

## **City of Chattanooga Alley Policy Summary**

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this document is to establish a transparent and concise explanation of the functions of City government pertaining to the classifications and maintenance responsibilities for city alleys.

### **Related Departments:**

- The Chattanooga Department of Transportation (CDOT) oversees design standards for components of the city-owned transportation network of streets and sidewalks, inclusive of alleys, among other roles and responsibilities.
- The Chattanooga Department of Public Works (DPW) oversees street repair crews, sanitation services (garbage), stormwater infrastructure, urban forestry and GIS services for the City, among other roles and responsibilities.

### **References:**

1. [Ordinance 28838](#) - Right of Way Closure and Abandonment Policy  
Note: A Right-Of-Way is the strip of land over which is built, or proposed to be built, a public way. Rights-of-way typically include streets, sidewalks, trees, and above-ground and below-ground utilities. Based on their classification, rights-of-way may or may not be publicly maintained by city government.
2. Temporary Use Permit Process and Application Forms available on CDOT's [website](#)
3. DPW Standard Operating Procedure - Alley Maintenance
4. [GIS Maps](#)

### **Alley Classifications:**

Alleys in the City of Chattanooga can be classified into one of three types:

- Open: Rights-of-way which are both platted **and** accepted by the City are considered Open. Typically Open alleys are usable for mobility or utility or other government services. The City of Chattanooga has maintenance responsibilities for Open alleys.
- Unopen: Rights-of-way which are platted only and have not been accepted by the City are considered Unopen.

Commentary: Throughout the history of the City, land is platted for development, inclusive of streets and alleys. In some cases those plats defined rights-of-way that have never been developed or put into use by the general public - these are plats on paper only and have not been accepted by the City. Unopen alleys are typically not physically usable for mobility or services. The City does not have a legal responsibility for maintenance of Unopen alleys. Because these rights-of-way were intended for future use, the City oversees several processes that are available to the public for how to utilize Unopen rights-of-way. For example, home builders wishing to create traditional rear alley access for homes using an unopen alley can either:

- build the alleyway to minimum city design standards and request that it be accepted by the City to become Open, and maintained thereafter, or
- request a Temporary Use permit to make modifications to the alley to provide the desired access. Unopen alleys remain Unopened even after a Temporary Use permit is issued because the maintenance responsibilities are assigned to the permittee.

- Abandoned (sometimes referred to as Closed) - Rights-of-way that once were platted but have been abandoned by Ordinance through the Mandatory Referral process. These former rights-of-way are actually no longer alleys because the abandonment process effectively dissolves the right-of-way lines and therefore the alley no longer exists with the underlying land reverting to the original property owners.

**Eligible Maintenance Functions:**

As determined in SOP - Alley Maintenance, referenced above, only for those alleys classified as Open, the City of Chattanooga is responsible for various maintenance functions in alleys. Maintenance activities include planned inspection as well as services requested through 311 to include vegetation clearing, street repair, and resurfacing. As with all city streets, the city’s resources are limited, so city staff use a system of evaluation for work performed based on severity of safety or property damage hazards such as severe street disrepair, limited sight distance caused by vegetative overgrowth, or other factors. Because alley usage is less intense, the City maintains them at a quality standard that is lower than other city streets.

Note, legally, maintenance is not performed on Unopen or Closed alleys and rights-of-way and, further, the City is not legally liable for damage to property resulting from objects, such as trees or vegetation, in Unopen or Closed alleys and rights-of-way. Adjacent land owners are legally responsible for their portion of Unopen rights-of-way.

**Index of Alley Classifications:**

The GIS division of DPW maintains a current database of all Open, Unopen, and Closed Alleys, as well as Temporary Use Permits based on data compiled and provided by CDOT. The general public can access this database through [GIS maps](http://GIS maps) available from [www.chattanooga.gov](http://www.chattanooga.gov). This interactive map includes multiple layers of information, including Rows\_Alleys, shown toggled to the visible setting in the below sample. For a tutorial on how to use the publicly available GIS maps to access this information citywide, follow this [link](#).

