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## The True Value of Code Enforcement in a Community

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The French writer Victor Hugo once said "There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come." The time for municipalities to recognize code enforcement as the driver of change in a community is upon us; but the question is, do towns, cities and counties truly value code enforcement?

Devastated neighborhoods and a suffering economy, plagued by unemployment, foreclosures, absentee landlords, and community blight provides the stage for this underutilized, under recognized "discipline" to emerge as a community's last line of defense. Code enforcement services in large and small municipalities throughout the country is beginning to emerge as a public service equivalent in importance to that of Police, Fire and EMS; and in many of these communities, this function has been consolidated into the public safety arm of local government service.

Gone are the days when code enforcement was performed by retired police officers with spare time, community activists with personal vendettas or the Mayor's underachieving son or nephew. Today's code enforcement officers and inspectors are members of state and national professional organizations, and are certified, experienced professionals. Municipal leaders are being forced to adjust pay scales to accommodate leaders with a host of expertise in fields such as management, public safety, public administration, customer service and economic development. Progressive communities throughout the nation understand the benefit of a strong code enforcement operation. The aesthetics of a community, and the overall way by which the property standards are managed and maintained is key in determining if your community leaders recognize its importance. Creating a synergy between economic development, zoning, community development and code enforcement allows for a comprehensive approach to community growth and improved quality of life. The work of code enforcement in a community often goes unnoticed, but the lack thereof becomes the topic of every community meeting.

The next generations of municipal leaders have the responsibility of charting the course for our communities with a vision that includes code enforcement services as an equal partner in the effective management of the quality of life of a community.