

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 (5) areas of responsibility consisting of: Administration and Support Services, Community Response Team, Permitting/Occupational Licenses, Building, Plans Review, and Inspections, and the Neighborhood Services Program. The Neighborhood Services Program was added to the department in January 2002. The Fire Plans Review Program (3 FTE's) that was added in the fiscal year 2003/04 budget has been transferred to the Fire Department in 2006/07. The main programs are described below.

DEPARTMENT SUMMARY					
	Actual 2003/04	Actual 2004/05	Budget 2005/06	Budget 2006/07	% Change
Development Services	3,060,567	3,308,879	3,522,950	3,800,310	7.9%
Neighborhood Services	281,446	285,739	314,380	336,390	7.0%
Total Dev/Nbrhd Services	3,342,013	3,594,618	3,837,330	4,136,700	7.8%

DEPARTMENT FULL TIME EQUIVALENT POSITIONS				
	Actual 2003/04	Actual 2004/05	Budget 2005/06	Budget 2006/07
Development Services	49.3	49.1	53.5	50.5
Neighborhood Services	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Total Dev/Nbrhd Services	53.3	53.1	57.5	54.5

Program Description

The major operations within the Development Services Program consist of the following:

Administration and Support Division – This operation provides for the administrative and support services for the entire department. Work includes the policies and procedures, direction and support of personnel, resources and other related activities. Budgetary decisions and business plans are formulated and approved at the administrative level.

Community Response Team – The following areas of responsibility are involved in this program.

Community Standards Enforcement – The Community Response Team Code Enforcement Team is responsible for handling a myriad of complaints pertaining to the requirements of the Community Development Code and general nuisances as defined in the code of ordinances. Codes addressed are property maintenance issues such as exterior paint, landscaping, and fencing and nuisances such as abandoned vehicles, overgrown lots, debris, graffiti, and snipe signs. The code inspectors also investigate and enforce on zoning and use related regulations such as short-term rentals. The unit conducts neighborhood “sweeps” to identify code violations. The goal is 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.

The operation is also involved with subordinate interrelated community activities such as the annual Paint Your Heart Out Clearwater event.

Sign Inspection and Enforcement – Since 1987, the City of Clearwater has targeted sign blight under an amortization program. Over 14,000 non-conforming signs were inspected and brought into compliance, including 34 over-sized “billboard” type signs, during the twelve-year period. The continuing goal is to enforce illegal signage, non-permitted signage and snipe signage in order to maintain the aesthetic appearance of the City’s business and vehicular corridors.

Occupational License Enforcement – This operation involves the enforcement of the licensing of businesses as allowed by Florida State Statutes and required by City ordinance. Annually, there are approximately 10,000 occupational licenses and registrations within the City. In addition to annual renewal periods, the license inspectors conduct grid sweeps throughout the City to locate and notify unlicensed businesses of the licensing requirements.

In March 2002, the City adopted a residential rental compliance ordinance that requires licensing of residential rental units, including single-family residences.

Water Enforcement – This operation provides for enforcement of the various water statutes and codes through aggressive enforcement activities by the inspectors.

Major Redevelopment Projects – This operation includes projects to initiate and enhance the Community Development Code. The Major Developments of the City are identified as: Downtown, and Clearwater Beach.

Building Permits/Occupational Licenses – This operation involves the intake of building plans and issuance of building permits of all buildings in the City. It also works hand-in-hand with the Community Response Team on the issuance of occupational licenses and includes the maintenance and mandatory retention of records for all areas of the department in a centralized records area.

Building Plans Review and Inspections – This operation involves the review and inspection functions for building construction services. The following major programs are included in this operation.

Unsafe Building Abatement and Housing Code – This operation 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. This operation enhances neighborhoods by improving the housing stock and thereby appreciating property values.

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Program Description

Building Plans Review – This operation involves the technical review of architectural and engineering plans for construction of buildings and structures in accordance with the building code.

Building Inspections – This operation provides for inspections of actual building construction. Inspections are done in accordance with the building codes, as required by Florida State Statutes including building, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical trades.

