

**Residential Building Code and Health
Enforcement Practices and Recommendations for
the City of Pittsburgh**

**Judith Derenzo
University of Pittsburgh
Community Outreach Partnership Center**

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	1
II. Housing Environment and Supporting Data	3
A. Bureau of Building Inspection	3
B. Allegheny County Health Department	4
III. Administrative Procedures	
A. Bureau of Building Inspection	5
B. Allegheny County Health Department	7
IV. Critical Case Study	9
A. Case Study Summary	
1. Bureau of Building Inspection	9
2. Allegheny County Health Department	10
B. Case Study Analysis	11
1. Bureau of Building Inspection	12
2. Allegheny County Health Department	14
V. Recommendations	16
A. Bureau of Building Inspection	16
B. Allegheny County Health Department	20
C. Additional Recommendations	21
Timelines	
Timeline A Bureau of Building Inspection	22
Timeline B Allegheny County Health Department	23

I. Introduction

Expeditious and effective residential building code and health enforcement practices are critical in preserving the quality of housing stock, the health and safety of residents, and the character of a neighborhood's population base. It is common knowledge that when property is left to deteriorate, disease, crime and violence are more likely to infest the community. Community leaders, politicians and neighborhood residents have been tackling the deleterious effects of poorly maintained houses for decades. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas' description of slum housing helps illustrate the effects of this ongoing problem:

Miserable and disreputable housing conditions... may indeed make living an almost insufferable burden. They may also be an ugly sore, a blight on the community which robs it of its charm; which makes it a place from which men turn. The misery of housing may despoil a community as an open sewer may ruin a river. Berman v. Parker, 348 U.S. 26, 32-33 (1954).

Pittsburgh's success in attracting more people to the city and encouraging them to stay here requires clean, safe neighborhoods and well-maintained housing stock. Blighted properties discourage housing investment by current and potential homeowners, creating a cycle of neighborhood decline. The causes of inadequate housing are due to both social and administrative factors. A lack of personal responsibility for the well-being of the community is the root of the problem. However, this is further aggravated by weaknesses within the administrative systems designed to hold violators accountable for their actions.

Improvements in Pittsburgh's neighborhoods require focused attention on residential inspection processes. This report examines current practices for enforcing residential building and health codes while providing recommendations for improvement. The two largest departments involved in investigating and abating housing violations are the City of Pittsburgh's Bureau of Building Inspection and the Allegheny County Health Department. The scope of this report will center on these two departments, although other related City services will also be mentioned as appropriate. The extent of inadequate housing in the City of Pittsburgh will first be described along with supporting data. Established procedures for investigating complaints at the Bureau of Building Inspection and the Allegheny County Health Department will then be discussed. This is followed by a case study analysis evaluating how established procedures are carried out in the field. Based on this analysis, recommendations are made for improving current enforcement systems and correspondingly Pittsburgh's neighborhoods.

The majority of the information in this report was obtained through interviews with officials at the Bureau of Building Inspection, the Allegheny County Health Department, the Mayor's Service Center, the municipal Housing Court and the City's Legal Department. Members of community organizations and neighborhood residents were also interviewed. The time and cooperation of all those who shared their knowledge and offered advice is greatly appreciated and fully acknowledged in allowing for the completion of this report.

II. Housing Environment and Supporting Data

Determining the extent of inadequate housing in a particular area is difficult since there is not one factor which clearly identifies housing units as such. Census overcrowding statistics provide one way of estimating the extent of inadequate housing since this factor is closely associated with slum housing conditions.¹ Overcrowding is defined as 1.01 or more people per habitable room, and severe overcrowding is defined as 1.51 or more people per habitable room. Based on 2000 Census data, out of a total of 68,809 rental housing units citywide, 3.1% were overcrowded and 1.1% were severely overcrowded.² In comparison, out of a total of 143,739 owner occupied housing units, .38% were overcrowded and .075% were severely overcrowded.³ This means that rental housing units are approximately 8.2% more likely to be overcrowded and 14.6% more likely to be severely overcrowded than owner occupied units citywide.

