

1961

Bangor's Housing Code Enforcement Program: August 1956 - December 1961

William J. Carney

Bangor Urban Renewal Authority

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BANGOR'S HOUSING CODE

ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

Aug. 1956 - Dec. 1961

William J. Carney
William J. Carney
Director of Public Health

February 26, 1962

In May 1955, the Bangor City Planning Board received a report outlining Bangor's housing problems and prospects, "with a view toward establishing a local housing policy and program." Several of the recommendations of this report have been accomplished. A Housing Code was adopted. An Urban Renewal Authority was created. The City is about to execute its first redevelopment project.

A section of this report is herewith quoted as a point of reference to evaluate the progress of housing improvement in the past seven years. "If Bangor's housing as a totality is to be kept from settling into a state of progressive degradation, means will have to be provided to assure; (1) the conversion of the precious existing supply of good dwellings and neighborhoods, (2) the rehabilitation of salvable dwellings and neighborhoods and (3) the studied elimination and redevelopment of certain cancer-like growths of blight and slums in existence in the community today."

The City Council adopted a Housing Code in May 1956. It seems appropriate to periodically review administrative programs with reference to their original goals. The purpose of this report is to indicate what has been done with the Housing Code since its adoption. This report points out the limitations of the present program and suggests the potential that exists for development of an improved housing program.

EVALUATION OF HOUSING INSPECTION PROGRAM

It is difficult to present accurate annual statistics that reflect the housing inspection program. Some of the reasons for this are:

1. TERMINOLOGY.

The terms dwelling unit and rooming unit appear to be all inclusive of living facilities and mutually exclusive. Yet, exceptions to these terms arise when one discovers single or double room apartments used for sleeping, cooking and living purposes. Many of these apartments, sometimes called "light housekeeping apartments", may be singly or doubly occupied. Here the problem of terminology arises. The Housing Code defines a rooming unit, "as one intended to be used for living and sleeping, but not for cooking or eating purposes." If we call these small apartments complete dwelling units, a full three piece bath is required for each. If we consider them rooming

units, eight persons may share a full three piece bath. Requirements for a full three piece bath for each unit is often physically impossible, and economically impracticable. There are many small "light housekeeping apartments" in Bangor.

It is difficult to properly place these small apartments as either a dwelling unit or a rooming unit. Our policy has been not to require full three piece baths for each small apartment, but to require at least the minimum toilet facilities of a rooming house. The minimum standards for the electrical outlets are required.

This is an example of the fact that the terminology of the code is not specific enough to cover all of the situations found in the application of the code. No changes to the code are suggested. It is felt that this matter can be handled with discretion, once there is understanding that the terminology is not specific.

2. FILING SYSTEM

Each structure is given a separate folder in the filing system. The Health Department is concerned with total compliance of the entire structure and not partial compliance with some of the dwelling units contained therein. Statistics are kept in structural units and it is difficult to transcribe this data into dwelling units. On occasions, structures that are abutting one another, but owned by the same person, are filed as one structure in one folder. It is easier to file correspondence on several abutting structures owned by the same person in one folder rather than have a separate folder and a separate piece of correspondence for each structure. An appreciation of this system is important in order to understand some of the statistical data. Our records are geared primarily to total structural improvement, not dwelling unit compliance.

3. CHANGES IN THE STATUS OF A HOUSE

In six years many changes take place in many pieces of property. The property at 15 Hamlin Avenue was inspected, condemned as unfit for human habitation, placarded, referred to the Building Inspector, and demolished. A new structure has been erected in its place. This piece of property would thus be counted in several places in the statistics.

The property at 228 York Street was inspected and reinspected many times. A statement of defects, a notice and an order was placed on one owner. The property was sold. The new owner contacted the Health Department before purchase of the property, to request time to comply with the minimum standards of the Housing Code. This time was granted. This three family dwelling unit was completely rehabilitated to the minimum standards of the Housing Code. Fire demolished the third floor and severely damaged the second floor. The structure was placarded as unfit for human habitation. The property was ordered secured by the Building Inspector. The owner has since rehabilitated the first floor apartment and the second floor apartment. The placard has been removed. The third floor apartment has not as yet been rehabilitated. This structure is one that has undergone many changes with statistics in various columns. It is now classified as pending action until the third floor apartment has been completed.

There are many examples where structures have changed their status several times in six years. Such situations defy accurate statistics.

4. ANNUAL STATISTICAL DATA

It is meaningless to answer the question "How many houses have been rehabilitated this year?" Housing rehabilitation is a continually changing phenomenon. Houses and dwelling units are continually undergoing processes of improvements and deterioration. Dwelling units declared rehabilitated in January may be abused by tenants in six months, and rendered unfit for human habitation. Houses initially inspected in 1957, may not be declared rehabilitated until 1960. Experience has taught us that many reinspections are necessary with constant prodding of tenants and owners before full compliance has been achieved.

