

Concerning property 722 Sixth St. E, St Paul

We feel that some prior history about this property needs to be given to better understand the whole picture of how we got to where we are now for the condemnation of 722 Sixth St E.

We have lived next door to this property for over 30 years. In 2020, the owner died inside the home and the owner's children emptied the house and later sold it (no for sale sign). The property sold in 2022 to property management company T&M Properties, Mr. Azzazi owner. We didn't know the house had sold but later learned while we meet the new owner briefly when he was "next door" coming out of the home. He gave us his business card and said that this was intended to be a project for his son (under age 20).

As time went on, we never saw the owner, his son, or staff on site for many months on end. I think it would be fair to say that over a two-year period since Azzazi has been the owner that either he or his son would be on site perhaps 2-3 times a year but it is fair to say that they were mostly absent when it came to maintaining this property. During the first year of his ownership, we called the owner up a few times because we noticed that people were breaking into the home or garage. We thought that as the owner that he would want to know about these issues and to manage this situation (and other neighbors also noticed this occurring and asked us if we noticed this too).

Then there were a few times that we emailed Azzazi about concerns we had about when a commercial snow plow would come remove snow from 722's driveway, how it would push a good amount of snow from his driveway onto our property which is extremely close to our house and onto our chain-link fence since the force of the plow and amount of snow could damage our fence. Fortunately, this plowing only happened a few times over the couple of years as snow removal only seemed to occur when there was quite an amount of snow that fell. We did not get any response or resolution to any concerns as these issues would continue to occur. NOTE: A large part of our concern has to do with the distance between 722 and our house at 724. It is extremely close in proximity. As homeowners, we are/were very concerned about having 722 being targeted for break-ins and lack of management! We stopped contacting the owner as it didn't make any difference and he never reached out to us about issues or concerns.

Since Azzazi has owned this property, many neighbors have told us that they had to call the city multiple times as they had worries about neglect issues with this property. This house has not been occupied since the former owner died in 2020. It has not been properly cared for or managed since that time either. Please check the city records over the past few years about violations and calls about various issues such as lack of mowing lawn and sidewalks not being cleared. This gives you some history and data to show how long these types of issue have been ongoing for many years.

However, issues have been ramped-up. Below are some other major concerns that have just recently occurred:

- 1) Owner put on a new roof in Oct 2024 without permit. When putting on new roof, while dismantling brick chimneys, the work team was throwing bricks out 3rd story window towards our house (have video to confirm). When tried to talk to Azzazi about this, he said "He had to go to work" and sped off in his truck. Pile of bricks left in rubble heap for weeks on his driveway.
- 2) Owner/son using large construction machinery (including bobcat with forklift and shovel) on site. Instead of using jacks to try to lift sagging front porch, he used forklift and whole porch structure fell apart. **When we went to ask Azzazi if he had a permit for this work, he said that he didn't need one. When asked if he knew that the property was in a historic district, he said that this place had no historic designation so it wasn't an issue but that he was not doing anything illegal.**
- 3) Last conversation with him about the lack of permits he also mentioned that it was not a part of his job to talk to anyone about their concerns.
- 4) Owner has left site all around house in shambles (ex. detached decking from another location has been dumped in front and back of house, torn off debris from project left all around property). **City inspector has told him to clean up debris and after weeks of being notified this has not changed.**
- 5) **Even after one of the city inspectors had a discussion with him to stop work until a permit was issued, the owner continued to work on site. Very concerning that owner blatantly ignored warning to stop work from city official.**
- 6) Does owner have the necessary licenses to own and operate the large construction machinery being used on site? We have had to put up safety cones as a means to try to keep the large machines off our property and/or not hit our house.
- 7) There appears to be black mold inside the interior of the house as it can be seen on some of the windows when looking from the outside. If so, this is toxic and needs to be handled and disposed of properly.
- 8) Contact the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency about 722 having a possible need for a mitigation system. All homes in a few block radius of the former Hospital Linen Site of 7th Street and Maple caused contamination in gases to seep underground and spread throughout a portion of blocks by the former site. Homeowners/property owners in the designated area were notified and had a timeline to voluntarily have homes/buildings tested for possible contamination. Since many homes on the same block that 722 is located on did choose to test and ended up with contamination, even our house was one of many that now has a mitigation system because we tested positive for contamination. We ask that you check to see if the former owner of 722 opted for testing years ago while it was an option because if declined, there is a possible health risk for future occupants of that house.
- 9) It has been the current owner's apparent lack of concern, skill, and management that has now placed 722 as a condemned and vacant building. We can only mention the things that we have experienced or seen. We would be naïve if we thought that there was only damage to the outside of this property since we have not ever been inside this house. It is truly a shame that the house is now condemned as it was likely to have been avoidable if the owner had decided to do what was necessary and work

as required under regulation in the first place when the owner first acquired the property in 2022. Now this house has fallen into a state of dilapidation and ruin.

After Azzazi said that he didn't need any permits, we turned to the city for assistance as did others individuals in our neighborhood. We appreciate all the help that has been provided from the city inspectors and now this has become an issue for the city council. Based upon our experiences so far, we have not been impressed with Azzazi's track record. Given all that has happened it seems like the owner lacks a sense of responsibility for what it takes to properly own and manage this property. The people in our neighborhood do not take any pleasure in having to spend time reporting concerns over the years to the city but have found it to be necessary.

We had hoped that the owner would want to be receptive not only to address neighbors' property neglect concerns more seriously but even more importantly, that he would follow city rules and regulations so that this situation didn't have to happen in the first place. We are fortunate in that we have a neighborhood "village" where neighbors can work together for a simple goal of being part of a livable community. We understand that there is a timeline now given concerning making 722 being habitable. It's going to take more than being hopefully optimistic that the owner will be responsible to take proposed actions and comply with what is required for him to do going forward. We put our trust that both city officials and the city council will make decisions/actions that will guide the process moving forward so that there will not be any question about how there will be a productive and positive future for 722 and for our neighborhood. Thank you for your time and consideration.

- John and Margie Smith
724 Sixth St E, St Paul