ESSENTIAL HOME IMPROVEMENT MANUAL

A step by step guide to home rehabilitation and maintenance for homeowners

6th edition
Presented to you by the Dominican Center and ACTS Housing to help build strong and vibrant communities one family’s home at a time.

A special thank you to the Northwestern Mutual Foundation for supporting the publication and development of this manual.
YOUR NEW HOME IS WAITING...

Bring your vision to reality one step at a time!
This manual is a product of a collaboration between ACTS Housing and the Dominican Center for Women, Inc. The updating and publication of the sixth edition of this manual was underwritten by the Northwestern Mutual Foundation.

Homeowners are encouraged to prioritize the work that needs to be done on their home. The manual is organized to provide an overview of the main steps necessary during a rehab, along with some resources to aid in the process.

Before you do any rehab work on your home it is important to have a **Scope of Work**. The Scope of Work provides an itemized list of repairs for your property that are necessary for safe occupancy. The repairs are organized into phases ranging from immediate repairs needed before you can safely occupy the property, to the final phase that allocates funds for cosmetic repairs. ACTS creates a Scope of Work and Rehab Plan for families that purchase foreclosed homes through its program.

It is important to note permits required for certain types of repairs. Special attention should also be paid to achieving code compliance. Code compliance is enforced by the City of Milwaukee’s Department of Neighborhood Services. City inspectors are available to review open code violations and inform property owners of specific repairs needed to achieve code compliance.
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Before you get started, consider the following...

ACTIVATE YOUR UTILITIES

Turn on Gas/Electric: WE Energies 800-242-9137
Fill your Oil Tank: City Oil 414-277-1300
Turn on water: Milwaukee Water Works 414-286-2830
Cable/Internet: Time Warner Cable 800-892-4357

NOTE THE LOCATION OF:

Main Water Shut-off Valve

Main Electrical Breaker

Main switch for the furnace or boiler and shut-off valve for gas
Once you are the owner of the property, protect your investment! Properly secure the property by boarding up any accessible windows or doors for the duration of the rehab while the home is unoccupied. Install added security measures for your doors by reinforcing from the interior and installing deadbolts and new locks.

CLEAN-UP AND DEBRIS REMOVAL

Most rehabs begin with general clean-up of the interior and debris removal from the exterior of the home. It is important to keep the debris contained and to avoid piling debris in a single location in the home. This may result in excess loads on the floor structure.

Construction and demolition debris can be disposed of at self-help locations. The charge is $20 for up to 8 cubic yards and $40 for 8 - 16 cubic yards.

Call 286-CITY (2489) to arrange for special pick-ups or to locate your nearest self-help station.
Before any other work, attend to the following items:

**FOUNDATION**

Check for needed repairs along the foundation walls on all sides of the home, exterior and interior. Look for cracks or holes that pass through the wall as this may lead to structural problems or access points for pests. If the paint on the exterior of the foundation wall is chipped or peeling, scrape and paint the wall to avoid any code violations.

**ROOF AND CHIMNEY**

Before doing any work on the roof, inspect it to ensure the roof structure is in sound condition. Look for shingles that are missing, curled, or split. Watch for any sagging at the center or the edges of the roof. Check along the roof ridge and valleys where two parts of the roof meet to see if there is any damage. Ensure the roof has proper ventilation.
If replacing a shingle roof system, it is recommended to tear off old shingle layers before installing the new one. Replace any old or rotting plywood sheathing attached to the roof’s framing. Check if any overhanging trees may be causing or hiding any of the roof’s damage.

**GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS**

Ensure proper roof drainage by repairing any damaged gutters. Repair any missing downspout segments. It is recommended to disconnect downspouts from the sewer. Avoid allowing downspouts to runoff onto service walks.
Before any other work, attend to the following items:

**ELECTRICAL**

Most rehab work needs access to electricity. Most work on a home’s electrical system needs to have a permit pulled by a licensed contractor. The work will need to be inspected and approved by a City Inspector before the permit can close. Older homes may need electrical service upgrades like: grounding outlets, increasing amps, and re-wiring.