It is difficult to measure progress by attempting to answer the question, "How many new structures were inspected last year?" If our goal was to continually show an increase in the number of new properties inspected, we could easily do this each year. Inspection of all structures in the city is the ultimate aim of the program.

Full compliance with those structures that have been inspected is the immediate goal of the program. This philosophy sacrifices statistics on inspections of new structure in the interest of statistics on the complete rehabilitation of structures that have been inspected. It is not appropriate to measure housing activity only in terms of new houses inspected or houses rehabilitated. Only when both new structures inspected and structures rehabilitated are measured over an extended period of time can a valid impression of housing improvement be obtained.

5. ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The present philosophy of Housing Code Enforcement is to be reasonable, yet firm in accomplishing compliance. It is our intent to use education of tenants and owners as a means of bringing about compliance, rather than court action. This policy is time consuming and often frustrating. Sometimes two or even three years may be judged to be a reasonable time for an owner to comply with the Housing Code. This policy is based on the fact that it is better to obtain voluntary compliance over a period of two years through education and persuasion, then to try to force compliance through court action. This policy seems reasonable when one considers that at the present rate of housing inspections, many substandard houses will not be initially inspected, when those presently on our books have completed their work. Exceptions to an extended length of time for compliance occur when serious danger to health and safety exist.

This enforcement philosophy results in considerable discussion between owners, tenants and the staff of the Health Department. Such discussions are often more valuable in bringing about compliance than an accumulation of statements, notices, orders and court actions. However these repeated conversations with owners and tenants do not lend themselves to statistical reporting. Results in bringing about compliance with the Housing Code cannot be measured in the amount of paper work accumulated on a given structure. An example of this fact occurred when the owner of one of several structures on a street was sent a statements of defects following

an initial inspection. Upon receipt of this statement from the Health Department, the owner, with his real estate agent, met with the Health Officer. The owner acknowledged that it would only be a matter of time before the Health Department inspected his six other properties. He explained it was his desire to bring all of his properties in total compliance and asked if he could have sufficient time to correct not only the one that we had inspected, but all others. In this instance very little paper work, and brief conversation, accomplished much.

In contrast, we have properties that we have been inspecting and talking about since the Housing Code was first adopted in 1956. One reason why many of these properties are carried over a period of six years, is that the major defects of plumbing and wiring have been corrected. Yet, many of the minor defects remain in violation. These minor defects remain a nuisance and a point of contention between the Health Department, the tenants, and the owners of the property. The defects are of such a nature that they are too minor to call to the attention of the court. Yet, the house has not been improved to a point where it can be declared rehabilitated.

One other problem in accurately measuring the effort in housing improvement, is that frequent reinspections of the same property, or repeated discussions with owners, tenants or real estate agents may be made without recording these facts so that they may be statistically summarized. Statistics are important to the Health Department, but not to the point that they hinder the ultimate goal of the program. It is admitted that many reinspections are made that are not counted.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

A house may be inspected for the following reasons:

- (1) A complaint from either a tenant, owner or neighbor.
- (2) To survey the extent of housing blight in an area.
- (3) On the systematic enforcement of the Housing Code in an area of known poor housing.

Housing complaints are received from every section of the city. Surveys have been conducted in the lower Main Street area between Third and First Street and in the Stillwater Park area. The Housing Code has been systematically enforced in the Curve Street area bounded by Division, Center and Spring Street, as well as the Hancock-York Street area. Currently systematic application of the code is being accomplished in the Third Street area.

1. STATEMENT OF DEFECTS

Following an inspection, there are two alternatives:

a) SATISFACTORY INSPECTION FORM - A satisfactory inspection form may be sent to the owner indicating that there is compliance with the major provisions of the Housing Code, but call attention to some minor defects that were found at the time of inspection. No reinspections follow a satisfactory inspection form.

b) STATEMENT OF DEFECTS - A statement of defects may be forwarded to the owner. This outlines the specific sections of the Housing Code in violation. A copy of the Housing Code is sent to the owner. The owner is requested to contact the Health Department within 30 days, to discuss reasonable terms for compliance with major problems found at the time of inspection.

2. NOTICE

If an owner has not contacted the Health Department within 30 days after receipt of a statement of defects, a reinspection is made. If the reinspection indicates that no work has been accomplished, notice is sent to the owner by registered mail, giving him 60 days to comply with the provisions of the Housing Code.

