

Neighborhood Give Day Guide

*Do you have an “eye sore” property in your neighborhood?
Have you ever wondered what steps **you** can take as a neighborhood to do something about it?
This guide is for you!*

The Neighborhood Give Day Guide is a reference tool with resources and steps for remediating blight on the neighborhood level. It both offers you resources to solve problems as a neighborhood and offers the right numbers to call to evoke change from the city level.

If you have any questions, comments, or feedback for this guide, please contact Eden Slater at hhoward@knoxvilletn.gov or (865) 215-3232.

Scenario:

You live on a friendly street with a great group of neighbors. Most houses are well maintained and inviting with well-kept yards. However, in the middle of the street is one problem property – high grass, wild shrubs, and sporadic tree limbs mark the front yard with a backyard that resembles a jungle. The property is a frequent topic of conversation amongst you and your neighbors, but no one seems to know what to do about it. You have decided it is time to find a solution and see what you can do to address the issues with the property as a neighborhood.

Figure Out the Situation

Find the Address on KGIS Maps:

Based on the situation, there are different ways to go about addressing the blighted property. Determining the type of situation you’re dealing with will make a difference in how to move forward.

Figuring out if the property is owner-occupied is a good first step: [KGIS Maps](#) allows you to look up properties by the address and identify the owner.

To look up the address in question, simply type the address into the search bar, it works best if you only put the street name and number, and click the correct address on the bar to the left side. Click the red circle button with a white “i” in the top bar to see the information card for the property. Then, click the icon that looks like a person to see the owner card report. This report will show you who owns the property, the date of purchase, and owner’s current mailing address.

Assess the situation based the owner’s address.

If the owner’s mailing address is the same as the address in question, the person likely still lives at the home (if it is a home). This guide will walk you through the steps needed to work with the neighbor and help them clear up the property, if that situation is applicable.

If the mailing address is different than the address of the property, then it is likely the owner does not live at the home. This guide will take you through who to call, and what steps to take to address the property of a vacant landlord.

Call the City's 311 Hotline at 311 or 215-4311.

The [311](#) staff can find out any information the city has on the property. Tell 311 the address you are considering. Explain that you are not reporting the address, but would like to learn more about the situation. Ask if there are any open complaints, if the property owner has had any violations in the past, etc.

This step can help you when deciding how to proceed. If the city has an open complaint on the property, you can ask where the city is in their process, and if the neighborhood can do anything to decrease the eyesore in the interim. If necessary, you may be referred to the Neighborhood Codes Inspector assigned to the complaint for further information.

If the property is a home and owner-occupied, follow the steps below:

Step One: Reach out to your neighbor:

If your neighbor has let their property go to the point of "blight," they very likely have a reason. Be understanding and approach a conversation with this neighbor from a place of kindness and respect.

Pick two or three neighbors in your group to knock on the door of the home.

Pick neighbors who can approach this neighbor with friendliness and warmth. You want to approach from an angle of kindness, not judgment. Show this neighbor that the neighborhood would like to help the situation, not judge them or turn them in. Make sure to have at least two neighbors knock on the door for the initial connection, but don't bring so many people that it overwhelms the neighbor.

Introduce yourselves as members of your neighborhood organization. Explain that you have noticed they may need some assistance with their property, and you and your neighbors would like to help. Ask if they would be willing to let the neighborhood coordinate a volunteer day to clean-up for their yard.

It is also important to check in and ask if they have any family or community support, or if there are other difficulties they might be facing. This does not obligate you or the neighborhood to take care of their every need. If the person does have other needs, reach out to one of the resources listed, in the resource section on Page 9.

If they do not answer, leave a friendly card on the porch.

Explain that the neighborhood has stopped by and would like to discuss ways to help them clean up their yard. Introduce yourself and be sure to emphasize that you stopped by to meet and help them, not turn them in. Make sure to list a way for the neighbor to contact you and a time you would like to try and stop by again.

Asses who are they?

Is this neighbor an elderly person? A single person with a fulltime job? A single parent? Someone with a disability? Or, is it another situation? Depending on who they are, their need may go far beyond the blighted property.

If your neighbor is elderly and it appears that they may need extra assistance, reach out to the [CAC Office on Aging](#) at (865) 524-2786. The Office on Aging can send a representative out to this neighbor to assess their need for other resources. They may not have another need, but if they could use Mobile Meals, case management, a Senior Companion, etc., CAC can help them access these resources.

