

Fall/Winter 2023

CHESTER HEIGHTS

BOROUGH BULLETIN

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Letter from the Mayor

Dear Chester Heights,

Each time an issue of this newsletter comes out, I wait until the very last minute to write this part. Sometimes topics, events, and progress move quickly. The final approved draft of what you are reading is due about six weeks before it's in your hands. What's current as I write this is history when you read it so I wait as long as I can.

Since the last issue, this Council has been very busy getting things done for our residents and it's so impressive for me to witness and occasionally be a part of the conversation. The biggest news, which you can read about in this issue, is that the Borough is under contract to purchase the majority of the Powell Property to save forever as open space instead of building luxury townhomes. The conversations, the grant options and the hard work of our team at Natural Lands Trust, the parks committee, the budget committee and our solicitor are commendable for all of us. They deserve a figurative round of applause!

We had some office changes in the last few months as well. Both Amy and Megan resigned in late spring due mainly to needing more flexible schedules than their roles at the borough provided. Luckily, we were able to welcome our former administrative assistant, Darlene Kurten, back to the position she held until 2022. Darlene's email is admin@chesterheights.org; she is also our Open Records Officer. Darlene is enjoying getting back into the swing of working with Sue to run the borough's every day needs. Speaking of changes at the office, Code Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector Rich Jensen passed away in June. If you have a few minutes, go listen to the heartfelt tribute and resolution honoring Rich during the September 5 regular council meeting on our website. He was a gentleman and a friend and he will be missed. Our deepest condolences go to his family and friends.

I also want to write a quick note about demolition of buildings in the borough or any other code hot topic that may come up. Our borough has codes and ordinances, a Planning Commission, a Zoning Hearing Board, solicitors, code enforcement and building professionals and a Council. Those folks and factors are what weigh decisions. No matter how any one individual feels about a code topic, the codes and ordinances are the factors on which many decisions are based. Some topics Council votes on are based on opinions, but some are based solely on what our laws are. And some topics are not up for a Council vote at all, permits are signed based on what is in our codes- as was the case with the old rectory at St. Thomas.

The ordinance committee and Planning Commission are working diligently to enact an Historical Preservation Ordinance that both protects the borough's historical assets and honors property owners rights, which we are finding is not an easy line to walk. That conversation will be a part of our Comprehensive Plan as well- keep reading to learn more about that.

As always, I find once I get started on writing to you all, I find more to say. Alas, I only allot myself so many inches, so that's it for now. Thank you for reading and enjoy this issue!

Mayor Anne Ellis



Moving Forward with the Comprehensive Plan

In a recent issue of this newsletter, we wrote about the upcoming Comprehensive Plan. To review, municipalities typically update this planning tool every ten years or so. Our last one can be found on the Borough website and it's very long. The goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to have it to refer to when topics of new businesses, development and zoning come up. The problem with our 2013 Plan is that it's lengthy and frankly, not very useful. Ideally, the Plan is concise and usable to Council, the Planning Commission and Zoning Hearing Board. Luckily for us, the planning profession is moving in the direction of producing a usable, easily digestible work product for municipalities and they've even come up with a new name/term: PA Department of Community and Economic Development's "implementable comprehensive plan."

Below you will find the introduction from Sarcinello's RFP answer to give you an idea of what they will be doing.

Introduction And Understanding Of Needs

This proposal demonstrates the qualifications of the consultant team led by Sarcinello Planning & GIS Services and its approach to the Chester Heights Borough Comprehensive Plan Update. Our team understands that Chester Heights Borough is facing increasing development pressure, most recently evidenced by the large and intensive Franklin Station development (former Franklin Mint site) and the new SEPTA Wawa Station on the Borough's eastern boundary. This is likely to catalyze more development, which could spill over into the Borough's rural open spaces. We also understand that in light of this pressure, the Borough wants update its current 2013 Comprehensive Plan and devise updated goals, policies, and strategies to effectively manage growth and development, preserve its open spaces and natural and historical resources, and provide a sense of community.

