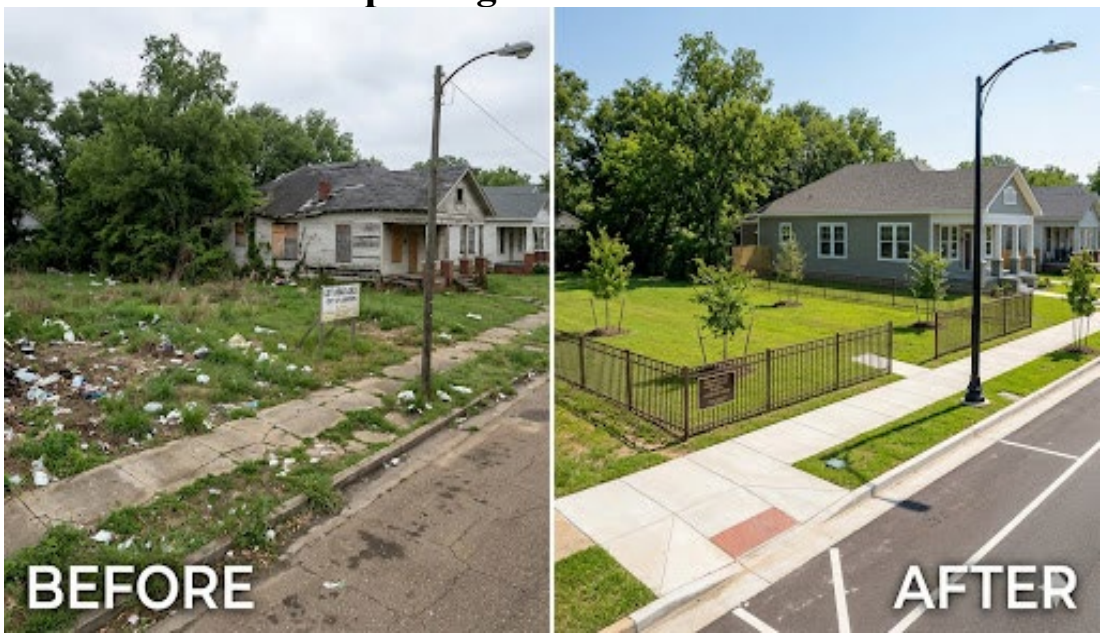
Strategies for Reducing Residential Blight in Jackson, Mississippi: A Comprehensive Resource Guide

"Exploring the Possibilities"



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Preface

As used in this resource guide, "Blight" is defined as . . . A condition characterized by vacant, abandoned, deteriorated, unsafe, or poorly maintained structures or properties that negatively impact public safety, property values, and neighborhood quality of life. Blight is an issue that has multiple causes and thereby requires multiple solutions depending upon the circumstances causing and/or maintaining those blighted conditions. This resource guide is written to provide city of Jackson (Mississippi) and other interested officials with comprehensive information for addressing issues associated with blight reduction. The primary value of this resource guide is its comprehensiveness in examining the blight issue from its causes, socio-economic implications, and solutions proven successful in other cities. This guide is designed to assist its readers in quickly identifying information that can help reduce the incidence and impact of blight in urban areas.

The issues and challenges associated with blight are not new or confined to the city of Jackson. Blight, and its associated problems, are common to urban areas experiencing large population declines, wide-spread economic disinvestment, high levels of poverty, and aging housing stocks. Blighted conditions can be found in cities across the United States, and have been found to negatively impact the quality of life in those areas. Blight in the city of Jackson has increasing gain attention due to the growing numbers of vacant and abandoned properties located within the city (calculated to range from 7,000 to 14,000 vacant and/or abandoned structures) (U.S. Census, ACS, 2024). With the total number of housing units in the city of Jackson estimated to be approximately 74,000 units, the percentage of vacant/abandoned housing ranges between 9% and 18%. As discussed in more detail later, having such a large percentage of vacant/abandoned housing brings about numerous socio-economic problems that include increases in crime, house fires; declining property values; increases in mental health disorders; increases in negative health conditions such as asthma, lead poisoning; lower educational attainment levels, and visually disturbing images. In other words, problems associated with blight generally decrease the quality of life for residents near those blighted areas, and for residents not living in those areas who must help pay for increased public services with declining city revenue sources.

