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### **GARY PARTNERS WITH INDIANA NATIONAL GUARD IN DEMOLITION EFFORTS**

**Gary, Indiana**-The City of Gary's ongoing blight elimination efforts will again this year receive the support of the Indiana National Guard. The National Guard will join forces with Gary's in-house demolition to demolish a number of vacant properties on the city's east side.

In 2017, the Indiana National Guard worked in the city for two weeks in September. During that time 22 structures were demolished in the 1900 Block of Maryland Street and in areas from 8<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> and Madison Street. The Indiana National Guard took down 11 structures and 11 were taken down by the city's in-house demolition.

This year the National Guard will increase its presence in Gary planning to spend two months in the city tearing down more vacant properties in the same vicinity as last year. Demolition in the 1900 Block of Delaware Street began today, Thursday, August 2<sup>nd</sup> and will conclude the first of October. This phase of the demolition project includes up to 14 properties. If the demolition of the properties are completed prior to October 1, the National Guard will demolish other properties between 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> and Virginia Street. In addition to in-house demolition, general services will also support the blight elimination project.

Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson says, "Since 2012 we have been aggressively working to tackle blight in the city. We have worked hard to identify resources and partnerships to help in our blight elimination and demolition efforts. As a result, through the use of Hardest Hits Funds, local dollars and through partnerships with entities like the Indiana National Guard, our demolition efforts have been accelerated."

The City reached out to the Indiana National Guard last year after being apprised of federal dollars that could possibly assist the city in its demolition efforts. Freeman-Wilson says, "The National Guard has been a willing partner and extremely helpful. We are grateful for the continued partnership that support our initiatives to eliminate blight in our city."

Indiana National Guard officials say, "This mission helps rid neighborhoods of gangs, drugs and associated violent activity and allows for community revitalization. Together, this joint effort between the city and the INNG creates a great program to make the streets, as well as the community safer for all those living in and around the neighborhood. It's a win-win situation. Our service members gain valuable experience with the equipment and the community will not only look better, but will be safer."

The Indiana National Guard will utilize federal dollars earmarked to address the suppression of drug activity in communities to support the project.

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