

DEVELOPMENT AND 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 and Neighborhood 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 department in January 2002 and is listed under a separate cost center. A fifth division, the Fire Plans Review Division, was added in the fiscal year 2003-04 budget.

Department Summary					
	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Budget</i>	%
	<i>2001/02</i>	<i>2002/03</i>	<i>2003/04</i>	<i>2004/05</i>	<i>Change</i>
Development Services	2,899,798	2,910,340	3,213,770	3,288,410	2.3%
Neighborhood Services	-	<u>221,846</u>	<u>310,310</u>	<u>297,340</u>	<u>-4.2%</u>
Total	2,899,798	3,132,186	3,524,080	3,585,750	1.7%

Department Full-Time Equivalent Positions

	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Budget</i>
	<i>2001/02</i>	<i>2002/03</i>	<i>2003/04</i>	<i>2004/05</i>
Development Services	45.3	47.3	49.3	49.1
Neighborhood Services	<u>0.0</u>	<u>3.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>
Total	45.3	50.3	53.3	53.1

Strategic Objectives/Measures/and Targets

Strategic Priority	Objective	Measure
Public Safety Quality of Life	To deliver service that is: Fair Consistent and Impartial, with a focus that addresses concerns associated with the Community Development Code	Respond to complaints within 48 working hours of calls <u>Performance 2001/02 and 2002/03:</u> 85% compliance achieved
Public Safety Economic Development Quality of Life	To deliver fair and consistent service: In ensuring quality constructions standards in accordance with the Building Code In the assistance of property owners to upgrade properties	Upon receipt of complete application submittal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and comment within 15 working days for new developments • Review and comment within 10 working days for remodels • Review and comment within 24 working hours for faxed (simple) building construction work <u>Performance 2001/02 and 2002/03:</u> Target met.
Public Safety Quality of Life	Keeping the city: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free of debris and clutter • Well-maintained • Prosperous • The best place to live, work and play 	85% voluntary compliance <u>Performance 2001/02:</u> 98% of cases reviewed brought into compliance <u>Performance 2002/03:</u> 93% of cases reviewed brought into compliance
Economic Development	To deliver fair and consistent service, while: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing businesses, including residential properties • Collecting fees owed for licensing of businesses • Identifying and resolving zoning conflict issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% licensing compliance of businesses in City of Clearwater • Sweep of entire city on annual basis of all business practices and residential rental properties <u>Performance 2001/02 and 2002/03:</u> Target met.
Public Safety / Quality of Life / Economic Development	Neighborhood Services: Maintain and improve the quality of neighborhoods in the City	<u>Performance 2002/03:</u> Coordinated and assisted in events and programs including the Neighborhoods Week, Town Hall Meetings, Mexican Independence Day, Martin Luther King Day Celebration, and the North Greenwood, South Greenwood and East Gate Initiatives Committees. Enhanced communications between the City and our residents, measured by events hosted by the City that residents attend, as well as our attention to their meetings, inquires, etc over the course of the year.

Program Description

The major programs in the department listed under Development Services 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 Enforcement Inspectors are responsible for handling citizen complaints pertaining to the requirements of the Community Development Code (examples are exterior building compliance measures, landscaping, fencing, and other aesthetic quality of life issues), conducting proactive compliance measures including self-initiated sweeps, and addressing nuisances, such as abandoned vehicles, overgrown lots, debris, graffiti, and illegally displayed posters and snipe signs. The code enforcement inspectors strive to achieve compliance through voluntary and educational processes. Absent voluntary compliance, code enforcement inspectors initiate other legal actions including presentation of cases to the Municipal Code Enforcement Board or to Pinellas County's local ordinance violations (LOV) court. In fiscal year 2002/2003, of the 9,541 cases, compliance was achieved for 8,849 (93%) cases, and the remaining 692 are still active. There are 3,000 more cases this year primarily due to the division's reorganization effort and prioritization of community partnerships and code sweeps.

The program also includes subordinate interrelated projects such as the North Greenwood and South Clearwater 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 13,639 signs have been inspected in the amortization program, of which 13,633 have been brought into compliance. At the start of the program, there were 34 oversized "billboard" type signs; of which 28 have been removed and 6 signs still in the legal review process. This program has made significant reductions in sign blight by removal of oversized and redundant signs. Signs for new developments fall under the sign restrictions of the current Community Development Code adopted January 21, 1999. In fiscal year 2002-2003, 178 sign permits were issued for new signs.

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

In March 2002, the City adopted a residential rental compliance ordinance that requires licensing of residential rental units, including single family residences. In conjunction with this ordinance and licensing, property owners receive an educational packet that outlines minimum housing requirements

Program Description

and property maintenance standards. Criteria for inspections, building and code, associated with residential rental units are also provided in the ordinance.

