

# Community Developments

## Gila County Community Development

### Welcome to our Newsletter!

This is the first issue of our quarterly newsletter. We hope to provide readers with helpful information to make the entire permitting process more understandable .

After reading our newsletter, if you have questions, feel free to contact us at the numbers on the back page. You can also go to our website, which contains forms, documents and other

useful information. The web address is on the back page as well. If you have a specific question that you need answered, email us at [communitydevelopment@gilacountyaz.gov](mailto:communitydevelopment@gilacountyaz.gov).



#### Special points of interest:

- **Plans for Zoning Ordinance Updates**
- **New Building Codes in the works**
- **Floodplain Ordinance changes**
- **The Code Enforcement Process**
- **Building Safety Permitting Explained**
- **Meeting/Training Notices**

### Changes are Coming!

Gila County’s Zoning Ordinance was adopted in the 1950s. Since then, our County has grown and demographics have changed, but the Zoning Ordinance has remained pretty much the same. The Community Development Division, in conjunction with the Plan-

ning & Zoning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, is working on some amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. For example, the current Zoning Ordinance only allows accessory buildings to be put on vacant property with a conditional use permit (a complex process). There is an amendment in the

works that will allow accessory buildings with a use permit (much simpler). There will be meetings scheduled to allow public comment on the changes; look for announcements for those meetings to be posted in our offices and on our website.

#### Inside this issue:

Code Enforcement	<b>2</b>
Floodplain Ordinance Info	<b>2</b>
Building Safety	<b>3</b>
Cesspools	<b>3</b>
Code Changes	<b>1 &amp; 4</b>



## How the Code Enforcement Process Works

Here are the steps in the Code Enforcement Process:

1. **Receive Complaint**—All violations are complaint driven by the public, not by staff. At this point, we compile parcel and tax information prior to calling or mailing anything to the property owner.
2. **Inspect**—Inspections are scheduled and completed within two to five working days from the date the original complaint is received. Pictures are taken and the code section identified for the violation.
3. **Notice of Violation/Summons**—This is only sent when we have determined that the property is not in compliance and we do not expect the owner to comply. The owner is given 30 days to comply, and if there is no compliance a Civil Hearing date is set.
4. **Hearing**—The Hearing

Officer may levy a fine and allow up to 30 days for the owner to come into compliance. The Hearing Officer can also initiate the Clean and Lien Process if the property is not in compliance.

For more information, contact Margie Chapman—Code Compliance Supervisor @ 928-474-7113 in Payson or Patsy Clayton—Code Enforcement Officer @ 928-402-8512 in Globe.

## Floodplain Ordinance Updated



View of the East Verde river in Beaver Valley

An important change to the Floodplain Ordinance in October of last year concerns accessory structures. An accessory structure means a structure which is limited to an “accessory use,” detached from the primary structure, used solely for parking or limited storage, and is less than or equal to 600 square feet of enclosed area. In the past, the owner had the option of dealing with the potential of flooding by either installing flood venting of one square inch per one square foot of plan area, or having all construction to be of “flood-resistant materials” below

the regulatory elevation. Now the “or” has been changed to “and” so that there is no longer an option. Both restrictions will have to be met for building an accessory structure in a Special Flood Hazard Area. It should be stressed to the home owner that a benchmark will have to be established so that the builder can determine to what height “flood-resistant materials” have to be used and so the surveyor or engineer can certify that the restrictions were met upon completion. The Elevation Certificate is also required for the venting but the surveyor will have to be

brought into the mix much sooner now to establish a benchmark from which the construction and certification will be measured. Another important facet for accessory structures is that if they exceed 600 square feet in size they will have to apply for a variance before the Board of Supervisors.

We may not agree with these changes but we are bound to follow through on them. The sooner the home owner is made aware of these new restrictions, the more likely that the structure will be built as required without the need to tear out or replace finished construction.

## Getting Started with Building Safety

So often we hear that the hardest part of most projects is "getting started." Here at the Building Safety Department, our friendly and knowledgeable staff is ready not only to help you get started, but also to guide you through the process from start to finish.