3. ORDER

If the owner does not react to the notice he has received, a reinspection of the property is accomplished at the end of 60 days. If no work has been started, an order may be sent to the owner by registered mail, giving him 30 days to comply with the Housing Code. Usually by this time, there has been a personal contact between the owner and the Health Department. This ordinarily follows the owners receipt

of the notice. It is customary for the owner to request a reasonable time for compliance. Current policy is to ask the owner to designate the time he feels would be reasonable for compliance. Maximum time allowed would be two years, but there would have to be progressive improvement in the property. For example, if a structure required four bathrooms, two years might be given as reasonable time for total compliance, but two bathrooms would have to be completed at the end of one year.

4. PLACARDS

There are occasions when extreme danger to the health and safety of the occupants of a house exist. Such a house may be placarded and condemned as unfit for human habitation. On such occasions, both the owner and the tenants are ordered to vacate the premises, usually within a short period of time. Placarding has been used when people do not use electricity and burn kerosene lamps, when there is no adequate water supply or sewage disposal facilities, when the electrical wiring is extremely hazardous, when a house is heavily infested with roaches or rodents, when a house is overcrowded, or when a combination of these factors exist.

5. COURT ACTION

If a person fails to vacate the premises upon order from the Health Officer, court action may be necessary. Violations of the Housing Code are misdemeanors. A warrant for the arrest of the people violating the Housing Code and any order of the Health Officer may be issued. Warrants for the arrest of people have been initiated by the Health Department. This is not a frequent occurrence. When warrants were issued, the cases were resolved before court appearances became necessary.

6. OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

There are other administrative procedures. One technique used frequently is to watch a house that has been initially inspected. When tenants move from this house, a letter is sent to the owner requiring that the property not be reoccupied until the minimum standards of the Housing Code have been met. This technique minimizes the relocation problem, and has an economic impact on the owner that is

often successful in bringing about early compliance with the code.

Another procedure is to have a verbal agreement with the owner to the effect that the Health Department will not placard his dwelling if he does not reoccupy it. There is a stigma attached to the placard which many people do not desire to have. If the same results can be achieved without placarding, this is satisfactory to the Health Department.

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6. GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

There are other administrative procedures. One technique used frequently is to watch a house that has been initially inspected. When tenants move from this house, a letter is sent to the owner requiring that the property not be reoccupied until the minimum standards of the Housing Code have been met. This technique minimizes the relocation problem, and has an educative impact on the owner that is

1956

105 structures with 215 dwelling units were inspected

61 structures with 87 dwelling units were inspected only once

OF THESE:

51 structures with 57 dwelling units were surveyed
7 structures with 18 dwelling units were rehabilitated
1 structure with 1 dwelling unit was demolished
1 structure with 8 dwelling units was secured
1 structure with 3 dwelling units had other action

39 structures with 128 dwelling units were inspected more than once

OF THESE:

21 structures with 64 dwelling units have been rehabilitated
15 structures with 58 dwelling units are pending action
2 structures with 3 dwelling units have been demolished
1 structure with 3 dwelling units has been secured

5 rooming houses inspected

Total reinspections 19

The City Housing Code was passed in May 1956. In August, Mr. J. Edward Prout was appointed the City Housing Inspector.

There are fifteen structures originally inspected in 1956 and still pending action. Some of these properties have been inspected more than twenty times. Major plumbing and electrical deficiencies have been corrected. These are multi-family units that are frequently abused by tenants. These structures could be rehabilitated in January and in disrepair by June. There are examples of chronic housing problems that will use up much of the inspectors time without any real possibility of improving a neighborhood.

During 1956, a survey of housing conditions between Main and Third Streets, starting at Buck Street was attempted. It can be seen that fifty-one structures with fifty-seven dwelling units were surveyed. These are mostly single houses, owner occupied, in good condition with a few problem houses scattered throughout. Some of these problem houses are owned by elderly people who cannot afford to improve the property. Other properties, may be aesthetically unsightly in appearance but comply with the minimum standards of the Housing Code.

Walter P. McHale was appointed Sanitation Inspector in July.

In 1956, only a small amount of the time of one inspector was devoted to housing.

1957

99 structures with 227 dwelling units were inspected

45 structures with 55 dwelling units were inspected only once

OF THESE:

40 structures with 57 dwelling units were surveyed

3 structures with 6 dwelling units were rehabilitated

1 structure with 1 dwelling unit was demolished

1 structure with 1 dwelling unit was secured

50 structures with 172 dwelling units were inspected more than once

OF THESE:

28 structures with 129 dwelling units have been rehabilitated

13 structures with 30 dwelling units are pending action

6 structures with 10 dwelling units have been secured

2 structures with 2 dwelling units have been demolished

1 structure with 1 dwelling unit had other action

4 rooming houses inspected

Total reinspections 80

In 1957, the survey of houses was continued in the Stillwater Park area, where forty structures containing fifty-seven dwellings were surveyed. The purpose of surveying housing is to gather information to better evaluate the conditions that exist in the area. No statement of defects resulted from this survey action. The only exception to this rule would occur when a serious hazard to health or safety was found, and the full force of the Housing Code was brought to bear on the problem.

