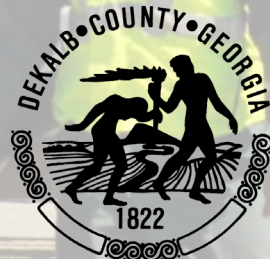


A New Day in DeKalb County Code Compliance, Code Enforcement and Beautification

January 25, 2022

Michael L. Thurmond
Chief Executive Officer



WHAT IS CODE ENFORCEMENT?

In DeKalb County, the code enforcement process is a multi-departmental, multi-agency effort designed to ensure compliance with DeKalb County's code of ordinances. The term is generally used to describe the enforcement of quality-of-life codes.

Code enforcement partners include:

- Residents
- Property owners
- DeKalb County CEO's Office
- DeKalb County Board of Commissioners
- DeKalb County Code Compliance Administration
- DeKalb County Community Development Department
- DeKalb County Law Department
- DeKalb County Department of Planning and Sustainability
- DeKalb County Sanitation Division
- DeKalb County Superior Court
- DeKalb County State Court
- DeKalb County Magistrate Court
- DeKalb County Solicitor's Office
- News media

WHAT ARE THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEKALB COUNTY CODE COMPLIANCE ADMINISTRATION (CCA)?

- **DeKalb County Code Compliance Administration (CCA) has an administrative function, not unilateral enforcement authority. The primary responsibility of the CCA is to ensure compliance with regulations protecting the health, safety and welfare of residents.**
- **DeKalb County Code Compliance Administration:**
 - **Receives citizen complaints.**
 - **Assesses properties for compliance.**
 - **Writes citations and warnings.**
 - **Negotiates with property owners and residents to achieve voluntary compliance.**
- **If conditions that have received citations or warnings are not voluntarily corrected by the property owner or resident in a prescribed, reasonable time, the case is presented to the appropriate court for adjudication.**

DEKALB'S CODE COMPLIANCE ADMINISTRATION (CCA) WAS PLAGUED BY MISMANAGEMENT AND DYSFUNCTION

- **Allegations of mismanagement, dysfunction and unethical behavior negatively impacted the operation of the DeKalb CCA and the code enforcement process.**
- **The Great Recession, from 2007-2009, dramatically increased the number of residents who lost their homes due to bank foreclosures. Thousands of homes were left vacant and unattended, increasing the number of blighted private properties throughout the county.**
- **There was public outcry from residents demanding more focus on county code enforcement and beautification efforts to address the growing blight throughout the county.**
- **Lack of funding hampered beautification and code compliance efforts.**

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CODE ENFORCEMENT IN DEKALB COUNTY

- **March 2020:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court of Georgia issued an emergency order suspending in person hearings for most court-related matters, which delayed the adjudication of code compliance cases.
- **March 2020-thru mid-August 2020:** No court hearings were held for code compliance cases.
- **Mid-August 2020:** Code Compliance cases resumed via Zoom held once a week.
- **March 2021:** In Rem cases resumed via Zoom, held once a month. Those pending since March 2020 are being handled first.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CODE ENFORCEMENT IN DEKALB COUNTY

- DeKalb County ordinance violations that result from citations written by Code Compliance officers are quasi-criminal cases which upon conviction may result in the punishment of incarceration. Therefore, unless consented to by all parties, the trial of such cases are currently only held in person.
- The court will adjudicate Code Compliance cases where the defendant pleads guilty or nolo contendere.
- If a defendant pleads not guilty, that case must wait until in-person trials resume, unless all parties consent otherwise.
- There have been no in-person trials of code violations cases since March 2020. They were scheduled to resume in January 2022 but have been delayed due to health concerns presented by the Omicron variant.
- If a defendant fails to appear at an ordinance hearing, the court will not issue a bench warrant for their arrest due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

\$14.2 MILLION IN INVESTMENTS TO IMPROVE DEKALB'S CODE ENFORCEMENT PROCESS

2018

- **Funded 10 code compliance officers, one senior code compliance officer, and one code compliance supervisor, \$506,000**
- **Funded 4 refuse collectors, \$158,500**
- **Continuation of Operation Clean Sweep, \$879,000**
- **Enhanced roadside maintenance- more frequent mowing, 350,000**



