



Department of Licenses and Inspections





VISION STATEMENT

The Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I) is responsible for promoting the general welfare and protecting the life, health, and safety of all citizens of Wilmington by monitoring the City's building and housing stock through code enforcement and the abatement of code violations. This is achieved by the implementation of fair and unbiased application of the Wilmington City Codes. Our goal is to facilitate voluntary compliance by working in partnership with our constituents.



Core Responsibilities

01

Residential Property Enforcement

- Residential Property Complaints
- Instant Ticketing
- Public Nuisance Property

02

Vacant Properties

- Residential and Commercial Registration
- Residential Vacant Property Enforcement
- Vacant Property Maintenance Service

03

Residential Rental Property Enforcement

- Rental Property Licensing
- Rental Unit Registration
- Rental Property Inspections

04

Mobile Food Truck Program

- Licensing/permitting for designated city locations



First 90 Days – Assessment: Key Issues Identified

- Staffing
- Code Enforcement
- Rental Properties
- Vacant Properties
- Communication issues between departments
- Lack of standard policies and procedures for the department



Comparison of Wilmington, DE and Lancaster, PA

Purpose of Visit

- The City of Wilmington visited the City of Lancaster, by invitation from our City Council members to review the processes Lancaster uses to achieve effective results in Housing Enforcement.
- The goal was to identify best practices that could help strengthen Wilmington's own enforcement and compliance strategies.

Collaboration and Follow-Up

- Following the visit, Wilmington's Administration invited Mr. Nixon, Chief of Building Codes for Lancaster, to Wilmington.
- We conducted a ride-along in Wilmington with Mr. Nixon later met with Mayor Carney and Chief of Staff Cerron Cade to exchange ideas on improving Wilmington's Licenses and Inspections operations.



