

## **Department of Code Enforcement**

*George Obren, Director*

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

### **Staffing**

Code is staffed by its director George Obren and four code officers - Phil Fick, Cris Campbell, Randy Redman, and Joe VanNevel. These five dedicated officers have a combined total of 135 years of service to the City of Mishawaka.



*Code Staff*

### **Details**

Most of Mishawaka's code violation cases are self-initiated by its code officers. Code tries to respond to citizen complaints the day they are received. Our goal is to work with residents to gain compliance from them without taking enforcement action such as writing citations or going to a hearing. It is also our belief that we get much 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 acted upon quickly. Code officers investigated more violations in 2013 than any other year on record. This doesn't mean that the integrity and stability of our neighborhoods has gone down. Actually, quite the opposite has occurred because of code's hard work and the cooperation received from most residents.

*Mishawaka's neighborhoods  
remain Code's priority*

Code officers investigated a total of 5,475 public nuisance cases in 2013. 5,112 of those cases have been closed with the violations remedied. Those violations include, but are not limited to tall grass, snow removal, abandoned autos, animal issues, noise complaints, and litter or debris. It is important to note that code officers had to follow-up on these violations over 10,100 times. While seasonal, the issue code officers address most often remains tall grass violations.

Some samples and totals of the types of public nuisance violations Code enforced in 2013 are:

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| Tall Grass      | 2,030 |
| Snow Removal    | 726   |
| Noise           | 31    |
| Animal Issues   | 75    |
| Abandoned Autos | 124   |

200 E. Donaldson

While some of this trash was properly contained, most of it was haphazardly placed at this alleyway. The trash won't be removed when set out in this manner. Code contacted the property owner who removed it promptly.



*Before*



*After*

2000 LaSalle

Tall grass was the issue at this vacant house. The owner couldn't be located so code hired a contractor to mow.



*Before*



*After*

800 W. Borley

The tenants at this rental property were in the metal scrapping business. Since this property is residential and not zoned for this type of activity, Code wrote the violators numerous citations and hired a contractor to clean the property up after the tenants vacated the premises.



*Before*



*After*

**Substandard Structures**

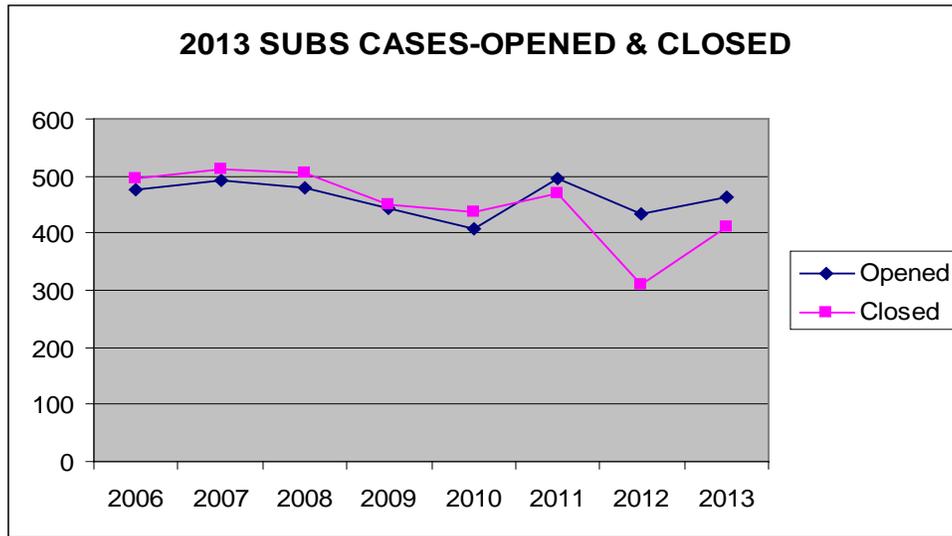
Continued implementation of our Top 100 Program is one of the reasons why you won't see many substandard structures in Mishawaka. This yearly initiative begins in the winter months of the previous year when code officers scour their areas in search of the houses, garages, or commercial buildings that need the most attention. In the coming spring Code will begin contacting the property owners in question and point out the issues to them. In 2013 Code was able to bring 65% of these structures into compliance. Code is now in the eighth year of the Top 100 Program which means 800 of the worst cases have been addressed.

*Code is now in the eighth year of the Top 100 Program*

Substandard structures demand a lot of attention from the code department. Code addressed 464 such cases in 2013. This includes our Top 100 previously mentioned. Many property owners have done a great job as they promptly began working on the substandard issues pointed out to them. Code conducted over 3,500 follow-up inspections to substandard structures in 2013 while closing 410. Some of those closed cases were from previous years. The amount of cases opened in 2013 is not as high as in most of the other years, which is a very positive sign in that the total number of substandard structures are decreasing in Mishawaka.

| Yearly totals since 2007 |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| 2007                     | 493 |
| 2008                     | 480 |
| 2009                     | 444 |
| 2010                     | 407 |
| 2011                     | 497 |
| 2012                     | 434 |
| 2013                     | 410 |

The following graph illustrates how 2013 compares with previous years:



900 Liberty

Code contacted the owner of this house because the roof and exterior siding were in substandard condition. The owner put a new roof on the house and painted it. He also installed new windows and doors.



*Before*



*After*

### 400 E. Grove

Code contacted the owner of this garage due to its substandard condition. The owner promptly installed vinyl siding for a much better look.



*Before*



*After*

### **Hearing Cases**

In 2013 Code summoned a total of eight property owners before our hearing officer. Only three of those cases will remain on the docket as we head into 2014. The others have been remedied. These cases involved substandard structures where the owners simply refused to cooperate with us. Many of these cases get resolved before or shortly after the initial hearing. These hearings are extremely valuable in bringing the most difficult cases to resolution.

### **Neighborhood Stabilization Program**

Code continued to assist the Department of Community Development in 2013 by providing them with the locations of vacant properties. This information has proved to be extremely valuable to Community Development as they progress with the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. Many vacant and blighted structures have been purchased and demolished with new single family dwellings taking their place. Some of our older neighborhoods overall appearance has greatly improved. Code hopes that the newly constructed houses will continue to serve as an impetus for other homeowners to improve their properties as well.

### **Stewardship**

A total of \$17,782.50 was spent in 2013 for board-ups and clean-ups. Most of this was for mowing by our contractor. The code department has recouped a total of \$4,440.25 for 2013 in weed/trash/lien monies. The amount we collected is twice as much as in 2012.

## **Weights and Measures**

Roger Shields is the City's Weights & 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 964 devices in 2013.



*Weights & Measures Inspector*