

Code Enforcement as a Tool for Safe and Affordable Housing

2024 Housing Matters Conference

A Partnership Between



Housing Action Illinois
A stronger Illinois begins at home

Funded By



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



Today's Facilitators - Introductions



Illinois Housing Lab



Andrew J. Greenlee Ph.D.



Emma Walters, MUP



Housing Action Illinois

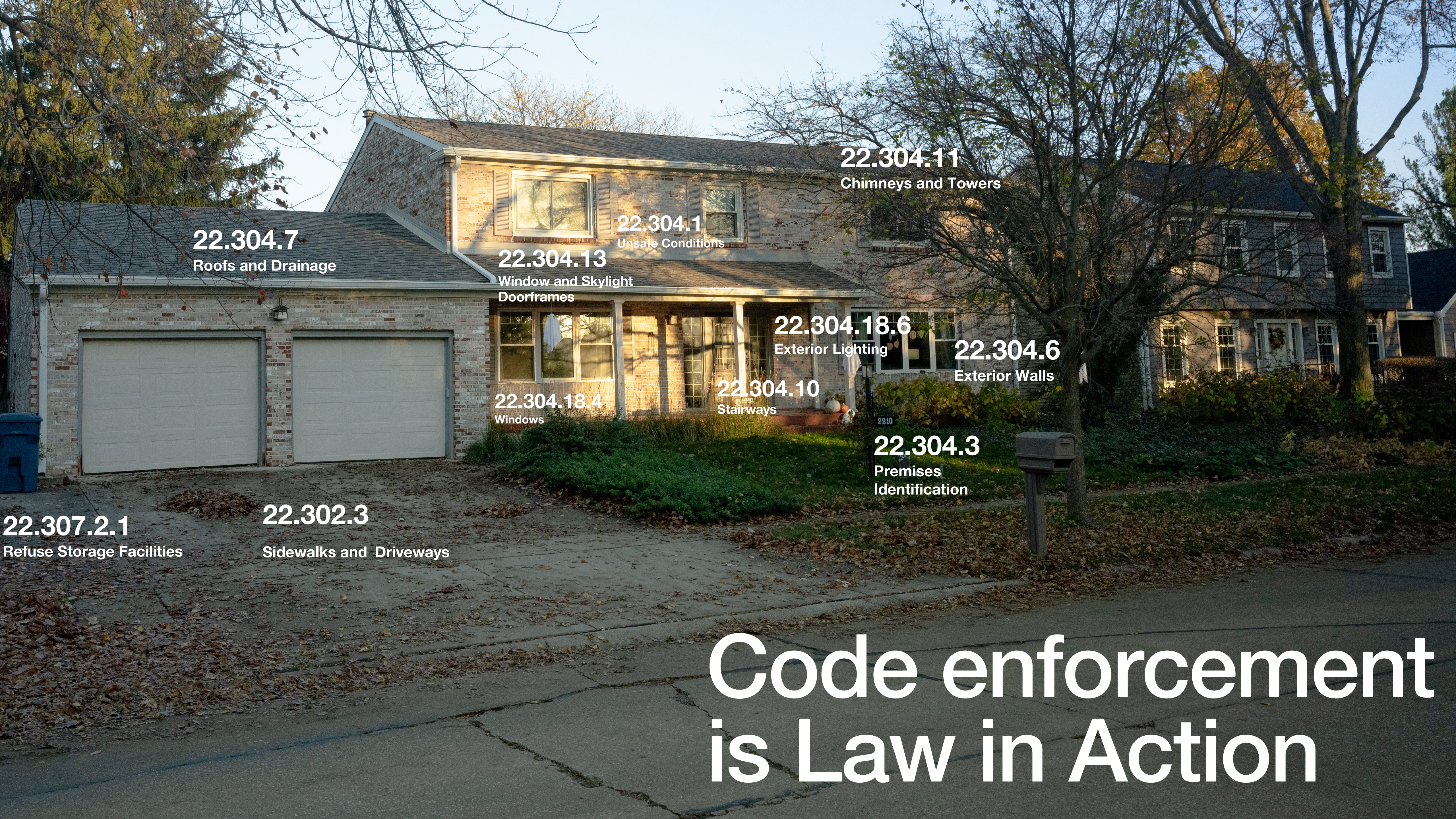
A stronger Illinois begins at home



Sharon Legenza, J.D.



