



Police: Abandoned properties encourage crime on Desoto

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HOUSTON -- When it comes to crime, residents say the area around Antoine and Desoto in Northwest Houston is arguably the worst in the city.

“It’s like being in a war zone,” one resident said.

It has been a problem that 11 News has exposed for years. Residents say it’s scary and police officers who patrol the streets say it is frustrating. They tell us promises are made every year to

demolish empty apartment and townhome complexes, but every year nothing gets done.

In the 5300 and 5400 Block of Desoto you will find a place called Candlewood Glen. It is a large vacant townhome complex that police say was condemned by the city years ago.

But with its trash, broken windows, knocked down doors, and collapsed ceilings, it is still standing. And now, somehow, some people are moving back in.

Tuan Nguyen purchased nine townhomes and is being allowed to rent them out. He is doing it without a "certificate of occupancy." The city requires the permit before people can move in.

But despite the red tags that have been posted on the lived in properties, no one is being told to leave.

Now renters like Joycelyn Williams say their homes are unsafe and falling apart.

"We fix our own apartment up as we go," said Cindy Ritchie, another resident. Residents said because of the vacant buildings the complex is a haven for drug dealers and molesters. There are many places to hide guns and drugs.

"Oh I watch the crime. I watch the crime. I watched it," said renter Jewell Peoples. "I was looking out of my window and seen these boys with these guns robbing these people. Yes it's bad down here," she said.

The crime is one thing that is scary, the roaches are another.

"Roaches fall from everywhere. Covered in roaches," Williams said.

The City of Houston's Public Works Department said it has to give Nguyen a chance to fix his properties before taking any more action.

But no one at City Hall could answer why Nguyen was able to buy the places and move renters in the first place.

"When they [inspectors] came out they told him they are going to shut him down or going to force him to fix everything up, but he's been hiding," said Williams.

Nguyen said he is just trying to make money.

"Because right now I have already bought it, if I leave, I lose everything, so the only way I can handle it right now is to try and fix it. I hope in the future, if everything is good, I can sell it," Nguyen said.

<http://www.khou.com/news/Abandoned-Properties-encourage-crime-on-Desoto-100384499.html>