

Across the Fence



Talking with
each other
about common
neighborhood
concerns

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Across the Fence

Welcome to the Neighborhood!

Fort Collins has lots of great neighborhoods. That's the primary reason so many people want to live here. And great neighborhoods start with knowing your neighbors.

Most of us instinctively realize that we should know our neighbors but we often don't know how. We at the Neighborhood Resources Office understand how difficult meeting neighbors can be. That's why we're constantly seeking out ways of bringing neighbors together.

Knowing your neighbors well enough to talk with them is the first and most fundamental step to resolving problems quickly before conflict escalates. Time and time again, we've found that neighbors are not aware that their actions are negatively affecting others. Usually people are willing to make changes if you approach them respectfully.

So let's start out by asking:

- Would you feel comfortable talking to your neighbor if an issue arose?
- Could you call on your neighbors if you needed help?
- Do you know your neighbors? What are you waiting for?

This brochure offers information you can use in resolving the most common neighborhood issues. It all starts with developing respectful, considerate and welcoming relationships with your neighbors.

Call the Neighborhood Resources Office at 224-6046 if you need help developing this essential foundation for addressing neighborhood issues. We have lots of ideas and can also put you in touch with other appropriate agencies.

If despite your best efforts, conflict persists, consider the following alternatives:



Community Mediation Program

224-6022

The Community Mediation Program is a free, confidential service designed to resolve neighborhood problems. Mediation offers an alternative to traditional dispute resolution such as legal intervention. Issues resolved through mediation typically include noise, pets, property maintenance, parking and landlord/tenant disputes.

Mediation is a voluntary process in which neighbors, with the guidance of professional mediators, come together in a neutral setting to resolve their dispute in a way that encourages communication and compromise. All parties present their side of the dispute and develop options for a permanent, peaceful resolution. Services are also available in Spanish.



Noise

Fort Collins Police Services

221-6540

How much noise is too much? If you can stand at the edge of your property and hear noise coming from another property, it's probably too loud. If you're comfortable doing so, try talking to your neighbors and ask them politely to quiet down. If not, it may be necessary to call the police. Remember that it may take time for the police to respond, so don't wait until you are past your wit's end to call.

Keep in mind that there are a limited number of police officers and a noise complaint is usually not their top priority, especially on a busy weekend evening. When you talk to the police dispatcher, emphasize that you want the officer to follow-up and contact you with the results. Police may refer noise complaints to mediation for more permanent resolution.

If the problem continues, violators can be subject to fines of up to \$200 for the first offense, doubling each time to a maximum of \$1,000. Repeated violations can also be prosecuted under the Public Nuisance Ordinance.

As a part of life in a college town, parties are a particular target of noise complaints. To avoid such complaints, when planning a party, remember to:

- Limit the number of guests and keep the party and guests on your property.
- Inform your neighbors that you're having a party, give them your phone number and ask them to call if it becomes a problem.
- Make sure those drinking alcohol are 21 or older.
- Call police promptly if the party begins to get out of control. They will help you break up the party.



Trash and Rubbish

Health and Safety Department
221-6399

There's often a fine line between trash and treasure. That's why it's always best to first talk with your neighbor about your concerns, if you feel comfortable doing so. They may not be aware of the codes or your concerns and might be willing to tidy things up as a neighborly gesture. When you talk with them keep in mind the following standards:

- Trash must be stored in plastic or metal cans with tight-fitting lids, or in sealed plastic bags. Trash containers must be stored in areas screened from view of the street. Trash containers can be placed out for collection no earlier than 12 hours before scheduled pickup and cannot remain there for more than 12 hours after pickup. Trash cannot be placed on the street or sidewalk where it can interfere with bicyclists, pedestrians and vehicles.
- Accumulations of rubbish such as vehicle parts, tires, scrap lumber, old appliances or leaves and branches in your yard also violate nuisance codes.
- No furniture designed for indoor use can be placed in your yard or on an uncovered porch.
- Leaves and branches may be piled temporarily providing they are being gathered for disposal, but cannot remain in your yard for an indefinite period of time.

