

Fort Collins Neighborhood News

Welcome to our bi-monthly Newsletter

by Beth Sowder, Neighborhood Services Manager

This is our very first bi-monthly electronic newsletter. We will provide hard copies to anyone who requests one or would like to stop by our office and pick one up. Our goal is to continue to share important and useful information to all of our active neighbors and community members in Fort Collins. This is one of our changes in 2006 in accordance with the City's new budget. We are striving to provide high levels of customer service with the lowest cost possible to the taxpayers. Since Fort Collins is a very high-tech community, many people have access to the internet; therefore, it is more convenient and cost efficient for people to receive our newsletters as an email or by looking on our web page. However, we recognize not everyone has internet access. We want

to continue to provide our newsletters to those who do not have access, so please contact Ginny at 224-6070 if you would like a copy sent to you.

Neighborhood Services has undergone many changes in 2005, and we are looking forward to the challenges and opportunities facing us in 2006. Please, look further in the newsletter to read more about our new educational series starting in February.

In addition, you'll notice that we have published an article submitted by one of our local neighborhood organizations. If your neighborhood

has some useful information to share with others, please feel free to submit your article to Ginny Sawyer at gsawyer@fcgov.com. In addition, we would love to publish stories and photos about you, your neighbors, and your neighborhood events. In addition, our office is working on many projects and programs such as Landlord/Tenant workshops, HOA workshops, Neighborhood Night Out, Welcome Bags, Adopt-A-Neighbor, Mediation Program, Bully Prevention Program, Civility Awards, Community Welcome, Sofa Round-up, National University/City Relations Conference, Innovative Code Enforcement, and many more. As you can see, we're striving for a busy and successful year!



New measures designed to improve neighborhood quality *(reprinted from CityNews)*

Improving neighborhoods has been a major initiative for City Council. Recently they have made some important changes to our current laws on housing-occupancy limits, boarding houses, rental-housing standards, and owner information needed for city electric/water utility services. The majority of these changes will go into effect in one year, January 1, 2007.

At that time, new customers connecting to Fort Collins electric and water utility services will provide property owner information. This confidential information will help the City contact the property owner in the event of delinquent accounts and possible service shut-offs. The information will not be disclosed to the public and may only be used for law-enforcement and City code-enforcement purposes.

A change in occupancy limits for any "dwelling unit" will also become effective starting in 2007. A dwelling unit is considered a single housekeeping unit with occupants sharing common living, sleeping, cooking and eating facilities. The new regulations will limit occupancy of any one dwelling unit to either one of the following:

- (a) A traditional related family (biologically, by marriage, adoption, or legally authorized means) plus one additional person; or,
- (b) Any two adults and their dependents plus one additional person.

In order to prepare for these changes, beginning November 25, 2005, a private occupancy disclosure form signed by the owner, manager and tenants (if applicable) must be kept as part of the property owners'/

managers' records. The purpose of this disclosure is to make sure that both owners and tenants are aware of how many occupants can reside in any one dwelling unit. This occurs at the time of sale or lease, regardless of whether the dwelling unit is rented or is owner-occupied, and includes all single-family homes as well as multiple-unit housing.

By ordinance, the occupancy-limit disclosure will only be requested by the City as part of a City Code violation investigation associated with the property or its inhabitants. The form is available either via the City website, <http://www.fcgov.com/disclosure.php>, or by calling 970 224-6046.

Additionally, several changes to current boarding house regulations went into effect on November 25, 2005. A "boarding house" is a

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Grants... a look back and a look ahead

The Neighborhood grant program has been and continues to be a mainstay program of Neighborhood Services. Over the years, these grant monies have helped promote neighborhood clean-ups, first-time and annual social gatherings, and contributed to neighborhood signage and parks. Over the past four years, we have awarded over 100 grants in neighborhoods throughout Fort Collins. Although the past year saw numerous budget cuts around the City, Neighborhood Services was committed and able to secure \$5000 for our 2006 grant cycle.

