

# COMMON GROUND

A Newsletter Celebrating Neighborhoods

## Mayor Ron Littlefield on Chattanooga's Answer to the Homeless Question: The Farmer's Market

### Neighborhood Services Contact Info:

Ron Littlefield  
Mayor  
757-5152

Beverly P. Johnson  
Administrator  
425-3730

Steve Hargis  
Assistant Administrator  
425-3739

Vanessa Jackson  
Program Manager  
425-3741

Sandra Gober  
Manager, Economic and Community Development  
757-5133

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Just days after taking office as Mayor of Chattanooga, I was invited to a meeting of the National Coalition on Homelessness in New York City. There, at an evening gathering of city officials from across America and Europe, we heard Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin speak eloquently and emotionally about her childhood and her father's experience with homelessness. A prominent attorney with a strong practice and a promising future, he descended into alcoholism and found himself on the street. He later recovered, but the experience left a lasting mark on the young woman who would grow up to be Mayor

of Atlanta.

I told Mayor Franklin that we have something in common. Her story made me recall my own father who spent some time as a homeless young man during the Great Depression of the 1930's. As one of seven children of a textile mill worker, in his words, "the older boys decided that if some didn't leave home, everybody would starve." So, he took to the rails and toured the country riding in boxcars and living off the land. Like Mayor Franklin's father, my dad also worked himself out of his condition – but the experience never fully left him. As he raised his own children he told us colorful and sometimes sad stories of life as a hobo and we could not help but notice that he would never turn away a hungry or needy person that came to our door.

The point is this: Homelessness can happen to anyone.

Something else that Atlanta and Chattanooga

have in common is the challenge of homelessness as it affects urban communities. Mayor Franklin and I have had opportunities at other gatherings to compare notes regarding how our cities have responded to the unique challenge of Katrina evacuees in addition to the usual homeless population. Atlanta converted an old jail to a comprehensive center for homeless services – a bold political move given the opportunity for criticism, the negative connotations and the potential political incorrectness of utilizing such a facility. However, the need was great. Resources were limited. So Atlanta used what was available and turned an old symbol of hopelessness into something that offered dignity and new opportunity to the down and out.

Chattanooga has gained a measure of well-deserved national fame as a transformed community. After years of struggle with

**See MAYOR LITTLEFIELD, p. 3**

## Letter from the Administrator

Dear Neighbor,

It is a very exciting time to be in one of America's most scenic cities. I would like to express my appreciation for the neighborhood organizations that are taking advantage of the Neighborhood Partners Projects for Beautification funding opportunities. We will be announcing the first round of approved projects soon. I would also like to encourage organizations considering applying to do so while funding is still available.

Please feel free to call our office at any time with questions or concerns. We appreciate your interest and involvement.

Sincerely,  
Beverly P. Johnson, Administrator



## Property Transformations: 1823 Wilson Street

June 2006

This property located at 1823 Wilson Street is the subject of this month's Property Transformation. A City Codes Enforcement Inspector observed unsafe conditions in violation of the City Code. The external structure's damage and deterioration

Below: 1823 Wilson Street, before



Above: 1823 Wilson Street, after

caused concern for the safety of residents as well as neighbors. Luckily, the property was not so damaged and deteriorated that it would be condemned. However, the property was in need of serious attention to preserve the

house.

The property owner made repairs to the house, making it safer and more attractive. Following re-inspection it is now in compliance with the city code.

Below: 1823 Wilson Street, after



## Neighborhood Notes News from Chattanooga's neighborhood groups

The **Chattanooga Neighborhood Association Council (CNAC)** held its election for governing board members on Monday May 15, at the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library Auditorium to fill vacant seats from the nine (9) Chattanooga City Council Districts. All Chattanooga neighborhood organizations established at least six (6) months prior to the election were invited to participate.

There was a modest turnout of community and neighborhood leaders. CNAC officials were pleased to garner several new members for service on the governing board, in addition to several new at-large members.

**Mr. Briston Smith** of Hill City in District 1 and **Mrs. Wilma Akridge** of District 1 are the two new CNAC Governing Body Board members. **Mrs. Linda Carter** and **Mrs. Ruby Greene** are the newly appointed at-large members.

