

Cradock Civic League

October 2, 2009

Joanna Hall, President

Cradock Civic League
92 Nicholson Street
Portsmouth, Virginia 23702
337-8764(Home) 515-3739(Cell)



Attention: Cradock Property Owner

Dear Property Owner,

The Cradock Civic League would like to make you aware of all the wonderful and exciting things that are happening in the Cradock community. The last two and half years have been the busiest and most successful years to date for the Cradock Civic League. The Cradock Civic League and Cradock Residents have worked closely with the Cradock "Neighborhood" Watch Coordinator Ted Lamb, the Sheriff's Department and the NIO Officer Bill Baker to reduce crime by 45%.

There are a number of projects underway that will further enhance property values in Cradock and improve neighborhood community life. The revitalization of the George Washington Park with the possible construction of a skate ramp is under study and development by the City of Portsmouth's Parks and Recreation.

This is the second year that World Changers will be doing volunteer renovation work on numerous Cradock homes in July. PRHA has completed two multiplex housing demolition projects on Cushing Street. UVA will complete the construction of the "Learning Barge" this summer, which is slated to float down the Elizabeth River to Paradise Creek and barge periodically at the planned Paradise Creek Nature Park. The first phase of the Paradise Creek Nature Park is scheduled to be complete in 2012 and the second phase in 2014.

The Cradock Civic League also designates each month "A Yard of the Month" which is photographed and published in the Cradock Times Newsletter and Historic Cradock Website to encourage homeowners to take pride in their homes and yards. The Clean Community Commission has a Community Clean Up day where volunteers clean areas within Cradock such as Afton Square.

The Cradock Civic League wants to let you know we are working hard to improve the physical environment of Cradock. The Cradock Civic League is asking You to help in this endeavor. We realize we cannot do this without our absentee landlords, vacant property owners and rental property owners. Maintenance of rental or vacant properties is key in the fight against crime, improving home values and tax assessments and improving the Cradock neighborhood.

VACANT PROPERTIES:

Researchers have found that 83% of unsecured vacant urban buildings showed evidence of illegal activities; crime rates on blocks with such properties were twice as high as similar streets without vacant properties. Also your neighbors who are homeowners who regularly maintain their property will have the burden of paying more real estate tax to compensate for the lost revenue from vacant property devaluation and absorbing the cost of inspections, materials and labor to board the property, lawn maintenance, debris removal, administrative costs, increased fire and police calls, and litigation on vacant properties. Vacant properties impact community real estate trends by keeping neighbors from achieving fair market value.

RENTAL PROPERTIES:

When drug criminals and other destructive tenants operate out of your rental property, neighborhoods suffer and landlords pay a high price. That price may include:

- Decline in property values -- particularly when the activity begins affecting the reputation of the neighborhood.
- Property damage arising from abuse, retaliation, or neglect; property damage from police raids.
- Fire resulting from the manufacturing or growing of illegal drugs.
- Civil penalties, including temporary closure of property -- or even property seizure.
- Loss of rent during the eviction and repair periods.
- Fear and frustration when dealing with dangerous and threatening tenants
- Increased resentment and anger between neighbors and property managers
- Loss of good tenants due to frustration of dealing with problem tenants.
- Your property can be designated a drug blight or a nuisance by law enforcement. These are real legal terms. *"Drug Blight means a condition existing on real property which tends to endanger the public health or safety of city residents and is caused by the regular presence of the property of persons under the influence of controlled substances or the regular use of the property for the purpose of illegally possessing, manufacturing or distributing controlled substances." Property where nuisance activity occurs regularly is blight on the whole neighborhood. The nuisances frighten away law abiding residents, discourage reinvestment and consume police and other city services.*

What can you do to help Cradock and to protect your investment? The first place to begin is to maintain the physical appearance of your property. Fix broken windows and siding and maintain the lawns appearance. Then secure the property with an alarm system. When a property looks lived in, it will not attract criminal activity.

Rental property owners can begin by knowing whom you are renting to. Do a criminal background and credit check on your renter. The benefits of investing time and effort upfront in knowing who you are renting to are:

- A stable, more satisfied tenant
- Increased demand for rental property
- Lower maintenance and repair costs
- Improved property values
- Improved personal safety for renters
- Appreciative neighbors
- More time spent on routine management
- Less time spent on crisis control

Please take the time to come to the Cradock Civic League meeting on the 1st Tuesday of the month and Cradock "Neighborhood" Watch meetings on the 3rd Tuesday of the month to learn about what's going on in Cradock and what you can do to help as a vacant or rental property owner. Also please feel free to contact our NIO – Officer Bill Baker at 757-235-5658 to discuss what you can do to protect your property and help make the Cradock neighborhood crime free and the best it can be.

We are all in this together and the Cradock Civic League needs your support. Every effort is rewarded with a better, safer and more beautiful community. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joanna Hall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke.

Joanna Hall, President

JH/jh