

# Neighborhood Grapevine

**City of Milwaukee**  
**Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS)**  
**Mayor Tom Barrett**                      **Commissioner Art Dahlberg**



The new information system call Land Management System (LMS) will replace the current system called Neighborhood Services System (NSS)

## ***DNS's NSS to be replaced by LMS... what is it all about?***

When you type "Neighborhood Services" into Google guess which city comes up first? Yes, it's Milwaukee. In fact, the top eight hits are all Milwaukee. With an electronic presence that large, you have to know we are doing something big and popular. DNS has perhaps the largest number of web pages and forms of any City Department. We also have a lot of records.

Managing all those records takes a comprehensive system of record keeping and file management. That system is called "Neighborhood Services System" or NSS for short. NSS is about to be replaced by LMS. LMS or Land Management System will be the new system name. But it is more than a revision. It is a top to bottom rewrite and review of all the systems and interactions that people and inspectors have with DNS. And LMS will be more than DNS. It will be truly citywide as all departments will be unified

**See NSS to LMS page 3**



Another blighted house on N. 36th St. comes down with the DFI Funds. DNS took down a record number of condemned homes from January 1st through June 19th.

## ***DNS demos a record number of condemned parcels in 6 months***

The buildings are missing their mechanicals, basements are caving in, thieves have taken anything of value, and left a carcass of a building behind. Like a giant stone around the neck of the neighborhood, it brings down everything around it. Until now. As part of Mayor Barrett's Strong Neighborhoods Plan the City applied funds from the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions to quickly remove the worst of

**See DNS Demo Record 3**

## ***Vacant buildings still DNS #1 mission***

Perhaps the most perplexing problem all across the country is how to deal with the aftermath of the 2008 economic collapse. In its wake are thousands of foreclosures and vacant homes.

DNS is tasked with the mission of dealing with the health and safety issues of vacant homes and their impact on local neighborhoods. The gargantuan task of bringing stability and revitalization to the struggling areas is likely the continuing focus of DNS for the foreseeable future.

**See Vacant Buildings page 2**

## Vacant Buildings continued from page 1

To offset this impact, Mayor Barrett has launched the Strong Neighborhoods Program (SNP). DNS is a strong partner in this program along with the Department of City Development, Milwaukee Police and Milwaukee Fire departments. The vitality, security and livability of these impacted neighborhoods will depend on the program's ability to grow and improve neighborhoods.

A powerful tool under DNS's belt for addressing the problem is the demolition process. After all, the old blighted properties must first be cleared in order to make room for new properties. The department continues to attack the negative conditions on neighborhoods impacted by foreclosed and vacant buildings. In 2013 these categories of buildings received intensive scrutiny with over 73,000 inspections conducted on these properties. An added benefit is the improved security from reducing the number of criminal hangouts and opportunities for criminal activity to be conducted. Nearly \$12 million (\$11.9 million) is targeted to be spent on the Strong Neighborhoods Program.

The Condemnation Section launched several successful projects in 2013 as well as several enforcement initiatives designed to enrich the city of Milwaukee. Among those successes was the demolition of the parking structure at 600 W. Wells St. that could have resulted in a \$1 million cost to taxpayers. The courts so far have ruled in the City's favor. Another major project was the demolition of the former St. Mary's nursing home which blighted the corner of 35th and Center. The task was complicated with historic issues and arduous schedules.

The following programs were created to address the waning job market. It targeted the poorest areas of the city where most of our demolitions occur. The Jobs Initiative started with a kick-off where stakeholders were invited to participate in a workshop for deconstruction training, provided by national expert Dave Bennink, on best practices on hand demolition, building re-use, and product marketing and recycling.

The Garage Demolition Program program allows community groups to participate in the demolition process within their area. It encourages residential preferences thereby creating neighborhood jobs. DNS received funding to demolish 100 garages at an average cost of \$1,800 per garage.

The Hybrid Deconstruction Program is designed to bolster hand demolition as a viable option within the city of Milwaukee. Hybrid Deconstruction employs techniques combining mechanical and hand demolition to achieve a lower cost thereby making deconstruction costs more competitive. We have demolished five houses under this program using community groups which also created jobs in the impacted areas.

DNS used WHEDA grant funds for the demolition of 39 dilapidated parcels within the city of Milwaukee. This funding was used to address the increased demand for demolition of City owned parcels. We were able to demolish these parcels at an average cost of \$12,500.00 per parcel.