In addition to answering your questions, we also have a variety of informa-

tive handouts available in the office at no charge. For your convenience, both our Globe office in Southern Gila County, and our Payson office in Northern Gila County are now "One-Stop Shops" with Building Safety, Planning & Zoning, Floodplain, Wastewater, Engineering and Code Enforcement Departments all under one roof.

Our offices are open from 8:00am to 5:00pm Monday through Friday. We welcome you to either call or stop in and see us if we can be of assistance, whether you are ready to submit plans, are in the planning stages, or considering something in the foreseeable future. We look forward to seeing you!

*"Our friendly, knowledgeable staff is ready ...to guide you through the process from start to finish."*

## Cesspools, Water Quality and Your Property Value

Cesspools discharge untreated waste into the soil that will ultimately contaminate the ground water. ***Cesspools have not been approved for use in Arizona since 1976 because they are a major source of ground water contamination.***

A cesspool is a covered hole or pit for receiving sewage from a house. Usually the walls are constructed out of concrete, brick or concrete blocks and the top cover is usually a poured concrete slab or timbers. The construction of the sidewalls are loose to allow the effluent water to penetrate through the holes, allowing the water to pass into the native soil while the solids build up in the pit. This solid waste, very similar to what you see in outhouse pits, may partially crumble into smaller pieces over time and be carried into the environment in an untreated state by the new liquids entering the cesspool. This material is a host for many disease-causing viruses, bacteria, and parasites.

By contrast, septic systems remove 100% of the disease-causing viruses, bacteria, and parasites. In a properly designed and installed septic system the tank retains 60 to 70% of the solids, oil, and grease that pass into the system and provide some treatment. The partially treated wastewater is then discharged into the leach lines, where the surrounding soil provides final treatment of the sewage prior to its discharge into the environment.

Cesspools were the preferred method of waste disposal in Gila County through the late 1960's. By 1984 all permitted installations were septic systems. Based on US Census 2000 information, it is estimated that there are nearly 3,000 cesspools still in operation in Gila County. Many of these are close to flowing streams and are major contributors to stream pollution. When a cesspool's lid, sides or structural members deteriorate or collapse and sewage comes to the surface or backs up into the home,

it is determined to have failed and must be corrected immediately. Possible corrective actions include ceasing use of the home or installing an appropriate wastewater treatment system.

The Wastewater Department will not approve the submittal of building plans for any property served by a cesspool if those plans expand the footprint of buildings or structures on the property or alter the wastewater flow characteristics (bedrooms or plumbing fixtures) of the property.

In April, 2008, in response to ADEQ's cesspool statement, the clearance practice was modified to state that only Life-Safety remodel projects of homes served by cesspools will be cleared for building plan submittal provided that the cesspool does not meet the definition of failure and the life-safety changes do not expand the home footprint.

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## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

### MISSION STATEMENT

To partner with our citizens by serving their needs in a positive and courteous manner to ensure that Gila County remains a healthy, safe, attractive and enjoyable place to live, work and play. Community Development will provide these services with honesty, integrity, compassion, fairness and a commitment to excellence always.

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## Building Code Updates for Gila County?

Gila County Community Development's Building Safety Department is in the process of updating our Building Codes. We currently use the 2003 IBC and IRC, and will be updating to the 2012 IBC and IRC as well as other supplemental materials. The Gila County Advisory and Appeals Board, made up of local contractors and other professionals, will be working with Community Development to note any changes or amendments that might need to be made in order to make the process a smooth one. Later in the process, property owners and contractors will have the

opportunity to attend public meetings where the major changes will be explained. The final step is taking the Building Code update to the Board of Supervisors for their approval. Plan to attend any one of the meetings, which will be advertised in the paper and on our website, if you have any concerns or questions.

### Upcoming Meetings/ Training Available to the Public

P&Z Commission Meeting  
December 15, 2011  
10:00am



One of the new codes Gila County is working to adopt