



Ed Sadler

“Boone River
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City
of
Webster
City

CITY SCENE

Winter 2011

Chronic Nuisances - What are they? Who are they? Where are they?

By Ed Sadler, City Manager

Well, you know what they are, they are that neighbor or landowner who never mows the yard (or weeds in many cases), they always have junk on their property, they have cars in the front yard, they have buildings that are filled with junk, are in bad shape or are even falling down. They are vacant lots, residential properties and commercial properties. You talk to them; you write to them, you file complaints. In many cases, you and the City are ignored. If they do clean up the property, three weeks later, it is back in the same shape and you start the process again. They are chronic and they are habitual. They are unsightly, unsafe and they bring down the values of all the property near them; properties that you work hard to take care of and are proud of.

Who they are varies widely. Sometimes they are your neighbor. Sometimes they are landlords. Sometimes they are out of town landlords. Sometimes they are out of state banks and holding companies that could care less what Webster City looks like and what affect it has on others.

Where they are varies just as widely. They are in residential areas and commercial alike. Some are occupied and some are vacant. They are in your neighborhood and mine. They are located along the areas you travel to work and to go shopping and you pass by them daily.

The process in dealing with these nuisances has always been long and drawn out and no doubt you and your neighbors have felt every bit as frustrated with the lack of action as has the City. In trying to be understanding, by giving these people (or companies) the benefit of the doubt, chronic offenders have been given too much leeway and too much time to the detriment and frustration of the rest of us.



The good news is that some of this is about to change. Last summer, City Council changed the process in dealing with long grass and weeds to both speed up the process with chronic offenders and to increase the penalties. Currently, City Council is in the process of creating new ordinances to deal with chronic nuisances as it relates to

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Janet Adams

vacant and unoccupied commercial properties to insure that they are kept up. This will be followed by a proposed ordinance to address maintenance issues with regards to rental properties that Council should take up later this winter. Discussions have also taken place between City Council, city enforcement staff and the City Attorney regarding chronic offenders and City Council has expressed a sincere desire to take a hard line with chronic offenders. Additional time will not be given. Fines will not be waived. Council is serious about cleaning up the City in

State of the City of Webster City

by Janet Adams, Mayor

As 2010 closes out and 2011 enters it is a time to take a look at the State of the City of Webster City. The "can do" attitude you often hear me say is alive and well thanks to the sensible, prudent citizens who call this city "home".

Webster City weathered the economic storm with an austere budget that did not raise taxes or cut needed services to keep the city running smoothly. Our city's infrastructure of 63 miles of streets, 67 miles of water mains, 80 miles of sanitary sewers, 33 miles of storm sewers, 26 miles of underground electrical lines, and 200 miles of overhead electrical lines (includes City Corp. limits and Service Territory) was maintained.

The Recreation & Public Grounds Department continues to operate the Fuller Hall Recreation Center, the

all respects.

This like everything will take some time as staff is limited and the list of offenders is long. If you look in the mirror and see a chronic offender, you are on notice. Your neighbors, local residents and the City are tired of your mess. You do not have the right to destroy neighborhoods and property values. Your dilapidated buildings, your junk and your weeds pose a health and safety problem for everyone around you.

outdoor swimming pool, maintain all parks and cemetery, and offer Adult and Youth programs year round.



The Municipal Utility provided electrical service to over 4606 customers.

Police and Fire Protection were continued.

Following is a list of policies, procedures and projects that moved us in a progressive path. These were adopted in 2010 or were continuing projects began in a previous year.

- The City mill levy was reduced and the City bond rating upgraded two grades.
- Utility issues were reviewed, studied and addressed resulting in new rate structures and progress was made toward a Utility agreement with possible providers.
- The Asset Management Plan called for major improvements on several

city assets such as the water and wastewater treatment plants and the distribution system.

- Street repairs were completed with one cent local option sales tax funds.
- A new City well location was determined.
- The GIS (Geographic Information System) was implemented.