The mission the Jackson State University Mississippi Urban Research Center (MURC) is "to conduct basic and applied research into urban problems and public policy, and to make available the results of this research to private groups, public bodies, and public officials." The preparation and dissemination of this resource guide is part of MURC's mission to use research to assist urban areas in improving their quality of life. It is hoped that the readers of this resource guide will find its contents useful in terms of saving time, energy, and other types of resources (financial and non-financial) as related to reducing the level of blight in their communities. MURC stands ready to assist those readers and communities in accomplishing that goal.

Glossary of Selected Key Terms

Term / Phrase	Definition
311 Complaint System	A non-emergency municipal service system through which residents report neighborhood concerns such as blighted properties, illegal dumping, or unsafe structures.
Abandoned Property	A property where the owner has relinquished responsibility for maintenance or occupancy, often associated with tax delinquency, foreclosure, or long-term vacancy.
Administrative Hearing	A formal municipal process through which property owners may challenge or respond to code violations or enforcement actions.
Blight	A condition characterized by vacant, abandoned, deteriorated, unsafe, or poorly maintained structures or properties that negatively impact public safety, property values, and neighborhood quality of life.
Blight Data Tracking System	A centralized municipal database used to track blight-related complaints, inspections, violations, legal actions, demolitions, and redevelopment outcomes.
Blight Reduction Strategy	A coordinated set of public policies and programs designed to identify, prevent, and/or eliminate blighted properties and promote neighborhood revitalization.
BlightSTAT	A performance management system used by some cities to monitor blight reduction initiatives through data dashboards, performance metrics, and regular leadership review meetings.
Blighted Property	A parcel of land or structure that meets legal or regulatory criteria for blight due to structural deterioration, abandonment, unsafe conditions, or repeated violations of property maintenance standards.
Code Enforcement	The municipal process of ensuring that buildings and properties comply with local housing, safety, and maintenance regulations.

Clouded Title	Any claim, lien, or encumbrance that impairs the owner's ability to prove full ownership or sell the property (e.g., unpaid taxes, missing heirs).
Community Development	Public and private efforts aimed at improving neighborhood conditions through housing rehabilitation, economic development, infrastructure investment, and social services.
Community Development Corporations (CDCs)	Nonprofit organizations based in local neighborhoods that help develop housing and commercial projects, promote job training and workforce develop initiatives, and often rehab blighted properties.
Community Land Trust	A nonprofit organization that owns land and sells or rents the homes on it at affordable rates, with some resale restrictions to keep the housing affordable long-term.
Compliance Order	A legal directive issued by a municipality requiring a property owner to correct code violations within a specified timeframe.
Dead Capital	Assets (like abandoned homes) that cannot be used as collateral for loans or sold because their ownership status is legally uncertain.
Demolition	The removal of unsafe or dilapidated structures deemed beyond repair in order to eliminate hazards and stabilize neighborhoods.
Distressed Property	A property experiencing financial or physical deterioration, often associated with foreclosures, abandonment, or extensive code violations.
Eminent Domain	The power of a government to take private property for "public use" (such as a road or school) following the payment of "just compensation."
GIS (Geographic Information System)	A digital mapping system used to analyze and visualize spatial data such as property conditions, blight concentrations, and redevelopment activities.
Heirs Property	Property inherited by multiple family members without a formal estate plan or clear title, often making maintenance, transfer, or redevelopment difficult.

Housing Code Violations	Legal infractions related to property conditions that fail to meet established housing and safety standards.
Land Bank	A public or nonprofit entity that acquires, manages, and redevelops vacant or abandoned properties to return them to productive use.
Neighborhood Conditions Index	A set of indicators used to measure neighborhood health, including vacancy rates, property conditions, crime, and economic activity.
Neighborhood Impact Analysis	An evaluation of how blight reduction initiatives affect property values, public safety, housing stability, and community well-being.
Neighborhood Revitalization	Public and private investments aimed at improving neighborhood economic conditions, housing quality, and community stability.
Neighborhood Stabilization	Policy initiatives designed to prevent neighborhood decline by addressing foreclosure, property abandonment, and blight.
Patent Confirmation	A legal process to confirm the validity of a "land patent" (title) issued by the state when it sells tax-forfeited land to a private buyer.
Parcel Database	A structured database containing detailed information about individual property parcels, including zoning, ownership, tax status, and code enforcement records.
Parcel-Level Data	Property information organized by individual parcels of land, typically including ownership records, tax status, inspection history, and enforcement actions.
Performance Metrics	Quantitative indicators used to evaluate the effectiveness of blight reduction initiatives, such as demolitions completed or properties rehabilitated.
Property Disposition	The transfer, sale, or redevelopment of publicly owned properties to private owners, developers, or community organizations.

