

Neighborhood Action Program -- Questions & Answers

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- 1. What can be done about juveniles displaying threatening and disrespectful behavior?**

When confronted with threatening behavior, the safest thing to do is to calmly walk away and call 911 as soon as possible. Please be as specific as possible with the police dispatcher by describing the nature of the threat and the description of the juvenile. Incidents involving a threat of violence will result in a prioritized response by police. Police officers will respond and do their best within legal limits to hold the offending juvenile accountable for their behavior.

If juveniles on your block or in the area are affecting your quality of life, please contact the COPS officer assigned to you, or call the COPS Unit at 763-493-8283. They will work with you to identify where these juveniles live and will make contact with whoever is responsible for them. Different problem solving strategies will be used to quell the disturbing behavior.

2. What can be done about people blocking and loitering in the streets/traffic?

This type of conduct has increased significantly over the past 2 years. The behavior is often intended by the offender show dominance or defiance. The police are aware of the problem and have placed a higher priority of addressing the behavior. Officers will typically stop and direct the person(s) to the side of the road. There are a number of laws that officers will use if necessary to gain compliance.

3. What can be done about speeding traffic?

You may report chronic speeding problems by calling 911, contacting your COPS officer, through the webpage at <http://www.brooklynpark.org/sitepages/pid1305.php> . This webpage allows you to register a traffic or neighborhood complaint. Please get license plate numbers when safely possible. If we have a license plate, a letter notifying the registered owner of the vehicle of the complaint will be mailed.

4. How do I receive a quick police response time?

Police response is based upon availability and the nature of the call. Calls for service involving the threat of or acts of violence, and medical emergencies take priority. In most instances where there is not an emergency, you should expect an average response time under 10 minutes.

5. Can the public know where convicted felons live?

It would be against the Data Privacy laws for a police department to distribute that information. You can however get some criminal history information that would include felony convictions at the web site for the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. There is also information on that site for convicted sex offenders. The web side is at <http://www.dps.state.mn.us/bca/bca.html>.

6. What can be done about excessive noise (fireworks, music, parties, etc.)?

There are several ordinances in Brooklyn Park that restrict excessive noise. If you hear some noise that offends you, please call 911. For loud parties, the police are not allowed to act as the complainant. As a result, an officer may ask that you sign a form indicating that the noise is offending you. If you are concerned about privacy, please tell the officer about it. They will then do their best to resolve problem without enforcement action. There are two ordinances used most frequently by police. They are:

- Noise in Residential Areas - Ordinance 134:18
- Radios, Tapes, Disc Players Audible at 50 feet - Ordinance 134:19

You can view the ordinance in their entirety at the website for Brooklyn Park located at www.brooklynpark.org.

7. What can I do to prevent my mailbox from being vandalized?

The most effective thing you can do is meet with your neighbors to discuss the problem. Ask them to be attentive and to call 911 if they see anything suspicious in the neighborhood. Suspicious can mean anything that you see that just does not feel right to you or is out of place in your neighborhood.

8. What is being done about drug activity and loitering in parking lots?

Our Street Crimes Unit, Drug Task Force personnel, and our patrol division are doing everything from confronting possible dealers directly, to doing surveillance and investigations. One of the new features of the Neighborhood Action Program is that we are now tracking drug dealers to their home address. With this information we will use new strategies to make them aware that their home is no longer a haven for criminal activity.

9. What can we do about problem juveniles whose parents are absent?

If you think children are being neglected or inappropriately supervised, please call 911. If it is a problem that is primarily affecting the livability of your neighborhood, please call the COPS officer assigned to your area. The officer will work with other officials to solve the problem on your street.

10. In what ways are rental owners held liable for crime, property maintenance and problems on their properties?

Owners that are found in violation of any section in ordinance chapter 117.40 on rental establishments are subject to civil and criminal court penalties. Enforcement procedures and processes may involve formal meetings between the owner and staff from code enforcement and police to identify a written work plan and timeline for property issues to be resolved. Situations involving more serious circumstances can result in license revocation, administrative fines and citations, rent escrows, tenant remedy actions in housing court and ultimately criminal court proceedings.