As part of the demolition process we must serve notice and record orders with the register of deeds. In the past that recording was done via mail and we would wait weeks to confirm that a document had been properly recorded. This is critical because a purchaser is considered served if the purchase occurs after the raze order is issued and the document is recorded with the register of deeds. We recently converted to electronic recording which allows us to record the raze order and provide proof of that recording within 3-4 hours. This is a huge improvement in our process. Thanks to Mike Marass for advocating this change.

While the electronic bidding process is still in the formative stage, we have recently converted to a new process that allows us to post huge bid packages to our website which eliminates both the time and cost of printing and the need for contractors to physically come to the office to pick up a bid package. This improves customer service and frees up the small contractors to do more important work.

More work remains for Condemnation in 2014. Among the goals are:

- Successful implementation of the Mayors SNP initiative.
- Support the implementation of the DPW demolition project.
- Successful performance under the DFI grant.
- Completion of 500 demolitions.
- Implementation of an effective quality control process improving office and field productivity. 🍀

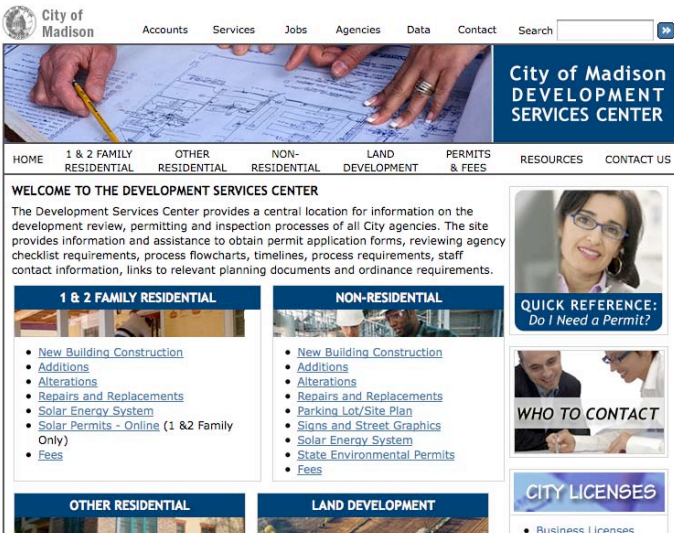


Earn up to \$1,000 for information related to the arrest and conviction of anyone taking siding or other material from buildings.

Call your information into We TIP!!

**1-800-78-CRIME  
(1-800-782-7463)**

**Remain anonymous and  
protect your neighborhood!**



The City of Madison, WI is already using Accela to build their new data system to track all the activity related to a property.

### NSS to LMS from page 1

under a common system and interface. DCD, Health and Public Works will all be using the same core database.

DNS is the first department to be reviewed. Currently DNS sections are reviewing and rewriting their processes to document what needs to be done and how to utilize the new system to do even more. This is a very time consuming task to explain every facet of your section's function, think how you can do it better, all on top a full regular daily workload of your existing job. Like any job, the better the preparation, the better the final results.

Among the benefits are a common core data base. All the records for one property in one place. Whether it is a new building permit, a call for police service or a complaint about tall grass, every City activity tied to that address can be reviewed in one place. The elimination of redundant data bases and the cost to maintain them along with the enhancements to see a more complete picture of what is going on are some of the benefits.

The system will allow for better communication to citizens. They will be able to follow along any process and know if their complaint or permit request is being processed and what stage it is in. They will have more information to the process to avoid any "surprises".

The advanced system will take advantage of new technologies like GPS and smart phones. Imagine standing in front of a building, taking a picture and the geo information is tagged to the photo to know the address, even if a vacant lot!

With the use of tablets and smart phones, all of this information will be scalable to those devices. As technology gets more powerful, DNS will harness that power to make for a better customer experience and a more timely response. Anticipated rollout date is March 2015. Until then much work remains to be done. 🍷

### DNS Demos set record from Page 1

the worst with regards to vacant condemnable buildings. Like tombstones out of place, these homes in targeted neighborhoods have been draining the vitality from neighborhoods already victimized upon by predatory lenders who took their profits and left the unpaid aftermath of vacant buildings in the hands of the taxpayers of Milwaukee. While the tsunami of foreclosures has subsided, the collateral damage to surrounding homes continues to be dealt with years later on after time, decay and neglect take their toll. And there is more coming in the pipeline.

In an effort to break that clog, \$2 million in state funds were allocated to Milwaukee to remove 204 such structures. The challenge was daunting. Horrible winter weather stalled efforts with 8 foot frost depths. Machinery was not up to winter conditions that lasted well into April by which time only 6 properties came down. Nearly half the contract deadline was gone with only a fraction completed. When the ice left the heat was on and it thawed enough as contractors from eight companies chewed into the backlog.