Public Participation

Having worked on numerous municipal planning projects, the Sarcinello consultant team places great emphasis on a broad-based, collaborative public process that includes an educational component. Based on our experiences in the public realm, we have developed techniques designed to:

- *Facilitate work sessions and public meetings in a manner that is organized, efficient, and draws meaningful input.*
- *Increase public knowledge of existing conditions and trends, future challenges and opportunities, as well as the comprehensive planning process in Pennsylvania.*
- *Identify future volunteers and partners to help implement the plan.*

The Sarcinello team's public participation process instills residents and stakeholders with an understanding of comprehensive planning and a sense of involvement in, and ownership of the comprehensive plan. This is extremely important for achieving plan adoption and future implementation. The consultant team will work with Borough staff to coordinate public participation events, which will include the following:

- **Monthly Comprehensive Planning Committee Meetings** - Monthly meetings with the Comprehensive Planning Committee to discuss issues, develop the plan, and review deliverables.
- **Community Survey** - A public opinion survey that explores the community's issues and vision will be posted online via a link on the Borough's website. The Borough may provide hard copies if it wishes.

With that goal in mind, a new subcommittee was formed; the Comprehensive Plan subcommittee of the Planning Committee is comprised of Planning Commissioners, Council, the Mayor, former Council and members of the public for total of 9 members. That committee spent the last year reviewing our 2013 Plan, deciding on what type of plan they want for the next investment of time and money, coming up with a request for proposal, reviewing that with our solicitor, sending out the RFP, reviewing and answering the questions from respondents, bringing in the top two groups for interviews and finally coming to a decision/recommendation for Council. After all that work, the subcommittee recommended to Council to contract with Sarcinello Planning and GIS Services. As of this writing, that contract is being drawn up and details negotiated. We expect the work to begin at the end of 2023 and for the entirety of 2024.

And for the public to be amply aware, please see this additional section of their RFP answer!

Our team's overall objective is to produce a clear, user-friendly, and realistic plan that addresses these key issues and others identified by Borough residents and stakeholders. The process will involve public outreach to uncover key planning issues, to educate citizens about what a comprehensive plan is and is not, to instill a sense of ownership of the plan, and to establish partnerships to advance the plan's recommendations. Following the PA DCED's guidelines for an "implementable comprehensive plan," the plan itself will be organized around the key issues and will include specific and realistic implementation strategies. It will also be structured to provide a strong basis for any subsequent grant funding applications, planning initiatives, and ordinance amendments.

And for the public to be amply aware, please see this additional section of their RFP answer!

- **Public Workshop** - A public workshop where residents will directly participate in the creation of the comprehensive plan. GIS mapping and other aids are used to stimulate interaction and discussion as participants work through a hands-on exercise to identify key issues.
- **Key Person Interviews** – Interviews will be conducted with individuals that have specific knowledge of a relevant issue. We will look to the Committee for help with identifying these individuals.
- **Outreach to Borough officials, staff, commission/committee members, and professionals** – We will communicate with individuals/groups associated with the Borough as needed in order to obtain information and insights. We recommend that a member of Borough Council attend the Committee meetings and serve as a liaison (or a different Council member attends each month on a rotating basis).
- **Focus Groups on Key issues** - Once key issues are identified, a series of focus group meetings will be held to explore the issues in more depth. Each focus group will include individuals with expertise related to that particular priority issue.
- **Public Information Exhibits/Open House** - Public information exhibits and/or an open house involve displays of comprehensive plan materials at the Borough building, local gathering places, and/or community events where residents can browse information and give feedback.
- **Comprehensive Plan Webpage/Social Media** - Information, including meeting notifications, draft plans, and maps, can be posted on the Borough's website and/or social media at the Borough's discretion.
- **Public Meeting and Public Hearing** - An advertised public meeting before the Borough Planning Commission and a public hearing before Borough Council will allow the public additional opportunities to comment on the Comprehensive Plan before its adoption.

