



Office of the Mayor
520 Market Street
Camden, New Jersey 08101

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
DATE: November 25, 2014

CONTACT: Vincent Basara
PHONE: 856-757-7200

CITY PREPARES TO TAKE NEXT STEP IN PHASE I OF ITS DEMOLITION INITIATIVE

62 Residential Abandoned Properties In The Whitman Park & Cramer Hill Neighborhoods Slated For Demolition During Phase I

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 received six bids for Phase I of its demolition project which will take down 62 abandoned and unsafe buildings in the Whitman Park and Cramer Hill neighborhoods. After careful review of bid documents, Tricon Enterprises, Inc., was the lowest responsible and qualified bidder at \$949,000. The award of the contract will be considered by City Council at its December 2, 2014 meeting.

“My promise to our residents to demolish unsafe abandoned properties is one step closer to becoming a reality,” Mayor Redd said. “These eyesores deteriorate our quality of life and create havens for unlawful activities. My Administration looks forward to presenting Tricon Enterprises, the lowest responsible and qualified bidder, for contract consideration and approval at the next Council meeting. With the support of City Council, demolition can begin after the holidays or sooner if possible.”

"The demolition of these unsafe structures will not only eliminate hazardous conditions but also help to reduce criminal activity and blight from throughout Camden's neighborhoods," said DCA Commissioner Richard E. Constable, III. "Many of the units are on the verge of collapse and significantly impacting adjacent property owners. In some cases the units are even used as havens for criminal activity. We support the City's efforts and expect to see an immediate impact as a result of the demolition."

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.

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 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.

###