A. Bureau of Building Inspection

Some of the best sources for housing statistics are the departments in charge of regulating inadequate conditions. In 2002, the Bureau of Building Inspection (BBI) reported a total of 13,558 complaints. BBI receives all public complaints from the Mayor's Service Center, a citywide call center responsible for collecting complaints and directing them to the appropriate departments. The Mayor's Service Center tracks the status of all complaints until the department informs them that an investigation has begun. In 2002, the Mayor's Service Center sent 9,671 code enforcement complaints to

¹ *Los Angeles Blue Ribbon Citizens Committee on Slum Housing*, 1997, p. 10.

² U.S. Census. "Tenure by Occupants Per Room." 2000 Census. Summary File 3, Table H20. <<http://www.census.gov>>

³ *Ibid.*

BBI, although BBI records indicate having received 9,171 complaints. The remaining 4,000 complaints were identified by BBI inspectors themselves and included activities other than code enforcement such as issuing business licenses and permits.

In 2002, BBI made 98,593 inspections. This includes all inspections in the categories of building construction, demolition, electrical inspections and code enforcement. Out of this total, 27,244 or 27.6% were code enforcement inspections. However, it must be noted that this number also contains multiple inspections made for the same site. Out the 98,593 inspections, BBI statistics indicate that 1,027 of these cases ended up in court. In contrast, Housing Court records show 1,700 BBI cases in 2002 with collected fines totaling \$117,520.31 and an average fine of \$69.12 per case. Because Housing Court collects these fines, BBI does not receive any revenue from its code enforcement activities.

B. Allegheny County Health Department

In 2002, the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) received approximately 3,500 housing complaints, mostly from low-income tenants with rental housing problems. In 2002, the Mayor's Service Center only sent 207 complaints to the Health Department since the Department receives most complaints directly. Out of the 3,500 housing cases, 189 rental housing units in the City of Pittsburgh were deemed uninhabitable in 2002. This is about average since the number of city rental units deemed uninhabitable in 2000 and 2001 were 198 and 141 respectively. According to Housing Court records, in 2002 ACHD prosecuted 237 cases with collected fines totaling \$3,576.50 and an average fine of \$15.09 per case. As with BBI, Housing Court also

collects fines from ACHD cases. However, ACHD has authority to implement and collect additional fines for violations.

III. Administrative Procedures

A. Bureau of Building Inspection

The Bureau of Building Inspection is authorized to administer and enforce Title 10 of the Pittsburgh Building Code which is based on the 1999 BOCA building code and the 1998 International Property Maintenance Code. Inspectors also enforce Title 9 of the zoning code which includes residential occupancy laws and parking regulations. As previously mentioned, BBI receives nearly all complaints electronically through the Mayor's Service Center. Unlike permit records which have been automated since 1991, building inspection cases are not recorded in a computer system. Instead, case files are based on paper and memory, with the exception of a two year old internal tickler system providing inspectors with property re-inspection reminders. As of recently, money is being set aside to automate the inspection process, although completion is not expected for three to five years.

A total of 44 inspectors within four categories conduct investigations. BBI has 21 inspectors for building construction, 11 for code enforcement, 7 for electrical inspections, 3 for demolition, and 2 for heating, ventilation and air conditioning. Inspectors have established procedures to follow when investigating cases and enforcing violation abatement. After BBI receives a complaint, it is assigned to an inspector based on the nature of the complaint and its location. The inspector then calls the complainant within 7 days to schedule an inspection. Two to four weeks after making the inspection, the

inspector sends a letter to the property owner listing all violations and the number of tickle days allowed to make the repairs. This usually ranges from 15 to 30 days depending on the severity of the violation and the amount of time reasonably needed for abatement. However, this deadline is regularly extended by 15 days in order to account for time spent for on typing, delivery and proof of service since the letters are sent by certified mail. This means that violators may not have to remedy the problem for up to 45 days after a complaint is investigated.

The bottom of the letter also states that if the violations are not abated within the specified number of days, the owner will be subject to prosecution by the City of Pittsburgh. Once the deadline has passed, the inspector receives a re-inspection reminder through the department's internal tickler system. The inspector then returns to the property to see if the problems still exist. If the violation is inside the building, the inspector calls the tenant or landlord to schedule a re-inspection. Although times vary, re-inspections usually occur within two weeks.