As our services and our office continues to grow and change to better meet neighborhood needs, the grant program will also see changes in the coming year that will hopefully streamline and clarify the process.

Some of the major changes are as follows.

- In the past we have had two levels of grants, Discover Neighbors and City Manager grants. Starting in 2006 there will only be **one grant with money available up to \$500 per neighborhood per year.** Those of you who are familiar with these grants will notice that a neighborhood map/directory is no longer required. Neighborhood Services still highly supports and encourages neighbors to create these directories, however, they will no longer be a grant requirement.
- Neighborhood Services will **no longer cover landfill tipping fees for neighborhood clean-ups.** Neighborhoods will need

to budget that amount into their grant requests.

- The last major change involves a “due date.” **Grants will be due by the 15th of month prior to the funded event.** (Grants may be submitted more than one month ahead.) This deadline will allow Neighborhood Services staff to rate grant requests once a month and will help neighbors have a more concrete deadline as opposed to the previous 10 days prior to event deadline.

To obtain a grant application, please call Ginny Sawyer at 224-6070 or go to www.fcgov.com/neighborhoodservices. Neighborhood Services is looking forward to another year of fun and neighborly events to support, so start planning today!

I'm a landlord...why should I mediate with my tenants?

In a city where over 50% of the homes are rental units, inevitable conflicts often arise between landlords and tenants over issues such as late rent/bills, property maintenance and repairs, safety concerns, security deposit refunds and retention, roommate conflicts, neighborhood nuisance complaints, early lease termination, occupancy, and pending eviction actions. What's a landlord or tenant to do in a situation like this, when the cost of litigation or relocation is commonly out of the realm of feasibility? The Neighborhood Services Division's Community Mediation Program has been providing free and effective landlord-tenant dispute resolution

services since 1999, and boasts a 96% success rate in resolving all sorts of rental-related problems. Through a process of open communication and compromise, disputing parties are given the chance to work together on remedying their shared issues, rather than having someone else (like a judge) decide who is right and who is wrong. This voluntary, win-win approach can be particularly helpful for landlord-tenant situations when a financial settlement is desired. In a rental market where the vacancy rate hovers around 15%, it makes good business sense for landlords and tenants to work together as partners to address their shared issues in a fair and productive manner. Because mediators



are not attorneys and cannot provide legal advice, the City also offers a free Landlord-Tenant Handbook to answer the most commonly-asked rental questions: www.fcgov.com/neighborhoodservices/mediation.php. Check it out today and find out what your rights and responsibilities are as a player in the Rental World!

Neighborhood quality, continued from page 1

building or a portion that is rented to four or more boarders or roomers and which is NOT classified as a “dwelling unit” or multiple-unit building such as an apartment building. The property owner does not have to occupy the building to qualify it as a boarding house. Although some of the new changes only apply to certain “zoning

districts” in the City, every boarding house must either currently have or obtain a “Certificate of Occupancy (C.O.)” from the City. Getting this certificate requires that the building meet the City Land Use (zoning) Code and City building regulations. To determine in which zoning district a property is located and for other

details about boarding houses, contact the Fort Collins Zoning Office at 970-416-2745; or go online to <http://www.fcgov.com/currentplanning/submittals.php> for application instructions, the on-line zoning map, zoning and building code criteria, and other related approval requirements.

2006 Community Civility Awards nomination form now available!

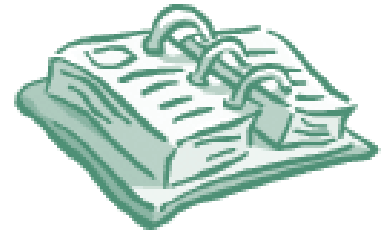
Nomination forms for the 2006 Community Civility Awards are now available. The Community Civility Awards are a collaborative effort by the City of Fort Collins and Colorado State University to honor exceptional individuals or groups from the community and campus who have made a difference in neighborhoods over the past year. By sharing stories of exceptional neighboring practices, both students and residents become aware of the unique contributions made by each group.