The 198 remaining parcels came down in 51 working days! In the end, 21.8 acres of blight were eliminated. The average cost per demolition was \$13,688.40, not including the cost of utilities disconnects and asbestos abatements. Combined with City allocated funds, the total Wisconsin DFI project cost \$3,235,99.72. The price of relief to the impacted neighbors was immeasurable. Here's the final tally:

#### Types of Structures Demolished:

- 74 single family dwellings
- 114 duplex dwellings
- 11 multi-family buildings
- 1 mixed use buildings
- 4 commercial buildings

In comparison, the condemnation section in a typical year demolishes between 70 to 100 buildings. DNS plans on removing 126 through the rest of this year. 🍷

### CODE QUIZ!

**Q. Can I park my trailer or boat on my lawn? If so, how many?**

- A) None B) One C) As many as I want.

**Q. How far must I be from a music source to be heard to be a violation?**

- A) 50 ft B) 100ft C) No distance limit

*Answer to both questions is (A). Trailers and boats must be parked on a paved or approved permeable surface. Generally, one 22-foot or less trailer can be in a yard. If you can hear the music at 50 feet, you risk a nuisance noise violation ticket. That could cost you \$354 from MPD.*

## What's wrong with this picture?...



We don't need to make this stuff up...people trying to cut corners always will come through for us. Another example of why manufacturers void all warranties when people fail to follow the proper installation methods.

The spaghetti-fest you see above is an attempt to repair a high efficiency furnace where not enough fresh makeup air was getting to the unit. In a "Tooltime" thought process perhaps, "more power" would make it work... more better.

This situation was brought to DNS's attention compliments of our friends at the Milwaukee Fire Department. They received an emergency call about high levels of carbon monoxide in the building. After evacuating the residents they found the source.

The repair consisted of connecting coiled dry vent tubing to 4" vacuum dust collection tubing into a shop vac back through 4" dust pipe, then flex hose back into the furnace. Purpose? More air...more heat.

All the excess pressure displaced the combustion gases that then escaped into the basement flooding the building with CO. The orderless, tasteless gas symptoms essentially start with a headache, dizziness, fatigue and in sufficient doses, fatal results.

High efficiency furnaces are "balanced" so that the intake and exhaust are matched. That maximizes the amount of heat that can be extracted. It does it so much so, that rated plastic pipe can be used for venting as the temperature is so low. The only hazard in winter is to avoid an ice block in severe cold as the water vapor leaving condenses on the pipe before leaving. Snow drifts can also compromise the pipe. There is a reason things stop working. It's best to follow the manufactures directions and leave the "creative" stuff to the TV shows.

**To report code violations call 414-286-2268 or go to [www.city.milwaukee.gov](http://www.city.milwaukee.gov) and click on E-Notify.** 🗣️

*Did you know carbon monoxide results from incomplete combustion of hydrocarbon fuels. It binds to the hemoglobin in your blood better than oxygen and that's what can suffocate you.*

## 10-year Lithium Powered tamper proof Smoke Alarms becomes law October 1, 2017

By Todd Weiler

We've all seen the headlines over and over...FATAL HOUSE FIRE! With little variation the stories end the same way..."no working smoke detectors were found in the home". Most recently, on August 17th, 2014 a 66-year old man died in an apartment fire. The fire started at 3:30 AM in the kitchen and the unit had no working smoke detectors.

There are very few retroactive building codes. One such common sense retroactive code is smoke alarms. They are so important, every home with electricity or gas is required to have one.

For homes built before January 1, 1983, battery operated smoke alarms are allowed to be used. Homes built after that date are required to have hard-wired battery back up alarms installed. Battery technology is improving and the cost is dropping. Sadly, the leading cause of fatal fires is due to the lack of a working smoke alarm. Often the cause is dead or missing batteries.

Milwaukee had a modern day record going coming out of 2013 with just two fire fatalities. A city with nearly 600,000 people and only 2 deaths. Both of those fatalities did not have working smoke detectors.

Sadly, 2014 is not going to beat that record. Once again the community is failing to heed the warning that smoke detectors need to be installed, tested and properly powered in order to save one's life. Like seat belts in a car, helmets on bikers, and car seats for toddlers, it is a message that is repeated but not heeded.

Now a change in the law may help. In addition to installing smoke alarms on every level at the top of every stair well including the basement, and within 6 feet of every sleeping area, the alarms must be the type where the battery cannot be removed and feature the 10-year lithium battery technology. It is hoped the law will prevent tampering and the frequent annual battery change.

