



# The Front Porch

The Newsletter of the City of Springfield  
Planning and Development Department's  
Neighborhood Conservation Office

Summer 2009

## 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.

## Neighborhoods Affected by High Foreclosure Rates

For the past five years, foreclosures in Greene County have steadily risen and are fast becoming the most important issue affecting neighborhood revitalization in our urban neighborhoods. In 1997, Greene County recorded 157 foreclosures. That number rose to 1110 in 2008 and is expected to be over 1250 in 2009.

Foreclosures do not discriminate based on size of house, household income or location. There are \$40,000 homes being foreclosed and there are homes with values at almost \$1 million facing the same thing. This is not a North side vs. South side issue but is happening all around the city and county. Many factors come into play but one of the most common reasons for families not making their payments is loss of job by one or more of the people in the household.

What many don't realize is that the person or family losing their home to foreclosure is not the only one affected by this problem. There is a ripple effect of foreclosures for property owners within the same neighborhood. In *The Municipal Cost of Foreclosure: A Chicago Case Study* (2/25/05), it was shown that, in the most conservative estimates, property values decrease by 1% for every conventional foreclosure within a 1/8-mile radius. In addition, crime rates increase and code enforcement goes up, putting a strain on a community already devastated by budget cuts. Because of the ongoing foreclosure and credit

crisis, there are more vacant homes in Springfield and Greene County now more than ever.

The good thing is that there is help out there for people that know they are having problems making their mortgage payments or facing foreclosures. The key is to call EARLY in the process. Counseling agencies like Consumer Credit Counseling Services and Catholic Charities have trained staff to work with both the client and the lender to come to a resolution to the problem.

A local initiative, Don't Borrow Trouble, is a group of agencies that are ready to make presentations to groups and neighborhoods about the foreclosure problem and what anyone might watch out for and services that are available to help people.

A new program being established to address the foreclosure epidemic is the establishment of a land trust with funds from the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. This program, being administered by the Urban Neighborhoods Alliance, will purchase homes that have been foreclosed, perform rehabilitation on the house as needed, and resale the homes back to an owner-occupied resident. The land that the house sits on will remain with the land trust, thus creating permanent affordability for this property. The land will be factored out of the selling price. For more information on this program, call the Urban Neighborhoods Alliance at 417-865-4774. **EP**

\*This article was provided by Bob Horton, Executive Director of the Urban Neighborhoods Alliance.



## Neighborhood Spotlight

### Midtown Neighborhood Association

The Midtown Neighborhood Association, established in 1989, has a mission to promote and preserve the character and quality of living in the Midtown neighborhood, including Springfield's largest nationally registered historic district, which is lined with stately old homes, tree-lined streets and lovely brick sidewalks. The boundaries of the Midtown Neighborhood Association are Blaine Street on the north, National Avenue and the BNSF railroad on the east, Boonville Avenue on the west and Chestnut Expressway on the south.

Over the past twenty years, Midtown has hosted many annual events designed to build a strong sense of community by bringing neighbors together, as well as showcase the neighborhood by bringing the rest of the City to Midtown. The Old Fashioned Fourth of July Parade and Celebration offers a parade through the neighborhood and a celebration in Washington Park, with entertainment, free ice cream and drinks. The Victorian Christmas Homes Tour, Midtown's only annual fundraiser, is always scheduled on the first weekend in December and offers the opportunity to tour five historic homes and one institution in the neighborhood. In 2001, Midtown kicked off the "Concerts in the Park" series, during which a free concert is offered on the last Sunday of June, July and August in Washington Park. Midtown also partnered with Boyd Elementary and Drury University for the past 14 years to offer a Back to School Social for parents and students of Boyd. For the past four years, they combined the Social with the Neighborhood Night Out event in Washington Park to build community across the entire neighborhood. This event has been a huge success as every year 400-500 people have attended!

Key to getting the word out about these events is the monthly Midtown Moments newsletter, which goes out to every resident in the neighborhood. Instead of monthly general meetings, the neighborhood now has bi-monthly social events that include a meal or dessert.

This offers folks who aren't interested in "meetings" a chance to get to know other neighbors and hear an update from the Midtown Board about what's happening in Midtown. To increase membership, the Association has developed a Membership Committee, which has implemented a membership drive with incentives such as a coupon program for paid members with discounts from neighborhood businesses and a block party for the block with the most new members and is planning a pancake breakfast and garage sale in the fall.

With the assistance of the Urban Neighborhoods Alliance and Caring Communities, the neighborhood has also revitalized its Neighborhood Watch program, with more than 40% of the blocks in the neighborhood now covered by Block Captains. This is a proactive way to increase safety and decrease crime in the neighborhood and another way to keep residents connected to each other and the Neighborhood Association. For more information about the Midtown Neighborhood Association, visit their website at [www.midtown-springfield-mo.com](http://www.midtown-springfield-mo.com) **EP**

\*This article was written by Janet Dankert, Program Director of Caring Communities.



