

Effects of Abandoned Housing on Communities Research Report for the City of Topeka

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Executive Summary:

In Early 2016, in response to a request for service from the City of Topeka, the Hugo Wall (HWS) of Public Affairs' Public Policy and Management Center (PPMC) at Wichita State University (WSU) began a research project to study the occurrence of public safety responses (police, fire and code) in city blocks with the existence of abandoned housing in comparison to similar city blocks with no abandoned housing present, and potential effect of abandoned housing on property values of properties adjacent and within the same city block as abandoned housing. A three pronged approach was used to complete the research study, including: analysis of public safety response and property value data; stakeholder interviews of neighborhood leaders within neighborhoods with abandoned housing present; and literature review of external studies conducted on innovative city and state abandoned housing remediation efforts.

To conduct this research and ensure consistent responses received, a workbook was designed by PPMC staff to collect information regarding properties: their specifications (renter or owner occupied, house square footage, number of rooms, year built, and property area), property value, and occurrence and frequency for a number of police, fire, and code responses (*workbook template included as Attachment A*). The survey was designed to be easily completed by City representatives in Topeka and elsewhere. Cities were asked to participate in the study through the Kansas Association of City/County Management (KACM) listserv of members; four (4) Kansas communities, in addition to the City of Topeka, participated in the study (Wichita, Dodge City, Garden City, and Ottawa). The City of Topeka provided 32 city blocks, including 587 total addresses of data, and the additional Kansas communities provided 24 total city blocks and approximately 250 total addresses of data for the study.

Each community was asked to select three (3) properties that were currently abandoned (as defined by the 2016 State of Kansas proposed legislation) and provide information requested for that property and the properties residing on the same city block as the abandoned property selected. The research study also asked communities to provide information requested for properties of similar specifications (house square footage, number of rooms, year built, and property area) to the sample properties, and requested information for those properties on the same block; comparable blocks, however, were requested to not have a history of abandoned property on the city block.

Analysis of the data indicates that there is a relationship between the existence of abandoned housing in city blocks and the frequency of public safety response; this relationship is most prominent in code violations and the need for code enforcement, but also exists in fire and emergency medical response, and police response, particularly in prevalence of person crimes. The need for increased public safety response necessitates increased demand on public resources; a time/resource comparative analysis of code enforcement personnel time and resource allocation is included within the body of the report, finding that approximately \$31,100 in additional personnel resources were needed to complete code violation cases in city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than those without.

Analysis of the data also indicates that the presence of abandoned housing has a detrimental effect to abandoned houses, adjacent properties, and houses within the same city block as abandoned houses. The 2015 average property valuation on sixteen (16) city blocks in Topeka with abandoned housing present was compared to the average property valuation on sixteen (16) comparable city blocks in Topeka without abandoned housing present. To ensure valid comparisons, comparable city blocks were determined by selecting city blocks with homes of similar specifications, controlling for: house square footage, number of bedrooms, property area, and year built. The point in time analysis determined that in 2015, houses on city blocks without abandoned housing present were valued seven (7) percent higher than houses on city blocks with abandoned housing present. Similarly, historical analysis of the same city blocks demonstrates that the entry of abandoned housing in a neighborhood has a halting effect on property tax growth of adjacent properties (4 percent growth in the 5 years after becoming abandoned, compared to 14 percent growth in the 5 years prior to becoming abandoned).

Neighborhood leaders eagerly involved themselves in the study, providing feedback and recommendations. Many mentioned the need to actively engage neighborhoods, with increased communication of current city processes and procedures available for remediation efforts. Many also mentioned current successes, through the Special Structures program and the SORT grant, and encouraged City leaders to continue to build community partnerships to build off of those successes.

Lastly, best practices and innovations in abandoned housing remediation and neighborhood revitalization are researched and summarized to provide a basis for policy recommendations. These best practices and innovations include lessons learned from successful programs and

practices from across the nation, including land bank formation and blight, vacancy and abandoned housing remediation.

Background:

In Early 2016, in response to a request for service from the City of Topeka, the Hugo Wall (HWS) of Public Affairs' Public Policy and Management Center (PPMC) at Wichita State University (WSU) began a research project to study the occurrence of public safety responses in city blocks with the existence of abandoned housing in comparison to similar city blocks with no abandoned housing present, and potential effect of abandoned housing on property values of properties adjacent and within the same city block as abandoned housing. A three pronged approach was used to complete the research study:

1. *Data Analysis*: comparable data from city blocks with and without abandoned housing present was collected and studied, including differences in property values and frequency of public safety responses.
2. *Stakeholder Interviews*: neighborhood leaders of neighborhoods where abandoned housing is present were interviewed.
3. *Literature Review*: a literature review was conducted to provide a summary of external studies conducted on the effect of abandoned properties on property values and tax revenues, and also to provide examples of innovations in abandoned housing remediation and renovation in cities and states across the nation.

Process/Methodology:

To conduct this research and ensure consistent responses received, a workbook was designed by PPMC staff to collect information regarding properties: their specifications (renter or owner occupied, house square footage, number of rooms, year built, and property area), property value, and occurrence and frequency for a number of police, fire, and code responses (*workbook template included as Attachment A*). The survey was designed to be easily completed by City representatives in Topeka and elsewhere. Cities were asked to participate in the study through the Kansas Association of City/County Management (KACM) listserv of members; four (4) Kansas communities, in addition to the City of Topeka, participated in the study (Wichita, Dodge City, Garden City, and Ottawa).

Each community was asked to select three (3) properties that were currently abandoned (as defined by the 2016 State of Kansas proposed legislation) and provide information requested for that property and the properties residing on the same city block as the abandoned property se-

lected. The research study also asked communities to provide information requested for properties of similar specifications (house square footage, number of rooms, year built, and property area) to the sample properties, and requested information for those properties on the same block; comparable blocks, however, were requested to not have a history of abandoned property on the city block. To provide additional depth for the purposes of the research, the City of Topeka provided additional abandoned and comparable city block data sets (32 total city blocks, and 587 total addresses are included in the Topeka data set. Information from the additional participating Kansas communities is aggregated and is presented as “Additional Kansas Community Data” in this research report; this data set includes 24 total city blocks, and approximately 250 total addresses studied.

Research Results:

Public Safety Response Data analysis: To study the demand on municipal resources, and the broad neighborhood effect of the existence of abandoned housing, public safety response data was collected and analyzed for city blocks with and without the existence of abandoned housing. Public safety data collected includes: police response data, fire response data, and code enforcement data. Participating communities were asked to provide frequency of response data for the 2010-2015 time period.

Police Response Data: The frequency of response for participating police departments was collected for: total police response, aggravated assault, aggravated battery, arson, auto theft, burglary, homicide, rape, robbery, and theft. Total police response data shows that police responses occur more often in city blocks with abandoned housing present than those without. *Table 1* demonstrates that in both Topeka and the Additional Kansas Communities (AKCD) studied, police response is 38% and 10% more frequent, respectively, in city blocks with abandoned housing present than those without.

