



**12 ALDER STREET**

All persons interested either for or against this Variance Appeal will be heard at a public hearing in Room 209, City Hall, Portland, Maine on Thursday, January 9, 1997 at 7:00 p.m. This notice of required public hearing has been sent to the owners of property directly abutting and directly across the street or alley from the property as required by the Ordinance.

Michael J. Rokowski, owner of the property located at 12 Alder Street and located in an R-6 Zone, hereby respectfully petitions the Board of Appeals relief from Section 14-387 and Section 14-139(2) of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Portland, Maine. For more detailed information, please come to Room 315 at City Hall weekdays between 7:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

**LEGAL BASIS OF APPEAL:** Such appeal will be granted if the Board of Appeals finds that the conditions imposed by Section 473(c)(1) of the Zoning Ordinance have been met.

**MATTHEW D. MANAHAN**  
**CHAIRMAN**

12 Alder Street

33-J-15

5 miles  
1/14/97

Variance

33-J-14

Basil R. Scott  
16 Alder St.  
Portland 04101

33-K-1

Abilities & Goodwill Inc  
353 Cumberland Ave  
Portland 04101

33-J-16

Roger & Elaine Passmore  
5 Brookside Dr.  
Cumberland 04021

33-K-2

33-J-4

Hilda A Taylor  
P.O. Box 5224  
Portland 04101

33-J-5

Jarrett B & Kim E Horine  
37 Bailey Ave  
Portland 04103



hat was feasible," he said.  
 A high-velocity blast from a big truck bomb can hurl debris at the speed of 20,000 feet per second, turning glass shards into bullets and equipping fortifications similar to World War II pillboxes for survival at close range.  
 The bomb that hit the apart-

become increasingly clear in the last decade as bombings — now the favored tactic of extremists worldwide — have grown in scale and frequency.

There have been roughly 1,000 car or truck bombings around the world since 1980, though few received the attention of the mas-

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during the explosion. 8A  
**Continued cooperation**  
 between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia is of vital importance to both countries. 9A  
**Tuesday's act of terrorism**  
 reflects political and religious opposition to the Saudi regime, experts agree. 8A

## y school women

ry Institute's  
 calls the ruling 'a savage

Ending a 157-year tradition of le education, the Supreme Court at Virginia Military Institute's unconstitutional.  
 institutes the strongest endorsement by the court in recent years. th Bader Ginsburg, the ruling erable military school must go private.  
 s the state's sons, it makes no er daughters. That is not equal id. The court found that neither ing "citizen-soldiers" nor its grueling program makes the able to women.  
 rceful rendering of the nation's discrimination from the time 1920 to present times. The

Please see COURT  
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## Vacant buildings attract squatters, drunks, fires

● Portland steps up efforts to reduce the number of abandoned apartment houses.

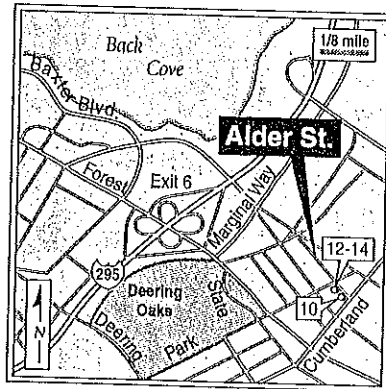
By JOHN RICHARDSON  
 Staff Writer

The only things between Basil Scott's back yard and the ravages of urban blight are a white picket fence and a string of plastic American flags.

Scott's flags are tacked to the burned-out apartment house next door, below the graying plywood that covers the windows and conceals the charred timbers inside. A limp foam mattress, comfort to the drunken men who frequently take up residence at 12-14 Alder St., slumps over a back porch rail.

Scott's fence offers little protection from the late-night disturbances, the occasional fires or the erosion of neighborhood pride. "They make such a doggone mess and throw wine bottles and beer bottles in my back yard," said Scott,

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Staff art

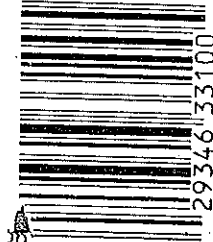
sounding more resigned than angry.

Tiny Alder Street, a short walk from City Hall, is a case study of a recurring problem in neighborhoods surrounding downtown Portland.

