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DENVER CITY COUNCIL ★ DISTRICT 5

Problem Property “Doom Loop”

DENVER DISTRICT 5 ★ CONNECTING PEOPLE & GOVERNMENT

Executive Summary

When a problem property is reported, there are multiple paths forward to get the property into compliance. However, there is little coordination and there are few available positive outcomes for either residents or property owners.

Challenges:

- Inconsistent inspection staff across all agencies tasked with inspections
- Siloed agencies lead to lack of coordination
- No lead agency or staff tasked with oversight of entire process
- Legal framework does not have teeth
- CAO does not have adequate staff bandwidth
- Outcomes often involve eviction of residents, condemnation or demolition of buildings
- Every situation is unique, but our code is one-size-fits-all
- Frequently, resolution of the issue falls to DPD and/or Sheriffs

2024 Mayor's Office Goal Alignment:

- Safe Denver
- Affordable Denver
- Great Government
- Employee Satisfaction

Complaint Received *(by City Council Office)*

Civil Issues

Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DOTI)

Community Planning & Development

Department of Public Health and Environment (DDPHE)

Excise and License (EXL)

City Attorney's Office (CAO)
Prosecution and Code Compliance Enforcement (PACE) Team

Zoning and Neighborhood Inspections (ZNIS)

Neglected and Derelict Buildings (NADB) division

Office of Housing Stability (HOST)

Denver Human Services

Department of Safety

DPD District Community Resource Officers (CRO's) & HOT Teams

Sheriffs

Street Outreach Team (SET)