Most often, a battery is removed, but never reinstalled. Manufacturers have tried all kinds of tricks such as not allowing the alarm to be installed back on the ceiling without a battery inside. Others are placed too close to cooking and frying areas of the kitchen and are disabled at the first order of burnt toast. Current City law requires smoke alarms placed within 20 feet of a kitchen cooking area be of the HUSH type that can be silenced for a brief period and then will reset.

With over 300 ways for a house fire to begin, wouldn't you want one way to save your life? While the building code is a minimum, what risk level is your life worth?

Wisconsin law requires every home and residential building to be protected by smoke alarms. Owners must install

**See 10 Year Lithium Alarms coming page 5**



**10 Year Lithium Alarms coming from Page 4**

and maintain all smoke alarms in the common areas of the building. Tenants are required to maintain any smoke alarm in their unit and must inform the owner of any smoke alarm problems. Additional smoke alarm requirements may apply to group homes, rooming houses, and the residential area of mixed-use buildings. For more details, call the Department of Neighborhood Services at (414) 286-3874.

Soon, all battery operated smoke alarms wherever installed will have to be powered by a 10-year or more non-removeable batteries. Alarms shall be replaced at the end of their manufacturers replacement date or October 1, 2017, which ever comes first. For multi-family units, every battery-operated smoke alarm shall be tested by the owner not less than once every calendar year. The owner shall provide a copy of test results to the commissioner or the commissioner’s designee upon request. Test results shall include the date on which testing was performed and the name, telephone number and property relationship of the person who performed the test. Testing shall be performed in accordance with the manufacturer’s specifications for testing.

Landlords should inform tenants in writing of the smoke alarm maintenance requirements. Tenants are responsible for maintaining the smoke alarms in their dwelling units. Landlords are responsible for maintaining smoke alarms in all public areas.

Tenants are responsible for informing their landlords in writing of any smoke alarm problems in their apartment. The landlord has five days from receipt of the notice to correct the problem. If a landlord has a problem with a tenant or vice versa regarding these requirements, call Department of Neighborhood Services at 286-2268 to make a complaint.

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It is recommended that you replace batteries on a set date each year, such as your birthday, lease renewal date or daylight savings time and then mark the battery with its installation date. It is recommended that tamper-resistant alarms, or preferably, house current powered alarms be installed if there is a problem with battery removal or disconnection.

It’s still up to you to have an adequate escape plan. You should have at least two ways to escape from a fire and an outside meeting location for everyone in the household, then contact the fire department. Also, smoke alarms are not a replacement for fire prevention. Look at your property for sources of fires and eliminate or reduce them.

While not required in 1 and 2 family homes, carbon monoxide detectors are a great idea. Commercial residential buildings are required to install them (a) Except as provided in par. (b), the owner of a residential building shall install a carbon monoxide detector in all of the following places.

1. In the basement of the building if the basement has a fuel-burning appliance.
2. Within 15 feet of each sleeping area of a unit that has a fuel-burning appliance.
3. Within 15 feet of each sleeping area of a unit that is immediately adjacent to a unit that has a fuelburning appliance.
4. In each room that has a fuel-burning appliance and that is not used as a sleeping area. A carbon monoxide detector shall be installed under this provision not more than 75 feet from the fuel-burning appliance.
5. In each hallway leading from a unit that has a fuel-burning appliance, in a location that is within 75 feet from the unit, except that, if there is no electrical outlet within this distance, the owner shall place the carbon monoxide detector at the closest available electrical outlet in the hallway.

(b) If a unit is not part of a multi-unit building, the owner of the residential building need not install more than one carbon monoxide detector in the unit. ☺

## **DNS Community Outreach Efforts range from Bed Bugs to Graffiti Removal**

by Regina Sims, Outreach Coordinator

DNS Outreach Section encompasses two areas that provide tangible services for the City of Milwaukee: Graffiti Abatement and Landlord Training.

The Department of Neighborhood Services manages the Anti-Graffiti program to maintain the attractiveness and overall livability of the City of Milwaukee through various efforts. The program continues to educate the community by attending neighborhood meetings and community service events in order to establish greater public awareness of the effects of graffiti vandalism on the City's overall economic, social, and cultural vitality. The following analysis highlights the 2013 Fiscal Year efforts in addressing graffiti in the community.

With regards to the outreach in the community for graffiti here are the results.

- Responded to 4,380 complaints city-wide.
- Funded eleven (11) Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). In total, the BIDs supplemented 50% of the cost for the removal of graffiti from 113 business properties. Resulting in a cost savings to the City of Milwaukee in the amount of \$8,174.
- Contracted with private graffiti removal vendors to abate 949 properties.
- Captured \$63,199.92 in graffiti charges and administrative fees from noncompliance property owners.