Of the nominees, six Fort Collins residents, six Colorado State University students, and one group will be specially recognized for their outstanding contributions to their

community at the awards ceremony being held from 4:30-6:30pm on Monday, March 20, 2006, at City Hall.

To print a nomination form, please use the link provided below. Nomination forms may also be picked up at the Neighborhood Services Office, 281 North College, online at the City of Fort Collins Neighborhood Services website, www.fcgov.com/neighborhoodservices, or be obtained from Melissa Emerson, the Community Liaison Assistant Director, at 224-6047 or memerson@fcgov.com. Nomination forms are due on February 22, 2006. Please nominate people that you know for this special and important honor.

Neighborhood Events



February

February 9

Neighborhood Info Session (See page 6 for details.)

Building Permit? Who me?

February 23

Neighborhood Info Session

Timely topics for HOA's

February 27

Civility Award Nominations Due

Code Corner ~ Questions on snow



With one round of snow behind us and certainly more snow to come, let's answer some of the most common questions received regarding snow removal.

Q: Is there a certain depth of snow required before shoveling is necessary?

A: No. If snow covers the sidewalk, it needs to be cleared within 24 hours.

Q: I've seen inspectors out in pairs. Wouldn't it be more efficient to split up?

A: Normally, we do only have one inspector per car patrolling a certain area. During the first few snowstorms of the year, we do pair up because we post courtesy warning notices, which requires placing a warning notice on the door of the residence in violation. Once we've given people a warning notice, they don't get another one. We have found we can do these warning notices (we call them stickies) much quicker with two people. One person goes to the house to place the notice, while the other person inputs the violation into the handheld PC. We've

experimented over the years, trying this with just one person doing both jobs, for example, and we've found that we can get to a lot more violations with two people in a car versus one. And, on really cold days, it makes it nice to be able to alternate the job of the person having to be outside putting the sticky on the doors. During the storm in early December, our four vehicle pairs amassed more than 700 sidewalk violations.

Q: Why doesn't the City plow all the streets if they make citizens shovel their sidewalks?

A: The short answer is Code Enforcement has absolutely nothing to do with street plowing policy. Our job is to enforce the sidewalk snow ordinance, which has been in effect for over 20 years. A 4000 pound vehicle can navigate a snowy street much easier than a 100 pound elderly person, a disabled person in wheel chair or a 40 pound child on his or her way to school on a snow-packed sidewalk.

March

March 9

Neighborhood Info Session

What's all the barking about?

March 20

Civility Awards

4 - 6 p.m. City Hall, 300 West Laporte

For questions contact Melissa Emerson at 224-6047 or memerson@fcgov.com.

March 23

Neighborhood Info Session

Code Enforcement...Quality Control for Neighborhoods

City Council Meetings

1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month starting at 6 p.m. in the Council Chambers at 300 Laporte Avenue.

Chronicles of the Noise Violation

By Melissa Emerson, City/CSU Community Liaison

It is no secret that residents throughout Fort Collins are concerned about noise violations and the impact of parties in their neighborhoods. Many residents are asking, "What is being done to address our noise concerns?" As the Community Liaison, I feel it is my obligation to keep the public apprised of the actions being taken by CSU and the City of Fort Collins to confront many of the issues surrounding disruptive parties.

The first initiative I want to tell you about is the **"Party Pack" Program**. Created in the Spring of 2004, this successful program is geared towards promoting responsible behavior among CSU students by educating them about their rights and responsibilities off campus, encouraging responsible use of alcohol, and helping them understand the impacts of their actions on others. The party packs encourage communication between neighbors and include 16 notices that can be distributed to neighbors informing them about the party, including the sober host's cell phone number. The packs also include water and a party smart t-shirt for the sober host, Ram Ride information, a party checklist that includes things to think about pre-party and post-party, 21 and over wristbands, recycling and trash bags and a handout outlining common code and ordinance violations and resulting fines and consequences.