Table 1: Police Response Frequency (2010-2015)		
	Topeka	Additional Kansas Communities
City Block with Abandoned Housing	76	79
City Block without Abandoned Housing	55	72
Increased Frequency of Response in Blocks with Abandoned Housing	38%	10%

Increased frequency experienced in neighborhoods with abandoned housing present related to police response is most apparent in levels of person crimes, including: aggravated battery, homicide, and rape. Non person crimes, such as burglary and arson, are also more frequent in neighborhoods with abandoned housing present rather than those without. The analysis of data in Topeka and the AKCD studied demonstrates that the only incidences of rape, homicide, and arson, within the sample of city blocks with abandoned housing and comparable blocks without abandoned housing, occurred on those city blocks with abandoned housing present. *Table 2* demonstrates that in both Topeka and the AKCD more frequent police response to aggravated battery is experienced, 500% and 50% more frequent, respectively, in city blocks with abandoned housing present than those without.

Table 2: Aggravated Battery Response Frequency (2010-2015)		
	Topeka	Additional Kansas Communities
City Blocks with Abandoned Housing	5	9
City Blocks without Abandoned Housing	0	6
Increased Frequency of Response in Blocks with Abandoned Housing	500%	50%

Instances of police response to burglary are more frequent on city blocks with the presence of abandoned housing rather than those without. *Table 3* demonstrates that in both Topeka and the AKCD police response to burglary is experienced, 5% and 85% more frequent, respectively, in city blocks with abandoned housing present than those without.

Table 3: Burglary Response Frequency (2010-2015)		
	Topeka	Additional Kansas Communities
City Blocks with Abandoned Housing	21	24
City Blocks without Abandoned Housing	20	13
Increased Frequency of Response in Blocks with Abandoned Housing	5%	85%

Fire Response Data: The frequency of response for participating fire departments was collected for: total fire response, fire response, overpressure response, emergency medical response, hazardous substance response, service call, good intent call, false alarm, severe weather response, and special incident response. Research data demonstrates that instances of fire response are more frequent on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than on those without. Total fire response in Topeka and AKCD, as demonstrated in *Table 4*, is 12% and 101% more frequent on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than those without.

Table 4: Total Fire Department Response Frequency (2010-2015)		
	Topeka	Additional Kansas Communities
City Blocks with Abandoned Housing	379	183
City Blocks without Abandoned Housing	339	91
Increased Frequency of Response in Blocks with Abandoned Housing	12%	101%

Breaking down the fire response data further, the data demonstrates that fire department response by Topeka and AKCD is more frequent to fires (structure fires, etc.) on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than on those without. *Table 5* demonstrates that fire department response to fires in Topeka and AKCD is 11% and 7% more frequent, respectively, on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than on those without.

Table 5: Fire Related Response Frequency (2010-2015)		
	Topeka	Additional Kansas Communities
City Blocks with Abandoned Housing	39	16
City Blocks without Abandoned Housing	35	15
Increased Frequency of Response in Blocks with Abandoned Housing	11%	7%

Table 6 demonstrates that fire department emergency medical response in Topeka and AKCD is more frequent, 9% and 191%, respectively, on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than those without.

Table 6: Emergency Medical Response Frequency (2010-2015)		
	Topeka	Additional Kansas Communities
City Blocks with Abandoned Housing	184	137
City Blocks without Abandoned Housing	169	47
Increased Frequency of Response in Blocks with Abandoned Housing	9%	191%

Table 7 demonstrates that fire department good intent calls (calls requiring a response that often do not result in medical transport) in Topeka and AKCD is more frequent, 8% and 100%, respectively, on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than those without.

Table 7: Good Intent Response (2010-2015)		
	Topeka	Additional Kansas Communities
City Blocks with Abandoned Housing	41	18
City Blocks without Abandoned Housing	38	9
Increased Frequency of Response in Blocks with Abandoned Housing	8%	100%

Code Violation Data: The frequency of response for participating code enforcement departments was collected for: total code violation response, weeds violations, vehicle violations, housing violations, unsafe structure violations, and sanitation violations. Research data demonstrates that instances of code violations are more frequent on city blocks with abandoned housing present than on those without. Total code violations recorded in Topeka and AKCD, as demonstrated in Table 8, are 72% and 55% more frequent on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than those without.

Table 8: Total Code Violations (2010-2015)		
	Topeka	Additional Kansas Communities
City Blocks with Abandoned Housing	999	348
City Blocks without Abandoned Housing	580	225
Increased Frequency of Response in Blocks with Abandoned Housing	72%	55%

Response by code enforcement officers in Topeka and AKCD is more frequent for weed violations on properties on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than those without; weed violations are 166% and 69% more frequent, respectively, on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than those without (*Table 9*).

Table 9: Weeds Violation Response (2010-2015)		
	Topeka	Additional Kansas Communities
City Blocks with Abandoned Housing	261	118
City Blocks without Abandoned Housing	98	70
Increased Frequency of Response in Blocks with Abandoned Housing	166%	69%

Response by code enforcement officers in Topeka and AKCD is also more frequent for housing violations on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than those without; housing violations are 63% and 51% more frequent, respectively, on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than those without (*Table 10*).

Table 10: Housing Violation Response (2010-2015)		
	Topeka	Additional Kansas Communities
City Blocks with Abandoned Housing	130	62
City Blocks without Abandoned Housing	80	41
Increased Frequency of Response in Blocks with Abandoned Housing	63%	51%

Response by code enforcement officers in Topeka is more frequent for graffiti violations on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than those without; graffiti violations are 100% more frequent on city blocks with abandoned housing present in Topeka rather than those without (*Table 11*).

Table 11: Graffiti Violation Response (2010-2015)	
City Blocks with Abandoned Housing	22
City Blocks without Abandoned Housing	11
Increased Frequency of Response in Blocks with Abandoned Housing	100%

Unsafe structure violations are more frequent on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than those without, in both Topeka and the AKCD. Unsafe structure violations are 100% and 1200% more frequent, respectively, on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than on those without (*Table 12*).

Table 12: Unsafe Structure Response (2010-2015)		
	Topeka	Additional Kansas Communities
City Blocks with Abandoned Housing	1	13
City Blocks without Abandoned Housing	0	1
Increased Frequency of Response in Blocks with Abandoned Housing	100%	1200%

Sanitation violations are more frequent on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than those without. In both Topeka and the AKCD, sanitation violations are 47% and 92% more frequent, respectively, on city blocks with abandoned housing present rather than on those without (*Table 13*).

Table 13: Sanitation Violation Response (2010-2015)		
	Topeka	Additional Kansas Communities
City Blocks with Abandoned Housing	526	113
City Blocks without Abandoned Housing	357	59
Increased Frequency of Response in Blocks with Abandoned Housing	47%	92%

Demand on Public Resources: Data collected for the purposes of this study demonstrates that city blocks with abandoned housing present generate an increased demand on public resources than those without, through the need for increased police, fire, and code enforcement response.

