



Metro Codes

E - News for Neighborhoods

Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County

Request For Service (RFS):

From Request to Abate—Roadmap to Solving Problems

This is the first in a series of articles that will describe the entire Property Standards Code process. Many of the inspections we make in Property Standards are the result of a Request For Service or RFS. The RFS is a request by our customers to investigate and correct an alleged codes violation. An initial request can take several forms. It can be called in over the phone, emailed to us or sent via Fax or sent via US mail. No matter how it reaches us, it is processed the same way.

Once we have the request, one of our secretaries will enter the request into the KIVA system. When submitting a request to us, try to be as detailed as possible about where the violation is and what the violation is. An inaccurate or vague location can delay our response to the request. Our new tracking system automatically schedules the initial inspection for the inspector once the RFS is created. This eliminates having to print the request and routing it through the inspectors' supervisor as we did under the old system. The request will show up on the inspectors Daily Worksheet as an open inspection.

After the inspector has gone out to investigate the request, they will document on the Daily Worksheet what they find. If the violation cannot be verified, then the request is closed as unjustified. However, if the inspector does find the address in violation, they will document the type and nature of the violation and post this information in KIVA. At this point violation(s) have been noted and we need to issue the property owner an abate letter. This is where KIVA helps out by already having the abate letter in the program, so when the inspector checks off the violations, these are merged into the abate letter when it is printed by our clerical staff. Our secretaries only have to sign-off on the abate to have it print the abate letter and the envelope.

On some violations we may not be able to verify the request because the violation only occurs at night or on the weekend. If the customer tells us this, we will schedule the inspection for either a night or on the weekend.

The abate letter gives the property owner all the information they need to correct the violation. Metro Code requires us to provide the violator with written notice describing the nature of the violation, the section of the

The Urban Forestry Section: Preserving and Protecting Nashville's Urban Landscape

The **Urban Forestry Division** of Codes is responsible for review of landscape plans and enforcement of the Tree and Landscape Ordinance. The division's focus is the protection of existing trees and the continued planting of quality trees in Nashville and Davidson County. In development other than single-family or duplex residential properties, and approved landscape plan is required prior to issuance of a building permit. After construction has been completed, an Urban Forestry inspection will be performed to insure compliance and coordination with the approved landscape plan. If inspection is satisfactory, the urban forestry phase of development will be complete.

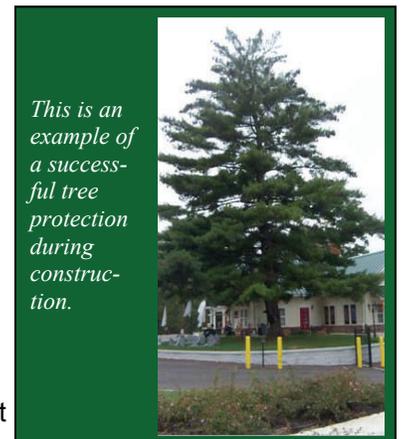
TREE REMOVAL PERMITS



This is an example of an improper planting, causing the death of this tree.

A tree removal permit is required whenever a tree or trees are to be removed, and are greater than six (6") inches in diameter.

This may be waived if the property is zoned for Single Family Residence or Duplex Residence, or a valid Building Permit has been issued.



This is an example of a successful tree protection during construction.

For more information contact Stephan Kivett at 862-6488 or email at Stephan.kivett@nashville.gov

code being violated, the time period to correct the violation and the consequence of not correcting the violation.

In the case of a repeat violation, we are not required to issue a written abate notice. In this case, we will skip the abate letter and initiate a warrant to environmental court.

The violator is given a reasonable amount of time to correct the violation. Usually that will be 15 to 30 days. If we are ordering a housing repair, that time period can range from 45 to 90 days. An extension can be granted for up to the original abate period if the situation warrants it. Once the abate period ends, our inspector will re-inspect to see if the property is in compliance. If it is, we can close the case, but if it is not, we then request a warrant to have the violator appear in Environmental Court. We'll take up the Environmental Court process in our next issue.

