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CULLMAN CITY CONNECTION

December 2025



Investing in Our Neighborhoods: A Smart Step Toward Restoration, Safety, and Affordable Housing

The City of Cullman is taking meaningful action to strengthen our existing neighborhoods, reduce blight, and expand opportunities for safe, quality, and affordable housing. Through the proposal of three updated zoning ordinances, the City Council working closely with Chief Building Officer, Brandon Lewis, has modernized long-standing regulations to better reflect today's realities while protecting neighborhood character.

These changes focus on restoring properties, improving safety and appearance, and making it easier to reinvest in established neighborhoods all without lowering standards or removing oversight.

Addressing Blight and Encouraging Reinvestment

One of the most significant updates allows residential structures that are deemed blighted or dangerous to be demolished and rebuilt within their existing footprint, as long as current building and safety codes are met.

This matters because many older neighborhoods contain homes that are no longer safe or habitable. Previously, zoning barriers often made rebuilding difficult even when the intent was improvement. The new ordinance removes those obstacles while maintaining setbacks and code requirements, making it easier for homeowners and developers to reinvest rather than abandon properties.

“Blighted properties don’t just affect one house—they impact an entire block,” said Brandon Lewis. “This gives us a practical tool to improve safety, eliminate hazards, and restore neighborhoods in a responsible way.”

Making Better Use of Existing Lots

Two additional ordinances address nonconforming lots and setbacks which are common challenges in older neighborhoods where lots were platted decades ago.

These changes allow homes to be built or rebuilt on existing lots when they cannot reasonably meet modern dimensional requirements, provided they conform as closely as possible and are reviewed by the Building Official. The ordinances also allow front setbacks to align with surrounding homes, helping new construction blend naturally into established streetscapes.

This approach ensures:

- New or rebuilt homes fit the character of the neighborhood
- Vacant or underused lots can be brought back into productive use
- Infill development becomes more feasible without compromising safety or oversight

Transparency, Neighborhood Input, and Accountability

Importantly, these ordinances also increase transparency and accountability. Adjacent property owners are notified of nonconforming use applications, decisions are reported to City Council, and appeal rights are clearly outlined.

This ensures neighborhood voices are heard while keeping decisions consistent, professional, and fair.

Why This Matters for Cullman

Together, these changes support three critical goals:

- Reducing blighted and unsafe properties
- Improving neighborhood aesthetics and safety
- Protecting and increasing property values while expanding affordable housing options

Rather than encouraging sprawl, Cullman is interested in improving what we already have our neighborhoods, our streets, and our sense of community.

The City Council believes strong neighborhoods are the foundation of a strong city. These ordinances provide the tools to restore, rebuild, and revitalize while preserving the character that makes Cullman home. Interested citizens may attend the public hearing on January 26 regarding these three ordinances.



Wild Water Season Passes for Residents of Cullman City and Cullman County!

The Cullman Parks, Recreation & Sports Tourism Board of Directors, together with the Cullman City Council and co-sponsored by Council Chairperson of Tourism David Moss and Council-member Jason Willoughby, is pleased to announce a special opportunity exclusively for Cullman County residents.

NOW and continuing through April 1, WildWater season passes will be offered at a reduced rate of \$99, a \$40 savings off the regular season pass price. This limited-time offer reflects the ongoing commitment of our City Council and Park Board to provide families with high- quality, affordable recreation and to expand access to the amenities that make Cullman an exceptional place to call home.

Residents are encouraged to take advantage of this early-season rate—the lowest available—and enjoy this opportunity reserved solely for Cullman County families. We look forward to welcoming you back for another memorable summer at WildWater.

[Link to buy a season pass!](#)





City Council Recognitions

Cullman City leadership took time to spotlight the people whose dedication helps keep the community moving forward. The evening included well wishes to longtime City Treasurer Sherry Compton as she steps into retirement, along with a warm welcome to Kayla Johnson, who was officially recognized in her new role as City Treasurer. The Council also acknowledged Timmy Denson for his more than 18 years of service at the Cullman Wastewater Treatment Plant as he begins his own well-earned retirement.

The City proudly celebrated its newest Alabama Fire Academy graduates — Emerson Schaeffer (Valedictorian), Cory Shadden (720 Award for Most Outstanding), Ace Taylor, Steven Prologo, L.J. Turner, and Andrew Durhan — and honored members of the Cullman Police Department for exceptional service. Recognitions included Daniel Palisay as SRO Officer of the Year, Olivia Cordon as Patrol Officer of the Year, and Max Bartlett as Investigator of the Year. Officers Aaron Brolsma and Chad Ashworth were also commended for their swift, professional response during a recent incident at Christkindlmarkt, helping ensure a safe and supportive environment for vendors.