To demonstrate the cost of this increased demand on public resources on city blocks in Topeka with abandoned housing present, City of Topeka staff conducted a time study of code enforcement officer time needed to address each category of code violation. The cost analysis assumes that the basic response was needed, only requiring the work of one officer, and does not include the cost of clerical staff time needed to assist each case.

The average code enforcement officer at the City of Topeka is compensated at a rate of nineteen (19) dollars per hour. For each category of code violation studied, the time study information coupled with the average rate per hour are used to calculate the cost to work cases on city blocks with abandoned housing compared to those without abandoned housing present, in the study area from 2010-2015. In summary, \$31,077 more public dollars were needed to fund the personnel time of code enforcement officers to respond to code violations on city blocks with abandoned housing in Topeka rather than those without, in this research sample alone. Translated into hours, from 2010-2015, 1,635 additional hours of staff time were required of code enforcement officers to complete cases on city blocks with abandoned housing rather than on those without the presence of abandoned housing; on average, this is an increased demand on staff of 273 hours per year.

Drilling down to weeds response (*Table 14*), an average 3.75 hours of a code enforcement officer's time is spent closing out an individual weeds case. With 163 additional violations occurring on city blocks with abandoned housing rather than on those without, 611 additional hours and \$11,613 additional dollars of public resources to fund personnel time were required from 2010-2015 to service this heightened demand.

Table 14: Demand on Public Resources – Weeds Response (2010-2015)				
	# of Violations	Average Hours Spent Working Case	Average Hourly Wage for Code Enforcement Officer	Cost to Work Case
Block with Abandoned Housing	261	3.75	\$19	\$18,596
Block without Abandoned Housing	98	3.75	\$19	\$6,983
<i>Cost of Increased Demand of Public Resources on City Blocks with Abandoned Housing</i>				\$11,613

To complete a housing code violation response (*Table 15*), an average 4.6 hours of a code enforcement officer's time is needed to close out each individual case. With 50 additional violations occurring on city blocks with abandoned housing rather than on those without, 230 additional hours and \$4,370 additional dollars of public resources to fund personnel time were required from 2010-2015 to service this heightened demand.

Table 15: Demand on Public Resources – Housing Response (2010-2015)

	# of Violations	Average Hours Spent Working Case	Average Hourly Wage for Code Enforcement Officer	Cost to Work Case
Block with Abandoned Housing	130	4.6	\$19	\$11,362
Block without Abandoned Housing	80	4.6	\$19	\$6,992
<i>Cost of Increased Demand of Public Resources on City Blocks with Abandoned Housing</i>				\$4,370

To complete a graffiti code violation response (*Table 16*), an average 4.6 hours of a code enforcement officer’s time is needed to close out each individual case. With 11 additional violations occurring on city blocks with abandoned housing rather than on those without, 51 additional hours and \$962 additional dollars of public resources to fund personnel time were required from 2010-2015 to service this heightened demand.

Table 16: Demand on Public Resources – Graffiti Response (2010-2015)

	# of Violations	Average Hours Spent Working Case	Average Hourly Wage for Code Enforcement Officer	Cost to Work Case
Block with Abandoned Housing	22	4.6	\$19	\$1,923
Block without Abandoned Housing	11	4.6	\$19	\$961
<i>Cost of Increased Demand of Public Resources on City Blocks with Abandoned Housing</i>				\$962

To complete an unsafe structure code violation response, an average of 12 hours of a code enforcement officer’s time is needed to close out each individual case. With the only unsafe structure violation occurring on a city block in Topeka with abandoned housing rather than on a city block

without, 12 additional hours and \$228 additional dollars of public resources to fund personnel time were required from 2010-2015 to service this heightened demand.

To complete a sanitation code violation response (*Table 17*), an average 4.33 hours of a code enforcement officer’s time is needed to close out each individual case. With 169 additional violations occurring on city blocks with abandoned housing rather than on those without, 732 additional hours and \$13,904 additional dollars of public resources to fund personnel time were required from 2010-2015 to service this heightened demand.

Table 17: Demand on Public Resources – Sanitation Response (2010-2015)				
	# of Violations	Average Hours Spent Working Case	Average Hourly Wage for Code Enforcement Officer	Cost to Work Case
Block with Abandoned Housing	526	4.33	\$19	\$43,274
Block without Abandoned Housing	357	4.33	\$19	\$29,370
<i>Cost of Increased Demand of Public Resources on City Blocks with Abandoned Housing</i>				\$13,904

Effects on Property Values:

In order to study the effects abandoned properties have on the property values of adjacent properties, and properties on the same city block, two analyses were conducted.

1. *Time Series Analysis:* Historical property value data was collected from the Shawnee County Appraiser’s Office, including property value data for all abandoned properties and those properties adjacent to the abandoned properties. Valuation data was collected for each year from 1995 to 2016. The percent change in property valuations in four (4) different five (5) year periods for each abandoned and adjacent property was calculated (1995-1999, 1999-2003, 5 years prior to point of abandonment, and 5 years after point of abandonment). Thirteen (13) abandoned properties and the properties adjacent to these properties were included in this analysis. Three (3) of the abandoned properties were

abandoned in the recent past, and thus did not have 5 years of post-abandonment data to analyze.

2. *Point in Time Analysis:* To determine if properties of similar specifications (square footage, number of bedrooms, property area, year built) were valued differently on blighted city blocks rather than those without abandoned housing present, the difference in average home price on comparable city blocks was studied. The difference in the average 2015 property valuation of every property on 16 city blocks in Topeka with abandoned housing present and 16 comparable city blocks in Topeka without abandoned housing present was studied.

Time Series Analysis:

Table 18: Topeka Property Valuation Time Series Analysis – Percent Change in Valuation Over Series of 5 Year Periods				
	1995-1999 (More than 5 years before abandoned)	1999-2003 (More than 5 years before abandoned)	5 years Prior to Becoming Abandoned	5 Years After Abandoned
Abandoned Property Address	10%	7%	10%	-10%
Adjacent to Abandoned Property Address	15%	10%	14%	4%
Abandoned and Adjacent Properties	12%	12%	12%	-1%

Table 18 demonstrates the results of the time series analysis. Percent change in property valuation was analyzed for several five (5) year periods of time, beginning with two five year periods more than 5 years before any properties were abandoned on the city blocks studied. Then percent change in valuation was calculated for the immediate 5 years prior to the entry of the abandoned property. Lastly, the percent change in valuation from the year the property became abandoned and forward five (5) years was studied. Data demonstrates that historically, prior to abandonment, properties studied were experiencing on average a twelve (12) percent valuation growth over a 5 year period of time. Upon entry of the abandoned properties, the abandoned properties experienced a 10% decline in property valuation over the 5 year period after becoming abandoned, and the increases in valuation historically expected on adjacent properties fell by nearly

ten (10) percent, resulting in only a four (4) percent increase in valuation over the 5 year period immediately following the entry of an abandoned property.

