



Dallas Area
Habitat
for Humanity®

build louder



Blight Forum -- Recommendations and Next Steps

EPIC Makes Eliminating Blight a Priority

On Thursday, August 29th, representatives from across the city gathered at the Communities Foundation of Texas' Mabel Peters Caruth Center to consider the problem of blight in Dallas. 190 people registered to hear a presentation by University of North Texas (UNT) faculty members on the [blight study](#) commissioned by Dallas Area Habitat for Humanity, followed by a panel of City of Dallas experts and community leaders. Much work needs to be done going forward, but there were some recommendations and ideas discussed at the Forum that are particularly compelling. Here are some thoughts on what comes next.



What gets measured gets done

One clear message from the Forum is there needs to be better and more transparent data, along with a data based system to set goals and priorities, that will monitor progress. Why is data so important? There is a lot of truth in the old quote "what gets measured gets done." A blight index like the one created by the UNT research team could provide city government, as well as the larger community, with a baseline to measure where we are as well as a way to track changes and evaluate the impact of various policies and procedures. Similarly, an accessible, current, accurate, and complete data tool would allow various City Departments, neighborhood champions, and potential investors to make more informed decisions and obtain a better return on their investments. The [City of New Orleans](#) has an

interesting web site that might provide a model for this type of approach. Dallas is already part of a system, [RAIDS Online](#), that provides this type of information for crime.

Next steps

Economic Partners Investing in Communities (EPIC) has made eliminating blight a priority. EPIC, a partnership founded by Ms. Toni Brinker, is comprised of Better Dallas/Safer Dallas, the Communities Foundation of Texas, Mayor Rawlings' GrowSouth initiative, and Dallas Area Habitat for Humanity.

EPIC is taking on this important initiative because blight often goes hand-in-hand with crime and safety is a key priority for the group. We also know that it is a costly drain on City government, on neighborhoods, and on the economic vitality of the city. We know that its presence deters further investment in our city. Working together, we know that Dallas could be a leader nationally in tackling this vexing problem.

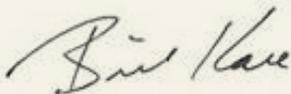
EPIC would like to see:

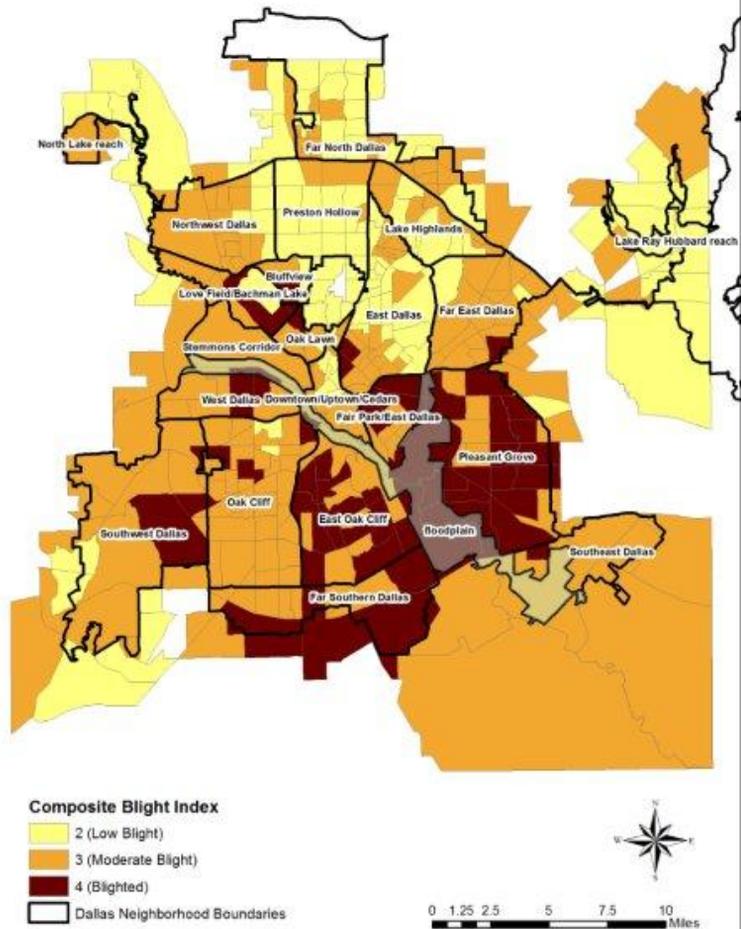
- A better system for monitoring non-tax liens and unpaid taxes to fully measure their cost to the taxpayers
- Improved geo-coding of City data to allow easy mapping
- The composite blight index refined, including a way to identify degrees of risk in moderate and high blight areas
- A regular report updating blight status and reporting results of various initiatives
- An evaluation by the City of what additional resources it needs for the blight reduction efforts
- Priorities, goals, and metrics established for blight reduction efforts and high priority properties targeted for action
- Additional research on the impact of absentee property owners and rental properties on surrounding properties
- Establishment of an easily accessible web-based system to track blight reduction progress

None of these action items will be easy and none are a quick fix, but they are absolutely vital for the future of our city.

Thank you for helping us Build Louder. Together we can make a difference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Kave". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



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