



Department of Community Development

City of Duncan, Oklahoma - October 2016

From the Director's Desk:

Growing up, I always enjoyed the Halloween time. My mom used to make my brother and I costumes out of cardboard boxes, paper bags, and colored paper. My mom was skilled in turning everyday items into fantastic costumes. One year my older brother was a Fire Hydrant and I was a Dalmatian. Being seven years younger than my brother I always chased him around, so this was really a sight to see when a Dalmatian was chasing after a fire hydrant! For that, and my enjoyment of Halloween, I thought I would change of the Department of Community Newsletter this month in honor of Halloween and share various bits of information with a "spirited" twist (see what I did there). In this edition I am sharing information on the "creepy crawlers," the "creatures of the night," and some of the "spook-tacular events" that have been taking place during the past month.

Butterfly Gardens - Flying Creatures of Beauty

What is a Butterfly Garden and Why Have One?

A butterfly garden is an environment that attracts butterflies with the hopes that the butterfly will lay eggs as well. The ultimate goal of a butterfly garden is provide an environment where the lifecycle of egg to caterpillar to butterfly can occur. Butterflies are beneficial insects in that they help pollinate plants and flowers. And many of the caterpillars do not feast on our garden plants, so to have them around is not going to result in a loss of crop or destruction of our prized roses. Take for example the Monarch butterfly, which is a species of butterfly that has had its population severely reduced, feeds on the nectars of many flowers, but the caterpillar will only feast on milkweed variety plants. Having butterfly gardens will help stabilize and increase butterfly populations that are becoming endangered due to habitat destruction and fragmentation.

Garden Design

The first step in designing a butterfly garden is to know what types of butterflies are common in our area. There are many wonderful websites that will provide this information. Once you have determined what species are common to our region, it is important to research what types of plants the butterflies enjoy, which plants their caterpillars feed upon, and what natural predators to the butterflies may exist. It is also important to provide a source of water for you butterfly, but do not worry about mosquitos as this does not have to be standing water. Many butterfly gardens will incorporate a little "sand pit" that stays moist and the butterflies can drink from this!

Concern for the Monarch Butterfly

The annual flight of the Monarch butterflies to Mexico has shrunk consistently for over twenty years, and this year's numbers were barely half of the size from last year. This is due to a loss of the Monarchs' primary food source, milkweed, and the shrinking winter habitat in Mexico. The Mexican government has taken steps to protect the butterflies' winter habitat, but overall enforcement of their policies remain a problem. However, we as citizens can help by increasing the food source, that being milkweed, along the Monarchs' route to winter in Mexico by planting this plant in our own butterfly gardens.

After a ten-fold drop in the population of the eastern Monarch butterfly population over the last decade, a 2016 study predicts that an 11% to 57% probability that this population will go quasi-extinct over the next 20 years. So if you enjoy seeing butterflies, especially the Monarch butterfly, gives some consideration in establishing a little butterfly garden in your own yard.



Beware Bed Bugs!

Everyone has heard of bed bugs, and that they act like little vampires right before dawn when they tend to crawl out and feast on their human host. Bed bugs will suck on blood for about five minutes before returning to their little “home.” These bugs will only bite about once a week and can actually live for a very long time without feeding. They can go six months to a year without feeding!

Some believe that bed bugs are a sign of poverty or a lower social economic class living style. This cannot be further from the truth. Any household can attract bed bugs. We can bring them into our homes when we travel and stay at hotels, we can get them on our clothing if we wonder through an infested area, our pets can bring them into our homes, and even our guests to our homes can serve as a host.

The most effective way to deal with bed bugs is to take preventive measures in your home. Never bring bed frames, mattresses, box springs or upholstered furniture found on the street into your home. If you rent furniture, always check for signs of bed bugs before allowing the furniture to enter your home. When traveling, check the hotel room for signs before you unpack, and remember to double check before you pack your belongings and head back home. Seal cracks and crevices in your home with caulk, even if you do not have bed bugs as this will prevent bed bugs and other pests from entering your home. If you see that you have come into contact with bed bugs, immediately wash and dry your clothing on hot settings or store your belongings in a sealed plastic bag until you can.