This project will be a part of all of our lives for the next 18-24 months, so start thinking about your thoughts and opinions about what you do and don't want to see in our little borough now and in the future. We will be asking for your input! You will be seeing lots of communications from the Borough and the planning company in the coming months.

Powell Property Acquisition and Preservation Plan Update

Where are we right now? We are UNDER CONTRACT to purchase the majority of the acreage of the Powell property for \$3,400,000! The meadow and the rolling hills you see from Valleybrook Rd are inclusive of the land we plan to acquire. All of this is planned without an extra open space tax for our residents.

Preserving undeveloped land is a goal of this Council, Mayor and residents. In an ideal world we would be able to purchase the entirety of the property to both prevent more development and to preserve the land and meadows. That ideal world is closer than ever now!

The Powell family and their representatives were open to the conversation of the Borough purchasing their land, understanding that an appraisal, grant applications and fundraising efforts would take significant time.

If you've been paying attention to Council meeting agendas and minutes, you may have noticed many Executive Sessions regarding the acquisition of the Powell property. Meetings having to do with real estate, especially when negotiations are involved, must be private among Council until we have a fully executed contract!

President and VP of Council worked very closely with our Solicitor and our team at Natural Lands Trust to coordinate all the tasks and conversations that needed to happen in order to get to where we are right now. In addition, the Mayor was having fundraising conversations with private donors.

Summary of our funding sources planning the worst case scenario of not being awarded all grants for which we are applying.

Funding sources secured thus far towards the \$3.4 million purchase price are:

- \$ 290,000 Borough Funds committed by resolution
- \$ 750,000 Private Donors – residents of the borough who wish to remain unnamed at this time \$ 500,000 DCNR Grant award announced earlier this year

\$ 1,540,000 Secured Funding

So where is the rest of the purchase price coming from?

There remains a deficit of \$1,860,000 for which we have applied for a grant from the State of PA. We are planning on that grant not being awarded for a variety of reasons. In a situation this significant, we have been sure to plan for all contingencies.

The next grant is from the Federal Government's Land Water Conservation Fund within the National Park Service

(continued on next page)

for which \$12 million is available. We plan on applying for that grant for \$1.87 million to cover the rest of the purchase price. The wrinkle here is that the Borough will need to front the funds to get to the settlement table. To be clear, we don't have those funds in the bank! The Finance Committee went back to the table to solve this obstacle and came up with a solution.

Final steps to come up with all the funds necessary to get to Settlement were made on June 5th when Borough Council approved the submission of the Conservation Fund Loan to bridge the \$1.87 million gap to complete the purchase of the Powell Property. This loan will be the "swing loan" to settle the purchase. We will need to submit proof of purchase and then the funds will be reimbursed to the Borough. Our commitment is a minimum of 90 days of interest. In all reality, the reimbursement averages 6-9 months. We will be responsible for the interest. Assuming the higher interest rate, the Borough's commitment is somewhere between \$77,000 and \$115,000 in interest.

PROJECTED TIMELINE

Summer/Fall, 2023

- The Borough will continue to investigate additional funding sources/grant opportunities. If YOU are interested in contributing to the purchase of the Powell Property thereby lessening the Borough's financial commitment (your tax dollars), please contact mayor@chesterheights.org.

October-November, 2023

- PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) announces grant winners; we are planning for the

Borough not receiving a grant this round. If we do, this timeline is moved up considerably.