**Code enforcement
is Law in Action**



22.304.7
Roofs and Drainage

22.304.1
Unsafe Conditions

22.304.11
Chimneys and Towers

22.304.13
Window and Skylight
Doorframes

22.304.18.6
Exterior Lighting

22.304.6
Exterior Walls

22.304.18.4
Windows

22.304.10
Stairways

22.304.3
Premises
Identification

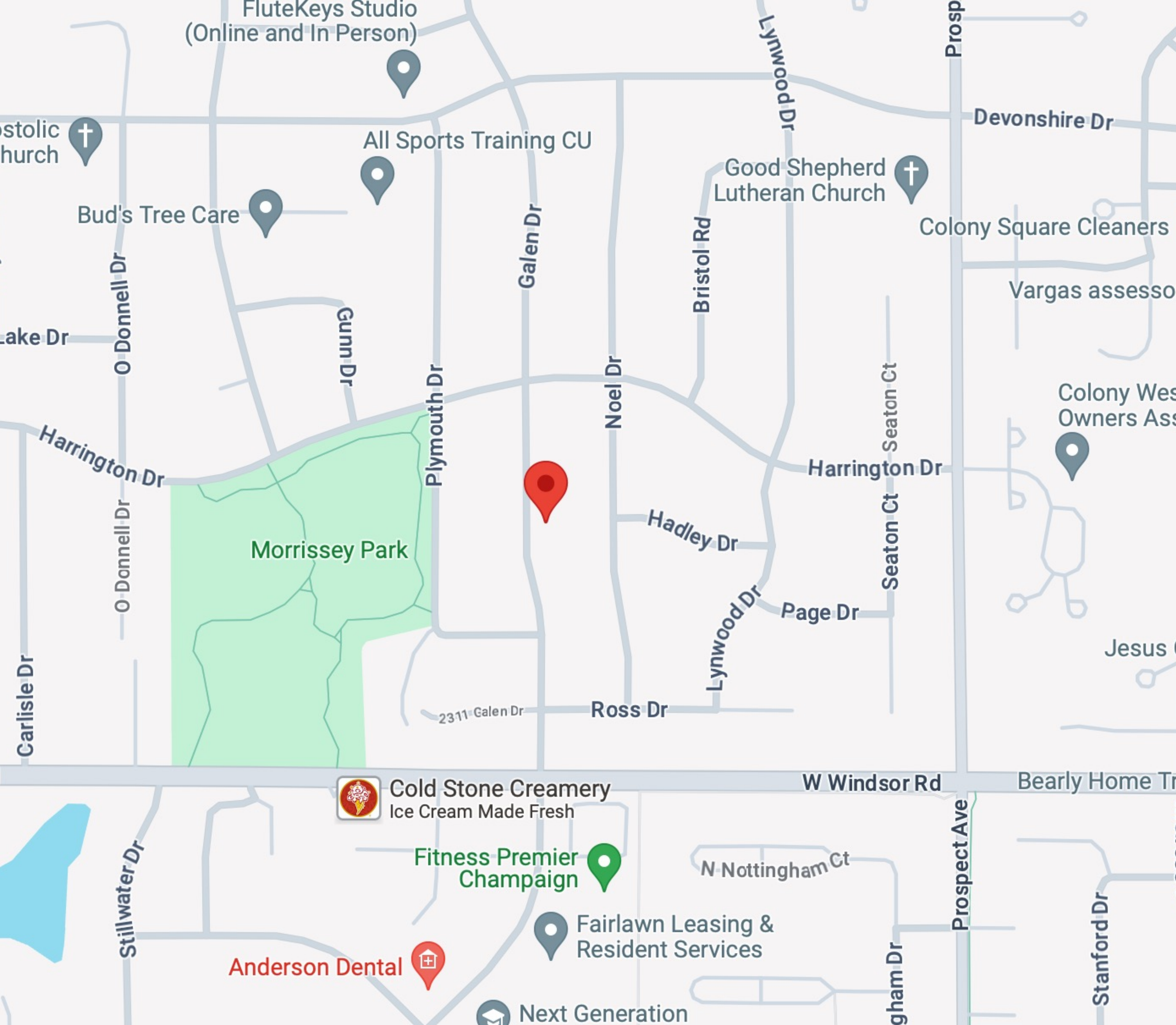
22.307.2.1
Refuse Storage Facilities

22.302.3
Sidewalks and Driveways

**Code enforcement
is Law in Action**



Code Enforcement is Entangled With Broader Social and Economic Forces



- Neighborhood change trajectory / status
- Infrastructure / public investments
- State of surrounding houses
- Housing tenure mix
- Property owner engagement
- Past enforcement action

SUBURBAN CHICAGO NEWS METRO/STATE

Video of 73-year-old boarded up inside his suburban Chicago apartment sparks investigation

In a viral video, Rudolph Williams was in his unit in a dilapidated apartment building when the windows and doors were boarded up.

By Sophia Tareen | Associated Press | Updated Jan 10, 2024, 5:52am CST



On Friday, crews started boarding up units in Rudolph Williams' 30-unit apartment complex in Harvey. The mayor has promised an investigation. | Associated Press

The complex, which is in clear disrepair, has been on the city's radar for months.