City officials say there are about two dozen abandoned buildings in Portland, most of them in Bayside, Parkside, Munjoy Hill and the West End. Three are on Alder Street,

### THE WEATHER

Partly sunny today,  
 high in the mid-  
 70s. Partly cloudy  
 tonight, low near  
 55. Partly sunny  
 Friday. 12B



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# ALDER

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including two burned-out hulks next to Scott's home.

Fire can be the "kiss of death" for an apartment building around the downtown Portland, especially if the owner is a landlord who lives elsewhere, said Sam Hoffses, chief of Portland's building inspection department.

"They find out (the buildings) are more costly to maintain than it would be to just abandon them," said Jerry DiMillo, a spokesman for the Portland Fire Department who has seen the cycle repeated around Portland.

Homeless squatters break into abandoned buildings, annoy neighbors and sometimes start fires. Property values — and residents' morale — sag.

Reconstruction can take months or years to begin, because owners can't earn enough rent money to justify it. The city offers financing but can't force property owners to take it. Demolition is a last resort, but it just leaves a neighborhood with a vacant lot.

Scott sat in his back yard one day this month with his black Labrador retriever, Precious, and talked about selling his two-story, single-family home. Then he thought again. "Nobody would want it," he said.

But there can be happy endings. Even, perhaps, on Alder Street.

After years of complaints from neighbors, and with the city threatening to tear down the two buildings, they were sold for \$7,000 each this spring. Last week, a new investor started the reconstruction that neighbors had given up hoping for.

## Fire-damaged building

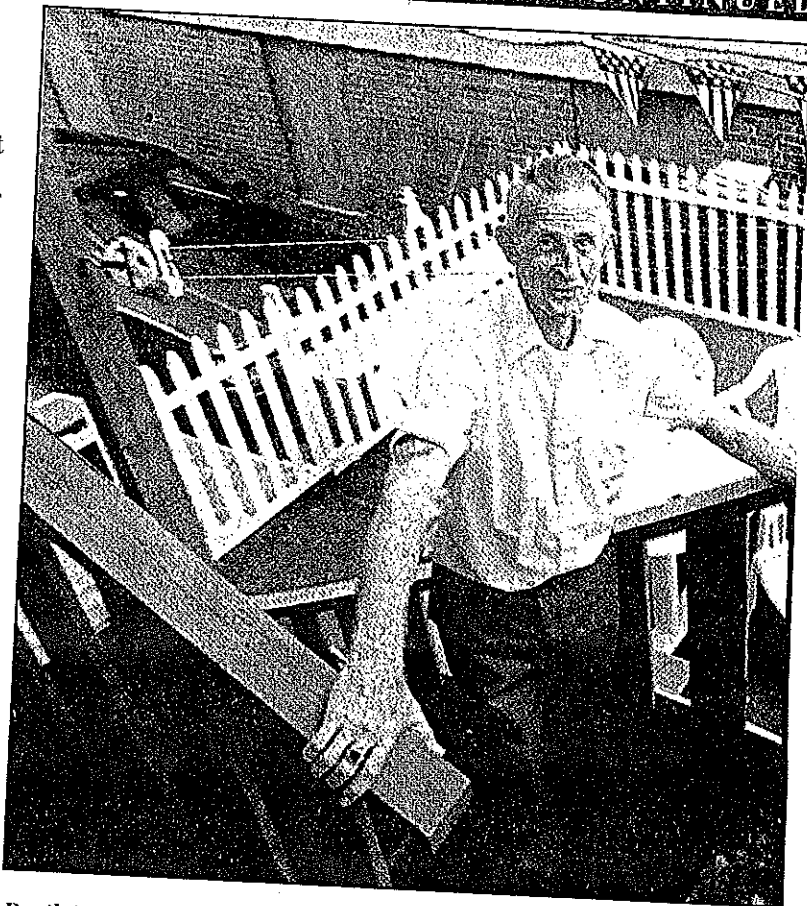
Alder Street runs for two blocks at the edge of West Bayside. It separates the neighborhood from an industrial strip along Preble Street.

Scott, a 71-year-old retired Marine, bought his house there seven years ago. At first, he said, it was a quiet street and he had nice neighbors.

But in April 1992, the first-floor apartment next door caught fire. The two-alarm blaze caused about \$50,000 worth of damage and left seven tenants homeless.

As the fire-damaged building sat, rain and snow rotted the interior and the cost of reconstruction steadily climbed. Soon it became a haven

CONTINUED



Basil Scott is surrounded by his neat backyard in his Alder Street neighborhood. Homeless squatters toss bottles and trash and generally make his life

for the homeless — and a fire hazard.