The license inspectors 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, self-help tools for customers, 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 is 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 Florida 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 with steel wire enclosures that are aesthetically visually pleasing 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 City Attorney's Office and the Official Records and Legislative Services 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 have been necessary components of the formulation of a plan to regulate standards of water usage in what has been 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.

Program Description

Major Redevelopment Projects - This program includes projects 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.

Along with personnel scheduling and assignment adjustments to cover these projects, other costs have included equipment and materials such as a new computer software system 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 Department 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 Florida 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 through the State of Florida Department 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 per inspector 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 due to the high volume of records. Also, Community Response Team case files are maintained and microfilmed under this program.

Fire Plans Review – This program involves the review of construction plans for new and renovated structures to ensure compliance with Fire Codes and statutory requirements. This program addresses associated complaints, new construction, remodeling, and general questions raised by the public and City officials. There are currently 1.8 full-time equivalent fire plans examiners in this cost center, who are physically located near the building plans review staff to improve communication and streamlining processes/revision times.

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Program Summary					
	<i>Actual</i> <i>2001/02</i>	<i>Actual</i> <i>2002/03</i>	<i>Budget</i> <i>2003/04</i>	<i>Budget</i> <i>2004/05</i>	<i>%</i> <i>Change</i>
Personnel	2,012,479	2,230,988	2,439,100	2,527,260	3.6%
Operating	144,677	127,223	135,330	132,140	-2.4%
Internal Services	425,733	448,646	473,810	479,110	1.1%
Capital	-	8,252	-	-	n/a
Debt Service	41,909	95,231	165,530	149,900	-9.4%
Transfers	275,000	-	-	-	n/a
Total	2,899,798	2,910,340	3,213,770	3,288,410	2.3%
Program Full-time Equivalent Positions	45.3	47.3	49.3	49.1	

Program Highlights

- ❖ The Development Services program is supported by 49.1 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, a decrease of .2 positions from the 2003/04 budget due to the reduction of two full time positions to part time. The decrease partially offset merit raises and medical insurance premium increases to keep personnel cost increases at 3.6% over the previous budget.
- ❖ The operating cost category includes \$22,660 for outside contractual services associated with research, preparation, and demolition of unsafe buildings, the same level of funding as last year's approved budget.
- ❖ Debt service costs decrease \$15,630 in this year due to the expiration of one of the lease/purchase contracts on the Tidemark System.
- ❖ There have been no significant changes in this program and this budget shows only a modest 2.3% increase over the 2003/2004 budget.

Program Description

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, the manager and one neighborhood coordinator were hired. An additional neighborhood services coordinator position was transferred to this program in FY 2001. 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 2003, Neighborhood Services became part of the Development Services Department. In January 2003 an additional Neighborhood Services Coordinator was approved by the City Council, for a total of four full time equivalent positions in the program.

The division strives to recognize the unique quality of the City's neighborhoods, to provide associations with the tools to improve their neighborhoods, and to gain a reputation as a diverse, safe and enjoyable place to live. Efforts include co-hosting an annual neighborhood conference, coordinating "Clearwater Celebrates Neighborhoods Day", managing the neighborhoods recognition program, leading the development of neighborhood strategic plans, and overseeing a neighborhoods grants program to assist with improvements.

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. The division has developed a phased approach for neighborhood planning that has targeted District 2 (neighborhoods immediately surrounding downtown, including North Greenwood and South Clearwater) for its initial primary focus. This district approach to neighborhood planning will be extended to the City's six other districts as the program is expanded.

There are five primary indicators involved in the program studies: Code Violations, Police Department Calls for Service reports, Police Department Crime reports, Percentage of Home Ownership Versus Rental, and Property Values.

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

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

Program Summary					
	<i>Actual</i> <i>2001-02</i>	<i>Actual</i> <i>2002-03</i>	<i>Budget</i> <i>2003-04</i>	<i>Budget</i> <i>2004-05</i>	<i>%</i> <i>Change</i>
Personnel		163,788	214,580	214,600	0.0%
Operating		17,814	29,580	28,120	-4.9%
Internal Services	-	15,244	36,410	24,880	-31.7%
Debt Service	-	-	4,740	4,740	n/a
Transfers	-	25,000	25,000	25,000	n/a
Total	-	221,846	310,310	297,340	-4.2%
Program Full-Time Equivalent Positions	0.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	

Program Highlights

- ❖ The Neighborhood Services program is supported by four full-time equivalent positions, the same level as the 2003/04 budget.
- ❖ Operating and internal services expenditures in the 2003/2004 budget included costs to add equipment and remodel workspaces to accommodate an additional full time position. Due to those one-time costs these categories decrease significantly in the approved budget.
- ❖ The \$25,000 transfer represents funding for the neighborhood beautification grants program, the same level of funding as in the 2003/04 budget.