Provided that the violations have been abated, the case is closed. Otherwise, papers are filed in Housing Court, although it usually takes two to three weeks for the complaint to be typed and sent. A hearing date is often scheduled four to six weeks after a complaint is received. If the defendant is convicted at Housing Court, 30 days are allowed to file an appeal at the Court of Common Pleas. From this time, the Court of Common Pleas may take from four to six months to schedule a court date. Under the current system, a violation could take up to six months or longer to be resolved.

B. Allegheny County Health Department

The mission of the Allegheny County Health Department regarding housing inspections is to enforce Article VI of the Department's Rules and Regulations entitled 'Housing and Community Environment'. This article is designed to ensure that dwellings are "safe, sanitary and fit for human habitation".⁴ Since most complaints are registered with the Health Department, seven secretaries speak directly to callers and enter the complaints into the Department's fully automated intake and tracking system. The complaints are then divided among the Health Department's 17 inspectors depending on the location of the complaint. In addition to their complaint housing caseload, Department inspectors also conduct planned inspections at various businesses and public facilities throughout the year.

Article VI lists the types of violations that the Health Department investigates. These include but are not limited to carbon monoxide hazards, gas leaks, lack of heat or water, structural deficiencies, electrical problems, and rat and pest infestations. Violations are then categorized into four classes depending upon their severity, with Class I violations being the most severe and Class IV violations being the least severe. Class I violations pose "a real and immediate threat to the life, health and safety of occupants"; Class II violations pose "major health hazards"; Class III violations are defined as "other health hazards", and Class IV violations are "any other condition that violates Article VI but does not determine a property unfit for human habitation."⁵

⁴ Allegheny County Health Department, Rules and Regulations. *Article VI: Houses and Community Environment*, p.1.

⁵ *Ibid*, pp.11-15.

For serious problems (such as Class I, Class II, and possibly Class III violations), an inspector visits the site approximately two days after receiving the complaint. A formal notice listing the violations is then sent to the property owner. Like BBI, the number of days allowed for abatement depends on the severity of the problem. For very dangerous conditions, the owner will be given two days to make the necessary repairs. Less serious violations could receive up to 30 days for abatement. After the deadline has passed, the department's internal tickler system reminds inspectors that it is time to conduct a re-inspection. Inspectors are expected to revisit the site one to two days after the deadline has passed.

If the problem has been abated, the case is closed. If the problems still exist, court papers are filed within five working days. However, as previously mentioned, Housing Court does not usually schedule a hearing for four to six weeks. In addition to court action, the Health Department is authorized under state law to issue a Penalty Assessment Letter which fines violators a flat fee of \$2,500 plus \$250 per every day that the violation continues to exist. Health Department officials report that this is a highly effective method of demanding cooperation and greatly reduces the number of cases brought to court.

For less severe complaints (usually Classes III and IV), inspectors send a Pre-Inspection Notification (PIN) letter to the property owner listing the alleged violations and requesting that any actual violations be fixed in a certain number of days. A copy of the letter is also sent to the complainant. After the abatement deadline has passed, the inspector for that area calls the complainant to see if the violations have been fixed. If

not, the site is inspected and a formal notice is sent to the property owner requiring abatement. After the deadline has passed, the inspector re-inspects the property within one to two days. Court papers are filed and a Penalty Assessment Letter is sent out if the problem still exists.

IV. Critical Case Study

In order to examine how thoroughly the administrative procedures described above are practiced, an actual housing complaint has been analyzed to identify departmental strengths and weaknesses and determine potential recommendations. The case study discussed below includes simultaneous violations falling under the jurisdiction of both the Bureau of Building Inspection and the Allegheny County Health Department and took place within one rental housing unit.