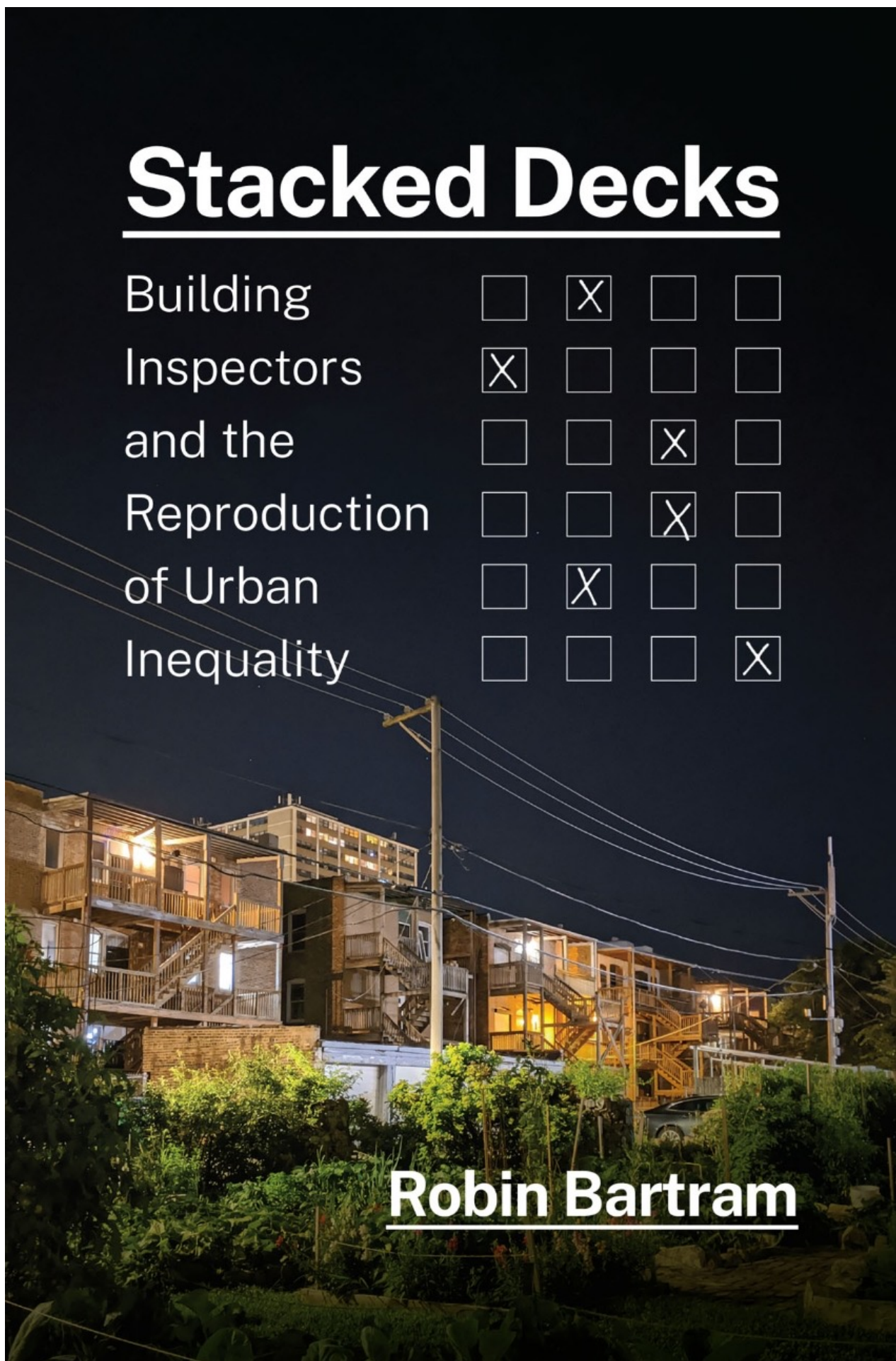


Various apartments at an apartment complex Monday, in Harvey., are boarded up where some are not. | Charles Rex Arbogast/AP

One of the two buildings has no heat, with residents using stoves and space heaters to keep warm. A set of stairs has collapsed and is blocked to pedestrians. There is garbage everywhere: broken furniture, a large dumbbell and liquor bottles.

There have also been numerous safety issues involving drugs and crime. Police were called to the property more than 300 times last year, according to Harvey Police Chief Cameron Biddings.

Context



Housing code enforcement involves making case-by-case judgement calls and stabs at justice within a stacked deck.

“The building code is enforced unevenly. This is the case for all laws and regulations but it is particularly important that we understand how this applies to building code enforcement because of the life-and-death consequences of compliance and violations.”

“... inspectors interpret the housing landscapes that uneven development and investment create, and they wield their interpretations of these landscapes to guide the assessments about who deserves leniency of punishment and how to allocate justice.”

