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Demolition starts clearing space for new KC police station

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A new chapter in the life of an old neighborhood came Monday morning with the first crunching bite of an excavator's shovel into the roofline of a once stately home.

The house on Olive Street was the first of the dozens that will be demolished to make way for the \$57 million Kansas City Police Department's East Patrol station and crime laboratory campus.

A liberal collection of city and police officials witnesses the demolition in the middle of the site bordered by 26th and 27th streets and Prospect and Brooklyn avenues.

Many neighborhood residents also came to watch, and not all were happy. Several people booed as the machine tore the house at 2625 Olive into rubble.

The public safety sales tax approved by Kansas City voters in 2010 is paying for the project, which city leaders say will provide needed stability and security to an area beset with crime and dotted with vacant lots and blighted properties.

Sales have been finalized on all but a few of the 128 tracts within the area, including 66 that were occupied. City Architect Eric Bosch said it was hoped that construction can begin as early as this summer.

"This is a good start," Bosch said of Monday's event.

City Council member Jermaine Reed said the city is working to ensure that people who live in the area will be hired for jobs that will come with the project.

"We've made a major commitment to hiring minority workers," he said.

While Monday's initial demolition was done with machinery, some houses will be de-constructed by hand so that materials such as brick, stone and lumber can re-used in building the new project or be given to Habitat for Humanity, said Bosch.

Among those watching Monday was Ayyonna Andrews, who grew up in the area and now lives just north of the project site. She is among those opposed to it.

"I think the people who had a lot of say so in this are not from this neighborhood," she said. "This is a real tight-knit neighborhood. It's not as bad as some people said it was."

Troy Pauley, another onlooker Monday who resides near the site, said he was pleased about the new project.

"I'm all for it," Pauley said.

He said anything that brings jobs to the neighborhood and enhances public safety is a positive development for the community.

"I think it's a good thing for the neighborhood," he said.

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