

Published July 21st, 2010

Decaying Home a Nuisance to Neighbors

By Cathy Tyson



View of sagging back deck of vacant Ruth Court home Photo Cathy Tyson

Neighbors are concerned about an abandoned home on Ruth Court in Lafayette, hoping that it will soon be demolished. It has been red-tagged since April - a classification that indicates it's too dangerous to inhabit. Because of its dilapidated condition and easy animal access, raccoons, feral cats, rodents and termites are calling it home. Indeed there is an open corner of the building at ground level that is covered with fur. The elevated back deck is in such poor condition that there are signs warning of collapse.

"The inside of the house remains filled to a hip-high depth in trash, including rotting organic matter, significant amounts of dog excrement and standing pools of water/liquids. The poor condition of all doors, windows and the roof allow the house to exhale a potentially noxious brew of off-gasses and provide easy entrance/exit to a veritable horde of flies and mosquitoes," said across-the-street neighbor Kevin Cornish, who has been contacting the City regularly asking that the house be demolished.

He describes the unsecured house as a, "Clear biohazard - it poses an imminent threat to the health of my family and neighbors." Cornish said there have been scavengers on the property and an increase in neighborhood burglaries on what was a quiet cul de sac.

Due to health and safety violations the City is pursuing a receivership action, said Melanie Donnelly, the City Attorney. A receivership action is a code enforcement tool that allows the City to request the appointment of a receiver to abate a public nuisance. A receiver is an unbiased third party appointed by a court to carry out its orders. "It's out of the City's hands at this point," said Donnelly. "It's up to the Receiver and the Court."

Reach the reporter at: cathy@lamorindaweekly.com

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