INTRODUCTION:

WHY MAKE THIS TOOLKIT?
THE ZION CITY STORY

Zion City residents founded the New Zion City Preservation Association in 2012.

- To improve quality of life in their neighborhood.

- To respond to vacancy, blight, zoning, and infrastructure issues in their area.

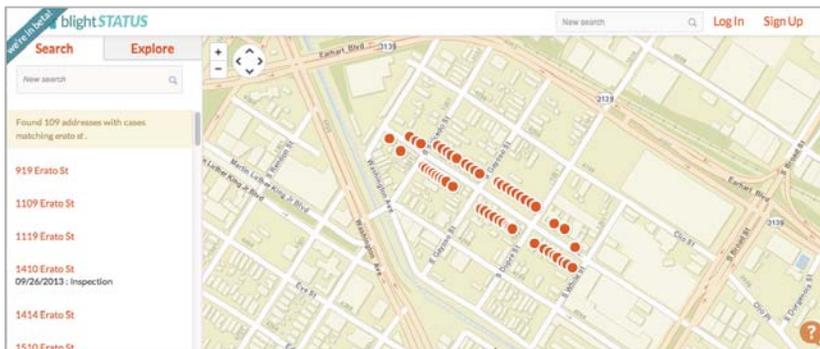**Key Point:** Zion City <u>organized</u> their neighborhood residents to look at how to improve their community.

Zion City Step 1: Defining the Issue

The New Zion City Preservation Association worked with Beacon of Hope in 2012 to map their community. They found:

- **Over 50%** vacant properties
- **30%** blighted properties

Key Point: Zion City used <u>community mapping</u> to gather data on problem properties in their neighborhood.

Zion City Step 2: Diving into Data

Orleans Parish Assessor: nolaassessor.com

BlightStatus: blightstatus.nola.gov

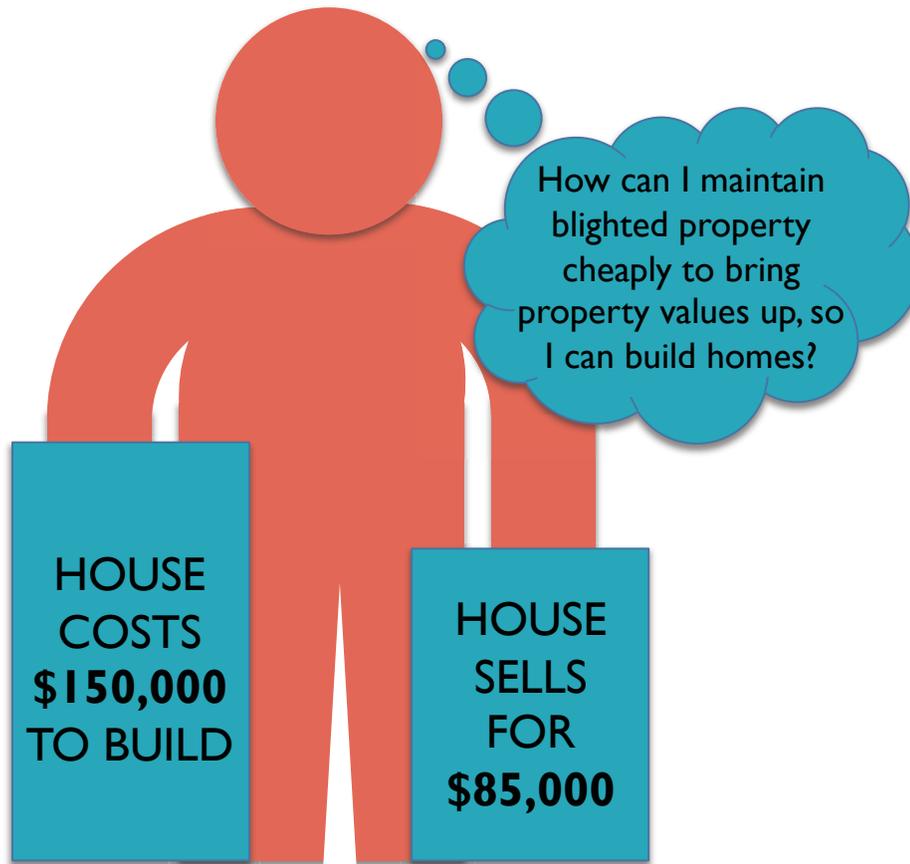Zion City residents used data to identify owners and monitor legal progress on blighted properties, including:

- The Orleans Parish Assessor's Website to investigate ownership and tax issues

- BlightStatus to monitor code enforcement progress

Key Point: Zion City used data to identify key issues like back taxes, speculative owners, and code enforcement progress.

Zion City Step 3: Understanding the Market

How can I maintain blighted property cheaply to bring property values up, so I can build homes?

HOUSE COSTS **$150,000** TO BUILD

HOUSE SELLS FOR **$85,000**

- Residents wanted to know <u>why</u> blighted properties in Zion City were so hard to bring back into commerce.

- One reason was <u>low property values</u> that made it hard to build houses or businesses in the area.

- Zion City found that certain policies and strategies would work better for their <u>real estate market</u> type.

Key Point: Zion City found that the <u>local real estate market matters</u> when developing a blight reduction strategy.

Zion City Step 4: Researching Policies & Legal Tools

- ❖ **Code Enforcement & Sheriff's Sale**

- ❖ **Tax Title Sale**

- ❖ **Adjudication**

- ❖ **Three-Year Acquisitive Prescription**

- ❖ **Expropriation**

- ❖ **Ground Leasing**

- Authors of this toolkit researched policies that could get owners to maintain their properties – or help community members access properties cheaply.

- Many blighted properties in Zion City had high <u>back taxes</u> and <u>clouded titles</u> – we looked for policies that could help resolve these issues.

- Details on each policy in Section 4.

▶ **Key Point:** Zion City looked at policies & tools that could help community members access or purchase blighted properties cheaply, if the owners wouldn't maintain them.

Zion City Step 5: Creating an Action Plan

Zion City residents worked to create an action plan for their community based on their:

- Vision

- Property Research and Data

- Policy Knowledge

- Property Value Knowledge

- Partners

- Community Assets

Key Point: Zion City created an action plan specific to their community – based on their vision, data, and research – to improve blighted properties and their quality of life.

Zion City Step 6: Executing a Project

Example: Park created on vacant land in Philadelphia
(Image credit: ocfrealty.com)

NZCPA is working to acquire two lots from cooperative owners and create a park, in partnership with the Land Trust for Louisiana. Considerations in any project:

- Liability Insurance

- Maintenance Costs/Volunteers

- Upfront Costs

- Design & Features

- Partners!!!

Key Point: Zion City established strong partnerships, raised funds, and found property owners they could work with in order to execute a project.

Our partnership has created this toolkit to share what we learned about **organizing your neighborhood to fight blight** with information about policies, property values, planning, and project implementation.

We hope this helps you address blighted properties in **YOUR** community.

Toolkit Activities and Information

For more activities related to this section, see:
Worksheet 1: Your Community and Zion City

This will help your group start to think about how your community's issues with problem property are similar to, or different from, the issues that Zion City had to deal with.