**PLUMBING**

Common plumbing repairs include repairing or replacing the home’s hot water heater(s). Water heaters normally have a life span of approximately 10 to 15 years. Water heaters should be flushed out to remove any accumulated sediment, and if replaced, an energy efficient model is recommended. All plumbing shut-off valves should be inspected for proper operation, and any damage to the plumbing stack should be noted and repaired by a plumber.
Replace any damaged plumbing fixtures (faucets, tubs, toilets, etc.). Missing or damaged piping can be replaced more cost effectively by using a plastic PVC piping.

**HEATING, VENTILATION, AND AIR CONDITIONING**

Ensure gas line connections to your home’s furnace are properly attached and have a functioning shut-off valve outside of the furnace. Inspect ductwork for damage and replace any sections that have corroded or are missing. Furnaces can have a long life if properly cared for. Replace filters regularly and oil moving parts as needed. A permit is required for the installation of a new furnace. Check thermostats for proper function as well.
REPAIR OR REPLACE ENTRY DOORS AS NEEDED. REPLACE DEFECTIVE HANDLES AND LOCKSETS. REPLACE ANY BROKEN GLASS PANES AND ENSURE ALL WINDOWS HAVE PROPER STORM WINDOWS AND SCREENS.

WALL CLOSURE

WINDOWS AND EXTERIOR DOORS

INSULATE EXTERIOR WALLS

WARM AIR NATURALLY FLOWS TOWARD A COOLER SPACE. INSULATION RESISTS THAT FLOW, SLOWING THE FLOW OF HOT AIR FROM INDOORS TO OUTDOORS DURING THE COLD MONTHS. EFFECTIVE INSULATION CAN REDUCE A HOME’S HEATING AND COOLING COSTS.
**DRYWALL, TAPing, AND MUDDING**

Close walls with drywall after any needed repairs to the home’s electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems have been completed. Holes or cracks in walls can be patched at lower costs. Finishing is a two-part process: applying the wet joint compound (“mud”) to the walls; sanding smooth the mud after it has dried.

**PREP, PRIME, AND PAINT**

Make sure all holes or cracks in the wall are fixed before you start painting. Properly cover floors or furniture to prevent drips. If mold is present, wash the walls with a bleach solution before sealing with a primer.
After the major rehab work has been completed, the project can move onto finishing touches. In some cases, this work can be completed after moving into the property. Wood floors can be refinished at a lower cost than replacing the wood floors or installing new carpet. Affordable options for home improvement supplies can be found at local surplus or resale stores like Habitat ReStore or Community Warehouse.

**CABINETRY**

**FLOORS AND CARPET**
FIXTURES

INSTALL INTERIOR DOORS, WOODWORK, AND TRIM

APPLIANCES
Avoid violations and fines by addressing these common repairs on the exterior of your home:

**PORCHES AND STAIRS**

Ensure porch is structurally sound and has proper railings. Scrape and paint if needed, repair deck if damaged.

**EXTERIOR WALL SIDING**

Replace any missing or damaged siding. Scrape and paint if needed for wood siding; tuckpoint if needed for brick siding.
CONCRETE SLABS AND SERVICE WALKS

Repair any trip hazards caused by broken concrete along service walks and driveways.

COMMON VIOLATIONS

Exterior foundation walls
Broken steps, missing handrails
Peeling paint on trim, damaged upper porches
Garages in need of repair, no house number on garage facing alley
LANDSCAPING

Beautify your yard! A lawn that is cared for provides curb appeal, and helps improve your block.

PAVING

Use porous/permeable paving where possible to minimize water run-off. Nice designs also improve appearance.

GARDENS AND PLANTINGS

Incorporate plants or gardens to help reduce water run-off. Use native plants to reduce needed maintenance. Trim shrubbery around walls, and do not place plants closer than 3 inches to your house to prevent insects.
REduce Water Seepage

Make sure all downspouts are directed away from the house and that no water drips or splashes onto the walls. Rain barrels can help collect roof water run-off or rain gardens can be installed to receive water run-off.