March-April 2024

- DCNR and the Borough, with Natural Lands Trust (NLT), submits a National Park Service (NPS) Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant application for \$1,860,000 (\$12 million in funding available)

October-November, 2024

- NPS LWCF grant awards announced

December, 2024

- Closing on Powell Property using all grants awarded, private donations, Borough committed funds and the swing loan

December 2024-February, 2025

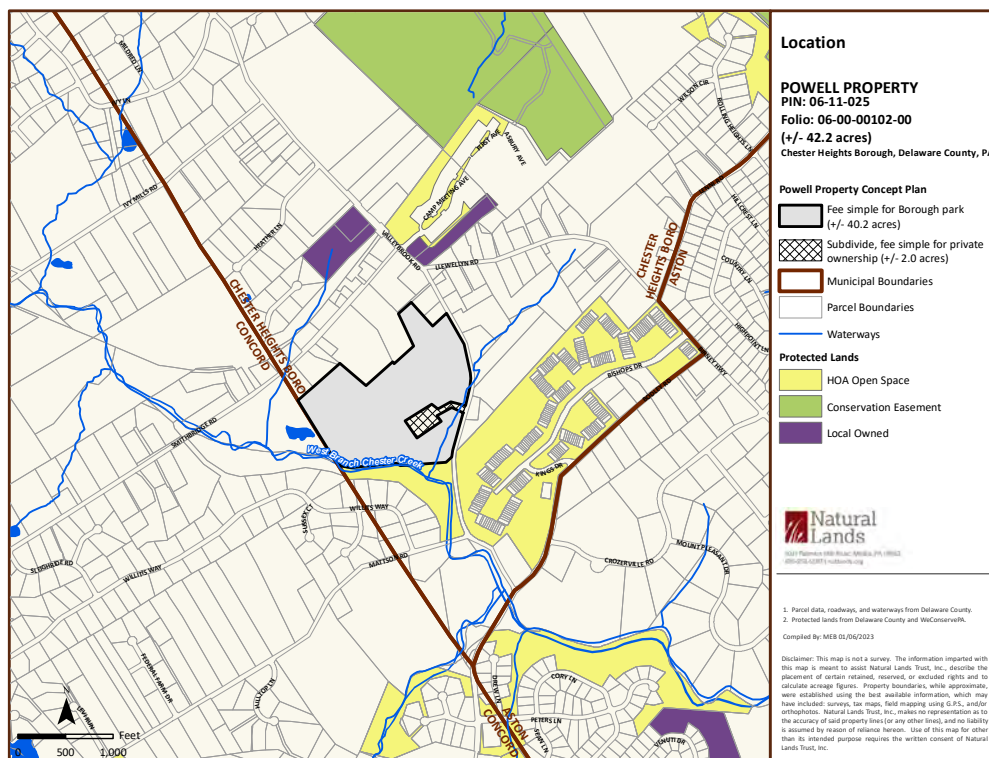
- DCNR submits NPS settlement sheets for grant close out and reimbursement of \$1,860,000

June 2025-September, 2025

- Borough pays off the Conservation Loan with applicable interest

After all that time, effort and money... The current plan is to eventually have walking trails and passive open space on the acreage. However, at the time of publication, our main goal is to acquire the land! The use of the land is a further conversation for a future time and a topic to be addressed in our Implementable Comprehensive Plan (go read that article!).

(continued on next page)





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Borough of Chester Heights to Purchase 40 Acres of Community Open Space

MEDIA, Pa., June 21, 2023 – Natural Lands and the Borough of Chester Heights, Delaware County, announced today the Borough has entered into an agreement to purchase 40.2 acres of open space on Valleybrook and Smithbridge Roads for public open space. Natural Lands, a non-profit land conservation organization, has been assisting the Borough in negotiating the project and securing grant funding.

The property is comprised of rolling meadows and woodlands, and includes a tributary to Chester Creek. The land provides important natural services like slowing and absorbing stormwater to help reduce flooding and filtering rainwater before it enters Chester Creek. This waterway is one of the healthiest streams in Delaware County largely because much of the land along it remains undeveloped. Chester Creek empties into the Delaware River and is part of a watershed that provides drinking water to 15 million people. By purchasing the property to preserve as open space, the Borough will ensure the land continues to provide these valuable environmental services and offer habitat to native wildlife.

