



# Metro Codes

E - News for Neighborhoods

Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County

## **Nashville Named One Of America's Most Digital Cities for 2006**

**S**acramento, Calif.—The most technology-advanced cities in America have been named by the Center for Digital Government ([www.centerdigitalgov.com](http://www.centerdigitalgov.com)) based on its 2006 Digital Cities Survey. The sixth annual study examines how city governments are utilizing digital technologies to better serve their citizens and streamline operations.

“We were so happy to see the fantastic improvements and innovations made by cities from coast to coast,” said Cathilea Robinett, executive director for the Center for Digital Government. “Each year, while conducting the Digital Cities Survey and other popular survey programs, we continually see America’s state and local governments raising the bar and expanding their use of technology to serve citizens. We can’t help but be inspired and impressed by the amazing strides made by this year’s participating cities.”

While the survey is open to all U.S. cities with populations of 30,000 or more, there are a handful of cities consistently at the front of the pack. Of note, Corpus Christi, TX has been in the top 10 since 2003 as has Madison, WI who each too top honors in their categories. In cities between 125, 000 and 50,000 in population Alexandria, VA shares first place with Madison, WI after holding forth place last year. Other top performers from Beach, FL who took first place last year in their first year in the survey.

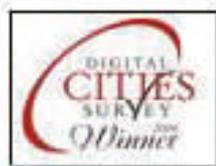
This year’s Digital Cities Survey was sponsored by Hyland Software, developers of OnBase ([www.onbase.com](http://www.onbase.com)) and CDW-G ([www.cdg.com](http://www.cdg.com)), both proud partners of state and local governments across America. Winners will be honored at a special awards ceremony conducted by the Center for Digital Government on December 7, 2006 in Reno, Nevada.

Below, you will find the top 10 cities from the 250,000 or more population:

### **Congratulations, Digital Cities Top Ten!**

250,000 or more population category:

- 1st—City of Corpus Christi, TX
- 2nd—City of Tampa, FL
- 3rd—City of Tucson, AZ
- 4th—City of Aurora, CO
- 5th—City of Nashville, TN**
- 6th—City of Colorado Springs, CO
- 7th—City of San Diego, CA
- 8th—City of Miami, FL
- 9th—Cities of Mesa, AZ / Washington, D.C.
- 10th—Cities of Phoenix, AZ / riverside, CA



## **Happy Holidays!**

**A**s the year comes to a close, I am reminded of all of the neighbors I have met this year, many for the first time. Everywhere I have traveled I have found groups of neighbors gathered together with one common goal in mind, to improve the livability of their neighborhoods. We’ve worked together; individual citizens, neighborhood groups and governmental agencies to move Nashville ever closer to that goal. And our efforts are getting national recognition.

Nashville has been voted as the best place to live, work and play and our Mayor has been selected as a top public official by Governing magazine. All of these accomplishments, large and small are due in no small part to the efforts of Nashville’s citizens taking an interest first in their own neighborhoods, and then stepping out to lend a hand to help shape our city’s future.

Without a doubt, I have one of the greatest jobs in the world. I get to be a part of the process and help it along its way. Together, we have made a difference in the way our city looks and in the lives of some of our neighbors. As we celebrate the Christmas season, I reflect on the blessing I have received from being a part of Codes and the opportunities I have had throughout the year to make a difference.

Without exception, those opportunities have come my way because a concerned citizen or neighborhood organization took the time to care and made the effort to get involved. For that we at Codes want to thank you. And from all of us with Metro Codes, we wish everyone a safe and joyous holiday season!

**William H. Penn, Jr.**

*Assistant Director—Department of Codes Administration  
Property Standards Division*



## Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Director Michelle Steele



Upon taking office on September 21, 1999, one of Mayor Purcell's first official acts was to sign an executive order creating the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods. The goal was to link neighborhood groups and citizens to Metro Government and through these efforts, Nashville's neighborhoods would become stronger, better places to live.

