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## **MAYOR REDD KICKS OFF PHASE I OF CITY'S DEMOLITION INITIATIVE**

### ***62 Abandoned Properties In The Whitman Park & Cramer Hill Neighborhoods Slated For Demolition During Phase I Of City's Largest Demolition Project.***

**CAMDEN, NJ** – As part of her commitment to improving public safety and address the quality of life for Camden residents, Mayor Dana L. Redd announced today the City of Camden has begun its large scale demolition project which is aimed at eliminating 593 blighted structures throughout the City of Camden. In December 2014, the City of Camden awarded a demolition contract for Phase 1 to Tricon Enterprises, Inc., as there were selected the lowest responsible and qualified bidder. The project, beginning with Phase 1, will result in the demolition of 62 abandoned and unsafe buildings in the Whitman Park and Cramer Hill neighborhoods. All 62 of the structures have been determined to be “unsafe structures” by the City of Camden Construction Official.

Mayor Redd was joined at today's commencement event by Congressman Donald Norcross, Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Richard E. Constable, III, Esq, New Jersey Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez, Camden County Freeholder Jeff Nash, City Council President Frank Moran, City Councilman Brian Coleman, City Councilman Luis Lopez, City Councilwomen Dan Burley and Camden County Police Chief John Scott Thomson.

“These are the worst of the worst units,” Mayor Redd said. “During Phase 1, the City will be spending \$949,000 to remove the 62 structures. Our residents have battled with the blight, crime and decay that come with living near abandoned buildings. In many cases these structures have been long vacated or simply left to deteriorate by absentee property owners. It is my hope that our residents and our children are able to enjoy the City safely and free of crumbling buildings. When I became Mayor I promised to improve the “Quality of Life” for our residents. Consider that promise kept.”

“We are pleased to play an instrumental role in Camden's demolition project,” said DCA Commissioner Richard E. Constable, III. “We support the City's efforts to improve public safety and the quality of life for its residents.”

Freeholder Jeffrey Nash applauded Mayor Dana Redd for her work on this project. “The city took another step forward by starting the largest demolition project in the state to remove abandoned homes from its landscape that have become dens of inequity,” Nash said.

“The Mayor has aggressively worked to make this plan come fruition with our state and federal partners and now it is a reality. Furthermore, this initiative will forcibly remove another tool that the criminal element of this city has utilized and provide residents with safer streets after these 600 units are trucked away.”

“I am so pleased to witness the demolition of these derelict properties,” said City Council President Frank Moran. “The structures are simply unsafe for the community and a nuisance to the neighboring properties. Our resident’s deserve a better quality of life and their safety must be our number one priority”

“The properties have not only left blight on the Whitman Park community but across the City of Camden,” City Councilman Brian Coleman said. “Too often, these abandoned buildings become havens for criminal activity. This condition is not acceptable and I believe the City is taking an aggressive approach to address the issue.

The City is slated to begin Phase 2 of its demolition initiative relatively soon. Phase 2 will consist of the demolition of an additional 531 abandoned and unsafe unit’s city-wide.

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, 593 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.

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