan

Request By: Supervisor Gross

Question: In the Strike Force Team's "5 Gradations of Code Enforcement", on what gradation would the team take action on foreclosed properties? And, who is responsible for currently following up when court action has occurred with violators (e.g., Strike Team, community)?

Response: The Strike Team's focus is the eradication of illegal boarding houses in Fairfax County. In some cases foreclosures may be an unintended consequence of the work of the Strike Team. The current plan is to engage County staff from a variety of agencies—Office of the Sheriff, Police Department, Fire and Rescue Department, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES), Health Department and Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ)—to monitor foreclosed properties which will allow the Strike Teams to remain focused on the illegal boarding house issue. During the course of their work, in any of the five gradations of code enforcement, members of the Strike Team will report any vacant/foreclosed homes to appropriate County agencies.

At the present time, staff from the Police Department, Office of the Sheriff, Fire and Rescue Department, DPWES, DPZ, and the Department of Housing and Community Development is designing a countywide strategy to identify and monitor foreclosed homes to prevent them from becoming neighborhood nuisances and havens for criminal activity. DPWES is moving forward to address the potential increase in workload associated with foreclosures and grass complaints by reallocating existing FY 2008 resources to increase staffing levels and increasing the number of vendors under contract to assist the County with cutting grass, securing vacant buildings and other costs associated with preventing these homes from falling into disrepair.

Similar to other enforcement agency practices, the Strike Team conducts, at appropriate levels, re-inspections of properties throughout the investigation, resolution/prosecution, and completion phases of a case to ensure that compliance is achieved. Once compliance has been achieved, the team closes the case. If subsequent complaints are received about the property pertaining to the mission of the Strike Team, either the case will be re-opened or a new case established as appropriate. If other, Non-Strike Team issues arise, those are then investigated by the enforcement agency—Fire and Rescue Department, DPWES, Health Department and DPZ—that is charged with that code area.