



A Newsletter from the Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development



Building Better Neighborhoods... Block By Block

COMMON GROUND



Sweeping the Neighborhoods

On Friday, April 27th, the Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development participated in the Chattanooga Police Department's "Crime Suppression" operation. Targeted neighborhoods were Highland Park, East Chattanooga, East Lake, Rossville Boulevard and Avondale.



Chattanooga Police and Code Inspectors from Neighborhood Services and Community Development check an abandoned house in the Avondale neighborhood.

The "sweep" was a joint effort of local, state and federal agencies to reduce crime in these neighborhoods and demonstrate a strong presence of law enforcement in areas prone to illegal activity.

The Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development's role in the operation involved all of our code enforcement inspectors. Accompanied by the Chattanooga City Police Civil Enforcement Unit, they worked in teams throughout the *continued on page 2*

A Letter from the Mayor

The following are excerpts from the Mayor's State of the City address from April 24th. For a full version of the Mayor's speech, go to www.chattanooga.gov.



First of all, let me say that I honestly believe that we have one of the finest teams of department administrators that I can recall in my more than three decades of experience with Chattanooga government. I thank these administrators for an exceptional display of teamwork and accomplishment. *continued on page 3*

Mayor Ron Littlefield

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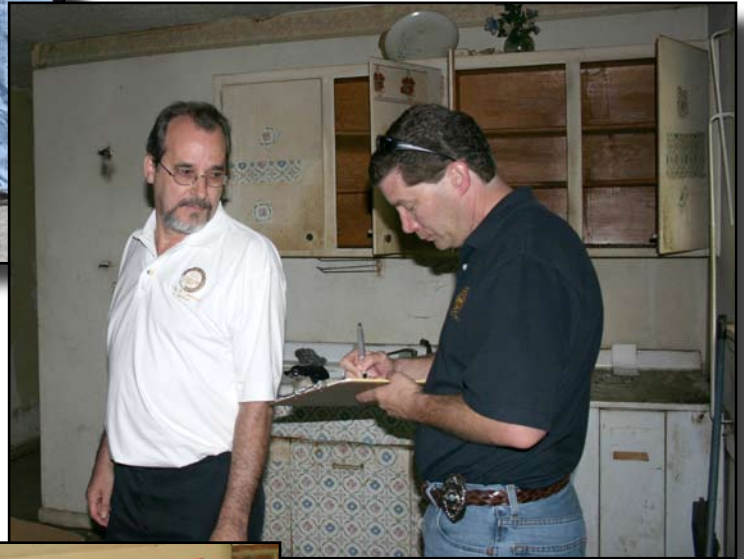
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Sweeping The Neighborhoods *(continued from page 1)*



Right: Code Inspectors and Chattanooga Police divide up in teams to simultaneously sweep streets in the Avondale neighborhood

Below: Steve Hargis, Manager, Codes and Neighborhood Relations, and Ed Graham, Chief Code Enforcement Inspector, inspect the inside of an unsecured property



Avondale neighborhood checking known vacant houses and duplexes. Doors and windows were checked to make sure the buildings were secure. Those not secured were entered and checked for vagrants, drug activity and general condition. The properties were then cited for violation of city code.

As the code inspectors and police were sweeping the vacant properties, other officers were in the neighborhood serving outstanding warrants. In addition to the Chattanooga Police Department, the Crime Suppression operation enlisted the assistance of the Hamilton County Sheriff Department, Tennessee Highway Patrol, Secret Service, DEA, U.S. Marshals, ATF, FBI Task Force, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, Chattanooga Fire Department and the Chattanooga Housing Authority.

The neighborhood was abuzz with the presence of so many police and city officials as the teams simultaneously swept streets in the area. Many of the residents expressed gratitude that the nuisance properties were being addressed, with numerous accounts of illegal activity taking place in the abandoned structures.



Sergeant Robert Simpson, head of the Civil Enforcement Unit, and Chief Code Enforcement Inspector Ed Graham post a notice of citation.

In all, 18 properties were inspected, with 2 citations issued for abandoned and unsecured structures. Three of the structures had been condemned and are scheduled for demolition.

“This is a another example of great teamwork between Chattanooga Police Department’s Civil Enforcement Unit and our department’s Code Enforcement division,” says Steve Hargis, Manager of Codes and Neighborhood Relations. “This effort to address the abandoned and vacant units is important to reducing crime and blight in the community.”

With more Crime Suppression operations planned for the future, the Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development anticipates participation in more neighborhood sweeps in the coming months.

