



# Department of Community Development

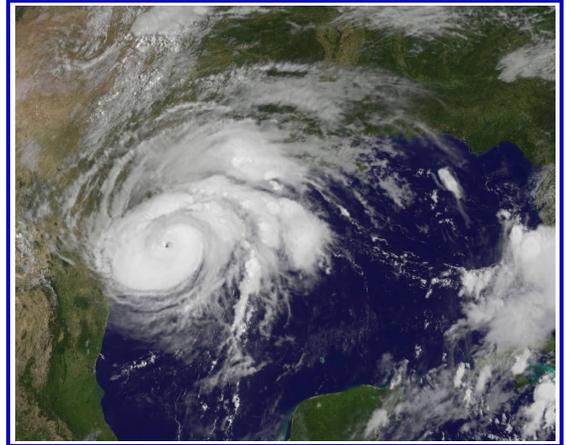
## City of Duncan, Oklahoma - August 2017

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### From the Director's Desk:

With the recent events in Texas and Florida (and maybe more storms to follow), I want to first express my sympathy for those that have been impacted by the devastation that has been caused by these natural events. My thoughts and prayers are with those in these two areas, as well as with the families that have loved ones that might be dealing with these situations.

I also want to thank some of our local utility providers that serve the City of Duncan as well as our region of Oklahoma. They are sending crews to the hardest hit areas to restore services in hopes of bringing a bit of normalcy to those that live in that region. The road to rebuilding will be a long one for the Texas coast and Florida and this is the just the first of many steps that are needed.



With the sending of local crews, there could be delays in providing services to our local community. Recently, my Department conducted a routine inspection and called the approved location in for final hookup. This process normally will allow the restoration of the utility the same day that we call it in. However, now we have been notified that there will be several days before this routine restoration can occur here in Duncan. The Department has been notified, and provided emergency contact information, that in certain situation where a threat to life or limb is present that the utility companies will shift some of their staff resources around to make the necessary repairs/improvements.

Again, I want to stress that the utility providers in our area are not forgetting about us. They just have to work to prioritize projects in order to accommodate the fact that they have sent human resources to the Texas and Florida to assist in restoring services. If there is an emergency situation, we will work to get the situation addressed and this has been confirmed by the providers my Department has contacted.

If it is an emergency situation that you do find yourself in, please do not hesitate to contact my Department at 580-251-7715 as we have been provided some emergency contact information that will allow some of these service providers in our community to move resources around to make those critical connections to keep Duncan moving forward.

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### DETA to Host Ward Meetings in October

The Duncan Enhancement Trust Authority (DETA) is planning on hosting a second round of Ward meetings during the month of October. As some of you may recall, DETA met in the four wards during October 2016 to gather information from our citizens on how we need to enhance our community to make it a better place to live, work and play. This information has proven to be very useful as DETA and other organizations in the City of Duncan have heard the voices of our citizens and begun working on several topics of interest.

DETA would now like to formally report back to our citizens and share the progress that has been made on several projects that relate back to the citizen input received, and how several community organizations are going to continue moving forward with projects that will make Duncan a more attractive and more vibrant community.

If you are interested in attending these ward meetings - and you do not need to just attend your ward as they are all open to the public - please contact the Department of Community Development in mid-September for more details as DETA finalizes dates, times and locations to engage our community as we all work together in Making Duncan Beautiful!

## Are You Thinking About Buying Property? Things to Know Prior to Making Your Investment.

It really is an exciting, and sometime nerve wrecking, adventure when you are buying property. Maybe it is your first home. It might be your first business opportunity. You could be an “expert” now with this type of purchase. In any event, congratulations and welcome to our community!

The Department of Community Development wants to let all potential buyers know that the staff is willing to assist in providing you with the information you will need to make sure this is the right investment opportunity for you. The Department can provide information regarding zoning (what can occur on a particular piece of property as a right), is the property in the flood zone (do you need special insurance or can you renovate the existing structures), and provide development standards for the property (setbacks, coverage area, size of structures, etc.).