A. Case Study Summary

1. Bureau of Building Inspection

In early March, a tenant was concerned about potential fire code violations in an apartment building and called the Mayor's Service Center to request a BBI investigation. A couple days later, a building inspector called the tenant and scheduled an appointment for the next day. Two fire code violations were identified that prevented the tenant from having any safe escape in the case of a fire. Two weeks later, the tenant called the inspector after not receiving any follow-up or seeing any changes being made by the landlord. The tenant was informed that multiple messages were left on the landlord's answering machine but the calls were not returned. Therefore, the inspector recently sent

a letter notifying the landlord of the violations. One week later, the tenant received a duplicate copy of the violation letter sent to the landlord. This was dated three weeks after the initial inspection, and the landlord was given 15 days to abate the violations from the date on the letter. A couple of weeks later the tenant also received notification from the Mayor's Service Center stating that BBI sent a letter to the property owner.

Like all BBI complaints, the 15 day deadline stated in the inspector's letter was extended an extra 15 days to account for typing, delivery and proof of service. However, it was not until one week before this extended deadline (or six weeks after the initial inspection) that the inspector and landlord met in the building to discuss the changes that needed to be made. As of this time no repairs had been started. After the deadline had passed, the tenant asked the inspector why all violations were not yet abated and whether prosecution would begin. The inspector replied that he extended the abatement deadline by an additional 30 to 50 days, although no explanation was given. One week later, all violations were fully abated, making the length of the entire process from initial inspection to full abatement of fire code violations to last exactly 2 months. (See Timeline A for a chronological overview of the BBI complaint).

2. Allegheny County Health Department

Around the same time, the tenant issued a complaint with the Health Department for inadequate heat. Rather than conducting an inspection in one to two days for potential Class I or II violations, a Pre-Inspection Notification letter was sent out two days later allowing 20 days for abatement. When the deadline passed and the violation remained unabated, the tenant called the Health Department to schedule an inspection. This

occurred one month after the initial complaint was issued. By that time, the winter weather had warmed considerably and on the day of the inspection the room temperature was two degrees above the minimum temperature necessary to issue an official violation. The problem could no longer be addressed and the heating problem was never fixed.

During the inspection, other Class III and IV violations were identified and an official notice was sent to the property owner requiring abatement within 35 days, five days longer than the amount usually granted. Although inspectors are expected to re-inspect one to two days after the violation deadline has passed, the tenant was not contacted to schedule a re-inspection for approximately four weeks after the deadline passed. Once the tenant was contacted, a re-inspection was conducted shortly after and the Class III and IV violations were determined satisfactorily abated. (See Timeline B for a chronological overview of the ACHD complaint).

B. Case Study Analysis

The Bureau of Building Inspection and the Allegheny County Health Department will be evaluated on the extent to which their expected procedures were or were not upheld throughout the case study. This is illustrated through a matrix listing the expected procedures and indicating whether the procedure was conducted (Y), was not conducted (N), or was unnecessary to the case (U). Each measure is also given a numerical score with Y equaling 1, N equaling 0 and U having no value at all. The total score is the sum of the individual scores divided by the number of necessary procedures for the case.

1. Bureau of Building Inspection

Bureau of Building Inspection Evaluation

Expected Procedure	Task Completion: Yes (Y), No (N) Unnecessary (U)	Score
Initial Inspection Scheduled Promptly	Y	1
Violation Letter Promptly Sent	N	0
Timely Re-inspection	N	0
Case Filed in Court	N	0
Total Score	--	1 out of 4 or 25% satisfaction rate

The Bureau of Building Inspection received a total score of 1 out of 4, or a 25% success rate. The task that BBI completed as expected was the “Initial Inspection Scheduled Promptly”. In this situation, the inspector called the tenant only a couple of days after the complaint was registered with the Mayor’s Service Center and an inspection occurred the following day.

The category ‘Violation Letter Sent Promptly’ received a 0 due to delays that diverged from established procedures. Two weeks after the inspection, the tenant called the inspector to follow-up on the case and was told that phone messages were left for the landlord before sending an official violation letter. Conversations with other inspectors also revealed that sometimes property owners are called first, especially if it is someone that the inspector knows. However, this was never mentioned in BBI’s established procedures. The problem with calling first is that it delays when an official letter is sent

and an abatement deadline imposed, allowing the violation to persist longer than necessary. In this case, time spent on calling delayed the letter and the abatement deadline by a full two weeks. Considering that the fire code violations in question were so serious and potentially dangerous, it is particularly disturbing that speedier action did not occur.