Point in Time Analysis:

The 2015 average property valuation on sixteen (16) city blocks in Topeka with abandoned housing present was compared to the average property valuation on sixteen (16) comparable city blocks in Topeka without abandoned housing present. To ensure valid comparisons, comparable city blocks were determined by selecting city blocks with homes of similar specifications, controlling for: house square footage, number of bedrooms, property area, and year built. The point in time analysis determined that in 2015, houses on city blocks without abandoned housing present were valued seven (7) percent higher than houses on city blocks with abandoned housing present.

Summary of Stakeholder Interviews:

To provide additional insight into the effect abandoned housing has on neighborhoods, a number of neighborhood leaders in Topeka were interviewed. Neighborhood leaders were selected that currently have abandoned housing present in their neighborhoods. Stakeholders were asked the following questions:

- What neighborhood do you live in?
- How long have you lived in this neighborhood?
- How long have abandoned houses been present in your neighborhood?
- What negative effects, if any, have you seen from the presence of abandoned housing in your neighborhood?
- Have any efforts been made to remedy the issue of abandoned housing in your neighborhood?
- If so, have these efforts been impactful?
- What do you feel would be the best course of action to remedy abandoned housing in your neighborhood?

Neighborhoods represented among these interviewees are: Chesney Park, Hi-Crest, Historic North Topeka East, and Oakland. Representatives had lived in their current neighborhoods from nine (9) to sixty (60) years, and each mentioned that abandoned housing had been present since they could remember, with the issue becoming more prevalent in the last thirty (30) years.

Major themes arose when asked what negative effects had been seen from the presence of abandoned housing in neighborhoods. All interviewees cited that: crime, blight, vagrancy (squatters), and overall neighborhood deterioration were issues related to the existence and arising prevalence of abandoned housing. One interview stated that “abandoned houses are like an open wound; they are a source for growing infection in neighborhoods.” Another stated, “when there are vacant houses, there is no one there to see or watch crime happening.”

Many felt that there are efforts being made to remedy the issue of abandoned housing that are impactful, but progress is slow. Efforts of the SORT (CDBG) grants, resident involvement in Neighborhood Improvement Associations (NIAs), the institution of the Special Structures unit within the Neighborhood Relations Department, and community involvement in Neighborhood Watch Groups were all cited as efforts that were making progress on the issue of abandoned housing. Community partnerships, including partnerships between NIAs, the City and non-profit groups were also cited as important in working towards solutions.

A number of suggestions were offered by stakeholders to encourage progress on the issue of abandoned housing in Topeka. Many of these suggestions focused on improved communication mechanisms between the City and the community, suggesting improved communication about neighborhood plans, the current process available to remedy issues of abandoned housing in neighborhoods, how community members can get involved in the process, etc. Stakeholders also suggested progressive enforcement measures be implemented to deter frequent violators from continuing to violate city codes. Lastly, many mentioned that the process to make progress on abandoned houses is currently too long; acknowledging that the process has certain constraints, stakeholders encouraged City staff to pursue avenues to speed up the process.

Many additional comments were received through the stakeholder interview process. Exhaustive comments for all interview questions are included in *Attachment B: Neighborhood Interviews*.

Summary of Additional Studies: Property Values and Tax Revenue Effects

The Cost of Vacant and Blighted Properties in Atlanta: A Conservative Analysis of Service and Spillover Costsⁱ

Immergluck (2016) used a conservative analysis technique to estimate costs associated with vacant and blighted residential buildings in Atlanta, Georgia. These costs manifest themselves in two ways: first, through direct service costs to governmental agencies (Code Enforcement, Corrections, Police, Fire); and second, through lost property tax revenues as property values decline.

A meta-analysis of 8 high-quality spillover studies completed in the last ten years was used to determine the cumulative effects of vacant properties on property values, which were then used to determine property tax revenue losses. The analysis considers spillover effects in the range of 500-660 feet. The best reasonable analysis finds the accumulated loss in property value for the City to be \$153,222,064, or more conservatively \$55,420,545. This loss is associated with a decline in annual property tax revenue of \$2,723,133, or more conservatively \$984,956. The aggregate loss associated with one abandoned property totals to \$63,000. A benefit-cost analysis would suggest that based on these costs alone, investment in demolition or renovation would be warranted.

\$60 Million and Counting: The cost of vacant and abandoned properties to eight Ohio citiesⁱⁱ

Community Research Partners and ReBuild Ohio (2008) documented the cost of vacant and abandoned properties across eight Ohio cities: Cleveland; Columbus; Dayton; Ironton; Lima; Springfield; Toledo; and Zanesville. The study identified 15,000 buildings and 10,000 lots—vacant and abandoned—across large and small cities alike. These accumulated to more than \$49 million in lost property tax revenues to local governments and school districts when using conservative estimation.

The housing market data they collected revealed three trends. In some communities, assessed prices and sales values increased with distance from vacant properties; and, significant differences existed between blocks with three or more vacancies and blocks with fewer or no vacancies. Some communities displayed no clear pattern; these were communities in which vacancy

was a widespread issue. Other communities revealed instances of property flipping, or unscrupulous real estate practices, in which properties close to vacancies had high property values and frequent title transfers.

Financial Impact of Blight on the Tri-COG Communitiesⁱⁱⁱ

Delta Development Group, Inc. (2013) analyzed the effects of 20,077 vacant lots and 7,158 lots with blighted structures scattered throughout three Tri-COG Communities. Annually, blight is estimated to cause a direct tax revenue loss of \$8,637,875, between \$218 million to \$247 million loss in property value, and an associated indirect loss of real estate taxes between \$8,574,723 and \$9,718,019. Additional cost estimates conclude economic development losses to construction of \$11,812,644 (one-time) and ongoing costs of \$8,284,294 annually.

Direct Costs

Delinquent taxes at the municipal, school district, and county level resulted in an annual loss of \$2,758,137 in 2011; this accounted for 3,191 blighted and tax-delinquent parcels. Delinquencies from vacant lots contributed another \$2,256,222 in uncollected taxes. These figures omit interest payments, losses in earned income tax due to residents leaving the area, and costs associated with recovering delinquent taxes.

Indirect Costs

28,478 properties were located within 150 feet of a blighted property and had a combined fair market value of \$1.5 billion. Estimating a negative impact on property values between 15-17%, the decrease in property values is between \$218-247 million. This decline in property value translates to an estimated real tax revenue loss between \$8.4 million and \$9.7 million annually.