If you are not comfortable talking with your neighbor or they do not respond positively, call the Health and Safety Department. Inspectors will investigate trash and rubbish complaints. If warranted, inspectors send a violation notice to the property owner and, if applicable, the tenant of the property. The owner or tenant then has seven days to correct the violation. If not corrected, the City will provide the service to correct the violation and assess the cost to the property owner. In some cases a summons may be issued, requiring a court appearance.



Yard Maintenance/Weeds

Health and Safety Department

221-6399

Weeds and grass cannot exceed a height of 6 inches in yards and alleys or 12 inches in fields or undeveloped lots within City limits. Noxious weeds and brush piles are also prohibited. Your neighbors may have special circumstances and need help. Try talking to them first. If the situation does not improve, call in your complaint and inspectors will investigate within 24 hours. After a complaint is received, it is required that violations be corrected within seven days. If it is not corrected, the City will provide the service to correct the violation and assess the cost to the property owner.



Companion Animals

Larimer Humane Society

Animal Protection and Control

226-3647, (24-hour emergency assistance)

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday,
10:00 a.m.-6:30 p.m.

Wednesday
Noon-6:30 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday
10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Pets are an important part of our lives, providing us with lots of affection and companionship. Unfortunately, they also can be a real annoyance to our neighbors. To some folks, nothing is as irritating as an incessant barking dog. The first step toward a solution starts with talking to the dog's guardians. Since dogs often bark when alone, guardians may not be aware of their dog's behavior and can pursue a number of approaches for dealing with nuisance barking.

If this is not effective and the problem persists, Animal Control officers may first issue a warning and information on modifying the dog's behavior. This can be followed by a citation if complaints continue. If your neighbors are cited, be prepared to appear in court as a witness and to provide evidence to support your claim. Evidence can include documented times and statements by other affected neighbors.

Some people have several pets. There is no legal limit on how many domestic animals neighbors can have, providing they are well cared for. Dogs, cats, ferrets and all other legally permitted pets must be licensed, vaccinated and leashed if they are not confined to their yards.

Animal guardians are also responsible for picking up animal waste immediately. Complaints about accumulations of animal waste should be directed to Animal Protection and Control, as should all other animal complaints or concerns. Animal Control officers are also available 24 hours a day to respond to injured, aggressive and stray animals.

Representatives from the Humane Society and Animal Protection and Control are available to meet with neighborhood groups to discuss local animal ordinances, animal behavior and humane solutions to wildlife conflicts.



Wildlife

We share our community with many species of wild animals including coyotes, foxes, raccoons, squirrels, birds and reptiles. Many of these animals are able to and prefer to live near people. It's important to acknowledge these “urban wildlife” neighbors and learn how to co-exist peacefully. Over generations, these animals have adapted to city life and would not survive if trapped and relocated to the wild. In addition, trapping and relocating animals simply opens up the territory around your house and increases the resources available to other critters, ultimately increasing litter sizes and the likelihood of disease.

If you are experiencing unwanted visits from urban wildlife, non-lethal methods of control include ammonia-soaked rags, securely closed and fastened garbage cans and regular tree pruning. For complete, free information on humane wildlife control, visit the Larimer Humane Society web site at www.larimerhumane.org.

Injured, orphaned or ill wild animals should be immediately reported to Animal Protection and Control. Officers will transport animals to the Humane Society's Wildkind Wildlife Rehabilitation Center where licensed, professional rehabilitation specialists can provide appropriate treatment.



Trees and Shrubs

Forestry Division

221-6660

The abundance of trees is much of what makes Fort Collins so special and can also be a source of conflict. Talk to your neighbor and keep in mind the following standards:

- All vegetation must be trimmed so those approaching can easily see around the corner. This means that shrubs must not exceed 30 inches in height for at least 30 feet back from the corner intersection. Tree branches can be no lower than 6 feet at corners.
- Tree branches extending over sidewalks must be at least 8 feet high to accommodate pedestrians. Trees extending over the street must be at least 14 feet high for vehicle clearance. All vegetation must be trimmed back from the edge of the sidewalk so it is completely unobstructed.