If the neighbor has a disability and it appears that they may need some extra assistance, reach out to the [Disability Resource Center](#) (DRC) at drc@drctn.org. The DRC is focused on providing resources and support to help people living with disabilities thrive and actively participate in their communities. You can also reach out to [Helen Ross McNabb Center](#), the [DIDD](#) at the State Department for Developmental Disabilities, or [ETHRA](#), for more resources.

Step Two: Assess the Blight need:

Once you have secured permission to assist your neighbor, ask if you can walk around the property and take pictures, either with them or on your own. Assess the issues:

1. Is the blight only in the yard?
2. Are there trees, large shrubs, or other potential large scale issues to address?
3. Are there issues with an exterior structure, front porch, outdoor steps, shed, etc.?
4. Are there issues with the house's structure?

Step Three: Evaluate if the Neighborhood Can Address These Needs:

Is this a project in the neighborhood's capabilities, or does it require professional support? Think through what it takes to tackle the project and consider the following questions:

1. Are there pieces of the project that neighborhood volunteers can take on?
2. Are there any safety concerns?
3. What types of tools and equipment are necessary to take on this project?
4. Are there people in the neighborhood who have any of these resources?
5. Are there community resources you can tap into to acquire these tools? (See suggestions for community tools and resources, number 11 on Page 10.)

Step Four: Present your findings to your neighborhood:

Discuss with your neighbors whether or not you feel confident taking on the project as a neighborhood.

If yes, follow the steps below. If no, turn to page 9 for other resources.

Step Five: Create an action plan:

Based on your evaluation, come up with a plan to move forward and address the problem. Whether you can address the issue as a neighborhood, or you need to seek outside help, developing an action plan to move forward is key. Assign neighbors to organizing, reaching out to volunteers and other neighbors, etc., and address the issue together.

If you feel confident that the neighborhood can take on the issue, pick a solution and follow the steps below:

Organize a Neighborhood Give Day:

Step One: Pick a date.

Reach out to your neighbors via Facebook, Nextdoor, your e-mail list serve, etc., and find a date that works for most people. Utilize resources like Facebook's Poll option, another polling website, or throw out a few dates for a general vote. Try to give neighbors three or four options to pick from and see when most people are available.

Saturday's and Sunday's are often the best days for clean-ups, with many people off work. However, every neighborhood is different; consider what might work best for the most people in your area.

Think through the season – the middle of winter may not be the best time for a clean-up, and summer can often be too hot. If you can, it is best to wait until spring or fall. In spring, more growth will occur, and in fall the leaves fall and create more of a mess. Temperature and school holidays are also important things to take into consideration.

Step Two: Pick a time.

Most clean-ups take two to four hours to conquer, depending on the size and state of the property and the number of volunteers. Additionally, volunteers are often willing to donate two to three hours of their day – It is easier to get people to agree to a two hour project than an all-day event.

Step Three: Notify ONE for the Neighborhood Give Day Calendar.

Contact the Office of Neighborhood Empowerment (ONE) at 215-3232 or hhoward@knoxvilletn.gov.

The ONE can add your cleanup to the Neighborhood Give Day Calendar, help you set up your cleanup, and access helpful resources and volunteers.

Let the ONE know the following information:

1. Is the cleanup on public or private property?

If the cleanup is on public property, i.e. a park, the ONE may want to contact Parks and Rec to inform them of the activity. If it is on private property, the ONE will want to look at KGIS to see if there are any issues from a city perspective in regards to removing waste/etc.

2. Is the property on a city street or private street?

If the property is on a city street, the ONE can contact Public Service to help with the appropriate cleanup measures.

If it is on a private street, such as in an HOA, the HOA or owner of the street will need to write a letter to the Public Service Department. This letter will allow city trucks to access the street to pick up the organic waste or drop off/pick up a dumpster. Keep in mind, private streets may not be up to city code, and the trucks could cause damage. The letter needs to acknowledge this issue; the city will not be liable for the street repair.

3. Are you dealing with trash or organic waste?

Is the cleanup to pick up trash and other inorganic materials? If so, the neighborhood may need a dumpster, trash bags, trash pickers, etc., to help dispose of the waste. If you need to request a dumpster, ask the ONE to do this for you. Dumpsters cost \$75 for the public, but as a Neighborhood Give Day project, the ONE can see about getting one for the cleanup for free.

