Written by Joseph D. Manzella, II
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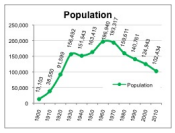
Significant population loss since the mid-1960s has left an indelible mark on the fabric of neighborhoods in Flint, MI. With half the population it had in 1966, the city and county have turned to creative methods to reclaim broken neighborhoods and stabilize areas in the midst of a global credit crisis, housing collapse, and a local and regional economy that is hemorrhaging the manufacturing jobs once the hallmark of this area's prosperity. To manage the vacant property issue, an innovative land bank authority was established in 2002. While this entity is widely cited in studies of best-practice, further innovation is both possible and needed. One as-yet untried tool for redevelopment is based on the Artist Relocation Program in Paducah, KY. This program used incentives to attract artists to a struggling neighborhood: stabilizing property values, creating jobs, and improving livelihoods within the vicinity.

Download the full report, with appendices, here .

Flint, MI, was once a powerhouse of industrial production and innovation. It is the birthplace of General Motors, the United Auto-Workers, and many other notable milestones in manufacturing. Like many mid-American industrial towns, the 1960s brought the first signs of disinvestment, deindustrialization, depopulation, and urban decay. In little more than 50 years, Flint lost half its population - nearly 100,000 people - to plant closings, "White Flight", and many other conspiring factors.



With little more than 100,000 people occupying an area built for twice that number, it takes little imagination to understand the severe and peculiar impacts this has on local policy.
Years of Decline:
Flint's population began to decline sometime between 1960 and 1970. Once Michigan's 2nd-largest city, it is now the seventh .
Substantial literature states that "white flight" was an initial driver of population loss, driving affluent whites and their families into the suburbs. This is supported by the growth of Genesee County - doubling its population since 1960 while Flint languished.
A Problem Defined: Vacancy and Disappearing Neighborhoods
By many measures, Flint is much different today than it was in the past. The shrunken population has left many neighborhoods with gaping holes to fill. A drive through some of the

worst-hit areas gives one the feeling of just how tough things really are. For a city to lose half of its population, and by extension half of its density, it loses the ‘critical mass' that an urban environment needs to maintain its underlying infrastructure.

2010 Year-End GCLBA Inventory	Number
Residential Improved	2,283
Residential Vacant	3,952
Commercial Improved	91
Commercial Vacant 2	02
Other	28
Total	6,556

Facing an onerous regulatory environment that blocked the razing of many blighted homes in the 1990s, local leaders worked with members of the state legislature on enabling legislation for the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA). This organization has been working tirelessly since 2002 to quickly raze or reclaim foreclosed properties in an attempt to stabilize neighborhood decline.

Vacant properties are a major concern for surrounding neighborhoods. Prior to the cleanup and reclamation efforts, vacant properties fell victim to arson, trash dumping, and became havens for crime. Since 2002, over 10,000 properties have gone through the tax foreclosure process in Genesee County, with a jump to 1,200 in 2008, and a spike in 2010 to over 2,300.

These efforts have cut Flint's vacant residential housing unit rate to just 8.57% - putting it on par with other Midwestern industrial-transition cities. When compared to cities of 50,000 residents or more, Flint ranks 55th place, which is well below many of the areas hardest-hit by the credit crisis and recent natural disasters. This is mostly due to the ongoing effort of the GCLBA.

Residential Vacant Structures

Rank	City, State	Rate
1	Apache Junction, AZ	30.14%
5	Galveston, TX	20.58%
16	Camden, NJ	13.71%
21	St. Louis, MO	12.07%
24	Daytona Beach, FL	11.68%
51	Gary, IN	9.00%

53	Cleveland, OH	8.73%
55	Flint, MI	8.57%
57	Pittsburgh, PA	8.54%

While the number of empty structures is being addressed, this statistic fails to paint the picture of the urban fabric - parts of which are torn asunder by half-occupied blocks of dilapidated houses intermingled with still-vacant homes waiting for demolition or restoration. Unlike Galveston or Daytona, many of these homes have been vacant for decades.
The GCLBA maintains over 5,000 parcels within the City of Flint alone. These vacant parcels - some with structures, some without - pose a severe fiscal burden on the organization. But without the GCLBA, property maintenance would likely not happen.

Figure 1: Each dot represents a vacant parcel owned by the GCLBA in the City of Flint as of 2011. This map does not include the vacant lots already sold to adjoining property owners, nor the many hundreds of homes restored and sold since 2002.

Concentrations of Poverty:

% Families w/ Income less than
$8,000, 2010 by Block Groups
0.00% - 2.00%
2.01% - 20.00%
20.01% - 27.00%
27.01% - 29.00%
29.01% - 100.00%

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