



The Front Porch

The Newsletter of the City of Springfield
Planning and Development Department's
Neighborhood Conservation Office
Spring / Summer 2007

Mission:

Neighborhoods are the building blocks of our community. Springfield must strive to promote strong neighborhoods that instill pride in their residents. Therefore, the Neighborhood Conservation Office is committed to working with the Community to ensure strong viable neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Conservation Office assists in Ice Storm Recovery

During the days following the January, 2007 ice storm, communication became very difficult as downed phone lines and power outages were prevalent across the city. The NCO assisted in the overall citywide emergency response and recovery effort through the use of its neighborhood organization network.

The NCO maintains a current list of neighborhood organizations and this list was used to contact as many neighborhood leaders as possible to provide emergency response information and answer questions. In some cases it was difficult to make contact with neighborhood leaders as they had left their homes to shelter elsewhere. Due to impaired communications, the NCO in cooperation with Community Partnership's Caring Communities Initiative and the Urban Neighborhoods Alliance hand delivered damage assessment forms to each neighborhood leader. These forms allowed leaders to identify properties where elderly or disabled persons were in need of assistance. The NCO worked closely with the AmeriCorps National Service Program to dispatch the necessary assistance to these individuals.

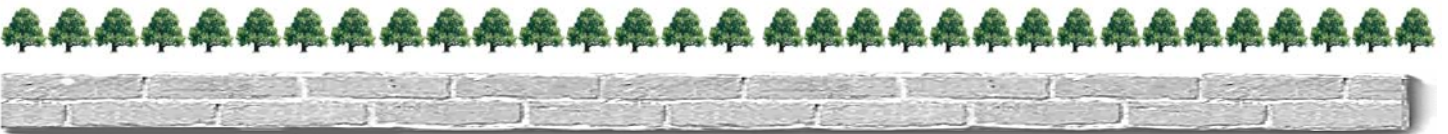
In addition to these efforts, NCO conducted an ice storm clean-up meeting with neighborhood leaders to distribute Ice Storm

Recovery Packets, debris removal information, tree debris clean-up guides and answer questions and respond to rumors. Most recently the NCO launched its first e-mail blast to neighborhood leaders. This "blast" provided timely information such as the public tree removal process and a question and answer page on storm-damaged trees.

During the initial days of this disaster, Springfield was fortunate that so many people took the initiative to check on their neighbors. The NCO would like to thank all of the neighborhood leaders who assisted in providing storm recovery updates to their neighbors during the aftermath of this historic storm. **FP**



Hundreds of City staff donated their time to participate in cleaning up the homes of elderly and disabled residents. Chris Akins, an employee with the Public Information Department, is shown here.





2007 Annual Landscape Awards

Are you proud of your landscaping? Does your neighborhood have an eye-catching entrance? If so, we urge you to enter the 2007 Annual Landscape Awards competition. This annual event, hosted by the Springfield Planning and Zoning Commission, is designed to give special recognition to properties with attractive landscaping. Nominations are now being accepted.

Applications are free, so why not nominate a few of your deserving neighbors, or local businesses that go the extra mile to beautify Springfield? Just remember that the property must be within the city limits of Springfield. You might live outside the city but you can still nominate a Springfield City Property! Nominations can be submitted for the following categories (2006 Winners listed below) :

Residence - Single Family

Dan Jessen

Residential Subdivision/Neighborhood

Lakeshore Apartment Community

Retail Establishment

Lazyboy Furniture Galleries

Manufacturing or Office Establishment

Bradford Office Condominiums

Improvement or Rehabilitation of a Site


The Fusion Building

Public Properties

St. John's Sports Medicine Building

Volunteerism

No Nominations


Last year the Commission also gave special recognition to 5 additional single family properties, honored with a certificate. Each category winner will receive a plaque. For more information, or to receive an application or brochure on the 2007 Annual Landscape Awards, please contact Ron Carey with the City of Springfield at 864-1089. 



The City's Tree Planting Permit Program

"The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now." - Anonymous

With the Ice Storm leaving so many yards bare, and spring finally here, Springfield residents may be considering planting new trees. With less than a month left of the tree planting season, it is the perfect time to consider planting "street trees". Trees lining the street define the character of a neighborhood and provide beautiful colors and shade in all seasons. All Springfield property owners are encouraged to plant trees in close proximity to the streets (either on public right-of-way or on private property). The current City Code requires a tree permit related to the planting of trees on public property by citizens, whether it be by a "do-it-yourself" planting or by taking advantage of the City assisted tree-planting campaign known as *NeighborWoods*.

The *NeighborWoods* program is a partnership between the City, the Springfield Tree City USA Citizens Advisory Committee and recognized neighborhood groups or other non-profit groups for the purpose of enhancing Springfield's community forest. City funds are to be used for purchasing tax-exempt trees from area nurseries through an established City contract and then neighborhood volunteers will plant the trees. This approach relies on the citizen to provide care for the tree in the first three years to ensure better survivability of the tree. The tree permit acts as a coordination tool between citizens and the City, and as a commitment to achieve the ultimate goal of having a healthy tree in place for the benefit of the entire community. 

