



May 21, 2009

Rocks crush La Quinta's code violators

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La Quinta Sun

The city, in partnership with a local business, is helping keep La Quinta homeowners citation-free.

After some controversy over the La Quinta's Code Enforcement Department — with some residents, even council members, questioning the department's aggressive approach toward violators — city officials and representatives at Granite Construction Company in Indio got together to find a way to help their low-income neighbors.

Five homes in the La Quinta Cove received free groundcover to fix their front yards, which were in violation of the city's municipal code that requires front yards to be landscaped or desertscape.

The 37 tons of rock divvied up for the residents was donated by Granite Construction Company on May 1, said Deby Conrad, the city's community safety manager who oversees code enforcement.

"It was a real good idea by the city," said Russ Clark. "It helps the homeowner, the city and the neighbors — it helps everybody."

Clark, who is a resident of Palm Desert, recently bought a bank-owned home in the La Quinta Cove with hopes to move in soon.

But he didn't realize that when he bought the home the condition of the yard was in violation of the municipal code, and was thankful for the opportunity to fix the problem for free before receiving a fine.

More than half of the city's code violations are related to the lack of groundcover on a property, Conrad said.

Last year, the city had more than 3,000 code compliance cases.

"The city brought to our attention that there was bit of a need and we found that we could help in a small way," said Lee Haven, business development manager at Granite Construction Company's Southern California office in Indio.

That "small way" came in the form of two truck loads of rock.

"We're part of the community; we live in the community and we're just happy that it assisted people that needed it," Haven said.

The residents chosen for this program were picked by the Code Enforcement Department.

"If we knew of any cases where the folks said they just didn't have the money to do it themselves, we called to see if they were interested," Conrad said.

To her surprise, a few people declined the offer — but for those that took advantage of the program, Conrad said it was a win-win solution.

"This helped their properties look much nicer and now they're not in violation," Conrad said. "Plus, it makes for an aesthetically better looking neighborhood."

Conrad said she is not sure whether the city will offer free groundcover again, but said city officials are expecting to discuss it with Granite Construction Company.