Since the onset of this program, over 450 packs have been distributed to CSU students, 116 of which have been given out since the beginning of this fall semester. Feedback from students has been extremely positive. Of the roughly 40 evaluations that have been returned, all but two said they would use a party pack again. Also included in our evaluation process is a search for noise violations on the properties where the pack was distributed. Of the first 100 distributed in Fall 2005, none of the homes received noise violations. Clearly these numbers are encouraging!

Now you may be asking, "Well what happens when there is a party and I

call it in to the police?" To answer this question, I decided to participate in some "hand's on" experience. One Friday evening in September, I participated in a



Hey, what is the City doing about our noise concerns?

"ride-along" with two Fort Collins Police officers who were assigned to respond exclusively to party/noise complaints. From 10 p.m. to 3 a.m., I accompanied the officers to numerous parties that

I decided to participate in some "hands on" experience...I participated in a "ride-along" with two Fort Collins Police officers.

had been reported to Police Services by disturbed neighbors. My experience was enlightening and informative. We responded to parties that ranged from several hundred guests to those where only a handful of people were present. It is also worthy to note that party hosts ranged from high school students whose parents were out of town, to community college and CSU students, and also included individuals who were well beyond the years of college. During

my ride along experience, I found that the police officers ticketed party hosts where noise levels were deemed unreasonable.

While many of you may think that the noise ticket is the ultimate consequence of the party, the City and CSU have developed a **noise violation class** that must be attended by violators. Due to the close collaboration of the City and CSU, all noise tickets received by CSU students off-campus are forwarded to the Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services Office. Students receive a letter from that office noting that they are in violation of the "code of conduct" at CSU. If this is the first noise ticket that the student has received, they will have the choice of attending a "Party Partners" workshop or having a hearing with a CSU hearing officer. "Party Partners" is an educational

class in which students review local ordinances with Fort Collins Police officers. This class is also attended by myself, and one other representative

from the Neighborhood Services Office. Through our participation in the class, we help students consider the impact that their party may have had on others in their neighborhood and we give them tips to be a good neighbor and a more responsible host for future parties. The City of Fort Collins has a similar noise violation class for non-students who receive a noise ticket.

This class is taught by police officers, with a representative from the Neighborhood Services Office present to provide a "neighbor perspective."

In October, I attended three CSU **"Party Partners" classes** and one City noise violation class. I would estimate that roughly 80 individuals attended these classes in October and several of the party hosts who we visited during my Friday night ride-along were participants in these classes. It should

Keeping in touch with neighbors in our electronic world creates community

The following was submitted by the Rolland Moore West Neighborhood Network steering committee.

Healthy neighborhoods are maintained by communication between neighbors. This used to be done by chatting on the front porch. Today fewer of us have front porches but more of us have home computers with internet connections. So today, neighborhood chatting can be more easily done via email. This idea is behind the Rolland Moore West Neighborhood Network (RMWNN). In fact, calling it a Network was inspired by the concept of neighbors in touch with each other by a network of home computers and email connectivity. Our network functions in a way that accommodates to our contemporary lifestyle-one characterized by reliance on the automobile, with a garage rather than a front porch facing the street.

The RMWNN consists of three important email networks-one for the Network Steering Committee and two for neighbors. Our Steering Committee is in regular contact with each other as members check their email and respond to questions and ideas-essentially a

virtual meeting. Steering Committee members post announcements on one of the lists for neighbors to keep them informed. Some of the uses for the neighborhood list include: (1) sharing what is happening in the neighborhood: events, gatherings, meetings; and (2) soliciting ideas and assistance with



issues of interest to neighbors to maintain the health, safety and quality of life of our neighborhood. The other email list for neighbors is for open discussion among neighbors. This type of list allows all neighbors to comment and suggest topics which should be addressed by the neighborhood.

Rolland Moore West Neighborhood has been transformed by the establishment of our email

network. In addition to the exchange of information, a real sense of neighborliness and neighborhood identity has been fostered. We all feel less isolated and more in touch with those who live near us but whom we seldom see because of no front porches or the time to use them. A healthy neighborhood is about being connected to neighbors, and caring about each other and the overall well being of the neighborhood. And email networks are a very effective way to apply the modern technology we all use to this purpose.