\$14.2 MILLION IN INVESTMENTS TO IMPROVE DEKALB'S CODE ENFORCEMENT PROCESS

2019

- **Increased maintenance of county property and right-of-way, \$1.8 million**
- **Funded 9 vacant positions – 5 code compliance officers, 2 senior code compliance officers, 1 administrative assistant and beautification director, \$425,000**
- **Restored funding to FY19 level for maintenance & mowing, tree trimming, herbicide, right-of-way mowing, litter removal, \$1.8 million**

\$14.2 MILLION IN INVESTMENTS TO IMPROVE DEKALB'S CODE ENFORCEMENT PROCESS

2020

- **Increase funding for title searches and legal organ postings to obtain court orders to abate and abolish abandoned and dilapidated properties.**
- **Increased part-time salaries in Magistrate Court to address backlog of evictions, nuisance and abatement ordinance cases.**
- **Leveraged \$1.1 million in federal funds through DeKalb County Community Development for demolition and abatement, and the funding of 2 code compliance positions.**
- **Performed a Comprehensive Property Condition Survey of Unincorporated DeKalb County, \$362,000, completed in Sept. 2020 (Note: For the first time, the county was able to identify all properties subject to abatement or demolition.)**
- **Worked with MARTA to clean up and beautify bus stops in the county.**
- **Purchased small rear loader and grappler truck to expedite MARTA bus shelter litter abatement.**