11. What can be done when a property has problems and there is an absentee landlord?

Owners of rental property are required to live within 50 miles of their rental property (ordinance 117.46A) and remain active in the management of their properties, or they must assign a property representative or management company to handle the business operations. Failure to comply with this ordinance is reason to revoke a license, seek criminal court remedies through the administrative penalty procedures or pursue a rent escrow through a tenant remedy action in housing court.

12. What is being done about unlicensed rentals?

Property maintenance inspectors, code enforcement inspectors, police investigators and business licensing staff all work together to identify and communicate regarding properties that may require a city rental license. The Business Licensing Division has a paper process that cross checks homestead records, existing rental licenses and utility bills. Owners of properties that are found to be non-homesteaded and without a rental license are then sent a letter that requires them to get the property licensed and inspected. Owners that fail to obtain a rental license are issued citations. The penalty per ordinance (chapter 110) for operating a rental property without a license is \$150 which doubles every ten days the violation exists up to \$2,000. Cases unresolved at that time go to administrative hearing or ultimately Hennepin County Court. Unpaid fines and citations will be accessed to property taxes once per year.

13. Can the City of Brooklyn Park include tenants' names on the rental license?

The license application is specific in regards to owner information. Concerns about tenants and/or background checks should be addressed by the property owner prior to signing a lease agreement. Many owners are currently screening tenants using the Lease Addendum for Crime Free/Drug Free Housing as part of the lease agreement.

The Lease Addendum for Crime Free/Drug Free Housing and tenant screening information can be found in our free Investment Owner's Guide. Licensed rental owners can receive a copy by calling 763-493-8145 or visiting <http://www.brooklynpark.org/sitepages/pid460.php>.

14. As a landlord, am I responsible for getting a good renter? Am I responsible for tenants' behavior?

Owners of rental property are responsible for the overall conditions of their property, property maintenance, code compliance as well as conduct of tenants on licensed premises. Screening of tenants and ultimately their conduct and behavior is the responsibility of the property owner. Legal remedies should be pursued by owners in cases involving inappropriate tenant behavior. In addition, licensed rental owners are eligible to receive our free Investment Owner's Guide calling 763-493-8145 or visiting <http://www.brooklynpark.org/sitepages/pid460.php>.

15. What is the city doing to address code violations such as junk vehicles and long grass?

The Code Enforcement and Public Health division will respond to the concerns of the residents regarding code violations. Although many situations are resolved through voluntary cooperation, some situations require the use of enforcement actions. Please keep in mind that we are required to follow certain legal processes to protect the city from potential liability as part of our investigation. Although a significant portion of the city is proactively evaluated each year, we rely on the communication of the residents, business operators and visitors in order to address specific issues in the city. If there is a concern regarding the maintenance of a property a complaint can be made and a case will be opened. The Code Enforcement and Public Health Division staff will inspect the property for all exterior violation. A compliance order, citation, and/or other legal action may be taken. Staff will continue with enforcement actions until the violations are corrected.

16. How can I find out about dangerous dogs?

Any animal that bites a person must be euthanized or quarantined in the manner provided by in Ord. 92.14. The Animal Control Officer may determine that an animal that bites a human being is ferocious and of a vicious character, habit or disposition and the animal is a public nuisance. An animal declared to be "a dangerous animal or public nuisance animal" will have to be destroyed. A person keeping a "dangerous animal" or "public nuisance animal" is guilty of a penal offense. (Ord. 92.15) For more information please contact the police department at 763-493-8222.

17. What is the policy on unleashed dogs?

When the animal is off your property, the animal must be on a leash. While on your property, your animal must be restrained from leaving your property by use of physical means or being in the physical presence of a competent person having control over the animal. Being hit by a car is the leading cause of accidental death of pets. Please keep in mind that animals are personal property and you can be held liable for any damage they may cause. (Ord. 92.03)

18. How do we learn more about the Good Neighbor Program?

This volunteer program is aimed at educating and training first-time homeowners about home and property maintenance and use. Information is available by calling the Code Enforcement and Public Health Division at 763-493-8070.