The 'Timely Re-inspection' category received a 0 since the tenant was never contacted about a re-inspection and was never told whether one occurred. Because the violations were interior problems, the inspector had to be granted entry into the building either through the tenant or the property owner. It is certain that the inspector did not contact the tenant to conduct a re-inspection. It is not known whether a re-inspection was made with the property owner.

The category 'Case Filed in Court' also received a 0 since grounds existed for prosecution, but BBI indicated no intention of doing so at the time or in the near future. BBI officials indicate that if the property owner is working with the inspector and being responsive to the changes that have to be made, then they will delay prosecution. In this case, full abatement did not occur by the time the deadline expired. However, rather than continuing to enforcing the penalty of court prosecution, the landlord was given a substantial amount of extra time, potentially allowing the problems to remain unabated nearly two months after the deadline had passed.

2. Allegheny County Health Department

Health Department Evaluation

Expected Procedure	Task Completion: Yes (Y), No (N) Unnecessary (U)	Score
Immediate Inspection for Serious Violation	N	0
Pre-Inspection Notification Letter Sent Promptly	Y	1
Initial Inspection Scheduled Promptly	Y	1
Re-inspection Scheduled Promptly	N	0
Case Brought to Court	U	--
Total Score	--	2 out of 4 or 50% satisfaction rate

The Health Department received a total score of 2 out of 4, or a 50% satisfaction rate. The first expected procedure that the Health Department failed to complete was ‘Immediate Inspection for Serious Violation’. The serious violation in question here was inadequate heat. Rather than conduct an immediate investigation in one or two days to determine the extent of the problem, a Pre-Inspection Notification (PIN) letter was sent to the landlord allowing 20 days for abatement. This was particularly needless since the tenant already told the landlord about the problem and decided to call the Health Department due to his refusal to respond. During the 20 day abatement period the landlord did not look into or remedy the problem, forcing the tenant to continue living without adequate heat during this time.

When the investigator was asked why an immediate inspection did not occur, the tenant was told that a PIN letter had to be sent out because the tenant reported some heat was emitted even though it was effectively negligible. Class I heating violations are identified when the majority of habitable rooms and bathrooms are 60 degrees or below and Class II heating violations are identified when the same areas are 65 degrees or below. Because the temperature of the entire living space was below 65 degrees, a health threatening Class I or Class II violation was overlooked. Rather than send out a PIN letter, the tenant should have been asked for a reading of the room temperature to help determine the severity of the problem over the phone. Albeit, to the Department's credit the PIN letter was sent out within two days, allowing them to receive a score of 1 for the category 'Pre-Inspection Notification Letter Sent Promptly'.

The category 'Initial Inspection Scheduled Promptly' also received a 1 since a re-inspection was scheduled soon after the abatement deadline had passed. However, it is important to note that in this case the tenant called the inspector to schedule the appointment, so we do not know how long the inspector may have taken to contact the tenant had that been necessary.

The "Re-inspection Scheduled Promptly" category received a O. As mentioned earlier, the inspector found various Class III and IV violations during the inspection. After this deadline passed, a re-inspection had to be conducted. Although inspectors are expected to contact the complainant one to two days after deadline, in this case, it took the inspector at least four weeks to contact the tenant for a re-inspection. However, it must be noted that the re-inspection occurred shortly after the tenant was contacted.

Lastly, the category “Case Brought to Court” received a U and was not included in the final calculation. This is because there was no possibility of prosecution since the heating violations were not identified in time. However, if a timely inspection was made and violations remained unabated, prosecution may have been an option.

V. Recommendations

In order to remedy problems identified through this research and the case study analysis, recommendations will be made on ways to improve various weaknesses in residential inspection procedures of both the Bureau of Building Inspection and the Allegheny County Health Department.