These members regularly attend the monthly CNAC meetings held the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month, 6:00 p.m. at the Community Foundation located at 1270 Market Street.



Previously, at-large members did not have voting rights, however, through enhancements intended to increase the impact of CNAC's at-large members spearheaded by **Charles Payne,**

**President of CNAC,** at-large members now have voting rights.

"There are vacancies still remaining to be filled on the governing body for Districts 2,3,4,6 and 8," according to Mr. Payne. Filling these vacancies by the end of the year is a priority goal of CNAC's current administration. Payne also states, "CNAC encourages all city council members to support the neighborhood associations in their district and help CNAC with its endeavor to unify neighborhoods for a better quality of life in Chattanooga."

CNAC's officers and members are very thankful to Mayor Littlefield and his staff for their support during the CNAC election efforts, especially **Anita Ebersole** and **Marie Chinery** for their assistance in facilitating the event.

For more CNAC information please call 899-1748.

DEPARTMENT



**MAYOR LITTLEFIELD**

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the common economic and environmental challenges that have afflicted so many industrial cities in this country, we have become known as a city of creativity and positive change. Dealing with homelessness is a common urban problem. With the potential development of the nine acre Farmer's Market property, Chattanooga once again has an opportunity to set a high standard.

The need for better coordinated services for the homeless became apparent last year during the campaign for mayor. Our headquarters was located in the old Hughes Equipment warehouse on 11<sup>th</sup> Street – near the Community Kitchen. It was winter and it was often cold and wet. Exploring the warehouse we found evidence that homeless people were living in the recesses of the building. I mentioned compassion in my inaugural address and called on the people of Chattanooga to step up and set a

new example in how this problem might be addressed. It is not so much that we aren't spending enough money on the situation – we simply aren't coordinating our efforts or employing our resources in the most efficient and effective manner. During

Market property came up for sale right across the street from the Community Kitchen just as that long standing and well respected institution was seeking more space to provide new, much needed services for the homeless. Further, just as the City



**Above: Farmers' Market Concept**

closed on the purchase of the property, the local Association of Architects was seeking a community project to serve as their gift to the community in recognition of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their national organization. After a brief examination

of options, the development of a campus for homeless services at the Farmer's Market was selected. Since then (April 1) things have moved very quickly.

the months since taking office, we have met many times with agencies and officials regarding various pieces of the homeless puzzle. Convincing evidence has been produced that unattended homelessness is more expensive for a community than providing a reasonable level of care. We know that we can and must do a better job.

Two weeks ago, Al Chapman, Director of Faith Based Initiatives for the Mayor's office, and representatives of a local foundation accompanied me to Washington for a meeting with key individuals of the President's Council. Just last week,

As a religious person, I believe in Divine Providence. Thus, it was not lost on me that the nine acre Farmer's

See **HOMELESS QUESTION, p. 5**



**Community Development Specialist:  
Doug Smith**



Doug grew up in Hixson and now resides in North Chattanooga. He previously worked for the State of Tennessee as a Community Planner. Prior to that, Doug worked at the Regional Planning Agency as a Researcher. Doug earned a Bachelor degree in History, another in Political Science, as well as a Master's degree in Public Administration, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Doug's 10 year old son attends Big Ridge Elementary.

Outside of work, he enjoys frisbee throwing, mountain and dirt biking, snow skiing, camping, hiking, tubing, and reading non-fiction, on the subjects of science, philosophy, sociology, evolutionary psychology, and comparative religions. He is particularly interested in how society molds the individual. Doug dreams of having a house, 10 acres of land and a huge, friendly dog. He also realizes that he cannot have everything he wants. As an employee of Neighborhood Services and Community Development, Doug enjoys helping non-profits realize projects that are otherwise unlikely without HUD funding.



**Community Development Project Management Support:  
Gloria McKeldin**

Gloria McKeldin supports the Community Development staff in numerous projects. Currently she is responsible for coordinating environmental reviews for all housing related projects using federal funds and updating and maintaining the HUD Integrated Disbursement and Information System (IDIS). She also reviews for compliance all Commercial Revitalization Deduction Applications for the renewal community tax incentives.

Gloria retired from General Electric Company after 30 years in their finance department. Her last position with the company was Finance Manager for the Medium Transformer Business in Rome, Georgia.

