



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

Queens Chronicle: Another abandoned site and no action

TONY AVELLA February 11, 2015

It seems to happen all too often in Queens. Frustrated neighbors get no help from the city concerning abandoned houses with overgrown yards, boarded-up windows and owners who are also derelict in paying their taxes.

One such site that has been on state Sen. Tony Avella's radar for five years is located at 80-44 233 St. in Queens Village. The two-level structure was built in 1930.

Ho Seng Tai bought the property in 1990, but only paid property taxes until 2009, according to city records, and owes more than \$27,000 in back taxes.

In addition, the Department of Buildings reports 14 complaints about the location dating back to 2002 that include disrepair, overgrown weeds and squatters entering the building, as well as a partial vacate order from 2010.

Some of the windows have been boarded up by the city, while others remain broken.

Avella is calling on the city to take immediate action. His office has recently contacted the Fire, Finance, Health, Housing Preservation and Development, Sanitation and Buildings departments in an attempt to have the residence's maintenance addressed.

The senator held a press conference at the site on Friday with area residents, similar to one held five years ago at the same location.

"I first called attention to this property in 2010, when I stood with this community and demanded the city take action," the senator said. "Now, five years later, we are still fighting to keep this property from continuing to pose safety hazards to this neighborhood, while dragging property values down.

"It is an absolute disgrace that the city would sit by while this house becomes more dilapidated each year," he added. "This neighborhood needs immediate and long-term action to clean this home up."

Avella's office has tried to reach out to Tai without success. His address is listed as the 233rd Street property. The Queens Chronicle was also unable to reach him.

Felicia Farino, who lives on the block, is fed up with the situation. "As a homeowner for the last 25 years, I am outraged that a home on the street that I live on can be neglected to this point and there is nothing the civic association, local government or homeowners can do to remedy the situation," she said.

"This eyesore has been festering over the last 25 years and the only relief we have had in that time has been the two times Sen. Avella has gotten the Department of Sanitation to clean up the property."

Farino doesn't believe the owner ever lived there and was told the building is now structurally unsound.

"It's a shame because it was a beautiful stucco house, with a Spanish roof and stained-glass windows," she said. "But it's in the middle of the block and devalues everyone else's property."

She said she just got an assessment on her home from the city, which went up, but doubts her house is worth more now.

A similar situation was the focus of a Queens Chronicle story last December about a house at 32-51 Utopia Parkway in Auburndale. The owner is \$11,000 in arrears and has received numerous citations over the years for the condition of the property.

If the owner, Michael C. Lee, doesn't pay in the next tax cycle in April, he could be added to the city's lien properties.

The city uses an outside firm to reclaim back taxes and if not forthcoming, it can foreclose and sell the house, but that can be up to a two-year process.

Avella's office does not know why the Queens Village property doesn't have a tax lien on it.

Calls to the Department of Finance seeking an answer were not returned by press time.

Read more [here](#)