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— M A Q U O K E T A —

**SENTINEL—PRESS**

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<http://www.publicnoticeads.com/IA/search/searchnotice.asp>

# Downtown remains piles of debris

**By DOUGLAS MELVOLD**

One year ago this week, a fire that broke out in a second floor apartment in downtown Maquoketa and rapidly spread.

The raging fire soon turned into one of the largest disasters in the city’s history, consuming four commercial buildings and damaging two others.

Firefighters from some 29 other departments rushed to the city to help, many staying well into the day.

It was the frigid predawn hours of Jan. 19, 2008 and it took the better part of two days before the last firefighters could leave the scene.

A full year later, the scene, especially on these snowy winter days, the east side of the 100 block of South Main Street looks pretty much like it did after that brutally cold weekend a year ago was over.

Partial walls still tower over a pile of bricks, singed beams and other debris.

The south half of the Smiles on Main building has been rebuilt and the business tenants have moved back into their locations.

Otherwise little restoration of the site has taken place.

The main reason is that state officials have determined that asbestos is on the site and that clean-up requires special handling, which means more expense. The three property owners involved were not insured for that expense.



MSP photo by Kelly Gerlach

**The South Main Street** buildings destroyed or damaged by the Jan. 19, 2008 fire remain in much the same state as they did following the fire one year ago. The city is seeking grants that would finance most of the cost of the clean-up, including asbestos.

For a time last spring and early summer, city officials and property owners pinned their hopes on a national pharmacy chain that was considering acquiring the entire south half of the block, extending to Olive Street, cleaning up the debris and building a store. When the company changed its mind, the city was left to seek other solutions.

In November, the city applied for three grants that, if awarded, would

help finance the clean-up.

If awarded, the grants would require that the city have ownership of the properties.

All three property owners involved--Sue Wilke of Sue’s Hallmark, Dan and Karen Breitbach of Breitbach’s Floor Covering and Todd and Jennifer Westphal of Jackson County Home Furnishings--have said they would give the properties to the city without com-

pensation as required by the grants, according to Wagner.

Once the property is cleaned up, the city then would market the site for development.

The largest grant being sought is offered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which would provide up to \$200,000. The agency will make a preliminary notification of grant recipients in February or March this year, with the announcement of the awards sometime after July 1.

The second grant is \$68,000 that the city is seeking from the Iowa Department of Economic Development. Notification of those awards will be made this spring.

The third grant source is the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, from which the city is seeking \$25,000. That program funds smaller projects that do not receive larger grants.

The East Central Intergovernmental Association of Dubuque is handling the grant applications on the city’s behalf.

Kelley Deutmeyer, executive director of the ECIA, noted before the council last fall that all three grants, if approved, would provide \$293,000 in funding, still \$47,000 short of the \$340,000 estimate Wagner was given for cleaning up the properties, including asbestos

**■ DEBRIS,**  
**Please turn to page 3**

***Snowfall cleanup done in dangerous temperatures***




MSP photos by Mike Earles

**A local resident** shovels snow from his driveway, leaving the least amount of exposed skin as possible in the subzero temperatures recently experienced in the area.

**City trucks** line up to carry snow away from Quarry Street in Maquoketa earlier in the week.