If you do have bed bugs, do not be ashamed. Anyone can get bed bugs. If you live in an apartment notify your landlord and other tenants as soon as possible. The sooner everyone responds the more successful everyone will be in removing the bed bugs from your environment. You will need to choose a good professional to best deal with the bed bug infestation. In support of what the professional will do to remedy your bed bug problem, you can also begin trapping and killing bed bugs yourself. You can force bed bugs out of cracks and crevices with a putty knife or a playing card, or with hot air from a blow-dryer on a low setting. The heat from blow-dryers will kill bed bugs after about 30 seconds of continuous contact.



Scary! Theft of Electricity in Duncan Can Cause House Fires!

On a recent inspection by Code Enforcement Officials, it was found that another property has been stealing electricity. This may not appear to be a huge concern to the overall wellbeing of the Duncan community, but in reality the dangers of this type of theft should be alarming to all residents. Many tenants of property, whether they own or rent, that steal electricity are putting their lives, the lives of their family, and potentially the property of neighbors at risk.

Below are pictures from a recent inspection where it was determined that theft of electricity was occurring. As you may be able to see, the resident of the property was utilizing kitchen knives to jump from the line to the load. This is normally connected by the meter which when properly fitted in place will not allow arcs to occur and create dangerous situations. An arc can cause electrocution and/or a fire. Which could result in the loss of life or property

The City of Duncan takes utility theft seriously throughout or community and stealing electricity is a punishable offense. In this instance, the Department will be issuing several citations and handing the information over to the attorneys to further prosecute.



DETA is “Treating” the Community with Beautification!

Through the month of October, DETA staff and members held a series of charrette style discussions in each ward to gather information from local citizens that are interested in the beautification process. The events were well attended and many thoughts were shared as to what the City of Duncan should try and focus on in order to stabilize property values, encourage new businesses to locate here, and open new avenues for tourism to occur.

At each function, the citizens were asked to share their thoughts on Duncan’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats - this exercise is commonly referred to as a S.W.O.T. analysis. The information shared during this segment was an effort to get those in attendance thinking about what Duncan offers as well as things that we as a community see as issues holding Duncan’s growth potential back.

The next segment of these discussions was to get our citizens thinking about what they would like to see happen in Duncan, with a focus on beautification. The idea of beautification was never defined, which allowed the citizens participating in the exercises the flexibility to think outside the norms and really look at ways that would help promote beautification as a form of economic development for the City of Duncan. The thoughts provided by citizens will become the action steps within the plan to move beautification forward in our community.

The next step of the process, now that DETA has been listening to the thoughts and concerns of our citizens, is to begin preparing the DETA Beautification Plan. This plan will be a document that guides DETA members, as well as other city officials, to begin addressing the concerns of our citizens as a community level. The S.W.O.T. analysis will serve as the foundation in preparing goal statements while the exercise that yielded the thoughts and ideas of our citizens will become some of the action steps to see that the goal statements are being worked towards. It is the intention of DETA to have this plan serve as a “living document” which means as action steps are completed then new ones will be added. Also, the plan will be revisited on a regular basis and the citizens of Duncan will be called upon to assist in any future revisions. DETA and its members understand that for a plan to work the community needs to take ownership and pride in the process. Thankfully, Duncan has many outstanding citizens that are motivated in Making Duncan Beautiful!



Top to Bottom: DETA members discussing the overall planning process and how members can engage citizens in Making Duncan Beautiful! Director Nate Schacht engaging citizens for their input in making Duncan a better place to live, work and play. Director Nate Schacht’s office covered in the thoughts and ideas of Ward 2 to improve the quality of life in Duncan based on citizen input.

