

## Neglected lawns roil residents; city says banks are responsible

Tamara H. Sone • Special to Palm Springs Sun • October 1, 2010

Palm Springs is known to many residents and visitors for its green grass and lush landscapes.

But as homeowners and business owners in the desert community deal with the effects of a recession, yards and areas that were once meticulously manicured are getting far less maintenance.

Properties that have been abandoned or foreclosed on have become unwelcome eyesores, some residents say.

"It makes me so angry to see these homes rotting away," said Marilyn White, a resident in the Ruth Hardy Park area.

"The banks need to at least take care of the lawns, and it seems like the city isn't doing anything about it."

The city's property maintenance ordinance requires that front and side yards be free of trash and debris, and if there is a lawn, it must be "watered and trimmed to a uniform height," city spokeswoman Amy Blaisdell said.

"When a home is foreclosed upon, the bank is required to register with the city and provide a contact number for Code Enforcement," Blaisdell said. "Code Enforcement does make regular visits to the houses and if there are violations the city sends the banks warnings and at times, the city has taken the banks to court over the lack of maintenance."

Eric Bennett, a foreclosure specialist at Capitis Real Estate, agreed that banks are responsible for the maintenance of a home in foreclosure.

"Sometimes the banks will use a nationwide maintenance company and other times they will ask the Realtor to contract with a local company," Bennett said. "The problem is that each bank has (its) own system and there is a lot of paperwork."

The majority of citations Bennett has seen have been

for green pools.

"The city of Palm Springs keeps up on the green pool situation due to the mosquito problems," Bennett said. "If a citation is given, it has to be paid before escrow closes. But it seems that the city is trying to keep on top of the foreclosures as best as they can."

But Code Enforcement is not doing enough, according to White.

"These banks have the money to take care of the yards; they just aren't being pushed enough," she said. "They know they can get away with it. It is sad, sad not only for the neighborhoods but for the houses left rotting."

Desert Sun reporter Blake Herzog contributed to this story.

### Report neglect

To report a concern about an abandoned/foreclosed home, call the city of Palm Springs Code Enforcement's 24-hour hotline at (760) 778-8434.

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