If the cleanup is dealing with trash, the Neighborhood or ONE can reach out to [Keep Knoxville Beautiful](#) to request trash pickers, gloves, and other useful items that help in trash pickup.

Is the cleanup addressing mostly organic material, i.e. grass, branches, tree limbs, weeds, and other yard waste? If so, Public Service may need to be notified to pick up the debris from the side of the street. The ONE can contact Public Service about the date of your cleanup and ensure they are there to pick up the debris that week.

If you are planning to place a large amount of organic material on the roadside, you may want to ask Public Service for the easiest spot to place materials for pick up.

4. Do you need outside volunteer support?

Depending on the project, ONE can reach out to the community via the ONE Facebook page and newsletter to recruit community volunteers for the project.

The ONE would like to see the neighborhood recruit volunteers from within the neighborhood; it needs to be a neighborhood driven project. However, extra help can also be useful.

5. Do you need a flyer for the event?

ONE can create and print flyers for you to hand out in your neighborhood. Send the time, date, location, items needed, any special details, and number of copies to hhoward@knoxvilletn.gov.

Flyers are half sheets and printed in black and white. They can be picked up at the City County Building's Hill St. entrance. **Please give two weeks' notice, if you need flyers for your event.

Step Four: Plan Your Outreach.

You have a date, time, place, idea, and you need... people! How will you reach out and find volunteers for your event?

Come up with the communication to share with your neighbors.

It helps if everyone is sharing the same information. It should be obvious, but no matter the communication method, always include the meeting location with an address, the time, the date, and the day of the project. Pick a general location near the home to put on all outreach materials. This should be a convenient place for volunteers to meet, park, and easily walk or carpool to the actual location. You always want to be careful not to put someone's address out there for anyone to see. Always pick a meeting location.

Make sure you have all the facts: Not only do you need to let people know when and where, make sure you add the "why." Write a compelling blurb to show your neighbors that their time will not only decrease blight in the area, but will also help a neighbor in need, boost morale in the neighborhood, offer a way to connect neighbors, etc.

Be sure to include what tools and any yard or trash collecting materials needed. Always remind neighbors to wear closed toed shoes, bring water, and dress for weather conditions.

Describe the nature of the project: Will people be weeding flower beds, tearing down a fence, trimming shrubs, hauling tree limbs, etc.? Are there different aspects of the project for different people? For example, could strong adults be working on a construction issue or cutting out small trees, while other neighbors trim bushes and haul away debris?

Let neighbors know special details, and think through potential questions. For example:

1. Is the project appropriate for children?
2. Is there a special meeting spot, specific parking details, etc.?
3. Are there any potential dangers? Think it through: Is there a poison ivy patch, brier bushes, or other harmful plants people should be aware of? Is there trash that could be sharp or harmful?
4. Are you working with a person who has dementia, a mental disability, or another special circumstance neighbors may need to be aware of?
5. Does the neighbor have a dog or other animal that might try to fuss at people?

Think through who you should activate in your neighborhood.

Consider what neighborhood resources and neighbors should be activated to most effectively accomplish your project goals: Schools, landscapers, local businesses, etc. Think through who in your neighborhood has tools, supplies, food, volunteers, etc. People like to give back and feel connected to the place they live, work, and play; don't be afraid to think outside the box and find creative ways to include and activate all kinds of neighbors.

See the Neighborhood Assets section of the Neighborhood Give Day Resource List, at the back of the guide for ideas of how to activate your neighboring resources.

Plan your outreach method.

1. Facebook

Facebook is an easy way to spread the word. If your neighborhood has a Facebook page, you can make an event, invite others, and share it between neighbors. Make sure to include all the details listed above.

When you create a Facebook event, share it on the Neighborhood page and on your personal page. The more places you share the event, the more exposure you will get. Encourage other neighbors to share as well.

Add the OON as an admin on the event. This will allow the ONE to make edits, invite people, add notes, etc. If you need assistance setting up a Facebook Event, contact Hayley Howard at 215-3232 or hhoward@knoxvilletn.gov.

2. Neighborhood Website

If you have a website for your neighborhood, make sure to add a blurb about the event, put it on the events' calendar, etc. If you have a Facebook and website, link the Facebook event in the website.

3. E-mail List Serve, Next Door App., or other Communication System

If you have an e-mail list serve, Next Door page, etc., make sure to share the event details and the link to Facebook and/or your event website in the message.

