



# Atlanta Police Department Code Enforcement Section September 24, 2019

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## Audit Objectives

- What resource bottlenecks or process issues, if any, are impacting the timely resolution of code enforcement cases?
- Do existing controls ensure that cases are documented and resolved according to policy?

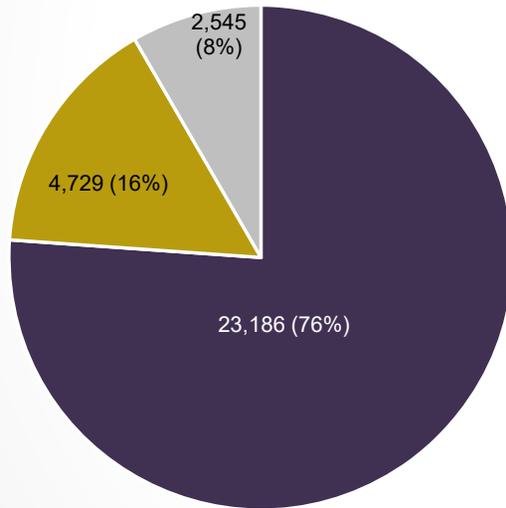
# Scope and Methodology

- We focused on the code enforcement process from complaint to citation, not on adjudication or compliance resolution
- We reviewed cases from the Accela database that were opened during the three-year period from March 2015 through February 2018
- Interviewed code enforcement staff and management; conducted a ride-along
- Analyzed workflows and timing of cases in the database
- Reviewed records and evidence for random samples of cases

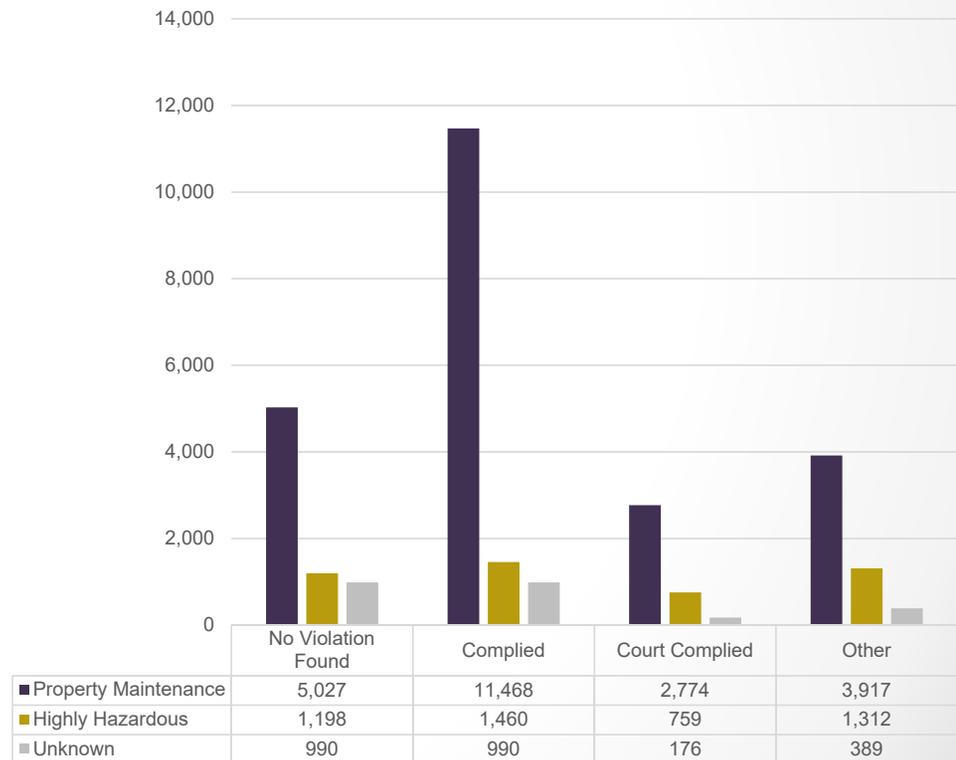
# Findings Overview

- Code Enforcement Section processed nearly 90% of all cases within performance goals
- Section would have done even better if cases had been correctly recategorized from highly hazardous to property maintenance
- Section's internal controls over case review and Accela access could be strengthened
- Accela system is not programmed to require supervisory review before case closure
- Former section employees still had access to the Accela system

