Commercial properties bog - Dayton Daily News (OH) - June 18, 2016 - page A1

June 18, 2016 | Dayton Daily News (OH) | Cornelius Frolik StaffWriter | Page A1

The city of **Dayton** has made a large dent in its residential **blight** problem, knocking **down** more than 2,000 obsolete homes and apartment units.

But the city has struggled to eliminate blighted **commercial** and industrial **properties** due to the high cost of removal and the lack of state and federal support.

Dayton is home to about 32 **commercial** and non-residential vacant buildings that are strong candidates for razing, as well as 113 others that require major repairs, some of which may be unsalvagable, according to officials and a recent citywide property survey.

The city is on track to receive millions of dollars in additional federal funding for demolition, but the money likely will be earmarked exclusively for residential **properties**.

The city has been forced to slowly chip away at the stock of smaller **commercial** eyesores given the available funding, officials said.

"(As) it stands, we could only tackle one major building a year, but that would mean directing most of our resources there," said Aaron Sorrell, **Dayton**'s director of planning and community development.

Since 2009, **Dayton** has spent more than $18 million to tear **down** more than 2,000 rundown and decrepit homes, garages and some multi-family housing units.

Demolition activities have been fueled by a variety of funding assistance from the state and federal governments, and it is aimed at stabilizing neighborhoods that were clobbered by the foreclosure crisis.

But the funding has been almost exclusively restricted to dealing with residential **blight**.

Since 2009, the city has knocked **down** about 70 **commercial properties**, most of which were small buildings, such as corner gas stations and first-floor retail space, according to city officials.

Like distressed housing, **commercial blight** deters investment, drags **down** property values and neighborhood aesthetics and attracts crime and trash issues.

Last year, the city paid for a survey of all **properties** in **Dayton** that evaluated their exterior conditions and whether they are occupied.

The survey found **Dayton** is home to about 486 vacant **commercial**, industrial and non-residential structures. About 113 of the structures need major repairs, 21 need major rehabilitation and 11 are dilapidated.

The likelihood that the most worn-**down properties** can be renovated and re-purposed is slim, and some of the facilities that need major repairs likely are no longer viable because of their size, location and other factors, said Sorrell.

Overall, the city has a fairly small supply of large blighted **commercial** and industrial buildings, Sorrell said. Unfortunately, the buildings are costly to demolish.

"Those are big-ticket items that could eat a year's worth of (our demolition) budget on one structure," he said.

Earlier this month, **Dayton** commissioners approved a $248,000 contract with United Demolition in **Dayton** to remove and dispose of the equivalent of 13 **commercial** buildings, or nearly 1.7 million square feet of **commercial** space.

The projec t is being funded with the $575,000 the city received for demolitionthroughthefederalCommunity Development Block Grant program. Some of the allocation will go toward residential bulldozing.

The CDBG-funded demolition will pay for removing some smaller **commercial properties** and mixed-use structures.

Commercial demolition tends to be expensive because of the complications that can arise related to environmental hazards and necessary remediation, said Mike Marshall, operations manager with United Demolition.

Many of **Dayton**'s vacant and deteriorating factories and manufacturing facilities were built before the Environmental Protection Agency existed and contain pipes wrapped in asbestos, underground fuel storage tanks and other issues, Marshall said.

One of the most expensive parts of **commercial** demolition is removing and disposing of the debris from leveled buildings, especially since many were constructed using concrete and steel,

Marshall said.

Also, many storage tanks are rusted and their chemicals have leached into the soil, which means the dirt must be removed and properly disposed, typically costing about $1,200 per dump truck, he said.

"You go to tear it **down** and you discover underground hidden items, like you run into an area where the soil is fluorescent green," he said.

Some deteriorating industrial **properties** are a source of headaches for neighbors and public safety forces.

In February, vandals set fire to a vacant industrial facility at Deeds Avenue and Edmund Street that had previously been set ablaze at least five times.

Millie Seals, 72, who lives across the street, says the building has been stripped by metal scrappers, and teens regularly enter the site. She said any chance of the building being reused is gone because of vandalism and metal theft.

Seals said she wishes the city would reduce the facility to rubble to prevent any more fires or criminal activities.

"It would be so much better if it was gone," she said.

But demolishing the facility could cost $725,000 or more.

The federal government has awarded Ohio an additional $197 million to help stabilize neighborhoods through demolition and other programs. **Dayton** is likely to receive millions of dollars in aid.

Land banks across the state are pushing harder for funding to remove distressed **commercial properties**, said Mike Grauwelman, executive director of the Montgomery County Land Bank.

"I think there's some momentum now and recognition on the part of the policymakers and general public that this is an important thing for us to do," he said.

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