For more information, or to download an application, please visit the City's Web site at: <http://www.springfieldmo.gov/>



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Tree Topping:

An Old Practice is killing Missouri Trees

Article provided by Forest Releaf of Missouri

It happens in the fall, after the last leaves have dropped and been raked. It happens in late winter, before trees start to bud. And it happens when a sudden ice storm hits. Missouri trees get topped. And that's not good.

“No matter how you reason it, topping — the severe cutting of tree limbs, usually from the top down — is bad for trees,” says Gene Brunk, Chairman of a steering committee directing a statewide public service informational campaign aimed at stopping this destructive practice. Even though many people have come to accept tree topping as a needed practice, Brunk points out that numerous long-term research studies by tree care professionals have shown beyond a doubt that the long-term damage done to trees is severe.

The Missouri Community Forestry Council and Forest ReLeaf of Missouri are leading a campaign to end this destructive practice of needlessly topping trees in Missouri. The campaign, dubbed “Experts Agree: Don’t Top Your Tree,” is supported by the Missouri Department of Conservation, the USDA Forest Service, the Society of American Foresters, and the Midwest Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture.

Topping is so widely practiced that many homeowners accept it as “the right thing to do” when they perceive a need to prune trees. Topping looks like a bad haircut — and it is. It is prevalent throughout Missouri — urban, suburban and rural. Most of the time topping is done to make trees smaller — to confine them to yards.

One of the most predictable times to see topping appear is after a severe storm. A homeowner may be worried that limbs will fall and make them vulnerable to lawsuits. So they allow the first opportunist who comes along with a chainsaw to cut back trees.

Evidence and experience shows that topping actually makes trees weaker and more hazardous. It opens trees to an invasion of rotting organisms. It starves trees by inhibiting their ability to utilize their food and water sources. And the resulting new growth produces limbs that are more likely to break in a subsequent storm. Each time a branch is cut, numerous long skinny young shoots (called suckers or water sprouts) grow rapidly back as replacements. The tree’s natural beauty is gone and can never be replaced.

There are alternatives to topping trees. The single most important thing to do is **Plant The Right Tree In The Right Place** to begin with. Experts agree that this simple practice will avoid 9 out of the 10 most common problems associated with future topping of a tree; **because right trees planted in the right place never need to be topped!** There are numerous books or guides, many free and available to the public, that provide information to help homeowners make good choices.

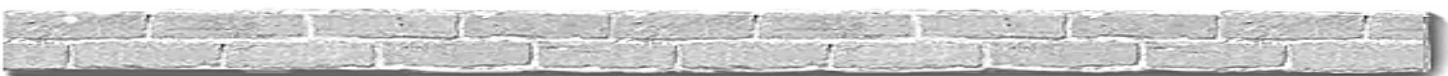
Experts point out that homeowners should really think through their decisions before planting a tree. For example, a really fast-growing tree may be the poorest choice because these species are usually more susceptible to damage from winds and other storms. Proximity to buildings, power lines and even neighbors, soil type, water availability and terrain all must be considered, before selecting a tree(s) to plant.

“With the right selection, the right location, and proper care during their lifetime, trees will increase property value, reduce heating and air-conditioning bills, and provide natural habitat for birds and small animals” Brunk says. “A beautiful, shade-providing, environmentally beneficial tree can grace our state for a century or longer, if treated properly. It all starts with planting the Right Tree In The Right Place.”



For more information on the “Experts Agree: Don’t Top Your Tree” campaign, Missouri residents should call: 1-877-40-NoTop (1-877-406-6867).

* The “Experts Agree: Don’t Top Your Tree” campaign is a program developed by the Missouri Community Forestry Council and Forest ReLeaf of Missouri.





NeighborWorks® Foreclosure Prevention

The Urban Neighborhoods Alliance, in partnership with the City of Springfield and NeighborWorks® America, held a three-day workshop on foreclosure prevention March 19-21 at Ozarks Technical Community College. This training, the first of its kind from NeighborWorks® America in the North Central Region, provided service providers information from nationally-trained instructors on both foreclosure prevention and homeless counseling.

Colleen Hernandez, Executive Director and President of the Homeownership Preservation Foundation, was the keynote speaker for the luncheon and brought into perspective the foreclosure epidemic facing Americans today. Almost 40 participants represented three states throughout the Midwest.

The launching of the Missouri Homeownership Preservation Network (MoHPN) was announced during the workshop that provides a state-wide collaborative of organizations that are working to reduce the number of foreclosures.

The three-pronged approach includes the use of

the **1-888-995-HOPE** hotline for consumers, counseling for those at risk of foreclosure and a education and outreach campaign for homeowners. **FP**

2006 “Tire Toss” Another Success

The Urban Neighborhoods Alliance, in cooperation with the Community Partnership of the Ozarks’ Caring Communities Initiative, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and the City of Springfield, sponsored a city-wide Tire Toss at the Missouri Entertainment and Event Center in November 2006. This was the second tire collection event sponsored by UNA, with 354 individuals participating and collecting more than 87 tons of tires this year, equaling about 4500 tires. Tires were collected from individual residences only. The event in 2003 collected more than 200 tons of tires. This event was free to the public.

Approximately 52 volunteers from neighborhood & civic organizations, as well as fraternities and sororities from Missouri State and Drury universities, contributed almost 200 hours of time. The tire collection is held both to clean up neighborhoods and also to help prevent the spread of the West Nile Virus. Another Tire Toss event is being planned for later this year. **FP**

