

## **FORMER LOOPER HOME DEMOLISHED**

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Two condemned properties, one of which was the former home of **Byron Looper**, are being demolished to make way for new townhomes in Cookeville.

"That property was the reason we came up with RAOs," Cookeville City Manager James Mills said Wednesday of the apartment complex known as "L Block" on Chestnut Avenue. "That was the impetus to get those areas redeveloped."



Cookeville Police Department Crime Analyst Sheila Julian said police were called to L Block 240 times in 2016 and 167 times in 2017.

**Mills said both L Block and the old Looper house, which is adjacent to L Block at the corner of 4th Street and Chestnut, were deemed unsafe and condemned by the city in January 2018.**

(Photo: Developers demolished the former home of Byron Looper Wednesday to make room for a new townhome development).

**Byron Looper was the Putnam Property Assessor who was convicted of killing his political rival Sen. Tommy Burks 20 years ago.**

After L Block was condemned, police were called to the property considerably fewer times — five times in 2018 and four this year.

Cookeville Planning Director Jon Ward said the planning commission first approved the University Park Redevelopment Area Overlay for the property in July 2018.

But since then, L Block and the old Looper home have faced significant costs in cleanup from hazardous materials including asbestos and lead paint and possibly methamphetamine.

"We had to come up with some way to encourage developers to go in there," Mills said of the reason for establishing the RAO. "It's a risk for the developer, because of the cost."

Developer Aaron Bernhardt purchased the property in July, at which time he also obtained a demolition permit from the city, and has plans for 17 two-story townhomes on the site of the condemned properties.

"We currently have no other properties officially declared unsafe," Mills said. "We do have some that the codes officers are working with to bring them up to code."

Bernhardt has also redeveloped property off Willow Avenue at 7th, 8th and 9th streets.



By Thursday morning, a pile of debris remained where Looper's house once stood.

(Photo: The old home of former Putnam Property Assessor Byron Looper, who was convicted of killing his political opponent State Sen. Tommy Burks.

L Block is expected to be demolished next.

\*Read more about the people and places of Putnam Co., TN at:  
<http://www.ajlambert.com>