

## Minutes from Physical Environment Subcommittee

Our committee met at the Hotel Julien on April 16, 2010. In attendance were: Carlotta Paige, Joyce Connors, Phyllis Russell, Mike VanMilligen, John Gronen, Wendy Lyons, Lynn Lampe, Sue Stork, Gabriella DeVega, Angie Petsche, Mary Rae Bragg.

After a lengthy discussion about current neighborhood improvement projects, partnerships with property owners, resident attitudes, and methods of opening conversations between different races, the Physical Environment subcommittee proposes the following recommendations to the Safe Community Task Force for their consideration:

**1) Set property maintenance standards that ensure an attractive, welcoming and safe neighborhood environment. Enforcement guidelines should be spelled out and followed.**

Rational: City agencies charged with setting housing construction standards should regard high quality in rental housing as the best long-term use of taxpayer funds, encouraging private builders to mirror the higher standards.

**2) Create an official welcoming program with a community liaison for all new renters (such as GDCC provides for new families coming to Dubuque).**

Rational: New renters should be required to meet with a community liaison that will provide them with information about the city's public and private agency offerings and explain precisely their leasing rights and responsibilities before they sign their contract with the landlord.

**3) Individuals who choose to own rental property in Dubuque must understand that they are considered business people who are responsible for providing housing that, at minimum, meets city standards which guarantee healthy, safe and comfortable rental living.**

Rational: The local Landlords Association exists to offer positive support to landlords. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of landlords belong to the association. Regardless of whether a property owner is involved with the association, all landlords should be expected to educate themselves on the procedures for meeting housing standards enacted by the city, benefiting from incentives that are provided, as well as libel when failing to meet their responsibilities.

**4) Create a Human Relations Department.**

Rational: Whereas our Human Rights Department focuses on legal issues, a Human Relations Department would focus on bringing together both new and established residents to share in social interactions.

**5) Appointees to city committees and boards should be required to participate in cultural awareness training in order to assure sensitivity to unfamiliar traditions and values.**

It should be understood that efforts to become a more inclusive, welcoming community must be regarded as long-term commitments, deserving of moral and financial support from both public and private interests. A safer community is one that depends upon participation by all segments of the population, in enforcing standards and concern for the general welfare of all residents.