



08.0619 Hennepin County to fund demolition of at least 50 blighted properties in Minneapolis

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June 18, 2008 -- Hennepin County and City of Minneapolis officials held a news conference Wednesday, June 18, to announce a new county initiative that will provide \$1.25 million in funding to demolish boarded and vacant homes in Minneapolis.

The county will fund at least 50 demolitions of properties that are blighted and pose a public safety threat to neighborhoods. Since many of the condemned homes have been abandoned because of mortgage foreclosure, the initiative is aimed at accelerating the housing market turnaround and stabilizing and securing neighborhoods. The funding was approved at the County Board meeting Tuesday, June 17.

The news conference announcing the initiative was held at 2914 Dupont Ave. N. in North Minneapolis – a condemned, burned-out house that will be among the properties to be demolished.

“We wanted to offer to help,” said Commissioner Mike Opat, who authored the resolution to provide the funding. “The number of blighted houses in Minneapolis has become overwhelming – now more than 900. There are too many of these houses and they need to come down.”

“We have to go block by block,” said Commissioner Mark Stenglein. “The county has provided financial aid to areas hurt by tornadoes. That’s what we’re doing here – this is a financial tornado. We are doing what we can to help Minneapolis.”

The initiative includes \$1.25 million in Hennepin County funding – \$500,000 from the Environmental Response Fund for environmental assessment and cleanup; \$500,000 in contingency funding for demolition work; and \$250,000 from the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund for transport and waste disposal. Environmental concerns for the properties include the presence of lead-based paint, asbestos and other hazardous materials.

All the properties will be demolished by Dec. 31 and final site activities completed by June 30, 2009. An assessment of \$17,500, or 70 percent of the average cost for assessment, cleanup, demolition and disposal, will be made on each property, repayable to Hennepin County.