



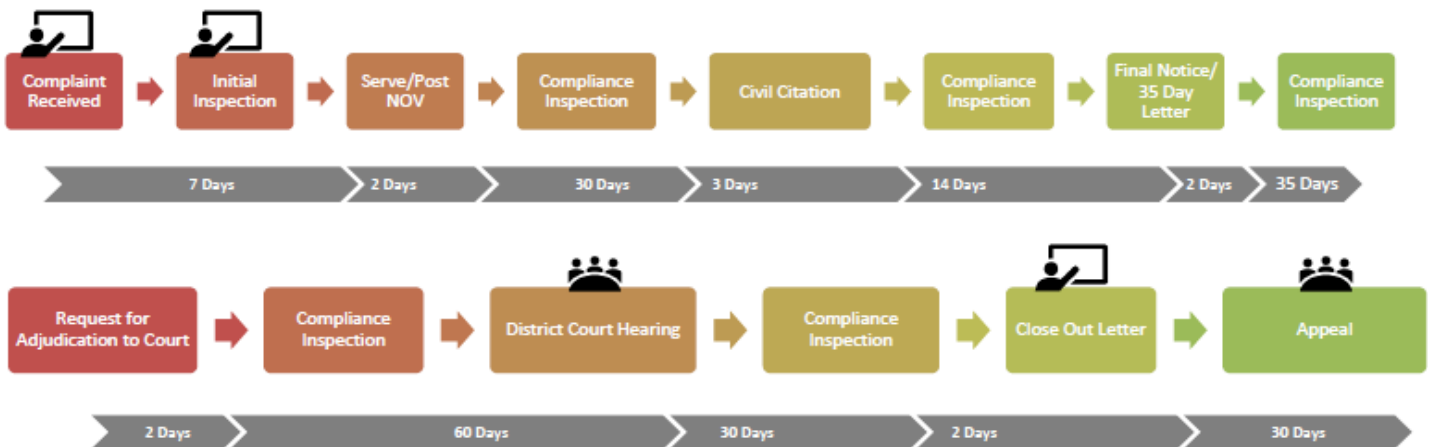
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING (DPZ)
CODE ENFORCEMENT PROCESS

Filing a Complaint:

A [complaint form](#) must be filled out and submitted to the DPZ. Forms can be submitted via fax, email, mail or delivered in person to the [Public Services Counter](#).

Inspection and Notice Proceedings:

Once a written complaint form is completed and properly submitted to DPZ, an inspector immediately opens a file and investigates the alleged zoning violation. If a violation is found, the case proceeds through a code enforcement process governed by state and local law. The steps and timing of this process are shown in the flow chart below.



This timeline is governed by state and county law, and provides due process to the alleged violator. It also gives the alleged violator an opportunity to voluntarily abate the violations.

Abatement:

The ultimate goal of code enforcement is abatement. If the violation is abated during the inspection and notice process, DPZ closes the case and notifies both the complainant and violator. The complainant has the right to appeal the decision if an appeal petition is submitted within 30 days of the case being closed.

If the violation is not abated during the inspection and notice process, DPZ can then present the case to the District Court for Howard County and seek abatement and/or fines through a Court Order. To obtain such an order, DPZ must prove the violation beyond a reasonable doubt. Therefore, it is critical that sufficient evidence is collected to meet this standard.

DPZ does not have the legislative authority or police power to compel someone to cease an activity by issuing a “cease and desist order.” Only the court can issue such an order.

If the county prevails in court and abatement is required through a court order, DPZ will continue to inspect and close the case once abatement is verified. If abatement does not occur, DPZ can Petition the court for additional relief and/or fines.

Once a case is abated and closed, the code enforcement process ceases. If a new complaint is received for the same or similar activity, then a new code enforcement case is opened and the process begins again.