

Code Enforcement

Joe VanNevel, 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 (condition of property) and substandard issues (condition of the structures that are on the property). Code Enforcement's priority is to keep Mishawaka's neighborhoods looking clean, attractive, and inviting to visitors and new neighbors. This objective is accomplished by addressing the public's concerns and by code officers aggressively patrolling their respective areas. Once again this was very challenging year - patience and compassion was very important when working with the residents, management companies, and business owners, in order to gain compliance without taking enforcement action, such as writing citations or going to a hearing. Residents can present their concerns through the City Web Site, in person at City Hall, or call into the office (258-1612).

Code Enforcement team 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. These individuals possess a combined total of 117 years of service to the City of Mishawaka with Randy Redman serving the City for 35 years. The code officers have been able to create working relationships with residents, management companies, and business owners. With the management companies, the code officers have been able to get quicker compliance because of communication via e-mail and phone. In 2021, the staff still kept their workload and compliance success at a high level even with challenges due to Covid.

In 2022 the Code Enforcement Team changed with the addition of another Code Officer. Carrie Lytle has been added to team and will be covering the area that the Director covered. Carrie will also cover a small section of the Southeast area of the City. This change will allow the Director to better serve the residents of Mishawaka and better serve the Code Team. The Director will focus on difficult cases, increase the number cases taken to Substandard Hearings, attend Neighborhood Meetings, and look at revising and updating City of Mishawaka Ordinances including Animal Ordinances.

The Code Department works closely with Police and Legal Department to work on difficult properties. If needed, due to criminal activity, the property will be deemed a Public Nuisance. With properties that have a property manager, an eviction rate of close to 100% has been achieved. In 2021, 21 properties were deemed a public nuisance. In the previous three years, 57 properties were deemed a public nuisance.

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 2021 were up compared to 2020 with about 500 more cases. In January and February almost 800 snow cases were addressed. In 2021 compliance was difficult to achieve, which increased the number follow-ups and increased the amount spent on mowing, removals, and board-ups. Evictions were down due to state mandates regarding Covid. Alleyways remain a focus for the code team.

Approximately 4,000 nuisance cases were addressed. It is important to note that for every case opened by a code officer 2021, about three to five follow-ups were required to gain compliance, which would be about approximately 15,000 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 Sixteenth year of the Top 100 Program, which means 1,600 of the worst structures have been addressed. Structures damaged by fire are monitored to make sure repairs are completed in a timely manner. 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.



Case Hearings - Substandard

In 2021, four hearings were held, nine new cases were added, and three cases were closed, which means eight cases remain currently on the docket. In 2022, code is planning to hold six Substandard Compliance Hearings and adding a minimum of twelve new cases. 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.

Mishawaka Animal Control Commission

The following table shows comparison of hearings over the past 4 years. Violations and appeals dropped significantly from 2020 to this year.

Animal Permit Appeals and Violations			
2018	2019	2020	2021
22	31	37	20

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, taximeters, package scales and gas pumps.

Stewardship

The following table shows comparison of contracted expenses for grass mowing, brush removal, clean-ups and board-ups over the past 3 years The Code Department recouped a total of \$4,200 in 2021, for this contracted work.

Contracted Expenses (\$)		
2019	2020	2021
31	37	20