Criminal Activity

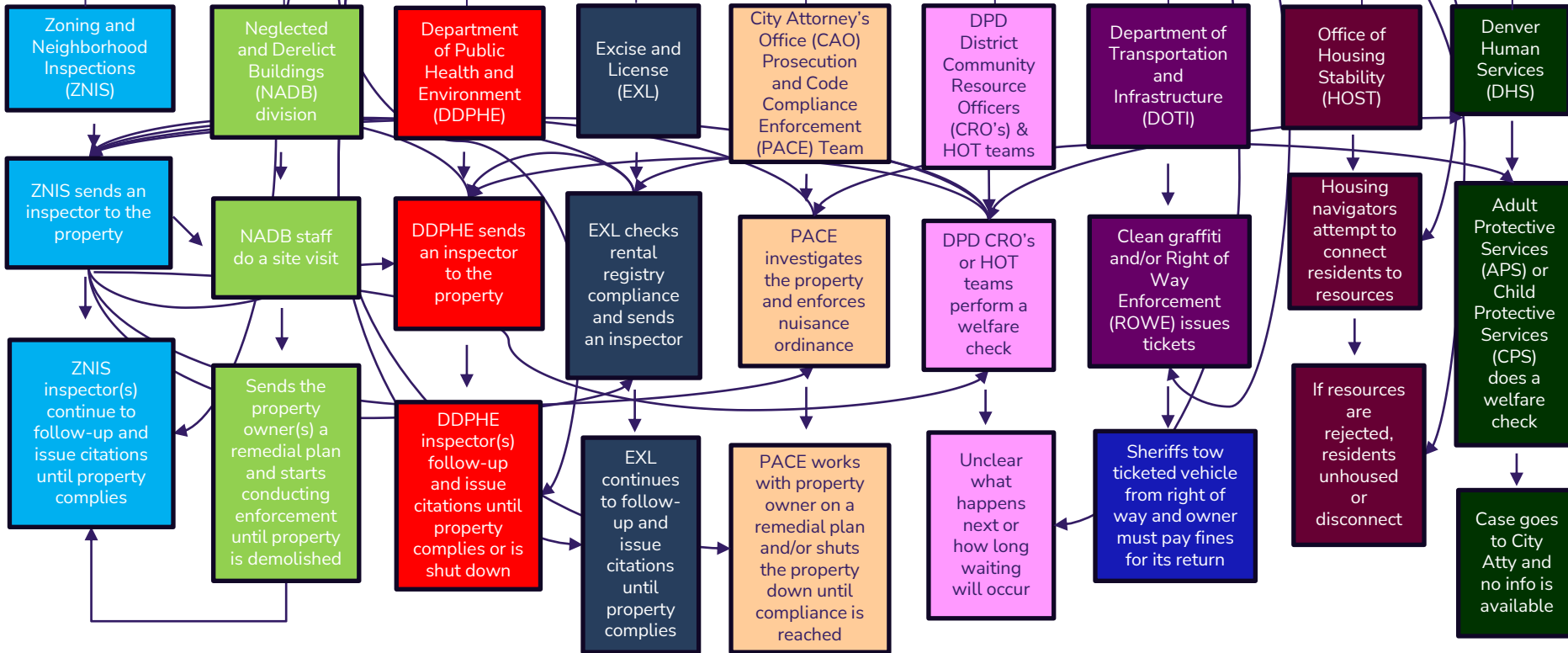
DPD Investigations

City Attorney's Office

District Attorney

Complaint Received by Council Office *(the "Doom Loop")*

Civil Issues



Case Study #1: 50 South Colorado Boulevard

Former church located near Burns Park at the intersection of Leetsdale Dr, Bayaud Ave, and Colorado Blvd

There was a Verizon cell tower in the steeple of the church. The property owners were being paid as part of that lease agreement, so they were not incentivized to tear down the building

Property was finally demolished in 2023 after Councilwoman Sawyer's Office played point agency to coordinate between the neighborhood organization, CPD, DPD, DPR, DOTI, and CDPHE

Created numerous safety challenges for the neighborhood, including a neighbor being attacked in the adjacent alley

Never placed on the Neglected and Derelict Buildings (NADB) list despite meeting the criteria

Remained a resource drain for the city for over a decade

- Total calls for service since January 1, 2018: **165**
- Total Safety personnel involved (including 911 operators): **260**
- Total 311 calls: **41**

Issues identified from this case

- Cell tower leases in NADB or nuisance properties disincentivizing demolition of structurally insecure or unsafe buildings;
- Resource drain for Safety personnel, 311, and responding agencies
- Lack of coordinated Agency response put this property in the "doom loop" for over a decade



Photo taken pre-demolition



Photo taken post demolition

Case Study #2: 690 Albion Street

Two-unit, long-term rental home in Hilltop

Property is in a trust managed by siblings after the father died

- No one could contact the property owner

In February 2023, neighbors started reaching out to Councilwoman Sawyer's Office about this property:

- Allegedly running an illegal car repair business in the ROW
- Overgrown weeds and trash in the front yard
- People living in a camper in the backyard
- Abandoned vehicles
- Placing their trash in neighbors' carts
- Confirmed drug activity
- Registered sex offender living in the home not listed as his address on file with reports of a baby living there
- Unlicensed long-term rental
- Encampment on the front yard
- Physical altercations among tenants

In May 2024, the residents were evicted and formed an encampment on the front yard

- Councilwoman Sawyer's Office asked DPD HOT, HOST navigators, ZNIS, and the CAO to respond but all services were rejected and the encampment remained with no resolution (*"doom loop"*)
 - No trespass agreement on file and none of the agencies could get in contact with the property owner, so the evicted tenants remained in the encampment on the front yard

Now, residents have "other'd" new residents of this property because of their traumatizing experience with the city and the resulting lack of faith in their government



Conclusion

The lack of legal “teeth” in the DRMC, staffing challenges, and minimal city agency coordination when resolving problem property complaints contributes to residents feeling of frustration with city government:

- This culture results in issues being dropped or mishandled, leading to a reasonable lack of confidence held by Denverites
- This results in low quality of life for some residents who are living in unsafe or unhealthy conditions
- This exacerbates tensions between police/sheriffs and residents because those agencies end up overseeing the final resolution
- This cyclical doom loop leads to a mistrust and negative perception of other City-led initiatives

Potential Legislative Solutions:

- Update CPD’s Vacant & Derelict properties and Nuisance ordinances to provide a better legal framework
- Work with HOST to allow more flexibility for staff to work with property owners to bring properties up to code in exchange for deed-restricted affordability
- Update Denver’s Minimum Habitability Standards ordinance
- Identify additional Staffing & Budget needs across Agencies to achieve these goals

Potential Operational Solutions:

- Identify a Lead Agency and assign a staff member as point person to better track and coordinate the follow up between agencies
- Update DDPHE’s Rules & Regs to better support investigators in obtaining better health outcomes for residents
- Update HR Pay, Rules & Regs, etc. to ensure full staffing and staff continuity over time (CAO, CPD, ROWE, EXL, etc.)
- Train DPD staff and officers to ensure an understanding of inter-agency communication and process, so they can reach out for assistance
- Identify additional Staffing & Budget needs across Agencies to achieve these goals
- Give all agencies access to Accela or create a centralized, internal information-sharing system to break down silos