Michelle Cummings Steele is the Director of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods. Ms. Steele came to Metro in September of 1999 when Bill Purcell was first elected Mayor. She served as a neighborhood liaison in the office answering daily calls for constituent services. Ms. Steele moved up the ranks quickly, first becoming the Training Coordinator for the very successful Neighborhood Training Institute, to Grants Coordinator for the Community Enhancement Grant and eventually the Program Coordinator for all programs implemented in the Office.

In September of 2003, Ms. Steele was named Director of the Office of Neighborhoods, after her mentor, Brenda Wynn, took the Director of community Affairs position with Congressman Jim Cooper's office. Ms. Steele has continued the commitments first started in 1999 to ensuring the citizenry of Nashville and Davidson County have a voice in Metro Government and are informed, active and involved. Since taking the directorship, the Office of Neighborhoods has increased the number of groups registered with the office, going from nearly 400 groups to over 600. Billy Fields, who was once a member of Michelle's staff and is now assigned to Codes Administration had a chance to talk with Michelle about her role and experiences with the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods.

**CODES:** What do you see as our greatest accomplishment?

**STEELE:** First let me say that the work we do in the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods is a team effort. We have accomplished a great deal since Mayor Purcell established the Office of Neighborhoods. If I had to pick one thing as the greatest accomplishment though, I would say it is the increase in the number of organized neighborhood groups and associations across the city. I believe the Mayor's focus and support for neighborhoods was a catalyst for them to organize and speak out. It has been a great experience watching as new neighborhood leaders emerge and begin working to improve their community. The administration is being held accountable and believes we are standing up to the test.

**CODES:** Can you describe the role of the Neighborhood Response Team (NRT) in this success?

**STEELE:** The NRT has allowed multiple agencies of government to gather monthly to review areas of concern. I think the NRT is a great approach to problem solving and dealing with the most serious environmental-health-safety issues facing a neighborhood. NRT is made up of various departments within Metro that touch our neighborhoods: Codes, Health, public Works, Police, Planning, Social Services, Parks, Water and the Fire Department. We have chosen specific areas of concern and targeted resources in a cooperative effort to achieve success.

**CODES:** Where has the Codes Administration fit into this success?

**STEELE:** Day in and day out, Codes put forth a tremendous effort. By implementing pro-active programs, including the strategic Neighborhood Initiative, Codes has been a great partner for MOON and neighborhoods all over the county. I can tell you, Codes is always looking for ways to improve. In fact, I believe the design and implementation of pro-active programs through Codes is unprecedented.

**CODES:** Any regrets?

**STEELE:** I do regret that the community enhancement grants haven't be funded during the past several years. These grants made a difference in the community. But I am so happy that as a part of Celebrate Nashville Wal-Mart is providing monetary assistance for neighborhood-community based projects. While it will not be a specific project from MOON, it is clearly a great way for neighborhoods to fund projects which will improve their quality of life.

Always working to improve the livability of Nashville's neighborhoods, Ms. Steele also shares her time with a number of community based projects, volunteering her time with various community organizations to include the YWCA where she serves as a board member. She is also chair of the Racial Justice Council; Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc, 2nd Vice President and Chair of the GEMS program; Nashville CABLE member and as a United Way VRT. Ms Steele is also very active with her church where she serves in the Children and Youth, New Members, and Marriage Ministries.

Ms. Steele is married to Larry E. Steele, Jr. and they reside in Goodlettsville, TN.



# Winter Safety Tips

## Fireplace Safety Tips

As wintry weather and fuel conservation bring fireplaces into increasing popularity, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reminds consumers that more than 6,000 children and adults required hospital emergency room treatment last year for injuries associated with fireplaces and fireplace equipment.

Children under five years old sustained 65 percent of the injuries reported to the Commission; about 15 percent of the injured were between five and ten years old. Although most injuries involved lacerations, five percent were burns which frequently are among the most painful and long lasting injuries.

A less obvious hazard resulted in injuries for at least two families who were overcome by carbon monoxide or other toxic fumes. One family tried to burn charcoal in the fireplace and the other had accidentally thrown some polystyrene foam packaging onto the fire.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates that there will be 14,000 house fires this year started by fireplaces. Major causes of these fires include overloading the fire, damage to the fireplace such as missing bricks, obstructed flues, ignition of nearby combustibles, and flying sparks.