Any neighborhood can create such an email network. It takes leadership by those willing to serve on a steering committee and someone to manage the email list. Managing the email list is primarily a matter of obtaining email addresses of neighbors wishing to be in contact in such a manner and keeping it up to date. In our case, Tom Loran (tom@lorannet.org) is responsible for our network. Tom is willing to assist other neighborhoods wishing to establish such networks. Contact Tom if you wish to pursue this method of communication for your neighborhood.

Noise Violation, continued from page 4

be noted that of the CSU students who attend a "Party Partners" workshop, only 3% are repeat noise offenders, according to statistics from the office of Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services. Most participants who complete a noise violation class report that the class was educational and provided them with important information about codes, ordinances, and neighborhood impact of their party. When surveyed with the question, "Will this workshop change your behavior?" 78% of the students respond "yes."

I recognize that many of you are concerned with noise and parties in your neighborhoods and we empathize with your frustrations. We want you to know

When comparing Fall 2005 to Fall 2004, noise/party complaints were down from 468 calls to 294 calls, which equates to a 37% reduction of noise complaints.

that actions are being taken in the form of outreach, education and enforcement. I would also like to share some important noise complaint statistics that should give neighbors hope that

our collaborative problem-solving efforts are working. When comparing Fall 2005 to Fall 2004, noise/party complaints were down from 468 calls to 294 calls, which equates to a 37% reduction of noise complaints. The comparison of noise/party complaint calls over the past two years is even more significant with a 46% reduction in calls during the fall semesters (546 calls in Fall 2003 to 294 in Fall 2005). The Neighborhood Services Office will continue to address your noise concerns while working with CSU's students and staff, as well as Fort Collins Police Services. It is our goal that each resident of Fort Collins enjoys the highest quality of life in their neighborhoods.



Fort Collins Neighborhood News



Neighborhood Services is kicking off 2006 with four educational sessions for citizens. Each session has a different topic area and will include a presentation as well as plenty of time for questions and answers. **All sessions are on Thursdays from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room at 215 North Mason.** Sessions include:

Building Permit? Who me? ~ February 9

During this session, representatives from both the Building and Zoning Departments will walk citizens through zoning and permitted usages and the permitting process. If you have exciting home improvement projects in your future, attend this session and learn which projects require permits, the fees involved, and basic building guidelines.

Timely topics for HOA's ~ February 23

More than half of Fort Collins neighborhoods have covenants and homeowner associations which have many legal requirements. With the passing of Senate Bill-100 last year there are some new changes on the horizon. Melissa Garcia, from Orten & Hindman, will facilitate this session and will guide participants through the maze of the most basic and important homeowner association functions.

What's all the barking about? ~ March 9

Many neighborhood conflicts are the result of barking dogs. While dog owners can be immune to the sound of their dogs barking, nearby neighbors can become sensitive to barking. Join Larimer Humane Society staff and an animal behavioral specialist to learn why dogs bark and what can be done to reduce barking. Neighborhood Services staff will also be on hand to discuss the court process for barking dog tickets and the option of mediation.

Code Enforcement...Quality Control for Neighborhoods ~ March 23

Have you ever received a violation notice or called in a neighborhood complaint? Attend this session to find out how code enforcement works, why we even have codes, and what the City can and cannot do. Neighborhood Services staff and code inspectors will share the in's and out's of the complaint process through abatement and ticketing.

Please contact Ginny Sawyer at 224-6070 or gsawyer@fcgov.com for questions and to reserve a space.

Neighborhood News is published by the **City of Fort Collins Neighborhood Services Office** (970-224-6046). City Council and the City Manager contact numbers are listed below and they can also be contacted via <http://www.fcgov.com/council>.

Doug Hutchinson, Mayor - 416-2154
Kurt Kastein - 223-0425
Karen Weitkunat - 217-4281

Ben Manvel - 217-1932
Kelly Ohlson - 493-7225
Darin Atteberry, City Manager - 221-6505

Diggs Brown - 420-9097
David Roy - 217-5506



Neighborhood News

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