### **Community Engagement and Partnerships Activities**

- Collaborated with community based organizations to maximize graffiti abatement efforts.
- Attended Milwaukee Police Department District's Monthly Crime Analysis meetings.
- Promoted community awareness of program
- Deployed graffiti surveillance cameras in highly targeted areas.
- Artistic Board Up: (See Artistic board-up story.)

The Department of Neighborhood Services manages the Landlord Training program as designed to help law enforcement agencies, owners, property managers, and residents keep illegal activity out of rental property. The following analysis highlights the 2013 Fiscal Year program outcomes:

### **Landlord Trainings**

- Conducted thirty-two (32) training sessions in English
- Conducted six (6) training sessions in Spanish.
- Total of 928 in attendance

### **Special Trainings**

- Hosted 1st Annual Bed Bug Training. In collaboration with the Landlord Training program, the Bed Bug educational training was presented by Batzner Pest Management Company. Four (4) sessions were conducted in which a total of 118 participants were in attendance.

## **2014 Landlord Training Program Initiatives**

We are preparing to launch city-wide Tenant Rights and Responsibility training. Tenant training will focus on increasing the skills to improve conditions of the tenant's housing sites, to build effective tenant associations, to increase knowledge of financial literacy, and to work with their landlords to foster a safe and healthy living environment that promotes housing retention and community building for all residents.

Partner with Housing Authority City of Milwaukee (HACM) to provide training to program participants who are receiving HUD - Section 8 housing supplement. ♡

## **Artistic Board-Up Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative**

Two additional phases successfully completed in 2013, phase IV underway to be completed in 2014, with a total of 25 properties having received an artistic board-up so far, all in NRSA areas. All properties can be viewed via the portfolio on the "new" Artistic Board-Up website that was recently launched.

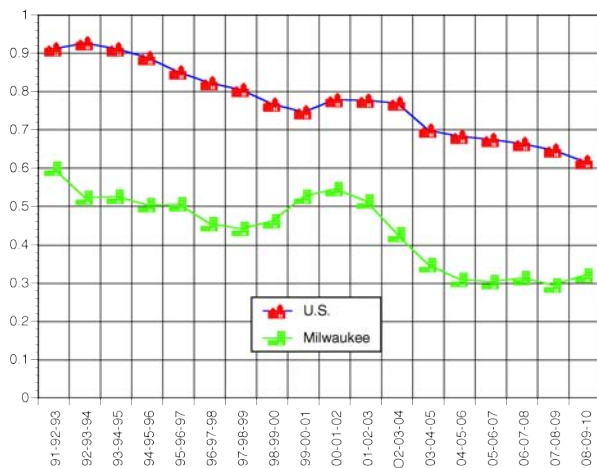
**PHASE II** - DNS, in partnership with Wells Fargo, successfully completed Phase II of the Artistic Board-Up Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative. Wells Fargo donated \$1,250 to support the effort and DNS matched these funds with \$1,250 in anti-graffiti dollars. Eleven city-owned vacant boarded properties, (all in Neighborhood Revitalization Areas) both residential and commercial, were artistically boarded. Article featured in the Journal Sentinel in March 2013 along with a photo gallery of some of the artistically boarded buildings. One of the properties was sold before the phase concluded!

**PHASE III** - DNS, in partnership with DCD and community partners, boarded an additional eleven properties within the five hardest hit foreclosure neighborhoods for phase III using \$5,000 in DNS anti-graffiti funds. The neighborhoods and community partners included Amani, Washington Park, Sherman Park, Metcalfe Park, and Thurston Woods. A neighborhood clean-up event was also held in each neighborhood in conjunction with one of the artistic board-ups.

**PHASE IV** - DCD applied for a \$25K Cities of Service grant and built a model that will focus on artistically boarding 15-20

**See Artistic Board-Up page 7**

## Commercial Fires Per 1000 Population 3 Year Average



\*NFPA and MFD data: DNS TNW V1 9/12/11 V1

### Milwaukee Commercial Fire Rate Beats National Average...Again

The October numbers are in from the National Fire Protection Association and Milwaukee Fire Department for 2010 fires. Comparing the number and type of fires that occur in Commercial buildings, the type that DNS inspects annually, Milwaukee continues to beat the national average. In fact it has done so consistently for the past several years as the chart above indicates. It beat the national rate by 32%.