During the year 1957, compliance with the Housing Code was initiated on all of the licensed rooming houses in the city. All the rooming houses were advised of the minimum standards and informed that full compliance would be expected by May of 1958.

One significant statistic in 1957, is the fact that 28 structures, with 129 dwelling units have been rehabilitated, a ratio of dwelling units per structure in excess of four to one. This indicates that we are having success with some of the multi-family dwelling units inspected early in our program.

Walter P. Kollala was appointed Sanitation Inspector in July.

In 1956, only a small amount of the time of one inspector was devoted to housing.

1958

101 structures with 112 dwelling units were inspected

33 structures with 44 dwelling units were inspected only once

OF THESE:

- 8 structures with 10 dwelling units were surveyed
- 4 structures with 4 dwelling units were rehabilitated
- 7 structures with 8 dwelling units were demolished
- 1 structure with 1 dwelling unit was secured
- 13 structures with 19 dwelling units had other action

28 structures with 68 dwelling units were inspected more than once

OF THESE:

- 14 structures with 36 dwelling units have been rehabilitated
- 8 structures with 22 dwelling units are pending action
- 1 structure with 3 dwelling units have been secured
- 5 structures with 7 dwelling units have been demolished

40 rooming units inspected

Total reinspections 128

In 1958, the results of the long term program of working with rooming houses showed some results. The City Council supported the Health Department's recommendation not to license those few establishments that failed to comply with the minimum standards of plumbing and wiring called to their attention in 1957. Considerable housing effort in 1957 and 1958 was spent on improving the health and safety conditions of licensed rooming houses.

The most important development in 1958 was the acceptance of the Urban Renewal Referendum by the citizens in June by a vote of 3490 to 980. This was the result of an intensive educational campaign with many showings of films on the slum conditions throughout our city to many groups of citizens.

In 1958, 14 structures containing 19 dwelling units were either secured or demolished. This was the peak year of housing condemnation. Structures in the city that had long been decaying were referred to the attention of the Building Inspector, who has the responsibility for condemning structures as unsafe once the Health Department has removed the occupants.

Personnel changes in the Housing Division of the Health Department occurred in June of 1959, with the addition of Mr. Vinal H. Lanson as Housing Inspector and Mrs. Charlotte Clark as Clerk-Stenographer.

1959

50 structures with 103 dwelling units were inspected

9 structures with 16 dwelling units were inspected only once

OF THESE:

6 structures with 11 dwelling units were surveyed

2 structures with 3 dwelling units were secured

1 structure with 2 dwelling units was demolished

34 structures with 87 dwelling units were inspected more than once

OF THESE:

17 structures with 48 dwelling units were rehabilitated

11 structures with 33 dwelling units are pending action

2 structures with 2 dwelling units were secured

3 structures with 2 dwelling units were demolished

1 structure with 2 dwelling units had other action

7 rooming houses inspected

Total reinspections 324

In 1959, the housing program was faced with a basic decision. For each of the three years prior to 1959, approximately 100 structures received an initial inspection. Because of the time consuming process of bringing about full compliance in these structures, the program became heavily weighted with a backlog of reinspections. Two alternatives were possible:

1. To continue to inspect new structures.
2. To make an intensified effort to reinspect the houses we had already inspected to bring about compliance with the code.

The decision was made to sacrifice statistics of new houses inspected in the interest of bringing into compliance some of the older cases.

Total reinspections for 1959 reached 324, almost two and a half times that of the previous year. Inspections of new structures dropped to about half of the previous years totals. The rewards of this decision were achieved in 1960 and 1961 as more houses became rehabilitated.

Personnel changes in the Housing Division of the Health Department occurred in June of 1959, with the addition of Mr. Vinal M. Lamson as Housing Inspector and Mrs. Charlotte Clark as Clerk-Stenographer.

1960

146 structures with 403 dwelling units were inspected

65 structures with 107 dwelling units were inspected only once

OF THESE:

59 structures with 90 dwelling units - Satisfactory Inspection Forms

2 structures with 2 dwelling units are pending action

3 structures with 13 dwelling units were rehabilitated

1 structure with 2 dwelling units had other action

82 structures with 296 dwelling units were inspected more than once

OF THESE:

43 structures with 114 dwelling units were rehabilitated

33 structures with 81 dwelling units are pending action

5 structures with 5 dwelling units - satisfactory inspection forms

Total reinspections 418

The impact of the additional personnel in the Housing Division was seen in 1960. For the first time sufficient personnel were available to apply the Housing Code on a systematic basis. This was accomplished in that area of the city bounded by Harlow, Division, Center and Spring Streets. This was the best year for initial inspections of structures when 146 structures containing 403 dwelling units were inspected. Balance to the program was achieved through 418 reinspections. New heights in housing improvements were seen when 46 structures containing 127 dwelling units were rehabilitated.