# 76% of Cases Were Property Maintenance



Total: 30,460

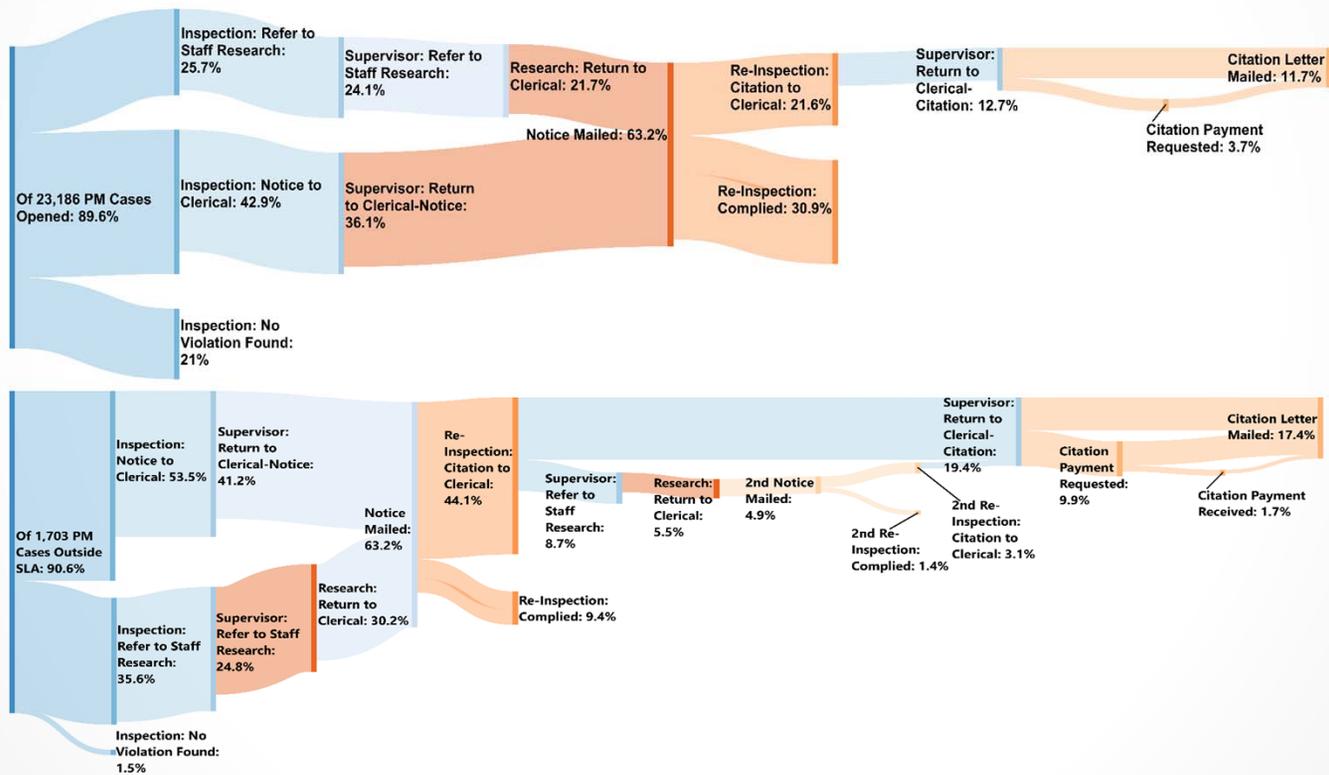


# Code Enforcement Section Processed Nearly 90% of Cases within Performance Targets

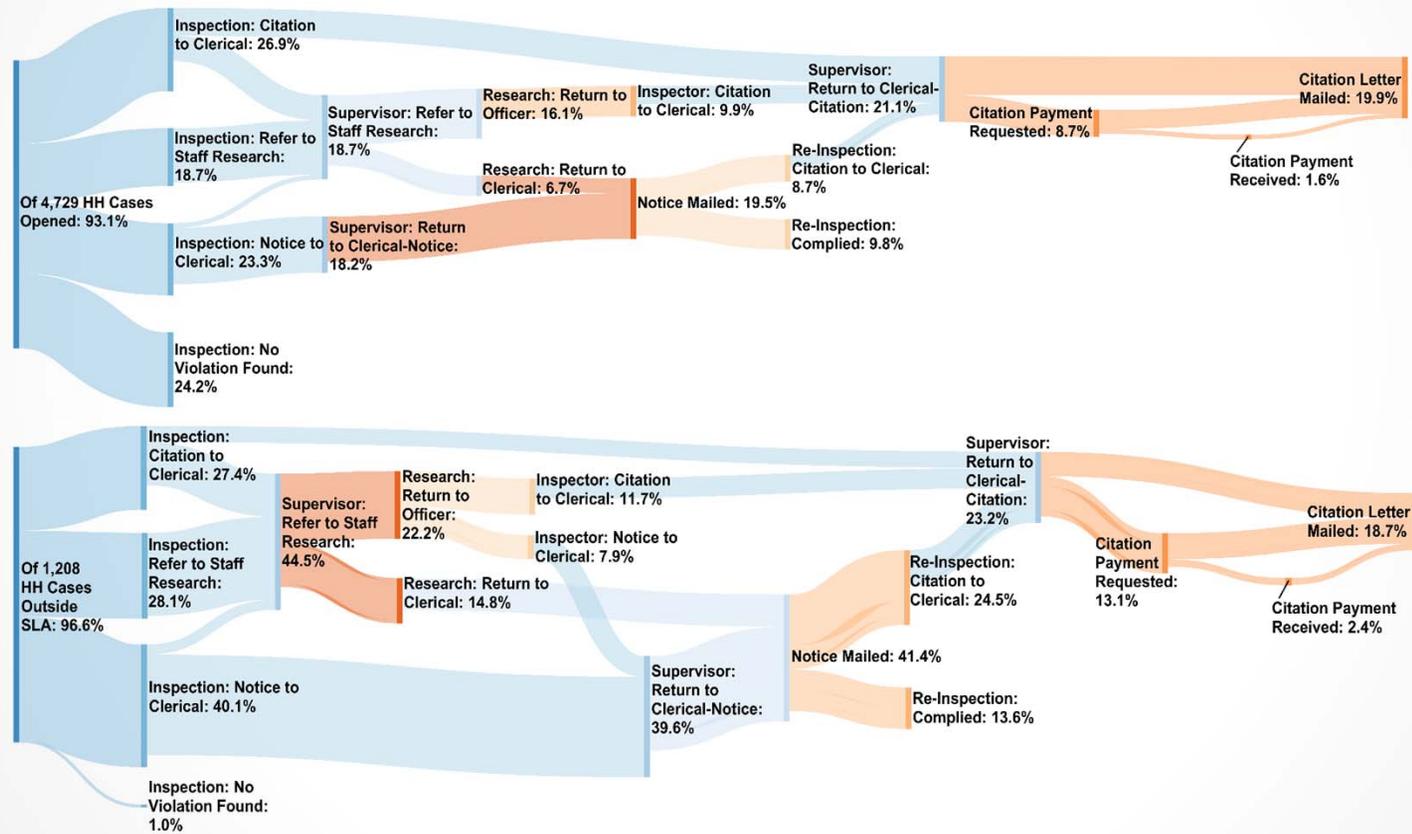
Property Maintenance Cases (120 Days)	Highly Hazardous Cases (58 Days)	Property Maintenance and Highly Hazardous Cases (120 and 58 Days)	Highly Hazardous Cases with No Notice Sent (58 Days)	Highly Hazardous Cases with Notice Sent (120 Days)	Property Maintenance and Highly Hazardous Cases Reclassified Highly Hazardous Cases (120, 58, and 120 Days)
92.7%	74.5%	89.6%	86.5%	87.7%	91.7%

**Recommendation:** Improve procedures to ensure that code violations are accurately categorized.

# Property Maintenance Case Workflows



# Highly Hazardous Case Workflows



# Code Enforcement Section Turnover Was High Relative to City

Jurisdiction	Total General Fund Revenue	Population	General Fund Revenue Per Capita	Starting Salary	Square Miles	Population Per Square Mile
City of Miami	\$693,963,345	467,872	\$1,483	\$49,708	36	12,996
Nashville-Davidson County	\$971,321,069	691,243	\$1,405	\$39,362	198	3,491
Gwinnett County	\$292,103,000	920,260	\$317	\$37,789	430	2,140
DeKalb County	\$284,186,000	733,900	\$387	\$36,555	268	2,738
City of Atlanta	\$572,908,000	486,290	\$1,178	\$38,300	134	3,629

**Recommendation:** Work with the Human Resources Department to make any needed salary adjustments based on the results of the classification and pay study authorized by Resolution 19-R-3759

# Accela Database is Not Programmed to Ensure Supervisory Review of Case Closures

- Effective internal controls require that the person performing a task should not also review and approve that task
- Code enforcement officers performing inspections in the field should not be able to unilaterally close cases
- Currently code enforcement officers can close cases with the statuses "No Violation Found" (after initial inspection) and "Complied" (after re-inspection)
