



CITY OF DANBURY OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE

Shawn Stillman
UNIT Coordinator
s.stillman@danbury-ct.gov

203-796-8026

Livable Neighborhoods 2013
“Building a Better Danbury”

December 2013

December 26, 2013

Honorable Mayor Boughton and City Council Members:

Below is a table highlighting UNIT activity from the time of last month’s City Council report. This does not include any UNIT activity regarding follow up and re-inspection work from previously noted issues. The UNIT works to ensure that each and every issue is resolved as quickly as possible.

Time Period	Nov. 21 – Dec. 26, 2013
Number of Quality of Life Issues	67
Year to Date	969

The top issues addressed by the UNIT were:

- Garbage/Debris on property (29)
- Front yard Parking (10)
- Illegal Apartments/Overcrowding, Unpermitted Construction (4)
- Miscellaneous (8)
- Abandoned or unregistered vehicles (8)
- Parking violations (4)
- Exterior Blight Order (1)

UNIT HIGHLIGHTS:

2013 is nearly complete, and a busy year it has been. Our office continues to be the department that residents can go to get their issues resolved in a timely manner. The UNIT does much more than simply ensuring that properties are kept clean, or that living conditions are kept safe. Everyday, our department members can be found walking the streets downtown talking to business owners and shoppers; or driving around town

knocking on doors helping to resolve any quality of life issues. The UNIT's goal has always been to "Build a Better Danbury". By addressing all of the little details within our community, greater and more extreme problems can be prevented. Commonly referred to as the Broken Windows principle, taking care of the many smaller issues, thus preventing them to become larger problems is an effective process resulting in a positive impact in the neighborhoods that property and business owners recognize. UNIT members, Jeff, Rich, Officer Ken Utter and myself work relentlessly to identify these quality of life issues and carry out strategies to resolve them quickly.

Year End Statistics:

- 32% of UNIT activity involved properties with garbage/rubbish
- UNIT identified 60 vacant/foreclosed properties, and banks were sent appropriate orders to clean and secure properties.
- Issued nearly \$4K in parking violations, mostly pertaining to vehicles parked on the sidewalk.
- Partnered with State's attorney and DPD to oversee community service program, where our office manages these individuals, assigns them work within the community and signs off on their completion.
- Vigilant on the immediate removal of graffiti on bridges, signs, power boxes, etc. Also, on the removal of unwanted signs tacked up telephone poles, street lights and lawn signs posted on city property.

Additionally, a statistic that year after year, I continue to be proud of is that approx. 36% of UNIT activity was the result of proactive enforcement. Our office is not sitting around waiting for complaints to come in, but rather we have integrated ourselves within the community looking for ways in how our neighborhoods and areas can be improved.

The services which our department provides and the manner in which we provide it, is second to none.

Exterior Blight Citation Warnings Issued:

Since the last Council Report, the UNIT issued one (1) Exterior Blight Warnings to property owners. In this case, thirty days are allowed for the property owner to remediate the issues highlighted on the citation warning. If compliance isn't achieved during this time frame, then our department goes to the next step of issuing daily fines of \$100/day until the issues have been resolved.

Orders written by UNIT (YTD): 28

Below is a review of the warnings sent this past month:

- **8 Garry Knolls:** Repeat offenders of the front yard parking ordinance and the residents have been given several warnings in the past by the UNIT. There has been a vehicle left on the front yard for months and hasn't moved. It also is

parked in the city right of way near the road. Additionally, neighbors have complained to our department.

A re-inspection was held at property, **28 Mountain Road**, pertaining to a deadline that was set, seeking compliance to an accumulation of rubbish left out in the yard. The property has been much improved. Additionally, there is another deadline set for the spring with a final cleanup and removal of temporary tent structure that was erected in the driveway. Neighboring residents have struggled with this issue of blight for many years, and I am proud to say that our department has successfully achieved a positive outcome for this property that neighbors will be grateful for.

There are a couple of properties that have been issued orders and are still pending. Our department is currently in the process of moving forward with the assessment of fines and the scheduling of a hearing, unless these issues are not resolved immediately.

The Exterior Blight Ordinance and our department's enforcement of it WORKS. The results have been very noticeable around our city. Our department continues to work on the remaining open orders and is prepared to continue issuing them, as this has become a valuable enforcement tool for our department.

311 Call Center Report: December 2013

The month of December saw the 311 Call Center receive approximately 480 calls, bringing the year-end total to more than 10,300 calls, emails, letters, and in-person requests from residents looking to input a service request or inquiring about free and dependable information. The year of 2013 was the first "normal" year in the past three where an off-season storm did not disrupt the city infrastructure and electricity. The most significant event proved to be the blizzard of early February, wherein over 400 calls were placed regarding snow removal and other related concerns. Due to the standards set forth by previous emergencies, as well as precedent for day-to-day activities, the 311 Call Center remained busy as it continues to prove to be the most efficient option for residents looking to submit a service request or inquiring about free and dependable information.

In addition to the 400 calls placed regarding the blizzard, the request for phone numbers were the most highly-requested item of the year at 1,852 requests, with 260 calls being placed by residents looking to dispose of household garbage, 209 calls for the spring and fall yard debris pickup, 198 calls for information on the recycling truck, 141 calls for the Household Hazardous Waste Day, and 116 calls for Clean City Danbury Day. The 311 Call Center was also successful in cleaning up and/or securing approximately 60 abandoned houses/properties within the city during 2013; abandoned properties pose a serious threat to community safety, as well as quality of life and property values, and every effort must be made to ensure that the responsible parties are current with their responsibilities. Working alongside the other members of the UNIT, banks or lending companies are contacted and informed of the status of their properties; after the

appropriate steps are taken a contract is confirmed for securing and maintaining the property. The 311 Call Center needs the help and input of neighbors in reporting these issues, as many abandoned properties are not noted until it is too late, and encourages reporting said issues as soon as a property is suspected to be abandoned. Residents should never hesitate to report such issues or assume that another neighbor will do so; unfortunately, instances of break-ins leading to fires and other illegal activity have become too commonplace within abandoned properties in Danbury.

The city encourages the residents of Danbury to be proactive in the care for their community and to alert CityLine 311 whenever areas of concern are noted. Even if residents are unsure if a notice of violation is warranted, or if the area of concern is a city responsibility, a city official will be sent out to investigate and determine the appropriate course of action. Residents can use Danbury's Knowledge Base on the website to inquire whether or not a violation may be present, and can submit a service request directly from our webpage. Your involvement with the preservation of the quality of life in Danbury is essential to not only efficient and effective government response, but also to the continued prosperity that is sought by all. The city greatly relies on, and appreciates, the community's partnership and support and the 311 service line is the best means by which this mutually-beneficial relationship can continue to thrive.

The UNIT continues to encourage the participation of 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, and now, residents can utilize the Danbury Direct app from their iPhone to submit a concern or question. Residents can choose to provide their contact information, so the UNIT can follow up and provide an update on the situation. By visiting the Neighborhood Assistance Department on the City's website, residents will also be able to view the UNIT's monthly activity.

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