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CITY of SPRINGFIELD



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## Neighborhood Night Out August 28, 2009

Neighborhood Night Out (NNO) is an annual, city-wide event sponsored by Caring Communities, neighborhood associations, the Springfield Police Department and the Springfield Greene County Park Board. Patterned after National Night Out, this event is designed to promote safety and crime prevention by encouraging neighbors to meet and get to know each other while sharing a meal and fun activities in their neighborhood park.

NNO has proven to be an effective, inexpensive and enjoyable way to promote neighborhood and police-community partnerships in an endeavor to create a safer community. Along with the traditional display of turning on porch lights, neighborhoods across Springfield celebrate NNO with cookouts, parades and flashlight walks, crime and safety informational booths, games, inflatables and face painting, contests and door prizes, fingerprinting for kids, and visits from the Police Department's Mobile Command Unit and McGruff, the Crime Dog. These events have been organized across Springfield for over thirteen years and every year new neighborhoods join in the fun. This year, the following neighborhoods are participating in NNO, which is scheduled for Friday, August 28th from 6:00-8:00 p.m.:

- Bissett Neighborhood Association, LA Wise Park
- Doling Neighborhood Association, Doling Park
- Fassnight Neighborhood Association, Fassnight Park
- Grant Beach Neighborhood Association, Grant Beach Park
- Heart of the West Side Neighborhood Association, Nichols Park
- Midtown Neighborhood Association, Washington Park
- Tom Watkins Neighborhood Association, Tom Watkins Park
- Weller Neighborhood Association, Smith Park
- West Central Neighborhood Alliance, McGregor Park
- Westside Betterment Neighborhood Association, Westport Park
- Woodland Heights Neighborhood Association, Lafayette Park

For information about NNO or to find out how your neighborhood can be involved, please call Janet Dankert at 888-2020 or via email at [jdankert@commpartnership.org](mailto:jdankert@commpartnership.org).



\*This article was written by Janet Dankert, Program Director of Caring Communities.

## Pace Car Program Implemented in all Neighborhoods

On February 25, 2008, Springfield City Council approved changing the speed limit on local streets from 30 mph to 25 mph. Sign installation started in June of 2008 and is now complete throughout the city. In order to assist residents in adapting to the change, the Pace Car Program has been implemented by the Traffic Engineering Division. The Pace Car Program addresses the issue by encouraging neighborhood residents to take responsibility for the impact their cars have on the roads they use. It is the hope of the Traffic Engineering Division that this program will encourage motorists to drive the legal speed limit in not just their own, but all Springfield neighborhoods.

The goals of the program are:

- To reduce speeding on streets throughout the community;
- To raise awareness of how individual motorist's behavior impacts the quality of life in their neighborhood and our community;
- To encourage residents to leave early and allow enough travel time to get to their destination, therefore reducing the temptation to speed;
- To promote courteous driving habits;
- To raise awareness that motorists share the road with bicyclists and pedestrians.

To participate in the Pace Car Program, all that is needed is for you to fill out a pledge form found on the city website and you will be sent a sticker to place in your back window that indicates you are a Pace Car Program participant. Please join our efforts to make our community a better and safer place to live.



McGruff the Crime Dog makes an appearance at Neighborhood Night out.



## Even or Odd?

**Saving water means saving money. That works for everyone! Its simple to do. Check your house number. Is it even or odd?**

**If your house number is even...**

If your house number ends in an even number, like 532, 4298, or 8266, water on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

**If house number is odd...**

If your house number ends with an odd number, like 531, 4299, or 8267, water on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

**What about Monday?**

We all take a break—no watering on Monday. But, our yards will still receive enough water to keep them healthy and attractive. Typically, even in dry and hot conditions, it is not necessary to water every day.

**Save water**

With your help, Springfield may be able to save 5 million gallons of water every day, preserving one of our most precious and valuable natural resources. We need water to live, so let's all use it wisely.

**Save money**

Plus, by saving that much water—enough for 17,000 homes—expensive projects like a new water treatment plant, necessary to serve customers with drinking water they need, may be delayed further into the future.

Because water use typically peaks on Monday, customers are asked to not irrigate on that day. It's estimated that by using this alternating irrigation method, CU customers could save as much as 5 million gallons from peak water usage amounts. That amount of water saved could supply the average water use of 17,000 homes. Future expansion of water treatment systems is currently targeted to begin in 2016. However, if the voluntary program proves successful, the expansion could be delayed, deferring expenses associated with new treatment facilities.

\*This article was provided by City Utilities

