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ANNUAL NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

The Hutchinson Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative has scheduled the following breakfast meetings in each of the featured neighborhoods this January. These annual meetings will be an opportunity for residents to talk about 2018 – what worked and what can use improvement – and to set priorities for the year ahead.

Hutch Rec will provide the breakfast - check out each of the neighborhood Facebook pages for more details and to RSVP.

SW Bricktown: 9 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 19, at SW Bricktown Neighborhood Center, 111 S. Madison St.

College Grove: 8:30 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 26, at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 407 E. 12th Ave.

Farmington Park: 10 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 26, at Emanuel Lutheran Church, 140 E. 30th Ave.

Hutchinson Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative is provided through a partnership with the City of Hutchinson & Hutch Rec. For more information, visit Hutch Rec at hutchrec.com or the Hutchinson Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative Facebook page.



THE CURBSIDE CHAT

CHARLES L. MAROHN, JR. PE AICP

@CLMAROHN | @STRONGTOWNS



In Your Neighborhood

WINTER 2018-19

A Newsletter from the Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative

Small bets are smart bets for neighborhoods, cities

For hundreds of years, towns and cities developed with the same basic pattern: A few people started off small, building a few inexpensive buildings.

If things went well, these communities would grow naturally, with more inexpensive buildings going up around the original core, while the original buildings in the core were replaced with larger and more lasting buildings, Strong Towns founder and president Charles Marohn said at a "Curbside Chat" on Oct. 23.

If things went poorly and the nascent community failed, the people would just move on, with fairly minimal losses, Marohn said. They made small bets that they could afford to lose.

Part of the reason so many cities are in tough financial situations now is that over the course of the 20th Century, developers and cities largely abandoned small bets, shifting resources into big bets while making it harder for true local entrepreneurs to make their own small bets.

One way Marohn suggested Hutchinson could make things easier for entrepreneurs to get started is by allowing them to work on certain building code issues over time rather than having to spend all that money up front. Immediate health and safety issues would still need to be addressed, but an inspector could identify non-emergency compliance issues to address over time.

Grassroots efforts

Marohn also discussed how grassroots efforts at the neighborhood level can make big differences by starting with small investments. He highlighted the example of Broad Avenue in Memphis, Tenn., which had struggled for decades. In 2010, over one weekend, residents and businesses painted bike lanes and crosswalks, placed benches and planters, and opened pop-up shops in existing, empty buildings. About 15,000 people visited Broad Avenue that weekend, and it was the spark to revitalize the neighborhood. Since then, the new Broad Avenue Arts District and surrounding Binghampton neighborhood have seen more than \$25 million in new investment.



Gaps are major problem facing Hutchinson

The biggest problem facing Hutchinson is the number and size of "gaps" in the city. Those gaps are a problem because of all the expensive street, sewer, water, and other infrastructure that has to go past them, without the gaps contributing anything to the city.

And those gaps are largely the result of a familiar growth pattern around the country since World War II. Since World War II, Hutchinson's population has increased only by about one-third, but the size of the city has ballooned to multiples of its 1940 size.



Paint Reimbursement Limit Increased

If your house is in need of repainting, a city program to reimburse homeowners for paint costs will go farther this year than the past. Hutchinson increased the reimbursement limit for Brush Up Hutch! from \$300 to \$500.

City Council approved the increase after a recommendation from the Housing Commission. The program was established in 2011 and has helped offset the cost of paint for 100 houses. In 2017, it became clear the \$300 limit wasn't enough to cover the cost of paint for an average size home, as six out of eight homes painted that year spent more than \$300.

How to qualify

Any home in the city with an appraised value below \$50,000 is eligible, provided it is visibly in need of repainting. Homeowners can also qualify if their income falls within a limit based on the number of people in the household, starting at \$48,150 for a single individual and increasing up to \$90,825 for a household of eight or more.

To apply, contact the Planning & Development Department at (620) 694-2639. If approved, homeowners should keep receipts for the paint they purchase, and after the project is completed submit receipts for reimbursement, up to \$500.

City Changes Property Maintenance Enforcement Policy

Hutchinson City Council this fall repealed a policy that required inspectors to receive a complaint about property maintenance before they could enforce the property maintenance code. But that doesn't mean inspectors are now going to blanket the city, looking high and low for issues to cite.

For one thing, the city isn't adding inspectors, and the current inspector keeps busy. Building Official Trent Maxwell said the inspector will spend the winter focusing on completing exterior rental inspections. With the policy change, however, if the inspector sees problems with other properties while conducting those rental inspections, he can send notice to those property owners about the problem.

"If my inspectors see a property that they feel should not wait, they will cite the property for violations," Maxwell said.

When an inspector finds violations, they generally give the property owner 30 days to fix the problem before taking any other enforcement action. And most cases can get more time than that based on weather, how much work is required, and the inspector's workload, Maxwell said.

The city's mission with code enforcement isn't to punish people or take them to court; it is to make Hutchinson a better, safer city.

