

## **A Collective Community Approach for Addressing Nighttime Noise Nuisance**

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The problem of disruptive nighttime behavior in our neighborhood is not new. In a university neighborhood, it is unlikely ever to completely disappear. But when residents and our partners all remain committed to reducing nocturnal disruptions, we all stand to benefit.

There are three primary stakeholders that form a successful response to nighttime disruptions on the East Side: neighbors, Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) District 1, and UWM. When we all do our parts, we improve the quality of life in our community. This is a guide to help residents know what to expect when dealing with noise and other disruptions. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to note that COVID outbreaks and concerns may alter this plan as we move through the semester. Enforcement and investigation may be adjusted to address gatherings to maintain the health and safety of all involved.

### **What Neighbors Need to Do**

When noise problems occur, neighbors should carefully document the problems. Only directly approach the situation if you are comfortable doing so. Make note of when the problem began and the description of the issue. Write down the address where the problem is occurring, including upper or lower unit. Call the non-emergency MPD dispatch number **(414) 933-4444** to report the problem. Make note of the time you made the call. MPD officers may call you back to verify information before they arrive at the scene.

Tell the dispatcher if you want citations issued and that you are willing to be the complainant. This means that you are willing to be a witness in municipal court should a person who gets the citation decide to contest it. Many neighbors have done this and as long as you have made good notes about the event, we've found that citations usually are effective. In your notes, be sure to record if and when a MPD police squad arrives and what the outcome of the visit was. If you have security video that records any of the activity, save a copy. Good records make a huge difference, if only to refresh your memory since court sessions happen many months after the event. Sharing these notes is important. (See "Let Others Know", below.)

### **What to Expect From MPD**

MPD resources are limited and more serious criminal activity may prevent dispatchers from sending a squad while the disruption is occurring. If a squad does arrive in time to witness the disruption, an officer can issue citations without recording you as the complainant. If UWM students are identified as part of the problem, MPD will either issue a citation or simply document the contact with a Field Interview Report. In either case, information is shared with the UWM Police Department who then shares that information with the Dean of Students Office.

If MPD is unable to send an officer to the problem property that night, or if they arrived after the disruption ended, an officer will attempt to visit the property the next day, or as soon as resource availability allows. Follow-ups the day after may still trigger citations and/or Field Interview Reports.

MPD, working in conjunction with Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services, will notify landlords of noise-related issues at their properties and inform them of potential consequences to landlords if repeated violations occur.

### **What to Expect from UWM**

UWM takes a proactive approach to behavior, beginning with orientation presentations to students and their families that address student safety and on and off-campus behavior as a member of the community. Off-campus students receive emails specific to them with information including behavior expectations. This includes encouraging off-campus students to meet their neighbors, share phone numbers, and contact neighbors proactively.

When citations and/or Field Interview Reports are received in the UWM Dean of Students Office, conduct concerns involving enrolled students will be addressed. Depending on the nature and outcome of the situation, consequences may include educational sanctions. These sanctions could include participation in drug/alcohol programs, or more serious consequences. Repeat violations are taken seriously, and parents/guardians may be contacted depending on the violation.

It is important to note that UW System Chapter 17 (the nonacademic misconduct policies and processes) does not specify noise issues as a potential violation. However, what has proven to be effective is addressing the behaviors that influence noise problems. These behaviors may include alcohol and/or drug use, reckless endangerment, violence, disorderly behavior, and illegal sales of alcohol at parties. Details you and MPD provide regarding the context of noise complaints are of critical importance to this process.

UWM students who have been reported for noise violations meet with UWM student representatives from the Neighborhood Housing Office with the intent of providing “peer-to-peer” information and education on the importance of respecting the neighborhood. Suggestions for responsible ways to engage with their peers are shared and students are directed to resources available to them.

### **Good Times, Bad Times, and the Grant Program**

Anyone who has lived in the neighborhood more than a year knows that there is a “pulse” to disruptive behavior driven by weather and the academic calendar. We experience relatively few problems during cold weather, Thanksgiving week, or during the winter and summer breaks as students are (mostly) gone. Low temperatures keep people inside and windows closed. All-in-all, it is easy to sleep. During summer months, the student population is also relatively low and disruptions tend to be less common. By far, late August through Halloween is the most difficult time for us, followed by late spring as school ends.

Because these times require enhanced attention, UWM partners with MPD through a grant program that allows for additional MPD officers to be dedicated to our neighborhood on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights to address safety and quality of life issues. An annual grant is coordinated between UWM and MPD for this purpose. During the grant period, policing in the neighborhood is increased with officers from MPD dedicated to the neighborhood and dedicated to events occurring in our immediate area. The grant period is when most of the noise-related Field Interview Reports are written.

UWM Police partner with MPD officers during this period and communication between both departments helps provide a targeted approach to addressing the most disruptive properties. The Department of Neighborhood Services also follows up on concerns related to properties and living conditions. This helps educate students on their rights as tenants and allows landlords to be notified of activities in their properties. Neighbors are encouraged to contact landlords to report what they see.

### **UWM Police**

UWM Police officers are sworn Wisconsin State Police. They work in close coordination with MPD on issues that impact the neighborhood, but their primary role is on the Kenwood campus and at UWM facilities away from the main campus, including residence halls. UWM officers do some off-campus patrolling, primarily in the blocks closest to campus, and participate in off-campus disruption monitoring activities in conjunction with MPD officers. As State Police, UWM officers do not enforce municipal ordinances, such as noise nuisance offenses. However, UWM officers do watch for potentially disruptive situations and attempt to prevent them from becoming more serious issues. The focus of the UWM Police in the neighborhoods around campus is assisting MPD with quality of life issues involving students and violent crime. Therefore, it is important that *when neighbors report noise problems, that we report to MPD, not UWM Police.*

### **Let Others Know**

In addition to notifying MPD at the time of the problem, a follow up email, sent the next morning, can be very helpful. It can be your own record of events, of course, but also **copy UWM’s Neighborhood Relations Manager ([neighborhood-relations-group@uwm.edu](mailto:neighborhood-relations-group@uwm.edu)), Alderman Kovac ([nkovac@milwaukee.gov](mailto:nkovac@milwaukee.gov)), our MPD Neighborhood Liaison Officer Carlos Felix ([cfelix@milwaukee.gov](mailto:cfelix@milwaukee.gov)), and MHNA ([issues@murrayhillna.org](mailto:issues@murrayhillna.org)).** If you know who the landlord is, let them know as well. You can find this information on the Department of Neighborhood Services website.

### **Remember...**

Call **(414) 933-4444** to report nighttime noise issues. Tell them you want citations issued and that you are willing to be the complainant. And take good notes:

- When the problem began
- Address, including upper or lower unit
- Description of disturbance, including how many people and any identifying features
- Time of call to MPD
- Summary of response and when the problem finally ended
- Send your notes to yourself and other participants in maintaining a livable neighborhood.