Context

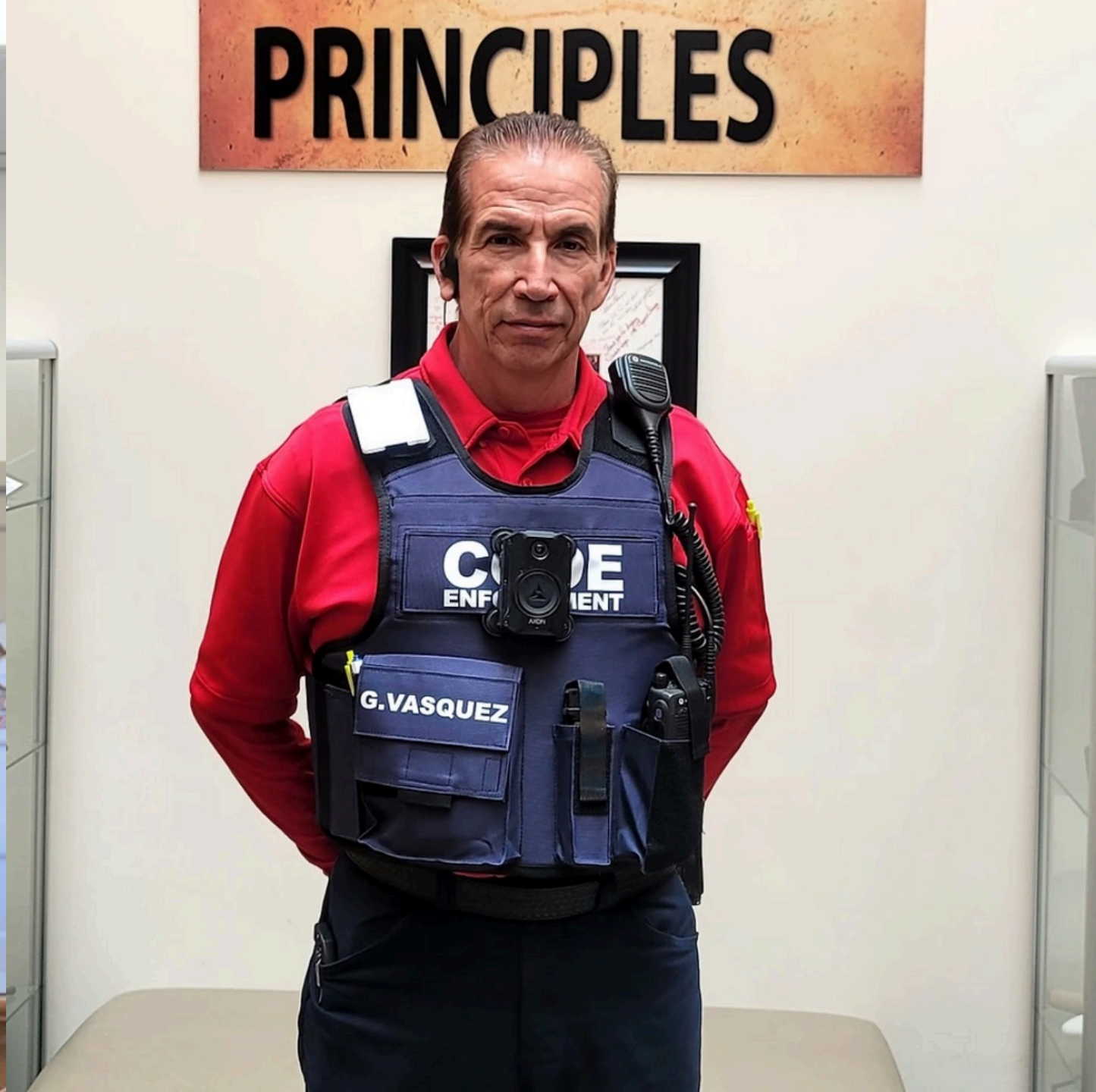
How Police and Anti-Crime Measures Reinforce Segregation

Cities' efforts to get tough on crime can make it harder for low-income residents to find good jobs and housing.

January 17, 2019 •
Daniel C. Vock and Mike Maciag, J. Brian Charles



Context



CODE ENFORCEMENT
OFFICER SAFETY FOUNDATION

Context

Nuisance Ordinance

- Excessive number of calls to the police for service
- Penalize property owners for perceived legal violations near a property or involving a tenant residing at a property

Crime-Free Ordinance

- Landlord and unit registration
- Required lease addendums that prohibit violent behavior or threats of violence
- Required eviction for tenants who engage in criminal activity on or near the property

THE COST OF BEING “CRIME FREE”

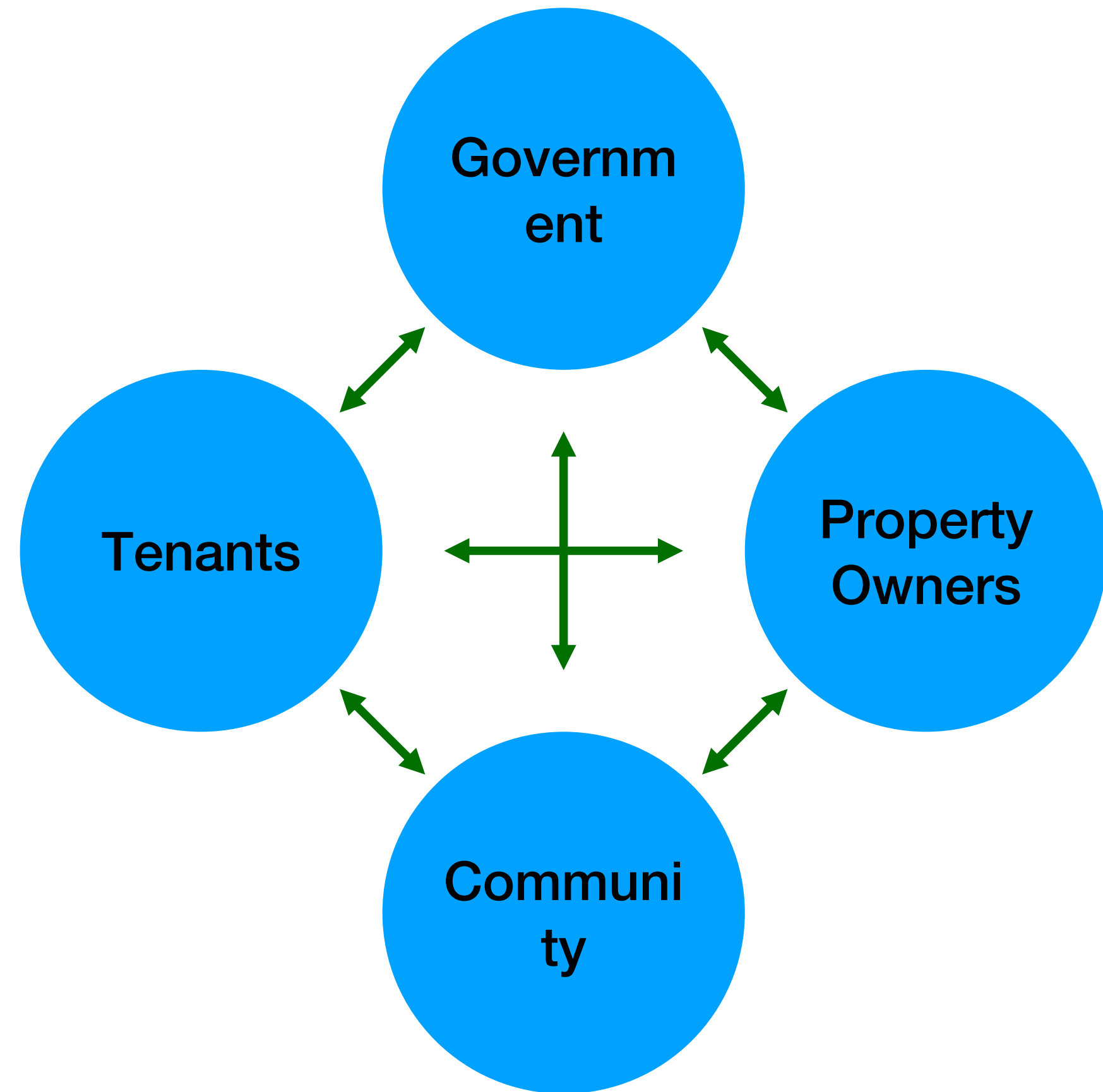
Legal and Practical Consequences of
Crime Free Rental Housing and Nuisance Property Ordinances