A Longitudinal Analysis of the Linear and Nonlinear Impacts of Housing Abandonment on Neighborhood Property Values^{iv}

Han's (2013) research examines the impact of abandonment on surrounding property values in Baltimore, Maryland while simultaneously controlling for nearby foreclosures and housing market trends. The study also identifies threshold effects of abandonment. Findings show that as properties are abandoned for longer periods of time, the impact on property values increases in magnitude and is observed at farther distances. Additional findings reveal that the negative effect does

not increase proportionally to the number of nearby houses, but rather it is a threshold effect. Specifically, the marginal impact on nearby properties significantly increases when the number abandoned properties within 250 ft increases by more than 2; and, the marginal impact significantly drops when the number of abandoned properties within 250 ft increases by more than 14.

“This finding implies that immediate intervention to have an abandoned property reoccupied and maintained is important to mitigate the negative impact of housing abandonment. One abandoned property is bad enough, but the longer it sits unoccupied and unmaintained the greater its negative impact on nearby property values as well as the values of other properties in the neighborhood. Estimates of the impact of abandonment on nearby property values provide a basis to project the potential benefits of renovating abandoned properties. Therefore, neighborhoods blighted by properties that have been abandoned for long periods should be targeted for immediate intervention for greater potential benefits. This research suggests that government efforts are more effective when focused in carefully selected areas with relatively small numbers of abandoned properties, where the government interventions could help reoccupy as many as possible of the abandoned properties – if not all of abandoned properties – rather than spreading resources thinly across entire neighborhoods or cities.”

Summary of Additional Studies: Effects of Foreclosures

Updated Projections of Subprime Foreclosures in the United States and Their Impact on Home Values and Communities^v

Center for Responsible Lending (2008) projections estimated that from 2008 to 2009 nearly 2.2 million subprime foreclosures would occur across the United States. These foreclosures would have an impact on an estimated 40.6 million homes located in neighborhoods surrounding foreclosures. The average decline in price per home was estimated as \$8,667, bringing the aggregate property value decline to \$352 billion. These declines are calculated as the direct effect of nearby foreclosures, separate from price drops due to slowing housing market conditions.

The Contagion Effect of Foreclosed Properties^{vi}

Harding, Rosenblatt, and Yao (2009) published a study to answer questions left open by other studies; namely, are observed price declines of properties near foreclosures the result of overall

neighborhood decline in property values or do foreclosures reduce the price of nearby non-distressed sales due to a contagion effect. After studying seven different MSAs, they found significant evidence that the presence of a distressed property does reduce the sale price for nearby non-distressed properties through a negative contagion effect. They find the discount to be 1% to 1.5% per nearby foreclosed property, that the effect diminishes with distance from the property, and that it increases in magnitude the longer a distressed property lingers. The pattern of the contagion effect is likely caused by a combination of deferred maintenance, neglect, and vacancy. Their evidence strongly suggests that the negative externalities of foreclosures could be efficiently reduced by facilitating a quick transfer of property to a new owner who has the capacity and incentive to maintain and occupy the home.

Examples of Best Practices and Innovations:

Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland: Spatial Analysis of the Impact of Vacant, Abandoned, and Foreclosed Properties^{vii}

Brian A. Mikelbank modeled the effects of vacant/abandoned and foreclosed properties to identify each independent impact on surrounding properties in Columbus Ohio's single-family housing market. Findings show vacant property has a more severe effect on nearby house sales up to 500 feet out; the citywide impact in 2006 was estimated as a \$16.9 million loss, with the issue concentrated in the city core. Losses from foreclosures, a widespread problem, amounted to \$97.5 million. Another study across eight Ohio cities with more than 15,000 vacant and abandoned properties found costs to exceed \$60 million.

Mikelbank found that properties in close proximity to both foreclosed and vacant/abandoned properties had a price penalty greater than \$8,600. These findings suggest that cities could curb losses by demolishing or rehabilitating abandoned properties as quickly as possible, because these estimated impacts are only realized when nearby properties sell. Short-lived instances of neighborhood blight are preferable, and less damaging, than a longer duration of blight.

Land Bank Best Practices:

Cuyahoga Land Bank^{viii}

Cuyahoga Land Bank was cited by NeighborWorks® America's Stable Communities as a role model for the country to follow. In its first two years, more than 1,200 abandoned properties were redeveloped.

As of December 2013, the land bank received 80-100 abandoned houses into its inventory each month and demolished 50 to 80 properties each month. Once demolished, lots are leveled, seeded, and then repurposed for transfer to neighbors, businesses, or to municipal land banks. The program increases the difficulty for speculators to buy up abandoned properties and flip them. The land bank contracts with governments and other entities for land improvements and has the power to issue bonds, apply for grants, make loans, and borrow money. ^{ix}

Cleveland State University^x Land Bank Best Practices (survey of 41 literature sources and 34 United States land banks)

- Sweeping tax foreclosure law reform (State of Michigan, 1999) allowing broad powers to independent authorities, approved and created by local governmental agreements and practical cooperation
- Property classification based upon site characteristics; neighborhood collaborative efforts in identifying house typologies
- Well integrated, highly cooperative relationships between the public and private sector; high degree of intergovernmental cooperation
- Consolidated municipal real estate records linked to GIS data as a property management tool, rather than just geographic information, as evidenced by Baltimore's CityStat database; focus on using technology as a complete management tool on a continually updated basis
- Applicability of historical tax credits to neighborhood-wide planning and rehab (Baltimore)
- Incentives to private realtors to represent city-owned properties (SCOPE Baltimore)
- Emphasis on redevelopment for affordable housing, with fast acquisition and disposition of properties
- Ability to set own pricing (by board of directors as a quasi-independent authority – Atlanta, GA); ability to set price at below-market rates; legal and administrative capability to sell properties at below-market value
- Expedited judicial foreclosure process
- Ability to waive delinquent property tax for distressed properties proposed for redevelopment
- Extensive network of community development corporations as collaborators with various city and county governmental partners (Cleveland, OH)

Blight, Vacancy, and Abandonment Best Practices:

State of Indiana^{xi,xii}

In early 2013, Lt Governor Sue Ellspermann announced a new abandoned and blighted homes initiative, the Hardest Hit Fund. Using a \$75 million grant, officials will demolish an estimated 4,000 homes. At the time of the announcement, there were more than 50,000 abandoned homes statewide.

The City of Kokomo received \$3 million in this grant funding and plans to tear down 148 houses through September 2016. The City's acquiring process for blighted homes requires willing participation of current homeowners, and without homeowner willingness, the City is unable to demolish the structure through the grant program.

South Bend, Indiana^{xiii}

Under Indiana's Unsafe Building Law, Code Enforcement can bring legal proceedings against property owners to compel them to address code violations found at their properties through administrative orders and hearings, demolition of the structure, or orders to repair the property. Because the law recognizes that destroying private property is a drastic measure, the Unsafe Building Law offers the property owner an extensive set of notices, hearings and opportunities to repair the property

The City of South Bend, Indiana set and reached a goal of repairing 1000 abandoned houses in 1000 days. By day 1,000 (reached in September 2015) the City had taken action on 1,122 properties, nearly 40% of which were repaired. The issue of vacant and abandoned houses is no longer at a crisis stage but rather is at a manageable level. Looking ahead, the City is working to address the new challenge of moving vacant lots into productive uses and further strengthening its neighborhoods.

