



A Newsletter from the Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development



“Building Better Neighborhoods... Block By Block”

COMMON GROUND



Mayor Ron Littlefield

A Letter from the Mayor

Summer Youth Work Program

With summer upon us, thoughts are turning to vacations, spending time outside and for some, an abundance of restless young people with nothing to do. Helping those young people find summer employment will be the goal of the Summer Youth Work Program. This collaborative effort will provide jobs for area youth as an alternative to the many temptations that exist.

The City of Chattanooga, Hamilton County, Maclellan Foundation, The Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce,

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Condemned: In Everyone's Best Interest

Your neighborhood is like any other in the city. You know the people who live on your street. There are a couple of rental houses where folks come and go, but you wave and speak to the new people. One of your neighbors keeps to himself and doesn't go out much. You and your other neighbors have been concerned about the condition of his property; your concerns finally reach a level where you call someone to inspect the property.

A few days later you see code inspectors from the city walking around with their clipboards. You are glad that they are taking care of your neighbor and

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Condemned *(continued from page 1)*

whatever problems he has with his home. After a week or so, you open the paper and there is a picture of your neighbor. The house is condemned and the neighbor has been ordered to leave.

The Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development oversees the enforcement of all housing code regulations, excluding the codes that apply to the building of a property. Our goal is to ensure that all residents in the City of Chattanooga have safe and healthy places to live. We must find the delicate balance between enforcing the city code and achieving the greater good for all residents in Chattanooga.

More often than not, when we visit a property to inspect for code compliance, we find that most violations that are present are minor and can be corrected fairly simply. Most properties found in violations have litter outside their homes that should not be there, or an overgrown yard or their house needs a new coat of paint. These properties can easily be brought into compliance, and the neighborhood is a cleaner place for everyone.



This hot water heater sits in 3 feet of water. You can see the water coming out of the top of the unit, which is compounded by leaking waste water pipes in the basement.



In a few cases, we find houses that are in such disrepair that they are no longer safe to live in. There are so many things in the house, including regular household items but also trash, that there is barely room to walk. There are piles of clothing on top of heating units that could cause a fire at any moment. The plumbing has deteriorated to the point that open sewage is leaking from the house into the storm drains on the street, the same storm drains that carry what will be your drinking water. These properties are not only a danger to the resident, but they are affecting the environmental health of the entire community.

In the case of a property that is deemed unsafe and unhealthy for the resident, the law requires the Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development to condemn it. When a property is condemned, it does not necessarily mean that it will be set for demolition. In many cases, a condemned property can be rehabbed, brought back into compliance with city housing codes, and the resident can move back into their home. This is an ideal outcome, and the overall goal, when the city steps in to address housing safety issues. A property is only set for demolition when the cost of rehab is determined to be greater than 50% of the total property value. Demolition is a last resort, and only used when properties are so deteriorated that they cannot be salvaged.

The law requires that our department condemn properties that are unsafe and unhealthy to live in. Condemnation of a property means that whoever lives there must leave and cannot return until the unsafe and unhealthy conditions have been corrected. This is a situation that is unpleasant and inconvenient for everyone, but it is in the best interest of the resident. Our code inspectors and neighborhood relations staff work to help the resident find temporary housing, until something more permanent is established. *continued on page 4*

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

Workforce Development, area faith-based organizations and hundreds of volunteers, among others, have come together to provide solutions to the temptations faced by our young people. Jobs instill pride, confidence and skills that can be utilized for a lifetime. As an added benefit, they also keep people out of trouble.

Establishing a successful employment history is a requirement for obtaining rewarding future employment. These jobs will be real jobs and require real commitment and responsibility. Arriving to work on time, working hard and establishing a strong work ethic will be requirements. If you plan to participate in this program, do so with the knowledge that this is a real job with real wages.

We, as a community, should expect more from government, the private sector and, most importantly, ourselves. The City of Chattanooga has stepped up and made

available positions in the parks and recreation department and public works as well as others. We are planning on having a Summer Youth Work Program employee in the Mayor's office too. Hamilton County will also be providing numerous positions as will the various partners that have

signed on for this program. Our private sector partners believe in the potential of this program and have faithfully committed their resources. Now it is up to us. Let us commit ourselves to making this work.

We have the opportunity to hopefully change the lives of some deserving young people in our community. The Summer Youth Work Program can be successful and that achievement depends on all of us. Thomas Edison said, "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work." Let's not miss this opportunity. Let us all come together and make the Summer Youth Work Program successful.

"Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

Thomas Edison

A Letter from the Administrator

It has been an interesting month for Neighborhood Services and Community Development. I'm sure many of you have seen articles in the newspaper or heard commentary on the radio regarding a home our Code Enforcement Inspectors had to condemn that still had an elderly woman and her disabled son living in it.

The majority of the time, the buildings we condemn are unoccupied, with the exception of vagrants, drug dealers and such that use them for illegal activity. But occasionally, some are reported to us by concerned neighbors that are still being occupied by the owners. These are unfortunate circumstances, but we are legally and morally bound to take action for the health of the resident as well as the affected neighborhood.