What this means is that businesses in Milwaukee are safer than those around the rest of the country. The reasons may be many...no forest fires, no earth quakes or flooding disasters that spark fires in commercial buildings.

It also means that the triad of plan exams, inspections and fire responses are able to hold the line when it comes to fires in the market place. Tragically, the fire codes we have today are the result of some death and/or disaster that has led us to reconsider how we do things. We know we can do better and each generation is charged with the responsibility to make our world a safer and more prosperous place.

Not having to lose lives and property to fire are one of the major financial advantages that makes Milwaukee a better choice to live and do business in. 🍀

### Artistic Board-Up from Page 6

properties in Metcalfe Park. Largely volunteer-driven this phase will engage and mentor local youth, residents, community partners, non-profit arts organizations, and create jobs for local artists.

Clark Square CIP GRANT – Clark Square neighborhood artistically boarded two properties through DCD/NIDC’s Community Improvement Project grant. DNS worked with DCD and Clark Square to help target two city-owned vacant properties that received artistic board-ups. A third property in Clark Square received a beautiful mural makeover as part of this grant. 🍀

## Commercial Section looking at Kitchen Hoods and Joint Inspections on Hazardous Facilities

By Mike Mannan, Commercial Section

**Commercial Kitchen Exhausts:** Completion and implementation of training and brochures related to Commercial Kitchen Hood exhaust inspections. Commercial Inspectors are now trained to perform the Commercial Kitchen exhaust inspections formerly done by the Milwaukee Health Department.

**County LEPC Joint Inspections:** The Commercial Division has conducted Local Emergency Planning Committee joint inspections with Milwaukee County’s Emergency Response, MHD, and the MFD for all hazardous facilities in Milwaukee for the 2013 year. These joint inspections have aided the department and the division by identifying hazardous materials within the city of Milwaukee’s commercial facilities. This mutually beneficial relationship has fostered an increased ability in inspector hazard identification, greater cooperation and enforcement between the City of Milwaukee’s departments and county government. In addition, facilities that pose a specific life safety hazard to the public are more quickly identified and gain more effective enforcement for code compliance to the building and fire code.

**Fire Code Modifications:** The Commercial section has identified 76 existing commercial facilities in the 2013 year that, due to the existing building’s construction and the respective storage and use of hazardous materials, require a fire code modification. The modification process is needed to provide code compliance for life safety and property preservation for these older commercial buildings while still keeping the businesses profitable and within the City of Milwaukee. Notable successes that have resulted in this retention of businesses, employees, and tax revenue to the City of Milwaukee are HIMAR specialty coatings, Pomp’s Tire Service, Mitchell International Airport, and Action Recyclers. All facilities identified are in varying steps of the modification process which includes emergency appeal hearings, phased improvements to facilities, obtaining high hazard occupancies, and demonstrating equivalency to life safety risks by mitigating the associated hazards.

**Joint Inspections:** The Commercial section has increased its association to other city departments including the MHD, DPW, ITMD, Assessor’s office, Licensing and DCD. The Commercial section leverages its enforcement authority to mutually aid other city departments. Notable examples include public right of way permitting requirements for DPW, licensing inspections and enforcement of code violations for the Clerk’s office, and address verification and premise

**See Commercial Section update page 8**

## Commercial Section Update from Page 7

identification for ITMD and the Assessor's office. Of particular note was the successful abatement of chronic odors creating a public nuisance from Advance Waste Services. The Commercial section worked in association with DPW, the Alderman's office, MMSD, and the MHD to lead the enforcement of building code, fire code, and occupancy violations that resulted in an amicable solution to both neighborhood residents, neighboring businesses, and to Advance Waste Services. The Commercial section is continuing the enforcement of the facility closure plan timetable for the agreed upon resolution.

### Commercial Sections Goals for 2014

- Complete adoption of 2009 Fire Code
- Continue to expand FPP modification process.
- Complete the building identification process for fire records with multiple buildings.
- Complete the field change permit process for single exits permitted under IFC.
- Provide Asbestos Supervisor Certification for all Commercial inspectors.
- Focus on facilities with hazardous materials and/or operations.
- Revising the Commercial career ladder to include a Technical Qualitative Performance metric based on commercial occupancies and a strong working knowledge of the IFC. 🐾

## Development Center One-year Anniversary with DNS

by Chris Rute, Development Center Manager

The Development Center management met with the business and developer community last year to work on improving the turnaround time for building plan approval. The current on-time delivery rate is 83% for 2013. The goal for 2014 is to move that up to 93% for on-time plan review approval.

