

# Near Northwest Neighborhood

I N C O R P O R A T E D



## How to Resolve Nuisance Problems in Your Neighborhood

At times we are faced with noisy, unruly, sometimes criminal situations with neighbors or properties in our neighborhoods. This behavior can be disruptive to your life, frustrating to your family, and exasperating to live by on a day-to-day basis. It can interfere with your quality of life and make a neighborhood feel cold and unwelcome then a place of community and unity. Sometimes we try to address these issues on an individual level but without results. This can be particularly frustrating. That is why this guide was developed. This guide is intended to help you and your neighbors organize yourselves to deal with problem properties within the confines of the law, city ordinances, and neighborly common sense.

First, it is important to assess the situation presented to you. Always take the proper steps to keep you, your family, your property and your neighbors safe. If at any time there you feel the situation you are addressing could be a threat or danger, please have the proper authorities take on the fight. Never put anyone in danger.

With that said, here are practical steps to establish empower you and your neighbors to effectively resolve disputes with nuisance properties and people.

### Preparation and Organization

1. **Identify the problem.** Is it criminal activity, noise, trash issues or unruly animals? Is it occurring at a specific address? Is it a homeowner or is it a rental. Is a multiple-unit residence, is it restricted to a specific unit/tenant?
2. **Start a log of the problems.** Documentation adds credence to your cause. Document: date and times of problems, people involved, try to get names and addresses if they live in the neighborhood. If you don't have names, then get detailed descriptions of the persons involved. Get license plates and descriptions of any vehicles involved. The greater documentation the more credibility for your claims. Remember; do not do anything that could jeopardize anyone's safety.
3. **Identify all the neighbors affected by the problem.** Remember the problem could affect neighbors that you may not know. They may share an alley with you and are not just next-door. Check with neighbors on all sides of the problem. The more people involved, the stronger your collective voice will be.
4. **Neighbors join in the cause.** Once you have neighbors willing to work to resolve the problems, have them start a log as well. Have them record the same type of information. Your case is strengthened when a group is reporting on the same types of issues.

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5. **Gather information.** Gather information on the people or city services that could best resolve the issues as quickly and effectively as possible. Identify the property owners or landlords – the county assessor’s office (235-9557) can provide information about a specific address. If there is a phone number on a rental sign use that to gather information on who owns or operates the property.

At the end there is a list of city services to contact to help with you resolve specific problems.

6. **Organize your neighbors:** Once you have your team of neighbors committed to resolving the issue, call a meeting and share your information about the property. Swap information with all the neighbors of problems and people involved – that way everyone can be on the look out for the same people and problems. Establish clear set goals that you want to address with the parties involved. Set a time line for all these goals to be reached.

## Addressing the Situation

Once all the neighbors are united and informed of the situation, now it is time to address it. Here are helpful steps to assess who can resolve these issues.

1. **Try to speak directly to the neighbors.** Does anyone have a rapport with the people causing the problem? Can a relationship be established? The best resolution is to have a small group of neighbors talk calmly and rationally with the neighbors about the concern rather than going to city officials or the police. You will have a better relationship with your neighbors if you don’t immediately involve city authorities. Talk to them as a small group. One person is not as effective or taken as seriously as a small group. Remember, you have greater power and impact in numbers, and a strong voice. Emphasize a small group when talking directly to them – just two or three people at the most. Too many people take on a mob mentality and the person you are meeting with might feel threatened. If you can, invite them to a small meeting of three people.

**Note:** Appoint one person to do most of the talking. This lead person needs to be calm, positive, and rational. If the meeting becomes confrontational, bring the meeting to an end and walk away.

2. **Try to speak with the property owners/landlord.** If the people causing the problems are not the primary homeowners, and speaking to them directly is ineffective, try to contact their landlord. Good landlords will welcome neighbors who can help look out for situations at their property and respect the quality of life of their neighbors.

If the landlord is responsive, ask to have a direct phone number so that you can contact him/her if there are other issues. It is also a good practice to meet with landlords on a regular basis just to stay in touch as it creates a working relationship and an investment in the neighborhood.