Factory made built-in metal fireplaces that were overloaded with fuel or improperly installed were associated with a number of fires last year.

For the safer enjoyment of the nation's 22 million fireplaces, the Commission recommends the following safety precautions:

- Be sure the fireplace was constructed for actual use, not just for decoration. Inspect it to be sure that it has adequate protective linings and smoke ducts and that the chimney is clear and in good repair.
- If installing a factory-made fireplace, insure that it is not near any combustible materials and has adequate flame and heat barriers.
- Open the damper before lighting the fire and keep it open until the ashes are cool. This will avert the build-up of poisonous gases, especially while the family is sleeping.
- Never use gasoline, charcoal lighter or other fuel to light or relight a fire because the vapors can explode. Never keep flammable fuels near a fire. Vapors can travel the length of a room and explode.



- Do not use coal or charcoal in a fireplace because of the danger of carbon monoxide build-up. It is not a good idea to burn trash or wrappings in fireplace fires because polystyrene foam and other coated materials can generate deadly fumes. Flying paper embers could also ignite the roof.



- Do not treat artificial logs like real logs. Artificial logs are usually made of sawdust and wax and have special burning properties. Be sure to read the instructions on the logs and follow them carefully. Use just one log at a time and do not add another log until the fire is completely out. Never add an artificial log to a natural wood fire that is already burning.
- Do not poke artificial logs because the flaming wax could stick to the poker and drop onto the floor or carpet. Poking a log could also cause a flare-up.
- Home rolled newspaper logs should never be soaked in flammable fuels of any kind because of the severe danger of explosion. Soaking the newspaper in water either before rolling or during rolling removes the clay content and will provide a better burning log. Then, stack the logs on end and let them dry for two weeks in the basement. When lighting the newspaper logs, use kindling just as you would for a regular fire.
- Do not overload the fireplace. Large fires can lead to overheating of wall or roof materials, particularly if the fireplace is constructed of metal.
- Always use a screen around the fireplace to keep sparks from flying out and to protect children and adults from accidental clothing ignition.
- Warn children about the danger of fire. Do not let them play with fire.
- Keep flammable materials such as carpets, pillows, furniture or papers away from the fireplace area. Be sure the Christmas tree is not close enough to be ignited by a spark. Be especially careful of accidentally igniting holiday wrapping papers.
- Make sure that the fire is out completely before retiring for the night or when leaving the house.



## ReLeaf Day—2006

On Saturday, Nov 18<sup>th</sup>, the 5<sup>th</sup> Nashville ReLeafing day took place at two locations in Nashville. The annual event is a great way to replant areas of town that need trees and have limited sources of tree planting money. It also demonstrates proper tree selections to use under powerlines.

Funding for Saturday's plantings came from the Nashville Tree Foundation and the Nashville Electric Service. All trees are planted by volunteers that hail from such diverse places as the Metro Tree Advisory Committee, NES, Mayor's Office, the Boy Scouts, Metro Codes Administration, and several citizen volunteers.

Locations for plantings include residential lots, schools, and metro park property. In the Sylvan Park area, 65 trees were planted throughout the neighborhood, including maple, cherry, redbud, and dogwood. In Germantown, there were 30 new trees planted including the same species plus buckeye. At Morgan Park, the Mayor and Tree Foundation members planted the Magdeburg Oak, a tree shipped from Nashville's sister city, Magdeburg, Germany.



Pictured from left to right are: Chris Armour, Glenn Springer, Stephan Kivett, Joanne Armour



## Employee Highlights

William H. (Bill) Penn, Jr. is the Assistant Director of the Property Standards Division. Bill supervises the Property Standards inspection staff and is the program manager for the NOTICE program, a community support program designed to provide direct involvement of citizens in the code enforcement process.



Bill holds a Masters degree in Public Administration from the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga and holds several certifications with the International codes council.