Our inspectors are not immune to these unfortunate circumstances. In the case of the elderly woman, the inspector personally transported her to social service agencies for assistance. Efforts were made to place the individuals with family here in town. They were able to locate two places for her to go while hopefully, repairs can be made to her home to make it liveable again.

The fact is, legal or not, no one should have to live in a house that has not had plumbing for over a year. Water pours through the ceiling every room, and the basement is full of waste water. No one wants their relatives or friends to

live in such conditions, and neither do we. We are striving to give this person the assistance she needs to improve her situation. It's not that we don't want her to live in her own home, it's that we don't want her to die because of it. We hope that she will be able to get the assistance she needs to make it a healthy home once more.

Neighborhood Services and Community Development's goal is to make all Chattanooga neighborhoods a clean, healthy place to live and grow. But a neighborhood is nothing without the people that live there. Efforts are made to address the wants and needs of all residents to the best of our ability.

I stand by the department's Code Enforcement Inspectors. They see parts of this city many of you never see, and encounter situations most would avoid. I know that they are compassionate individuals who not only perform their jobs in a professional manner, but go above and beyond to offer assistance when they encounter someone in need.



Beverly P. Johnson, Administrator

We're Coming To Your Neighborhood...

On a regular basis, The Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development's Code Enforcement division conducts "systematic" inspections of neighborhoods in Chattanooga. Each month, a different neighborhood is chosen for the Code Inspectors to canvas block by block for housing code violations, litter, overgrowth and abandoned vehicles.

We now have new signs to announce a week in advance that inspections will be taking place in that area. The signs will be placed on blocks surrounding the targeted neighborhood. This will give violators a chance to "clean up their act" and let residents of the community know who we are and why we are there.

Violators found during these inspections will receive a notice of violation and an inspectors' report. A period of compliance is given depending on the violation. In a case where the property has had previous violations that have not been addressed, the owner will be issued a citation to court.

Look for these signs coming to your community.... it means our Code Inspectors are at work to keep your neighborhood healthy and clean!



Condemned *(continued from page 2)*



There are limits to what we are able to achieve, but we do our best to see that displaced residents have somewhere to go. We are not required to provide this service. We do it because we care about our neighbors.

The Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development is dedicated to maintaining Chattanooga's neighborhoods by identifying revitalization opportunities, fostering community partnerships, cultivating neighborhood based leadership, and engaging in active code enforcement to create viable living environments that enhance the quality of life for all residents. This is our mission. This is our commitment.

Crumbling Walls, Faulty Toilets, Fire Hazards Lead to Condemnation

The City of Chattanooga has dealt with unfit housing for many years, as you can see from these newspaper archives. The goal of the Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development is to maintain healthy and safe living conditions for all residents of the community,



Neighborhood Traffic Management Program

The City of Chattanooga is continually striving to strengthen and protect its neighborhoods by improving the quality of life in residential areas. The desirability of Chattanooga neighborhoods as a place to live is directly affected by local traffic conditions. Safety hazards can be created by unnecessary through traffic in these neighborhoods or by motorists traveling at unsafe speeds on streets designed primarily for local access to abutting properties.

Effective solutions to neighborhood traffic problems may require a combination of traffic control/diverter devices treating an entire area or neighborhood. However, a comprehensive approach must be taken to ensure that traffic is diverted in a manner consistent with the City's Thoroughfare Plan, so as not to unduly impact the rest of the transportation system or adversely affect other neighborhoods.

An evaluation process has been established for determining which projects should be included in the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program. The process requires completion of two phases prior to a location being considered for funding:

Phase 1 - Community Support. No project will be considered without support from the citizens in the affected area. Responsibility for completion of this phase rests with the community and involves the following steps: 1) An individual or group must make a request by calling the Traffic Engineering Division at 757-5005. 2) A Traffic Engineering staff member will discuss the concerns and define a petition area. 3) A petition is circulated by the individual or group. At least 67% of households must sign the petition.

Phase 2 – Traffic Safety Analysis. Each project will be evaluated based on technical traffic data. Responsibility for completion of this step rests with the Traffic Engineering Division and involves the gathering of technical information to determine if a need exists for the installation of traffic management devices. Traffic volume counts, speed surveys and accident reports are utilized to determine needs and feasible solutions.

For more information on the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program, visit http://www.chattanooga.gov/Public_Works/70_547.htm.



Speed cushions, such as these on Tremont Street, are one option available for neighborhood traffic management.



Traffic circles are another device to manage traffic. Above is the Valleybrook traffic circle, and to the right is another version found on Old Mission Road.



Neighborly News from...

Parks and Recreation Department



Summer Day Camp

The City offers a great day camp for children ages 6 – 12. There will be two sessions: June 4-29 AND July 9-August 3. The best deal in town. Sports, canoeing, hiking, mountain biking & other outdoor recreation activities at the Greenway Farm, art, field trips, swimming, and more! Monday – Friday from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm. Only \$100.00 per session.



Summer Activities Guide

The Summer Activities Guide is here and outlines all of our department's programs, events, and information for June, July, and August.

