



Neighborhood
Preservation,
Inc.

Mission

Neighborhood Preservation, Inc. clears the path to revitalized Memphis neighborhoods by identifying and resolving systemic causes of blighted properties.

Visionary Goal

By 2020, we aspire to eliminate all known legal and systemic impediments to removing blighted properties in Memphis so that the limited available resources to address blighted properties can be used more effectively.

Strategic Goals

1. *Build and Sustain a Community Wide Effort Through Collaboration:* Encourage, educate and support the ever-changing “coalition of the willing” as community members work together to achieve the goals of the Memphis Neighborhood Blight Elimination Charter (Attachment “A”) and of the most current Blight Elimination Action Plan (Attachment “B”)¹. (See “Action Items”, page 2)
2. *Advocate for Legislative and Policy Change:* Advocate for policy change to remove systemic barriers to neighborhood revitalization². (See “Action Items”, pages 2 - 4)
3. *Neighborhood Transformation:* Take a hands-on role in select neighborhood revitalization projects to demonstrate innovative models. (See “Action Items”, page 4)

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- 1) Examples of currently existing partnerships (not an exhaustive list) include NPI’s partnership with the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law, BLDG Memphis, Clean Memphis, Blues City Cultural Center, the Memphis Community Redevelopment Agency, the Memphis Healthy Homes Partnership, the Memphis Medical District Collaborative, the Memphis Chamber of Commerce Chairman’s Circle, the Frayser Community Development Corporation, the Klondike Smokey City Community Development Corporation, Com-Cap Financial Partners, Urban Renaissance Partners, Knowledge Quest, Inc., and The Works, Inc.
 - 2) Policy areas of community-wide interest in which NPI is involved include state tax foreclosure and land banking law, local code enforcement and neighborhood improvement law, and affordable housing law and policy.

Build and Sustain a Community Wide Effort Through Collaboration: Action Items

- 1) Convene, connect and facilitate the Blight Elimination Steering Team (BEST).
- 2) Members of BEST will be provided frequent and accessible learning opportunities. NPI, with and through BEST, will develop and provide such opportunities, exposing local participants to relevant research and best practices elsewhere.
- 3) Identify research questions raised by BEST program and policy goals and seek to develop effective answers to those questions, factoring in the need for input from those “on the ground” and from external experts.
- 4) Continuously develop strong collaborative partnerships, whether formal or informal, with like-minded neighborhood, government, philanthropic and other nonprofit organizations and with the business community. Continue to serve as a connector of people and organizations working on neighborhood revitalization to resolve blighted properties.

Advocate for Legislative and Policy Change: Action Items

- 1) As opportunities arise for NPI to provide assistance on strategic projects or policy work in Memphis (or elsewhere) that is not identified in this plan but is consistent with its principles, NPI may take on consulting engagements for a fee.
- 2) Every property sold at *future* tax sales in Shelby County will have marketable and insurable title. Milestones include:
 - County Trustee’s office will provide constitutionally adequate notice of tax sales.
 - State law should require provision of constitutionally adequate notice to owners and interested parties prior to the completion of a tax sale by the tax foreclosing entity.
 - Tennessee title insurance providers should be comfortable insuring all tax sale properties.
 - Purchasers at tax sale should be required to commit to beneficial management and care of the property. *If a bidder has delinquent taxes or a history of unresolved code violations, in Memphis or elsewhere, such a bidder should not be allowed to bid on tax sale parcels.*
- 3) Every property sold at a *past* tax sale in Shelby County will have marketable and insurable title. Milestones include:
 - A bulk quiet title cause of action should be clearly defined in state law.
 - The City of Memphis Land Bank (the “Blight Authority of Memphis” or “BAM”) is authorized and resourced to handle as many bulk quiet title actions as required to provide marketable and insurable title to past tax sale properties.