19. When appliances are left out on the curb for up to 2+ weeks, what happens?

If appliances are left at the curb, residents should call the Code Enforcement and Public Health division at 763-493-8070. Orders will be issued to have the items removed within 10 days. If the violations remain, the appliances will be removed and the cost will be charged back to the property owner.

20. How can neighborhoods get “slow down for children” signs?

Studies have shown that many types of signs attempting to warn of normal conditions in residential areas have failed to achieve the desired safety benefits. If signs encourage parents and children to believe they have an added degree of protection, which the signs do not and cannot provide, a great disservice results. Because of these serious considerations, Minnesota law does not recognize, and Federal Standards discourage, use of "Children at Play" signs. Specific warnings for schools, playgrounds, parks and other recreational facilities are available for use where clearly justified. Children should not be encouraged to play within the street travel ways. The sign has long been rejected since it is a direct and open suggestion that this behavior is acceptable. For more information regarding these signs please contact Jeff Holstein, City Traffic Engineer at 763-493-8102

21. Is there a limit to the number of group homes in a neighborhood? In the city?

Currently Minnesota State Statutes do not allow cities to restrict the number of group homes in a neighborhood. However there is pending legislation regarding group homes. For more information call the Code Enforcement and Public Health Division at 763-493-8070.

22. Can the City maintain a property and then charge the cost to the taxes of the owners?

The city code allows certain violations to be corrected by the city. These violations include junk vehicles, garbage, junk, long grass, unsafe structures, unsecured structures and graffiti. Orders will be issued to correct the violation within a particular timeframe. The city code does not allow for the city to repair housing maintenance items such as damaged siding or roofs.

23. How can residents start a Crime Watch in their neighborhood?

To start a Crime Watch in your area call the Crime Prevention Unit at 763-493-8035 to request an information packet. This packet has a sample flyer inviting neighbors. Set a date with a Crime Prevention Specialist and have a location and time picked out. The neighborhood response determines how the Crime Watch is set up.

24. How do I learn about the eviction process?

If you have questions or concerns regarding any tenant or landlord issue, including information on the eviction process, call 763-493-8145. You can also access the *Landlord and Tenants: Rights and Responsibilities* handbook online at <http://www.ag.state.mn.us/consumer/housing/lt>.

25. Why is the City buying the Huntington Pointe apartment complex? What is the status of this redevelopment?

In response to concerns about neighborhood instability, the Brooklyn Park City Council established the Stable Neighborhoods Action Plan (SNAP) Task Force in 2005. The SNAP Task Force was charged with researching factors leading to neighborhood instability and determining:

1. An appropriate mix of housing for current and future residents
2. Development standards to evaluate and guide future development

The redevelopment of Huntington Pointe Apartments is consistent with the findings and recommendations of the task force and the SNAP Action Plan.

In January 2007 the Brooklyn Park Economic Development Authority (EDA) directed city staff to begin negotiations with Dominion for the direct acquisition of the Huntington Pointe Apartments. Huntington Pointe is a 306-unit apartment complex located at Brooklyn Boulevard and Regent Avenue. Dominion Corporation is the current owner of Huntington Pointe. For more information and updates on this project visit <http://www.brooklynpark.org/sitepages/pid1320.php>.

26. Some town homes have missing siding and are need maintenance – what can be done to upkeep town homes?

Through the City's Town Home Loan Program, town home associations may be eligible to receive a low-interest loan to make exterior property improvements, including siding. For more information call 763-493-8145.

27. What kind of youth opportunities are there in Brooklyn Park?

A listing of the many Recreation opportunities for elementary and preschool youth can be found on our website at <http://www.brooklynpark.org> or by calling us at 763-493-8333 to be mailed a seasonal brochure. Another good community resource for youth programs and services is through the School Districts' Community Education departments. During the summer months, the City offers the Teen World program. During the school year, the Recreation and Parks Department partners with the junior high schools to provide after school activities and dances at school. Our youth development programs for this age group focuses on leadership, service to others, community engagement, and positive recreational socialization.

