



Attachment D

Fire Services Report Feb 19, 2025

707 Queens Avenue

REPORT

Fire & Rescue Services

To: Jackie Teed
Director, Planning and Development **Date:** February 24, 2025

From: Erin Williams
Director, Fire & Rescue Services **File:** INC #25-0633

Subject: 707 Queens Avenue Structure Demolition Request

RECOMMENDATION

The fire damaged structure located at 707 Queens Avenue is recommended to be demolished as soon as possible to limit the fire and structural hazards that is currently present.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide information to support the recommendation for demolishing the structure situated at 707 Queens Avenue as soon as possible.

SUMMARY

A structure fire on January 31, 2025, incident #25-0633, resulted in significant fire damage to the structures on the property of 707 Queens Avenue. The structural integrity of the house was compromised and the garage was demolished as a part of the fire suppression efforts. The main structure is recommended to be demolished as soon as possible as it poses a hazard to the community for the following reasons: the cold weather can attract the unhoused population to seek shelter in a vacant property, the integrity of the structure is compromised, and the excessive amounts of combustible contents and debris in and around the building is creates an undue fire hazard.

BACKGROUND

On January 31, 2025, New Westminster Fire & Rescue Services (NWFRS) responded to a structure fire, incident #25-0633, at the residential property situated at 707 Queens Avenue. The property included a 5-suite rooming house and detached garage at the rear of the property.

Extensive fire damage was observed to the rear of the house extending to the interior and the roof structure, which was no longer intact. The detached garage was also extensively fire damaged and was eventually demolished to facilitate fire suppression efforts.

After our crew completed our suppression and investigation efforts for the January 31, 2025 fire incident, the access doorways were noted to be closed and we arranged for the property to be fenced to prevent unauthorized entry.

On February 3, 2025, Deputy Chief Jeff Gill, Assistant Chief Isabella Li, and Building Inspector Michael Racanello conducted a site visit at 707 Queens Avenue. The security fence was observed to have been breached at the front and the rear of the property. The basement access door into the house was breached and there was visible evidence of an attempt to breach the access door to the main floor. The fence was subsequently requested to be reinforced for securing the perimeter. When Building Inspector Racanello returned to post "Do Not Occupy" signs on the fence, he witnessed individuals attempting to enter the property once again but left after seeing a staff on site.

Records show that the rooming house appears to have been in operation since 2005. In 2023, Fire was dispatched to a call at this property eighteen times. This was up from one call in 2022 and no calls between 2019 and 2021. In 2024, the number of calls to this property increased further to twenty-one calls. Between 2023 and 2024 NWFRS responded to three fire incidents at 707 Queens Avenue.



Figure 1: Rear of the house located at 707 Queens Avenue.

ANALYSIS

After the fire incident on January 31, 2025, the house located at 707 Queens Avenue is no longer habitable. The house is structurally compromised with the rear portion of the house partially consumed by the fire and the roof no longer intact. Heavy charring is observed to the framing and flooring of the house with areas that are no longer intact. The garage was demolished as a part of the fire suppression efforts but the debris, including the excessive amount of combustible contents that was in the garage, remains on site.

Upon inspection, it is clear that the property is in violation of the BC Fire Code 2024. For example, Sentence 2.4.1.1.(1) provides that combustible waste materials in and around buildings shall not be permitted to accumulate in quantities or locations that will constitute an undue fire hazard. In the current state, the property has an excessive amount of

combustible waste materials in and around the building that creates a fire hazard for the neighbouring structures and the community.

If another fire incident were to occur at 707 Queens Avenue, the extensive combustible content on site, particularly the loose debris, can increase the potential for fire spread to the adjacent properties. The property is situated in between two other buildings, one being a residential apartment and the other being a house that is currently operated by a non-profit organization.

Further, in accordance with BC Fire Code 2024, Sentence 2.4.6.1.(1), Vacant buildings shall be secured against unauthorized entry. I note that despite our efforts to secure the property, there were persistent attempts of unauthorized entry into the property. Access and entry into the property poses a life safety hazard due to the current condition of the structure.

If the property were to remain, it poses a significant health and safety risk to individuals, and to other properties. There is also a risk of individuals breaching the fencing, and entering this building. Unauthorized entry to the property may result in injury due to the hazardous materials, and any individuals attempting to seek shelter in the remaining structures at the property may increase the risk of subsequent fire incidents, especially during cold and rainy weather months.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If a person ordered to perform a Remedial Action Requirement fails to do so in the time required, Council may authorize staff and contractors to perform the action, and to recover the cost from the owner of the affected property.

If the owner fails to pay, the cost can be added to property taxes as per Division 12 of the *Community Charter*.

CONCLUSION

The fire incident that occurred at 707 Queens Avenue on January 31, 2025 resulted in a fire damaged structure and a demolished garage on site that are creating an undue fire and life safety hazard. We recommend that the remaining house be demolished and the debris be removed as soon as possible.

This report was prepared by:
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Jeff Gill, Deputy Fire Chief

This report was approved by:
Erin Williams, Director, Fire and Rescue Services