She is a member of Orchard Knob Baptist Church, Pi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., The National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Chattanooga Chapter and CARATS Inc. Gloria enjoys playing tennis, golf, and traveling.

**Upcoming Events!**

**June 2006:**

**13—Sector 2 Community Policing Interactive Committee (CPIC) - (Echo and Fox zones)**

**Location:** Diagnostic Center  
**2205 McCallie Avenue**  
**Time:** 6:00PM

**26—Chattanooga Neighborhood Court (Night Court) for Ridgedale and Oak Grove**

**Location:** Parks and Recreation Administrative Building  
1102 S. Watkins Street  
**Time:** 6:00 PM

**26—Chattanooga Neighborhood Association Council Meeting**

**Location:** Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga  
1270 Market Street  
**Time:** 6:00 PM

**28—Court Watch**

**Location:** East Lake Seniors Center  
3208 15th Avenue  
**Time:** 11:30 AM



**Neighborhood Talk**

**TUNE IN!!!!**

Tuesday Mornings, 9:00-9:30am  
WNOO, 1260AM — Heritage Radio



## Hope IV in Alton Park

June 2006



Above: Hope IV Project in Alton Park

The HOPE VI project in Alton Park, a residential development consisting of both rental and homeownership units, is funded in part by the Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development. Approximately \$7 million was set aside for infrastructure improvements, including street paving, sidewalk construction, in addition to stormwater and sanitary sewer installation.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), awarded the \$36 million HOPE VI grant for demolition and housing construction at this Alton Park site.

As of May, 2006, 173 rental units have been built on the HOPE VI site. 275 rental sites will be completed by December, 2006, and 125 homeownership units are expected to be completed in 2007. The infrastructure por-

tion of the project, originally projected to be finished by August of 2007, should be complete by October, 2006.

## Mayor Littlefield: Homeless Question

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Mr. Chapman and other staff of various homeless agencies visited Phoenix to tour a recently completed comprehensive center addressing homelessness in that city. In a few days, more staff will visit Austin, Texas to see another new state-of-the-art facility. I plan to go along to Austin myself. All cities are seeking a solution to this common problem.

Services for the homeless fall into a category of public initiatives that are commonly called "NIMBY's" – short for "Not in My Backyard". Everyone knows that something must be done and practically everybody wants the government to attempt to resolve the

problem. However, the usual reaction from individuals is that they want such remedies to take place somewhere far, far away from their own neighborhood. Landfills, jails and other such facilities fall into the same general category. Resistance is a completely human and understandable reaction to the unknown. The only way to deal with such concerns is to face the situation head-on and engage those most affected in developing the solution.

For this reason, we have begun with the first of what will doubtlessly be many meetings with neighborhood residents and other stake holders. As David Hudson who chairs the local effort by Chatta-

nooga's architectural community recently noted, a nine acre tract within a central city area is a rare commodity. The site represents a unique opportunity that must be used to our best advantage. It is very important that we get it right. There are a number of questions yet to be answered. But Chattanooga has made a name for itself as a city that comes together, develops a plan through a public process and then moves ahead with a solution. We don't plan for the sake of planning. Creativity, change and compassion - it's the way we do things in Chattanooga.

## News and Notables: Personnel Activities

**Eleanor Liu** is the City's new contact for employee deferred compensation enrollment. City employees with questions or needing to make changes in their deferred compensation status should contact Eleanor at (423)757-0527 or via city email.

**Rachel Howard**, formerly Rachel Burns, Grants Specialist for the Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development, has resigned from the City to work as a Grants Specialist with the Siskin Chil-

dren's Institute.

**Nelsene Lowery**, Codes Enforcement Inspector for the Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development, recently earned her Property Maintenance and Housing Inspector certification through the International Codes Council.

**Vickie Corson** was recently approved by the Chattanooga City Council for the position of Assistant Administrator of the City's Finance Department.

### Neighborhood Partners Projects for Beautification

The Department of Neighborhood Services and Community Development is still accepting applications for the Neighborhood Partners Projects for Beautification. A maximum of \$1,500 will be awarded for landscaping and beautification efforts within Chattanooga's neighborhoods.

To request guidelines and applications, please contact Darius Swoope at (423) 425-3718.