A. Bureau of Building Inspection

- **Automate the inspection process.** Given that BBI receives nearly 14,000 complaints a year and performs close to 100,000 investigations, the department needs to automate the inspection process so that cases are efficiently recorded and tracked. In comparison, the Health Department which receives around 4,800 complaints a year is fully automated. The current paper and memory system is not only extremely dated but increases the chance that records are incomplete or lost. A possible record keeping problem is indicated through statistical discrepancies between BBI records and those of the Mayor’s Service Center and Housing Court. Although money is currently being set aside for automation, a three to five year wait is expected. BBI officials also stated that automation would make prosecution less burdensome and time consuming by providing faster access to a file’s case history, thus encouraging inspectors to prosecute more often.

• **Reduce delay in typing complaints.** In order to abate code violations faster, BBI must reduce the two to three week delay that currently exists to type violation letters and Housing Court complaints. This problem was particularly apparent in BBI's established procedures. This could be quickly resolved by having inspectors themselves compose the letters on a computer template that allows them to fill in the necessary information. In addition, it is strongly suggested that cases presenting serious safety threats be given typing priority over less threatening problems in order to reduce unnecessary delays.

• **Document violation immediately with letter sent to property owners.** It is highly recommended that violation letters be written immediately after an inspection, even if an inspector decides to call the property owner as well. Otherwise, as the case study illustrated, relying on phone calls to initially contact the property owner can significantly delay the abatement deadline and allow the problem to remain longer than expected under standard procedures.

• **Enforce abatement deadlines and prosecute violators.** In addition to sending out letters promptly, BBI also must also more stringently enforce abatement deadlines and prosecute violators when they do not abide by them. Granting additional days to resolve violations, especially serious ones, should only occur sparingly. Knowing that BBI is serious about the deadlines they impose could significantly improve property owners' response time and abatement rates while potentially reducing the need for prosecution.

• **Inform the Mayor’s Service Center of case completion.** In order for the City to better track violation abatement rates, it is highly recommended that BBI inform the Mayor’s Service Center when cases are closed, not only when investigation has begun. This would provide statistics on the amount of time it takes for cases to be completed from beginning to end while encouraging BBI to resolve cases as soon as possible.

• **Authorize BBI to impose fines.** It is strongly recommended that BBI receive authorization to fine violators in order to sufficiently finance and conduct code enforcement activities. BBI officials agreed that the department lacks the monetary threats necessary to make violators comply with the law. Under the current system, uncooperative violators are only threatened with minimal Housing Court fines while draining BBI of its resources. With a median rental unit price of \$414 per month or \$4,968 per year in the City of Pittsburgh, an average Housing Court fine of \$69 is unlikely to compel landlords to abate violations quickly if at all.⁶ Situations can be imagined where it may be in a property owner’s financial interest to pay the fine before making the necessary changes. Due to the City’s current budget crisis, it is also possible that BBI will prosecute fewer cases in order to cut costs.

• **Support Private Asset Attachment legislation.** One proposal that both BBI and the Mayor support is the Private Asset Attachment legislation within the State’s Urban Blight Bill package. Such legislation would allow municipalities to attach landlords’ private assets for payment of code enforcement penalties and departmental costs. However, it is unlikely that this legislation will be passed in the near future since the

⁶ U.S. Census. “Median Contract Rent (Dollars)”. 2000 Census. Summary File 3, Table H56. <[www.http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTTable?_ts=83456651865](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTTable?_ts=83456651865)>

Blight Bill package has been continually defeated for over a decade. Although it is recommended that lobbying efforts in favor of this legislation continue, it is not a viable solution at the present time.

- **Implement flat rate and daily fines.** It is recommended that the City allow BBI to assess fines for non-compliance similar to the Health Department's state authorized ability. Under the current system, fines for code violations are only assessed in Housing Court. However, given the small number of cases that go to court (approximately 1700) and the small fine imposed (\$69 per case on average), this threat is insufficient in demanding timely compliance. Due to the Health Department's success in demanding abatement through their state authorized Penalty Assessment procedure where flat rate fine of \$2,500 is combined with a daily violation fine of \$250, it is likely that a similar program would work well for BBI.

- **Implement a rent escrow program.** Another possibility is for tenants to place their rent money into a rent escrow account when property owners violate abatement deadlines. For each day that the problem remains unabated, a percentage of the escrowed money would be returned to the tenant at the end of the case or the end of the lease, whichever comes first. This would effectively fine the landlord and provide a financial incentive to abate problems quickly.

