



Department of Code Enforcement

Spring 2015

WORKING TO MAKE CODE ENFORCEMENT MORE CITIZEN FRIENDLY!

IN THIS ISSUE

What's Happening in Suite 1300 South?

Thanks for the memories, Eddy!

In March, Ed Humphrey retired after **26 years with our Department!** He was responsible for Inspector Area 7; which makes up part of the Westside of the City.

Jim Wood, inspector for the southeast side of town, sat next to Ed for nearly 10 years. Jim says he "Enjoyed sitting next to him and if I ever needed help he was always dependable."

Over those years, Jim and Ed got to know each other pretty well and one thing Jim noticed was Ed's passion to stay healthy. "Eddy was more dedicated to his diet than anybody I have ever known. Once in a while, he would let me have it about my health!"

Best wishes to Ed!



Introducing! Code Enforcement's Mascot, Code-E the Clover!



CODE-E THE CLOVER
INSPECTOR
CODE ENFORCEMENT
CITY OF SOUTH BEND
574-235-9486

V&A Progress



- Count of Houses:**
- 294 Houses Repaired
 - 440 Houses Demolished
 - 10 Houses Deconstructed
 - 4 CDC Partner Houses
 - 64 State Blight Elimination Program
 - 0 Houses Under Contract for Deconstruction
 - 1 Houses Under Contract for Demolition
 - 813 Total**

We are excited to report we are on track to meet Mayor Pete's goal of addressing 1,000 V&A Properties by November 24th!

On June 9th we will be bidding out approximately 130 properties for demolition!

Director's Corner -Randy Wilkerson

It is Spring again in South Bend and things are buzzing everywhere in the City!

Code Enforcement has teamed up with a few neighborhood associations for the "Adopt-a-Block" programs. If your neighborhood would like to take part in this, just let our

department know and we will provide gloves, trashbags, and trash containers.

Also with Spring comes the beginning of grass season! Our inspectors are working diligently to cite properties with tall grass and weeds.

According to municipal ordinance, an owner has 48 hours from the date on the citation letter to mow the lawn. If not mowed by the owner/occupant, we send the violation to the Parks Department crew in order for the yard to get mowed. Once completed, we will bill the owner for work performed. If the invoice goes unpaid, we work with our Legal Department to send the invoice to our collections agency.

We are often asked if neighbors are allowed to mow the grass and/or take care of the vacant property next to them. The answer is yes! Under the "Good Samaritan Law" (Indiana Code Section 34-30-26-5), if a neighbor determines that a property next to them is vacant, he/she can mow the grass,

remove any litter and even board up the doors and/or windows without having to worry about trespassing laws! It takes the help of everyone in the City to keep our neighborhoods clean, happy and safe!

Our inspectors are out most of the day checking their areas for code violations. People often ask how they will know if someone is an inspector. All City of South Bend Code Enforcement inspectors will provide you with a photo ID upon request. Most days they are wearing uniforms with the city logo and are driving in vehicles with the city seal located on the door. To find out who the inspector is for your neighborhood, check out the new map we put on our website: http://www.ci.south-bend.in.us/sites/default/files/files/Code_InspectorZonesCouncilOverlayMap0415.pdf

Finally, I am happy to announce that **Willetta Miller will be the new inspector for area 7.** Willetta has been working as one of our secretaries for over a year. She previously worked for the Department of Engineering. She begins her new job on May 18th. Willetta will be a great addition to the inspector team! We look forward to her taking over that section of the west side of the City. If you see her out, be sure to say hi!

Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Code Enforcement is to ensure a safe and clean environment by upholding and enforcing the ordinances of the City of South Bend through education and communication.

Vision Statement

To be one of the premier code enforcement departments in the nation as a result of our core values and commitment to innovation.

Core Values

- Pride
- Adaptability
- Service
- Integrity

Code Enforcement Conference

On February 20th and 23rd, the Code Enforcement office was closed and all staff took part in a two day strategic planning workshop thanks to **Leadership South Bend/Mishawaka and the St. Joseph County Chamber of Commerce**.

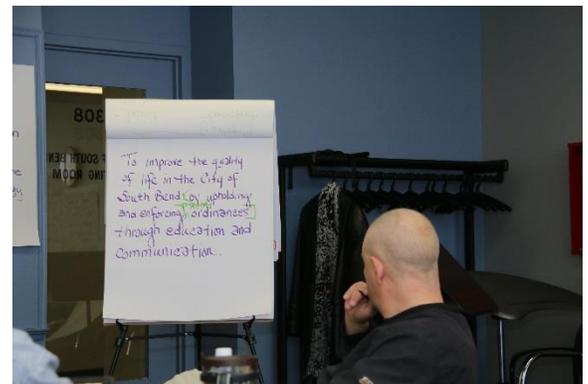
The purpose of this event was to discuss ways in which Code Enforcement can be more effective for the citizens of South Bend and to develop goals that will serve as benchmarks in the years ahead.

