

CITY OF JERSEY CITY

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Jersey City Works to Eliminate the Problem of Vacant and Abandoned Properties

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy and the **Department of Housing, Economic Development and Commerce**, who last year announced a comprehensive approach to eradicating vacant and abandoned buildings in Jersey City, announced today that the City is in the process of hiring a firm to acquire the most blighted properties via eminent domain.

The City would then rehabilitate those properties and return them to the tax rolls, so they are no longer a nuisance to the community.

“Abandoned and vacant buildings are not only unsightly, but they also attract criminal activity that is detrimental to the quality of life in our neighborhoods,” said **Mayor Healy**. “We want our children to be safe and families secure, and property values to be protected. My administration and I will continue to put delinquent property owners on notice and will take whatever action necessary to remediate these eyesores and restore them to the tax rolls.”

The administration is recommending a contract with **Gluck Walrath LLP** for the purpose of having them perform legal services relating to the acquisition of targeted abandoned properties that have been published as part of the City’s abandoned properties list.

When originally published, the Abandoned Property List included 56 properties. Due to aggressive enforcement, that number now stands at 43. The thirteen properties removed from the list have met or satisfied Housing Code Enforcement or were renovated and currently occupied. In an effort to reduce the number of vacant and/or abandoned properties, property owners are contacted to arrange an inspection and are then given an opportunity to renovate or turn the property over for demolition. If the property owners fail to respond to the notices, their properties enter into the eminent domain process.

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Additionally, in Dec 2011, the Mayor unveiled the Vacant Building Registry as part of the Division of Housing Code Enforcement's continued crack-down on the most negligent property owners. Since then, Housing Code has registered 813 vacant buildings, which has generated a total of \$248,750 in registration fees. Additionally, in 2012, the City collected more than \$100,000 in fines and violations from code enforcement of vacant buildings.

Abandoned or vacant properties will be obtained by negotiated purchase or spot blight/ eminent domain. These actions are permissible under the Abandoned Properties Rehabilitation Act, N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et. Seq. (APRA). This will allow the City to acquire the properties and arrange to have them rehabilitated. It will result in the removal of blight and it will assist with stabilizing neighborhoods.

The law defines "abandoned property" as any property that has not been legally occupied for six (6) months, and which also meets any one of the following criteria; (a) the property is in need of rehabilitation, and no rehabilitation has taken place for six (6) months; (b) construction was initiated and then discontinued prior to completion, and no construction has taken place for six (6) months; (c) the property is in property tax arrears by at least one installment; or (d) the property is determined to be a nuisance by the public officer.

Jersey City has been one of the most aggressive Municipalities in New Jersey and at the forefront on tackling the vacant property issues due partly to the sub-prime mortgage collapse. The abandoned property ordinance and the vacant building registration ordinance have provided us the tools to combat this quality of life issue affecting every neighborhood.

The new vacant property ordinance signed by the Mayor Healy has increased the enforcement and issuing of violations to property owners due to the neglect of their vacant properties.

All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy at 201-547-4836 or 201-376-0699.

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