Soil Grade

In order to prevent water from draining towards your house, you should regrade the soil surrounding the exterior walls of your home. The grade should begin at a minimum of 3 inches high, and slope downward from your foundation walls. This helps prevent water from seeping into the basement and damaging walls. The slope can be created by adding extra dirt along walls.
HOME MAINTENANCE

SPRING/SUMMER

☐ Clean out gutters and downspouts by removing any leaves, branches, or other debris.

☐ Cut back or trim any trees/shrubs that extend over your home or gutters.

☐ Make sure ground is sloped away from foundation walls.

☐ Replace batteries and/or test your smoke and CO detectors throughout your home.

☐ Begin any garden prep work and installation.

☐ Re-seal bathroom tile and granite, caulk bathtub as needed to ensure no water can penetrate through to the floors or walls.

☐ Replace filter for furnace, typically every 3 months.

FALL/WINTER

☐ Flush out hot water heater to remove sediment.

☐ Check attic for any leaks, check for evidence of pests.

☐ Check caulking around windows and doors.

☐ Inspect window and door screens. Adjust or replace as necessary.
☐ Check roof for leaks and inspect for damaged, loose, or missing shingles.

☐ Check roof for evidence of animal or bird nests.

☐ Inspect flashing around chimney and vents.

☐ Check chimney for deteriorating bricks and mortar.

☐ Check siding for damage or rot. Repair as needed.

☐ Check for cracks in exterior concrete and asphalt.

☐ Examine septic system drain field for flooding or odor.

☐ Replace filter for furnace, typically every 3 months.

☐ Test pressure valve on hot water heater and look for leaks.

☐ Insulate pipes in unheated spaces such as basements, garages, and attics.

☐ Test your sump pump for proper function.

☐ Service heating system and heat pump.

☐ Drain exterior faucets before cold weather hits.

☐ Prune trees or shrubs as needed while branches are exposed.

☐ Avoid raising your thermostat above 68 degrees to prevent a large heating bill.
HANDY TOOLS FOR HOMEOWNERS

Hammer
Box Cutter or Utility Knife
Tape Measure

Wrenches
Pliers
Crowbar or Clawhammer

Saw
Ladder
Level

Replaceable Bit Screwdriver
Cordless Drill and Bits
Rake and Shovel
HOW TO SELECT CONTRACTORS

VERY IMPORTANT!

Work that is requiring a permit or is beyond the owner’s skill level should be contracted out. The contractor should be licensed, bonded, and qualified to complete the work. If it becomes difficult to determine the right cost for a project, work closely with a Rehab Specialist.

Each repair being contracted out should receive a bid estimate from two or three contractors. Be sure to consider the following when trying to decide which contractor to work with:

- How much will the job cost?
- How long will the job take to complete?
- Does each contractor have proof of insurance?
- Always receive a completed copy of the signed contract including: total cost, details of work, and schedule of payment.
- Avoid paying any contractor up-front costs for labor. Instead, purchase materials to get started and progress payments on the work.

Remember to remain diligent on keeping the property secure while work is being done. Be careful leaving tools or machinery on-site while the home is unoccupied.

Refer to page 30 of this manual for a list of some local contractors in the Milwaukee area.
If you will be receiving help from a group of volunteers, here are some tips to help the day go smoothly:

- Be sure to have purchased all necessary materials and have them on site PRIOR to the time and date scheduled for volunteer efforts.

- Plan and provide supplies for as many tasks to be completed as possible. Some groups are fast!

- Whenever possible, work alongside volunteers with as many willing friends and family as you can gather.

- Offer beverages, water, and/or snacks for volunteers.

- If you need to cancel work for volunteers, inform the contact person at least 48 HOURS in advance.