A Letter from the Mayor *(continued from page 1)*

It's hard for me to believe but almost exactly 20 years ago I hired Beverly Johnson to become the first woman Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Public Works. She excelled in that position until I convinced her to move up to Administrator of the Department of Neighborhood Services – and then we added the division of Community Development. Once again, she hasn't disappointed me as she has reorganized and reenergized that department and pushed them on to new records of accomplishment. She's given me a report of the more than 21,000 inspections conducted, the responses to more than 10,000 complaints and the more than 7,600 violations recorded. The Department of Neighborhood Services is making a difference – a positive difference. They've taken almost 3,000 cases to Environmental Court and participated in 158 neighborhood association meetings. Just this week, the department embarked on a new leadership training program to prepare even more people in the city to take charge of their communities. On other fronts, the department hosted the World Changers faith-based initiative in conjunction with our local Front Porch Alliance to utilize young volunteers to repair 31 homes owned by senior, handicapped or low to moderate income individuals. The department oversaw the distribution of almost \$5 million in

The Department of Neighborhood Services is making a difference – a positive difference.

HUD block grant funds to aid a range of community needs. The Neighborhood Partners Projects creates opportunities for neighborhood based organizations to make their communities stronger, safer and healthier places to live, work and play. Twenty-five neighborhood associations were awarded \$50,985 to implement development, safety and beautification projects. Finally, in partnership with the Urban League of Greater Chattanooga, the department provided funding to assist low to moderate income residents with free tax preparation to claim earned income tax credit refunds for eligible taxpayers. Just in 2006 the department

utilized 95 volunteers to provide service at 9 sites. Assistance was provided to 2213 eligible taxpayers including 392 who were eligible for Earned Income Tax Credit. The campaign yielded \$2,228,858 in federal tax refunds and \$74,894 in Earned Income Tax Credit returns. In addition to putting all that money into our citizen's pockets, the City and the Urban League saved citizens the cost of fees and services to a total of almost \$150,000 – clearly a winner all around.

Yes, the State of the City is good. The first two years have been exciting and I personally look forward to the second half of this administration.

God Bless America and God Bless this beautiful City that He gave us: Chattanooga.

A Letter from the Administrator

I want to thank Mayor Littlefield for acknowledging the achievements of the Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development in his State of the City address. It is, in fact, Mayor Littlefield's strong commitment to better the neighborhoods of Chattanooga that has allowed us to have such successes.

I also want to thank you, the citizens of Chattanooga, for your role in the department's success. You are the watchdogs of your communities. Your neighborhood associations and community organizations are the compasses that point us to how city government can best serve each neighborhood's particular needs. Keep up the good work!

Last, but not least, I would like to recognize my department's capable staff. They work hard to make the goals of the city and the citizens come to fruition. They are a wonderful team of professionals to work with, and I know I can depend on them.

Our move to City Hall has been exciting. While construction work still goes on all around us, we have been unpacking and settling in to our new surroundings. I hope all of you can come for the Grand Re-Opening to see how wonderful City Hall looks.

I am especially pleased that the department is finally joined under one roof. Neighborhood Services and Community Development now truly feel like a team. As the next few weeks pass and other departments move into City Hall, it should bring even more cohesiveness to our city government as a whole.



Beverly P. Johnson, Administrator

Demolitions

On the last Wednesday of each month, a public hearing held at the City of Chattanooga's Development Resource Center has an often profound impact on the revitalization of Chattanooga's neighborhoods. Neighborhood Services inspectors bring properties before a public hearing officer for the purpose of determining if a substandard structure should be demolished. This is typically the final step of the city's enforcement process against owners of dilapidated properties, and generally occurs after multiple notices and City Court citations have failed to bring the property into compliance with [Chapter 21 of the Chattanooga City Code](#).

Typical properties include abandoned houses with delinquent property taxes in which the property owner has made no attempt to address violations, fire damaged structures, and open/vacant buildings that pose a risk to the general safety and welfare of a neighborhood. At the demolition hearing, property owners are given an opportunity to present a plan to bring their building into compliance with current city codes. Neighborhood residents often appear at the hearings to voice their concerns and to address the impact that a dilapidated building is having on the quality of life in their neighborhood.

Since April, 2006, forty seven substandard buildings within the city have been demolished as the result of these monthly hearings. In most cases, the actual demolition was performed by a City of Chattanooga contractor, though in some instances the property owner employed the services of a demolition company. In either case, the end result was the removal of a blighted structure, thus setting in motion a process for planting seeds of revitalization in Chattanooga's neighborhoods.