Comparison of Wilmington, DE and Lancaster, PA

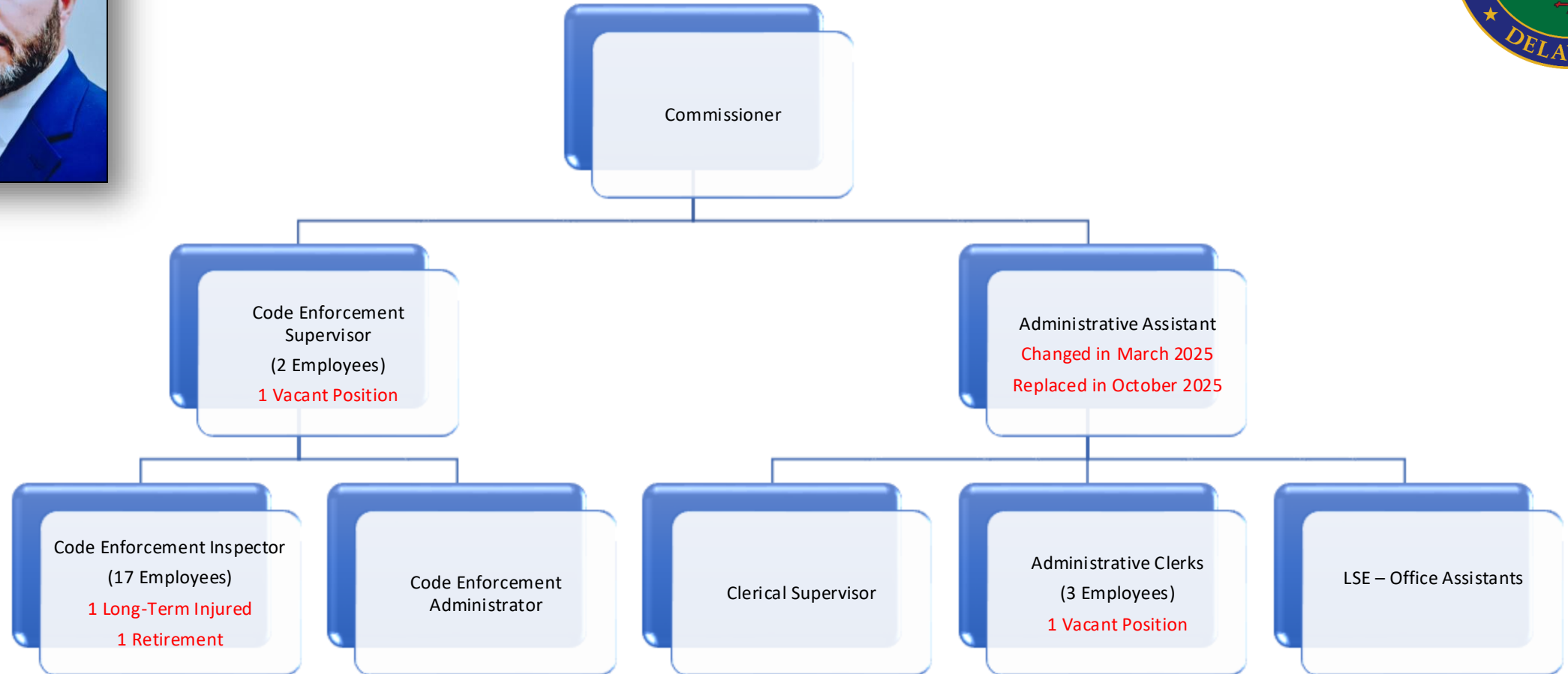
Key Observations

- Lancaster's housing codes support a more aggressive enforcement approach, utilizing shorter compliance timelines and a broader range of enforcement tools that lead to eminent domain.
- Lancaster requires individual property licensing, giving them the authority to suspend or revoke a property's business or rental license for non-compliance.

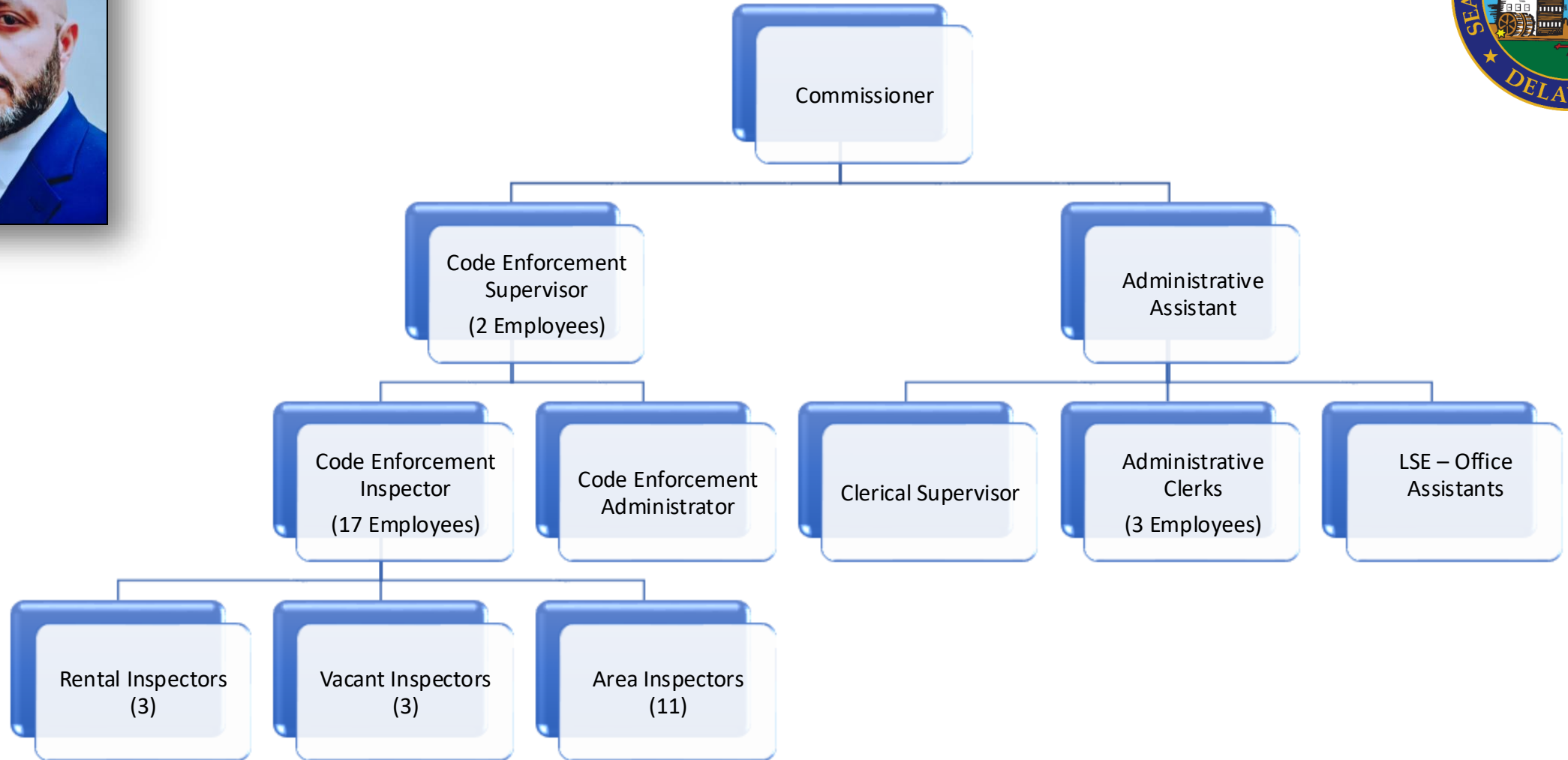
Takeaways

- Both cities have similar enforcement tools; however, Lancaster's approach demonstrated how consistent application, and timely action can enhance compliance.
- Wilmington's existing codes, processes and resources can be better leveraged to achieve stronger and more consistent housing enforcement outcomes.