A new technique was applied in 1960, the Satisfactory Inspection Form. Experience had indicated that we were spending a considerable amount of time reinspecting houses with relatively minor defects. In order to achieve maximum utilization of the staff's time, a new form was developed. This was sent to the home owners with relatively few housing defects. These problems were pointed out to the owners and no formal reinspection was made. An informal survey of some of the homes, to whom satisfactory inspection forms were sent, indicated that results were being achieved in correcting the minor defects that were brought to their attention. In 1960, 64 Satisfactory Inspection Forms were sent to owners of properties containing 95 dwelling units.

Most of the houses systematically inspected have been brought up to the compliance with the minimum standards of the Housing Code. Yet, such results are not obvious as one drives through this neighborhood.

The houses comply with the minimum standards of the code but the neighborhood does not show improvement.

1961 136 structures with 483 dwelling units were inspected

136 structures with 248 dwelling units were inspected only once

61 structures with 92 dwelling units were inspected only once

OF THESE:

39 structures with 48 dwelling units - Satisfactory Inspection Forms

19 structures with 38 dwelling units are pending action

2 structures with 5 dwelling units were rehabilitated

1 structure with 1 dwelling unit was secured

73 structures with 156 dwelling units were inspected more than once

OF THESE:

23 structures with 53 dwelling units were rehabilitated

48 structures with 98 dwelling units are pending action

1 structure with 4 dwelling units - satisfactory inspection form

1 structure with 1 dwelling unit was demolished

2 rooming units inspected

Total reinspections 622

In 1961, the Hancock, York Street area was selected for the systematic application of the Housing Code. The fact that 67 structures with 136 dwelling units initially inspected in 1961 are still pending action, indicates that we have not yet achieved full compliance with the minimum standards of the Housing Code in the Hancock, York Street area. The technique of using Satisfactory Inspection Forms was continued with 40 structures containing 52 dwelling units receiving this type of letter.

It is significant that in 1961, more orders, (the last administrative action prior to legal action), were sent to tenants and owners than in any other year. This is an indication that we are becoming more strict in our applications of the code.

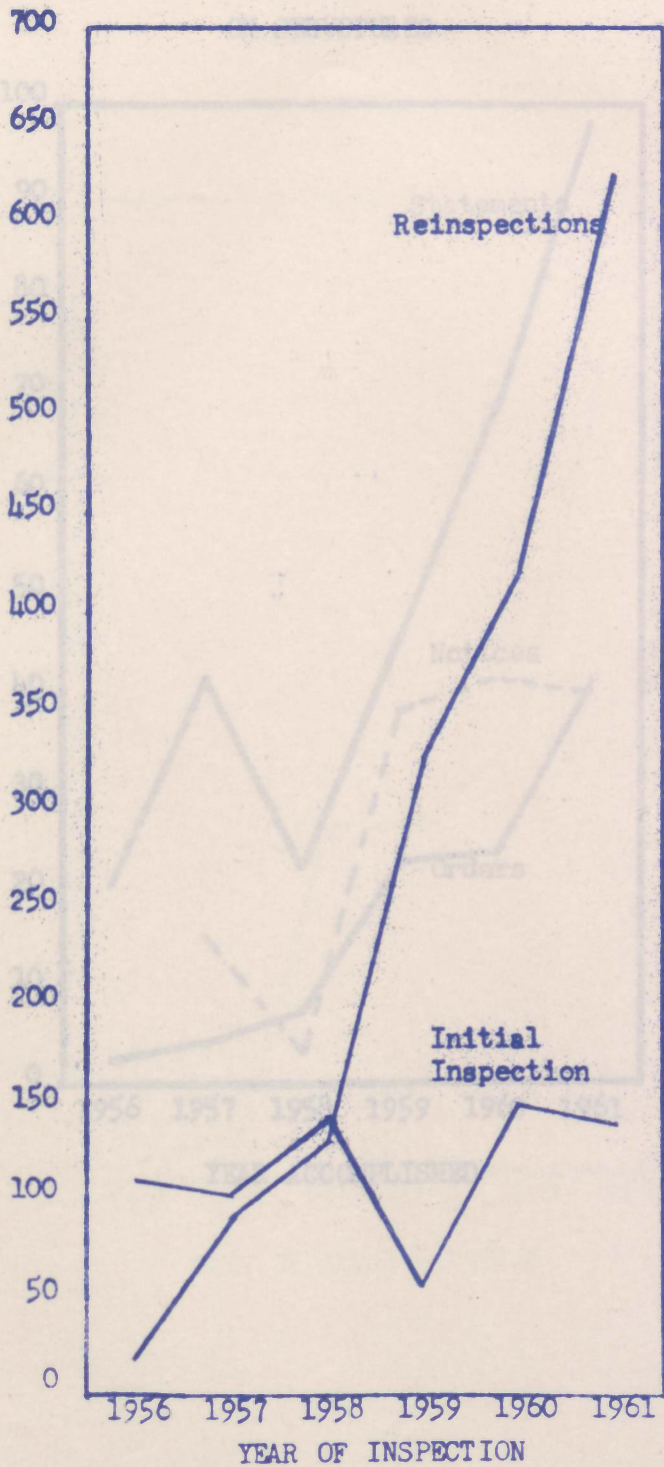
In 1961, total reinspections reached 622. 83 structures were rehabilitated, nearly twice as many as any other year.