The Trick or Treats of October (Department Activity)

The Department of Community Development notified 109 property owners (as of October 27, 2011) in the month of October about violations to City Code. Most of these violations were due to tall grass and weeds. This number is down from prior months in part to vegetation beginning to grow more slowly and that Code Enforcement Officials had mandatory training to attend and therefore were not in the community to provide normal services. Also, the Department is beginning to process more abandoned vehicles and dilapidated structures now that the growing season is slowing down.

The Department also issued 75 permits in October and collected \$4,824.75 in permit fees. The Department is beginning to see steady requests for permits to allow remodeling of commercial structures which indicates that there is interest in reinvesting in our community. In addition to the reinvestment that is occurring, the Department has met with several interested parties that have made inquiries about bringing new commercial opportunities to the City of Duncan. The Department is dedicated in working with interested parties to find existing or potential sites that are suitable to their development goals and dreams. At this time, no formal applications have been made beyond the informal inquiries made to the Department.

Spooky Buildings Can Be Revitalized and Reused!

Old, underused, and often dilapidated commercial and industrial properties have a spooky feel to them. These buildings and properties are classified as “brownfields” which may or may not have potentially hazardous materials left behind by previous owners and/or uses. These areas tend to promote community blight to occur in that the property can become an attractive nuisance to vandalism, crime, and general dilapidation. However, these properties, and in many instances the buildings too, can be revitalized!

Brownfield redevelopment is a form of economic development and community stabilization that can be accomplished by promoting public and private partnerships that desire to work towards a common goal. By addressing an underused property and making it a viable asset to the community once again, the City of Duncan will be able to help stabilize property values and create new jobs. The Department of Community Development sees the brownfield redevelopment process as an economic tool that needs more community consideration and support. This support will enable the City of Duncan to apply for various grants and funding streams that can in turn create jobs, establish new business, and stabilize property values throughout the community.

The Environmental Protection Agency (Oklahoma is in Region 6) offers training, grants, and other assistance in the brownfield redevelopment process. It is important for communities, like the City of Duncan, to take advantage of these programs and resources in order to inventory properties, determine what contaminants exist, remove and/or contain the contaminants, and ultimately prepare a redevelopment plan that will allow new business opportunities in our communities.

Per the “The Economic Impact of Oklahoma’s Brownfields Program” prepared by the Oklahoma Department of commerce, benefits to Oklahoma when communities partake in brownfield remediation and redevelopment are as follows:

- **Employment:** Employment increased 55% since 1998 on remediated properties, which is a rate that is more than three times Oklahoma’s employment growth rate and more than four times the national employment growth rate over the same period.
- **Employment and Payroll:** Employment growth totaled 2192 jobs with an associated payroll of \$116.611 million since 1998 on remediated properties.
- **Property Values:** Remediated properties in Oklahoma accounted for more than \$178 million in property value, as well as over \$5 million in property taxes.
- **Retail Sales and Sales Taxes:** Total retail sales increased \$85.465 million on remediated properties since 1998, which accounted in \$8.015 million in new sales tax collections for state and local governments.
- **Federal Return on Investment (ROI):** For every \$1.00 the federal government spent in assisting with brownfield remediation, and estimated \$17.87 was returned to it in the form of federal income taxes.

The Department of Community Development will be pursuing future grant opportunities as they relate to various brownfield assessments and cleanups. For this, the Department asks that you as citizens, stay informed with the progress being made by the Department and the City of Duncan as we look at opportunities to reinvest in ourselves. As with all grant application processes, public support is extremely important and is scored highly by review committees. Points are awarded on what communities do to education the population, share information about ongoing projects, and seeing that the citizens of the community truly support the grant proposal. At such time, the Department will seek your support (typically in the form of a letter of support) for various brownfield redevelopment programs and projects.



Communities can address industrial and commercial contaminants through various programs offered through the EPA and ODEQ. Many of these require writing grants, which Community Development plans on doing in next year. A benefit to the community is redevelopment of property already connected to utilities while preserving our open spaces.