- You can prune branches of your neighbor's tree overhanging your property, providing you do it in an aesthetic manner that doesn't damage the health of the tree. This is often a sensitive issue, and it's best to consult with your neighbor before doing any pruning.
- Residents own and are responsible for maintaining trees and shrubs located behind the sidewalk and toward the house. That area is private property and trees growing in this space are not the City's responsibility.



Snow Removal

**Health and Safety Department
221-6399**

Residents are required to shovel their sidewalks within 24 hours after a snowfall ends. If your neighbors' walks haven't been shoveled by that time, consider reminding them. Sometimes they just need to be made aware of the requirement. Offer to help if you're willing and have the time. If walks remain unshoveled, the City can have the sidewalk shoveled and bill the adjacent property owner for the cost.

The City will shovel sidewalks if they are buried by snowplowing after residents have cleared them. If your cleared sidewalk is covered by a snowplow, report it to the Streets Department at 221-6615. Residents can choose to clear the driveway and walkway to their house, but are not required to do so.



Vehicles and Parking

Fort Collins Police Services

221-6540 (on public streets)

Health and Safety Department

221-6399 (on private property)

Parking can become a particular problem because in many parts of the city there just aren't enough parking spaces. If there is a conflict, it's always best to first discuss it with your neighbors in an effort to reach compromise. If that doesn't work, consider mediation. As a last resort, call the City for enforcement, keeping in mind the following codes:

- Vehicles can be parked in the same place on a street for 72 hours. After that, they can be considered abandoned and are required to be moved. Police enforce this requirement on a complaint basis. Streets are public and vehicles can be parked in any legal parking place along them. It is not illegal for someone to park in front of your home, although we urge residents to be courteous and not take all their neighbors' parking places.
- Trailers of any kind cannot be stored on the street. Semi trailers and truck tractors exceeding 20 feet in length cannot be parked or stored on residential streets.

- Vehicles must be parked facing the correct direction at all times. They cannot block driveways or sidewalks (even your own) at any time.
- Inoperable vehicles that are not currently licensed or are not capable of running may not be stored on your property unless they are screened from public view.
- Vehicles may not be parked on front or side lawns unless they are parked on an improved area with either a rock, gravel, concrete or asphalt surface. Such surfaced parking areas cannot exceed 40 percent of any front or side yard.



Speeding and Traffic

Traffic operations

221-6630

The speed limit on residential streets in Fort Collins is 25 mph unless otherwise posted. There are a number of ways of to deal with speeders in your neighborhood. The first one starts with you. Statistics show most speeders live in the neighborhoods where they speed. So slow down in the neighborhoods. The life you save may be somebody you know or love.

- Residents can borrow radar guns through the Traffic Tamers program to monitor motorists. Violators will be mailed a warning letter to increase their awareness.

- “Slow Down in Our Neighborhood” front lawn signs and 25 mph trash can decals are available at the Traffic Operations office, 626 Linden St. The signs increase awareness and make a statement that neighbors will not tolerate excessive speed.
- You can also apply for the Neighborhood Traffic Safety Program, which offers a number of approaches for slowing traffic. Neighborhoods applying for the program are evaluated for techniques that can be implemented relatively quickly and inexpensively such as signing, street striping, and use of the Smart Trailer—which alerts motorists of their speed on a giant display. More elaborate measures such as speed humps or raised crosswalks will be considered only after all other efforts have been exhausted. Neighborhoods applying for these advanced measures will be prioritized based on effectiveness and must obtain approval of at least 70 percent of all affected neighbors.
- In some situations police can do enhanced traffic enforcement in neighborhoods with particular problems. Call the police at 221-6555 for more information.

We at the Neighborhood Resources Office hope this brochure has been helpful and we encourage you to get to know your neighbors across the fence. For more information call us at 224-6046.

City codes can be reviewed on the City’s website at www.fcgov.com