
Neighborhood Services Department

Department Overview

Mission

The mission of the Neighborhood Services Department is to ensure a comprehensive and effective response to neighborhood needs through implementation of the City's *Neighborhood Wellness Action Plan*, coordination of neighborhood-based City services, and leadership on public information and citizen participation activities.

Organization

The Neighborhood Services Department consists of three divisions: Neighborhood Coordination, Property Maintenance, and Neighborhood Programs.

- ◆ The Neighborhood Coordination Division is responsible for citizen education and outreach, coordination of interdepartmental efforts to solve neighborhood problems, organizing neighborhoods, and promoting neighborhood self-help programs to address community priorities.
- ◆ The Property Maintenance Division is responsible for the maintenance and preservation of existing structures in the community through enforcement of property maintenance codes and coordination of efforts to achieve compliance with the City's blight and nuisance abatement programs.
- ◆ The Neighborhood Programs Division is responsible for developing and managing programs to address neighborhood needs, including housing rehabilitation and home ownership programs, neighborhood plan implementation, and community service activities. The Division administers a variety of Federal, State, and local funds to support these programs and activities.

The Neighborhood Services Department also provides staff support to two of the City's Boards and Commissions: the Neighborhood Services Advisory Board and the Code Enforcement Board of Appeals. The purpose of the Neighborhood Services Advisory Board is to assist in the articulation of citizen concerns and direction for Neighborhood Wellness and the activities of the Neighborhood Services Department.

The purpose of the Code Enforcement Board of Appeals is to allow citizens a public hearing when they believe that a code enforcement action taken by the Neighborhood Services or Fire Departments is incorrect. Grounds for appeal are restricted to the following: the true intent of the code or codes has been incorrectly interpreted; the provisions of the codes do not fully apply; or an equally good or better form of construction or repair can be used.

Neighborhood Services Administration and Coordination (02-000-10001-000)
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Current Level Services

- ◆ Assure that our City has livable neighborhoods throughout by providing leadership and oversight of City Council goal actions related to neighborhood wellness.
- ◆ Improve department responsiveness to neighborhood needs by providing oversight and coordination of department resources, programs and activities.
- ◆ Respond to neighborhood needs and problems by coordinating appropriate City services from all City departments through oversight of the Neighborhood Services Team and other interdepartmental problem solving activities.
- ◆ Build employee expertise and skills through training and communication on neighborhood-based customer service delivery, problem solving techniques, and citizen participation strategies.
- ◆ Provide support to new and existing neighborhood groups through implementation of the City's neighborhood organizing and technical assistance policy and coordination of the neighborhood watch and neighborhood registration programs.
- ◆ Support resident initiatives to address neighborhood needs and priorities through attendance at neighborhood meetings as needed and by providing citizens with information on City policies, programs and services.
- ◆ Provide financial assistance for neighborhood initiatives through implementation of the Neighborhood Small Grant Program.
- ◆ Increase citizen awareness of City services and community resources through public education and training programs.
- ◆ Increase cooperation between the City and the Housing Authority of Champaign County (HACC) through routine communication with HACC staff and oversight of intergovernmental agreements.
- ◆ Serve as liaison to community boards, committees and task forces dealing with neighborhood wellness issues such as the Drug Elimination Study Group, the Seniors and Law Enforcement Together (SALT) group, the Community Volunteers Committee, the Community Collaboration for Economic Development, the Safe Kids Coalition, CU Diversity Network, Crimestoppers, the Police Chief's Advisory Committee, and the Champaign Park District
- ◆ Provide staff support to the Neighborhood Services Advisory Board.

Changes in Service Level

- ◆ Assure that senior citizens in the community have adequate access to City services and that their housing needs are addressed by implementing a planning process as identified in the Livable Neighborhoods City Council goal action plan.

Productivity and Efficiency Initiatives

- ◆ Coordinate the update of the *Neighborhood Wellness Action Plan*, including identification of performance measures for City services in neighborhoods and collection of baseline data to periodically reassess neighborhood classifications.