Neighborhood Leadership Institute Begins

April was an exciting month for our department, and the start of one of our newest programs. 29 of the city's brightest neighborhood leaders were chosen to participate in the Neighborhood Leadership Institute, and have already attended the first class session on Government & Neighborhoods. The class is eager to learn and has already expressed enthusiasm and anticipation for the upcoming classes. Class sessions will run through October, culminating at the Annual Neighborhoods and Codes Conference.



Jill Murphy, Neighborhood Development Planner, leads the class in an exercise teaching the different responsibilities of city, county and federal government.

The First Department In City Hall

The Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development was the first department to move into City Hall on April 23rd. With construction going on all around, the move to the second floor went fairly smoothly. It seems as though we will be unpacking for some time to come... they are installing our filing cabinets this week.

As of this writing, Personnel has joined us on the second floor, and Accounting has just moved in on the first floor. The Mayor's office on the third floor is still being finished.

The "new" City Hall looks great, and will only get better as details are finished and everyone gets settled in. We look forward to having all of you come visit us in our new space. Don't forget the Grand Re-Opening Celebration on May 19th!



Above: In front of the main stairway in the "new" City Hall, from left to right: Sandra Gober, Economic and Community Development Manager; Tony Sammons, Deputy Administrator; Beverly Johnson, Administrator and Steve Hargis, Codes and Neighborhood Relations Manager.



Above: Darius Swoope, Grants Specialist, sorts through his moving bins



Left: Miles of moving bins waiting to be unpacked

First Visitors To City Hall

Among the first visitors to City Hall were the students from Barbara Gibbs' second grade class at Brown Academy. The tour was led by Anita Ebersole, Deputy to Mayor Littlefield, and John VanWinkle of Public Works. They were accompanied by teachers Lori Maughon and Lindsey DeLaughter.

The students visited the City Council Chambers and the lobby of City Hall. "They thought it was beautiful," said Ms. Gibbs "and wished they could see the entire building. Their favorite part was the stained glass window on the stairway."

The students are writing reports and drawing pictures about their trip. Thanks for coming to see us, Brown Academy!



Neighborly News from...

Parks and Recreation Department



New Summer Baseball & T-Ball

Registration is going on now at all of the city's 14 recreation centers for the Summer Baseball and T-Ball program. Sign up for Co-ed T-Ball for ages 5 & 6 or Boys "Coach Pitch" Baseball, ages 7 & 8. We need volunteers to help coach and referee. Call Ty Armour at 643-6057.

Girls Fast Pitch Softball

Interested girls ages 5-12 can register at Avondale, Eastdale, Glenwood, North Chattanooga, & South Chattanooga Recreation Centers! Call Michelle Taylor at 697-1289. League play in June if enough girls sign-up.

Pool Openings

Our Outdoor Pool at Warner Park will open on Memorial Day, Monday, May 28th at 12:30 and the Carver Recreation Complex Pool

will open on Tuesday, May 29th at Noon. Schedules are available at the Chattanooga Fitness Center and on-line.

Summer Activities Guide Coming Mid-May!

available at:

- All Recreation Centers
- 1102. S. Watkins Street Office
- www.chattanooga.gov
- The Zoo, the Skate Park, the golf courses, the Champions Tennis Club, the Carousel.
- The Convention-Visitors Bureau.

City Hall Grand Re-Opening

PARADE: 11:00AM - RIBBON CUTTING: NOON - TOUR & FESTIVAL: 12:30PM TILL 5:30PM Saturday, May 19th, 2007

LEGEND

- ★ New City Hall & Tours
- ✂ Ribbon Cutting
- 🍴 Food & Entertainment
- 🚗 Children's Area & Trucks for Kids Expo
- 🚗 Antique Cars/Tractors
- 🐎 Carriage Rides
- 📖 Library/History Mus.
- 🐾 Petting Zoo
- P Parking

WDEF News 12 is proud to present: "CHATTANOOGA: THEN & NOW" —A CALL FOR ENTRIES OF VINTAGE PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE 1900'S TO PRESENT TIME TO BE DISPLAYED ONLINE AT WDEF.COM. PRIZES TO BE AWARDED IN BOTH "THEN" & "NOW" CATEGORIES. VISIT WDEF.COM FOR MORE DETAILS.

Chattanooga Times Free Press

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DRESS UP! & COME DOWN!!

Neighborly News from...