In August 1961, Mr. Reginald Libby was added to the staff of the Housing Division.

The houses comply with the minimum standards of the code but the neighborhood does not show improvement.

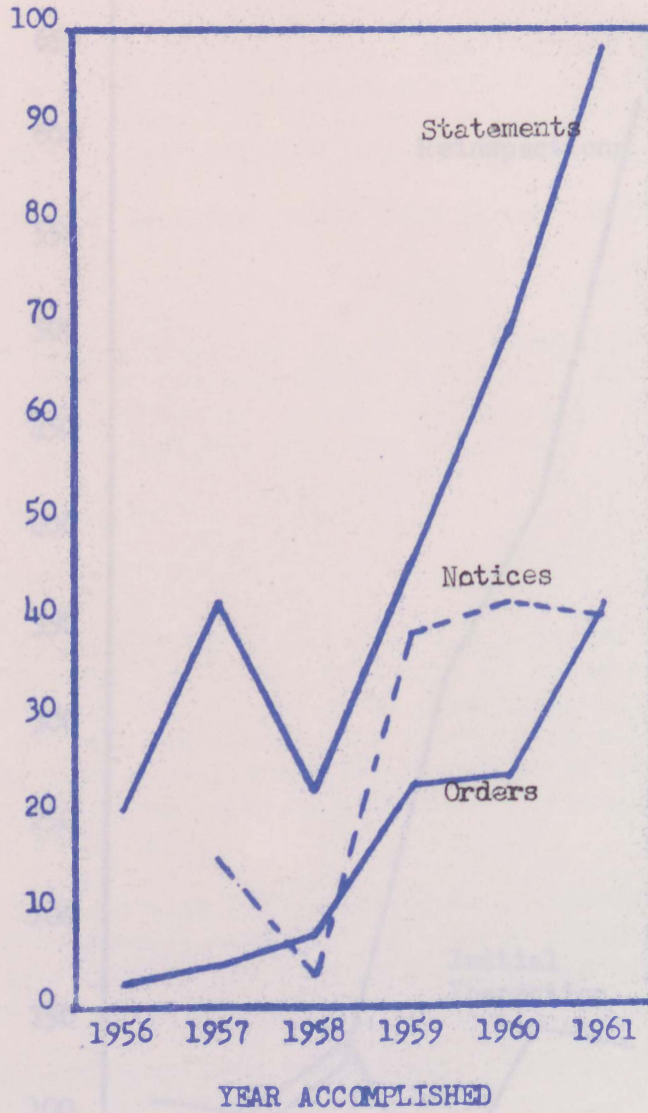
TOTAL INSPECTIONS

STRUCTURES



ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

ON STRUCTURES



YEAR ACCOMPLISHED

636 structures with 107 dwelling units were inspected

OF THESE:

**REHABILITATED
STRUCTURES**

164 structures with 274 dwelling units were rehabilitated.

104 structures with 207 dwelling units have received Satisfactory Inspection Forms.

22 structures with 33 dwelling units were rehabilitated.

15 structures with 27 dwelling units were inspected.

128 structures with 228 dwelling units are pending action.