When most people think of workshops for their jobs, boredom is the first thing that comes to mind and a groan usually follows. However, everyone in our office agreed that the two day session was very productive and quite fun! It was a time for all staff to voice their concerns about problems that they face on a day-to-day basis and how changes can be implemented to resolve these dilemmas.

We set up committees of 4 to 5 people to further identify issues as well as how to solve them in the future. The committees include: **1) Safety, 2) Policies & Procedures, 3) Intra-Department Communication, 4) Technology, and 5) External Relationship Building**. Part of our office met with the new County Auditor Mike Hamann to

introduce ourselves and create a better partnership with our office.

Additionally, in order to continue to foster a team environment between office staff and inspectors, we are also planning monthly after work outings (like going to a South Bend Cubs game!). Our plan is that we can continue to build on the comradery that was started at the workshop to make our Department even stronger!



Special: Nextdoor at Northshore

Are you having trouble getting to know your neighbors?

Feel like you're missing out on neighborhood news?

Well, we have great news for those of you who said yes! With the help of a website called Nextdoor, you can easily be connected with your neighbors!

Barbara Sutton, leader of the Northshore Triangle Neighborhood Association, is passionate about keeping her neighbors connected. "I started an email group for my neighborhood about 10 years ago. There were 270 members and I used to send information out about crime alerts, lost pets, gatherings, and important city meetings."

The only problem was that email proved to be very time consuming and she could not always send information out quickly. One day, a neighbor suggested Nextdoor, a private social network where neighbors

can communicate online together. Barbara signed up Northshore and so far it has worked out great!

The website even offers a sense of security in know that you are speaking with those in your neighborhood. Barbara notes that "The website restricts communication to members of the neighborhood within the boundaries I defined when I set the group up. It also does not allow commercial advertisements which I like and the neighbors have found to be very useful."

Barbara also said that it has helped make communications between her neighbors better and allows them to feel like they are part of a community.

After all, Barbara notes, "Strong neighborhood networks make strong communities and a great place to live and work."



If you think your neighborhood would be interested in joining Nextdoor, find out more information at: <https://nextdoor.com/>



Code Enforcement FAQs

Q: How many inspectors does Code Enforcement have?

A: We have a total of 8 inspectors...considering South Bend has a population of 100,000 that means there is 1 inspector for every 12,500 people! Because of this, we ask citizens for patience as we remedy code issues that may affect your neighborhood.

Q: When are hearings held?

A: Code hearings regarding housing repairs and/or environmental issues are held Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1:30pm in the Meeting Room on the 13th floor of the County-City Building.

Q: Are inspectors allowed to go on people's properties to check for violations like high grass or trash?

A: No. Due to private property laws when a violation is reported, an inspector must be able to see the violation from a public right-of-way (i.e. street, sidewalk, alley). Once the inspector cites the violation, a warning letter is mailed to the owner and the owner is given a certain amount of time to resolve the issue. If after that time period has passed the violation still exists, a city crew

has the right to go onto the property to remedy the situation.

Q: Can the inspector go onto or inside a property to check for housing violations?

A: Due to private property laws, an inspector cannot go onto or inside a property unless they have permission of either the owner or the tenant or possess a warrant.

Q: Does your department handle properties in the city with 5 digit addresses (ex. 12345 Main St)?

A: No. We only handle street addresses up to 4 digits. 5 digit numbered properties are handled by the county through the St. Joseph County Building Department (574) 235-9554.

Q: Someone dumped trash in my yard. Can Code Enforcement come by to pick it up for free?

A: When it comes to illegal dumping, unless the homeowner has proof that someone else dumped on their property, we have to hold the property owner responsible for the clean-up. However, the Department of

Solid Waste does offer special pickups. For more information, please contact 311.

Q: I understand that I have 48 hours to address code issues like tall grass or litter. However, I did not receive the warning letter in the mail until after the 48 hour deadline. By then, you all cleaned up the property and sent me a bill. Can I have more time?

A: Code Enforcement's job is to enforce the ordinances the Common Council passes. We are not property managers. According to city ordinance, an owner has 48 hours to clean up their property. By state law, we are required to mail the owner a letter regarding the code violation. We mail the letter to the owner's address that is listed on the county tax records. Because we have no control of when the Post Office delivers the letter, we have to use a date certain (the date the letter was mailed). To prevent this situation, we suggest that all property owners regularly check on their properties to make sure they are being properly maintained (especially owners who live out of town).