

LOCAL EYESORE?

Neighbors battle 'nuisance'

But despite city violations, junk remains on property

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Neighbors call him the garbage man.

He is West Side resident Richard Berlinguette, whose cluttered yard has been creating headaches for homeowners in his Mast Road neighborhood.

Among those is Rebequa McKinney, who has lived across the street from Berlinguette for almost three years.

She said that she originally decided to move to the area because the neighborhood was beautiful, except for one home.

"Walk three blocks down Mast Road and you see all these beautiful homes and then that one eyesore," McKinney said. "It brings the value of the whole neighborhood down."

Broken tractors, various automobile parts and other junk can be seen from the road outside Berlinguette's home. The majority of the mess appears to be behind the house in a makeshift shed.

Last December, the city's Neighborhood Enhancement Team went to Berlinguette's Mast Road home, and also to another property he owns on Parker Street.

The team found ordinance violations at both locations.

"The filed complaint simply said that there was substantial junk and trash that was creating a public nuisance," said deputy city clerk Matt Normand, a member of the team. "Everything in the complaint was accurate."

Calls to Berlinguette's home for comment were not returned.

Normand said that Berlinguette has received 15 citations from the city since Jan. 15, 2004. Deadlines for clean-

ing up his properties have come and gone.

McKinney said that she has tried to talk with Berlinguette, even offering to help him clean up his yard.

"I went over there with the kindest of hearts," McKinney said. "I got called every name in the book."

The last straw, McKinney said, was when her 80-year-old neighbor confronted Berlinguette, believing that he

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would be kinder to the elderly.

"She called me back in tears," McKinney said. "That man cursed her out."

Shortly after she came to the city, McKinney began calling the city's Building Department on a consistent basis to complain about Berlinguette's home.

"What makes me so angry is that they fine him, and he can just pay it, and do nothing about the problem," McKinney said. "I've been working at this for almost three years, and nothing has happened."

McKinney's alderman, George Smith of Ward 10, echoed her frustration.

"These people get a citation, they pay it, and they don't fix the problem," Smith said. "A lot of people use the legal system to their advantage."

Smith said that he spoke with Berlinguette a few years back, but was ignored.

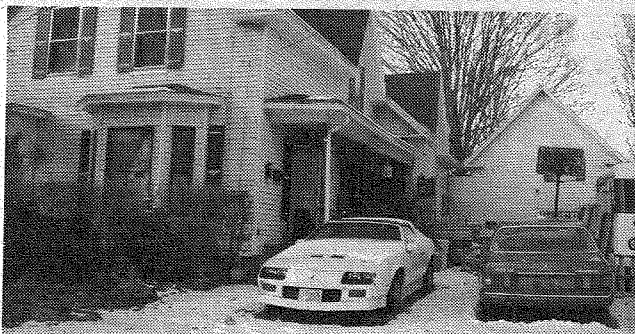
"It's awful out there," Smith said. "And it's not only him. I have several problems like this in my ward."

Over the past year, Manchester officials have made it clear that one of their top priorities is cracking down on negligent land owners who refuse take care of their properties. Efforts have included raising the fines for certain ordinance violations and reinstating the Neighborhood Enhancement Team.

Officials believe that properties such as Berlinguette's contribute to crime and have a negative impact on the city's quality of life.

McKinney said that she understands that it is difficult to maintain a nice property. She just wishes that Berlinguette would make some attempt at it.

"Since I moved here, I have watched the downtown really come alive, and I think it's wonderful," McKinney said. "And now I'm watching my own neighborhood go down and it's really sad."



The exterior of another property on Parker Street owned by Richard Berlinguette. (Express Photo/Dan Magazu)

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