Property Maintenance Division (02-0000-10002-0000)
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Current Level Services

- ◆ Improve the condition of existing residential properties through enforcement of property maintenance and nuisance codes.
 - respond to approximately 1,300 citizen complaints about nuisance conditions in Restoration and Preservation Planning Areas, and 650 complaints in Conservation and Healthy areas resulting in an estimated 1,950 nuisance inspections per year.
 - generate approximately 1,000 nuisance notices as a result of staff-initiated inspections citywide, including 650 in Restoration and Preservation areas and 350 in Conservation and Healthy areas.
 - generate approximately 30 exterior housing inspections in assigned “Primary Areas” (Planning Areas 1, 2, 4 and 8), and 50 to 60 additional exterior housing inspections throughout the City for a total of 80 to 90 per year.
 - conduct approximately 110 interior housing inspections throughout the City in response to tenant inspection requests.
 - prepare 50 to 60 property maintenance cases for prosecution when property owners do not comply with code requirements.
- ◆ Take direct action to eliminate neighborhood blight by contracting for abatement of nuisances and pursuing court-ordered demolition of severely deteriorated structures.
- ◆ Assure that University of Illinois Certified Housing complies with University standards and Fire Prevention/Property Maintenance Codes by inspecting 55 to 60 properties annually.

- ◆ Provide support to other City departments in responding to neighborhood needs by referring approximately 250 citizen requests for service per year.

Changes in Service Levels

- ◆ Issue 60 to 75 vehicular tickets resulting from the implementation of the Front Yard Parking Program throughout the city.
- ◆ Prepare 40 to 50 Administrative Search Warrants per year to abate nuisance violations cited on private property.

Productivity or Efficiency Initiatives

- ◆ Implement the property maintenance related software package designed to track and monitor property maintenance enforcement activities. Apply software features to expand information available to staff and the public including the addition of digital images in violations notices and case files.
- ◆ Complete review of the International Property Maintenance Code with the Fire Department, Legal Department and the Code Review Committee and prepare draft code recommendations for consideration by the City Council.
- ◆ Evaluate current inspection guidelines, policies and procedures to ensure that property maintenance codes are equitably and effectively enforced in the community through implementation of actions identified in the Livable Neighborhoods City Council goal action plan.

Neighborhood Programs Division (05-0000-10004-0000) & (05-0000-10003-0000)
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Current Level Services

- ◆ Improve the quality and appearance of the City's neighborhoods and increase the number of safe, decent, and affordable housing units available to low and moderate-income families.
 - complete 30 to 35 emergency (threat to health and safety) repair projects, including emergency roof repairs.
 - complete 8 to 10 housing rehab projects to eliminate structural barriers for persons with physical disabilities.
 - provide free paint to 20 households to upgrade the exterior of their homes; provide financial assistance to elderly and disabled households who are unable to perform the work themselves.

- rehabilitate 20 to 25 owner-occupied properties to meet full City code requirements, and make certain that homes are in full compliance with HUD and IEPA safety regulations for lead-based paint in residential properties.
- identify and address lead-based paint hazards in 5 homes, focusing on homes where a child age 6 or under resides.
- demolish 2 to 5 deteriorated secondary structures.
- ◆ Reduce hazards posed by lead-based paint in residential housing by providing education to homeowners/renters and taking appropriate actions to identify and address lead hazards as necessary. Risk assessments and clearance inspections will be conducted for all full home rehab and handicapped retrofit projects undertaken during the year, in accordance with HUD regulations.
- ◆ Provide credit counseling and budget assistance to low/moderate income families participating in the City’s rehab programs by conducting periodic workshops (approximately 4 per year). Following the credit workshops, conduct home maintenance training sessions to assist low/moderate income families maintain their homes, thereby promoting self-sufficiency and reducing repeat requests for City rehab assistance. Assist approximately 50 to 60 households annually.
- ◆ Update and revise the City’s Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing in accordance with HUD requirements. Activities include collecting public input, analyzing past efforts, devising future action steps, and providing fair housing education to concerned groups and residents.
- ◆ Maximize the amount of Federal, State, and private grant funds available for local housing and community development activities.
 - annually prepare and submit the HUD Consolidated Plan which includes grant applications for Community Development Block Grant and HOME funds.
 - seek additional funding to expand delivery of affordable housing services and to support neighborhood improvement efforts.
 - prepare and submit all Federal and State grant reports on a timely basis, including environmental reviews, and performance and monitoring reports.
 - maximize housing loan repayments by regular portfolio monitoring and regular contact with loan clients.
 - increase the amount of private funding for City housing programs by continuing City-lender partnership activities through the Champaign County Community Reinvestment Group.