Bill is also a former Army Field Artillery Officer having served in the US and in Europe. Prior to coming to Nashville, Bill held a variety of positions with the City of Chattanooga. He was the city's first Recycling Coordinator, the Assistant Director of the City-Wide Services division of Public Works, and he was the Assistant Administrator of the Neighborhood Services Department in Chattanooga. He was manager of the Code Enforcement division, responsible for development and implementation of all of the division's community support programs.

Since joining Metro Codes, Bill has continued his efforts to build a responsive and pro-active division focused on supporting Nashville's neighborhoods. He regularly attends neighborhood meetings, participates in neighborhood ride-along visual surveys and actively seeks community involvement in the department's pro-active programs.

Bill's interests are varied and center on his love of photography and all things *Star Trek*. He is also very involved with environmental issues having served as president and board member of the Tennessee Recycling Coalition, president and board member of the Recycling Marketing Cooperative of East Tennessee, and is a former board member of the Tennessee River Gorge Trust.

He is also a past recipient of the Charles Walter Nichols award from the Tennessee Chapter of the American Public Works Association. Bill and his wife Martha currently live in lovely yellow home in Madison.

## Change of Use Permits

**S**ection 17.40.520 Of the Metro Zoning Code requires an application for a zoning permit must be filed with the Zoning Administrator prior to any person or entity commencing any construction or alteration of a structure or initiating a change in use of the property. No building permit shall be issued except on presentation of a valid zoning permit.

*What is a change of use?* If a use of a property and or / building or any portion there of is proposed to be changed to a use other than the what it is currently or has last been used, a permit is required. As an example if a building is being used for an office and the proposed use is a retail establishment a permit is required to make this change.

It does not matter whether there is construction work proposed with the change. A change of use permit is still required. Another example is converting a residence that may have been recently rezoned and is now being converted to a business must have a change of use permit.

*What is the purpose for a change of use permit?* Different occupancies under the zoning, building, fire and various other codes often apply differently than for the previous occupancy. As an example the parking requirements under the zoning code may be different. The building and or fire codes could have more stringent exiting requirements. Any number of requirements could be different which could prohibit the Change of Use or require alterations to a property to be able to comply with applicable codes for a new use.

Some of the biggest problems we have seen persons get themselves into as unsuspecting business owners were a result of not getting a change of use permit. It has caused problems for the tenants but also for leasing and sales agents. This has often times been discovered after persons have spent money for rehab, purchased properties without first obtaining permits. The consequences in some cases can be irreversible.

In addition to this any change of use generally requires new signage. This requires that sign permits be obtained in addition to a change of use permit. We will not issue sign permits on a location until the change of use permit has been issued when required.

We urge all persons connected with the opening of a business or persons in the business of offering real estate that will result in a change of occupancy to make sure proper permits are in place. The consequences of not obtaining a permit can be irreversible and expensive in some cases.



## Fall Leaf Collections Begin

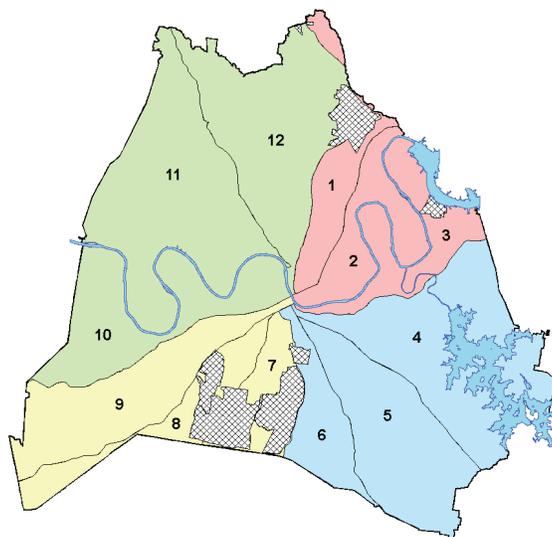
**B**eginning Tuesday, November 28, Public Works crews will travel Metro's 12 brush routes picking up bagged leaves left at the curb or in alleys. Crews will make a second sweep of the routes in January.

