

COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN
735 H Street Warehouse Demolition and Abatement Project, Fresno, California
December 8, 2023

Overview

The purpose of the Community Relations Plan (CRP) is to describe the plans for the City of Fresno to inform and respond to the potential concerns of neighbors and other community residents potentially affected by the proposed demolition and abatement of hazardous building materials to be completed for the warehouse building located at 735 H Street in downtown Fresno.

The CRP outlines how the City has involved, and will continue to involve, affected parties in the cleanup decision-making process, as required by state and federal law.

Spokesperson and Information Repository

The spokesperson for this project is Dalton Bennett, Project Administrator for the City of Fresno. Mr. Bennett and other staff at the City's Planning & Development Department have been coordinating environmental site assessment and remediation planning at the site and will assist with communicating the results of these studies to the public. Contact information is as follows:

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Physical copies of all environmental assessment reports, the cleanup plan, and other components of the Administrative Record are available for review at the Planning and Development Department offices. On-line digital copies of the records are also available for review at the following webpage: www.fresno.gov/planning/building-and-safety/.

Site Description

The site consists of a 0.54-acre parcel (Assessor Parcel Number 467-040-23) located at the west corner of H Street and Mono Street, and currently associated with addresses of 735, 739, and 741 H Street. The property is nearly fully occupied by a 50-foot by 400-foot one-story vacant warehouse building owned by the City and constructed sometime between 1906 and 1918. The property dimensions are 59-feet by 400-feet, with a 9-foot by 400-foot strip of land occupied by a concrete loading dock present on the southwest side of the building that served a former railroad spur. The northeast side of the building is occupied by a 14-foot-wide concrete loading dock that appears to be located within the right-of-way for H Street. The property has been the subject for Phase I environmental site assessments (ESAs) completed in 2021 and 2022; asbestos and hazardous building materials surveys completed in 2014 and 2022; an evaluation by a structural engineer completed in 2022; analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA) in 2023, and a National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Inventory and Evaluation Report completed in 2022. These studies documented that hazardous building materials (i.e., asbestos and lead-based paint) are present on or within the building and that the walls and foundations of the building are significantly deteriorated and in danger of eventual collapse – in particular in the event of a significant seismic event. Past use of one portion of the

building by the California Spray Chemical Corporation between 1931 and 1947 may have impacted soil beneath one of the basement areas, but sampling to further assess this potential impact cannot safely be performed until the building is demolished.

History

The Property was shown as being vacant land on Sanborn fire insurance maps dated 1885, 1888, and 1898. On the map dated 1906, the Property was occupied by Madary's Lumber Yard. An article in the Fresno newspaper dated 11/18/1909 referenced plans by the City to install an 18-inch diameter storm sewer beneath the sidewalk on H Street from Mono Street to Inyo Street to address repeated flooding occurring in this area every winter with heavy rains, flooding two businesses documented on Sanborn maps to have been present on the opposite (northeast) side of H Street. The article does not reference flooding of a building at the site. By 1918, the existing building was present, divided into four main areas with separate street addresses, ownership, and/or uses. The earliest records for businesses at the primary addresses date from 1910, 1912, 1913, and 1918. Sometime during 1950-1970, the walls of the building were extended in height by 6-8 feet (resulting in the current uniform wall height of approximately 22 feet) and a new roof constructed. This renovation is suspected to have been partly in response to a major fire that destroyed a large portion of the original roof. The last documented occupant of an area within the building was Falcon Enterprises of Fresno, and Fresno Tire Disposal listed at addresses of 733-735 H Street in the 1999 city directory. The building as a whole appears to have been vacant since approximately 2000.

