



## The Department of Community Development

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City of Cincinnati

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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Homeownership Month</i>	2
<i>Metro West Commerce</i>	2
<i>Ribbon Cuttings</i>	3
<i>BluePrint for Success</i>	3
<i>DCD Brownfield Class</i>	3
<i>Property Maintenance</i>	4
<i>National Competition</i>	4
<i>Something New!</i>	4

### MISSION

To work with diverse neighborhood partners to leverage financing and other funding for quality housing, distinct commercial properties, small business development opportunities, and community based programs.



## MESSAGE FROM MICHAEL (THE DIRECTOR)... DCD'S CHARGE FOR CHANGE!

### Welcome to the Inaugural edition of *Vibrant Voices!*

Our department's new e-newsletter is one method the Department of Community Development (DCD) will use over the coming years to better communicate the activities and accomplishments within our organization.

The beginning of 2008 marked many changes within the Department of Community Development. These changes included the separation of our Planning Division to create a new City Planning Department. The re-establishment of the City Planning Department is a very significant event as it restores the prominence of the planning function within City government. Community Development staff fully intends to continue the strong working relationships that were established with Planning staff when we were all within the same organizational structure.

Our department is thrilled to have Property Maintenance Code Enforcement join us as teammates. This merger affords new opportunities for the de-

partment to closely align new business, housing and neighborhood initiatives that will have a significant positive impact on the quality of life in the City. DCD is charged with both "a carrot and a stick" approach to addressing buildings and residences. We must ensure appropriate maintenance of existing real estate while also bringing about greater vision for new developments in neighborhoods. I believe that this consolidation of functions will pay important dividends in terms of improving the condition of our neighborhoods for years to come in a historic way. A great synergism of ideas continues to evolve daily.

The Department also welcomed the City's Arts Grants function this year. Arts are another likely fit within the DCD area. There is already commonality in Arts processes, which almost mirror the Human Services Grants programs. In addition, since Capital Arts grants are also managed within Community Development, there can now be better coordination and improved efficiencies among all of these activities. We are excited about ways to showcase City-funded Arts initiatives in the community!

Finally, as we move forward from the many ground breakings and tours celebrated during this year's exciting Homeownership Month, we have much work to continue and to start. Our systems will continue to be enhanced. In addition to *Vibrant Voices*, another communications tool we have re-established is a departmental email address: [communitydevelopment@cincinnati-oh.gov](mailto:communitydevelopment@cincinnati-oh.gov).

I believe that these new streamlined methods of communication will greatly improve each reader's understanding of our department's operations and provide increased access to results. Communities can look forward to enjoying ongoing communications and the excellent customer service they have come to



Michael Cervay, Director  
Department of  
Community Development



## IT'S ALL ABOUT HOUSING DURING HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH!

The Department of Community Development (DCD) had a busy June Homeownership Month during our many Housing celebrations in neighborhoods. DCD hosted the City of Cincinnati leadership, community members and developers in ribbon-cutting ceremonies for the start of new construction on homes in College Hill and Walnut Hills. The department also cut the ribbon on several homes in Carthage as part of Rehab-A-Rama. In total, there were ceremonies for over 15 homes and 57 Downtown condos.

DCD didn't stop at ribbon cuttings! The department partnered on the *Ultimate Urban Tour of Living* in Downtown, Mt Auburn, Mt Adams, and Over-the-Rhine; served as a partner in seven homeownership educational workshops; and, participated in the Homeownership Tour of Westwood and Price Hill for the Real Estate Ambassadors.

DCD oversees several housing initiatives that benefit citizens of Cincinnati. The programs are:

### **Tax Abatement**

DCD offers a 10-year tax abatement on newly constructed or renovated homes. Homes remodeled to LEED certified "green" standards are eligible for a 15-year

tax abatement.

### **New Housing**

DCD partners with home builders and community groups to support the construction of new single family homes and condominium developments using infrastructure improvements and capital financing. DCD plans to support construction of 241 units throughout the city, including 108 condos in Over-the-Rhine and 33 loft condos in College Hill. Additional housing includes 43 new homes in Northside, new homes in Lower Price Hill and homes in Walnut Hills.

