

# DEVELOPMENT & NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

## Mission

*Our objective is to make the City of Clearwater the best place to work, live, and play by encouraging neighborhood involvement, empowerment and revitalization, and by guiding the future growth, development, and redevelopment of the City. We are committed to providing prompt, accurate, consistent and fair service in a friendly manner.*

*Further, we strive to consistently, fairly and impartially regulate established community standards and quality of life issues as set forth by the City's Code of Ordinances, with an emphasis on achieving voluntary code compliance through education, communication and cooperation.*

## Department Description

The Department of Development Services currently consists of five main divisions, three under one cost center, consisting of: Community Response Team, Permitting/Occupational Licenses, and Building and Inspections, which together consist of ten programs. The Neighborhood Services Division was added to the Development Services Department in January 2002 and is listed under a separate cost center. A fifth division, the Fire Plans Review Division, has been added in the fiscal year 2003-04 budget.

<b>Department Summary</b>							
	<i>Actual</i> 2000/01	<i>Actual</i> 2001/02	%	<i>Budget</i> 2002/03	%	<i>Budget</i> 2003/04	%
Development Services	2,541,173	2,899,798	14.1%	2,935,360	1.2%	<b>3,213,770</b>	<b>9.5%</b>
Neighborhood Services	-	-	n/a	192,090	n/a	<b>310,310</b>	<b>61.5%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,541,173</b>	<b>2,899,798</b>	<b>14.1%</b>	<b>3,127,450</b>	<b>7.9%</b>	<b>3,524,080</b>	<b>12.7%</b>

<b>Department Full-Time Equivalent Positions</b>				
	<i>Actual</i> 2000/01	<i>Actual</i> 2001/02	<i>Budget</i> 2002/03	<i>Budget</i> 2003/04
Development Services	40.0	45.3	47.3	<b>49.3</b>
Neighborhood Services	0.0	0.0	3.0	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>44.0</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>50.3</b>	<b>53.3</b>

## Program Description

The ten major programs in the department listed under this cost center are as follows:

**Community Standards Enforcement** - This program provides for the administrative, support and technical staff required for the enforcement of the standards of the community. The administrative staff provides the direction, policies and control mechanisms for the entire department and support of department personnel, resources and activities. Budgetary decisions and business plans are formulated and approved at the administrative level.

The Community Response Team Code Inspectors are responsible for: responding to citizen complaints pertaining to the requirements of the Community Development Code (examples are exterior building compliance measures, newspaper rack proliferation, landscaping, fencing, and other aesthetic quality of life issues), conducting proactive compliance measures which includes self-initiated sweeps, and addressing nuisances, such as, abandoned vehicles, overgrown lots, debris, graffiti, and illegally displayed posters and snipe signs.

The code inspectors strive to achieve compliance through voluntary and educational processes. Absent voluntary compliance, code inspectors initiate other legal actions including presentation of cases to the Code Enforcement Board or to the County's local ordinance violations (LOV) court. In fiscal year 01-02, of the 6,180 cases, compliance was achieved for 5,972 (96.6%) cases, and the remaining 208 are still active.

The program also includes subordinate interrelated projects such as the North and South Greenwood Initiatives, Community Partnerships – Paint Your Heart Out Clearwater, County Enclave Code Compliance Program, Residential Rental Ordinance Program and Short-term/Overnight Accommodation compliance project.

**Sign Amortization and Sign Permitting** -This program involves amortization of previously permitted signs and permitting and enforcement under the current sign ordinance. The sign amortization portion of the program institutes the gradual upgrade of signs that were legally installed prior to the 1986 sign code regulations (in 1992, the amortization process began). The inspectors achieve amortization by field examination, measurements and calculation of the appropriate amount of signage allowed by the previous code. Many of the previous signs will require board review or legal action. A total of 13,588 signs have been inspected in the amortization program, of which 13,581 have been brought into compliance. There are 7 signs still in the legal review process. Signs for new developments fall under the sign restrictions of the current Community Development Code adopted January 21, 1999. In fiscal year 2001-2002, 159 sign permits were issued for new signs.

**Occupational License Enforcement** - This program involves the enforcement of the licensing of businesses as allowed by Fla. State Statutes and required by City ordinance. There are approximately 10,000 occupational licenses within the City. Licenses expire at the end of September each year. Licenses are issued throughout the year. About 9,000 renewal reminders are sent out yearly on August 1<sup>st</sup>. The months of August, September and October produce a high volume of licensing activity with licensing renewals.

In March 2002, the City adopted a residential rental compliance ordinance that requires licensing of the rental of residential units, including single family residences that are leased to tenants. In conjunction with this ordinance and licensing, property owners are now asked to acknowledge minimum housing requirements and property maintenance standards. Criteria for inspections, building and code, associated with residential rental units are also provided in the ordinance.

