



Small Town, Big **Heart** *Blight Problem*

Who are we?

- Population
 - 3,245 households in city limits with 7,800 residents
 - Serve a daytime population of 33,000
- Fearless leader: Natalie Zeigler (City Manager)
- Majority of blight concentrated in 1 LMI neighborhood
- Relevant staff: City Manager; Assistant to the City Manager (grants); Development Project Manager (Community Liaison); Full time Codes Enforcement Officer responsible for enforcing the International Property Maintenance Code and other standards as adopted by City Council





The Situation: *The South Hartsville Neighborhood*

- 1,323 parcels of land
 - 1,073 single-family housing units home to 1,785 people in 763 households
 - 29% vacancy rate (city-wide 19%) for properties with structures
 - 296 are owner-occupied, **with 73% of these having a head of household over age 60**
 - 358 undeveloped parcels totaling 93.7 acres of land=36% of all properties in the neighborhood
- Nearly a ¼ of the City's population, and almost ½ of the African American population reside in this community
- Settled under laws of segregation, once a thriving neighborhood now in decline
- From 1990-2010, saw a 37% loss in population



Who's Left?

- 77% of residents are in households of low to moderate income
 - 58% of households have incomes less than \$20,000/year
 - More than 25% are less than \$10,000/year
- 37% are single person households
- Another 46% headed by a single female parent
- 35% have no vehicle for transportation
 - 41% of all renter households lack a vehicle
- 23% unemployment rate
- 37.7% residents over 25 have less than a high school education



Non-Owner Occupied Properties

- 26% of non-owner occupied parcels are owned by absentee owners who reside out of state
- 18% are owned by in-state out-of-town absentee owners
- 56% owned by in-town owners



The Situation

Legend

Structure Condition	Parcel Use Designation
Poor	Residential Single-Family
Fair	Residential Medium-Density
Good	Residential Single-Family
	Residential Medium-Density
	Residential Single-Family
	Residential Medium-Density

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The Problem

- For properties with a structure on them, **half** of the structures were in poor, deteriorated, or dilapidated condition
- Many of these are heir property with absentee owners and the rest are held by the Forfeit Land Commission with no maintenance plan

The Solution

- Sought expert guidance
 - American Planning Association's Community Planning and Assistance Team: Revitalization Strategy
 - Marketing and Affordability Study
- Collaborative efforts to implement plan recommendations
- Multi-faceted approach to Neighborhood Revitalization with major emphasis on improving housing conditions and BLIGHT ELIMINATION

The Fight Against Blight

- Community Development Block Grant Funds (Neighborhood Revitalization)**
- SC Housing Neighborhood Initiative Program
- Demolition Assistance Program**
- City Demo and Lien



CDBG: The Demolition of Lincoln Village



Lincoln Village: Before



Lincoln Village: After



Project Overview

- Received \$500,000 CDBG Neighborhood Revitalization grant to cover demolition of remaining 8 buildings of abandoned, vacant apartment complex deeded to the City
 - Original scope included construction of sidewalk but removed due to high cost of demolition
- Match minimum of 10% plus any overage (we are well over \$100,000)
- Match includes:
 - Sensitive clearing of adjacent abandoned African-American cemetery
 - Street light upgrades
 - Installation of security cameras



Pros and Cons

- Note: CDBG has multiple grant categories, can demolish through other(s) so seek technical assistance from Grants Administration to find the right fit (workshop coming up!)
- Pros:
 - Funds larger scale projects
 - Staff is VERY helpful
- Cons:
 - Does have match requirement
 - Application and oversight to ensure compliance with all rules/regs is very demanding



Neighborhood Initiative Program



Project Overview

- Joint venture of the South Carolina State Housing Finance and Development Authority and the SC Housing Corp., a not-for-profit corporation; made possible by the U.S. Department of the Treasury
- Received \$420,000 award (not grant) to demolish 12 residential properties (included acquisition, legal, asbestos surveying and air monitoring as well as grading and greening)
- Required partnership with non-profit, who holds title to the properties
- Status: Demolition bid out currently (work must be completed by Nov 30)



Pros and Cons

- Pro:
 - No match requirement
 - High dollar award that covers pretty much everything
- Con:
 - Program ending (we are last round), so no longer available
 - LOTS of paperwork (especially for small town with limited staff)



Residential Demolition Assistance



Project Overview

- City allocates funds out of demolition budget to local Foundation (Community Foundation for a Better Hartsville) every year (usually \$20,000 of \$60,000)
- City Manager manages program as ex-officio member of Foundation, serving as liaison between City staff (Codes Enforcement Officer) and Foundation
- Allows property owners to demolish blighted houses at fraction of the cost while avoiding liens and retaining ownership of land
- 53 houses and a small apartment complex demolished since start (May



How it Works

- Codes Enforcement Officer identifies candidate property, confirms interest with owner
- Codes Enforcement Officer or City Manager requests quote on behalf of Foundation from go-to demo guy (doesn't have to go through procurement since this is a non-profit org)
- If under \$3,000, owner contributes \$500, if over, owner contributes \$1,000
Owner completes affidavit (includes commitment to maintain property after demo) and gives this and check to CEO/CM
- CEO inspects site after demolition before approving final payment by Foundation



Pros and Cons

- Pros:
 - Avoids liens, which have low to no chance of ever being covered
- Cons:
 - Ensuring "mowability" of properties after demolition (residual debris or bad grade) has been a challenge
 - Long-term maintenance of lots once house is demolished continues to be a problem



City Demolition

- Researching option to do in-house to save money
- Rarely used (favor Demo Assistance), but only option for non-responsive properties
- How it works:
 - After no response from formal notification and posting process outlined in ordinance, City hires contractor to demolish
 - Demolition must be procured
 - City invoices owner of record for cost of demolition plus appropriate fees
 - If owner fails to pay within 30 days, City files lien on property:
 - Collected with property tax bill (auditor/treasurer)
 - If property tax bill is not paid, the lien may be recorded against the land records of the property. Such a lien must be satisfied prior to any subsequent transfer of the property in question (Clerk of Court)



Lessons Learned & Remaining Challenges

- For liens, collection rate is dismal because even if one of these properties does sell, it is not done through the formal channels (no transfer of ownership/deed filed, so no opportunity for the County to collect)
 - Requires cooperation with County
- For grant-funded work: consider staff capacity
- Still to solve:
 - Reaching absentee owners and enforcing law where we have no jurisdiction
 - Long-term maintenance of private property (see Rental/Vacancy Registration model of Cayce)
 - Forfeit Land Commission property maintenance