Street Numbers:

Premises Identification Could Save your Life

The Metro Building Code specifies that residential and commercial buildings having mail and delivery services are required to have their street numbers posted in accordance with the rules promulgated by the Director of Public Works. Premises identification is also required by the Property Standards Code and applies retroactively to all properties in Davidson county.

Many people take this requirement for granted but the lack of street numbers can mean the difference between life and death in an emergency situation. Without proper premises identification, it may take emergency vehicles more time to reach you in an emergency or they may not be able to find your address at all. Either situation could prove deadly when seconds count.

Residences are to have street numbers at least 3 inches in size, on a contrasting background, and visible from the street. The numbers may be attached to the residence or the mailbox, if the mailbox is next to the street.

Numbers posted on the outside of commercial buildings must be 6 inches or larger. Numbers posted on an inside business door (such as a lease space in a mall) must be at least 3 inches.

Because this is a requirement of the Metro building code, street numbers are required to be affixed to the structure (or mailbox) prior to issuance of a Use and Occupancy Certificate.

The numbers should be posted on a contrasting background and be readily visible and legible from the street – a minimum of 3 inches tall. During a fire or medical emergency, 'minutes' may mean the difference between life and death.

Proper street numbers are assigned by the Public Works Department prior to issuance of a building permit. For assistance call 862-8780.

Fire Safety Tips from the Department of Codes & Building Safety

1. **Install Smoke Detectors.** **Smoke detectors save lives!**

Working smoke detectors can alert you to a fire in your home in time for you to safely escape, even if you are sleeping. Install smoke detectors on every level of your home, including the basement, and outside each sleeping area. If you sleep with the door closed, install one inside your sleeping area as well.

Test detectors every month, following the manufacturer's directions, and replace batteries twice per a year. Change the batteries each time you reset your clocks for daylight savings time. Never "borrow" a smoke detector's battery for another use – a disabled detector can't save your life. Replace detectors that are more than 10 years old.

2. Plan Your Escape. If a fire breaks out in your home, you have to get out fast! Prepare for a fire emergency by sitting down with your family and agreeing on an escape plan. Be sure that everyone knows at least two unobstructed exits – doors & windows – from every room.

[If you live in an apartment building, do not include elevators in your escape plan.] Decide on a meeting place outside where everyone will meet after they escape. Have your entire household practice your escape plan twice a year.

3. Keep An Eye On Smokers. Careless smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths in the U.S. Smoking in bed or when you are drowsy could be deadly. Provide smokers with large, deep non-tip ashtrays and soak butts with water before discarding them. Before going to bed or leaving home after someone has been smoking, check under and around cushions and upholstered furniture for smoldering cigarettes. Another idea is simply not allow smoking inside your home.

4. Cook Carefully. Never leave cooking unattended. Keep cooking areas clear of combustibles and wear clothes with short, rolled-up or tight fitting sleeves when you cook. Turn pot handles inward on the stove where you can't bump them and children can't grab them. Enforce a "Kid-Free Zone" three feet around your kitchen stove. If grease catches fire in a pan, slide a lid over the pan to smother the flames and turn off the heat. Leave the lid on until cool.

5. Give Space Heaters Space. Keep portable heaters and space heaters at least three feet from anything that can burn. Keep children and pets away from heaters, and never leave heaters on when you leave home or go to bed.

6. Remember: Matches & Lighters are Tools, Not Toys. In a child's hand, matches and lighters can be deadly. Store them away and out of reach. Teach your children that matches and lighters are tools, not toys, and should be used only by adults or with adult supervision. Teach children to tell a grown-up if they find matches or lighters.

7. Post Your House Numbers. To assist fire and emergency personnel in finding your home as quickly as possible, post your house numbers on your house and/or mailbox.

Who We Are

Employee Highlights

Stephan Kivett, is the Urban Forester for Metro Davidson County. His section is responsible for enforcement of the Metro Tree & Landscape ordinance in connection with building permits and associated Use and Occupancy certificates. They further investigate illegal tree removals and consult with the development community on how to best save and protect trees.

Stephan has performed tree inventories throughout the eastern U.S. and Canada and will conduct tree identification classes when needed. He has also led tree-clearing & power restoration efforts for hurricane-damaged cities along the gulf and east coast.