- In a sample of cases we reviewed, there was not sufficient evidence to support case closure in 26% of "No Violation Found" cases and in 32% of "Complied" cases

**Recommendation:** Request that the Accela software be programmed to require supervisory approval before code violation cases are closed

## Former Code Enforcement Section Employees Continue to Have Access to Accela

- Forty-two former code enforcement employees continue to have access and permissions in the Accela database
- Section 98-1 of the city code prohibits individuals from acting as a code enforcement officer without legal authorization
- Using the Accela system is an integral part of a code enforcement officer's job duties
- Termination of Accela access will reduce risk of inappropriate case closures

**Recommendation:** Work with AIM to ensure that access to Accela is promptly deleted after employee separation or transfer and that only current section employees have access to the system

# Officer Certification Records Are Missing from the Police Central Database

- Pursuant to Section 98-1 of the city code, all acting code enforcement officers should be certified by completing an application, being sworn in, and obtaining a permit
- Permits expire after two years, before which officers must complete recertification
- Digital records of the certification process are stored by the police license and permits unit in the police central database system
- There was no evidence in the database of a current permit badge for 15 officers (58%)
- Staff provided proof of physical permit badges for 14 of the 15 officers; the remaining officer is on medical leave

**Recommendation:** Ensure that the police central database and physical certification files are reviewed periodically to ensure that required documents, including permits, are maintained

# Questions?

Full Report:

<http://www.atlaudit.org/audit-reports.html>