- Be sure to have all the necessary safety equipment on site when needed to avoid major health or safety risks.
## TOOLS AND MATERIALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Store</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home Depot</strong></td>
<td>4155 N. Port Washington Rd.</td>
<td>414-263-1291 or 150 W. Holt Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Menards</strong></td>
<td>8365 N. 76th St.</td>
<td>414-355-5666 or 2101 Miller Park Way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOBO</strong></td>
<td>3543 S. 27th St.</td>
<td>414-643-1226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bliffert Lumber</strong></td>
<td>1014 E. Chambers St.</td>
<td>414-264-5700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salvage Heaven</strong></td>
<td>206 E. Lincoln Ave.</td>
<td>414-482-0286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N. Josten &amp; Co</strong></td>
<td>4905 N. 32nd St.</td>
<td>414-445-4651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lisbon Storm, Screen, &amp; Door</strong></td>
<td>5006 W. Lisbon Ave.</td>
<td>414-445-8899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Warehouse</strong></td>
<td>521 S. 9th St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Membership required)</td>
<td></td>
<td>414-383-7792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing Resources, Inc.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tool Loan Program</strong></td>
<td><strong>(Membership required)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2500 W. Capitol Dr.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>414-449-0705 or 1407 W. Lincoln Ave.</td>
<td>414-383-7071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity ReStore</strong></td>
<td>420 S. 1st St.</td>
<td>414-257-9078 or 3015 N. 114th St.</td>
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LEAD ABATEMENT

By combining the guidelines of the City of Milwaukee Health Department, the Department of Neighborhood Services, and WE Energies, we created the following principles to define a healthy home:

- **Lead abatement through replacement of windows**
  *This is the main cause of lead poisoning among children*

- **Exterior City of Milwaukee Code Compliance**
  *This increases safety and beautification of the home*

- **Proper Insulation and Air Sealing**
  *Attic*
  *Doors and Windows*
  *Exterior Walls*
  *Floors*

- **Proper Ventilation**
  *This reduces mold and improves air quality*
  *Heating/cooling ducts*
  *Attic*
  *Sealing basement walls*
  *Proper air circulation*

Contact your Rehab Specialist with questions or for assistance with the implementation of the above principles.
AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE

Social Development Commission
Lead Hazard Reduction Assistance Program
SDC Residential Services
401 N. Richards Street, Milwaukee, WI 53210
(414) 344-9010
www.cr-sdc.org

City of Milwaukee Health Department
Lead Hazard Reduction Program
Milwaukee Health Department
841 N. Broadway, Room 118, Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 225-5987
www.milwaukee.gov/lead-poisoning

Rebuilding Together Greater Milwaukee
The program provides free essential and emergency home repairs for veterans, the elderly, disabled.
Rebuilding Together Greater Milwaukee
700 W. Virginia Street, Suite 221, Milwaukee, WI 53204
(414) 319-9828
www.rtmilwaukee.org

City of Milwaukee Energy Efficiency
Me² Milwaukee Energy Efficiency Program
Milwaukee Shines Program
City of Milwaukee Office of Environmental Sustainability
200 E. Wells Street, Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 286-8556
www.smartenergypays.com/homeowners
MISC. RESOURCES

City of Milwaukee
Landlord Training Program (free)
(414) 286-2954
www.milwaukee.gov/landlordtraining

Milwaukee Community Insurance Information Center
Provides information and assistance to individuals in finding homeowners and renters insurance (free)
(414) 291-5360
www.insuranceinfo-ciic.org

Smoke Detector Hotline
See if you’re eligible for a free detector
(414) 286-8980

Illegal Dumping
If you see dumping in your neighborhood, you could be eligible for a reward up to $1,000 if your tip leads to a conviction
1-800-78-CRIME

My Milwaukee Home
Ownership, property details, and local contact information for properties are available online
www.milwaukee.gov/MyMilwaukeeHome

City of Milwaukee: (414) 286-2489
www.milwaukee.gov
The following lists some contractors that ACTS CDC staff has successfully worked with. They may be worth considering for your next project.