The staff also encourages you to research what the neighboring properties are zoned as well. All too often a new home owner did not realize the vacant property next to their dream home is zoned for industrial development. Staff has actually fielded calls of new property owners complaining about the agricultural uses (surprisingly some people are offended by the smell of cows), or that there are exemptions to the agricultural uses/zones per State Law that restricts certain code enforcement policies from being enforced.

Feel free to use the Department of Community Development as a resource regarding:

- Zoning and permitted land use
- Floodplain zones and restrictions
- Setback and lot coverage requirements
- Building permit information
- General property information (permits and/or violations issued)

Staff is happy to assist in providing you with the information that is needed to make sure you are making a great investment in your future with the purchase of property. Plus, the Department likes meeting our community “neighbors” as we continue to build a better Duncan!

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## Department Looking to Improve Commercial Development in Duncan

The Department of Community Development has been working closely with the Duncan Chamber of Commerce to find ways to improve the community’s ability to bring new commercial development to Duncan. This process does include a commercial retention component as well, as it is not only important to bring business to our community but to also make sure that the businesses we have here have an opportunity to grow and flourish.

Both the Department and Chamber are looking at our local zoning regulations, permitting process, land and infrastructure available, incentives, and outside consulting help in order to serve our community better. It is the hope that we can grow a strong commercial base, much like how the Duncan Area Economic Development Foundation works tirelessly on job creation projects, and the Duncan Enhancement Trust Authority works towards improving the quality of space. These components, along with a healthy downtown, superior schools, and a strong health network will help grow Duncan to a vibrant future!



## **CDBG Small Cities Grant update**

The Department of Community Development has been in touch with the Oklahoma Department of Commerce regarding the CDBG Small Cities Grant application that was submitted and staff members are encouraged with some of the news that has been passed back! Though there were some deficiencies with the initial application, the information provided to the Department of Commerce was strong enough for a dialogue to open and discuss these deficiencies and how to overcome them for both this grant cycle as well as future grant opportunities.

By no means does this discussion mean we are going to receive the funding, it is very encouraging that we still have a shot for this funding stream that will help benefit the citizens of Duncan. This discussion is moving Duncan in the right direction, and the Department of Community Development is scheduled to present a Resolution to City Council on Tuesday, September 12, 2017 to continue to strengthen our opportunities with this program.

As a reminder, if these funds are awarded to the City of Duncan, the community will begin to address blight and fire safety in a section of our community that has seen property owner neglect for many years. It is the goal that these funds, when used in accordance with the grant guidelines, will serve as an opportunity for reinvestment and improvements made to the overall quality of life for those citizens that live, work and play in these designated areas.

With the discussion with the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, it was indicated that the income survey that was completed this year can be used for three years on future grant opportunities. The Department is dedicated in trying to find future grants that will benefit this area, as well as all of Duncan for years to come.

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## **Who Can Help Determine Where A Property Line Is Located?**

The Department of Community Development is always willing to assist the citizens of Duncan, Oklahoma with their development projects. However, the Department does not have a licensed surveyor on staff. If you have questions about where your property line might be, or even the location of an easement, it is always best to purchase a survey. The Department gets asked frequently to come out to a property and show the owner where their property line is located. Sadly, the Department is unable to accurately show this location. Staff can offer potential suggestions to the location with the hope that the property owner can find a survey maker or pin that has been left from a previous marker. Staff cannot, and will not, state the exact location of a property line for the use of development. Only a licensed surveyor can perform that task.



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## **Department Activity for August 2017**

During the month of August, 2017, the Department sent out 162 violation notices. This number is down slightly from 2016 as a result of recent changes to the Department. Though the number sent out is down from this time last year, there seems to be a slight increase in the number of properties that are not coming into compliance with City Code on their own and therefore requiring additional attention from staff to process completely. That noted, the Department is still in the process of implementing several procedural changes, as well as looking at our current software to see how we can become more efficient and effective in processing the violations to City Code that occur here in Duncan.

During this same period, the Department also issued 21 permits and collected \$1,183.86 in permit revenue. Inspectors were also busy during the month of August conducting electrical, plumbing, gas and structural inspections for several on-going projects. Also, following some of the August storms, the Department was called to several residential properties to verify the new/upgraded electrical services that were damaged by fallen trees and limbs.

