



## **City offers help to fight blight from foreclosures**

Picture this scenario: The home next to yours, or maybe it's the third or fourth house down the street, has a foreclosure sign on the front lawn. The spreading weeds have grown a foot or more in height, and their seeds are blowing in the direction of your house.

The pool water in the backyard is stagnant and foul smelling. Maybe one of the windows is broken. A loosened gate in front squeaks as it swings back and forth in the wind. To summarize, the place has turned into a blighted mess.

Your house, of course, is well manicured and properly cared for, as is every other home on the street. You talk to some of your neighbors, and everybody agrees that the neglected, foreclosed house, which is bank-owned, swiftly is converting your beautiful neighborhood into a slum.

What do you do? If you're clued in on the operations of the Neighborhood Services Department of the city of Las Vegas, you'll call 229-6615, which is the department's Citizen Complaint hot line. You'll tell them the problem, and you won't have to ask for immediate assistance. The people on the other end are well informed on what to do.

In essence, help for such a situation, and most other problems that involve your neighborhood's environment, is only a phone call away.

And if you think the above scenario and similar neighborhood problems are not as prevalent in Summerlin as they are elsewhere in Las Vegas, then guess again.

"We get calls of that kind from all over the city, and the number of complaints dealing with neighborhood issues is on the rise, largely due to the foreclosure problem," said Mary Ann Price, a spokeswoman for Neighborhood Services.

"We're here to provide assistance for homeowners of any neighborhood that falls into neglect," Price added. "We offer residents good advice, such as how to access resources, where to go, who to talk to, in effect a means to help them navigate the system. Or, depending on the nature of the issue, we might refer the matter to one of our own problem-solvers."

But the above scenario is only one of many situations in which the resources of the department are available to residents, under a program titled Improving Neighborhoods Through Partnerships. Of course, the partners in that program are the city's trouble-shooters and you, any resident of a neighborhood in need of help.

The department's responsibilities are multi-tasked, but its mission is summed up as a means of enforcing the city's code for clean neighborhoods. According to the code, "the mission of Neighborhood Services code enforcement is to work in partnership with Las Vegas residents to promote and maintain a safe and desirable living and working environment and improve the quality of our community..."

That means all efforts are available to counter the litany of potential neighborhood problems. The department will step in to correct more than just neglected houses. For example, it could help eliminate cars parked on front lawns, abandoned refuse, graffiti, illegal dumping of garbage in vacant areas, excess noise, repairs of non-owned vehicles in residential areas, illegal types of animals kept in a residential neighborhood and much more.

"Housing foreclosures are one of our biggest concerns right now," Price said. "It's a citywide problem, and it will become an even greater problem as we get into the hot weather.

"We urge residents to call our citizen complaint hot line, where swimming pools are left to stagnate, or where weeds are growing uncontrolled, or where there may be debris collecting. We don't want to see whole neighborhoods become blighted and insecure as a result of foreclosures," Price said.

On a positive side, more residents are becoming involved in keeping watch on their neighborhoods. The department offers assistance in organizing neighborhood associations for such purposes. Anyone seeking help in establishing an association can call the department's Neighborhood Initiatives Division at 229-2330.

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