

BLIGHT OF THE WEEK

BY MARIA ROGERS



PHOTO: JYMI BOLDEN

Address: 1615 Clayton St., East Walnut Hills

Owner: Paul Wallpe

Year Built: 1913

Value: \$7,400 according to the Hamilton County Auditor's Office

Comments: The city of Cincinnati has a contract for the demolition of this building, but the issue is tied up in court, according to Al Taylor, an inspector with the Department of Buildings and Inspections. The owner, Paul Wallpe, filed suit to prevent demolition, Taylor says.

Wallpe says he invested in parts of East Walnut Hills when no one else would invest in the property and fixed up buildings in the neighborhood.

"It was a matter of trying to do something for the neighborhood," he says.

Both Wallpe and his wife were past presidents of the community council, he says.

Wallpe says two people who lived and worked in

the neighborhood are interested in rehabbing the building. At present, he says, he uses the building for storage. Without a proper permit, that's illegal, Taylor says.

Mary Anne Lee, president of the East Walnut Hills Assembly, says no one wants to tear down historic commercial or residential buildings.

"We try our very hardest to save the best representative examples," she says.

However, this building has been vacant throughout the 18 years she's lived in East Walnut Hills, Lee says.

"It's a chronic eyesore," she says. "It pulls down everything else."

An eight-unit building on one end of the block is getting ready to be rehabbed and a 30-unit building on the other side is also going to be rehabbed, according to Lee.

"There's gorgeous residential property around it," she says. "I am not at all opposed to anyone's right to buy their property and rehab it."

But she opposes an owner buying property and simply sitting on it.

Wallpe says he bought the property 10 years ago, put a new roof on it and sold it. He says he re-acquired the property about eight years ago. Wallpe says he bought the building with the intention of rehabbing the property when he retired. But there were a number of vacancies in the area and there wasn't a strong demand for the building, he says.

Wallpe says he twice applied for permits to rehab the building but was denied because the city said he had to make the first floor of the building commercial. He says he unsuccessfully applied for a zoning variance.

Zoning problems with the first floor don't prevent Wallpe from renovating the other two floors, according to Taylor. He says Wallpe also could have brought the building into minimum compliance with the building code.

BLIGHT OF THE WEEK is an effort to highlight the problem of abandoned buildings — and who's responsible for them.

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