4. Neighborhood Newsletter

If you plan enough time in advance and your neighborhood puts out a newsletter, be sure to include the event in your neighborhood newsletter.

5. Door to Door Flyers

Going door to door is always a good way to reach people who may not be on these other contact streams. See number 5 on Page 5 for steps to attain flyers from the ONE.

6. The ONE

Tell the ONE. We can make sure your event is listed on the Office of Neighborhood Empowerment's calendar, shared on the ONE Facebook page, and put in the neighborhood advisory newsletter.

Step Five: Plan the Event!

What will you do the day of your event?! Think through the logistics and consider some of the following:

Where will you meet?

Consider parking: is there room to park at this location? Should volunteers meet at the church parking lot up the street and walk or carpool to the house?

Consider visibility: If the property you are cleaning up is large or contains multiple houses, etc., make sure to add a specific meeting spot at the location.

Will the home owner be there?

If the project is at a person's home, make sure a neighbor, who has met this neighbor, knocks on the door to remind them about the group. A friendly face and hello can go a long way, especially if the person is elderly.

Ask them important questions: i.e. are there rose bushes the group shouldn't cut, do they want you to leave any certain shrubbery, etc. Remind them how long the group plans to be there and what you do and do not plan to accomplish that day.

What do you need?

Even if you are depending on neighbors and volunteers to bring the yard/construction tools needed to complete the project, plan to have small items that might come in handy:

1. Water – Ask volunteers to bring their own water, but also provide some bottles or jugs, just in case.

2. Snacks – Have a snack for the volunteers, small items such as granola bars, chips, and cookies are fine.
3. Gloves
4. Include Local Businesses: If you have a local business who will donate food or beverages and/or give a discount on these items, make that part of the event! It could encourage people to frequent the local business and build more neighborhood comradery afterwards.

Make a Game Plan.

Appoint a leader: This neighbor is in charge of coming up with the game plan for addressing the property, answering questions, and referring people to those who might know the answer.

Appoint a greeter: Have someone who stays at the meeting place or at the front of the property to greet volunteers as they arrive, instruct them on where to go, and deal with any issues.

Wrap Up:

Before you leave for the day, make sure you wrap up the project: have all the brush/trash piled in the appropriate place, ensure all tools are with their owners, thank volunteers, and end on a high note.

Make sure the neighbor knows you are finished.

Knock on the door and thank the neighbor for letting the group come out and help. If they are able to walk, show them the yard, and share in the joy of having a nice, beautiful space again.

If the neighbor is open to it, ask if they are willing to allow and/or be in a group picture. This can help for advertising future projects and showing who the group was able to help.

If someone in the group is comfortable being the contact, leave the neighbor with a number to call. This can be useful in case they have any issues getting brush removed, someone left tools behind, etc. Also, if the yard starts to get out of hand again, they know who to reach out to.

Make sure you take many pictures

Ask permission, from both the owner and the volunteers, first. Take a group shot, before and after photos, and some action shots. Show what a small group of neighbors can accomplish and emphasize how the project was both fun and impactful.

Thank your partners

Be sure to send out a huge shout out to your neighborhood and community volunteers, Public Service, and any other community, city, or business partners who donated time, support, or resources to your project! A social media and e-mail Thank You is acceptable, if you do not have time to send a personal card.

Share the photos and story with the ONE

We can use your success stories to promote more Neighborhood Give Days, and we love to show off what good neighbors are doing in the community!

Neighborhood Give Day Resource List

This list includes contacts for resources to help fight blight in your neighborhood, when the project is outside the neighborhood's abilities. If the neighborhood can handle parts of the project, but needs assistance in other areas, this list can also be useful:

1. Office on Aging:

Phone: (865) 524-2786

E-mail: dottie.lyvers@knoxseniors.org

Website: <http://www.knoxseniors.org/about/>

Address: 2247 Western Ave., Knoxville, TN 37921

The Office on Aging (OOA) is a useful resource in several ways:

- Resource for Vulnerable Seniors: The OOA has numerous resources to help seniors remain independent in their own homes. From Mobile Meals to Assisted Transportation, OOA can provide much needed resources to make sure these folks have what they need.
- Yard Maintenance: The OOA's Project LIVE Program utilizes volunteers to help seniors maintain their yard and other smaller projects. If you need extra support for yard upkeep or do not have the neighborhood support to organize a cleanup, Project LIVE is a good group to call.