In addition to the programs offered through the Recreation and Parks Department, there is also a skate park located adjacent to the Community Activity Center and many parks throughout the city. Mosaic Youth Center, located in the southwest corner of Brooklyn Park, offers a variety of programming for middle school- and high school-aged youth. Unfortunately, the Mosaic will be moving to the Crystal Community Center in the fall. The Hennepin County library provides a number of resources for youth. Many local churches also have very active youth ministries which provide youth with many programs and resources.

28. How do we create more youth and family opportunities?

Contact our staff at 763-493-8333 to talk with our Recreation professionals and work with us to look at creating new opportunities in your area.

The Brooklyn Park City Council recently approved the creation of the Youth Opportunities Coalition to bring together various community partners in Brooklyn Park, also called Youth CHAMPIONS. The coalition members will include the corporate community, organizations, religious groups, parents, the City of Brooklyn Park, Hennepin County, schools, higher education, foundations, and, most importantly, youth. The goal of the coalition will be to study the opportunities available to youth in Brooklyn Park and propose ways in which the City can better serve its youth. Any youth ages 14-18 or adults who are interested in joining the coalition can call the Champions For Youth Office at 763-488-6388 or email us at championsforyouth@comcast.net.

29. Activities for youth through the city are expensive – what can be done to eliminate or lessen these costs for youth to participate?

Our recreation program and activity fees maybe reduced up to 100% based on need for Brooklyn Park residents- contact us for information at 763-493-8333- it's easy! Our goal is to find a way for every young person in Brooklyn Park to participate.

30. How often is playground equipment inspected?

A Parks Maintenance staff member goes out twice a month to inspect playgrounds. In addition, when staff are in the parks on a weekly basis, a visual inspection takes place. It is helpful if residents are at the playground and see any repairs needed to call Operations and Maintenance at 763-493-8350 to report any issues.

31. Brooklyn Park has an image problem. Why is there so much negative press?

Brooklyn Park's image problem is often related to the crime that occurs in the city. Most media outlets in the Twin Cities cover crime as lead stories because unfortunately, that is what sells newspapers and gets television viewers. With that being the case, any shooting, murder or violent crime is of interest to journalists.

32. What can we do to create more positive stories?

We need you, as residents, to let the city and the news media know about the *good news* happening in Brooklyn Park. Do you know a child or have a child that is making a positive impact on the city? Or is there a person you know that is going *above and beyond* the call of duty to make life better for residents? We need to make an effort to publicize all the wonderful attributes and people this city has. If you have some good news, you can call the city's communications coordinator, Mary Tan, at 763-493-8003. She will help you pitch your good news story idea to the media, and may even put it in the city's newsletter *Park Pages*.

33. Why aren't there sidewalks on many of our streets? How can we get more sidewalks?

The City's Operations and Maintenance Department has a master sidewalk plan that is followed in cases where sidewalks do not exist and when sidewalks will be built with new development. The City's Planning Division works to plan for sidewalks along significant roads in our new developments and as many local streets as reasonable, especially where there is a connection to schools or parks. Many people, however, are still not in favor of adding sidewalks in existing neighborhoods. Contact Operations and Maintenance at 763-493-8007 or the Planning Division at 763-493-8056 or contact your elected officials with your concerns.

34. What is the City's non-homestead policy? Are taxes higher because of this policy? And do some rental owners choose not to get a rental license because of the increased costs?

Homesteads are regulated by state law. Homesteads are granted to properties that are owned and occupied by the owner, or a qualified relative of the owner, all other properties are classified as non-homestead. A married couple is allowed one homestead. The wife and husband cannot each own a home and get homestead on both except under very narrow circumstances. Each year the Assessor's office receives a list of Social Security numbers from the state of Minnesota that match on more than one homesteaded properties. These properties are investigated and the homestead is removed when necessary. The difference between homestead and non-homestead taxes is not as great as it has been in the past; the maximum homestead credit is \$304 and is reduced as the value of the property increases.