### **Downpayment Assistance**

The American Dream Downpayment Initiative provided homebuyer education and grants to 147 new homeowners last year. The *Sold On Cincinnati* program is a partnership between the City, the Homeownership Center and the Cincinnati Area Board of Realtors that has provided 245 grants since 2003.

### **Foreclosure Prevention**

DCD contracts with the Legal Aid Society, Working In Neighborhoods, the Home Ownership Center, Better Housing League, and Smart Money to provide foreclosure prevention counseling and emergency mortgage assistance.

### What is Community Development?

Community development builds social capital, sustainable communities, community networking, business and community partnerships. This includes building physical structures such as houses and businesses as well as forming collaborations that propel others to do the same.



## CITY WELCOMES METROWEST COMMERCE PARK

DCD, the City of Cincinnati and the community of Lower Price Hill celebrated the start of demolition and cleanup activities at the site of the former Queen City Barrel plant. The project will renew approximately 18-acres of brownfield property into the MetroWest Commerce Park, a new light industrial and service center business park just minutes away from downtown Cincinnati. The \$25 million project will result in approximately 250,000 square feet of new light manufacturing, flexible warehouse and office space

and 400 new jobs to the community.

The project is managed through the City's Strategic Program for Urban Redevelopment (SPUR). Project partners include the following City Departments: Community Development, Budget, City Planning, Environmental Quality, Finance, Fire, Law, Metropolitan Sewer District, Real Estate, Transportation & Engineering, Water Works, as well as the Lower Price Hill Community, Al Neyer,

Inc., ATC Associates, Inc., Charles F. Jergens Construction, Inc., Hull & Associates, Inc., Resurgence Group, LLC, Ron Taylor Repair, and Duke Energy.

In September 2007, the City was awarded a \$3 million Clean Ohio Fund grant for the demolition and cleanup of the MetroWest site. Completion of demolition and cleanup activities at the site is expected in May 2009. The first businesses in the new MetroWest Commerce Park could be open by Summer 2010.

## WHAT WAS OLD IS NEW AGAIN

DCD and City leaders joined the Homesteading and Urban Redevelopment Corporation (HURC) and College Hill leadership on June 10th to cut the ribbon on a newly renovated house in College Hill (6014 Connecticut). This development is part of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Good Neighbor Program. HURC purchased the house from the City for \$1 and completely renovated it. This 4 bedroom, 1.5 bath home features an attached garage, with a brick exterior and is currently available at \$134,900.

DCD also hosted City leaders, Working In Neighborhoods, Inc. (WIN) and Northside

leadership on June 12th to cut the ribbon on a newly renovated home in Northside. This redevelopment is part of WIN's Homeownership Preservation Initiative in the communities of College Hill and Northside and is the second of seven homes to be built. The Victorian style home, (4253 Fergus) features 3 bedrooms, 1.5 baths, intricate hardwood floors throughout the first floor, restored original woodwork and pocket doors. It is currently available for sale at only \$95,000.



4253 Fergus Street Ribbon Cutting in Northside

## BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

The Cincinnati Hamilton County Community Action Agency (CAA), in partnership with the City of Cincinnati, has collaborated to implement the Blueprint for Success Program. "The value of this program is that it allows youths with limited options to learn a valued trade and prepare them with a skill that can lead to self-sufficiency," states Gwen Robinson, President/CEO of the Community Action Agency.

Blueprint for Success is a nine-month construction-training program that provides hands-on experience to participants. In addition to this experience, participants will also receive a stipend, acquire math skills,

life skills, financial literacy, and academic training to assist them in obtaining their GED.

Over the past three years of this partnership the City of Cincinnati has committed \$1,750,761 in funding (CDBG and HOME funds). The funding served approximately 107 students with 35 graduates. The students have completed and sold four units of housing that generated approximately \$192,540 in program income. These homes were sold to low-to-moderate income families.



