



INTEROFFICE MEMO

TO: James Ritsema, City Manager

FROM: Rebekah Kik, CPED Director
Prepared with: Roger Iveson, Building Official; Scott Brooks, Fire Marshal

DATE: June 29, 2020

SUBJECT: Fire Demolition Information; Assistance to Property Owners

Demolition of Properties

There have been many questions regarding the process that is followed for demolition of burned buildings. I have reached out to Fire Marshal Scott Brooks and Building Official Roger Iveson to describe the decisions that are made based on their expertise and certifications required to administer the City's Code.

How does the City decide to demolish a structure during a fire?

The decision to take a structure down during a fire is one that requires taking in the totality of the situation. Fire Marshal Brooks has certifications as a Structural Collapse Technician. This training allows him to assess the structural stability and determine when they are in imminent danger of collapse. A few of the visual cues that he looks for are referenced in the Department of Homeland Security Stabilization and Shoring Techniques guide and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Urban Search and Rescue Program Field Operations Guide (see attached).

What were the considerations to demolish structures during the North Street fire?

During the North Street fire, FM Brooks indicated the following considerations leading towards the decision to demolish the buildings:

1. Very large, 3 story buildings suffered major structural damage due to fire burning up through the middle of 902 and 920 W. North. The roofs were falling in on themselves, and this was causing the walls to bow outward.
2. Buildings cannot be left to burn, and there were large void spots that had trapped fire in where the water wasn't reaching the burning materials.

3. This major fire scene was in the middle of a populated residential neighborhood, in close proximity to an elementary school, with a lot of people that walk, ride bikes, and play in this area. If the buildings are not structurally sound, there is a possibility of them falling and causing injury. Fencing off the site does not entirely prevent curious individuals from accessing the area.
4. On the morning of June 3, FM Brooks conveyed his concerns and recommendations for demolition to the Building Official, Roger Iveson, who agreed with the assessment and approved the demolitions.

Were the property owners informed of the intent to demolish the buildings?

On the morning of June 3, FM Brooks spoke to Mr. Washington (Owner of 920) and explained to him that the buildings needed to be taken down, and Mr. Washington indicated that he understood. Brooks was not able to speak to Mrs. Lockett, or the owners of 715 Woodward. 912 W. North was already on the ground. Later that day, Brooks was able to talk to Mrs. Lockett and showed her photos of the structures, and she and her husband both told the Fire Marshall that they understood.

Has the City taken demolished other structures during the fire?

- 335 N. Burdick, 2/2012: Sarkozy Bakery was pulled apart while personnel attempted to extinguish the fire due to structural damage and the inability to fully extinguish the fire.
- 1951 Portage, 5/2016: This was taken down the same.
- 740 Skinner, 10/2016: This was taken down while the fire was still burning. Personnel had issues reaching the seat of the fire.
- 2323 Inverness, 12/2018: This was taken down the next morning after the fire due to structural damage and concern of collapse.
- 1409 S. Burdick, 3/2019: This was taken down during the fire to extinguish hidden fire and the fact the building was falling in on itself.
- 1024 Denner, 3/2019: This was a fatal fire, the building was taken down the following day due to structural stability concerns.
- 725 Academy, 4/2019: Building was taken down by Public Services to locate victims and because of the structural stability.
- 416 Phelps, 5/2019: Roof/walls were falling in due to the fire. The structure was taken down during the fire to extinguish hidden fire and to access the building.
- Staff are researching other instances of emergency demolitions in past years and will provide additional data as it becomes available.

What is the status of the fire investigation(s)?

The Fire Marshal has ruled the fire(s) that began at 912 W. North started due to human involvement. Because of the significant fire involvement of the original fire building, there was no physical evidence that could be collected (any evidence that may have been present was consumed). The Fire Marshal and staff from the Criminal Investigations Divisions canvassed the area twice to attempt to locate witnesses and security video. Additionally, staff reviewed all of the body-worn and in-car camera videos to look for potential suspects in the area. At this time, there are no leads and/or information available relative to potential suspects. The investigation remains open.

What is the status of the North Street fire properties now?

| Address | Owner | Demo Status | Next Steps |
|--------------|----------------------|-------------|---|
| 902 W. North | Twala Lockett | Demolished | City is finalizing bid package for clean up |
| 912 W. North | Sheperds LLC | Demolished | City is finalizing bid package for clean up |
| 920 W. North | Robert Washington | Demolished | Asking permission for clean up |
| 715 Woodward | Evans Investment One | Demolished | City is finalizing bid package for clean up |

Other properties that were damaged over the two days of fires

| Address | Owner | Demo Status | Next Steps |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--|--|
| 916 Stockbridge | Arthur Meier | House is damaged, but not demolished. Needs to go to Building Board of Appeals (BBA) | Preparing BBA meeting for July to ask owner if they will demolish or fix. |
| 1031 Paterson | Lenora and Rodney Williams | Demolished by owners; Need assistance with clean up. | Asking permission for clean up; Working with Owner on possible Brownfield Plan |

What is the current status of cleaning up these sites / properties?

- CPED staff has been working with the City Attorney to ask the property owners permission to clean up the debris on site. Some of these properties are known to have insurance and those funds will be used to reimburse the City for costs associated with the demolitions.
- Assistant City Attorney Marcia Jones assisted staff in outlining an agreement. Development and building team met on 6/16 to discuss the agreement with property owners for City to clean up the demolition debris. Currently, the agreement is being finalized.

- Staff are preparing a bid package to be released to have the debris cleaned up. It is expected that the bid package will be released as soon as we have confirmation from Consumers that the utilities have been disconnected.
- The source of clean up funding for these projects would come from CDBG Demolition funding as well as 231 General Funds dedicated to Blight Removal.
- It is estimated that the North Street and Paterson Street property clean ups may cost as much as \$125,000.
- The 916 Stockbridge Ave property is not included at this time as it is still standing. The owner has not been in touch with us yet to determine what their course of action will be yet.

What is the current status of rebuilding sites / properties?

- City staff are also working with property owners to explore incentives for rebuilding. Antonio Mitchell, Community Investment Manager, has been reaching out to schedule meetings with the property owners.
- One on one phone calls or zoom meetings with property owners have been had. Each of the owners of the North Street properties were asked if they would participate in a group meeting to assist with coordinating the projects together. They were all receptive to this idea and would like to have their properties fit together rather than separate projects that don't work together. Rebekah and Antonio will be coordinating the development meetings.
- As a quick reference, Rebekah has included a sheet with staff teams and names for development services that are always available at CPED.
- All development related questions can be directed to Antonio at mitchella@kalamazoocity.org or 269-337-8165. He leads the incentive and resources team and is the best contact for all property owners who need assistance.