Property Inventory System	A database used by municipalities to track vacant, abandoned, or distressed properties within the city.
Property Lien	A legal claim placed on a property due to unpaid taxes, fines, or municipal enforcement costs.
Property Maintenance Ordinance	Local regulations requiring property owners to maintain buildings and land in safe and sanitary conditions.
Property Registry	A municipal database requiring owners of vacant or distressed properties to register those properties with local government agencies.
Property Rehabilitation	The repair or renovation of deteriorated properties in order to restore them to safe, habitable, and economically productive use.
Property Speculation	The practice of purchasing property with the expectation of increasing value without making improvements, which can contribute to prolonged vacancy.
Property Stabilization	Short-term actions taken to secure vacant structures, such as boarding windows, repairing roofs, or removing hazards.
Public Nuisance	A property condition that threatens public health, safety, or welfare, including unsafe structures, illegal dumping, or persistent neglect.
Quiet Title Action	A lawsuit intended to establish a party's title to real property against anyone and everyone, effectively "quieting" any challenges or claims to the land.
Redevelopment	The process of improving or repurposing previously vacant or underutilized properties for residential, commercial, or community use.
Strategic Code Enforcement	A targeted enforcement approach that focuses on neighborhoods with concentrated blight to maximize impact.
Tax Delinquency	A condition in which property taxes remain unpaid, often leading to penalties, liens, or foreclosure.
Tax Foreclosure	A legal process through which government entities seize properties due to unpaid property taxes.

Tax Forfeiture	The loss of property ownership to the state or municipality due to the non-payment of property taxes.
Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	A financial subsidy for redevelopment that "captures" the future increase in property tax revenue generated by a new project to pay for the project's initial infrastructure costs.
Tax Recapture	A funding mechanism where a portion of the taxes collected on a newly renovated property is redirected back to the Land Bank to fund further blight removal.
Urban Land Banking	A policy approach in which local governments acquire vacant properties, maintain them temporarily, and later transfer them for redevelopment.
Urban Revitalization	Long-term strategies aimed at restoring economic vitality and improving living conditions in distressed urban areas.
Vacancy Rate	The proportion of residential or commercial properties within an area that are unoccupied at a given time.
Vacant Building	A structure that is unoccupied and often susceptible to deterioration, vandalism, or illegal activity.
Vacant Lot Maintenance	Activities such as mowing, debris removal, and securing parcels after demolition to prevent neighborhood decline.
Vacant Property	A building or parcel that is unoccupied for an extended period and may be vulnerable to deterioration or illegal use.
Work Order System	A municipal tracking system used to manage property inspections, enforcement actions, maintenance tasks, and demolition activities.

Executive Summary

As used throughout this resource guide, "Blight" is defined as a condition where residential property has deteriorated to the point of being a threat to public health, safety, or welfare due to structural collapse, fire hazard, illegal dumping, overgrown lots, and/or structures that are very poorly maintained. The city of Jackson, Mississippi, faces severe challenges posed by the blighted conditions of vacant, dilapidated, and abandoned structures. The city of Jackson has over 2,000 tax-forfeited properties and 7,000 abandoned houses currently sitting vacant. The presence of blight can create a self-perpetuating cycle of decline by depressing property values, discouraging economic development, escalating public safety risks, and generating significant adverse health outcomes such as toxic stress, lead exposure, and increased rates of infectious and chronic diseases. This resource guide serves as a comprehensive roadmap designed to help public, private, and nonprofit officials understand and address this multifaceted problem. It presents important facts and data points, proven policy interventions, case studies of other U.S. cities blight reduction strategies, and a review of current Jackson and state of Mississippi blight-related initiatives. Its ultimate goal is to help city officials and others develop and implement blight reduction strategies that restore neighborhood prosperity, safety, and health.