Philadelphia, PA^{xiv}

In Philadelphia, findings from a report published in 2006 show that small numbers of abandonment resulted in large, deleterious impacts on house sale prices. Abandoned housing within 450 feet of a property lowered sales prices in the range of \$3,542-7,627, holding other factors constant. The number of abandoned properties on the block also had a significant effect; one abandoned house netted a loss of \$6,869 with up to \$11,304 in losses for five abandoned houses. The presence of any abandonment resulted in a net loss of \$7,386. (Philadelphia mean house price = \$75,520 in 2006.)

In response, the City passed a bill that included additional expenditures for neighborhood stabilization: rehabilitation, acquisition, and other improvements; capped demolition expenditures; placed responsibility for planning within each city council district to tailor plans to individual neighborhood needs; and, created geographically targeted reinvestment projects similar to blight-free zones.

In 2013, the City passed additional legislation to establish a land bank. Implementation began in 2014 to accelerate the current transfer level of 100-200 properties per year to thousands—to both private and non-profit developers.

Cincinnati, Ohio^{xv}

The City of Cincinnati partnered with local corporate interests to form the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC). The 3CDC procured \$284 million for the downtown area, \$69 million of which was City funding. A blighted park, Washington Park, became the central focus as the park was notorious for drug trafficking and prostitution.

After the planning and engagement phase with the public and various downtown stakeholders, Washington Park was transformed into a welcoming, vibrant, focal downtown attraction. The Steering Committee focused on including low-income residents throughout the design process as a way to overcome historic power imbalances. The neighborhoods surrounding the park are becoming increasingly less dangerous; and, Cincinnati's urban core is more energized.

Vacants to Value – Baltimore City^{xvi}

Through a combination of strategies, including streamlined code enforcement^{xvii} and community development clusters, the City of Baltimore is quickly, efficiently, and economically cleaning and redeveloping vacant and abandoned properties.^{xviii}

In relatively strong housing market neighborhoods, the pilot approach entails issuing \$900 citations when owners of vacant buildings do not respond to violation notices, and \$250 citations when owners do not respond to violation notices for problems with occupied homes. The fines escalate quickly when non-response continues, to either spur owners to take action or to use the law to push auction and receivership. Neighborhoods with many vacant, rundown properties are designated as community development clusters—forming partnerships with multiple developers and using the law to push properties to auction ensures that blocks are not left behind in the redevelopment process.

One House at a Time – Baltimore City^{xix}

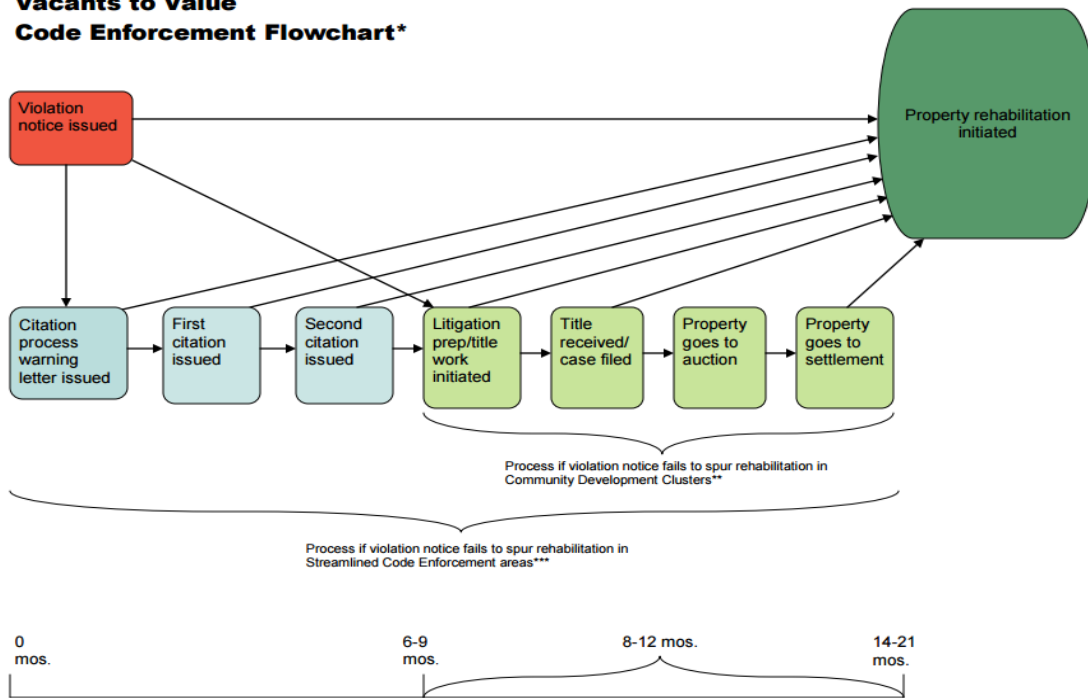
OHAAT was formed in 2003 and was first appointed by the 5th District Court in Maryland as a Vacant Building Receiver in 2006. OHAAT has facilitated the transfer of more than 430 blighted and nuisance properties to qualified owners to be fixed up, and OHAAT receives as many as 25 properties a month.

OHAAT can abate the nuisance created by a vacant property in three ways: sell the property, raze the property, or rehabilitate the property. To date, OHAAT has not razed or rehabilitated a property, but has sold properties to qualified buyers who complete the work.



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Vacants to Value Code Enforcement Flowchart*



* This flowchart simplifies a complex set of processes for illustrative purposes only. In practice, every case is different.

** Clusters of properties in distressed neighborhoods where we're partnering with nonprofit and private sector partners to redevelop whole block areas.

*** Targeted neighborhoods where we're working to stabilize relatively healthy housing markets threatened by scattered vacancies.

xvii

Vacants to Value Code Enforcement: Track Our Progress

Below, see a summary of our progress. To learn more about what's happening with a specific property or target area, see our [Streamlined Code Enforcement](#) or [Community Development Cluster](#) pages.

	Strategy II: Streamlined Code Enforcement	Strategy III: Community Development Clusters
Number of Areas	85	24
Vacants on Start Date	1,529	1,831
VBN \$900 Citations Issued	2,373	n/a
Rehabbed or Rehab Underway	1,636	1,042
Receivership Cases Filed	902	852
Non-VBN \$250 Citations Issued	2,376	n/a
Permit Revenue	\$2,508,554	\$1,347,799
Private Investment (Construction Costs from Permits Only)	\$90,165,237	\$68,570,807
Demolitions	28	91
City Sponsored Demolitions Since V2V Start		1,737

xviii Last Updated: 12/17/2015

xix "One House at a Time." One House at a Time: About Comments. <http://www.onehousebaltimore.org/about/>.