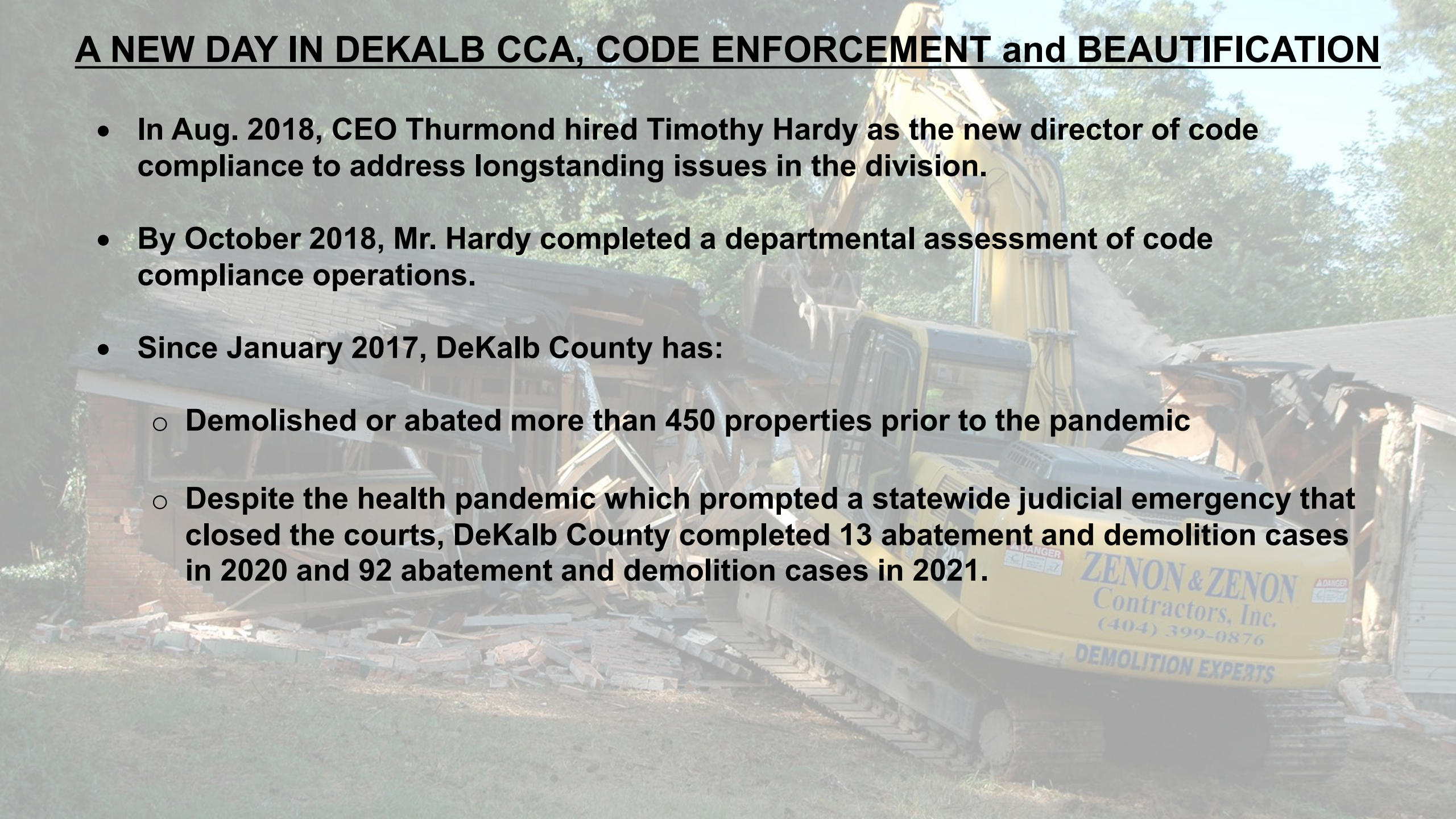
\$14.2 MILLION IN INVESTMENTS TO IMPROVE DEKALB'S CODE ENFORCEMENT PROCESS

2021

- Implementing a \$90,000 case management software system to track code enforcement violations and cases
- Funded four new positions (crew supervisor, crew leader, and two crew workers) to support curb bumping efforts.
- Continued funding for street sweeping
- Funded design and install six gateway improvement projects along the Interstate 20 corridor, Candler Road, and Chamblee-Tucker Road.
- Funded ATV for moving PATH trails

A NEW DAY IN DEKALB CCA, CODE ENFORCEMENT and BEAUTIFICATION

- In Aug. 2018, CEO Thurmond hired Timothy Hardy as the new director of code compliance to address longstanding issues in the division.
- By October 2018, Mr. Hardy completed a departmental assessment of code compliance operations.
- Since January 2017, DeKalb County has:
 - Demolished or abated more than 450 properties prior to the pandemic
 - Despite the health pandemic which prompted a statewide judicial emergency that closed the courts, DeKalb County completed 13 abatement and demolition cases in 2020 and 92 abatement and demolition cases in 2021.



A NEW DAY IN DEKALB CCA, CODE ENFORCEMENT and BEAUTIFICATION

- **Established a Comprehensive Commercial Corridor Inspection program to sweep commercial thoroughfares throughout unincorporated DeKalb County over a 5-year period.**
 - **As of March 2020, the team had completed sweeps on Memorial Drive, Candler Road and 20 percent of Glenwood Road.**
- **Hotel-Motel regulations passed by the Board of Commissioners**
- **Established Hotel-Motel Task Force**
- **Performed best-in-class Hotel-Motel regulatory compliance sweeps**
 - **Completed approximately two sweeps per month over the past three years since the passing of the Hotel-Motel regulations**
 - **A specialized inspection team evolved to become recognized as one of the models for efficient regulatory practices for identifying and following up on extended stay hospitality facilities that failed to maintain the basic standards for its guests.**

A NEW DAY IN DEKALB CCA, CODE ENFORCEMENT and BEAUTIFICATION

- **Conducted inspections of multifamily apartments**
 - **The multifamily inspection program requires each rental property with more than 4 units to submit an annual Code Compliance Certificate, certifying through an approved third-party inspector that at least 20% of all units meet the minimum property maintenance requirement.**
 - **DeKalb Code Compliance routinely performs two annual inspections of targeted locations based on the number of complaints and data gathered during routine inspections and required court inspections of those properties with pending court cases.**

NEXT STEPS

- **To strengthen the partnership between the government and private citizens in the fight against litter and blight.**
- **Initiate an anti-littering campaign and reinvest in county's Keep DeKalb Beautiful initiative.**



A New Day in DeKalb County Code Compliance, Code Enforcement and Beautification

January 25, 2022

Michael L. Thurmond
Chief Executive Officer

