

# ORANGE REMINDS OWNERS OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAINTAIN PROPERTIES

As a follow up to Orange's Spring Beautification Campaign, Valerie Jackson, Director of Planning and Economic Development for the City of Orange Township is reminding property owners and occupants of their responsibilities under the City's property maintenance code.

Mayor Eldridge Hawkins, Jr. said, "Our quality of life in Orange depends on citizens and property owners doing their share to keep properties in good shape and looking good. Many residents took part in the flower plantings, graffiti removal, clean up and other beautification activities in May and June. We are asking people to remain involved by carefully looking over their properties and make sure that they are being maintained according to the law."

The law states: "The exterior of the premises and all structures thereon shall be kept free of all nuisances and any hazards to the safety of occupants, pedestrians and other persons utilizing the premises and free of unsanitary conditions, and any of the foregoing shall be promptly removed and abated by the owner or operator. It shall be the duty of the owner or operator to keep the premises free of hazards, which include but are not limited to the following:

- Refuse: brush, weeds, broken glass, stumps, roots, obnoxious growths, filth, garbage, trash, refuse and debris
- Natural growth: dead and dying trees and limbs

or other natural growth which, by reason of rotting or deteriorating conditions or storm damage, constitute a hazard to persons in the vicinity thereof. Trees shall be kept pruned and trimmed to prevent such conditions."

Furthermore, the code also has specific requirements for vacant lots: "When any lot has been vacant for a period of thirty (30) or more days or becomes vacant as a result of demolition of any structure thereon, the owner of the vacant lot shall erect and maintain a fence around the perimeter of such lot as required to fully enclose and protect the property."

Complaints regarding property conditions that do not meet the code should be directed to 973-266-4098. A Code Enforcement Officer will be assigned to investigate the complaint.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Officer will give the proper notice of clean up or abatement to the property owner. If the owner does not abate the situation within a specified time frame, the Code Enforcement Inspector will issue a court summons. If the property owner appears in court, the Judge may issue a fine and order the property owner abate the matter. If the property owner does not attend court, then a bench warrant is issued for the person or company by the court.

In the worst property maintenance cases, the City cleans up the property when the Public Works Department schedule allows. Then, a lien for the cost of the clean up is placed on the property.