One of the night's most touching moments came when Councilmember Chuck Shikle presented Officer Cody Hardin with a pair of handcuffs that once belonged to his grandfather, Charles Hardin — a meaningful symbol of service passed from one generation to the next.

The Cullman High School Varsity and Junior Varsity cheerleaders were also recognized for their impressive performances at the 2025 AHSAA State Cheer Competition. It was an evening filled with appreciation, pride, and gratitude for the individuals who make Cullman such a strong and connected community.





The Cullman City Council presented a check to Cullman City Schools as part of our continued commitment to supporting their ongoing capital improvement plan. With a \$600,000 allocation in the FY 2026 budget—and more than \$2.4 million contributed over the past four years—this investment reflects our shared belief that strong schools strengthen our entire community by enhancing safety, opportunity, and educational excellence for every student.



City Council Minutes

The Council took several actions aimed at supporting growth and community services, including voting to add two residential properties to the city limits so they can receive city services and adhere to city residential standards. In addition, the Council adopted the 2026 City Council meeting schedule, approved financial support for the Cullman County Library to help continue its educational programs, and authorized financing for much-needed improvements at the Cullman Regional Airport to support safety, accessibility, and future development.



Safety Training at the Water Department

Chris Freeman, Superintendent of Water/Wastewater Department, and Christopher Dotson, Director of Risk Management, conduct ongoing safety training for employees.

This hard-working crew keeps our city running day in and day out. We appreciate the work this does to maintain and develop Cullman's infrastructure.



Message from Mayor Woody Jacobs



This December has been a season of celebration, service, and civic pride here in Cullman. Our Christkindlmarkt once again shined as a centerpiece of holiday spirit, welcoming visitors downtown throughout the month. A highlight of this year's market was the unveiling of the world's largest walk-on Christmas arch, a striking new landmark that reflects both our German heritage and the creativity and ambition of our community.

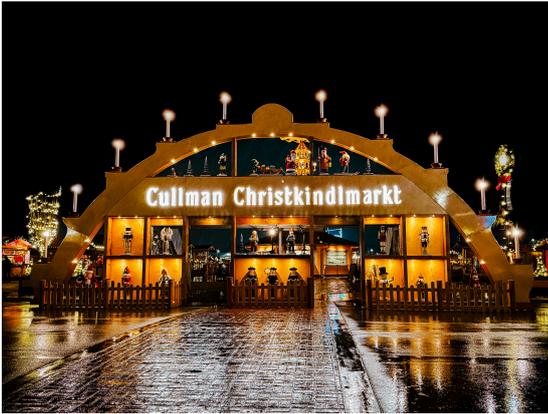
During this month, we also took time to recognize several dedicated public servants whose commitment has helped move Cullman forward. We expressed our sincere appreciation to City Treasurer Sherry Compton for nearly two decades of faithful service, to Timmy Denson for more than 18 years of work at the Cullman Wastewater Treatment Plant, and to Steve Cummings for his long-standing leadership and thoughtful service on the Planning Commission.

As we close out 2025, I am grateful for the pride, participation, and sense of community that continue to define Cullman. From record-setting holiday attractions to decades of steady public service, this month has been a reminder of what makes our city such a special place to live, work, and celebrate.

Cullman Christkindlmarkt

The Cullman Christkindlmarkt was a tremendous success this year, bringing the community together for a festive celebration filled with food, shopping, and family-friendly activities. The event featured a wide variety of food and

merchandise vendors, along with plenty of activities for all ages, and welcomed a record number of attendees throughout the festival. Thank you to everyone who participated, supported, and helped make this event so special. We're already looking forward to an even bigger and brighter Cullman Christkindlmarkt next year!



CUB Lake Cleanup 2025 Recap

On November 4, 11 volunteers joined us at Lake Catoma, collecting an impressive 620 pounds of trash from the shoreline and surrounding areas. On November 5, 14 volunteers gathered at Duck River Reservoir, walking the trails and cleaning along the shoreline to remove 660 pounds of trash.



Happy New Year!

As we welcome the New Year, the City of Cullman extends its warmest wishes to all residents, businesses, and visitors for a happy, healthy, and prosperous year ahead. We are grateful for the continued support and involvement of our community and look forward to building on the progress of the past year as we move into 2026. From all of us at the City of Cullman, Happy New Year!



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