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- The balanced budget allowed \$1.7 million to be set aside for Economic Development and new jobs. This money allowed the hiring of IDM from UNI, Atlas from Denver and David Toyer an economic

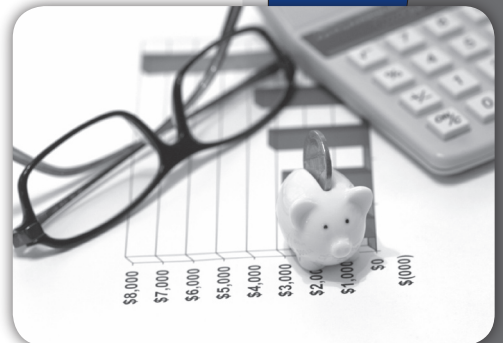
development coordinator to assist with Economic Development. The majority of the funds to be used as direct incentive for retaining or creating new jobs in Webster City. This supported the AMS Electric Car Manufacturer which located in Webster City and the Electrolux Corporation to retain its Tech Center here in Webster City at the former Beam Building. This also assisted small expansions in existing businesses. (See David's article in another story in this City Scene).

- A Citizen Committee recommended a General Obligation Bond for the purchase of a ladder fire truck, a new slide at the outdoor pool and a street sweeper.
- FEMA buyout and property removal plans were completed.
- An Enterprise zone was designated with the help of local legislators.

- New revenue sources such as the gas franchise fee were studied.
- Policies relating to appointments to commissions and boards were updated. These entities were scheduled to give an annual update to the Council.
- A volunteerism committee set up procedures to recruit and match volunteers with projects.
- The Hotel-Motel Tax was utilized to enhance tourism opportunities with new City signs and garden areas and it also enabled the Depot at the Wilson Brewer Historical Complex to be open and staffed for several days a week.
- The walking trail to Briggs Woods was completed.
- A City Clerk was hired.
- Services and projects accomplished working with other entities included **sharing of an IT person** with Hamilton County. A joint effort with the Fuller Hall Trust **purchased an indoor pool cover** to conserve heat and save energy, but also save water, chemicals and extend the life of the equipment. Working with the Chamber of Commerce, TV **commercials promoting Webster City** were produced and continue to be aired on TV.

All of this happened with 68 staff members, a lower number than in decades.

The budgeting process for 2011-2012 will begin in January and February. Changes in property tax assessments and payments and State and Federal





David Toyer

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funding always impact the local City revenues. Increases in rates from Corn Belt Electric will affect the utility bills we pay. Costs of items the City purchases usually

increase. The City Council, manager and staff will continue to balance the budget and make every effort to assure needed services are provided.

Launching the future

by David Toyer, Economic Development Consultant

Since my introductory article in last spring's newsletter, there has been much work on the City's Economic Development and Recovery Coordination Plan. I've been working alongside the Council, city staff, local businesses leaders, and economic developers from around the region. Great progress has been made to ready the city for economic development and, even more importantly, proactively seek out new economic development opportunities.

While more work remains, the New Year provides a great time to reflect on the accomplishments and success of the City's efforts over the past year.

Milestones

Much has been accomplished over the last twelve months as the City has:

- Completed a comparative analysis of the City against many cities we are competing with for new business
- Established guidelines for how the City will administer local economic development incentives
- Completed a "Comprehensive Economic Development Assessment," identifying gaps where we can make the city more competitive
- Developed a preliminary marketing assessment that studied what industries we are best suited to attract based on our workforce and how we can best reach those industries with our marketing
- Finalized a marketing plan and

brand standard that will drive the implementation of a targeted marketing plan

- Trained a prospect host team comprised of local business and community leaders, which has since hosted site selectors and prospects
- Finalized a comprehensive analysis of the most likely companies we can attract based on our workforce availability, skills and other assets
- Launched a new economic development website to serve as the landing place for site selectors and companies looking for specific information on how our community fits their expansion and relocation plans
- Launched a social media strategy that includes a blog, mobile friendly website, and brand representation on sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, allowing us to reach key marketing audiences that rely on these new tools
- Implemented templates for responding to inquiries from companies and site selectors that desire a comprehensive proposal or group presentation
- Adopted new codes that are designed to further support new development, investment and entrepreneurship
- Developed print media and direct mail that will be elements of our targeted marketing strategy
- Conducted surveys of existing businesses to better understand how the City can support the growth of their business within their industry