A detailed review of historical records documented use of different portions of the building by at least 24 businesses, including: Alta District Lumber Co., Angelo & Son (fruit basket manufacturing and sales), Armour & Company (wholesale meat supplier), Avernell & Arioto (A & A) Florists Inc., Brentwood Egg Company (egg warehouse), Butler Johnson Corp. (a floor tile warehouse and/or wholesale floor covering business), California Spray Chemical Company, Eagle Transfer Co., Falcon Enterprises of Fresno/Fresno Tire Disposal, Fowler Lumber Co., Fresno Chamber of Commerce, Fresno Macaroni Co., Germain Seed & Plant Co., H. Graff Co. (grocery warehouse), Mark Lally Company (later Walworth-Lally Plumbing Supplies – a plumbing supply warehouse), Mid Valley Distributing Company, United Warehouse Company, Sequoia Lumber Co., Slater Furniture Co (furniture warehouse), The Feed Barn (a livestock and poultry feed supplier), United Fairway Produce Company, Valco Lumber Distributors, Valley Lumber Co. (Johns Manville Inc. division), and Zellerbach Paper Co. (warehouse).

An initial asbestos containing materials (ACM) and lead-based paint (LBP) survey for the building was completed in 2014 and identified lead concentrations in excess of 1.0 milligrams per square centimeter (mg/cm²) in 47 of 199 interior samples, and 4 of 14 exterior samples. The survey identified the following estimated quantities of materials containing ACMs:

- Drywall taping mud and texture (5,491 ft²); vibration dampeners (16 ft²)
- Vinyl floor tiles and mastic (1,740 ft²)
- Wall panels (264 ft²); Plastic roof cement (15 ft²)

A survey for ACMs only was completed in 2022 and identified the following estimated quantities of materials containing ACMs:

- Friable/RACM: Aircell (240 linear feet); drywall – skip trowel or smooth texture with tape & joint (14,240 ft²); vibration dampeners (4)
- Category I Non-Friable: Vinyl floor tile (11,687 ft²); floor tile (135 ft²);
- Category II Non-Friable: Transite panel (120 ft²)

Neither study included assessment or sampling for other types of hazardous building materials and equipment that may be present within the building, including but not limited to PCBs in caulk, fluorescent light ballasts, elevators and other hydraulic equipment, fire alarms, and mercury switches.

As a requirement for use of funding from a United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Grant awarded to the City in 2020, an ABCA was completed for the site in 2022 to evaluate options for abatement of asbestos and other hazardous building materials in conjunction with demolition of the building. In addition, the Section 106 study was completed to meet another requirement for use of RLF funding. Both documents were posted on the City's website earlier this year (2023), and are included as part of the Administrative Record for the project.

Nature of Threat to Public Health and Environment

A primary concern for public health related to the building has been its vacant status and repeat incidences of residents that are homeless and others breaking into the building. The City has had to respond to multiple fires started by those who have broken into the building and there is risk of a catastrophic fire occurring if the wooden roof was to catch fire, which in turn could endanger the lives of any illegal occupants or visitors to the building as well as endanger the lives of fire department staff responding to the fire. This could also result in potential exposure risks for residents in the area exposed to smoke resulting from the fire. Even in the absence of a fire, there is risk for illegal occupants or visitors to the building being exposed to ACM, LBP, and other hazardous building materials present in the building. Demolition of the building will include full removal of basement walls, foundations, and floor slabs, which could temporarily result in exposure of construction workers or trespassers to potential undocumented contaminated surrounding the basement walls or underlying the floor slabs. The basement area will be backfilled to match the surrounding grade, which will prevent exposure to any contamination that remains under the building after demolition.