Department of Education, Arts and Culture

Sunset Concert Series

North River Civic Center presents the Sunset Concert Series beginning in May. Admission is free. Concerts are Fridays, 7:00-8:00 p.m. The North River Civic Center is located at 1009 Executive Drive, Suite 102 (Behind Northgate Mall) in Hixson. For more information contact Linda Rugina at (423) 870-8924.

May 18	Jay Craven
June 15	Chattanooga Gospel Orchestra
July 20	Band Directors
August 17	Dalton Roberts, Tom Morgan & Lynn Hass
September 21	The MaxTriam Trio
October 19	The Dismembered Tennesseans
November 16	Oja World Music Band
December 21	Chattanooga Symphony & Opera
January 18	The Choo Choo Kids
February 15	The Jericho Brass Band
March 21	Olta Celtic Band
April 18	The Ripe & Ready Players



The Olta Celtic Band is one of the featured acts scheduled to perform for the Sunset Concert Series at North River Civic Center.



Lookout Heroes – An Essay Contest

The Department of Education, Arts & Culture and the Chattanooga Lookouts are sponsoring a summer essay contest, "Lookout Heroes" where area youth are encouraged to write about their hero/heroine in their life. This "hero" can be ANYONE who has touched their life – a parent, caregiver, sports figure, teacher – you name it! Ten winners will be chosen, and each winner will receive: 4 Box Seat Tickets to the Wednesday, July 25, 2007 (12:30 p.m.) Chattanooga Lookouts Game; the honor of throwing the first pitch at this game; and an autographed baseball by a member of the Chattanooga Lookouts!

Entrants must be between the ages of 9-12 years of age. Essay may not be longer than 500 words and must be in English. All essays must be completed to participating recreation centers by July 2, 2007:

Carver	North Chattanooga
Eastdale	Shepard
Eastlake	Southside
Glenwood	Westside
John A. Patton	Wyatt

Additional information can also be obtained by calling Dorothea Richardson at (423) 425-6535.

Don't miss this chance to brag about your favorite hero. Who knows, you may be throwing out the first pitch at a ballgame with your chosen hero cheering you on!

Outdoor Chattanooga

BIKE2WORK 2007

Bike2Work is the first Friday of the month through Oct. 5th. Ride your bike & join us for free breakfast at our new location on the Walnut Street Square - south end of the Walnut Street bridge from 7:00-8:30 am! Choose your route using our website map or ride with us meeting at:

Coolidge Park	Theater Center Parking Lot (7:00 AM)
Tennessee Riverpark	Fishing Pier Entrance (7:00 AM)
The Incline Railway	Rear Parking Lot (7:00 AM).

For more information about Bike2Work, contact Colleen Carboni at 423-280-1764 or visit www.bikechattanooga.org.



May Calendar of Events

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3 • 10:00AM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Court • 6:30PM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District 6 Neighborhood Meeting	4	5
6	7 • 6:30PM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> East Lake Neighborhood Association Meeting • 7:00PM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Association of Historic St. Elmo Meeting	8 • 6:00PM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sector 2 Community Policing Interactive Committee (CPIC) • 6:00PM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lupton City Neighborhood Association Meeting	9 • 10:00AM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Board of Zoning Appeal Meeting • 11:00AM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> East Lake Senior Citizens Meeting	10 • 10:00AM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Court • 6:00PM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clifton Hills Neighborhood Improvement Committee Meeting • 7:00PM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cedar Hill Improvement League Meeting	11	12
13	14 • 1:00PM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional Planning Agency Meeting	15 • 5:30PM - 7:30PM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alton Park Community Meeting: CRIME	16	17 • 10:00AM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Court	18	19
20	21 • 5:30PM - 8:00PM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Leadership Institute: Session 2	22	23	24 • 10:00AM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Court • 5:30PM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> South Broad Redevelopment Group, Inc. Meeting • 7:00PM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ridgedale Neighborhood Association Meeting	25	26
27	MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY CITY OFFICES CLOSED	29	30 • 10:00AM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition Hearings	31 • 10:00AM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Court		

Visit our Calendar of Events at http://www.chattanooga.gov/Neighborhood_Services

Event: March to School with Principal Randolph
Place: First TN Pavilion (parking available at Finley)
Time: Wednesday, May 9th at 8:00 am

Parents are encouraged to participate and a Lunch * End Backpack will be given away!

Save the Date
The 9th Annual
Neighborhoods and Codes
Conference
October 17-19, 2007
 at the Chattanooga Convention Center

Do you have an article to publish in
Common Ground?
 E-mail it to:
 Dottie Swasey, Editor