Homeless people can get beds at several shelters in Portland. But if they're drunk, their choices are limited.

The Arnie Hanson Center on India Street has the only "wet shelter" in the city. Its 17 beds and several cots sometimes fill up early. "So, after that it's life on the street," said Portland police Detective Danny Young.

The homeless know where the abandoned buildings are, and even which rooms in them are the best for shelter. If it's cold, squatters will start a fire, using pieces of the building for fuel. They sometimes ignite a building accidentally, then leave without reporting the fire, because they want to avoid trouble.

Scott has stood outside his home twice in the past two years and watched flames spread through the vacant building less than 15 feet away.

## Chase away drunks

Its vacant buildings give Alder Street a forbidding aura, and make it a hot spot. "There's a lot of fires in this neighborhood," said Rick Logan,

who lives next to Scott, on the other side.

Fire is the scariest thing about abandoned buildings, Scott said. But the noise is more annoying. He said he has called police regularly — "nearly every other night" — to chase away drunks.

Sometimes he doesn't wait for police. "I go right in the back yard and give 'em some lip," he said. "I'm an old retired Marine. I don't care I'll fight the devil."

Police filed 22 formal complaints about 12-14 Alder St. from the time it was abandoned through last year. Almost every one reported drunk people — breaking in, making noise or passing out.

Vacant buildings can attract other trouble, too. When eight boys escaped from the Maine Youth Center June 8, Portland police found four of them hiding outside Alder Street's abandoned buildings. Neighbors took it in stride.

Joanne Roussin, who lives on the edge of Portland's downtown peninsula, owned 12-14 Alder St. until April. "We kept boarding it up," she said but people broke in anyway.

Roussin said her family was preoccupied by health problems.



Staff photos by Gordon Chibruski

neighborhood where drunks and miserable.



Alder Street's neglected pavement adds to the deterioration of a neighborhood in which there are three abandoned buildings, including two burned-out hulks next to Basil Scott's home.

the house got overlooked until the city sent a demolition notice last winter.

Roger Passmore of Cumberland bought 10 Alder St. at auction about four years ago — after it already had been vacant for four years. Passmore, who owns a plumbing shop in West Bayside, planned to restore it but “couldn’t get the dough.” The amount of money he could make from rents wouldn’t cover the cost, he said.

Passmore also decided to sell in April, when the city was moving to tear the building down at his expense. “I was afraid someone would have set it on fire,” he said. “I wouldn’t care about that. But somebody could have got hurt.”

### Subsidized loans

Over the years, neighbors figured the city had given up on Alder Street.

But city officials say it’s ultimately the building owners’ responsibility. “The way the ordinance is, if you keep (an abandoned building) secure, there’s nothing we can do,” said Hoffses, who helps track vacant buildings in the city.

State law says the city can tear

down a building that is unstable or a fire hazard. But “it rarely gets that far. It’s the absolute end,” said Hoffses. “I don’t like seeing buildings boarded up, but if it’s got potential there ... I hate to tear down houses.”

Portland fights blight first by arranging federally subsidized loans that investors or homeowners can use to restore vacant buildings. Other federal loans are available in the private market.

Mark B. Adelson, director of Portland’s housing and neighborhood services division, said the city has stepped up efforts to reduce the number of abandoned apartment buildings. The combination of demolition notices, financial help and a rejuvenated rental market downtown has had an impact, Adelson said. Several houses tracked by the city have been restored or are getting financing, he said.

Oren Ahlquist, a Scarborough investor who restored another

burned-out house in Portland, bought both abandoned buildings next to Basil Scott.

For the past week, Ahlquist and a crew of workers threw trash and wood scraps out of 12-14 Alder St. into two roll-off trash bins. They tore off the roof and are dismantling the top floor. Ahlquist plans to gut both houses, then either offer them for sale with a federal financing plan or complete the restoration himself.

“It’s a lot of work,” he said, but not as hopeless as some believe. “The structure is fine, but it intimidates everybody who looks at it.”

The homeless people who annoyed Scott apparently have already found a new place to sleep and drink.

“Since that fella got in there in the last few days, we haven’t been bothered,” Scott said last week.

“I was thinking very seriously of moving,” he said. “Boy, it would be nice to get some nice neighbors in here.”

33-J-15  
12 Alder St  
R-6



CUMBERLAND

SHEET 37-A

AVENUE

SHEET 27-A