

METRO POLITAN

City should expand help for Prospect

EDITORIALS

Kansas City officials have pledged \$164,000 to help clean up the Prospect Avenue corridor and improve police protection for residents. It's a measure, given the massive and long-neglected problems in the area. The city needs to do more.

The plans announced Wednesday make sense, as far as they go: knock down up to 15 dangerous buildings, remove overgrown weeds on city-owned property, reduce illegal dumping and improve police patrols with new, more nimble vehicles.

About 60 square blocks of the urban core are in line for extra attention, stretching from 21st to 31st streets, from Prospect Avenue east to Indiana Avenue.

Neighborhood residents are understandably frustrated that it took the recent discovery of six bodies in the general area to induce City Hall to fire up the money — to show that officials "care about Prospect," as City Council member Troy Nash put it.

Leaders from various neighborhoods have repeatedly appeared at council meetings to request better basic services on the East Side. Sometimes the city responded. In the mid-1990s, it aggressively got rid of hundreds of dangerous buildings.

The list of neglected structures has grown too large again, and on Thursday it included more than 330 pending cases in which city officials have ordered demolition.

Unfortunately, elected officials and city managers in recent years have not allocated adequate sums to demolish more dangerous buildings, cut weeds on vacant properties or step up programs to stop dumping.

Council members even cut back some of these efforts, blaming slower growth in city tax revenue. While pleading poverty, though, council members spent money elsewhere, such as funding millions of dollars toward excessive employee pay raises.

Jerry Young, an official with the Kansas City Church Community Organization, said Thursday that the new pledge of money for the Prospect Corridor was "not enough" to make a huge difference. He quickly added, "But this is a good first step."

More steps, however, are needed. The problems created by crime and blight in the Prospect Corridor will require more effective solutions and additional money from City Hall.