“Natural Lands applauds the Borough of Chester Heights for investing in our region’s open space,” said Natural Lands President Oliver Bass. “Natural areas offer us all more than just pretty views. They contribute to our way of life, improve our physical and mental health, and generate significant economic value for our region. We’re delighted to help Chester Heights with this important conservation project.”

The Borough of Chester Heights plans to establish low-impact trails on the property for residents to enjoy.

“I am filled with gratitude for the many individuals who are working very hard to leave a legacy of open space: Natural Lands, our solicitor, Councilwoman Lim, the grant committees, and more,” said Borough of Chester Heights Mayor Gina Ellis. “I am most especially thankful for the cooperation of landowners Lorraine and Glenn Powell. The current and future residents of Chester Heights and the surrounding area will be able to enjoy the rolling hills for generations to come.”

The property is valued at \$3.74 million; the current owners have agreed to sell it for \$3.4 million. The Agreement of Sale is contingent on the Borough of Chester Heights raising sufficient funds to complete the acquisition.

Natural Lands has applied for grant funding from a variety of sources for the project on the Borough’s behalf. A \$500,000 grant has been awarded from Delaware County through its Delco Green Ways Grant Program. Private, anonymous donors have committed \$750,000.

An application is pending with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, which may be awarded through Pennsylvania’s allocation of federal Land and Water Conservation Funds. As these funds are only available as reimbursement after the project closes, the Borough has secured a loan commitment for \$1.87 million from The Conservation Fund to demonstrate to the Commonwealth that it has the means to proceed if a federal grant is awarded. If all project funding is not secured, The Conservation Fund loan will not take effect and the Borough will only owe a \$500 application fee.

Natural Lands is dedicated to preserving and nurturing nature’s wonders while creating opportunities for joy and discovery in the outdoors for everyone. As the Greater Philadelphia region’s oldest and largest land conservation organization, Natural Lands—which is member supported—has preserved more than 125,000 acres, including 42 nature preserves and one public garden totaling more than 23,000 acres. Nearly five million people live within five miles of land under the organization’s protection. Land for life, nature for all. natlands.org.

Please note: “Natural Lands” is the organization’s official operating name and should be used instead of its legal designation (Natural Lands Trust, Inc.).

Media Inquiries:

Kirsten Werner, Senior Director of Communications 610-353-5587 ext. 267

267-222-0072 (mobile)

kwerner@natlands.org

New and Improved Borough Website!

Five years ago, when the new Communications Committee was named, the Borough website was updated. We entered into a contract with the PA State Association of Boroughs web design program which is underwritten by the dues of the collective boroughs. It's a less expensive yet professional option. That update included the design of the borough logo and was inclusive of all relevant borough information. Though it feels like yesterday, five years went by quickly!

The Mayor and Borough Secretary/Webmaster Sue Timmins spent hours perusing other municipal websites, making notes on what was pleasing to the eye and easy to navigate. We also took notes on the inquiries residents and professionals called into the office looking for so we could make it easier to find on our website. After hours of updating info and three one hour plus long calls with the web designer at PSAB, our new website went live in June. Included in the update are two great improvements; your ability to pay permit fees online and an ADA accessibility widget. Please, go check it out! And if you have suggestions to make it even better and easier to navigate, please let us know by using the "contact us" form on the site! www.chesterheights.org

Permit, Code Enforcement and Zoning Update

Earlier this year, our Code and Zoning Enforcement Officer, Rich Jensen, went on medical leave with the full expectation of his eventual return to his duties. We are incredibly sad to announce his passing on June 24, 2023. Rich started his tenure at the Borough over ten years ago beginning as a consultant and eventually being appointed Code and Zoning officer. If you have ever done work on your home or built it and needed a permit or variance, chances are you met Rich. He is survived by his wife of 51 years, two children and three grandchildren. He will be sorely missed. (photo provided)



We are caring individuals, but borough business goes on. Since Rich went on leave and continuing now, Charles Catania and Associates has been doing the work of permits, code enforcement and zoning. As residents, nothing changes for you- all the paperwork and fees remain the same; the difference is who signs your permits and the person you may meet for inspections.

