

City Officials Wage Strong Condemnation Drive On Sub-Standard Housing

By DAN WALTERS
Klamath Falls officials are waging a continuing campaign to rid the city of substandard buildings.

Armed with copies of the Uniform Building Code, inspectors from the office of chief building inspector, Verne Schortgen, have had more than 100 buildings in the city demolished within the past year and a half.

About half of these buildings were destroyed after condemnation proceedings, while the others were burned or torn down voluntarily by the owners after being advised to do so by the building inspector's office.

Schortgen says the campaign is designed to "upgrade the city."

But this drive has not met

with the blessing of at least some of the landlords.

One, Frank R. Weaver, was visibly angered last week when the city council condemned four of five cabins he owns on Portland Street. He read a statement denouncing the action and the meeting had to be called to order at one point.

The Portland Street structures are typical of the buildings that have been demolished in the last year and a half.

Most of them are small frame buildings which are rented cheaply to low-income families.

Although there is no "slum" where the substandard structures are in great number, certain sections of the city—North Side for one—do contain more than other sections.

Most of the buildings were built a number of years ago as cheap housing for an influx of lumber workers. Many of them are converted garages.

Although they are substandard for different reasons, all have one thing in common—neglect.

For instance, says Schortgen, a house in otherwise good condition and worth thousands of dollars may be considered substandard if windows are broken and the house left open.

Homes that are suspect come to the attention of the building inspector from many sources including routine checks by his staff.

The inspectors are guided in their evaluations by a section of the Uniform Building Code, which was adopted by the city in its

present form in 1960. The code is also the law in many other cities.

Section 203 of the code lays down the conditions for a substandard building.

The section states: "All buildings or structures which are structurally unsafe or are otherwise dangerous to human life, or which in relation to existing use constitute a hazard to safety or health, or public welfare by reason of inadequate maintenance, dilapidation, obsolescence or abandonment, as specified in this code or any other effective ordinance, are, for the purpose of this section, unsafe buildings. All such unsafe buildings are hereby declared to be public nuisances and shall be abated by repair, rehabilitation, demolition or removed in accordance with the procedure specified in subsections (b), (c) and (d) of this section."

These definitions cover a mul-

titude of sins, and Schortgen says that if he was out to enforce a vendetta against property owners, probably a neat percentage of the buildings in the city could be condemned.

But, the building inspector says his office is more concerned with the spirit of the section, which is to protect the public from

buildings which may be injurious to lives or property.

As an example, Schortgen cites the case of 12x22-foot shack in which a woman and her four children were living. He said the building was divided into two sections—kitchen and bathroom, and sleeping quarters.

The woman in this case was

receiving money from the county welfare department and Schortgen says she is typical of the residents of these houses.

When a building is determined to be substandard, Schortgen's office notifies the owner.

In some cases, a few repairs and cleaning will bring the structures up to par.

But in the majority, demolition is the only answer because the buildings are not worth the repairs that would be necessary.

In about half of these cases, the property owners agree to destroy the buildings with no action taken.

Destruction by burning is the cheapest and most effective method, since there is generally nothing worth salvaging from the structures.

Off-duty firemen are hired to conduct the burning and are paid directly by the owner.

Again, off-duty firemen are used for these jobs and the buildings are burned after all valuables are removed.

A lien is placed against the empty lot that is left and if the landowner does not pay the demolition costs voluntarily, the land is sold at auction. Demolition costs are deducted from the sale price and the balance is returned to the owner.

The campaign to clear substandard buildings from the city is not one which will likely slow down in coming years. Each year brings its crop of buildings upon which action will have to be taken.



HOUSES BURNED — This vacant lot on Michigan Avenue was left by the recent burning or tearing down of several houses which were condemned after being declared substandard by a city building inspector. More than 100 buildings in the city have been destroyed within the past year and a half after being condemned.

City Briefs

MRS. WILLARD MITCHELL, of Poplarville, Miss., visited her sister, Mrs. Ray Wharton, 6800 South Sixth, for a week before returning home.

CUTTING THE HILL GRASS
FRANKFORT, Ky. — The Kentucky Department of Highways is using four self-propelled machines with mountain goat characteristics to cut grass and weeds along steep slopes of interstate and turnpike routes in Eastern Kentucky. The mowers will cut going uphill at angles approaching 90 degrees and downhill at 80-degree angles.

A total of 12,254,800 new homes were built in the U.S. in the 10-year period between 1952 and 1962.



CONDEMNED — Four of these Portland Street cabins owned by Frank R. Weaver were ordered condemned by the city council last week as part of a continuing campaign to rid the city of substandard structures. They are typical of the buildings that have been destroyed through city action within the last year and a half.

HERALD AND NEWS, Klamath Falls, Oregon Wednesday, August 14, 1963 PAGE 9-A

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PEE CHEES	3 for 21c
PORTFOLIOS (Assorted colors)	3 for 21c
BINDER (with paper & dividers)	99c
500 COUNT FILLER PAPER Collegian or wide line	87c

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For those who have children attending city schools, we have COMPLETE SCHOOL SUPPLIES and WORK BOOKS taken from the approved city school list.

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6 for 97c
Newberry's Low Price
100% acetate, elastic legs and top. Assorted colors. Sizes 4 to 14.

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Newberry's Low Price
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LADIES NYLONS

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