Context

- Code enforcement exists on the same regulatory spectrum as local law enforcement
- Crime-free and nuisance ordinances are being increasingly adopted and leverage criminal complaints to trigger code inspections
- Code enforcement action has the potential to alter the landlord-tenant relationship, housing stability, and patterns of racial and economic segregation

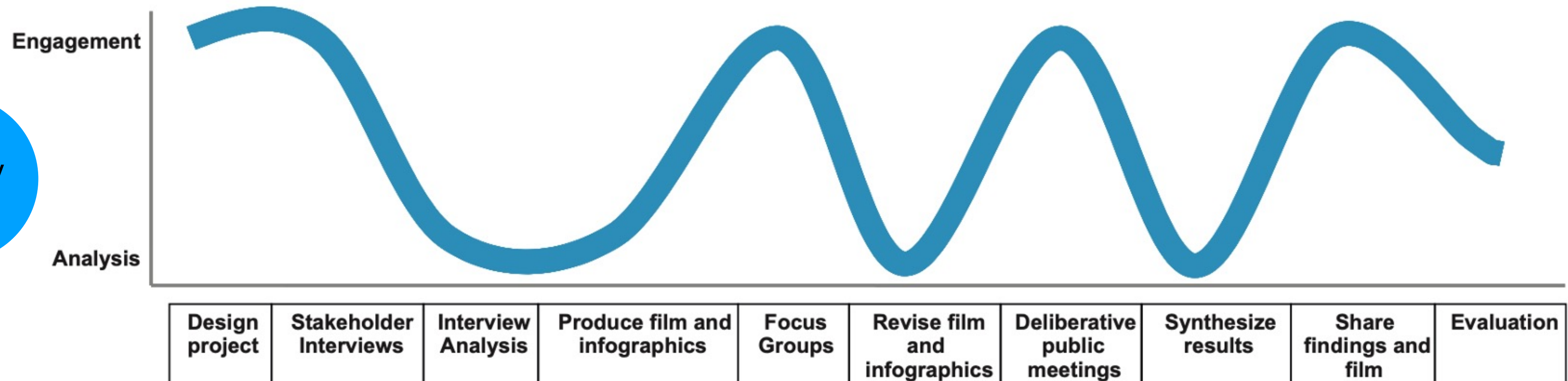
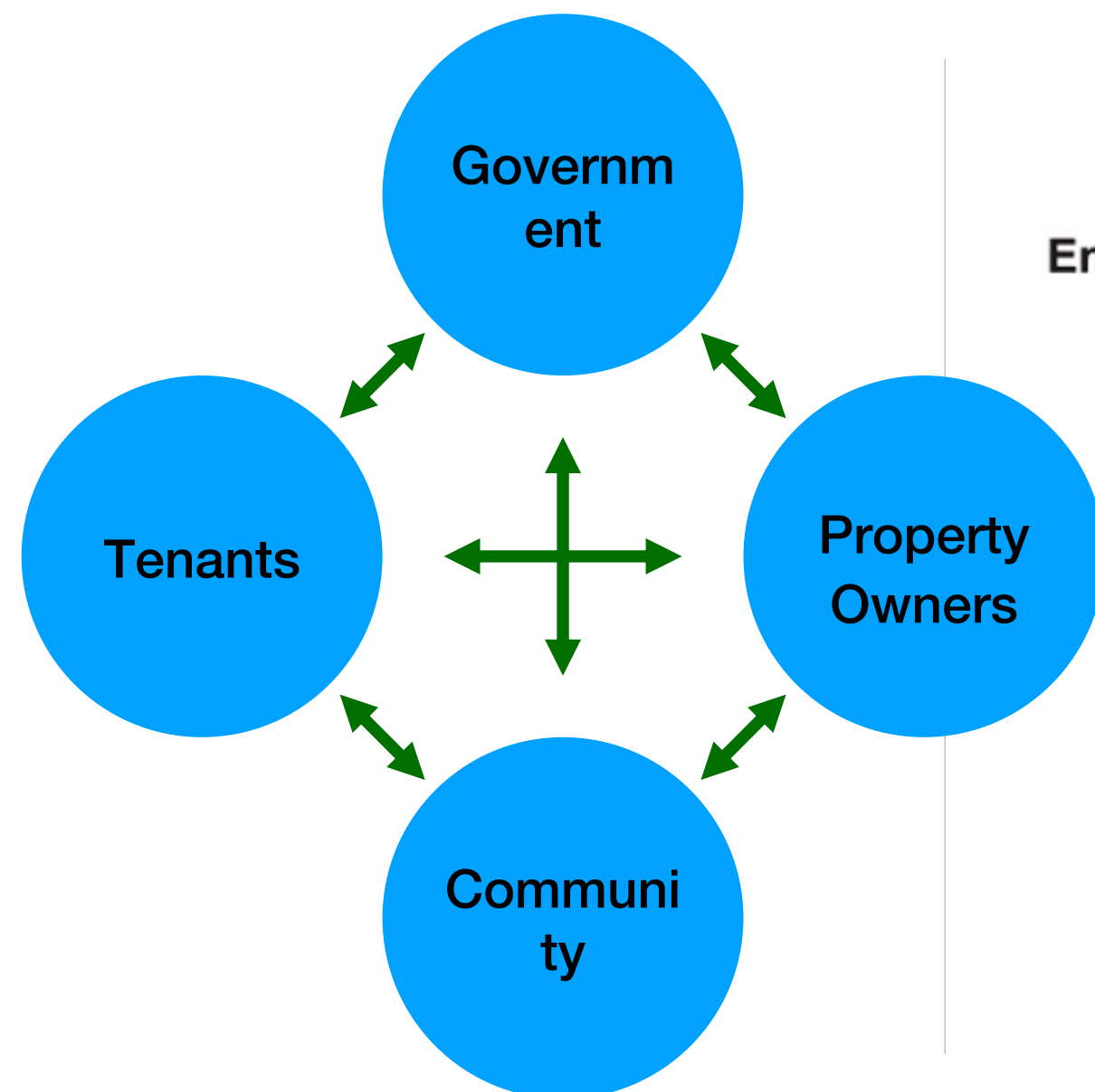
Questions