- The Development Center successfully and seamlessly transitioned from DCD to DNS.
- Two Plan Examiner Specialist positions were implemented. This position primarily provides service to the Development Center walk in customer base dealing with simple homeowner type permits, signs, and Certificates of Occupancy. These positions provided an additional 45 hours per week of plan review time for the Plan Examiner II's.
- A walk-in plan review program was initiated. This program is served by construction inspectors to provide plan review services for small commercial and residential alterations. This program enables customers to have their projects reviewed in a time frame much shorter than

possible prior to this program's inception.

- With help from ITMD, a program was created to track the time required for each plan review with an ability to report the number of reviews that are completed within the specified time frames for plan reviews.

### Development Center 2014 goals:

- A robust Quality Assurance Program will be further refined and implemented resulting in a greater consistency in the completeness, accuracy, and expeditiousness of the plan review process.
- Establish a career ladder for Development Center staff.
- Create and fill permit technician positions to handle the administrative tasks associated with plan review currently performed by the Plan Examiners to further reduce the time from submittal to approval of development projects. 🐾



Utilizing a Courtesy Inspection, building owners can get a review of the code issues impacting their proposal before committing a significant financial investment.

## Courtesy Inspections now available to help businesses determine scope of work before major financial commitment

by Todd Weiler

You have a business idea but you are not sure if the idea will work with the building you have in mind? You want to expand your business but you are not sure of all the code issues involved to make it compliant? Where can you turn? Say hello to the Courtesy Inspection.

When an existing building or space within a building is being considered for a future business, it is important that the interested party has as much information as possible before making a decision to enter into a purchase agreement or lease. The Courtesy Inspection Program was designed to reduce the amount of risk involved in re-using existing buildings by identifying major building code and zoning code issues that can result in costly upgrades and delays.

**See Courtesy Inspections page 9**



## Courtesy Inspections from Page 8

Alarm systems, fire suppression systems, ADA accessibility, boilers, building structure, electrical systems, elevators, plumbing systems, deferred maintenance as well as zoning code limitations can all impact the time and expense business owners incur when opening a new business location. A courtesy inspection can provide the business owner with valuable information about a location before a commitment is entered to purchase or lease. The base fee for a commercial building courtesy inspection is \$253.50.

### Courtesy Inspection Process

- A business owner can apply for a Courtesy Inspection at the City of Milwaukee Development Center, 809 N. Broadway, Milwaukee WI 53202. Hours of operation are 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM. Please allow 30 minutes to complete an application.
- Applicants will need to provide the following information to request a Courtesy Inspection: Address of the property including the unit number (if applicable). The proposed use of the space, i.e. what type of business or activity will be conducted within the building or space. It will be important to include all proposed uses. The building and zoning codes contain different and sometimes multiple requirements that are dependent upon the use. Applicants should be prepared to provide as much detail as possible to assure their Courtesy Inspection provides them enough information to make a sound business decision. Depending on the proposed use of the building or space a series of other questions will be asked. Here is an example of a few of the more commonly asked questions: How many people are expected to be in the business during regular business hours including employees and customers? What type of equipment will be used within the space? What type of materials or merchandise will be stored and/or sold?
- Staff will perform a zoning check. The use of buildings is regulated by the City's zoning code. The City is divided into many different districts and each district has a zoning designation. The zoning designation of the district in which your building resides will impact the type of uses that are allowed at that location.
- If the prospective business owner makes a decision to move forward with the selected location, it may be necessary to retain the services of a design professional to prepare detailed plans and specifications for the alterations needed to prepare the building or space for your business. Before a business can occupy a building or space, it will be necessary to obtain an occupancy permit, Board of Zoning Approval (if necessary) and any applicable license.

After application is made for the Courtesy Inspection, the DNS Construction Division will arrange a date and time for the inspectors to visit the site with the owner or owner's representative. Each inspector will assess the building and provide you a Field Inspection Report 📄

## Neighborhood Improvement Section

by Brian Kaufman

In the past the NIP section's responsibilities have been primarily the NIP rehabilitation projects and the ongoing Period of Affordability (POA) periodic inspections to monitor compliance with HOME regulations as well as HOME funded housing production.

The Neighborhood Improvement Project (NIP) is an owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program that assists low-income homeowners in bringing their properties into compliance with the municipal building codes. The program also addresses lead-based paint hazards and provides security items to protect occupants.

The Neighborhood Improvement Project (NIP) receives its funding from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the City of Milwaukee's Community Development Grants Administration (CDGA). There are two types of federal dollars used for the NIP Program: (1) Home Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program and (2) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program funds. The City allocates HOME and CDBG dollars to various non-profit community organizations, for-profit entities, and City Departments on an annual basis.

