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**LOCAL: KOKOMO HAS LARGEST WAGE DROP IN U.S. A4**

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# KOKOMO TRIBUNE

kokomotribune.com

SUNDAY | JUNE 5, 2016

## IN SPORTS



Kelly Lafferty Gerber | Kokomo Tribune

## HAYNES APPERSON

■ See the sports section for HA Sports Festival entry forms. **B4-5**



## IN PARADE UP LATE AND LOVING IT

■ "Late Late Show" host James Corden on carpool karaoke, acting, and having fun.

- Plus:**
- **Parade Picks:** The New Toys
  - **Community Table:** Stay Cool

### Inside



## IN LIFE&STYLE HALF A CENTURY AND HAPPY

■ Roy and Toby Chaplin have been married for 50 years. **C1**



# CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT

## REMOVAL OF BLIGHTED HOMES MAKES ROOM IN LOCAL NEIGHBORHOODS

**BY CARA BALL**  
KOKOMO TRIBUNE

The day Joseph Patterson woke up to the sound of a demolition crew tearing down the vacant home just one house over from his, was the day he gained a new outlook on the neighborhood he's lived in for 50 years.

"It's been about seven or eight years we tried to get [that house] taken out," Patterson said. "But nothing had been done until today."

The yellow house at 1305 E. Taylor St. had shattered windows and cardboard coverings. It was a harbor for stray cats and rodents, and sometimes Patterson would have to tell the neighborhood kids not to hang around in front of the home for their own safety.

"I ran about four or five kids off the porch the other day because windows were broken," Patterson said. "[It's] not a safe environment for them."

There were at least four other homes in similar fashion on the same block.

The yellow home Patterson had been trying to get removed for the last seven years was torn down in May through the city's

blight elimination initiative. With over \$3 million in grant money awarded to the city back in August 2015, city officials and local contractors have been busy working to raze many of the run-down houses in Kokomo. By September 2016, a minimum of 148 homes are expected to be demolished.

Patterson, who sits and watches the neighborhood from his front porch on most days, has witnessed several generations of families grow up on East Taylor Street. He's seen decades of changes on this one block, and asserts that the area is and has always been a good neighborhood.

"I've been here a long time to see the improvement and see what happens to a neighborhood as far as the changes that is brought through the leadership of the city," Patterson said.

And for the most part, those changes have been good, he said.

There isn't much crime on the block, and Patterson doesn't hear of many drug-related issues either. Also, the demographics of the neighborhood have certainly

changed over the last 50 years, he said.

"When we first moved down here, there was only one black family down here other than my mom," Patterson said. "And so, that's been over 50 years ago."

Over time, Patterson said he's seen a number of families move in and out of the neighborhood.

Where the vacant yellow house once stood, there was a woman named Estelle that Patterson remembers lived in the home some years ago. She passed away, and then the Hillmans moved in shortly after. Over time, the property became vacant again and it's remained that way for roughly 12 years.

"It's been a major concern because when I get out of the car to come into the house, I never know what to expect from a vacant house that has been sitting there for 12 or 13 years," Patterson said.

Just under two miles away from East Taylor Street, Donnie McElroy remembers purchasing his home on North Courtland back in 2009.

His home was a labor of love, completely remodeled from the inside out. But over the years, the downturn of the neighborhood has made McElroy question his decision to invest so much time and money into his home.

McElroy is concerned that the abandoned homes encourage a drug problem in the area. It also makes it easier for crimes to be committed.

"Well, for one thing, our property values have dropped so much since I moved in here it ain't funny," McElroy said. "It's been bad; they should've done this a long time ago."

A vacant piece of land near McElroy's home was once a meth house but was torn down by the city some time ago, McElroy said while he and his buddies watched on as a demolition truck picked apart the home at 908 N. Courtland Ave. one afternoon.

He and neighbors keep the land presentable now by pulling and spraying weeds when necessary.

And although the plan to remove blight from Kokomo is a good idea, McElroy said, there are quite a few other homes around

>> See **BLIGHT** // Page **A9**

**kt**

**Video:**  
For a video of the homes being razed, visit: <http://goo.gl/5pZRNx>

### INSIDE

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TODAY'S PAGE ONE DESIGNED BY RODNEY OGLE & KATELYN MILLER

### ONLY ONLINE

**Strawberry Festival**

Kokomo Tribune photographer Tim Bath captured photos of the Strawberry Festival on Friday and they're available online for viewing at: <http://goo.gl/jUYyFZ>

**kt**

### WEATHER

A passing shower or two.

**HIGH 74 // LOW 60**

Complete forecast on Page **A12**

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