- ◆ Prepare and monitor contracts for the demolition of 3 structures on properties identified for Boneyard channel improvements. Also manage the demolition of 1 structure on a site needed for the construction of a new Library facility. Provide demolition oversight services on other City projects as needed.
- ◆ Expand the scope of the City’s housing, community development, and neighborhood wellness activities by providing funding to non-profit agencies.
 - execute a contract with a non-profit agency to assist with intake and construction monitoring of 8 - 9 Full Home Repair projects, including lead paint hazard reduction.
 - execute a contract with a non-profit agency to assist 40 elderly households with minor home repairs.
 - assist 10 low-income households with purchasing affordable homes through the Urban League of Champaign County lease-purchase program.
 - provide homebuyer assistance to 3 families purchasing newly constructed homes in the Bristol Place subdivision. Home construction project is administered by Metanoia Centers, Inc., a non-profit housing developer.
 - assist 5 low-income households with the construction of affordable housing by funding land acquisition and clearance costs through a lot acquisition pool. Funding in the pool will be available to Habitat for Humanity, Homestead Corporation, and other non-profit housing developers.
 - create space for 15 additional beds for persons with drug and alcohol dependency and consolidate the agency’s supportive services by providing funding to Prairie Center.
 - improve the condition and accessibility of supportive services space by providing funding for improvements to Family Service of Champaign County.
- ◆ Assist social service agencies to address City-identified human service priorities by providing funding through the Community Service Grant program.
- ◆ Improve the appearance and safety of the Beardsley Park neighborhood through implementation of the Beardsley Park Neighborhood Improvement Plan. Activities include public education and citizen input meetings, monitoring of environmental issues, acquisition of properties in Subarea 1, coordination with Collegiate Cap & Gown to relocate their parking lot on Market Street, assisting the HACC in relocating its maintenance facility, coordination with Illinois Power to improve the appearance and utilization of the land south of the IP substation, and coordinating the redevelopment of the City-owned land at Market Street and Bradley Avenue and in Subarea 1.
- ◆ Improve the appearance and safety of the Douglass Park neighborhood through implementation of the Parkside-Mansard Square Redevelopment Plan. Plan implementation

includes the construction of 15 single-family homes for sale to low/moderate-income homebuyers on the Taylor Thomas Subdivision site, formerly Mansard Square. Another activity to be undertaken is the improvement of Wesley Park, which is located south of Oakwood Trace Townhomes, through a cooperative arrangement with the Champaign Park District.

- ◆ Coordinate the allocation of a portion of the City's private activity bond cap to provide assistance to 15-20 homebuyers through the Assist Champaign, Mortgage Credit Certificate, or Illinois Housing Development Authority 2003 programs or other similar homebuyer assistance programs.

Changes in Service Level

- ◆ Participate in a joint planning process with the Housing Authority of Champaign County to investigate redevelopment options for Burch Village. Serve as lead department for implementation of the City's actions involved in the redevelopment plan.
- ◆ Promote the construction of housing units that are affordable to all households in the community, particularly moderate income homebuyers, through implementation of actions identified in the Livable Neighborhoods City Council goal action plan.

Productivity or Efficiency Initiatives

- ◆ Create a property disposition policy for City properties. Market City-owned non-buildable vacant lots to adjacent property owners to reduce City maintenance cost and return the properties to the tax rolls.
- ◆ Seek additional grant funding to continue and expand on-going lead hazard abatement work in owner-occupied homes. Obtain additional funding from the Illinois Department of Public Health through its "Get the Lead Out" program if available and seek alternate funding for lead hazard reduction work that is not tied to owner income.
- ◆ Begin the five-year Consolidated Planning process including the gathering and analysis of relevant housing data and preparation of a plan for citizen input. The plan will cover the period from FY2005 – FY2009.