He is a graduate of Kansas State University Department of Agriculture 1991; I.S.A. Certified Arborist since 1994, I.S.A. Certified Line Clearance Tree Trimmer since 1996. Prior to joining the Codes Department in 2000 as Metro Urban Forester, Stephan was the Urban Forester of the historic City of Charleston, SC. He also spent three years in the U.S. Army in the 82nd Airborne Division and the 4th Infantry Division.

Upcoming Events in Metro



Oct 28, The 10th Annual Metro Codes Charity Golf Tournament will be held at the Ted Rhodes golf course. The proceeds from the event will benefit the Easter Seals camp Miriam's promise and Harris-Hillman School through the Metro Employees Consolidated charities Campaign. For more information, contact [Sonny West](#) at 862-6608

8. Use Electricity Safely. In an electrical appliance smokes or has an unusual smell, unplug it immediately, then have it serviced before using it again. Replace any electrical cord that is cracked or frayed. Don't overload extension cords or run them under rugs. Never use extension cords as permanent wiring. Don't tamper with your fuse box or use improper-size fuses.

9. Crawl Low Under Smoke. During a fire, smoke and poisonous gases rise with heat. The air is cleaner near the floor. If you encounter smoke while you are escaping from a fire, use an alternate escape route.

10. Stop, Drop and Roll. If your clothes catch fire, don't run. Stop where you are, drop to the ground, cover your face with your hands, and roll over and over to smother the flame

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Going Beyond Protecting the Environment to Enhancing Neighborhoods

Everyone knows the importance of recycling. We all know that it helps preserve our dwindling natural resources, but did you know that adopting the three "R's" could also benefit our neighborhoods? America has become a throw-away society. This has caused a significant increase in the amount of waste we generate and what later must be land filled. Of course land filling is not the end of the line for our solid waste. Whenever we land fill something, we must "baby sit" that waste in the land-fill for as much as thirty years from the time it's buried. What that means is the toxic sludge which is formed when water percolates through the garbage (which is called Leachate) has to be collected and disposed of in another hazardous waste facility, special liners of plastic and clay must be used, and let's not forget the high energy gas called methane that's generated from all that garbage cooking underground. This gas by the way is what's responsible for the lovely smell that surrounds land fills.

However, we can avoid all of these headaches by practicing the three "R's", and we can improve our neighborhoods. If we reduce our waste on the front end, we can reduce what is set out on the curb, especially those unsightly bulky items that tend to end up in backyards or dumped in alley's. Recycling even extends to buildings. Our first priority should be to rehabilitate the building if possible. Affordable residential housing is getting harder to find and older housing stock can offer a cost effective alternative to new construction and can help breath life back into older inner-city neighborhoods. Even if the building cannot be saved, careful demolition can provide a treasure trove of hand-crafted building elements like doors, windows, trim pieces and stone work which can be reused in other building projects.

By reducing or eliminating waste from our waste stream, we can extend the life of our current land fills and avoid having to waste valuable land that could be used for other more people friendly purposes. ([more info](#))

Nashville’s Rehab Code and the Rehab Process

Nashville’s existing buildings—both residential and non-residential—are valuable assets in our city that can be used and re-used to meet the demands for housing and commercial development. To facilitate this process, our Rehab Committee offers what we believe is the fastest, most user-friendly rehabilitation process in the Southeast. Working with the Nashville Downtown Partnership’s Development Committee, we are getting the word out to potential developers about this process. It has been very successful, since this initiative began, vacant upstairs floors have decreased from 84 down to 24 and there are plans in the works for many of the remaining vacant floors.



“The Rehab Committee has worked with GHP on several rehabilitation projects to determine the optimum approach to assuring life safety, while adapting our valuable Historic structures into functioning facilities. They review our projects with an objective eye, interpreting the code, not as black and white, but rather as a guideline to a safe building.”
Ron Gobbell, FAIA Gobbell Hayes Partners Inc.

