2019-2020
Strategic Plan Highlights
+
Overview & History
A letter from the President

Dear Friends,

Thank you for taking the time to read about our work, our plans, and our goals. Our most important collaborator has always been you: the concerned resident, partner, or stakeholder committed to playing a role in making Memphis full of vibrant, successful neighborhoods for all. If you’re reading this, chances are you’re one of the many people involved with us in the community-wide effort to remove systemic barriers to revitalizing Memphis neighborhoods.

I have served on the Neighborhood Preservation, Inc. team since we launched in 2012. I am proud of what we have accomplished, and I am excited about what NPI is working on. Abandoned and neglected properties are often a byproduct of uncoordinated or outdated policies and programs. NPI leads an ever-changing coalition of agencies, organizations, associations and individuals who share our passion to clear the path to restoring Memphis neighborhoods that are experiencing overwhelming property deterioration.

Our coalition has improved state and local law and practices in the areas of delinquent tax foreclosure, landbanking, and property maintenance enforcement. The vision set out in the Memphis Neighborhood Blight Elimination Charter, is that every resident in Memphis and Shelby County should live in a neighborhood free of blighted properties.

I want to share with you our latest strategic plan. Our goal early in Memphis’ third century is to eliminate all remaining legal and systemic impediments to removing blighted properties. This does not mean that the thousands of neglected properties across our neighborhoods will all be improved. But the systemic barriers to improving them will be removed, making it possible to maximize impact of all available resources. Meanwhile, NPI will continue to work with local leadership to foster innovative approaches at the neighborhood level.

We are dedicated to work towards exciting goals like increasing the availability of title insurance for tax sale properties; strengthening local land banks like the “Blight Authority of Memphis” statewide, further streamlining local property maintenance laws; and advocating for additional resources for owners and occupants who need support to meet property maintenance standards. The NPI team works hard every day to support the growing momentum of our community towards removing barriers to neighborhood revitalization.

Sincerely,

Steve Barlow
President
We’re changing the rules of revitalization.

Every piece of abandoned real estate in Memphis affects the value, viability, and safety of the property around it. These neglected properties are often by products of failed or outdated local, state, and federal policies and programs. Coupled with the complex social and economic issues surrounding property neglect, our city is faced with a staggering, systemic problem that won’t correct itself.

That’s why Neighborhood Preservation, Inc. advocates for legislative and policy innovation for positive neighborhood-level change. Founded in 2012 by Memphis economic and community development leaders, we focus on policy advocacy to fix the systems that allow people to abandon real estate without being held accountable.

NPI’s active policy areas, include:

- State tax foreclosure and land banking law
- Local code enforcement and neighborhood improvement law
- Affordable housing law and policy

What’s in a name?

Sure, “Neighborhood Preservation, Inc.” might be on our business cards. But we think “NPI” could also stand for something else: Neighborhood Policy and Innovation. After all, while our approach to fighting blight often takes a legislative approach, we’re always looking to do things in a new, more effective way.
Our Mission

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

The Vision

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.
“Whether it’s a house, a skyscraper, or an abandoned lot that needs to be cleaned up, the hope that comes from taking a small step forward to improve property conditions is powerful for a community, and creates momentum.”

Steve Barlow  
President  
NPI

Neighborhood change takes time.

Systemic change can be slow, and it takes a lot of people. And that’s OK. In fact, no one should try to do this alone. We rely on numerous strategic partners for their expertise, resources, support, programs, data, and more. Collaboration is a vital element in making our work possible.

First and foremost, collaboration.

We often work closely with these partners, and many others.

BLDG Memphis  
bldgmemphis.org

City of Memphis  
memphistn.gov

Clean Memphis  
cleanmemphis.org

Com-Cap Financial Partners  
comcap-partners.com

The Compost Fairy  
compostfairy.com

Downtown Memphis Commission  
downtownmemphiscommission.com

Frayser Community Development Corporation  
fraysercdc.org

Klodike Smokey City Community Development Corporation  
ksccdc.org

Knowledge Quest, Inc.  
knowledgequest.org

Memphis Chamber of Commerce Chairman’s Circle  
memphiscouncil.com/about-us/chairmans-circle/

Memphis City Beautiful  
memphiscitybeautiful.org

Memphis Community Redevelopment Agency  
cramemphis.org

Memphis Healthy Homes Partnership  
memphis.edu/law/help/community_partnerships/hhp.php

Memphis Medical District Collaborative  
mdcollaborative.org

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mdcollaborative.org

Shelby County  
shelbycountytn.gov

University of Memphis  
 Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law  
memphis.edu/law

Urban Renaissance Partners  
urbanrengroup.com

The Works, Inc.  
theseworksdc.org
Keeping the community in focus.

As we lead, participate in, and facilitate neighborhood improvement projects, we focus on building power at the neighborhood level. Our goal is to work alongside existing leadership and community members to ensure outcomes that are in the best interest of those most closely affected. We don’t stand in the spotlight but “backstage” in support of others.

You can help.

We foster neighborhood restoration through collaboration, and we need your help to do it. Here are some simple ways you can get involved:

• Join your neighborhood association
• Talk to your legislative representatives
• Learn about and visit all types of neighborhoods
• Get to know and connect with our partners listed above
• Follow NPI on social media
  Facebook: @MemphisFightsBlight
  Twitter: @NPIMemphis
  Instagram: @NPIMemphis
• Sign up for our email newsletter at npimemphis.org
Spreading the word.

