

Code Enforcement

Joe Van Nevel, Director

Code Enforcement's mission is to serve the residents of the City of Mishawaka through enforcement of the city ordinances pertaining to public nuisance issues, which is the condition of the property, and substandard issues pertaining to the condition of the structures that are on the property. Code Enforcement's priority is to keep Mishawaka's neighborhoods looking clean, attractive, and inviting. This is accomplished by addressing resident complaints and by code officers aggressively patrolling their respective areas. We try to work with residents and businesses to gain compliance without taking enforcement action, such as writing citations or going to a hearing.

Code is staffed by its Director Joe Van Nevel, Office Manager Carrie Lytle and four Code Officers – Cris Campbell, Randy Redman, Mike Carpenter and Victor Kasznia Jr. with a combined total of 105 years of service to the City of Mishawaka.

In 2019, a new software program was implemented to record and track Nuisance and Substandard cases. With the implementation each officer has received an iPad which allows the Code Officer to be more efficient and productive in the field. This allows each Code Officer to make changes to cases, initiate new cases, and take photos while out in the field. The iPad allows access to e-mails in the field, which allow the Code Officer to respond to the property managers/landlords via-email with the violation which allows for a quicker response. There has been some trial and error with the new program which has affected the case load numbers for the year.

In close collaboration with the Police Department and the Legal Department there has been a great success rate with properties that have been deemed a public nuisance. With properties that have a landlord/property manager, an eviction rate of close to 100% has been achieved. In the last two years there have been 32 public nuisance letters sent out.

Public Nuisance Violations

The main public nuisance ordinances that the code officers enforce include the following: snow removal, tall grass, accumulated trash/litter, improper storage of building materials and household items, and abandoned vehicles. Overall totals for 2019 were down compared to 2018 due to the implementation of the new software program, a decrease in snow removal totals due to the mild winter, and a decrease of grass cases due to the dry weather.



Before



After

Approximately 4,000 nuisance cases were opened. It is important to note that for every case that is opened by a code officer, two to three follow-ups are required totaling approximately 12,000 follow-ups.

Substandard Structures

The continued implementation of the Top 100 Program helps keep the number of dilapidated structures in the City of Mishawaka to a minimum. Code is now in the fourteenth year of the Top 100 Program, which means 1,400 of the worst structures have been addressed. Structures damaged by fire are monitored to make sure repairs are completed in a timely manner, and if not become included into the program. This program begins in the winter months when the code officers inspect their areas in search of houses, garages, or commercial buildings that need the most attention. In the spring, letters are sent out to the owners describing the issue or issues that need to be addressed.

With the implementation of the new software program approximately 300 substandard cases had to be converted from the old system to the new system –which was very time consuming for the Code team. Including the Top 100, Code opened 660 substandard cases and conducted approximately 4,200 follow-ups. Code successfully resolved and closed 240 substandard cases.



721 Berlin Ave. – Before



721 Berlin Ave. – After



Before



After

Case Hearings

In 2019 Code summoned a total of 3 properties for substandard issues and their respective owners before our hearing officer. Currently 4 cases remain on the docket from 2019 with many more planned for 2020. These cases involve substandard structures where the owners have made no progress or progress has stopped. Many of these cases get resolved before or shortly after the initial hearing.

The Mishawaka Animal Control Commission

Thirty-two hearings were held in 2019 involving animal permit appeals and violations.

Weights and Measures

Roger Shields is the City's Weights and Measures inspector and he inspects all kinds of measuring devices such as computing scales, prescription scales, taxi meters, package scales and gas pumps. Roger inspected and certified a total of 803 devices in 2019.

Stewardship

A total of \$12,087.50 was spent in 2019 for mowing, brush removal, clean-ups and board-ups by our contractor. The Code Department recouped a total of \$4,715 in 2019, for this contracted work.