Encouraging developers to preserve and adapt older buildings is a recent national trend, but not a new idea in Nashville. In 1983 R.G. Stubbings reported on “Rehabilitation and Adaptive Re-use of Existing Buildings: An Analysis of the Present Situation and recommendations for Change”. This report for the Metropolitan Codes Administration led to the 1983 legislation supporting the need for the conservation and rehabilitation of our buildings. To encourage the conservation and rehabilitation of existing buildings the enacted legislation gave the Director of Codes discretionary power to “modify in whole or in part the application of any provision of the Code”....“modifications shall be consistent with the intent of the Code”.....and “achieve acceptable levels of safety for the general public”.

A Rehab Committee was formed to implement this legislation. The committee is made up of four members. They are the Assistant Director of Codes, the Deputy Fire Marshal, the Chief Plans Examiner, and the Chief Building Inspector. They meet on an as needed basis, usually within 1 or 2 days, to evaluate proposed alterations to existing buildings. Their charge is to allow deviations from individual provisions of the applicable Codes as long as the proposed alterations provide a level of safety, when evaluated as a whole, no less than provided by the Code requirements. This procedure was followed and has worked well during the years following its enactment. The “Rehab Committee” is by far the preferred method of rehabilitation of existing buildings in Nashville. We believed, and still do, that we have the fastest, most user-friendly rehabilitation process in the southeast.

“The Rehab Committee excels at being user-friendly. They simplify what could potentially be a very time-consuming and confusing process for potential developers. Being able to meet with the committee early in the project and identifying the scope of work that will need to be done to bring a building into compliance is critical for continuing the rehabilitation of downtown Nashville’s stock of great buildings.”



Tom Turner
Executive Director of the Nashville Downtown Partnership

Celebrating Nashville's 200th Anniversary

Mayor Purcell, who also invited all Nashvillian's to "Celebrate Nashville" in remembrance of the city's 200 anniversary of incorporation, described the day as a "celebration of a new park in the heart of our city that reflects the history of the Public Square and Nashville." The dedication of the Public Square took place 200 years after Nashville elected its first mayor, Joseph Coleman and was incorporated by the State of Tennessee. The dedication began nine months of celebration to mark the 200th anniversary of Nashville's government charter. ([More Info](#))



An aerial view of the new courthouse campus shows how classic architecture and contemporary design can blend into a Public Square Park of which Nashville can be proud .

Photo courtesy of Gary Layda

Department of Codes and Building Safety



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Terry Cobb and **Bill Penn** welcome your feedback on our e-newsletter. Please send your comments to [Bill Penn](#), Assistant Director, Property Standards Div., 862-6516

Metro Moves to New Courthouse

Metropolitan Government of Nashville-Davidson County moved home on Oct. 1 when Mayor Bill Purcell welcomed everyone to the newly renovated Historic Courthouse as he dedicated the Public Square Park.

The Courthouse project serves as an example of the Metropolitan Codes and Building Safety Departments role in historic renovation. Since older building renovation presents very special challenges for modern code and building safety implementation, Director Terry Cobb and his staff worked



Photo courtesy of Gary Layda

closely throughout the project with other city agencies as well as construction teams to be certain the safety of the building was the primary focus while preserving the historic values of the facility.

The Mayor's Office along with the Metropolitan Council as well as the Finance and Law departments returned to their offices in the courthouse in mid-September following completion of renovation on the ground, first and second floors. Work continues on restoration of the other floors in the building.

From the public perspective the most noticeable aspect of the restoration can be seen in the Grand Lobby and Grand Corridors with its restored artwork. Further, all courtrooms have been restored to their original plans. The custom Arts Deco light fixtures have been restored as the fountains south side terrace.

Davidson County Courthouse was designed by Frederick Hiron of New York and Emmons Woolwine of Nashville and was the subject of an architectural competition. Funding from the federal Public Works Administration supported its construction in 1937. It reflects PWA Modern style characteristic of many public buildings of the New Deal period. Art Deco details and murals by artist Dean Cornwell are found inside. The Davidson County Courthouse has remained in municipal government use throughout its history.



For information regarding accessibility, please contact Manley Biggers at (615) 862-6521 or fax (615) 862-6499. He can also be reached at manley.biggers@nashville.gov on email