

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor Cawley and Members of the City Council

FROM: Tony O'Rourke, City Manager
Joan Davenport, Director of Community Development
Joe Caruso, Fire Marshal & Code Manager

DATE: August 6, 2015

SUBJECT: Dangerous Building Strategy, Phase One Priority

In recent months the City of Yakima has experienced numerous structure fires, as well as various other emergencies. The volume and frequency of these events placed a strain on the response from service providers. Many of these fires occurred at buildings that were structurally unsound prior to the event, which created challenging conditions to the responders. Staff has developed a strategy to begin abatement of the most dangerous or at risk structures.



1. This summer, Code Enforcement Officers identified 123 primary structures that were boarded-up, vacant or appeared abandoned. This inventory did not include sheds, garages or other accessory structures. Property owners, parcel and other basic information was identified.
2. Structures are prioritized by the Action Level for response based upon code requirements, as follows:
 - Level 1 = Eminent danger/ recent fire/ too dangerous for firefighters to enter
 - Level 2 = Obvious dilapidated, leaning, holes in roof, etc.
 - Level 3 = Boarded up, but chronic problem of vandalism, break-ins, attractive nuisance, criminal citations
 - Level 4 = Boarded up, not apparently dangerous. May be other code violations such as graffiti, weeds
3. **Action Level 1 Structures:** A total of 22 structures were identified as Action Level 1 which were found to be in the most serious fire damage and dangerous conditions. These 22 structures qualify for abatement under the Fire Code provisions of the Yakima Municipal Code (YMC 10.05.145). This is an expedited process that allows for a warrant if the property owner is unresponsive.
 - a. **Field Identification of Level 1 Buildings:** The City Fire Marshal (Joe Caruso) has identified all 22 structures as dangerous buildings to pre-warn first responders.
 - b. **Time Frame to Remove:** Total time to process action for each priority structure will be about 45 days. This time includes the Notice, a title report, the 10 day response period,

potential appeal to the Board of Appeals and hiring of contractor to conduct the removal.

- c. Responsibility for Removal: Removal of the damaged structure is the responsibility of the property owner within 10 days after the notice from the City Code Administration Manager. Alternately, the property owner may secure the building to the satisfaction of the Building Official for repair or private removal. However, if no action is taken by the property owner, the City will demolish the building and lien the property for the cost of removal.
 - d. Notice to Property Owners: In order to appropriately notice the responsible party of a Fire Code violation of YMC 10.05.145 a Title search will be conducted for each property to determine all interested parties. A typical Title search takes about a week and costs approximately \$375.
 - e. City Contracting Procedure for Removal: The City will use a Small Works Roster procedure to secure contractors for clean-up and removal of these structures. All certified asbestos removal and demolition firms will be contacted for proposals. Actual demolition may occur in groups of one to five structures, depending on cost and timing.
 - f. Cost of Program: Each property is unique and it is difficult to anticipate the cost to implement this program to remove the Level 1 dangerous buildings. Recent average costs to remove other residential structures is in the \$5,000 range. Level 1 clean-up is estimated to cost \$100,000.
4. Action Level 2, Second Priority Program: Code Enforcement identified 44 structures that are in very severe condition. Approximately 11 of these 44 buildings were identified as “uninhabitable”. Removal or repair of these structures would constitute the next phase of the Dangerous Building Strategy. At this time, we do not have a time or cost estimate for addressing the second phase of this program.

In order to implement Phase One of the Dangerous Building Strategy, as outlined in this memo, approximately \$100,000 will be required to be authorized for this expenditure.