_of course, ACTS can make no guaranties as to any work these contractors may do for you. If you are not comfortable soliciting bids or managing any contractors, you should consider having ACTS Housing or another rehab management team assist you._

**LICENSED GENERAL CONTRACTORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>GSI General Inc.</strong></th>
<th><strong>RightPrice Interior &amp; Exterior Work</strong></th>
<th><strong>TC Home Improvement</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Clark</td>
<td>Lonzo Williams</td>
<td>Jimmy Durant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
<td></td>
<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>414-349-7583</td>
<td>414-397-4325</td>
<td>414-419-4636</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>G. H. Contractor</strong></th>
<th><strong>Rizo’s General Construction LLC</strong></th>
<th><strong>Fuentes Company</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German Hernandez</td>
<td>Martin Rizo</td>
<td>Roofing, Siding, Gutters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
<td></td>
<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>414-793-6480</td>
<td>414-581-4940</td>
<td>414-841-0386</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Atlantic Contractors</strong></th>
<th><strong>Three Headed Elephant Construction</strong></th>
<th><strong>Williams Family Contracting, LLC</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paulino Ontiveros</td>
<td>Raphael Sivongsa</td>
<td>Willie Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>414-349-7473</td>
<td>414-737-6365</td>
<td>414-308-4070</td>
</tr>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Anderson Improvements</strong></th>
<th><strong>JM Remodeling WI</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Todd Anderson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slinger, WI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>414-587-9688</td>
<td>Brown Deer, WI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>262-644-5373 (office)</td>
<td>414-354-2800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LICENSED ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS

G & G Electric
Gerald Green
414-712-5331
262-784-0281 (office)

Electrical Solutions
By R.P. LLC
Reggie Pickens
414-234-8619

Dyna-Brite Electric LLC
Rudy Gutierrez
Milwaukee, WI
414-339-7111

Lions Pride Electric
Lionel Garcia
Milwaukee, WI
414-840-4149

EWS Electrical Service
Ezzard White
Milwaukee, WI
414-803-1488

Dyna-Brite Electric LLC
Rudy Gutierrez
Milwaukee, WI
414-339-7111

Lionel Garcia
Milwaukee, WI
414-840-4149

EWS Electrical Service
Ezzard White
Milwaukee, WI
414-803-1488

LICENSED PLUMBING CONTRACTORS

Aztec Plumbing
Hugo A. Uribe
Milwaukee, WI
414-870-2070

Altmann Plumbing, Inc.
Lane Altmann
414-430-2003
414-482-0775 (office)

Nelson’s Water & Sewer Service
Jim Nelson
414-445-2896

Roy’s Plumbing
Milwaukee, WI
414-264-2812

Wilde Plumbing
Mike Wilde
262-695-0451

Wilde Plumbing
Mike Wilde
262-695-0451

Three Kings Services
Errol Sampson
414-235-1795

LICENSED HVAC CONTRACTORS

Kinlow Heating & Cooling
Fred Kinlow
414-397-3899
414-463-5150 (office)

BCM Best Choice Mechanical
Isaac Malone
414-461-6400

Abil’s Heating & Air
Abel Villalobos
Milwaukee, WI
414-406-1522
414-747-0444 (office)

Jon Mitchell
Heating & Cooling Service
Milwaukee, WI
262-229-5698

Xiong Bros. A/C LLC
Khue Xiong
Milwaukee, WI
414-559-0764

James Hightower
Heating, A/C & Refrigeration
414-241-5100
ROOFING, SIDING, & FLASHING CONTRACTORS

Community Roofing, Inc.
   James Godsil  
   Milwaukee, WI  
   414-745-8011

Salas Roofing
   Milwaukee, WI  
   414-514-7789

I & J Construction Inc
   Israel Vargas  
   414-467-2787

Riveria’s Roofing
   Milwaukee, WI  
   414-698-5512  
   414-672-2208 (office)

Superior Exteriors
   Roofing Siding Windows  
   Painting Gutters  
   414-378-8272