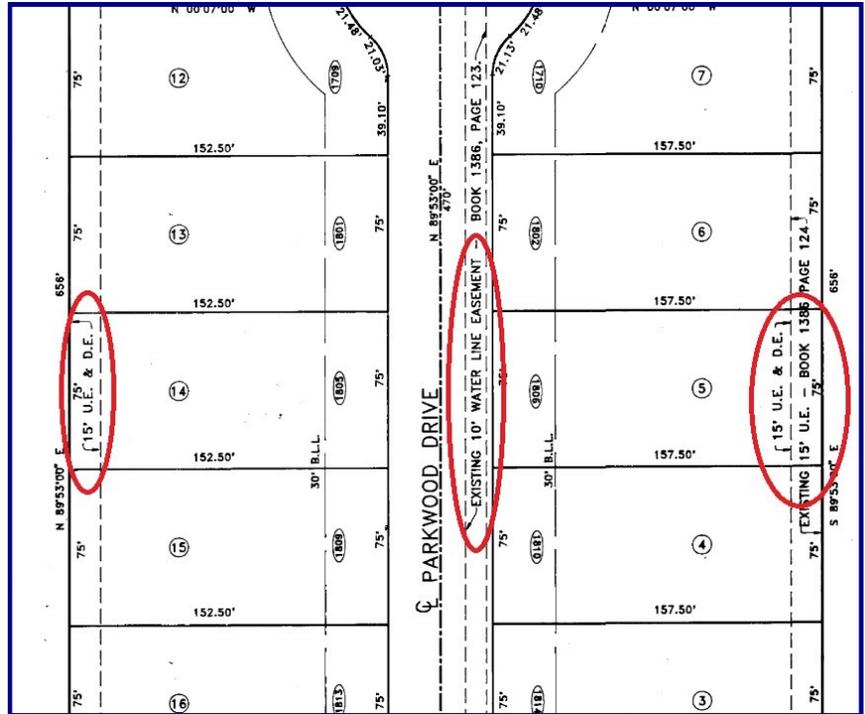
The Department has also been working to improve the overall filing system for permits, violations, and special meetings. It is the goal of the Department of Community Development to be able to provide information back to our citizens following inquiries as quickly as possible. Part of this filing improvement project is looking at how software can better serve the staff in organizing information about a property's history.

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## Alleys and Easements - Who Maintains Them and How Can They be Developed

The Department of Community Development is often asked about situations that involve alleys and easements. Staff receives questions almost weekly regarding “Who can use an easement?” “Can I park in an alley?” “Who is responsible for maintenance?” “How can an easement be used?”

First it is important to note that there is a difference between an easement and an alley. Easements are typically designated for use by utility companies and for drainage purposes. An easement typically, unless specified on the original plat or survey, are not to be used by the general public to access the back or sides of a property. Alleys are typically platted as right-of-way and can be used for utilities, drainage, and use by the general public to access the back and sides of property. Neither alley nor easement can be built upon or developed as this would restrict those that have a right to use this area.



It is important, as citizens of Duncan, that we keep our alleys and easements clear of debris, tall grass and weeds, and structures. These designated areas are still the responsibility for maintenance by the property owner, and failure to maintain in accordance to adopted City Code and Ordinances can result in potential fines and liens placed on the subject property. It is important to keep these area clear in the event of a disaster or power outage. Our utility crews work tirelessly to restore services to our community in such events and often faced with delays when they have to clear an alley or easement to service a line.

As a citizen, the next time you feel that the utility has not been restored in a timely manner, think about those properties that exist throughout the City of Duncan that have allowed their alleys and easements to become cluttered and blocked. The Department of Community Development writes up approximately 50 to 70 properties each week and many of these have violations that extend into the alleys and easements.

For development purposes, no development may occur in alleys and easements. This includes the erection of fences, planning of vegetation (other than grass), or the construction of buildings. Any of these items, if found in the way of crews trying to service an area, can be removed at the owner's expense.



Overgrowth in an easement in Duncan, Oklahoma. This overgrowth has grown up into the power lines which can cause electrical outages for the neighborhood. The overgrowth also slows down utility companies that work to restore outages in our community - and in some cases utility companies will hold any restoration effort until the property owner addresses the overgrowth.