2. Knoxville Leadership Foundation – Operation Backyard

Phone: (865) 524-2774 Ext. 106

E-mail: jzartman@klf.org

Website: http://www.klf.org/index.php/programs/operation_backyard/

Address: 318 N. Gay Street, Suite 210, Knoxville, TN 37917

Knoxville Leadership Foundation's Operation Backyard Program is a volunteer based program providing free home repair services to low-income, elderly, and disabled Knoxvilleans. Operation Backyard can help with house painting, roof repairs, and ramp building.

3. Catholic Heart

E-mail: chwcknoxville@gmail.com

Website: <https://heartworkcamp.com/dates/knoxville-tn/>

Address: 9245 Fox Lonas Rd., Knoxville, TN 37923

Catholic Heart work camp can handle larger projects, including building ramps, repairing porches, etc. It is a multi-day camp that always takes place in June. Project requests are made in April.

4. City of Knoxville Codes Enforcement – Building permit

Phone: (865) 215-2999

E-mail: bldginspections@knoxvilletn.gov

Website: http://knoxvilletn.gov/government/city_departments_offices/plans_review_inspections/building_permits_inspections

Address: 400 Main St., Suite 475, Knoxville, TN 37902

If you plan to do any major construction on the property, make sure to call and find out if you need a permit.

5. City of Knoxville Neighborhood Codes Enforcement

Phone: (865) 215-4311

E-mail: rmoyers@knoxvilletn.gov

Website: http://knoxvilletn.gov/government/city_departments_offices/plans_review_inspections/neighborhood_codes_enforcement

Address: 400 Main St., Suite 475, Knoxville, TN 37919

Neighborhood Codes enforcement can explain the situation on a property and start the process on addressing it from a City level. Call them first to find out if there is a history or an open case on the property you are looking to address.

6. Keep Knoxville Beautiful

Phone: (865) 521-6957

E-mail: info@keepknoxvillebeautiful.org

Website: <http://www.keepknoxvillebeautiful.org/>

Address: 2743B Wimpole Ave., Knoxville, TN 37914

KKB can provide trash pickers, bags, and gloves free of charge for any event dealing with trash and inorganic waste.

7. Office of Neighborhood Empowerment

Phone: (865) 215-3232

E-mail: hhoward@knoxvilletn.gov

Website: http://knoxvilletn.gov/government/city_departments_offices/neighborhoods

Address: 400 Main St., Suite 546, Knoxville, TN 37919

OON can help you connect to the right city departments, get a trash bin if needed, recruit volunteers, create you event on Facebook, and show your good work. Contact OON at start of your project for support, or at the end for recognition.

8. City of Knoxville Public Service

Phone: (865) 215-2060

E-mail: cweth@knoxvilletn.gov

Website: http://knoxvilletn.gov/government/city_departments_offices/public_service

Address: 3131 Morris Ave., Knoxville, TN 37909

Public Service can provide trash dumpsters, pick up brush and/or other organic matter from local streets. Go through the OON for this service.

9. Food City

Find the closest one to you!

Food City donates locally; tell them what you are planning and ask if they can give some snacks for your volunteers. They often donate \$25 gift cards.

10. Knox Heritage

Phone: (865) 523-8008

E-mail: info@knoxheritage.org

Website: <http://knoxheritage.org/>

Address: P.O. Box 1242, Knoxville, TN 37901

Knox Heritage can help address blighted historic properties. They can provide restoration advice to owners of historic homes, advocate for and work with community groups considering historic designation, offer grants for homeowners in historic districts, and purchase and restore historic blighted properties.

11. Neighborhood Assets

- a. Schools – Get the kids involved where appropriate! Schools are an excellent resource for volunteers, spreading the word, etc.
- b. Businesses – Get local businesses involved by asking if they can provide food, tools, or any other support for the project.
- c. Grocery Store – See if your neighborhood grocery store will donate snacks, water, advertise, or more.
- d. Restaurant – See if a local restaurant can donate a meal to volunteers or provide food.
- e. Landscaper – Ask your local landscaper to come out and lend support for the project.

- f. Churches – Churches are a great way to recruit volunteers, ongoing support for vulnerable seniors, and advertise for volunteers.

*Make sure to give a shout out to those who donated their time or resources!