You should have bagged leaves out by the first day of collection in your area, use only paper or plastic biodegradable bags, and place them where your trash is collected. Satellite cities (Belle Meade, Forest Hills, Oak Hill, Berry Hill, Lakewood and Goodlettsville) are not included in Metro's leaf collection program.

There are several ways to dispose of leaves. They can be mulched in place by a lawn mower, piled up in your yard for composting, or set out in bags for Metro's collection service. Whatever you choose to do, please don't rake your leaves into the street where they may plug up storm drains or cause other problems.

Until the end of December, you can also take bagged leaves to Metro's Bordeaux mulch facility at 1400 County Hospital Road free of charge. If your leaves are bagged in plastic, please plan to take the bags back home with you. Plastic bags will not be accepted with your leaves. In January, there will be a minimal charge to dispose of bagged leaves.

For more information, call 880-1000, or visit online the recycle website at [www.nashville.gov/recycle](http://www.nashville.gov/recycle) for a more complete list of leaf collection guidelines.



**Leaves will be picked up on the following schedule:**

Routes 1, 2, 3	Nov 28 – Dec 8	Jan 22 – Feb 2
Routes 4, 5, 6	Dec 11 – Dec 22	Feb 5 – Feb 19
Routes 7, 8, 9	Dec 27 – Jan 8	Feb 20 – Feb 28
Routes 10, 11, 12	Jan 9 – Jan 19	March 1 – March 9

## Fence Construction in Davidson County

The old adage “fences make good neighbors” is not always correct, but improperly built and maintained fences always makes for bad neighbors and can get you into trouble.

You don't have to have a building permit from the Metropolitan Codes Department (although there are some regulations related to fencing materials) in order to legally build a fence. However, common sense should reign when constructing a fence or repairing an old one. You should bear in mind that while its “your” fence, you “share” it with anyone who is nearby, especially your neighbor.



The first suggestion for property construction of a fence is simple: *do not encroach on your neighbor's property*. Secondly, the Metropolitan Government's Code of Law's Zoning Code establishes the specific regulations for the heights of fences:

The maximum permitted height shall be:

- Two and one-half feet in height within 10 feet of a street right-of-way (property line). Open fences, such as chain link or those of similar nature are permitted to be six feet in height,
- Six feet in height in the remainder of the front setback (leading edge of house)
- Eight feet in height within the required side or rear setback (side and rear yards).

Maximum height is measured from finish grade level on the side of the wall or fence with the greatest vertical exposure.

Fences must be constructed of the following materials:

- Woven wire or chain link
- Wrought iron
- Wood, vinyl, steel, or aluminum slats of no more than one inch by six inches in width hung vertically, or diagonally between steel, wood, or vinyl posts no further than ten feet apart;
- Masonry consisting of brick, concrete block, split-face block, dry stack stones, or stones and mortar;
- Plastic or other synthetic material treated in a manner to maintain the fence in good structural condition and with an appearance that is aesthetically compatible with the type of fence it represents;
- Decorative-type split rail or dry-stack stone may be used for decorative fences.

Metal fences will consist of materials manufactured and/or treated in a manner to prevent rust or corrosion. Wood fences shall be painted, stained, or preserved in a manner to maintain the fence in good structural condition.

All fences must be maintained in a manner to preserve the

structural integrity and appearance of the fence, including (but not limited to) the replacement of broken boards or sections and preventing paint from peeling.

Finally, if you live in a neighborhood which has a zoning overlay (historic, conservation or similar zoning overlay), you should discuss your fence with the Metro Historical Commission or other agencies of government.

Please direct any questions concerning fences to the Metro Codes, Property Standards Division, at 862-6590.

## SHERIFF'S OFFICE PROVIDES SOBER RIDES FOR 22<sup>nd</sup> CONSECUTIVE YEAR

Once again this year, the Davidson County Sheriff's Office is sponsoring *Sober Ride*. This is a service that provides free, safe and sober rides for those in Davidson County too intoxicated to drive on New Year's Eve.



Sheriff Daron Hall has said “*Sober Ride* is a Nashville Tradition and people have come to depend on this service. Over the past 10 years, we have taken about 11,000 people home including almost 2,500 last year, and we feel certain a tragedy has been avoided by keeping these people off the roads.”