**Community Councils,  
Cincinnati  
Neighborhood  
Business Districts  
and Nonprofits!**

In an effort to keep your information up to date, please forward all contact information changes to our new email address: [communitydevelopment@cincinnati-oh.gov](mailto:communitydevelopment@cincinnati-oh.gov)

## DCD GRADUATES 10TH CLASS OF BROWNFIELD ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNICIANS

Now on the third grant from the Environmental Protection Agency since 2002, DCD has graduated 147 students from its Brownfields Workforce Job Training Program. On May 27, 2008, the tenth class held a graduation ceremony in Council Chambers in Cincinnati's City Hall.

The City of Cincinnati has

identified several abandoned/underutilized industrial properties with suspected contamination (known as brownfields) in Cincinnati's industrial corridor.

The benefit of this Brownfields program is that graduates are becoming experts who will help transform the City's brown-

field properties into areas that will be ripe for redevelopment and reuse.



**Public Relations Committee**

- Velda Chapman**
- Dwendolyn Chester**
- Lori Clemens**
- Ethel Cogen**
- Yudora Flack**
- Gerald Fortson**
- James Hatton**
- Cheryl Taggart**
- Jennifer Walke**



City of Cincinnati

**Helpful Hints**

**Sidewalk Weeds**

Sidewalk weeds can be killed with boiling water. Accumulation of dead weeds, leaves and other natural debris in the cracks of the sidewalk can form enough soil, and with moisture, can grow new weeds in the small spaces. Hot water has the same effect on plant cells as it does on skin tissue (an organ). If many cells are burned at the same time, it is sure death to the plant or animal. The weeds must also be removed after they have been killed to make sure the root is gone.

**PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE ENFORCEMENT: "HOW IT WORKS FOR YOU!"**

Property Maintenance Code Enforcement, sometimes known also as "Housing Inspections" is charged with adhering to city, county and state laws related to the physical condition of both commercial and residential buildings. The Division is also a resource for tenants who may have complaints about housing that has code violations and/or for tenants who are neighbors of dilapidated or unmaintained buildings.

Complaints can be filed any time of day by calling the Customer Service Request line at (513) 591-6000. Once a complaint is filed, it

is electronically scheduled to the calendar of an inspector in that district. The inspector will contact complainants at their daytime phone number to schedule an inspection or to obtain more information.

Code violations observed during the site inspection are noted and sent to the owner of the property in the form of a document called an "Order." An Order is a legal notice directing the owner to correct the violation(s). The Order specifies a reasonable amount of time in which the correction is to be made. If the violation(s) is not corrected upon re-inspection, the inspector may use Civil or Criminal

sanctions to bring about compliance.

Common property maintenance violations include leaking roof, gutters, and walls, unsafe stairs or porches, unprotected wood or metal in need of paint, missing handrails, leaking plumbing, broken windows, and defective accessory structures such as dilapidated garages or falling retaining walls etc.

To see what is covered under the Housing Code, individuals can go to municipal code section on the City of Cincinnati's website at: <http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/council/pages/-3667-/, Section 1117>.

**CITY'S COMMUNITY PROGRAM WINS NATIONAL COMPETITION**



Cincinnati's Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP) won the National 2008 Program of the Year at the Neighborhoods, USA (NUSA) Annual Conference on Saturday, May 24, 2008. Through focused, integrated

and concentrated city service delivery and community redevelopment efforts, the NEP program seeks to improve the quality of life in a targeted area of a neighborhood. The City initiated program, which has been suc-

cessfully deployed in the Cincinnati neighborhoods of Price Hill, Avondale, Northside, and CUF (Clifton Heights/University Heights/Fairview), won the award specifically for efforts in the community of Northside.

**Something New!**

Effective July 14, 2008, the Department of Community Development will have a new email address and information line that members in the community can use when seeking information about the Department.

**The new email address is: [communitydevelopment@cincinnati-oh.gov](mailto:communitydevelopment@cincinnati-oh.gov)**

**The phone number is: (513) 352-6146.**

"This system will enable Community Development staff to decrease response time and to track the needs of our constituents," stated Michael Cervay, Director of the department.

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