## Program Description

The occupational license specialists are responsible for locating those businesses that are in the city and have not obtained proper licensing. These employees also address license issues that are subordinate to businesses such as the licensing of vending machines, secondary businesses/uses, etc.

**Building Permits/Occupational License Issuance** - This program involves the administrative, technical staff and resources required for the intake of building plans and issuance of building permits for construction of all buildings and structures in the city. The program involves: one-on-one contact with customers, customer self-help tools, such as fax permits, 24 hour inspection requests, internet access to application forms and instructions, and up-to-date technology. The program is also educational – including, the dissemination of information pertaining to the building code and other life and safety codes, to the public and potential applicants, contractors, engineers, architects and property owners in the city. This activity is designed to obtain code compliance and it is also educational in nature to create community awareness. Note: Prevention of unscrupulous business practices are a main focal point of this program. Development guides are available in book form and on the Internet to assist customers with the regulating process of obtaining permits for residential and commercial development.

In addition to the issuance of building permits, this program also involves the issuance and renewals of occupational licenses as allowed by Fla. State Statutes and required by City ordinance.

**Unsafe Building Abatement and Housing Code** - This program involves the enforcement of the Unsafe Building Abatement Ordinance and the Minimum Housing Codes. These codes protect citizens and business owners by ensuring that residential and commercial buildings meet minimum safety and housing requirements.

Staff works with owners to refurbish dilapidated structures and put them into use again. They work to refurbish these structures through reconstruction activities and coordinated efforts with owners, tenants, contractors, and other governmental/private entities. This program enhances neighborhoods by improving the aesthetics and housing stock and thereby appreciating property values. If properties are not brought up to code standards, the properties are posted and the structures are secured through an improved aesthetically pleasing process with steel wire enclosures rather than boarding up the structures. The goal is to abate unsafe structures with rehabilitation and if necessary through demolition. Liens are filed on properties to cover demolition costs. This part of the program is coordinated through the Legal Department and the City Clerk's Department.

**Water Enforcement** - This program provides for enforcement of the various water statutes and codes through aggressive enforcement activities by the inspectors. Typical violations encountered by water enforcement personnel are the illegal watering during unassigned hours and days, failure to maintain equipment to prevent the waste of water, car washing, etc.

This program has been praised by the Southwest Water Management District (SWFWMD) as one of the premier programs for water conservation in the State of Florida. Partnership and alignment with SWFWMD standards are necessary components of the formulation of a plan to regulate standards of water usage in what is now referred to as the "drought of the century". Note: Water inspectors typically are involved in other code enforcement issues involving a wide variety of responsibilities.

**Major Redevelopment Projects** - This program includes projects that were addressed in the FY99/00 budget to initiate and enhance the Community Development Code. The three Major Developments of the City are identified as: Downtown, Clearwater Beach, and North Greenwood. The department has continued to contribute to these programs.

## Program Description

Along with personnel scheduling and assignment adjustments to cover these projects, other costs have included equipment and materials such as a new computer software and digital camera equipment. Staff is involved in researching property ownership and past city approvals, surveying and measuring the parameters of the developments and calculating the current code restrictions and requirements for properties in these areas. Factors and issues include the evaluation of existing landscaping, signs, utilities and parking/vehicular areas.

**Building Plans Review** - This program involves the technical review of plans for construction of buildings and structures in accordance with the building code and other associated life and safety codes. Building Plans Review staff are required to be licensed through the State of Florida Dept. of Business and Professional Regulations in each discipline of review – mechanical, electrical, plumbing and building. This is a detail oriented and time consuming process to verify the many components involved in construction, covering the various codes adopted.

**Building Inspections** - This program provides for staff and resources required for inspections of actual construction sites of buildings in the city in accordance with the building code and other life and safety codes, as required by Fla. State Statutes. Codes include: Building, Electrical, Plumbing, and Mechanical. Inspectors compare the work done with the code requirements and drawings of the architect and engineer. The inspectors are required to be licensed per discipline through the State of Florida Dept. of Business and Professional Regulations in each discipline of review – mechanical, electrical, plumbing and building. To adequately meet legal liability and code requirements approximately 15 inspections per day is the limit to insure a high standard of quality control. This is a detail oriented and time consuming program.

**Records Retention** - This program involves the mandatory maintenance of building plans, permits and other related documents for the 32,000 parcels of land in the city. The records are researched on a daily basis as a service to customers and property owners who want to review previous construction plans and obtain copies of the plans and documents that are on record. There is an aggressive microfiche project associated with this program due to the high volume of records.

**Fire Plans Review** – This program involves the review of construction plans for new and renovated structures to ensure compliance with statutory requirements, and addresses associated complaints or questions raised by the public and City officials. There are two full-time equivalent fire plans review examiners in this cost center.

## DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

<b>Program Summary</b>							
	<i>Actual</i> 2000/01	<i>Actual</i> 2001/02	%	<i>Budget</i> 2002/03	%	<i>Budget</i> 2003/04	%
Personnel	890,739	2,012,479	125.9%	2,175,340	8.1%	<b>2,439,100</b>	<b>12.1%</b>
Operating	91,396	144,677	58.3%	136,490	-5.7%	<b>135,330</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>
Internal Services	360,446	425,733	18.1%	451,900	6.1%	<b>473,810</b>	<b>4.8%</b>
Capital	13,835	-	-100.0%	20,000	n/a	-	<b>-100.0%</b>
Debt Service	16,637	41,909	151.9%	151,630	261.8%	<b>165,530</b>	<b>9.2%</b>
Transfers	168,120	275,000	63.6%	-	-100.0%	-	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,541,173</b>	<b>2,899,798</b>	<b>88.2%</b>	<b>2,935,360</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>3,213,770</b>	<b>9.5%</b>
Program Full-time Equivalent Positions	44.0	45.3		47.3		49.3	

### Program Highlights

- ❖ **The Development Services program includes two additional full-time equivalent (FTE) positions over the 2002/03 budget. The increase reflects the addition of two fire plan review inspectors. The increased cost of these two positions will be offset by an increase in building permit fees.**
- ❖ The operating cost category reflects savings of \$9,340 in contractual service costs for the cost of lot mowing services for abandoned property.
- ❖ The \$13,900 increase in debt costs represents 2002/03 purchases for the Tidemark System, an additional inspector vehicle, and the purchase of a vehicle for the fire plans review examiners in 2003/04.
- ❖ The \$20,000 decrease in capital expenditures reflects the need in 2003/04 for only small capital items such as radio, batteries and chargers. These items valued at less than \$5,000 each are included in the operating cost category and total \$6,700.

# NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

## Program Description

The mission of the Neighborhood Services Program is to strengthen Clearwater's neighborhoods through empowering residents to enhance their quality of life and to develop a partnership for progress between neighborhoods and the City. Staff interacts with neighborhood leaders, as a liaison team, and then facilitates with other City departments to solve neighborhood concerns.

This program was initially established in FY 2000 as part of the Planning Department, to be phased in over three years. During the first year of the program's operations (FY00), the manager and one neighborhood coordinator were hired. An additional neighborhood services coordinator position was transferred to this program in FY2001. In FY 2002, this position was changed to a Neighborhood Services Specialist in order to add other work functions, such as Geographical Information System mapping responsibilities, to the program. In 2002/03, Neighborhood Services became part of the Development Services Department. As described in more detail below, the program is proposed for further expansion over the next two years at approximately \$100,000 per year.

This program was established in an effort to recognize that Clearwater's strongest assets are its citizens and the quality of life provided to them in their neighborhoods. In a regional metropolitan environment such as the Tampa Bay area, citizens have many residential options - many of them new housing in planned communities. Clearwater desires to recognize the unique quality of its neighborhoods, provide associations the tools to improve their neighborhoods, and gain a reputation as a diverse, safe and enjoyable place to live.

The Neighborhood Services Program assists neighborhoods at varied levels of their development through technical assistance, liaison with City departments for problem solving and coordination of meetings to publicize City projects and activities. In addition, the program has developed a phased approach for neighborhood planning that targeted District 2 for its primary focus. District 2 includes the neighborhoods immediately surrounding downtown and the program is coordinating the development of neighborhood plans by a multi-department city team. This district approach to neighborhood planning will be expanded to the City's six other districts as the program is expanded.

The Neighborhood Services Program is composed of four professional positions: a Division Manager, two Neighborhood Services Coordinators and one Neighborhood Services Specialist.

<b>Program Summary</b>							
	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Actual</i>		<i>Budget</i>		<i>Budget</i>	
	<i>2000-01</i>	<i>2001-02</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>2002-03</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>2003-04</i>	<i>%</i>
Personnel			n/a	158,960	n/a	214,580	35.0%
Operating			n/a	15,160	n/a	29,580	95.1%
Internal Services	-	-	n/a	17,970	n/a	36,410	102.6%
Debt Service	-	-	n/a	-	n/a	4,740	n/a
Transfers	-	-	n/a	-	n/a	25,000	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>192,090</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>310,310</b>	<b>61.5%</b>
Program Full-Time							
Equivalent Positions	0.0	0.0		3.0		4.0	

### Program Highlights

- ❖ The Neighborhood Services program is supported by four full-time equivalent positions, the same level as the amended 2002/03 budget. An additional Neighborhood Services Coordinator was approved by the City Commission in January 2003.
- ❖ The increases in operating and internal services reflect expenditures for office furniture, equipment and supplies needed to move this growing program to an office of its own.
- ❖ The debt service is for a vehicle to be purchased in 2003/04.
- ❖ The \$25,000 transfer represents additional funding for small neighborhood beautification grants, which were funded at the same level in the 2002/03 budget.