Rental licenses are required in Brooklyn Park, they are not a choice. Assessing and Business Licensing have been involved in a year-long process to check non-homestead properties for the correct status; this has resulted in over 100 properties receiving homestead status and 200 properties applying for a rental license.

35. How can Neighbors confront issues without retaliation?

In most instances you have the ability to remain anonymous when you call 911. Simply tell the 911 dispatcher that you would like to remain anonymous, but ask the dispatcher to have

the officer call you at their earliest convenience. When the officer calls, you can relay the information you have and tell them your concerns about safety. Officers are very sensitive to this need and will take care of you.

If you are reporting a longstanding issue in the neighborhood that needs some problem solving, contact the COPS officer assigned to your neighborhood. If you no longer have that information, simply call the police department at 763-493-8222 and you will be connected to someone who can help. When speaking with the COPS officer, be very plain about your concerns or worries about being identified.

36. What is the city curfew time?

Curfews apply to anyone under age 18, at any public place, including streets, common areas of schools, hospitals, apartment houses, office buildings, transport facilities and shops. Parents always can set tighter curfews.

Curfew hours are staggered, depending on age and day of the week:

- For juveniles under age 12, curfews are from:
 - 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday to 5 a.m. the next day.
 - 10 p.m. Friday or Saturday to 5 a.m. the next day.
- For juveniles 12 to 14:
 - 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday to 5 a.m. the next day.
 - 11 p.m. Friday or Saturday to 5 a.m. the next day.
- For juveniles 15 to 17:
 - 11 p.m. Sunday through Thursday to 5 a.m. the next day.
 - 12:01 a.m. to 5 a.m. Saturday or Sunday.

Law enforcement officers can ask for information about why a juvenile is out after curfew. They can't issue a citation, detain someone or take them into custody unless, after speaking to the child and considering the circumstances, they reasonably believe the child has violated the ordinance and no exceptions apply.

What are the exceptions? If a juvenile can prove that:

- They are accompanied by a parent, guardian or responsible adult.
- They are working or going to and from work.
- There is an emergency situation.
- They are going to, attending or coming home from an official school, religious or recreational activity, sponsored or supervised by a public entity or civic organization.
- They are on an errand at the direction of a parent or guardian.
- They are exercising First Amendment rights, protected by the federal or state constitution.
- They are engaged in interstate travel.
- They are on a public right-of-way, boulevard or sidewalk abutting property where they live or a neighbor's property.

37. If I suspect a home is over-occupied, what should I do?

There are no criminal penalties for individuals actually living in the home. However, there are some concerns that may need to be addressed. These may include health code violations, parking issues, and occupancy levels that exceed rental agreements. If you have concerns about over occupancy, please contact a COPS Officer at 763-493-8222. You may also contact Code Enforcement officials at 763-493-8070.

38. If I see graffiti in public areas or on private property, how should I report it?

Beyond the property damage it causes, graffiti may be symbolic of a larger criminal problem for our city. Graffiti is sometimes used by illegal gangs to "claim" territory or to threaten rivals. It is important that the police are given an opportunity to document the graphics

before they are painted over. Once documented, COPS officers and officers assigned to the Gang Strike Task Force will analyze the symbols to gather criminal intelligence. Victims of Graffiti on private property should call 911. An officer will respond, take pictures, and gather whatever information is available. If you observe it on public property, call 911 to report it.

39. For property damage crimes, are those convicted still liable for the cost even after jail time served?

If you have been the victim of a property crime, please try to provide the officer a general estimate of the value of the damage at the time the report is made. If it is a felony level offense, you will be contacted during the court proceeding either by telephone, or by mail to provide damage estimates. During the sentencing phase, the judge will order the defendant to pay for the damages as part of the penalty. If the convicted person fails to pay, a warrant may be issued for their arrest. The same principal would apply for lesser offenses and for damage caused by juveniles. If you have any questions about your specific case, you should contact the Sergeant of Investigations at 763-493-8309.