Background/Purpose: The Public Policy and Management Center (PPMC) at the Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs, Wichita State University, has been contracted by the City of Topeka to study the effect(s) of abandoned housing on adjacent properties, neighborhoods and communities. PPMC staff is gathering information for this study from communities across Kansas. Please follow the instructions below to input information in the worksheets included in this workbook. **Please return your completed worksheet to Corinne Bannon, Community Research Manager, WSU-PPMC at corinne.bannon@wichita.edu by Friday, February 19, 2016. Please also contact Corinne via email or at 316-258-1906 with any questions regarding the study or how to fill out the workbook.** *All information submitted will be summarized in a final report and made available to all participating organizations by mid March 2016.*

DEFINITIONS:

Abandoned Property, for the purposes of this study is defined as: (1) Any residential real estate for which taxes are delinquent for the preceding two years and which has been unoccupied continuously by persons legally in possession for the preceding 90 days; or (2) any residential real estate which has been unoccupied continuously by persons legally in possession for the preceding 365 days and which has a blighting influence on surrounding properties, unless the exterior of the property is being maintained and the property is either the subject of a probate action, action to quiet title or other ownership dispute, or the property is subject to a mortgage.

Rental Property, for the purposes of this study, should be identified as any property where the property tax bill is sent to a different address than the property being taxed.

Instructions: (PLEASE READ INSTRUCTIONS IN DETAIL BEFORE FILLING OUT THE WORKBOOK)

B1. City Block with Abandoned Housing (AH):

Please locate an abandoned property in your community and enter the information needs requested in each column of the worksheet (B1. City Block with AH). A city block includes every property on both sides of the street where the specific abandoned property is located. *When choosing the specific abandoned house to study, ensure that there is a city block elsewhere in the community with houses of similar specifications (square footage, # of rooms, year built, property area, etc.) but no abandoned housing present.*

B2. No History of AH:

Please locate a city block in your community with no history of abandoned housing, and enter the information needs requested in each column of the worksheet (B2. No History of AH). A city block includes every property on both sides of the street where the specific property is located. *When choosing the specific city block to study, ensure that the houses on the block have similar specifications (square footage, # of rooms, year built, property area, etc.) of housing studied in the B1. City Block with AH worksheet.*

B3. City Block with AH:

Please locate another abandoned property in your community (on a different city block than the property studied in worksheet B1) and enter the information needs requested in each column of the worksheet (B3. City Block with AH). A city block includes every property on both sides of the street where the specific abandoned property is located. *When choosing the specific abandoned house to study, ensure that there is a city block elsewhere in the community with houses of similar specifications (square footage, # of rooms, year built, property area, etc.) but no abandoned housing present.*

B4. No History of AH:

Please locate a city block in your community with no history of abandoned housing, and enter the information needs requested in each column of the worksheet (B4. No History of AH). A city block includes every property on both sides of the street where the specific property is located. *When choosing the specific city block to study, ensure that the houses on the block have similar specifications (square footage, # of rooms, year built, property area, etc.) of housing studied in the B3. City Block with AH worksheet.*

B5. City Block with AH:

Please locate another abandoned property in your community (on a different city block than the property studied in worksheets B1 and B3) and enter the information needs requested in each column of the worksheet (B5. City Block with AH). A city block includes every property on both sides of the street where the specific abandoned property is located. *When choosing the specific abandoned house to study, ensure that there is a city block elsewhere in the community with houses of similar specifications (square footage, # of rooms, year built, property area, etc.) but no abandoned housing present.*

B6. No History of AH:

Please locate another city block in your community with no history of abandoned housing, and enter the information needs requested in each column of the worksheet (B6. No History of AH). A city block includes every property on both sides of the street where the specific property is located. *When choosing the specific city block to study, ensure that the houses on the block have similar specifications (square footage, # of rooms, year built, property area, etc.) of housing studied in the B5. City Block with AH worksheet.*

Attachment B: Topeka Neighborhood Interviews

What neighborhood do you live in?

- Oakland
- Hi-Crest
- Historic North Topeka East
- Chesney Park

How long have you lived in this neighborhood?

- Since 2007
- Since 1961
- Sixteen ½ years
- 60 years

How long have abandoned houses been present in your neighborhood?

- Assume into the indefinite past
- Constantly
- “Abandoned houses are like an open wound, they are a source for growing infection in neighborhoods.”
- Since I can remember; there are several deteriorating and abandoned houses, houses without windows, etc. There are demolished properties and people living in tents.
- Houses in neighborhood over the years have become mostly rentals, as rentals increase, the quality of homes decreases.
- I have seen multiple instances of houses becoming vacant/abandoned as people die in the neighborhood and the new owner is living out of state.
- As long as I’ve lived here
- At least 15 years; dilapidated housing began to appear, kids grew up and moved out. There was not much good support from the City 15 years ago and the neighborhood slowly began to deteriorate; the neighborhood quickly became NIA qualified (80% low income).

What negative effects, if any, have you seen from the presence of abandoned housing in your neighborhood?

- General upkeep/appearance
- Vacant house fire
- Occasionally used for drug operations
- Vagrancy

Attachment B: Topeka Neighborhood Interviews

- “You can’t separate abandoned/vacant housing from neighborhood issues; the direction of the correlation isn’t necessarily important, the issues are systemic.”
- Vagrancy increased and houses used for drug houses
- Makes community look bad in eyes of the rest of the community; neighborhood is known as the “dirty south”
- Big drug and gang presence
- Gang shootings create bad perception of neighborhood and people are afraid to live in the neighborhood.
- Abandoned and vacant housing creates nuisance issues...the neighborhood is plagued with trash, cockroaches, rats, etc.
- Vagrants break out windows to get into the houses
- The presence of abandoned/vacant properties discourages home ownership on block
- Houses begin to deteriorate around the vacant property, and on the same block.
- See a lot of vagrants breaking in to houses
- People come to steal copper out of houses
- Fires in houses, even burning down
- Drug houses, drug deals happen right in front of house when realtors come to sell the house
- Drug dealer coordination to try to prevent good renters/buyers
- “If there are abandoned houses, you have blind eyes; no one is there to watch your back”
- “drug dealers in the neighborhood don’t want the properties to be torn down; they are money-makers; they are safe places for their drug-aties; they are the drug dealers’ greatest blessing.”
- Individuals have been threatened to be shot if they call the police; windows are being shot out.
- “every day we wake up and see that abandoned house and wonder who is in that house today?”
- Neighborhood watch individuals are being threatened if they report crime; my kids can’t go outside alone.
- “When there are vacant houses, there is no one there to see or watch crime happening.”
- “I can’t walk my dog in the neighborhood because I have to pass multiple drug houses.”
- 3 most wanted individuals were recently caught within a block of an abandoned house.
- I find that it is hard to sell recently vacated properties because of the abandoned properties in the neighborhood.

