

A Collective Community Approach for Addressing Nighttime Noise Nuisance

The problem of disruptive nighttime behavior in our neighborhood is not new. While conditions are greatly improved over years past, the problem has not disappeared. In an urban university neighborhood, perhaps it is unlikely ever to completely evaporate. As long as all parties stay committed to reducing nocturnal disruptions, we all stand to benefit.

There are three primary stakeholders that form a successful response to nighttime disruptions in our neighborhood. To the extent that neighbors, Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) District 1, and UWM all do our parts, we improve the quality of life on the East Side. This is a guide to help residents know what to expect when dealing with noise and similar disruptions.

What Neighbors Need to Do

When noise problems occur, neighbors should carefully document the problem. Only directly approach the party 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.

Tell the dispatcher that 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 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.

What to Expect From MPD

MPD resources are limited and more serious criminal activity may prevent dispatchers from sending a squad to the problem address while the disruption is occurring. If a squad does arrive in time for officers to witness the disruption, an officer can issue citations without recording you as the complainant. In any event, expect an arriving squad to call you to verify the address, your name, and review the issue. Keep your phone on and turn your ringer up because the police may not call until after you've fallen back to sleep.

When UWM students are identified as part of the problem, MPD will either issue a citation or use what have come to be called "Yellow Cards." Yellow Cards are part of the hand-off between MPD and the UWM Dean of Students when handling student misconduct and offer an alternate method of handling disruptions. They can be just as effective as citations for handling student behavior problems. These short documents are "owned" by UWM but are filled out by MPD police officers in the UWM area.

If MPD is unable to send a squad to the problem property that night, an officer will attempt to visit the property the next day, or as soon as resource availability allows. Follow-ups the day after will still trigger citations to be issued if you have requested them or may result in Yellow Cards being written.

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

What to Expect from UWM

In recent years, UWM has taken a proactive approach beginning with presentations to both students and their families at orientation addressing safety and the impact of both on and off-campus behavior as a member of the community. Off-campus students receive emails specific to them with information including behavior expectations.

When citations or Yellow Cards are shared with the UWM Dean of Students Office, conduct concerns involving current, enrolled students will be addressed. Depending on the nature and outcome of the situation, consequences may include educational sanctions, such as participation in drug/alcohol programs, or more serious penalties. Repeat violations are taken seriously, and parents may be contacted depending on the violation.

It is important to note that UWM does not specifically list noise issues as part of its nonacademic misconduct statute. However, what has proven to be effective is addressing the behaviors that influence the noise problems. These behaviors may include: alcohol use (possession and abuse), drug use, unsafe situations, disorderly behavior, and operating a place that sells alcohol (aka house party). Therefore, the details you and MPD provide regarding the

context of the noise complaint are of great importance to this process.

UWM students that have been reported for noise violations are visited by UWM student representatives of 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 and fun ways to engage with their peers, as well as resources students have available during situations of need.

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. 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 helps subsidize policing in the neighborhood and pays for MPD officers to be dedicated to our neighborhood on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. (An annual grant of \$50,000 is provided by the University to the City for this purpose.) In the fall and spring, during the grant period, policing in the neighborhood is dramatically 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 Yellow Cards are issued.

UWM Police supplement 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 what their rights are as tenants and allows for landlords to be notified of activities in their properties. Neighbors are also 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 affect 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 seek out 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. In any case, 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 office (neighborhood-relations@uwm.edu), Alderman Kovac (nkovac@milwaukee.gov), our MPD Neighborhood Liaison Officer Tom Kline (tkline@milwaukee.gov), and MHNA (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.

*Updated April 20, 2018
Drafted by Murray Hill Neighborhood Association*

How to Address Neighbor Nighttime Noise:

- 1) When noise problems occur, carefully document the problem, including the time and address
- 2) Call the non-emergency MPD dispatch number: [\(414\) 933-4444](tel:(414)933-4444) to report the problem. Note the time you made the call.
- 3) Tell the dispatcher that you want citations issued and that you are willing to be the complainant.
- 4) Record if and when an MPD squad arrives and what the outcome of the visit was.
- 5) Keep your phone on and turn your ringer up as MPD will call you when they arrive.