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3. **Addressing unresponsive neighbors or landlords.** In the unlikely event you can't talk directly to the neighbors causing the problem or the landlord, you need to contact the proper authorities. Determine which city service can best help resolve your issues. Invite them to a group meeting or schedule a time when most of the neighbors can meet with the proper authorities. Explain what your reasons are for meeting them. Schedule an appointment; explain to them how many neighbors will be attending the meeting.
  - a. Determine which city service can best address the situation. Is it Code Enforcement? Animal Control? The South Bend Police Department?
  - b. Invite the proper officials to a meeting with you and your neighbors. Let them know approximately how many neighbors will be there and explain in advance why you want to meet with them, being as specific as possible. That way they are prepared for the meeting.
  - c. Present your logs and all of the information that you and your neighbors have collected. Remember that while you may need to vent and tell your story, facts help get the situation resolved.
  - d. Explain the expectations that you and neighbors have and what YOUR goals and timelines are as neighbors.

**Remember:** it is a good idea to designate one person to do the talking.
  - e. Listen to the city officials to find out what they plan to do, or are doing, about the problem
  - f. Come to consensus with the officials about what the goals and timelines can be for improvements. Some problems are dynamic and could change your goals or deadlines. You might have to adjust your goals and deadlines to deal with new facets of the problem. Be persistent to obtain your goals.
  - g. Keep in contact with the officials – sometimes this will require additional meetings and follow-ups from neighbors. Don't give up until you goals are obtained.
  - h. Review the goals once the deadlines have expired to monitor progress. Some problems are dynamic and upon review, your goals or deadlines could change.
4. **Keep calling.** While this process can take time, continue to keep your log and call proper authorities whenever there is a nuisance problem affecting you and your neighbors. KEEP CALLING. Have all your neighbors call as well. "The squeaky wheel gets the grease" theory works well here.

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- 5. Don't give up.** Keep meeting, keep logging the problems, keep calling city services and keep meeting with authorities until the problem is resolved. City Services are just that - to serve the residents of the city. If you have your facts and are calm, they will respond.

If you do not have a Neighborhood Watch program, please look into one. This is a great tool to empower neighbors and share information of criminal activity in your immediate neighborhood.

While this process takes some effort, time and commitment, remember it will empower you and your neighbors to protect your investment in your neighborhood and your quality of life. The city services cannot solve nuisance issues without the help of the neighbors around the problem. You will succeed more than you will lose if you work together, gather you information and present it in a calm way. Take pride in your neighborhood and take care of those around you.

## **South Bend's Disorderly house ordinance**

In July of 2005, the South Bend Common Council adopted an amendment to strengthen the city's disorderly house ordinance.

The impetus for the amendment was the often uneasy and frustrating relationship between homeowners in the northeast neighborhood and the University of Notre Dame students who populate the area. However, the ordinance affects residents throughout South Bend, including those living in the near northwest neighborhood.

### **Here's a look at the details of the amendment to the city law:**

- The amendment adds state alcohol law violations to the list \* of prohibited conduct constituting a public nuisance.
- The previous ordinance required three citations for loud and raucous noise before the City could issue a notice to abate, or stop, the activity. Now the City can do so after the first incidence.

A violation that takes place after this notice is sent can result in the City filing suit for an injunction (Court order to stop) and for \$2,500 for each day the activity occurs after the notice is sent.

(\* gambling, battery, resisting law enforcement, disorderly conduct, criminal recklessness, discharge of firearms, loud and raucous noise, and failure to keep vacant property secured.)

# Near Northwest Neighborhood

INCORPORATED



## South Bend City Services Contacts

Abandoned vehicles - 235-9486

Animal Control: 235-9303

Code Enforcement: 235-5915

### **Police:**

Emergency: 911

Non-emergency - 235-9361

Ongoing problem:

Day shift commander - 235-9283

Afternoon shift commander - 235-9587

Midnight shift commander - 235-5970

Suspected drug activity: 235-9406- (you may remain anonymous)

Noise ordinance violation- 235-9361

Open Drug dealing or prostitution - 235-9388

Traffic/parking related - 235-9306

Sgt. Tom Cameron, Northwest Crime Intelligence Unit Office - 235-7505

Mayor's Office - 235-9261

Near Northwest Neighborhood, Inc. - 232-9182

Post Office - 255-9691 Recycling - 235-9973

Street Light Outages: 235-5938

Trash Service - 277-8823

Trash Violations: 235-9386

### **Utilities**

Electric company (AEP) - 1(800) 672-2231

Gas Company (NIPSCO) – 1(800) 464-7726

Water Works - 235-9236

**Zoning Issues** - 235-9554