

## **CAPS**

### **Community Assisted Public Safety**

#### **What is CAPS?**

Community Assisted Public Safety (CAPS) is a systemic change in the way the residents and city administration think about and approach overall neighborhood health in the City of Richmond. CAPS seeks to eliminate blight and restore luster to our neighborhoods by partnering with citizens to identify and eliminate the problems associated with the most troublesome properties in our City. Community Assisted Public Safety provides a vehicle for us to work together to ensure that each of Richmond's neighborhoods is clean, safe, and healthy.

The CAPS philosophy recognizes that code enforcement alone cannot deal with blighted and other problem properties in the City. Nor can the Police alone always solve crime-plagued properties. A key feature of CAPS is that numerous city departments work together as a team with citizens to ensure that a problem property will stay a priority until a satisfactory resolution is reached. Outstanding results have been achieved across the City.

#### **How does CAPS work?**

A six member team Code Action Team (CAT team) composed of property maintenance, police, fire, health, zoning and tax enforcement forms the nucleus of each zone's program. The Commonwealth's Attorney, ABC, finance and other departments are heavily involved, as well. The CAT team, lead by the code enforcement official, partners with citizens in each zone to identify, track and abate problems with properties that pose significant public safety or blight issues for the neighborhood.

Citizens volunteer to attend monthly meetings and help to identify the properties they feel need the full attention of the City. The Team, with other City staff as required, works with each property owner, and reports progress at meetings. Problem properties, once accepted into the program, are tracked until there is resolution.

If property owners are not willing to satisfactorily address their problems, the case may go to court. Should this action be taken, it is vital that citizens attend the court hearings to impress upon the courts that they, too, seek abatement. Court attendees wear buttons proclaiming that 'Neighborhoods Have Rights Too!'

#### **How are properties selected?**

By completing an identification form, citizens and the team "nominate" properties that they feel will benefit most from the attention of the CAPS program. Due to the extensive effort required by these problem properties, the CAT team handles only a limited number of cases at any one time. Thus, the group ranks properties in priority order.

To be officially addressed and tracked by the CAT team, the property must require the attention of more than one agency AND meet any one of the following conditions:

- the problem must have a long standing history
- the problem must have had previous enforcement attention
- the problem must be public safety related

### **What if a property does not make the CAPS list?**

Not every problem property requires the attention of CAPS. Houses with peeling paint, or broken gutters, for instance, may only require a letter from the City pointing out the need for maintenance in accordance with the City Code. These cases will also be actively tracked until resolved, but will not be part of the CAT team's focus.

### **How are non-CAPS problem properties tracked and reported?**

Several reports of all properties known to be in violation of the City Code will be generated monthly for each zone. They will be distributed at the monthly CAPS zone meetings. The reports will reflect progress of the abatement efforts for both the CAPS properties and general code violations.

### **How are properties reported?**

If you know of properties that are serious problems in your neighborhood, report them to your civic association, which in turn will bring them to the CAPS zone meetings. If you do not have a civic association in your neighborhood, you may call the CAPS number, 646-CAPS, and request a problem property reporting form. The forms are available for downloading from the City's website, at [www.richmondgov.com](http://www.richmondgov.com). You may fax them back to 646-5789, being sure to use a cover sheet directing the fax to the CAPS department.

### **What is the timetable for problem property resolution?**

It is not possible to establish a timetable for specific resolutions. Each property is unique. A responsible property owner will probably fix his property in 30 days, with only a letter from the City. An absentee landlord who lives out of state is an entirely different case, and could take months and months of effort, if not longer. Unfortunately, it is not always easy to even find the owner to begin the process.

What we do know is that there will be measurable improvement in our neighborhoods almost immediately. As owners see that the City and the community are united in the CAPS effort, many will choose to maintain their property voluntarily, rather than be cited by the City, and be subject to code violations, fines, and court appearances.

### **What is the role of the City? The role of the citizens?**

CAPS is a partnership in which both the City and the citizens share responsibility for improving our neighborhoods. The City is responsible for using every means available to address public safety and property maintenance issues at identified locations and to keep trying until the problem is solved. Citizens are responsible for identifying the most troubling problems and helping to track progress toward solution. Citizen participation when cases must go to court is critical. Citizens are also responsible for maintaining their own properties and encouraging others to do the same.

### **Who do we contact with questions?**

There is a CAT team leader for each area of the City. You may reach the CAT teams by dialing 646-CAPS.

# CAPS Complaint Form

Location of Violation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occupied       Vacant       Unknown

Description of Structure \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Complaint       Open/Vacant       Improper Use       Unlawful Activity  
 Blighted       Other       Abandoned Vehicle  
 Refuse       Weeds       Pet Areas

Description of Violation \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Additional Information \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Complainant Information      (This information is optional, but helpful.)  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Would you like to be contacted regarding this complaint?    Yes    No

### The CAPS Criteria

- There must be activity that requires the attention of more than one agency and**
- The problem must have a long standing history, or**
- The problem must have had previous enforcement action, or**
- The problem must be public safety related**

\*\*\*\*\* **FOR OFFICE USE ONLY** \*\*\*\*\*

Date Received	_____	Inspection Date	_____
Tax Status	_____	Map Reference	_____
CAT Zone	_____	Tracking Number	_____
Logged Date 1	_____	Logged Date 2	_____
Logged By	_____		
Previous Actions / Notes	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____		