January 2025 L&I Chart: 26 Full-time Employees



May 2025 L&I Chart: 26 Full-time Employees



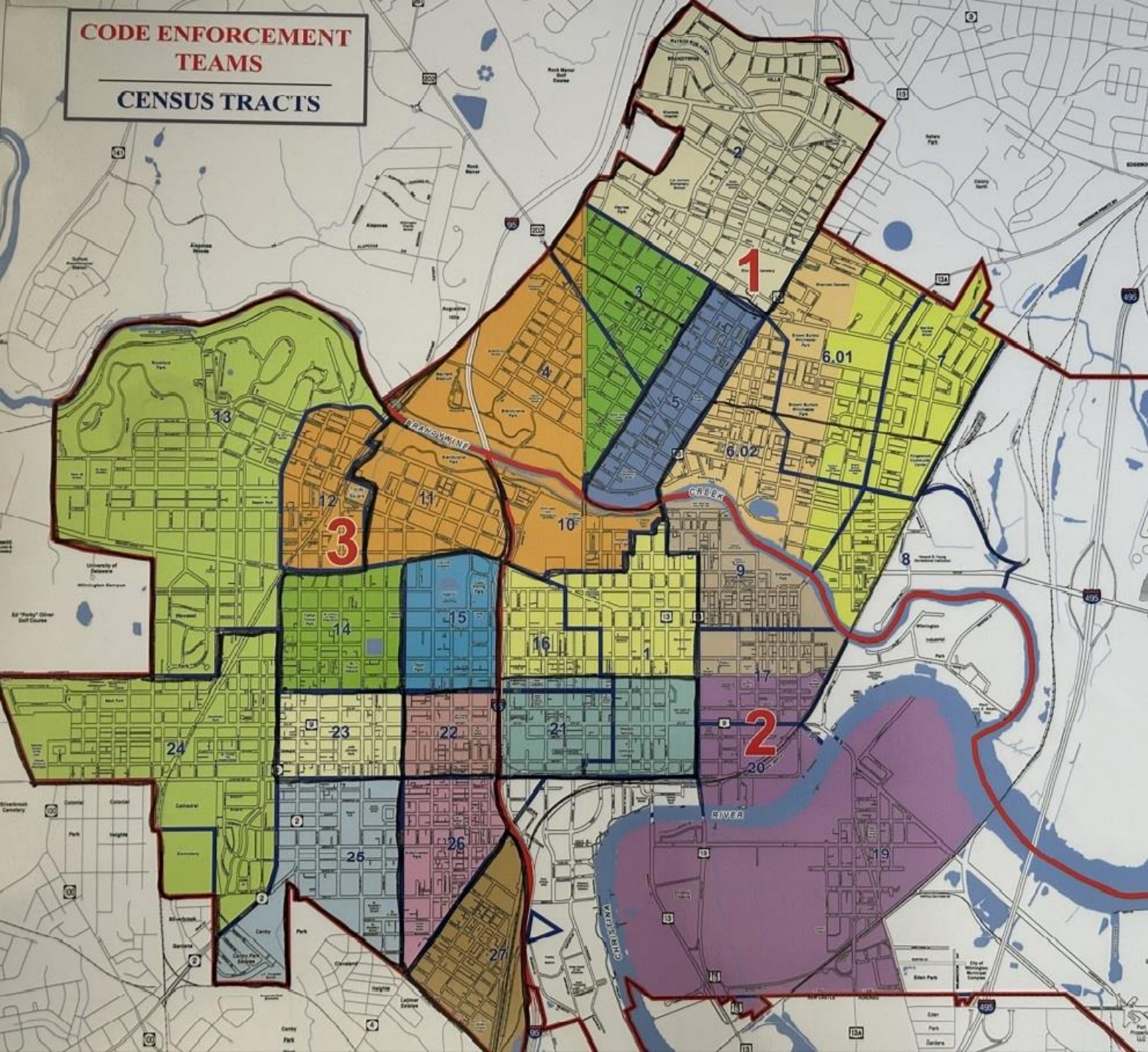


2000 Census Map

17 inspectors were assigned to 17 areas throughout the city covering 27 census tracts.