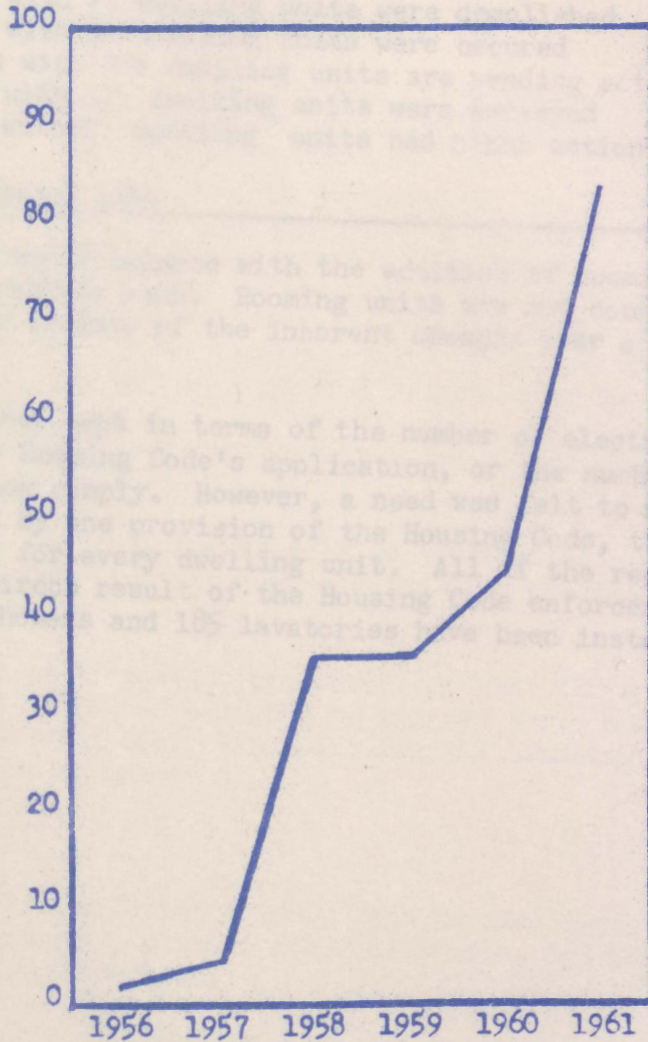
97 structures with 174 dwelling units were inspected.

27 structures with 42 dwelling units were inspected.

Total Yrings

The statistics reported above are based on the number of structures which are rehabilitated each year. Dwelling units are counted as of the date of the inspection. The number of dwelling units which are pending action is reported as of the date of the inspection. The number of dwelling units which are inspected is reported as of the date of the inspection.

Statistics are reported in terms of the number of electric outlets installed in each structure as a result of the application of the National Electrical Code's application, or the number of rooms occupied. However, a need was felt to ensure the improvement of the provision of the Housing Code, the requirement for a three piece bath in every dwelling unit. All the records were reviewed. Since 1956, as a result of the Housing Code enforcement, 127 flushes, 153 bath-tubs or showers, and 185 lavatories have been installed.



YEAR OF REHABILITATION

SUMMARY OF ENFORCEMENT EFFORT
Aug. 1956 to Dec. 1961

636 structures with 1209 dwelling units were inspected

OF THESE:

164 structures with 479 dwelling units were rehabilitated

104 structures with 147 dwelling units have received Satisfactory Inspection Forms.

22 structures with 27 dwelling units were demolished

15 structures with 31 dwelling units were secured

128 structures with 322 dwelling units are pending action

99 structures with 124 dwelling units were surveyed

17 structures with 27 dwelling units had other action

Total reinspections 1591

The statistics would balance with the addition of rooming houses which are counted as one structure each. Rooming units are not counted. Dwelling units will never balance because of the inherent changes over a five year period.

Statistics are not kept in terms of the number of electric outlets installed as a result of the Housing Code's application, or the numbers of rooms once overcrowded that now comply. However, a need was felt to measure the improvement brought about by one provision of the Housing Code, the requirement for a three piece bath for every dwelling unit. All of the records were reviewed. Since 1956, as a direct result of the Housing Code enforcement, 117 flushes, 183 bath tubs or showers and 185 lavatories have been installed.

1. TERMINOLOGY.

The terms dwelling unit and rooming unit appear to be all inclusive of living facilities and actually are. Yet, problems to these terms arise when one considers single or double room apartments used for sleeping, cooking and living purposes. Many of these apartments, sometimes called "light housekeeping apartments", may be singly or doubly occupied. Here the problem of terminology arises. The Housing Code defines a rooming unit, "as one intended to be used for living and sleeping, but not for cooking or eating purposes." If we call these small apartments complete dwelling units, a full three piece bath is required for each. If we consider them rooming

STAFF AND BUDGET

The total staff of the Environmental Sanitation Section of the Health Department consists of a Sanitation Supervisor, 2 Sanitarians, a Housing Inspector and a Clerk Stenographer. Approximately 75% of the time of these people is spent on the housing inspection program. Approximately 25% of the Health Officer's time is devoted to housing activities. Based on 1962 budget figures, the cost of the housing inspection program amounts to approximately \$20,000.