Much of the work we do at NPI includes long timelines and complex processes, so we love to share and celebrate progress. Here are some stories about our ongoing work in collaboration with our partners.

**HIGH GROUND**

*Armed with data, partners find a new strategy to tackle blighted properties*

*September 12, 2018*

*Read this story:* [bit.ly/NPI001](bit.ly/NPI001)

**WKNO**

*Community Revitalization*

*March 15, 2019*


**Daily Memphian**

*Vacant, blighted apartments to get $11M renovation, family-support programs*

*March 7, 2019*

*Read this story:* [bit.ly/2WFebxu](bit.ly/2WFebxu)

**Daily Memphian**

*Collaboration, cooperation are Memphis’ ‘secret sauce’ in blight fight*

*March 29, 2019*

*Read this story:* [bit.ly/NPI004](bit.ly/NPI004)
The NPI Strategic Framework
Three overlapping goals guide NPI's strategies:

Reduce Blighted Properties
We work to improve state and local policy, systems, and processes with a goal to reduce the number of vacant and abandoned properties.

Improve Neighborhood Health
Stable, quality housing and other neighborhood amenities can improve health outcomes for all residents. NPI has a holistic approach to neighborhood health.

Revitalize Specific Properties
We support reclaiming and reusing empty land and buildings. Many have been devalued, but they remain valuable community assets.

Within this framework, we prioritize:

- Convergence of these three goals
- Building strategic partnerships
- Projects that are synergistic
- Policy and systems work that can resolve challenges at scale
Timeline of Accomplishments

2012
Facilitated demolition of hundreds of abandoned apartments at Winchester and Cazassa

2015
Began Blight Elimination Charter planning process

2016
Launched Frayser Neighborhood Initiative

2017
Promoted the establishment of Neighborhood Preservation Clinic

Supported the establishment of the Blight Authority of Memphis, a local landbank

Established and planted Carnes Garden

Facilitated the acquisition and stabilization of historic Clayborn Temple

Hosted the inaugural Neighborhood Blight Elimination Summit honoring partners and celebrating progress

Founded Blight Elimination Steering Team, and released the first BEST Action Plan

Worked with partners to establish the Memphis Property Hub

Launch of neighborhood transformation projects in the Medical District
2017
Supported a Joint City of Memphis and Shelby County Mayors’ Environmental Team

Hosted first Strategic Code Enforcement Management Academy

Released second BEST Action Plan

Hosted second Neighborhood Blight Elimination Summit

Completed National Technical Assistance project in Providence, RI

Co-sponsored Small Developer Boot Camp

Established Decatur Street Tree Garden on formerly abandoned lots

Planted wildflower field on Galloway

Established Carnes Garden East

Created railroad corridor and butterfly trail in Carnes-Galloway
2018
Completed Keep America Beautiful Technical Assistance

Initiated partnership with Klondike Smokey City CDC

Sponsored Continuing Legal Education seminar on property blight at Law School

Released third BEST Action Plan

Hosted Third Neighborhood Preservation Summit at the Neighborhood Christian Center

Hosted second Strategic Code Enforcement Management Academy

Worked with elected officials to significantly restructure the Neighborhood Preservation Act
Strategic Goals & Action Items

01 Build and Sustain a Community-Wide Effort Through Collaboration
Encourage, educate, support, and connect the ever-changing “coalition of the willing” to achieve the goals of the Memphis Neighborhood Blight Elimination Charter (Attachment “A”).

02 Promote Neighborhood Innovation
Take a hands-on role in select neighborhood revitalization projects to demonstrate innovative models.

03 Advocate for Legislative and Policy Change
Advocate for policy change to remove systemic barriers to neighborhood revitalization.
Strategic Goal 1: Build and Sustain a Community Wide Effort Through Collaboration

How?

1. Convene and facilitate the Blight Elimination Steering Team (BEST).
2. Provide frequent and accessible learning opportunities to members of BEST.
3. Identify research questions raised by BEST program and policy goals and seek to develop answers to those questions, with input from those “on the ground” and from outside experts.
4. Promote strong collaborative partnerships, connecting people and organizations who care about neighborhood revitalization through resolving to blighted properties.

Strategic Goal 2: Promote Neighborhood Innovation

How?

1. As opportunities arise, focus on neighborhood challenges which may be daunting or time-consuming.
2. Serve as a facilitator of neighborhood restoration alongside local community leadership.
3. Focus on building power at the neighborhood level.
4. Where possible, align this work with the City of Memphis Comprehensive Plan, Memphis 3.0, particularly its call for neighborhood plan.

Strategic Goal 3: Advocate for Legislative and Policy Change

How?

1. Advocacy for marketable and insurable title for every property sold at a past or future tax sale in Shelby County, and for the elimination of the backing of tax delinquent parcels.
2. Advocacy for Blight Authority of Memphis to have all powers and authority by state law to repurpose abandoned property at scale.
3. Advocacy for consistently enforced property maintenance and building reuse/redevelopment standards that are efficient, equitable, and effective.
4. Advocacy for data-driven decisions regarding property maintenance enforcement and neighborhood change.
5. Advocacy for a triage approach to the worst-of-the worst properties, holding owners accountable and assuring quality housing for all.
6. Advocacy for an increased, dedicated pool of capital sufficient to support multiple neighborhood revitalization projects at once.
7. Advocacy for an alternative property tax structure for affordable housing, conducive to encouraging the development and proper maintenance of both new and renovated affordable housing, which is affordable long-term for families with very low income.
8. 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.