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- Identified new business opportunities for several existing Webster City businesses
- Started a process of reaching out to non-resident owners of idle commercial and industrial property in the City to encourage development and redevelopment

economic development organizations annually. Competition is exponentially tough and takes place on a regional, national and international scale.

Some other ways of measuring success include:

- Identifying a prospective project where the city fits the project's unique needs and the list of required qualifications to submit a proposal
- Being asked to provide a prospective project with supplemental information for a second round or review
- Hosting a site visit by the prospective company or their site selector
- Being able to announce a project has been recruited



**A snapshot from
www.buildwebstercity.com**

Measuring Success

We all measure success differently. Many people may define success in economic development as being limited to when new projects are secured or jobs are created and retained. This would be a reasonable websterable methodology for evaluation. However, let me suggest some other tools by which success might be measured as we look at the past year.

There are roughly 39,000 counties and cities in the United States and approximately 10,000 to 15,000 economic development organizations working to recruit new projects. Comparatively, there is only an average of 300-500 new projects per year. Without adjusting for the unique needs of each project, that's only one project per 37.5

Looking only at prospective large commercial and industrial projects during last year, here is how the City did in hitting these measurements of success:

- Responded to more than a dozen general inquiries and requests for information
- Submitted four formal, qualified proposals to prospective projects
- Provided a second or third round of information for two of these prospective projects
- Hosted two formal site visits

Lastly, the biggest successes are the City's retention of the Electrolux Tech Center, the addition of AMS, Inc., and many small expansions that Webster City companies have made this past year. Nearly 200 jobs have been created or retained, and it is expected that another +200 jobs will be created as a direct result of this year's efforts.

Keeping Connected

Our hope is that many of you want to be more connected to what's happening with economic development in the community. So, we invite and encourage you to follow our efforts on the web at www.buildwebstercity.com, the blog at <http://blog.webstercity.com>, or through Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter.

How You Can Help

As you go about your typical day, as you travel, or as you talk with business associates around the globe, you're helping Webster City out when you talk about why you love it here and why

Identity Theft

By Chief Brian Hughes

Identity theft continues to be an emerging crime that causes extreme inconvenience and disrupts the financial lives of Americans. These thefts occur whenever a person(s) obtain another's personal information (social security number, date of birth, financial account numbers, etc) and applies them in a manner which involves fraud, deception or some other type of economic gain. The financial loss can be minimal or extreme, but the inconvenience of clearing your good name is insurmountable.

These crimes continue to rise every year due its high reward and low risk level. In other words, the monetary gain can be extremely lucrative with a very low risk of being caught. Today, a criminal in another country with a laptop computer and an internet connection can commit these crimes right here in America. This becomes a major problem for law enforcement and prosecutors to ascertain where the crime occurred (jurisdiction) and who committed the

you do business here. Moreover, you can also help us out by letting us know if any of your suppliers or customers are talking about relocating or expanding. These small efforts often account for very big successes.

Thank You

I want to extend my appreciation to the business and community leaders, residents and others that I have had the chance to work with during the past year. Together we can accomplish amazing things. And, I know this because we already have. Many thanks for all your help.



crime. All of which are essential elements in any successful prosecution.