- BAM will be empowered and resourced to utilize alternative options for achieving marketable and insurable title for large numbers of unmarketable and uninsurable property taken at past tax sales.
- 4) BAM will be a model land bank that revitalizes and repurposes properties at a large scale. BAM will have all powers and authority necessary to achieve this goal delegated to it by state law and will be adequately resourced with necessary ongoing financial and staffing support. The first step will be to develop a sustainable business plan for BAM that includes clear milestones.
 - 5) Eliminate the backlog of tax delinquent neglected and abandoned properties in the Memphis area. Milestones:
 - Roll out an awareness and education campaign to convince government officials and taxpayers that the current backlog is a problem that needs to be addressed.
 - With NPI's assistance, elected officials will identify and remove barriers to eliminating the backlog, taking action and allocating sufficient resources to eliminate the backlog over a reasonable time.
 - 6) Clearly define, publicize, and consistently enforce property maintenance and building redevelopment standards. Milestones:
 - City to adopt the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC).
 - City to build its property maintenance enforcement efforts on the foundation of a strong and sufficiently robust legal team.
 - Neighborhood residents to understand the property maintenance process and their role in it. Encourage citizens to be accountable by taking part in keeping Memphis clean.
 - Assure that qualified inspectors are available as needed to identify health and safety hazards in buildings and structures of all types in Memphis and to enforce appropriate standards while also providing connections to resources for occupants of substandard housing.
 - Empower the Shelby County Environmental Court through legislation and adequate local funding to efficiently resolve cases brought before it.
 - The University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law's Neighborhood Preservation Clinic will be the driving force behind the implementation of existing and enhanced code enforcement strategies and tactics.
 - 7) Shelby County will adopt and utilize flexible building codes so that existing structures needing major repairs can be redeveloped affordably and used safely via "Pink" or "Smart" Code. Milestones:
 - Existing Building Code of 2015, as adopted, will be implemented by the building official in such a way as to encourage and support economically affordable development and reuse of long-vacant existing buildings,

particularly in distressed neighborhoods, and to reduce the “red tape” of revitalization while protecting health and safety.

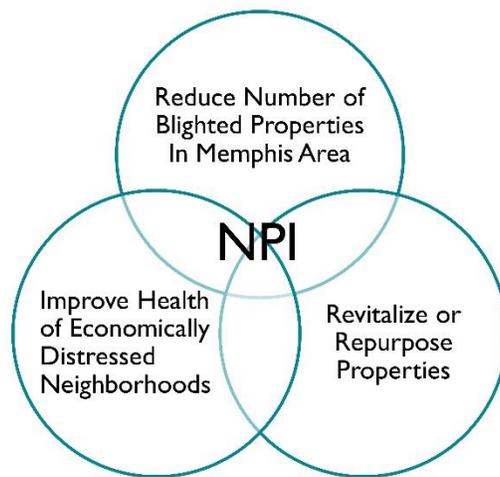
- 8) Decisions regarding property maintenance and development will be informed and influenced by an understanding of significant differences between neighborhoods. Milestones:
 - City government departments will always utilize available neighborhood market information for intervention decision making, e.g. “Property Hub.”
 - Develop and build consensus around an approach to optimally invest limited community development resources, e.g. “Middle Neighborhoods.”
- 9) Memphis will develop and apply a customized, triage approach to the worst-of-the-worst properties.
 - There is usually solid agreement about which properties are causing the worst problems for the surrounding community, and those should be resolved first.
 - Owners should promptly be held accountable for illegal activity and neglect of property conditions regardless of ownership legal type (e.g. LLC).
 - Renter occupants of housing should be empowered to demand and receive healthy and safe housing conditions.
- 10) Develop a central pool of capital sufficient for multiple neighborhood revitalization projects, with a sustainable business plan.
- 11) City and County to adopt an alternative property tax structure for affordable housing, conducive to encouraging the development and proper maintenance of both new and renovated affordable housing. The current property tax structure includes little or no inducement or encouragement to provide affordable housing context.

Neighborhood Transformation: Action Items

- 1) Focus on the “intractable situations” which are often daunting and deter others from taking them on.
- 2) Serve as a facilitator alongside local community leadership. Focus on building power at the neighborhood level and working alongside existing leadership to resolve commonly shared challenges.
- 3) Use extensive on the ground experience of staff and board as needed context for policy advocacy and collaborative building.
- 4) When invited by neighborhood-level leadership, provide technical assistance to advance revitalization efforts that achieve commonly held goals, thus increasing capacity among such leadership to problem solve independently in the future.

Strategic Framework

We promote policies and programs that resolve systemic causes of blighted properties by: 1) reducing the number of blighted properties, 2) improving the health of neighborhoods in distress, and/or 3) revitalizing or repurposing specific properties. Priority is given to the convergence of these three priorities, to building strategic partnerships and connections within each, to projects that are synergistic, and to activities that can resolve large numbers of problem property conditions quickly. Abandoned and neglected properties are often a byproduct of uncoordinated, failed or outdated local, state and federal policies and programs.



We advocate for legislative and policy innovation and positive neighborhood-level change. We lead, participate in and facilitate projects and programs that demonstrate success in distressed Memphis and Shelby County neighborhoods where blighted properties are prevalent and where we believe our interventions will have the most impact, with a focus on building power at the neighborhood level and working alongside existing leadership to resolve commonly shared challenges.