

## **Code Enforcement Department**

*George Obren, Director*

The Department of Code Enforcement is responsible for enforcing the City of Mishawaka's ordinances pertaining to public nuisance violations and substandard buildings. Code continues to achieve overwhelming success in keeping Mishawaka neighborhoods looking attractive and well maintained. This is accomplished by our code officers aggressively patrolling their respective areas daily and addressing violations that they see. Mishawaka's neighborhoods remain Code Enforcement's priority.



The Department is staffed by its Director George Obren and four code officers. The officers include Phil Fick, Cris Campbell, and Randy Redman. In November, Jim Campbell, one of the Code Officers, resigned to pursue another opportunity. While we wish Jim well, the Department is anxiously awaiting the arrival of Joe VanNevel who will serve residents as the new Code Officer. Joe is a longtime city employee who is transferring from the Parks Department.

Most of Mishawaka's code violation cases are self-initiated by code officers. However, we do respond to citizen complaints, usually the day they are received. Our staff works closely with residents to gain compliance from them without taking enforcement action such as writing citations or going to a hearing. It's our belief that we get more favorable results when dealing with our citizens face to face whenever possible.

### **Public Nuisance Violations**

Code violations can have a very negative impact on a neighborhood if they are not addressed quickly. Code officers handled a total of 4,373 public nuisance cases in 2012. Those violations include, but are not limited to, tall grass, snow removal, abandoned autos, animal issues, noise complaints, and trash. It is important to note that code officers had to follow-up on these cases well over 8,000 times. The issue most addressed by code officers is tall grass violations.

#### 2012 Violation Statistics

<b>VIOLATION</b>	<b>CASES</b>
Tall Grass	2259
Abandoned Autos	152
Snow Removal	288
Animal Issues	71
Trash	20
Noise	21

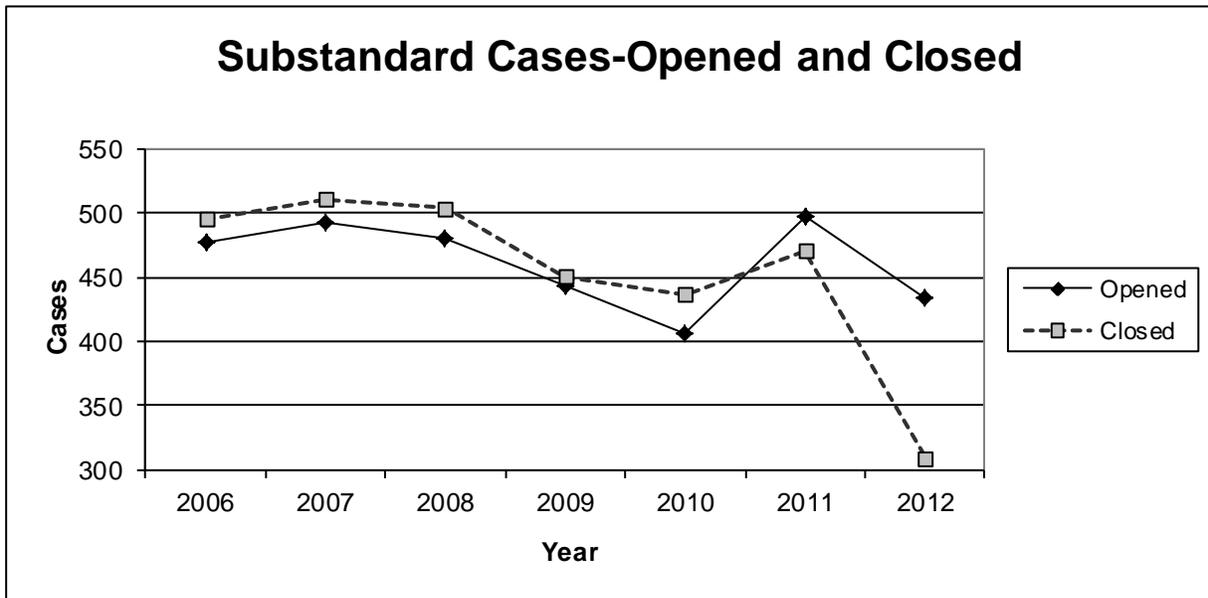
## Substandard Structures

Continued implementation of our “Top 100 Program” is one of the reasons why you see few substandard structures in Mishawaka. This yearly initiative begins in the winter months of the previous year. Code officers scour their areas in search of the houses, garages, or commercial buildings that need the most attention. In the coming spring, Code will begin contacting the property owners in question and point out the issues to them.

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In 2012 Code was able to bring 91% of these structures into compliance which is fantastic! The Top 100 program has played a huge roll in the great overall appearance of Mishawaka. Code is now in the seventh year of the Top 100 Program which means 700 of the worst cases have been addressed.

Substandard structures demand a lot of attention from the Code Enforcement Department. During 2012, 434 such cases were addressed, including our Top 100 previously mentioned. Many property owners have done a great job by promptly working to correct the substandard issues pointed out to them. The Department also conducted over 3,900 follow-up inspections of substandard structures, and closed 309 substandard cases during the year. Some of those cases were outstanding from previous years.



## Hearings

In 2012, The Code Enforcement Department summoned a total of seventeen property owners before our hearing officer, Richard Currey. Most cases have been remedied as

only six cases remain on the docket as we head into 2013. These cases involve substandard structures where the owners simply refuse to cooperate with us. Typically most cases get resolved before or shortly after the initial hearing. These hearings are an extremely valuable tool in bringing the most difficult cases to resolution.

### **Neighborhood Stabilization Program**

Code Enforcement continued to assist the Department of Community Development in 2012 by providing them with the locations of vacant properties. This information has proven to be extremely valuable to the Department of Community Development as they progress with the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. Many vacant and blighted structures have been purchased and demolished, replaced by new single-family dwellings. The overall appearance of some of our older neighborhoods has greatly improved. Newly constructed and re-modeled houses often serve as an impetus for other homeowners to improve their properties as well.



### **100 E. Donaldson**

*This property had been vacant for several years. The owner was taking no action to bring property up to code or have it occupied. Code took this case to hearing. Prior to the hearing the owner sold the property to an investor who remodeled the house and garage.*



### **200 W. Grove**

*This property was an apartment building that the owner lost in foreclosure. Then tenants were forced out and left behind carpet, furniture and debris. Code had the owner remove everything.*



### **600 Meridian**

*This house had been vacant for some time and its condition continued to deteriorate. A new owner purchased the house and remodeled it. The property is now a welcome addition to the neighborhood.*



### **1000 Merrifield**

*Resident left large pile of trash at alleyway. The trash contractor would be unable to remove debris of this nature. Code contacted the owner and had them remove it themselves.*



### **2400 Normandy**

*This house had significant peeling paint. When Code contacted the owner, she was physically and financially unable to have the house repainted. Through the Community Development Department's "Summer of Service Project", volunteers from an area church provided the labor.*

## **Stewardship**

A total of \$18,829.95 was spent in 2012 for board-ups and clean-ups. Most of this was for mowing by our contractor. The code department has recouped a total of \$2,100 for 2012 in weed/trash/lien monies.

## **Weights and Measures**

Roger Shields, the city's Weights & Measures Officer, inspects and certifies measuring devices such as computing scales, prescription scales, taxi meters, package scales, and gas pumps. Roger inspected 727 devices in 2012.