Permits? Fees? Paperwork? Yes! In the borough you should be applying for permits for a number of items. Here is what you will find on our website permit page:

Please contact the Borough Office at **610.459.3400** or admin@chesterheights.org for any Building, Plumbing, HVAC, Electrical Permits and U&O Inspections

Act 247 Review

Building Permit Application

Electrical Permit

HVAC Permit Application

Plumbing Permit Application

Resolution 02-23-B Fee Schedule SD Land Dev Building Plumbing HVAC Electrical Permits U&O Inspections

Resolution 04-23-C Fee Schedule Zoning Hearing Boards

Road Opening Permit Fee

Road Opening Permits

• Starting 1 June 2023 on-site septic is now handled by Delaware County Health Department – Call Center (484) 276-2100
Email **Environmental@co.Delaware.Pa.US**

On-Lot Septic System – DCHD

Septic System Fee Schedule – DCHD

Use & Occupancy Inspection Application

Use & Occupancy Requirements

Land Disturbance Permit

Stormwater Agreement

The biggest updates to the above information are that the new County Health Department is now handling on-site septic topics AND that the Borough can accept online payments for permit fees. When in doubt, call the office and ask.

There's A New Restaurant In Town!

This summer, the long-anticipated Pizzeria Maki opened in the Walgreens shopping center. So many people have been asking the question- are they putting sushi on pizza? Ewww, nope! It's one location for casual eat in or take out of some of the most desired foods. How many times have you asked your loved ones what they want to eat and you get three answers- Pizza! Sushi! Salad! At our newest restaurant

you can get all three in one location. Pizzeria Maki here in the borough is the second location of this restaurant idea, their other location is in Greenville DE. Four friends, each with a particular expertise, got together and invested in this novel idea. We welcome them to the Borough and encourage you to go try their menu for yourself!



The Community Park Walking Trail is Happening!

On September 5, Borough Council awarded JJ Danielle the contract to build our Chester Heights Community Walking Trail. Construction of the trail, which will have two pedestrian bridges, should take about 6 weeks once the project is started. Construction should begin around the end of September and be completed by late October, assuming the weather cooperates.

Please continue reading for excerpts from the Local Shares Act Grant Application we submitted and were subsequently awarded. "Chester Heights Borough Council intent is to increase the opportunity for outdoor recreation to both local

residents and the community at large with installation of a walking trail in the park. We are still a rural area without sidewalks and our residents are forced to use trails in adjoining municipalities to walk, often with their pets. The existing park, consisting of nine (9) acres, offers an excellent venue for installation of a trail.

Several years ago, initial plans were designed to install a meandering trail through the wooded area of the site that surrounds a soccer field and playground. That area, approximately 0.3 miles long, was cleared but needs to be finished with box-out excavation, the installation of a walking path consisting of a crushed stone base and a stone dust walking surface, and two (2) 18-foot long pedestrian bridges to span a small creek twice. The Dust Stone walking trail will consist of 140 tons of 3/8" stone and the trail will be 5 feet wide. The trail area has already been identified and preliminary clearing of scrub vegetation has been completed for trail proof of concept.

The total estimated cost is \$85,916.00. Funding for the trail comes from 3 sources; \$43,187.00 Local Shares Grant, and a combination of \$33,900 from a land development agreement and \$8,879.00 which was allocated in the borough's 2023 park's budget.