Attachment B: Topeka Neighborhood Interviews

- Human waste is an issue with abandoned housing (no utilities); this is a public health issue
- There is a connection between teenage pregnancy and abandoned housing; these houses are a dark place for this to happen.
- Human trafficking is an issue in abandoned properties; they serve as a place where people can bring folks from different places to squat
- Houses really close together
- More and more empty houses
- People walking up and down alleys to find somewhere warm to stay; will break into houses to stay warm, maybe even start a fire there.
- Active folks in the NIA have moved out because of concern about what neighborhood is turning into; the neighborhood now has so many low income individuals just trying to figure out how to live.

Have any efforts been made to remedy the issue of abandoned housing in your neighborhood?

- Neighborhood association has engaged with City
- There is a bigger issue of what City is allowed to do; this impedes progress on the issue, leads to general negativity about the neighborhood, makes people feel like the City doesn't care when in reality the City is stymied by the process.
- When progress is slow, it leads to a frustrated community and some loss of trust.
- When progress is slow, sometimes the lower socio-economic group does not understand the specifics, it appears as if the City is stalling.
- Community police officer – great program
- Community events with police presence – this has changed community perception of the police
- Rescue mission now big presence in neighborhood – providing community education (financial literacy classes)
- There is no work currently being done to remedy problem of abandoned housing by non-profits, etc.
- Women prisoners come to pick up trash, etc; this helps a little bit with appearance of the neighborhood.
- NIA has spoken to legislature, to the police and neighborhood relations
- SORT grant has been helpful
- The NIA and start of the neighborhood watch

Attachment B: Topeka Neighborhood Interviews

- Sidewalks have been put in and trees are being removed
- Neighborhood is currently working with the North Topeka Art District on beautification projects
- Enthusiastic code enforcement
- VA efforts and people in landlord association having conversations
- Model in Wyandotte County – focus and work together as problem solving group; work together to get grants, etc.

If so, have these efforts been impactful?

- The inventory of abandoned structures and the creation of a special unit within property maintenance is a good start; intensive process is needed to create resolutions to the problem.
- The SORT grant has been impactful; putting in sidewalks has created a perfect opportunity for criminals that are walking in the street to be stopped.
- Things seem to be improving in our neighborhood, but how do we think about it more broadly; how does the whole work together? If criminals move out of 1 neighborhood, how do we ensure they don't go to the next?
- A number of habitat houses have been built and have made an improvement in the neighborhood.

What do you feel would be the best course of action to remedy abandoned housing in your neighborhood?

- Correct legislative issues
- Build on neighborhood partnerships; bring resources to bear.
- Communicate process of new group in Property Maintenance
- Think about the front end; what could be in place in the legal and administrative process to prevent abandoned housing getting to where they are beyond repair
- "If we were better at solving these issues, it would drive up participation in community groups"
- Look into landlord registry implementation; how do you ensure that good owners don't get pulled into the registry; what is the threshold?
- Engage the neighborhood leadership roundup to be champions of change, look for additional avenues for engagement

Attachment B: Topeka Neighborhood Interviews

- Actively engage neighborhood associations and non-profits in the discussion/remedy (Habitat, Safe Streets, etc) to make progress on the issue of abandoned housing.
- For those houses that are beyond repair, the quicker to demolish, the better for the community.
- Continue to try to build City's relationship w/non-profits; make more robust through Council support.
- Examine how the problem is exacerbated by those that game the system. For landlords/property owners that do this over and over again; maybe allow only one exception? The house continues to deteriorate through this process, at one time it could have been inhabitable but ends up abandoned and ultimately demolished because of this "gaming" of the system.
- What court remedies may exist? How can NIA's be lead agents on the front end? Can an NIA take property owners of problem abandoned properties to court?
- How do we ensure that nuisance laws that are available are effectively used?
- Do cities that have better front end management of abandoned properties have less of a problem (rental registry, etc)?
- Perhaps if you own property in the city, but do not live here, the owner should at least have a local agent in Topeka?
- Perhaps institute a progressive fine system for code violations:
- Look into the impact of what is being done in North Topeka through the SORT program. What investments can be made concurrently (street sweeping, beautification projects, etc) to ensure quick and lasting impact to the neighborhood.
- Landlords provide an option of rent to own
- Abandoned houses should either be torn down or repaired to be back on tax rolls
- "Poor people won't fight the establishment, someone has to do the fighting for them"
- Work with those that one to rehabilitate houses; responsible people come in to buy, fix up and rent abandoned houses, but most are too far gone to remedy and the prices to fix are too much.
- How do we get responsible landlords?
- More assistance is needed for those that can't afford to fix up houses.
- How do you grow community/relationships among neighborhood members, build a network to look out and help each other?
- "the more services we can give the community, the more they'll see we're on their side."

Attachment B: Topeka Neighborhood Interviews

- We “need strong people in code and police departments to enforce timeframes and have progressive enforcement.”
- Legislation has to change.
- Look out for “zombie mortgages”; if it is foreclosed, the transfer of deed needs to be finalized.
- There has to be political will to change and make progress on the issues
- Talk to banks about the community investment act which regulates banks to invest in community; don’t discuss zombie mortgage issue but more about how they can reinvest in the neighborhood.
- What is the solution once the house is demolished? Need to partner more with nonprofits and find other resources.
- Train people on how to write grants; work alongside them.
- Move beyond code enforcement
- CAC meeting – we need something like this to sit down more than once a quarter to discuss strategies, resources, plans, etc.
- Move faster and communicate more
- Get the word out; there is miscommunication about what City is doing and should be doing; get information out on how to stabilize neighborhood; how do you encourage people to be proud and have a good attitude about the neighborhood
- Every neighborhood needs to have a plan and the neighborhood needs to be involved in its creation.
- Communicate out what the plans are so that residents can get excited about what is next.
- Find out what resources are available in neighborhoods and engage them.
- Discover ways to motivate individuals to get involved
- Emphasize involvement in neighborhood organizations
- Be careful what ideas are introduced; be sure that they can be addressed so that trust is not lost
- Every neighborhood needs access to a grant writer, or to find a grant writer within the neighborhood
- City work with neighborhoods to determine what the neighborhood needs are, then chart out a plan for how everyone can work together to address needs
- Look at the rules, make them rational. What if they can’t pay taxes? Does that mean that they shouldn’t be qualified for façade rebates?
- How can we negotiate with landlords to have a plan?

Attachment B: Topeka Neighborhood Interviews

- Create a training program to teach about everything needed to be a good renter
- VA has taken over some empty houses in the community, which has been a good thing.
How do we get women and children off the streets and out of cars?
- Get kids involved; breed enthusiasm in working towards community solutions
- Need strong legal department to move on issues; have story from neighborhood, communication dialogue