



CITY OF DANBURY OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE

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Livable Neighborhoods 2010
“Building a Better Danbury”

UNIT 2010: YEAR IN REVIEW

The past year has been extremely productive for the UNIT (Unified Neighborhood Inspection Team). In 2010, the UNIT handled nearly 1200 quality of life issues.

Assembled in 2005 by Mayor Mark D. Boughton, the UNIT is responsible for improving and preserving the quality and character of Danbury’s neighborhoods. Given the variety of issues faced by the UNIT, ranging from health, safety, building and zoning concerns, the UNIT consists of officials from the Health, Building, Fire Marshal and Police department. Additionally, the UNIT frequently partners with the Highway and Zoning departments, as well.

Common examples of issues that that the UNIT addresses around town are:

- Cleaning up properties littered with garbage.
- Addressing homes that are overcrowded and contain unsafe living conditions.
- Removing vehicles parked on front lawns and sidewalks.
- Removing unregistered/abandoned vehicles from properties.
- Illegal/unauthorized construction without permits.
- Illegal dumping.
- Neighborhood nuisances.

During the past year, the UNIT has worked with property owners to clean nearly 400 properties containing garbage or debris. Owners and/or tenants are given a fair amount of time to complete the clean up of the property and will then be subject to reinspection. In most cases, properties are improved quickly and pass reinspection. Keeping properties clean continues to be the leading activity by the UNIT each year; however, our department is proud to report that since 2008, the issue has declined approximately 21%. Without a doubt, this is directly due to the increased exposure of the UNIT within the neighborhoods and the continual correspondence with property owners and tenants.

One of the objectives established by the UNIT for 2010 was to partner with the Danbury Police Department in the enforcement of Ordinance 19-36, Sidewalk Parking. Too many times, vehicles are parked up on the sidewalk blocking pedestrians and forcing them, including children, to walk onto the street around the vehicle. As a result of the UNIT's assistance, our department issued over \$14,000 in citations and today, many of those neighborhoods still continue to reflect compliance to this ordinance.

The UNIT continues to receive complaints regarding apartments and houses with unsafe living conditions. Most often, these dwellings are found to have living space in the basement or attic that does not meet the appropriate code requirements determined by the City of Danbury. The result is major fire and health hazards, as secondary emergency exits are often blocked or non-existent. For the safety of Danbury's residents, it is critical that families do not place themselves at risk by sleeping in unapproved rooms. While responding to these complaints throughout the year, the UNIT has far too often found cases where emergency rescue becomes severely challenged. Additionally, properties are zoned accordingly based upon the number of families that are approved to live in the dwelling. Property owners that extend the approved use of the home not only create safety risks, but health hazards as well. Septic systems, electrical and water usage, and parking spaces are just a few items that are specifically planned for each property. When a property owner stretches the use of a dwelling without the required permits and city approvals, many problems will occur.

Over the past year, the UNIT has aggressively expanded its activity toward eliminating unregistered or abandoned vehicles from properties. Over 150 vehicles were tagged by the UNIT in an effort for residents to get them re-registered or removed from the property. The majority of the vehicles that were tagged displayed obvious signs of age and appeared to have not been driven for a long period of time. Not only are the vehicles required to be registered, but for those older, inoperable cars, it becomes an eyesore and blight in the neighborhood. For the most part, vehicle owners have been quick to comply.

The UNIT has accomplished much success over the year. Properties have been cleaned and neighborhood nuisances have been eliminated. Maintaining the quality of life for the residents of Danbury is the highest priority of Mayor Mark Boughton and the UNIT and our department is committed to responding to the concerns of the residents of Danbury. Our department continues to be pro-active within the community, identifying these issues and working with the applicable property owners to resolve them quickly. In fact, approximately 51% of UNIT activity for 2010 has been the result of ACTION (Active Commitment Toward Improving Our Neighborhoods).

2010 YEAR IN REVIEW: 311 Call Center

Spanning the months of 2010, the 311 Call Center received over 8,000 phone calls and nearly 300 emails while processing over 2,200 service requests that ranged from such tasks as potholes that need to be filled, to more complicated requests of new drainage systems for streets. Approximately 70 percent of calls received on 311 were immediately responded to; meaning that residents are utilizing the free vast and reliable resources of

the Call Center for quick answers to their inquiries about Danbury and, in some instances, the surrounding area. New residents to Danbury, as well as those who have moved away and require information, continue to use the 311 Call Center to understand city services and programs such as the snow emergency protocol, recycling truck, spring and fall leaf pickup program, Clean City Danbury Day, Household Hazardous Waste Day, and other local events such as the Concerts on the Green, Fourth of July fireworks, and First Night. The 311 Call Center is also a valuable resource for residents who wish to notify city officials of road emergencies such as dangerous and downed trees and overgrown brush that may cause hazardous road conditions; such received calls are immediately forwarded to the appropriate department for consideration. Residents both new and seasoned are encouraged to call 311 when unsure which department to contact, as in many instances, 311 can not only answer their question but also input a service request to send to the appropriate department if required. Frequent communication with other city departments has proven to be the best resource for 311 to provide the best service and response to public inquiries and residents can rest assured that such measures, as well as any other necessities, will be used to provide the high standard of service that the residents of Danbury have come to expect from city officials and 311.

311 Call Center Report: December 2010

The month of December saw the 311 Call Center receive 675 calls from residents with requests for phone numbers bringing the most volume at 224. The blizzard of December 26-27 brought in over 150 calls spanning the two days as the Call Center was open and operational for the convenience of the residents of Danbury for four hours before City Hall officially opened on December 27 at 12 noon. Residents were grateful for the immediate responses to their questions and concerns regarding the forecast, parking ban, road safety, and City Hall hours. The fall leaf pick-up program brought 42 calls as it was successfully completed by the Highway Department. Fourteen residents called asking where they can dispose of their household garbage and inquiries concerning the recycling truck brought 34 calls. As noted in the recent storm, there are many areas of concern that must be coordinated properly to ensure that the appropriate responses are met. Due to the large number of calls and concerns regarding inclement weather such as this, residents are encouraged to report concerns such as roads that were not plowed, sidewalks that were not shoveled, dangerous tree branches, and accidental mailbox or curb damage as soon as possible so each request can be logged and sent to the appropriate department. City employees are often unaware of problems until they are reported by diligent and concerned residents; and safety concerns such as those listed above should not be ignored with the hopes that another will report the issue. City employees and residents share the same desire for a well-maintained and operational municipal government, yet each is dependent on the other to make that happen; which can be more easily achieved by calling 311.

The UNIT appreciates the participation of the community and continues to encourage Danbury's residents to report any concerns in their neighborhood by utilizing the City Line 311 system. Residents of Danbury can simply dial 311 from their home phones, or 203-744-4311 from out of town or cell phones. Additionally, residents can log on to the

City's webpage, www.ci.danbury.ct.us, and click on the City Line 311 link and register their complaint at their convenience. Residents can choose to provide their contact information, so the UNIT can follow up and provide an update on the situation.

If we can be of any assistance to you or residents in your ward please contact us at 796-8026 or 311.

Sincerely,
Shawn Stillman
Coordinator, Office of Neighborhood Assistance