

Demolition Process Explained to Neighbors

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The start of Contractors handling the demolition through extermination phases of a vacant Brodart site at 1609 Memorial Avenue - location of a future 40-unit apartment complex to be known as Memorial Homes - were available to neighbors Thursday.



Director of Community Development John Grado and Lycoming County Department of Planning Deputy Director William Kelly talk with neighborhood residents Thursday at the meeting to discuss the demolition of the Brodart building in Williamsport.

"I'm satisfied with them," said Rebecca Bridge, who lives on Memorial Avenue. Her biggest fear was mice, rats, and dust getting into the air as builders knock down the warehouse to make space for the apartments.

It is the first phase of a multi-family housing project to include 32 market-rate townhouses.

"When they dig, bugs are down lower," Bridge said. "I worry about that."

No evidence of vermin or insects were found inside the building by an exterminator.

General contractor Norm Artebaine, of Shea Construction, said he wanted people to be comfortable with the process that will level the building in stages.

"There will be dust," he said. He said he expected to start at 7 a.m. and work eight to 10 hours a day, with some Saturday work. The work should continue from next week through November or December, according to Gary Hoover, an engineer with L.R. Kimball and Associates.

There will be an effort to control dust by constructors using fire hydrants, said John Grado, city engineer and director of community and economic development.

Allan Hughey, a landlord, offered an unfavorable outlook. "I don't believe the neighborhood will improve," he said. "I think there will be rats, noise and dust," he said.

Artebaine said machines doing the work are going to be loud but the crushing of building material won't happen until October. The crushing portion should last about a week.

"It won't happen in this summer or early fall when you are out on your porches enjoying your lemonade," said William Kelly, deputy director of the Lycoming County Department of Planning and Community Development. "We're reinvesting using gas money from Marcellus Shale," Kelly said. "We want to get that money in Harrisburg and bring it back here and put it to work in our neighborhoods," he said. "We need to hear from you to find out where you believe the investment dollars should be focused. We're in this for the long-term and we're here to lift the neighborhood up."

Safety precautions include a fence to be constructed around the site where contractors will start to dismantle the building, and closing a portion of Oliver Street to Memorial Avenue.

The apartments will be built by the NRP Group, of Cleveland, Ohio. The land-development plan goes before City Council next week.

Neighbors play an important role in improvement of surrounding properties. Some 150 property owners were notified of financial opportunities available to repair building code deficiencies and raise the value of their property.

Hughey wondered why none of the "gas money" goes to landlords who rent and have tenants.

Efforts are underway to secure funds for neighborhood improvements for those with rental properties, said Kim Wheeler, lead county community development planner.