

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HISTORIC DOWNTOWN STRUCTURES STABILIZED

SUFFOLK, Virginia (July 17, 2012) Suffolk Building Code officials are directing repairs and structural stabilization of two vacant, commercial structures within the City's Downtown Historic District. The buildings, located at 147 and 149 West Washington Street, have suffered damage and structural deterioration from years of neglect by the properties' owners. An adjacent alley which leads to the City's Cherry Street Parking Lot was closed recently while the City completed a structural analysis and interior inspection of the buildings.

The buildings on West Washington Street caught fire in 2009, damaging adjacent businesses. The current owners, George Hranowskyj and Eric Menden, have owned the structures since 2008. During that time, Hranowskyj and Menden have accumulated roughly three hundred thousand dollars in fines, clean-up and demolition expenses and court costs for City and State building code violations as a result of their lack of repairs and maintenance of the roughly 75 buildings they own in the Downtown Suffolk area under various corporate names.

The repairs this week follow a clean-up of the interior of the buildings last week which focused on the removal of flammable and combustible materials from the interior of the buildings. All costs for the clean-up and building stabilization work

will be assessed by the City as additional liens against the properties, some or all of which would be collected by the City once the properties are sold.

The Saratoga Street entrance to the Cherry Street Parking Lot is expected to be re-opened within the next seven to ten days, following the completion of repairs to the buildings.

Also this month, City Code Officials are proceeding with the removal of several blighted and vacant structures near the City's downtown area as part of a multi-agency blight abatement and public safety initiative which City Council received a briefing on in April.

Eight structures have been demolished since July 1st. Staff from the departments of Police, Fire & Rescue, Planning & Community Development and Social Services have worked to prioritize vacant and blighted structures in need of significant repair or demolition based on an analysis of deteriorating neighborhoods and housing conditions and the prevalence of criminal activity in and around those properties.

A similar effort was carried out by staff from these departments in February and March of 2012. Additional vacant and blighted properties throughout the City are being assessed by City staff, who will continue to work with property owners to either rehabilitate the properties or remove dangerous buildings in cases where no other option exists.

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