Recently the NIP section has taken on more responsibilities that do not "fit" in other sections of DNS.

These responsibilities include: Oversight & technical assistance to NIDC's HOME funded Home & Rent Rehab programs, oversight & technical assistance to agencies and NIDC's implementation of the NSP funds and Involvement in the INREM process from "beginning to end":

- Initial team inspection with DCD Real Estate staff to assess property condition and prepare a scope of the work needed to bring the property into compliance. The scope is then attached to the sale of the property.
- Tracking and monitoring of inspected and sold INREM properties
- Administration of full (INT/EXT) Code Compliance Certificate inspection and issuance of orders, CCC or enforcement
- Partnering with developers (Gorman & Co, Lindsay, LBWN, etc.) to navigate the permit, inspection and occupancy processes as well as required UDC, UDC HVAC, CCC & Occupancy inspections. 📄

Full details are available in a brochure available for download on the Courtesy Inspections web page. Go to:

<http://city.milwaukee.gov/CourtesyINSP>

The full brochure is at:

<http://city.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/Public/DNS/pdf/broc/DNS-178CourtseyInspectionsBroF.pdf>



## COMMISSIONER'S CORNER

by DNS Commissioner Art Dahlberg

DNS lost a valuable member of its staff on Monday, August 18, 2014. DNS Construction inspector William (Bill) Richter passed away while on a routine inspection.

While the final report on his death is yet to be determined, it appears to be from natural causes. Many employees recalled talking to him in the morning as he left for field inspections and were shocked to learn he died just an hour later.

Bill, as he liked to be called, was around construction work all his life. He learned the carpenter trade in the Lake Geneva area building many custom homes and remodeling projects with his dad and his uncles. Bill was still caring for his elderly father in the Twin Lakes area.

In 1996 he joined Building Inspection, as it was called then, as a construction inspector. He worked for a while as a condemnation inspector and then back to construction. In the construction section his experience was very valuable. He was always pointing out he wasn't an inspector he, "was a construction inspector."

In 1998 he was part of a special team that worked to assess the severe flood damage that struck on a weekend. He volunteered to give up his free time on a weekend to help conduct a damage assessment. His willingness and cooperation were noted by the Mayor and Commissioner Lee Jensen. It was comforting to know that there were individuals like Bill in this department who are willing to give up their free time for the good of the community and the safety of its residents.

Bill had a fondness for all things red. From the color of his work shirt, the Coca-Cola memorabilia, to Wisconsin Badger games, red was it. Blame his hobby of collecting all things antique and related to Coca-Cola. If it was old and red, Bill had to have it. Environmental Health inspector Mark Malin and Bill used to attend Badger games together when not on the prowl for red antiques.

Another fascination of Bill's was the architecture of Wisconsin legend Frank Lloyd Wright. On more than one occasion he attended the South Eastern Wisconsin Building Inspectors Association's field trips to Chicago where the group would tour many of the Frank Lloyd Wright homes. Bill also visited

Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West in Scottsdale. He was proud of the many photos he took and the wide range of abstract and "organic" architecture featured there.

Bill had an eye for the unusual and that came into play with a special project on the south side. He received a commendation from me in 2011 for his work with the Horny Goat Brewing Company. The upstart business was seeking a way to have a special tent built to allow them to have outdoor volleyball courts in winter.



DNS Construction Inspector William (Bill) Richter 1955-2014

His work on the project greatly pleased the business owner who wrote a thank you letter to me citing Bill's hard work and diligence to make the unique occupancy a possibility for the customer. That business is thriving and now a new landmark on the south side.

Bill's personality could be a bit intimidating with his "bearlike" stature. His appearance would have made you think he was a lost brother of Jerry Garcia. Always in a low soft voice he would let his opinion be known. If he disagreed, he'd grudgingly utter a "ah-huh" and roll his eyes.

He had a large district that included a large portion of the downtown area. He had a hand in the construction of most every large building built in Milwaukee's downtown since 1998.

After returning to the office at the end of the day Bill would fire up his portable DVD player at his desk and play his favorite band REO Speedwagon over and over while finishing his paper work. We'll miss hearing that.

Thank you for a job well done Bill. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family. 🍀

*Art Dahlberg*

**DNS How to reach us** 📞

**Department of Neighborhood Services**  
**286-2268 841 N. Broadway RM 105**

Have a contribution for the next edition of the DNS GRAPEVINE?  
 Email it to Todd Weiler, Editor: [tweiler@milwaukee.gov](mailto:tweiler@milwaukee.gov)