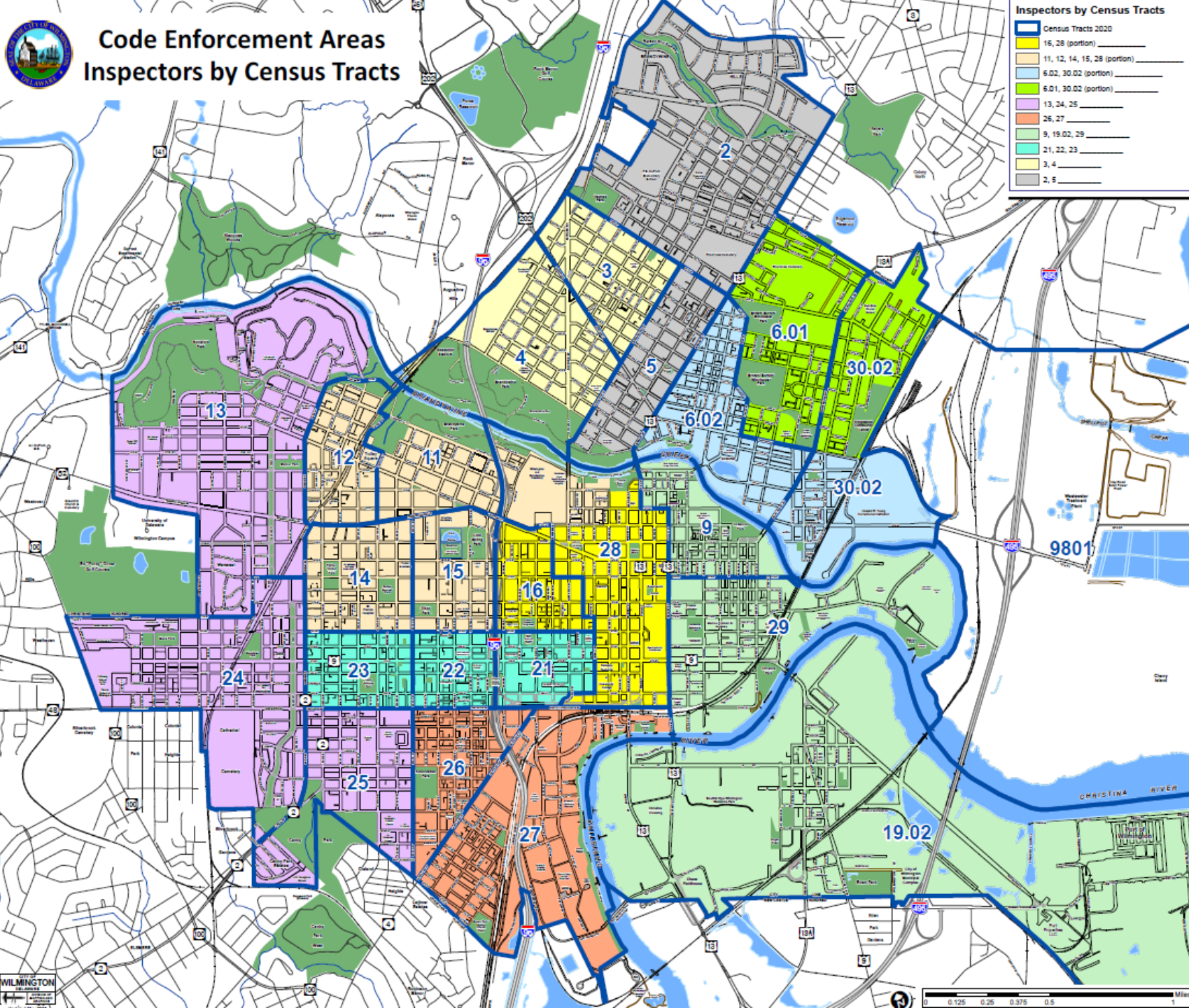
Responsibilities:

- Housing Code Enforcement
- Rental Property Inspections
- Vacant Property Inspections
- Sanitation Enforcement
- Complaint-Driven Investigations and Enforcement





Code Enforcement Areas Inspectors by Census Tracts



2020 Census Map

Responsibilities:

11 Area Inspectors - assigned to 10 areas throughout the city covering 27 census tracts.

- Proactive and Complaint-Driven housing Investigations and code enforcement
- Sanitation enforcement – (trash, junk & debris, high grass, weeds and vegetation, and animal feces)

3 Rental Team Inspectors

- Work closely with Administrative rental team
- Rental Property Inspections
- Proactive Rental License Investigations