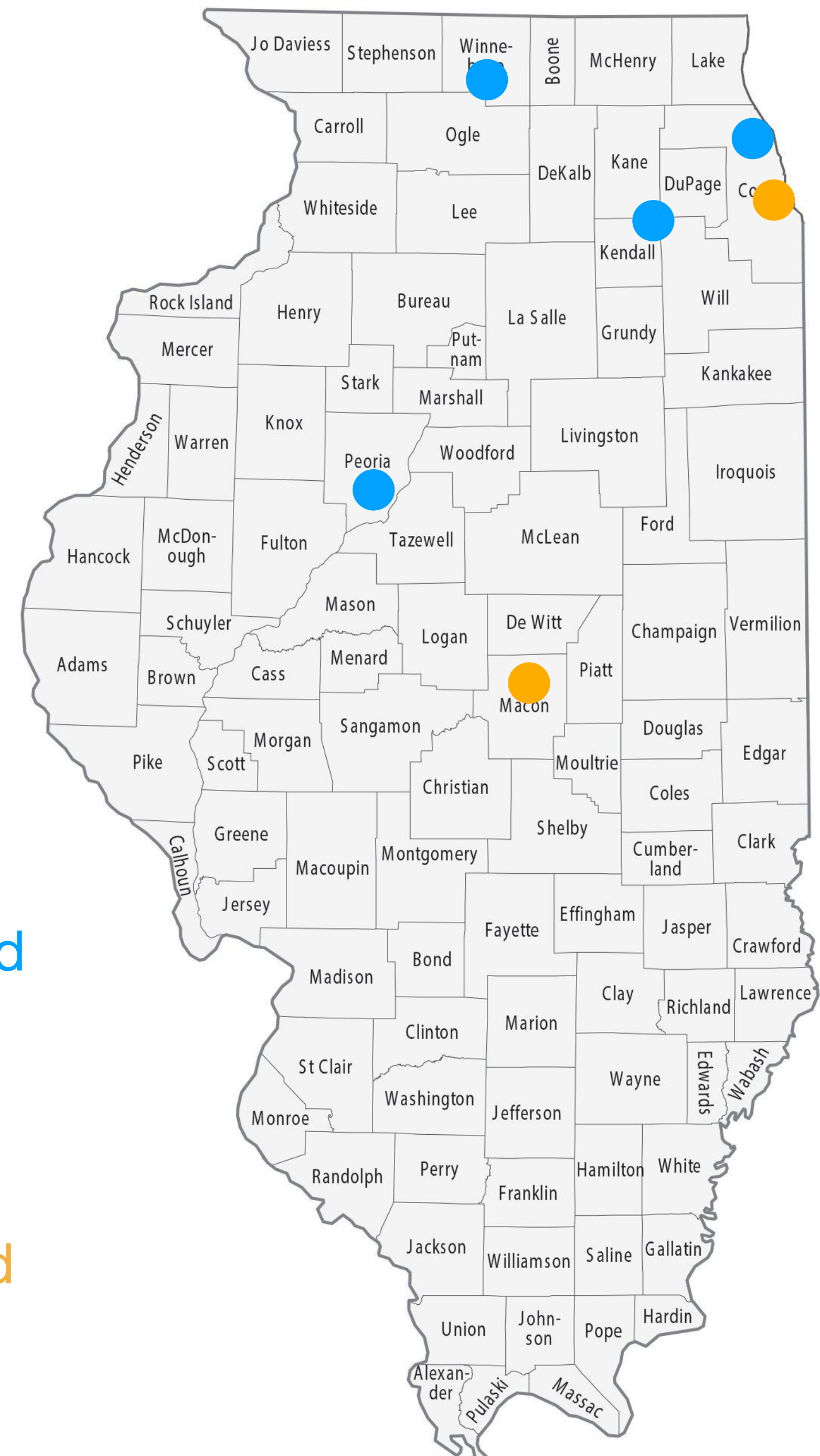
- Through what pathways does code enforcement action influence housing stability?
- What potential is there for disparate impact on low-income communities and communities of color?
- What are the implications of the pandemic for future policy and practice?