Proposed Remediation

The ABCA recommended full abatement of ACM within the building and full demolition of the building, as well as off-site disposal of the demolition debris. Specifically, the ABCA recommended completion of the following sequence of events:

1. Development of bid specifications, solicitation of bids, execution of a contract for abatement/removal of hazardous building materials (including roofing materials presumed to contain asbestos), and subsequent demolition of the building and disposal of building debris.
2. Abatement of asbestos, lead based paint, and other hazardous building materials as necessary to minimize overall costs for abatement, demolition, and disposal of materials.
3. Demolition of the walls and floors of the building, and disposal/recycling of the materials.
4. Drilling and collection of soil samples through the floor slab of the building, and screening and analysis of the soil samples for potential contaminants of concern.
5. Removal of concrete floor and basement slabs/walls and either on-site crushing and stockpiling of materials for future use, or off-site disposal at a concrete recycling facility.
6. Removal and off-site disposal of the brick foundations.
7. Excavation and disposal of contaminated soil, if present.
8. Backfilling of former basement or excavation areas with clean compacted fill to match surrounding grade.

Based on subsequent discussions with abatement/demolition contractor and environmental consultants, the planned sequence of activities has been modified so that the drilling and

sampling of soil along with any necessary excavation and disposal of contaminated soil will be performed as the final step in the future. This will help to minimize any delays in the backfilling of the basement areas and the associated health and safety hazards associated with having large open 8- to 10-foot-deep basement areas in close proximity to a major downtown street.

Chronology of Community Involvement

The following activities have been completed to inform the community regarding the project:

1. A copy of the ABCA dated March 23, 2023, was posted on the City's website for public comment for >30 days in October-November 2023.
2. The plans to demolish the building and utilize USEPA RLF funding were included as an item on the agenda for the City Council meeting on October 19, 2023.
3. A pre-construction meeting occurred in October 2023 that included representatives from the Fresno Grizzlies baseball team, who have a field and other buildings near the site
4. In-person canvassing of nearby business owners was conducted by City staff in October 2023.
5. City staff informed the downtown Fresno business association (Downtown Fresno Partnership) about the upcoming work.
6. City staff informed the Fresno Homeless Assistance Response Team (HART) regarding the project as a result of homeless residents having sometimes used the building on the site for shelter.
7. A sign is posted at the Site providing the email address and phone # for the City's designated contact person for this project. City staff will be on-site periodically to observe the demolition work.
8. The Administrative Record, containing the documents that form the basis for the selection and implementation of the cleanup plan is posted on the City's website www.fresno.gov/planning/building-and-safety/. The information will remain available for a minimum of 3 years following completion of the project, together with records documenting completion of the project, including removal and disposal of hazardous building materials.
9. A notification regarding the location of the Administrative Record will be posted on the City's website for a minimum of 30 days beginning on December 11, 2023.

Key Community Concerns:

Prior to the completion of the structural analysis of the building in 2022, there was a desire by some community residents to restore the building and convert it to use as a public market or other commercial/public use. However, the structural analysis documented major deterioration in the walls and foundations of the building, as well as the presence of a 6- to 8-foot extension of the walls that occurred sometime in the past 50-60 years in conjunction with reconstruction of the roof. This wall extension was determined by the structural engineer to result in elevated risk of the building's collapse during a seismic event. As a consequence of the compromised structural condition of the building, it was determined that reconstructing the building in its entirety would be far less costly than trying to preserve the building and fully address/correct the structural deficiencies.

There have been no documented community concerns expressed to date regarding the proposed cleanup plan.

Continued Community Involvement

The City will keep a record of public comments or questions received, if any, as the project is completed, and provide responses or updates as necessary on the City's website. The City will

consult with EPA and the San Joaquin Air Quality Management District on any feedback received that may impact the cleanup plan at the site.

Decision Document

In response to on-going break-ins, vandalism, and fires occurring in the building during 2023, and the lack of any financially or technically viable alternatives to eliminating the building as an on-going threat to public safety, the City made a decision to proceed with Alternative 3 identified in the ABCA. Formal City approval to proceed with demolition and to utilize USEPA RLF funding occurred during a meeting of the City Council on October 19¹, 2023. No public comments were received on the ABCA. The proposed cleanup plan was approved by the San Joaquin Air Quality Management District.

¹ [Resolution - - 2023-281 - 10/19/2023 \(fresno.gov\)](#)