CONCLUSION AND PROBLEMS

PROBLEM: NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

One of the early goals of the program was neighborhood improvement. This is not being achieved. Neighborhoods cannot be improved solely through the use of the minimum standards of the Housing Code. The Housing Code is aimed at the essentials of safe plumbing, adequate wiring, standards of space and occupancy. It does not cover outside painting or landscaping or similar things people do to improve their neighborhoods. It should not be interpreted that this report suggests additions to the code to cover painting and landscaping. Five years of experience in applying the Housing Code has shown that the interior of individual houses can be brought up to the minimum standards but this effort does not result in a general neighborhood improvement.

If the improvement of neighborhoods remains a worthwhile goal, two more requirements are necessary.

There should be capital improvements in the form of street repair, sidewalk construction, improved lighting, coordinated with Housing Code enforcement in selected neighborhoods.

There should be participation by people who want their neighborhoods improved. The voluntary desire of citizens to improve their homes above the minimum standards of the Housing Code, with painting and landscaping, is necessary if neighborhoods are to be improved.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION:

Careful planning, and follow through with capital improvement projects, coordinated with voluntary participation of people, and Housing Code enforcement in a selected neighborhood.

PROBLEM: INTERDEPARTMENTAL ADMINISTRATION

The Fire, Police, Health and Building Inspection, Assessors and soon the Urban Renewal Department, have responsibilities to inspect properties within the city. All keep separate records systems. Referrals are made between some departments. Duplication is frequent. The public will soon grow tired of the harassment of the many government officials entering their homes for a variety of reasons.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION: CENTRAL RECORDS CONTROL

The purpose of the central records system is as follows:

1. One central file would contain all of the current data on any building in violation of any code.
2. If more than one department became concerned with any one building, joint inspections of the property could be arranged, thus minimizing harassment of the public.
3. If more than one department became concerned with any one dwelling, legal action could be brought concurrently by all departments.
4. A system could be established so that each property in violation would be reinspected after a timely interval to check for compliance. Failure to comply, would result in the necessary legal action based upon a good records system.

PROBLEM: PROGRAM PLANNING

What are the current goals of the Housing Program? Is it sufficient to bring individual structures into compliance with the Housing Code? Is neighborhood improvement a worthwhile goal? If so, what area should be next for the systematic application of the Housing Code, the fringe areas of Stillwater Park, the area between State Street and Hancock Street from Newbury Street north, the lower Main Street area?

SUGGESTED SOLUTION:

Coordinate the planning of the Housing Program, define the immediate and long range goals of the Housing Program. Establish an administrative mechanism not only to implement these plans but to periodically evaluate the direction the plans have taken.

PROBLEM: RELOCATION OF DISPLACED FAMILIES

The Housing Code establishes minimum conditions of safe and healthful living. It contains standards that tells a father how many children he may have in his house, how many electrical outlets there must be in each room and states that it has been illegal for him to use his outhouse since January 1, 1957. The alternatives to compliance with the minimum standards are either to move one's family or be arrested for failure to comply with an order from the Health Officer.

Poor housing consists of two factors, poor structures and poor people. Too often in the past six years, the Health Department has displaced families from one poor structure, only to have them relocate in another poor structure. Shuffling poor people from one poor structure to another is the end result of a code enforcement policy that considers only structures, without planning for the people within these structures.

Are we being honest with people? In the Stillwater Park Urban Renewal area, there is a legal requirement of the Federal Government to provide safe and sanitary housing at rents people can afford when they are displaced by governmental action. Does there not exist a moral responsibility to help other people when they are displaced by government action, not just people in an Urban Renewal area who have a federal string attached to them? The test of the sincerity of the city's claim to help people when they are forced to move need not await the first bulldozer in Stillwater Park. Families are being displaced from their homes by government action now. Such families need help today and they are not receiving it.

There is another way to state this problem. Do the families who are being displaced from their homes by government action know, or really care, whether it is a city program or a federal program that is forcing them to move? What is the criteria for helping families displaced by government action? Is the criteria one of real need in a family? Or, is the criteria aimed at helping only those families touched by federal dollars? These questions need answers.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION:

Coordination of public and voluntary effort aimed at economic and social help for people displaced by government action is needed today. We can demonstrate to people now, the sincerity of our promise to those who will be displaced from Stillwater Park, that we will find safe and sanitary housing for them at rents they can afford.

The Health Department is not operating under the delusion that all families will improve when economic and social help is given to them. In the application of the Housing Code since 1956, we have seen some families improve. We recognize that some people are incorrigible. The Health Department believes that everyone deserves a chance to improve in a safe and sanitary physical environment supplemented by whatever economic and social help is needed.