NEIGHBORHOOD VOICES COLUMN: Farmington Park kids spark memories

By Marla Long, Farmington Neighborhood resident

Editor's note: In the new Neighborhood Voices column, we will feature stories from residents about positive things they have seen in their neighborhoods. To submit a column, email astewart@hutchrec.com.

I have lived in the Farmington Park area since 1991, and I've had my own daycare for 17 years. Working from home all day, I see a lot that goes on in the park, and the best part is happy kids playing while parents or grandparents sit and watch them or even push them on the swings or merry-go-round. I remember watching the day they took down the space ship. I've seen grown men take pickup basketball games very seriously. But one thing memory out in my mind.

A few summers ago, on a hot and windy trash pickup day, someone's recycling poly cart blew over, and recyclables blew all over our lovely park. Paper and plastic were everywhere. A group of young grade school children saw what happened, and quickly started picking up the trash, chasing as the wind was still blowing, making it difficult. I think it may have turned into a game of who could grab the most flying pieces. But they were having fun. It must have taken a half hour, but by the end these kids cleaned our park up and an adult that was with them sat the poly cart up again.

It was good to watch those kids. It was proof to me that we have great kids who enjoy a beautiful park. I know for my husband and I, we also take a lot of pride in Farmington Park. This has been our neighborhood for 27 years now.

Street trees provide numerous benefits



This past spring, the Hutchinson Tree Board provided 17 new street trees – trees planted between the sidewalk and street – in a single block of the College Grove neighborhood that had lost many trees to disease in the past.

It will take years for the strong, slow-growing tree varieties selected to grow to full size, but the benefits will be well worth the wait, as study after study underscores the benefits of trees in general and street trees in particular. Here are a few of their notable benefits:

Property values

People naturally understand that trees improve homes and neighborhoods, and that knowledge means that homes with trees are more valuable. A 2007 case study in east Portland, Ore., neighborhoods by the U.S. Forest Service found that houses with street trees sold for an average of \$8,870 more than those without them in the same zip code. In Portland's housing market, that price increase was comparable to adding an extra 130 square feet to the house. Even trees nearby increase a home's value, the study found, with a large tree increasing the value of all homes within 100 feet by a combined \$12,828.

Many benefits of shade

Shade trees provide many benefits. Most obviously, it's more pleasant to walk in the shade on a hot, sunny day. Less obviously, that increased walkability indirectly improves security, as more people being out and walking helps to deter crime. Healthy shade trees also can help reduce energy use in the summer, depending on their placement. A study by the U.S. Forest Service in Sacramento, Calif., found houses with trees on the south and west reduced summertime electricity bills by an average of \$25 per month because of reduced need for air conditioning.

Good for infrastructure

Street trees provide some unexpected infrastructure benefits, as well. Trees prevent about 30 percent of rain that falls on them from ever hitting the ground, thereby reducing strain on storm water drainage systems and reducing flooding.

Additionally, the shade from trees reduces thermal expansion and contraction of asphalt, slowing degradation of streets. Studies in California suggest street trees can extend the life of asphalt by 40 to 60 percent.

Traffic and pedestrian safety

Research by Texas A&M University found that drivers slow down on streets with trees, typically by 3 to 15 mph. And comparisons of otherwise similar streets show that street trees reduce the frequency of run-off-the-road crashes and overall crash severity. Street trees also create a visual separation between the street and sidewalk, making pedestrians safer.

Leftover garden seed may work next year

By Pam Paulsen, K-State Research & Extension

Garden catalogs seem to come earlier each year. Since new seed can be expensive, you may want to consider using seed bought in previous years. We normally consider seed will remain viable for about three years under cool, dark, dry, conditions, but there are exceptions. For example, members of the carrot family (carrots, parsnips and parsley) are short-lived and are usually good for only one to two years.

If you are unsure of viability and have plenty of seed, there is an easy method of determining how good your seed is. Place 10 seeds on a paper towel moistened with warm water and cover with a second moistened towel. Roll up the towels and place inside a plastic bag with enough holes for air exchange but not so many that the towels dry quickly.

Place the bag in a warm place such as the top of a refrigerator. Re-moisten towels with warm water as needed. After the first

week, check for germination. Remove sprouted seed and check again after another week. Add these numbers together to determine the percent germination. If only 50% of the seeds germinate, you then know you will need to plant twice as many seeds to get the desired amount of plants.

Ashes in the garden

You may have heard that using wood ashes on your garden can help make the soil more fertile. Though ashes do contain significant amounts of potash, they contain little phosphate and no nitrogen. Most Kansas soils are naturally high in potash and do not need more.

Also, wood ashes will raise the pH of our soils, often a drawback in Kansas where soils tend toward high pH anyway. Therefore, wood ashes add little benefit, and may harm, many Kansas soils. In most cases it is best to get rid of them.



Sign Toppers Go Up in Farmington Park

City workers installed sign-toppers in Farmington Park neighborhood the first week of November. The colorful design - selected by residents - includes a tree, whose trunk can also be seen as two neighbors. Signs were purchased with money from the city Planning and Development Department budget.