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Mayor Fulop Expands Most Aggressive Abandoned Building Program in the State to Enhance Public Safety & Stabilize Neighborhoods at No Cost to Taxpayers

JCRA Issues RFQ Seeking Builders to Rehabilitate the City's Worst Abandoned Buildings

JERSEY CITY – Investing in all neighborhoods throughout the city has been a primary focus of the Fulop administration, and today **Mayor Steven M. Fulop** and the **Jersey City Redevelopment Agency (JCRA)** announced the most aggressive program in New Jersey to rehabilitate nearly two dozen of the city's most problematic abandoned buildings.

The JCRA is issuing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) seeking builders to rehabilitate 23 abandoned properties throughout the city to improve public safety, the quality of life for residents, and stabilize neighborhoods. The program comes at no cost to the taxpayers as the builders pay all acquisition and rehabilitation costs.

Since taking office, the Fulop administration has vigorously pursued the owners of vacant and abandoned buildings through code enforcement and registration actions. To date, Jersey City has collected more than \$600,000 in registration fees and renewals, and through enforcement has collected more than \$100,000 in fines, court costs and warrants, more than any other city in the state.

“These properties are destructive to the neighborhoods they are in, creating real public safety and quality of life issues for the entire community,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “It is time to take these neighborhoods back and rehabilitate and elevate these communities so we can create real opportunities for future community development and investment.”

Over the last 20 years, Jersey City has enjoyed significant development downtown, however, prior administrations neglected certain areas of the city. Mayor Fulop has made investing resources in all communities throughout Jersey City a priority and has implemented several policies to encourage development in previously overlooked neighborhoods.

The administration's plan to solicit builders to rehabilitate abandoned buildings is the next step in restoring neighborhoods and tackling the issue of abandoned buildings. Even one abandoned building on a block depreciates the value of nearby homes and severely impacts the quality of life for all residents.

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Vacant and abandoned buildings are a breeding ground for criminal activity as well as an eyesore and a menace in any community they inhabit, particularly for those closest to them. They attract rodents, depress property values and have been implicated in the perpetuation of graffiti, litter, loitering, and arson.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), more than 75 percent of the more than 12 million fires in abandoned properties across the nation were linked to suspicious causes. For example, the first fire of the New Year was a vacant building on Bidwell Avenue that had been vacant for two years.

Following the procedures of the New Jersey **Abandoned Properties Rehabilitation Act (APRA)**, the JCRA is able to condemn the properties, seek an appraisal through the courts and assign a redeveloper. The redeveloper would pay the creditors of the property the APRA appraisal amount and work with the City on a plan to rehabilitate and re-market the building. This process comes at no cost to the taxpayers as the approved redeveloper pays the liens on the property and all costs associated with rehabbing the building.

The Request for Qualifications (RFQ) being issued by the JCRA seeks qualified entities to rehabilitate the 23 worst abandoned buildings initially, with the ability to then address the other approximately 900 vacant buildings that are listed on the City's Vacant Building Registry. The RFQ seeks to establish the financial wherewithal of the potential redevelopers, as well as what types of rehabilitation projects they have completed in the past. The JCRA hopes to qualify several entities, who would be eligible to rehabilitate multiple properties over the course of two years.

“In some communities where multiple abandoned properties exist, property values have been so degraded and communities so disrupted, that residents have been forced to leave adding to the list of vacant properties,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “We want to put an end to this cycle and create a pathway to future investment in our neighborhoods so that all residents can benefit from the progress and growth of Jersey City.”

All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Steven M. Fulop at 201-547-4836 or 201-376-0699. ///