The guides are available at all of the recreation centers, the Zoo, the Fitness center, Warner Park and Carver Outdoor Pools, the Skate Park, both Brainerd and Brown Acres golf courses, the Champions Club Tennis Complex, the Convention & Visitors Bureau, and at our office at 1102 S. Watkins Street. Call Rhonda Seeber at 423-643-6079 for more information.

You can also access the entire Parks and Recreation Summer Activities Guide online at www.chattanooga.gov.

Ridgedale Community Association



Mrs. Burrell proudly displays her new Ridgedale Community Association banner.

The Ridgedale Community Association was given a Neighborhood Partner Program award for the purchase of "Ridgedale Pride" banners. The banners reflect community pride, reinforce the unity of the residents and businesses as well as communicating that Ridgedale is a community of choice for newcomers.

The Association held a special meeting to kick off the distribution of the banners on May 24th at the Chattanooga Parks and Recreation Pavilion on Watkins Street. Residents and business partners came together to celebrate Ridgedale Pride through fellowship and food. McCallie School provided the food as well as donating the cost sharing match for the banners!

Any residents or businesses in the Ridgedale community that are interested in displaying one of these attractive banners can call Gary Ball at 421-4622. And congratulations, Ridgedale, on your community pride!



New members sign up at the association meeting.

Neighborly News from...

Department of Education, Arts & Culture



Above: Hector Olivera will be in concert July 2nd at Memorial Auditorium

Right: Carolyn Brown competing in billiards at the Senior Olympics hosted by the EastGate Senior Activity Center.



Memorial Auditorium Organ Dedication Concert

Join the Chattanooga Music Club, Mayor Ron Littlefield, and other local dignitaries on Monday, July 2nd at 7:00 p.m. as they rededicate the 1924 Austin Pipe Organ at Memorial Auditorium. Internationally acclaimed concert organist Hector Olivera will headline this patriotic salute to the armed forces. After a 21-year restoration project, Memorial Auditorium's Austin organ is ready for its debut. Come experience one of the last great pipe organs of its type and size left in existence. Admission is free.

EastGate Senior Activity Center Hosts The Senior Olympics

Clarence Williams, director of the EastGate Senior Activity Center, continues to program a wide variety of activities and events. May 9th through the 13th, Chattanooga hosted the senior Olympic Games and EAC's own EastGate Senior Activity Center was host to the billiards tournament. The room was filled to capacity with center regulars and visitors watching the tournament.

Public Works

On May 22, 2007, in a special presentation at the Chattanooga City Council meeting, Steve Pack was named as the Public Works Employee of the Year. Steve is an employee in the Traffic Operations branch within the Traffic Engineer's Office.

A native of Chattanooga, Steve began working for the city as a teenager on his summer breaks from school. After receiving his welding certificate, he began working for the city full time in 1993.

Since then Steve has sought innovative ways to improve daily operations in the Traffic Division. Among these, he developed a special mounting bracket to attach parking meters to existing light poles, saving the city money and eliminating the need for a separate pole for every meter. He worked with city engineers to develop special traffic signal poles, which had to undergo extensive testing.

Steve also developed a specialized tool to install poles for traffic safety signs. Prior to his development, traffic operations employees used sixteen pound hammers to drive the poles into the ground. While a specialized truck was available to do this job, the cost of \$54,000 per unit was prohibitive. Steve designed, fabricated and installed a system on an existing truck to use hydraulics to install the poles at \$11,000 per unit, for a total savings to the city of over \$270,000!

Steve Leach, Administrator for the Public Works Department presented the award to Mr. Pack. "Because Steve's experience, expertise and willingness to move to the next level are exemplary, he is being recognized for his extraordinary dedication to his job and department," said Mr. Leach, adding "Steve Pack reflects great credit to himself and the City of Chattanooga."

COMMONGROUND

June Calendar of Events

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4 6:00PM East Lake Neighborhood Association Meeting 7:00PM Community Association of Historic St. Elmo Meeting	5	6	7 10:00AM Environmental Court	8	9
10	11 1:00PM Regional Planning Agency Meeting	12 6:00PM Sector 2 Community Policing Interactive Committee (CPIC) 6:00PM Lupton City Neighborhood Association Meeting	13 10:00AM Board of Zoning Appeal Meeting 11:00AM East Lake Senior Citizens Meeting	14 10:00AM Environmental Court 6:00PM Clifton Hills Neighborhood Improvement Committee Meeting 7:00PM Cedar Hill Improvement League Meeting	15	16
17	18 6:30PM - 8:00PM Neighborhood Leadership Institute, Session 3	19	20	21 10:00AM Environmental Court	22	23
24	25	26	27 10:00AM Demolition Hearings	28 10:00AM Environmental Court 6:30PM South Broad Redevelopment Group, Inc. Meeting 7:00PM Ridgedale Neighborhood Association Meeting	29	30

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

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

Do you have information
 you would like to publish in
COMMON GROUND?
 E-mail it to:

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Neighborhood TALK

Tuesday Mornings 9:00-9:30 a.m.
 WN00 1260AM - Heritage Radio