Approach

- Code scan and housing typologies for 29 Illinois communities
- Statewide survey of code enforcement officers
- Conversations with code enforcement stakeholders recorded as documentary video



Case Study Communities



RWJF Funded

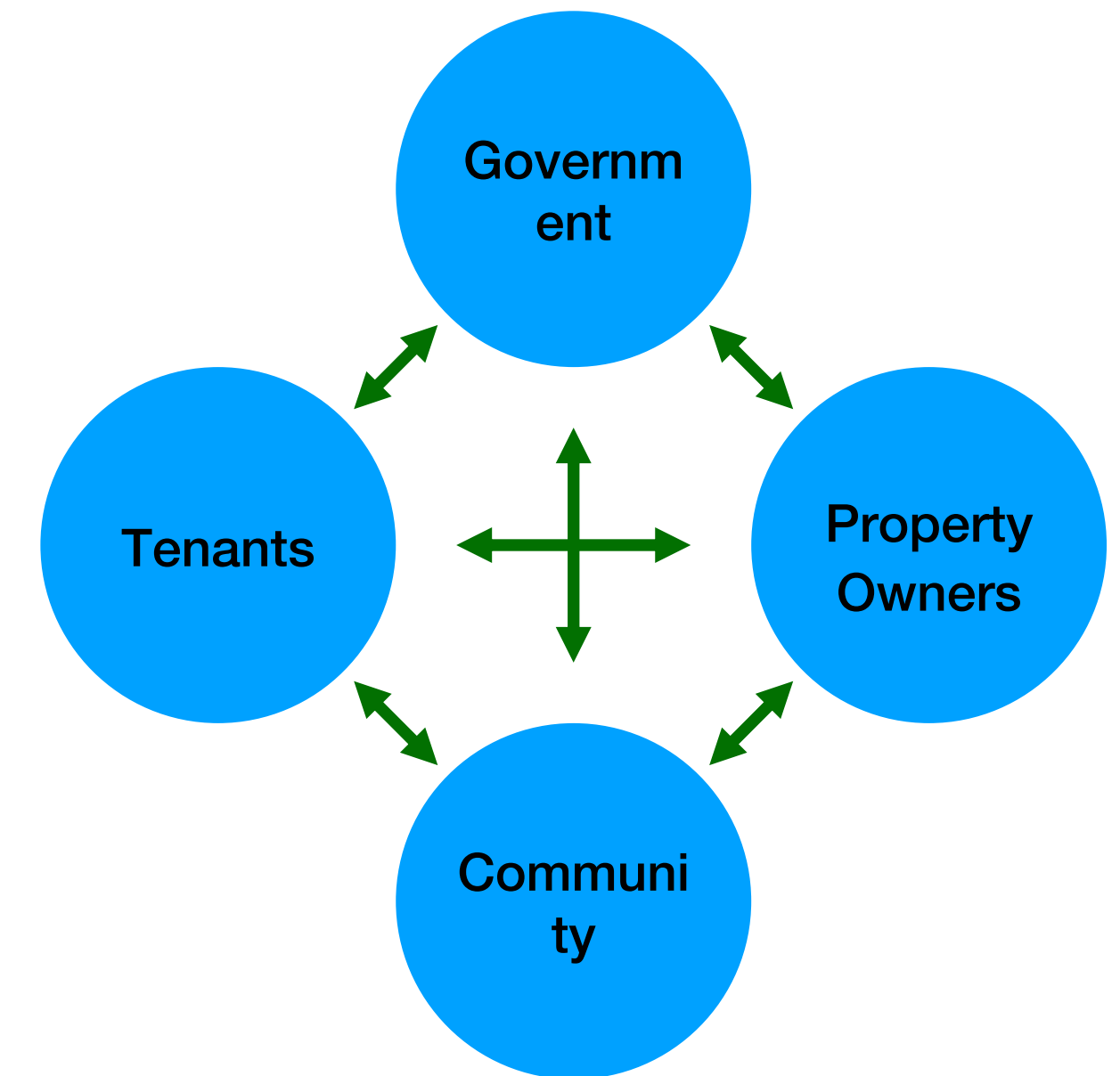
1. Aurora
2. Evanston
3. Peoria
4. Rockford

IGPA Funded

1. Chicago
2. Decatur

Today's Conversation

- Share perspectives on code enforcement in Illinois coming from our research
- Use these perspectives to have guided dialog based upon your own experiences in your communities
- Think together about policy implications and questions for future engagement



Area 1: Perceptions of Code Enforcement

Let's watch a short video from our research featuring code enforcement stakeholders reflecting on perceptions of the code enforcement process.

Questions for reflection:

1. How is code enforcement work perceived in your community?
2. How do these perceptions support or impede effectively addressing housing issues? Other issues for residents?
3. What interventions or actions might change the perception of code enforcement?

