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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
DATE: October 14, 2014

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**MAYOR REDD'S ADMINISTRATION TO BEGIN PROCESS FOR PHASE I OF
MAJOR DEMOLITION INITIATIVE IN THE CITY OF CAMDEN**

*City Of Camden Solicits Bids For The Demolition Of 64 Abandoned Properties In Whitman
Park & Cramer Hill Neighborhoods*

CAMDEN – As part of her commitment to improving public safety and the quality of life for Camden residents, Mayor Dana L. Redd today announced that the City of Camden has advertised for bid for contract work to demolish 61 abandoned properties in the Whitman Park and three in the Cramer Hill neighborhood. This bid is for Phase I of a major demolition initiative that will ultimately seek to demolish a total of 598 abandoned buildings throughout all of Camden's neighborhoods. Phase II will be a bid for contract work to demolish the remaining 534 abandoned properties.

“As a life-long Camden resident, I feel the same way our residents do about vacant and abandoned properties – I don't like them,” Mayor Redd said. “Because of my Administration's effort to stabilize our finances, Camden is now poised to undertake the biggest demolition initiative ever attempted in the City or State to substantially reduce the number of abandoned properties in all our neighborhoods. I promised to seek real solutions to improve public safety and the quality of life for our residents and I am keeping my word. I truly believe this first phase will send a clear message that we are serious about transforming and improving our neighborhoods.”

During the past four and a half years, Mayor Redd's Administration and City Council has been working on numerous concerns from Camden residents. From dealing with public safety, to stabilizing our finances, to boosting economic development that will create jobs for Camden residents, Mayor Redd and City Council has stepped up to the plate and confronted these challenges head on.

“Camden residents have been long asking for something to be done about abandoned properties in their neighborhoods,” Council President Frank Moran said. “The abandoned buildings are eyesores, breeds criminal activities and deteriorates our quality of life. This new and bold initiative Mayor Redd has implemented is a great step towards combating this long standing systemic challenge and City Council stands ready to do our part to ensure this initiative becomes a model that others throughout the state can emulate.”

Contrary to some who believe that the City has done little to address abandoned properties, this Administration has been very active in leveraging numerous tools to decrease the number of abandoned properties in the City. City Code Enforcement officials, including the Construction Official (which is the only person who can deem a property to be demolished) canvassed the entire City and came up with approximately 1,629 abandoned residential properties. Of this total, 598 met the criteria for demolition and 1,031 are slated for stabilization.

It is worth noting that the City of Camden has done a substantial amount of work to make our neighborhoods safe and improve the quality of life for our residents. Since 2010, the City has demolished 464 abandoned properties and boarded-up 2,272 properties – and included in this 2,272 are 84 Safe and Secure board-ups which cements the windows on first floors and basements and perma-seal the doors.

The City has also taken a bold step in utilizing the Abandoned Properties Act. Prior to this Administration, there were only four properties on the Abandoned Properties List. Currently, there are 915 on the list. 171 property owners won appeals, which is a good sign because this means property owners had to bring their property up to code to be removed from the list. To date, the City has acquired 110 properties from the list by spot blight eminent domain for rehabilitation and another 31 properties are in the process of being acquired.

Earlier this year the City of Camden passed the Vacant Property Registration Act, which in part requires owners or foreclosing entities to register the property within 60 days of property becoming vacant. Annual fees are tiered from \$500-\$5000 based on length of vacancy. Additionally, the Act places the responsibility on the owner to secure and maintain the property as well as posting the property with a designated agent for service of process.

The City of Camden is will also be working with surrounding municipalities in a shared services agreement to have Rutgers-Camden graduate students come up with a strategy to resell vacant structures.

Phase I of the demolition initiative will be funded through Community Development Block Grant and Economic Recovery Board funds. The advertised bid is set not to exceed \$970,000.

“There can be no dispute that progress is being made, seen and felt in the City of Camden,” Mayor Redd said. “I look forward to quickly beginning the process for Phase II of this initiative which will demolish 534 abandoned properties.”

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