

Neighborhood Initiative Program

Program Notice 6



Date: August 24, 2016
To: NIP Lead Entities and Partners
From: NIP Staff
Subject: Program Notice #6: Final Inspections

This notice is being released to address properties that are not passing their final inspections. Many properties submitted for final inspection have had debris, trash, standing water and overgrown vegetation remaining on the lots. Inspectors are noticing that in some cases only the footprint of where the structure stood has been graded and seeded, the remaining areas of the property have not been touched. Inspectors are also having trouble determining where the property lines are for some of these properties, making it difficult to determine if all of the debris, trash, and overgrown vegetation have been removed. Some of these issues appear to be the result of contractors not being provided with a detailed scope of work and others appear to be a result of the time allowed to elapse between when the contractor is finished and final inspection is requested. In several instances, final inspections have been requested several months after the work had been completed.

To address these issues, effective immediately:

- **SC Housing inspectors will be conducting on-site visits for all final inspections.**
- **Each parcel must either be staked at the corners or a site map or plat that denotes the property's boundaries must be submitted with the final inspection request.**
- **Final inspections should be requested promptly after the work has been completed.**

It is important to make sure contractors are aware of the condition the property needs to be in after demolition has been completed. Language detailing the complete scope of work must be included in contracts. All lots must, at a minimum, be: free of debris and trash; properly graded; and seeded. Seed must be covered with straw or some other acceptable substance to prevent the seed from washing or blowing away. Erosion control measures must be in place to prevent soil and water from running off onto neighboring properties. There should be no detrimental site characteristics on the property such as tree stumps, overgrown vegetation, loose wires, de-activated power poles, etc. when the final inspection is requested. Below is a list of ***Frequently Asked Questions*** we have received regarding final inspections.

Does the entire lot need to be clear cut? No, the entire lot does not need to be clear cut. You can leave healthy trees, but all brush and overgrown vegetation must be removed.

Does the driveway need to be removed? This depends on the condition of the driveway and whether or not there are plans to redevelop the property which include re-using the driveway. Driveways in poor condition must be removed. If a driveway is in good condition and there are plans to redevelop the property and re-use the driveway, it can remain. This must be communicated to NIP Staff when submitting the final inspection request.

It is acceptable to cover driveways, patios and other remnants of concrete with dirt instead of removing them? No, covering driveways, patios and other remnants of concrete with dirt in lieu of removing it is not acceptable.

Can the lot be sprayed with hydro seed? Yes, hydro seed, which typically includes seed, fertilizer and mulch, is acceptable.

The property has a fence that is in bad condition, and it is also covered with weeds and vines. A portion of the fence is connected to a fence on the adjacent parcel and if removed, would require the neighboring property owner to replace that section in order for their backyard to remain enclosed with fencing. Is it acceptable to leave that section of fencing in place so the neighboring property owner does not have to spend money to rebuild it? Yes, if this is what the owner of the adjacent property would prefer, it is acceptable to leave that section of the fence. The overgrown weeds and vines should be removed and the reason for the fence remaining in place needs to be communicated to NIP staff so they can inform the inspector. **Can NIP funds be used to repair or replace that section of fence? Does this qualify as greening?** Yes, this is an eligible greening expense as long as the fence is on the NIP parcel.

Do we need to wait for the grass to start growing before we request the final inspection? No, but the inspector must be able to see that the parcel has been seeded and that mulch or straw has been put down to prevent the seed from washing away.

There is an easement in the front of the property that is owned by the County. It contains a damaged retaining wall that is connected to the sidewalk. We cannot remove the damaged retaining wall because it belongs to the County, what should we do? Do not demolish or remove items that are not on the NIP parcel. We recommend you contact the County and notify them of the condition of the retaining wall. When submitting the final inspection request you will need to inform NIP staff that the damaged retaining wall was not removed because it is located in an easement that is not owned by the Partner.

Do I need to wait until SC Housing approves the final inspection before paying the contractor? Many Partners have had to request for their contractors return to the site to address the issues identified during the final inspection. It is recommended that a retainage be held and not released until the final inspection has been approved.

Questions regarding final inspections should be directed to your assigned program representative.