3 Vacant Team Inspectors

- Work closely with the Vacant code Enforcement Administrator
- Vacant Property Inspections
- Vacant Property oversight and enforcement



Staffing Changes

- Long-term supervisor vacancy
 - Job was posted and immediately worked with our Human Resources Business Partner to fill the vacancy
 - Position was filled in May
- Long-term injuries resulted in staff shortages
 - Continued to have constant communication with Human Resources Department to utilize their resources on gaining advice of how to best handle employee matters
 - Continued conversations with Human Resources Department to stay up to date on employee status
- Administrative Assistant replacement during the first 90 days and again 6 months later
 - Hired new assistant, but maintained Administrative Assistant as an LSE to ensure effective transition
 - 6-months later the Administrative Assistant relocated and was replaced immediately



Code Enforcement Changes

- Previously the department was reactively responding to community complaints/concerns and special projects causing area coverage gaps. This prevented the inspectors to consistently follow up due to an inflated workload throughout the city.
- The department is proactively educating the community through meetings and literature on the requirement and benefits of the inspections – engaging with council members to help finalize pending rental lease legislation (APPROVED)
 - January 1, 2025: Licenses and Inspections had **11,660 opened violations** as of 10/31/2025, we have **6,131 violations open from that same time period** (5,529 violations have been closed from the backlog; **787 civil penalties have been issued**) *July 1, 2022, is the implementation of the L&I tracking portal*
 - As of January 1, 2025:
 - **4,217** new violations have been issued
 - **2,328** of those new violations are still opened (opened because they may have civil penalties or criminal charges pending)
 - **1,889** new violations have been closed (meaning they are in compliance; violations will remain open if they are not in compliance or if civil penalties or criminal charges are pending)
 - **278** new civil penalties have been issued



Rental Properties

How the department is addressing Rental Property Concerns:

- Lack of rental licenses and registrations
 - Changed the Organizational Structure and created a Rental Team with 3 Inspectors to assist the Administrative Rental Team
 - Proactive approach to identify unlicensed and unregistered properties.
 - Working with Finance Department to review and investigate unpaid rental registration fees.
 - Updated the notification process from letter only to utilizing the City Code regulations
- Rental inspection scheduling responsibility
 - The department has changed the rental inspection process. Our team will be moving to a new scheduling rental inspection process, which will be based on the last completed inspection. This will be an ongoing process that we'll continue to monitor and enhance. The goal is to change the current process and work on implementing an automated scheduling and an online rental registration portal.



Vacant Properties

How is the department addressing Vacant Properties Concerns:

- Numerous vacant properties throughout the City not identified
 - Changed the Organizational Structure and created a Vacant Team with 3 Inspectors to assist the Vacant Property Administrator
 - Proactive approach to identify unregistered vacant properties by utilizing various resources
 - Educating the public and property owners on the Vacant Property waiver process
- Properties had been vacant for a long time without active enforcement efforts
 - Designated areas of the City to Vacant Team to conduct sweeps and gather a baseline of Vacant Properties
 - Implemented a vacant property standard inspection process to ensure all properties are inspected and have the most current violations
 - Updated the notification process from letter only to utilizing the City Code regulations



Vacant Properties (cont.)

- Lack of communication from property owners
 - Restructured the pre-bill letters to encourage compliance and urge property owners to reach out to the department
 - Working with property owners to establish compliance plans to address renovation issues
 - Revamped timeline for violation compliance to ensure property owners had enough time to repair the issues or request extensions
 - Updated the Registration Form for vacant properties
- Properties with unresponsive owners had large amounts of debts
 - Continued to attempt to reach out to the property owners, by sending out the pre-bill in July with registration form
 - Cross reference city databases to get the most current information from the owners
 - Updated the notification and enforcement process from letter only to utilizing the City Code regulations
 - Property owners with continuous lack of engagement with our department are referred to delinquent accounts and Sheriff Sale Administrator.



Communications between Departments

- The department has increased communication between other departments including:
 - Department of Land Use and Planning
 - Department of Public Works
 - Wilmington Police Department
 - Department of Finance
 - Wilmington Fire Department
 - Law Department
- Working with other departments helps increase property status, consistent follow up and increases compliance, as mentioned previously



Lack of Policies and Procedures

- The department did not have policies and procedures to guide inspectors on day-to-day operations. Developing policies, procedures and standard operating procedures for the department is one of my top priorities.
- Policy implementation
 - Mandatory Posting of Violations Policy
 - Daily Inspections Log Policy
 - Property Maintenance Policy
- Procedural Inspection Standards
 - Vacant Property Inspections
 - Rental Property Inspections