

Around the City with City Manager David Thayer

In 2014, in an effort to address and attack the blight issues in the city, City Council adopted three ordinances; (1) Property Maintenance Code, (2) Abandoned Vacant Buildings Code, and (3) Rental Registration and Inspection Code. We are slowly creating the enforcement protocols required to implement these ordinances. To effectively enforce blight ordinances, I believe the city must create an outlet for its citizens to effectively and environmentally dispose of their outdated, unwanted, and broken goods.

This year, I expanded our large item disposal program conducted at the DPW grounds on South Washington Avenue. At our spring collection on May 22nd, we collected 33.16 tons of debris, at our mid-summer collection on August 5, we collected 19.75 tons, and at our fall collection on September 30, we collected 25 tons. In addition, with our fall pick-up, we added scrap tire collection and had 3.25 tons of tires turned in. The week after each collection when I drive around town, I can see the major impact the collection has had on blight in our city.

The week of October 23rd we will conduct our city-wide, street-side brush and leaves pick-up. We will use the same zoned schedule as practiced in the past. Once your collection date has passed, we will not back track to pick-up late additions.

Through the efforts of several sources, we have identified 54 junk vehicles in and around the city. In the next couple of weeks, we will send a letter to the property owner of where the vehicle is placed. For those vehicle owners that have a clear title, we have made arrangements with Tru-Recycling to come and pick-up your vehicle. Thereafter, Tru-Recycling will send a check to the owner for the salvage value of the vehicle minus expenses. For those that lack a title, they will have to make other arrangements to move the vehicle or to correct its deficiency.

A junk vehicle is defined as, but not limited to, a visible unlicensed, inoperable automobile, truck, or motorized machinery that is currently unable to perform as designed.

I have identified 22 buildings that are in a blighted, unsafe condition that posed a public health hazard, are an attractive nuisance, are presently uninhabitable in their current state, and are economically unfeasible to repair. There are others that I am processing to condemn and order their demolition. The county owns several, some are privately owned, and some the City owns. As I identify funds or am successful in obtaining grant funding, we will move quickly to have the city owned buildings torn down and the property restored to a community friendly state. The others, if I am unable to persuade the owners to follow through with demolition, I will seek the court assistance in forcing the razing of those structures.

These next several months, I will be positioning the city to enforce the three blight ordinances. Our city did not witness the creation of blighted conditions overnight and we will not be able to solve them overnight. However, with earnest effort and cooperation of many, we will turn the corner and restore our aesthetic appearance. This is a major step to repopulating our city, which is the cornerstone for economic development.