I have listed below some statistics from the United States Department of Justice report (2010) of its 2008 statistics:

- An estimated 11.7 million persons, representing 5% of all persons age 16 or older in the United States, experienced at least one type of identity theft in a 2-year period.
- Although the total financial cost of identity theft was nearly \$17.3 billion over a 2-year period, less than a quarter (23%) of identity theft victims suffered an out-of-pocket financial loss from the victimization.
- About 42% of victims spent 1 day or less working to resolve the financial and



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credit problems associated with the identity theft; however, 3% continued to experience problems related to the theft more than 6 months after discovering it.

Criminals use a variety of methods to obtain your personal data. A common method is "Shoulder Surfing," this involves criminals watching you enter your credit card numbers, PIN information or just eavesdropping on your conversations involving transactions. "Dumpster Diving" continues to be another successful technique in which people do not properly shred their personal documents before discarding in their garbage can. Responding to internet spam messages and having no or poor anti-virus or spyware on your computer is another method criminals use to obtain your information. Once your information is obtained they can open credit accounts and purchase just about anything in your name. In one particular case, a criminal even purchased a new home!

Everyone can reduce their chances of being a victim to identity theft by practicing a few simple steps. First, be very cautious of anyone that contacts you over the phone representing themselves as one of your credit or financial institutions. This is especially true if he/she requests your personal information to verify your current account or application for a new account. Also, before discarding any personal or financial data it should be ran through a paper shredder. Missing financial statements or other pieces of mail may be a sign someone has or is trying to obtain your personal information. Most importantly, always remember to never mail any letters that contain your personal data by leaving it in your mailbox for your postal carrier. These letters can be easily stolen before your postal carrier can pick them up. If everyone would apply these simple practices it could prevent or drastically reduce their odds of becoming a victim to identity theft.

Graceland Cemetery Spring Cleanup Reminder

The City of Webster City would like to remind all persons the spring cleanup removal will start on April 1 at Graceland and Foster's Baby Addition Cemeteries. It is requested that all flower boxes, wreaths, decorations, and flowers (this includes items in above-ground fixtures-saddles, vases, planters, Shepherd hooks) be removed before April 1. If these items are not removed they will be picked up and disposed of by the Cemetery staff.

After April 20 persons will be permitted to place flowers and other decorations on above-ground fixtures (i.e., saddles, vases, planters, Shepherd hook type hangings as long as they do not interfere with mowing/trimming). All decorations that will be placed on the ground will not be permitted until nine days prior to Memorial Day (this year after May 20- May 30 is Memorial Day). The post Memorial Day removal of flowers (placed on the ground) will begin on June 10.

In addition, the United States' flags placed on the Veteran's graves will be removed at this time. New flags will be placed on Veteran's graves in time to observe Memorial Day.

Please direct any questions to Graceland Cemetery at 832-9125.

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Help Keep Fire Hydrants Visible

The Webster City Fire Department asks for the public's help in keeping fire hydrants visible and clear of snow. The large amount of snowfall last winter completely covered many fire hydrants.

The delay in locating a hydrant and removing the snow and ice buildup adds significant time in connecting a supply line to a fire truck.

Webster City's first arriving fire truck carries 1000 gallons of water, which on a house fire can be used up within 4 to 5 minutes. It is crucial a supply line from a fire hydrant be hooked into the fire truck within that time.

Check where the closest fire hydrant is to your home. If you can help by keeping the hydrant in your block clear of snow it will give firefighters the extra time needed to quickly extinguish a fire.



Chamber of Commerce - An Exciting Year

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GREAT PLACES

It's been an exciting year for the Chamber of Commerce with many accomplishments under our belt. We have increased our membership, assisted with new businesses opening their doors, new events and additions to community events, and the Iowa Great Places designation for Hamilton County just to name a few!

Our focus will continue to grow Webster City for the business community, the citizens of Webster City, and all visitors to Webster City. The Chamber of Commerce anticipates a wonderful new year with continued success on all the communities' endeavors.

We wish Webster City continued success in 2011!!!

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