PROGRAM SUMMARY					
	Actual 2003/04	Actual 2004/05	Budget 2005/06	Budget 2006/07	% Change
Personnel	2,335,509	2,539,766	2,854,540	2,848,450	-0.2%
Operating	156,679	190,566	137,260	310,150	126.0%
Internal Services	472,319	480,336	446,770	508,840	13.9%
Capital	-	17,421	-	22,000	na
Debt Service	96,060	80,790	84,380	110,870	31.4%
Total Development Services	3,060,567	3,308,879	3,522,950	3,800,310	7.9%

DEPARTMENT FULL TIME EQUIVALENT POSITIONS				
	Actual 2003/04	Actual 2004/05	Budget 2005/06	Budget 2006/07
Development Services	49.3	49.1	53.5	50.5
Total Development Services	49.3	49.1	53.5	50.5

Program Highlights

- ❖ The Development Services program is supported by 50.5 full time equivalent (FTE) positions, a decrease of three positions from the previous approved budget. Three Fire Plans Review Inspectors were transferred from this department to the Fire Department to allow coordination of duties within the Fire Department.
- ❖ The decrease in positions offsets routine salary increases and higher pension costs and results in Personnel costs that decrease slightly from the previous year.
- ❖ The operating cost category increases 126% over the previous budget for two reasons. The major increase is for an additional \$157,340 in Contractual Services, an increase of 694%, to use outside contractors to assist with the increased building permit activities related primarily to the recent numerous large building construction projects in the City. The building fees received relative to these projects will compensate for the additional expenditures. A second factor in the increase in this category is an increase in Other Services for bank fees as more customers pay their bills with credit cards.
- ❖ Internal Services reflect a 13.9% increase due to higher fuel and maintenance costs for vehicles, higher Radio Service charges due to an increase in the number of radios in use in the department, and higher computer charges related to maintenance and support of the Geographical Information System (GIS), and Tidemark software applications.
- ❖ Capital costs increase \$22,000 in this budget to purchase nighttime surveillance equipment to assist in code enforcement efforts and "air" cards to allow inspectors in the field to use computer resources more effectively.
- ❖ Debt service costs increase \$26,490 in this year due to a new lease/purchase contract that will fund upgrades to the Tidemark computer software.

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

Program Description

This program was initially established in fiscal year 2000 as part of the Planning Department. During the first year of operation, a manager and one neighborhood coordinator were hired. A second neighborhood services coordinator position was approved for this program in fiscal year 2001. In fiscal year 2002, this position was changed to a Neighborhood Services Specialist in order to add other work functions, such as Geographical Information System mapping responsibilities. In 2003, Neighborhood Services became a program of the Development Services Department. In January 2003, an additional Neighborhood Services Coordinator was approved by the City Council, for a total of four (4) FTE positions now in this program.

The division strives to recognize the unique quality of the City's residential 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, work and play. Efforts include co-hosting an annual neighborhood conference, coordinating "Clearwater Celebrates Neighborhoods Day", and managing the neighborhoods recognition programs that include the home and neighborhood of each quarter and year. In 2006, the Business Beautification Recognition Program was created in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce. Other programs include neighborhood strategic plans, and a neighborhoods grant program to assist neighborhoods with identification and improvements. Through partnership with Clearwater Neighborhoods Coalition, University of South Florida and Clearwater Chamber of Commerce, staff developed the Resident Engagement Program that included a 30-minute educational video and an interactive workbook for residents to use in order to make more effective presentations to the City Council and advisory boards.

PROGRAM SUMMARY					
	Actual 2003/04	Actual 2004/05	Budget 2005/06	Budget 2006/07	% Change
Personnel	200,704	215,280	228,100	228,080	0.0%
Operating	15,798	20,778	32,380	35,480	9.6%
Internal Services	31,183	20,476	24,160	43,620	80.5%
Debt Service	1,051	4,205	4,740	4,210	-11.2%
Transfers	32,710	25,000	25,000	25,000	0.0%
Total Neighborhood Services	281,446	285,739	314,380	336,390	7.0%

PROGRAM FULL TIME EQUIVALENT POSITIONS				
	Actual 2003/04	Actual 2004/05	Budget 2005/06	Budget 2006/07
Neighborhood Services	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Total Neighborhood Services	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0

Program Highlights

- ❖ The Neighborhoods Services Program is supported by four (4) full time equivalent (FTE) positions, the same level as the 2005/06 budget. Personnel costs remain unchanged after filling of vacant positions at lower salaries than previous incumbent salaries.
- ❖ Operating expenditures increase 9.6%, or \$3,100 for professional services to assist production of a video presentation for use by neighborhood groups, increase postage for additional mailing to citizens, and increased travel to allow staff training.
- ❖ Internal Services reflect an 80.5% increase due to an increase in Information Technology charges related to maintenance and support of the Tidemark computer software.
- ❖ Debt Service costs decrease \$530, or 11.2%, in this budget as the lease/purchase contract on a FY 2005/06 vehicle acquisition came in under budget.
- ❖ The \$25,000 transfer represents funding for the Neighborhood Beautification Grants program, the same level of funding as in the 2005/06 budget.