B. Allegheny County Health Department

• **Properly classify violations over the phone.** Based on the case study, recommendations for the Health Department mostly concern internal vigilance that a complaint's classification is properly assessed. The most egregious Health Department violation was the improper classification of a heating problem over the phone. It was assumed that the violation was not a Class I or II violation because some heat was being emitted. However, this does not mean Class I or II conditions did not exist. Although this report only deals with heating violations, it is recommended that ACHD ensures that classifications for all problems are clearly defined and properly identified at the time the complaint is received.

• **Schedule re-inspections promptly.** The Health Department should also make sure that inspectors promptly schedule a re-inspection after the abatement deadline. Under expected protocol a re-inspection is supposed to occur one to two days after the deadline has passed. In the case study this did not occur for at least one month after the deadline expired. This delay may be due to overworked staff, or it may be an organizational problem. However, timely re-inspection is essential for an effective enforcement process.

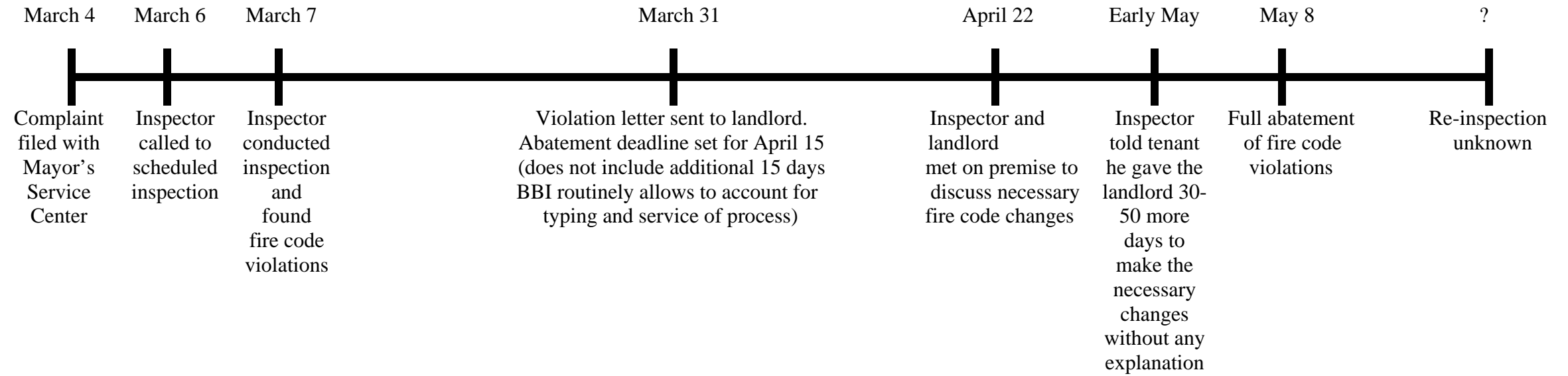
C. Additional Recommendations

• **Establish a non-profit tenant organization.** In order to help complainants resolve problems without departmental involvement, it is recommended that a non-profit tenant organization be established in Pittsburgh. Activities would primarily consist of conducting mediation sessions between tenants and landlords while providing assistance should a complaint be filed. This would not only help resolve problems faster, but lower departmental case load and provide more time for investigating and prosecuting serious violations. Usually such organizations are volunteer driven with one or two part-time employees. San Francisco is one of the most successful cities in developing tenant organizations, and it is highly suggested that this model be looked into for ideas on improving housing conditions in Pittsburgh.

• **Increase awareness of Private Right of Action legislation.** It is also recommended that Pittsburgh's Private Right of Action legislation be better promoted as an alternative to filing a complaint with public departments. This legislation allows individuals or community organizations to file a criminal complaint against property violators and bring the case directly to court. However, this is not a possibility if a complaint has already been filed with an official department. Therefore, more people must know that this recourse is available in advance. This option could save departments time and money while hastening housing improvement efforts. Tenant organizations could also educate the public about this option and assist complainants in the court process.

Timeline A

Bureau of Building Inspection



Timeline B

Allegheny County Health Department