Completion of the Chester Heights Community Park Walking Trail will provide a local recreational opportunity for residents of the Borough that does not currently exist. The COVID pandemic has proven that outdoor recreational

(continued on next page)



The Community Park Walking Trail is Happening! (continued from page 9)



facilities are an invaluable benefit to our general physical and mental health. Existing trails are seeing unprecedented use, with expectations that this trend will continue. Borough Council would like to provide such a benefit to our residents and the neighboring communities. The direct impact on the community will be instantly noticeable; residents will be able to drive less to be outdoors. Residents can enjoy a closer walking trail with family and neighbors without having to leave the borough. The most critical impact of this walking trail is the existence in the borough of a safe place to walk and enjoy the outdoors.” We hope to see you at the park!

Speaking of the Community Park- have you seen the Little Library? Take one, leave one and keep it neat please



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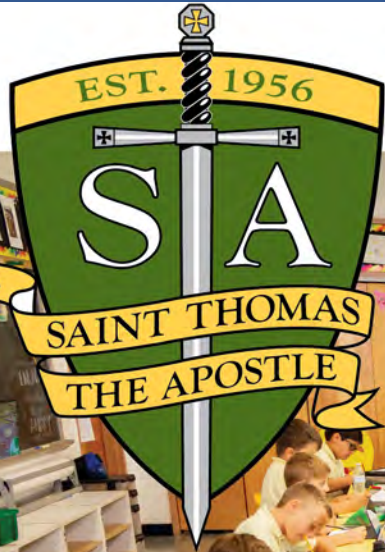
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Half of all home heating fires occur in December, January and February.



Heating equipment is involved in **1 in every 7** home fires and **1 in every 5** home fire deaths.



Keep anything that can burn **at least 3 feet** from any heat source like fireplaces, wood stoves, radiators or space heaters.



Keep portable generators **outside, away from windows, and as far away** from your home as possible.



Install and test carbon monoxide alarms **at least once a month**.



Plug only **1 heat-producing appliance** (like a space heater) into an electrical outlet at a time.



Have a qualified professional clean and inspect your chimney and vents **every year**.



Store cooled ashes in a tightly covered metal container, and keep it **outside at least 10 feet** from your home and any nearby buildings.



For more information on how to prevent winter fires, visit www.usfa.fema.gov/winter and www.nfpa.org/winter.



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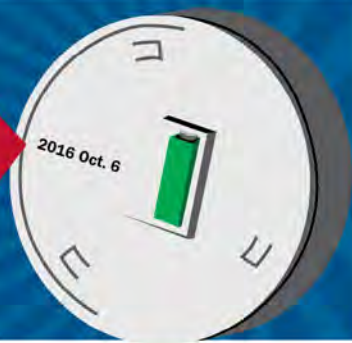
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Don't Wait — Check the Date!

Replace Smoke Alarms Every 10 Years



Age matters when it comes to your smoke alarms.
Check the manufacture dates on your smoke alarms today!

<p>1 Remove the smoke alarm from the wall or ceiling.</p>			<p>2 Look at the back of the alarm for the date of manufacture.</p>
<p>3 Smoke alarms should be replaced 10 years from the date of manufacture.</p>			<p>4 Put the alarm back on the ceiling or wall if it is less than 10 years old.</p>



A closed door may slow the spread of smoke, heat and fire.



Test smoke alarms at least once a month by pushing the test button.



If the smoke alarm sounds, get outside and stay outside. Go to your outside meeting place.



Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area, and on every level of the home, including the basement. Larger homes may need more alarms. For the best protection, make sure all smoke alarms are interconnected. When one sounds, they all sound.



Call the fire department from a cellphone or a neighbor's phone. Stay outside until the fire department says it's safe to go back inside.

For more information about smoke alarms, visit usfa.fema.gov and www.nfpa.org.



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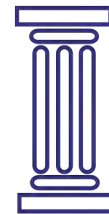
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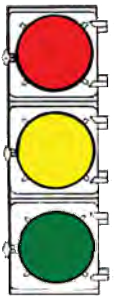
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