FOUNDATIONS & CONCRETE CONTRACTORS

CRC Concrete Raising Corporation
   Bob Zidar  
   New Berlin, WI  
   414-750-6888  
   262-827-5000 (office)

William Henry Smith Foundations
   Milwaukee, WI  
   414-265-0822 (office)

Complete Concrete Construction LLC
   Josh Rawli  
   Milwaukee, WI  
   414-588-4992  
   920-474-4992 (office)

Eaton’s Seal Coating & Maintenance
   Concrete & Asphalt  
   Jeff Eaton  
   414-745-0189  
   414-462-4523 (office)

Select Services of Wisconsin
   Patrick Vanderboom  
   Greenfield, WI  
   414-406-8279

LP Advanced Construction LLC
   Creative Concrete Stamp and Design  
   414-426-7986

Return to page 23 for tips on how to select contractors.

It is always recommended to get two to three cost estimates for any project.
# LANDSCAPING, DEBRIS REMOVAL, & PARTS

**Bonds & Sons**  
Lawn Service & Landscaping  
414-349-2821

**Big V’s Moving & Hauling**  
Waste/Debris Removal  
Vincent Wilkes  
414-627-1595

**Reggie Brown**  
Lawn Service  
414-419-1652

**100,000 Parts**  
Power Equipment Co.  
Milwaukee, WI  
414-744-3210

**Walnut Way - Blue Skies**  
Landscaping Program  
Milwaukee, WI  
414-264-2326

**CustomCraft**  
Environmental  
Rich Reimer  
262-305-7221

# HANDYMEN

**Saitong Cha**  
General Construction  
Milwaukee, WI  
414-333-0371

**Jerrell Cathey**  
General Construction  
Milwaukee, WI  
414-554-6920

**Felipe Fuentes**  
Drywall/Wall Repair  
Milwaukee, WI  
414-430-3455

**Saul Hernandez**  
Interior/Exterior Painting  
Milwaukee, WI  
414-861-4762

# LEAD-LICENSED CONTRACTORS

**GET Home Improvement**  
Gehr Thompson  
Milwaukee, WI  
414-617-6648  
414-486-7526 (office)

**E & L Home Improvement**  
Emer Martinez  
Milwaukee, WI  
414-852-1803  
414-852-1865

**Leo Balderas Construction**  
Leopoldo Balderas  
Milwaukee, WI  
414-384-1492
SPECIALTY CONTRACTORS

Insulation Technologies, Inc.
Juan Hurtado
Milwaukee, WI
414-397-0648
414-732-2235 (office)

INDEPENDENT HOME INSPECTORS

Dick Gotz, Firm Footings, LLC  414-881-5624
Al Walters, Walters Home Inspection LLC  414-235-1101
Troy Beasley, ACE Home Inspections, LLC  414-395-5318

MISCELLANEOUS RESOURCES

A B C Lock & Key Inc (change your locks & copy keys)  414-562-5612
Permit Questions  414-286-8328
Code Violations/Compliance Questions  414-286-3838
Department of Neighborhood Services  414-286-3441
Milwaukee Health Department  414-286-0387
Property Tax Questions/Treasury  414-286-2240
Garbage Cart Replacement  414-286-2489
The Tub Doctors, Inc. (Tub Repair & Re-seal)  414-327-5610
J.F. Cook Co. (Garage Door Replacement/Repair)  414-762-4000
Certified Environmental Services (Mold Abatement)  414-744-8100
Milwaukee Chimney Roof (Chimney Liners)  414-421-2021
ACTS Housing’s mission is to promote affordable home ownership that fosters a low-income family’s ability to be self-empowered, thereby reducing community blight, neighborhood deterioration, and poverty.

www.actshousing.org

The Dominican Center for Women, Inc. partners with the community to maintain and enhance a beautiful, stable, healthy and safe neighborhood consisting of residents who are community-minded and are striving to be meaningfully educated and employed.

www.dominican-center.org