

WHAT IS A NEIGHBORHOOD PROTECTION DISTRICT?

It is an area where the residents and property owners ask the city to provide stronger enforcement of the housing and property maintenance codes. In these districts, the city will require that the property be inspected to see that it meets basic housing code requirements before utility service can be transferred to a new occupant or owner.

WHO CAN ASK THAT A PROTECTION DISTRICT BE ESTABLISHED?

Residents and property owners of any residential area can ask the Planning Department to set up a hearing to discuss setting up a protection district. A majority vote of owners and residents is required.

WHY DOES THE CITY BELIEVE THE DISTRICTS ARE NEEDED?

Our code enforcement program is intended to protect residential neighborhoods by preventing badly maintained property from having negative impacts on the value of other houses. However, we do not have the manpower to deal with all the deteriorating property in Tupelo under the current process, which requires a legal procedure and generally takes five to eight months.

WILL THE PROTECTION DISTRICT REQUIREMENTS APPLY TO BOTH HOMEOWNERS AND RENTAL PROPERTY OWNERS?

Yes. If an owner sells his house, there will have to be a certificate of occupancy before new owners can move in. However, this will not happen as often as rental units will change tenants.

WILL THIS REQUIREMENT MEAN LONG WAITS BEFORE TENANTS CAN MOVE IN?

No. The building inspectors have been using the certificate of occupancy process on commercial properties for several years now and are usually able to make their inspections on the same day they are requested, and always within 24 hours. If there are violations found that have to be corrected, the owner will be motivated to get the work done as quickly as possible in order to be able to get the tenants in.

CAN OWNERS GET THEIR PROPERTY INSPECTED AHEAD OF TIME?

Yes. If an owner wants to avoid a delay in getting his property sold or occupied, he may call and request an inspection at any time.

IF MY PROPERTY MEETS CODE REQUIREMENTS, WILL I HAVE TO KEEP GETTING INSPECTIONS?

No. Once a property is inspected and a certificate issued, it will be valid for two years. If it is sold or service is transferred to a new tenant, the planning department will check to see if a valid CO is on file. If so, no reinspection will be needed.

WHAT KIND OF THINGS WILL THE INSPECTORS BE CHECKING?

The inspections will focus on problems that could affect the health or safety of people living in the house, such as unsafe wiring, leaky roofs, defective plumbing, woodwork damage that allows water or insects in, et cetera.

WILL OLD HOUSES HAVE TO BE BROUGHT UP TO CURRENT CODE STANDARDS?

No. They are only required to be safe according to the standards under which they were originally built. There are a few exceptions such as open flame gas heaters are no longer allowed.

WILL THE CITY CHARGE A FEE FOR THE INSPECTIONS AND CERTIFICATE?

No, with one exception: if an inspection finds violations, the owner is given time to correct these and a reinspection is scheduled. If the violations are corrected by the time of the second inspection, a certificate is issued with no charge. However, if the problems still exist, a fee of \$100 will be charged for a third inspection.

WILL THE DISTRICT BENEFIT THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE THERE?

Yes. The stronger code enforcement authority will result in better maintenance of property, higher property values, and a higher standard of safety and appearance.

WILL THESE REQUIREMENTS BE PERMANENT?

No. The designation of a neighborhood protection district expires after three years. We believe that a substantial impact can be achieved in limited areas over three years.

WHEN WILL THE DESIGNATION TAKE EFFECT?

After a neighborhood chooses to request designation as a protection district, the City Council must hold a second hearing and vote for the district also. Thirty days from that Council meeting will be the official date for the district to take effect.

IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DISTRICT DESIGNATION AND THE INSPECTION PROCESS, WHO SHOULD I CONTACT?

You can call anyone in the city Planning Department at 841 6510, or come to the second floor of City Hall.