All drivers are Sheriff's Office employees and many of the nearly 200 volunteers have made *Sober Ride* their New Year's Eve Tradition. Many individuals work at headquarters answering phones, verifying calls, and mapping pick-up locations.

Drivers will take people home, but not to another party or bar, and serves only Davidson County. No reservations are allowed.

“The most important decision someone will make this holiday – or any holiday for that matter – is to not drink and drive. I encourage anyone who has had one too many to call *Sober Ride* and arrive home safely,” Hall added.

For a free, safe, and sober ride home this New Year's Eve, call **862-RIDE**. Operating hours are from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m.

This project is funded in part under an agreement with the Tennessee Department of Transportation, Governor's Highway Safety Office and the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration.





## *A History of Codes Administration Airs On Channel 3*

“A History of Codes Part I” began broadcasting on Metro Channel 3 (Comcast Cable Channel 3) in October.

“A History of Codes, Part I & II” are the first two episodes in a series of programs that will highlight the Department of Codes & Building Safety and the role that it has played in the evolution of Nashville into a major American city.

“This series provides an opportunity for the public to see the contribution that the Codes Department has made as it addresses building and public safety issues as well as quality of life issues that have affected the community, said Terry Cobb, Director.

Cobb, who has served as the Director of Codes Administration since 1990, believes that this series will go a long way toward answering many questions that the public may have regarding Codes Administration and its policies.

The series title, “The Metro Department of Codes and Building Safety Presents...,” will be produced in cooperation with Metro Channel 3 and marks the first time that a program concerning Codes Administration has been featured on the local government channel.

Upcoming programs include, “The Structure of Codes”, “Rehab Codes & Downtown Redevelopment”, “Responsive & Pro-Active Code Enforcement”, “The Other Public Safety Agency” and “Zoning 101”.

The programs have been running throughout November, and will continue to run during December. To check on the current broadcast schedule, you can access them by the following link: <http://www.nashville.gov/calendar/metro.htm>.

**Department of Codes and Building Safety**



Metro Office Building  
800 2nd Ave, South  
Nashville, TN 37210  
615-862-6590 / Fax 862-6593

**Mayor - Bill Purcell**

Director - Terry Cobb  
Assistant Director - Bill Penn

Office Hours: Mon-Fri / 7:30-4:00

## HOLIDAY SHOPPING



Christmas is a time of the year during which many of us will be busy shopping and running errands in order to be ready for the upcoming holiday celebrations. We must not forget that criminals will also be out and about looking for easy targets to make a big score. Here are some simple tips that can reduce your chances of becoming a victim of crime:

- In parking lots, always be aware of your surroundings
- Don't display large sums of cash. Use credit cards/debit and personal checks whenever possible.
- Always have your car keys in your hand when walking in parking areas.
- When possible, shop with a friend or spouse.
- Most malls provide security personnel to escort you to your vehicle. *Don't be ashamed to ask!*
- Never leave valuables in plain view inside your vehicle. This is what many criminals look for, an easy target.
- Always scan the parking lot for suspicious persons or vehicles before you park and exit your vehicle.
- Don't display gifts under your tree from a front window of your home. Although this looks pretty, it can be attractive to would-be thieves.
- Always try to get as close to a well lit area as possible, if not close to the light itself.
- Never leave your purse or other valuables unattended in shopping carts, even for a short time. An unattended purse is an easy target for a thief.
- If you're stopping at a convenience market or fast food restaurant, and are only going to “run in for a minute”, a few of these tips might be handy:
- Always turn your car off, lock your car and take your keys with you.
- **NEVER** leave your child in the car, even for a few moments, *especially* if the doors are unlocked.

**Terry Cobb** and **Bill Penn** welcome your feedback on our e-newsletter. Please send your comments to [Bill Penn](#), Assistant Director, Property Standards Div., 862-6516



For information regarding accessibility, please contact Manley Biggers at (615) 862-6521 or fax (615) 862-6499. He can also be reached at [manley.biggers@nashville.gov](mailto:manley.biggers@nashville.gov)