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Area 2: Cross-Cutting Issues

Let's watch a short video from our research featuring code enforcement stakeholders reflecting on the ways in which housing issues interact with other community concerns.

Questions for reflection:

1. Do you see similar types of cross-cutting issues in the communities you work with?
2. How is your community engaging these issues?
3. What types of policy changes or interventions are needed to more effectively address these issues?

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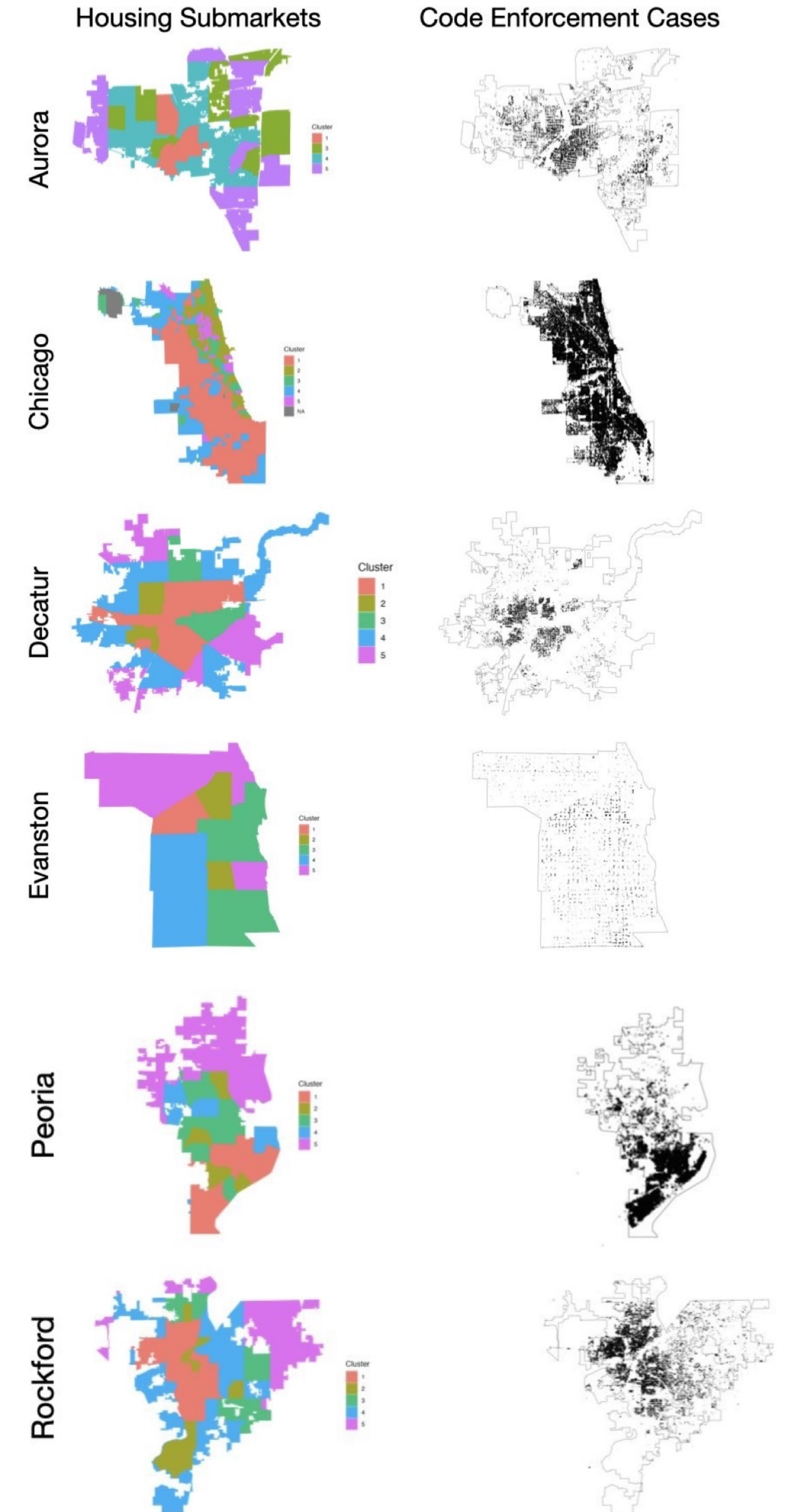
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Our findings

Protecting property values

- Code enforcement predominantly focuses on **blight reduction**
- Poorer households of color are more exposed to substandard housing **AND** housing instability from code enforcement actions
- Code enforcement doesn't have the tools to address **root causes** of blight
- Code enforcement is most often a **reactive** process
- Proactive tools tends to focus on **exterior aesthetics**



Our recommendations

For health and safety centered code enforcement

- 1. In-house mediation** - hire social workers or counselors to work alongside code enforcement officers
- 2. Equity-based licensure program** - develop a rental licensure program with tenant-based oversight committee
- 3. Centralized data** - standardized violation and licensure data across all municipalities

Wrap-Up: Agenda Setting and Questions

Based upon what we've seen and discussed, let's take a few minutes to think about future policy agendas, and questions we should be asking of our code enforcement, advocacy, and local government partners:

1. After learning more about what we saw in communities across Illinois, are there any particular questions which you would like to see researchers follow up on?
2. Based upon your own experiences and our conversation today, what types of policy advocacy should be prioritized around code enforcement and related issues?

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