Historical Context

Blight in the city of Jackson results from decades of economic disinvestment, population loss, economic restructuring, systemic issues such as racial segregation and redlining, increasing poverty levels, and declining tax revenue leading to reductions in city services. The presence of blighted properties in Jackson is geographically concentrated in neighborhoods facing the greatest socioeconomic challenges like South Jackson, West Jackson, and older central city neighborhoods. Many properties have fallen into tax delinquency, and thus forfeited to the State of Mississippi via the Secretary of State's Public Lands Division. This process creates additional legal and administrative hurdles surrounding the disposition of tax-forfeited property. When properties are abandoned and taxes go unpaid, they can sit indefinitely unmaintained and unused. This legal limbo is a major historical reason for the large inventory of blighted properties in Jackson; thereby limiting the city's ability to efficiently gain title or control over the properties for remediation or reuse.

Recent city leadership, under both former Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba and current Mayor John Horhn, have both prioritized blight mitigation. Mayor Lumumba's 2018 plan aimed to eliminate 25% of blight but faced major hurdles related to state funding and the administrative costs of clearing property titles. Mayor Horhn has continued focusing on blight elimination by launching initiatives like CleanJXN; targeted demolition approvals; pursuing legislative proposals and state collaborations; reinforcing infrastructure and public works coordination; and engaging community and faith-based entities.

Key Data Findings

The following data indicators help frame the historical and statistical context surrounding Jackson's blight challenges and issues.

Table 1 Key Statistical & Data Findings

Metric	Data Snapshot	Why It Matters
Population (2020)	~173k (2010) to ~153k (2020)	Decades of population loss leads to excess housing and infrastructure to maintain.
Poverty Rate	~24.9%	Higher poverty levels correlate with housing affordability, tax defaults, and deferred maintenance.
Owner-Occupied Housing Rate	~50.6%	Lower owner-occupancy correlates with weaker upkeep of housing stock.
Median Household Income	~$38,000	Limited household resources constrain repairs and rehab.
Estimated Blighted/Abandoned Parcels	7,000+ parcels	Describes the scale of the problem and fiscal impact.
State-Held Tax-Forfeited Parcels	~1,900–2,431	Creates legal & administrative delays with property remediation and redevelopment.
City Demolitions (2024–2025)	117 properties	Addresses less than 5% of the total properties needing demolition.
Community/Church-Led Demolitions (2023–2025)	~200 properties	Represents other non-governmental entities assisting with problem.
Staffing	~12 code-enforcement officers	Limits the city's ability reduce massive backlogs and addressing complaints.

Key Findings on Successful Blight-Reduction Strategies

As will be discussed throughout this resource guide, successfully addressing the blight crisis will require a multi-faceted approach. Evidence from other cities shows policy interventions such as aggressive code enforcement, adopting a Land Bank Authority to streamline property acquisition and reuse, utilizing legal tools like Expedited Judicial Foreclosure and Receivership, and creating sustainable funding sources (e.g., Tax Incentive Financing - TIF; Neighborhood Blight Remediation Fund) will be needed to produce long-lasting, measurable results. The table below provides a summary of major blight reduction strategies and tools that have been used successfully in other U.S. cities:

Table 2 Summary of major blight reduction strategies and tools

Strategy / Tool	Primary Function	Model / Example
Land banking of tax-delinquent/vacant property	Acquires and "quiets" titles to return properties to productive use and faster title clearing.	Proposed Mississippi Land Bank Act
Public nuisance litigation & environmental/housing court	Uses environmental courts to compel owners to fix or lose property; enables receivership and accountability for absentee owners.	Memphis, TN model
"Clean and Green" Initiatives	Stabilizes cleared lots through community-led maintenance; helps to reduce crime, improved mental health, and increase nearby property values. Quick, visible gains; maintain lots between demolition and reuse.	Flint, MI (Genesee County Land Bank); Philadelphia & Pittsburgh, PA
BlightSTAT Performance Tracking System	Data-driven performance reporting to track demolitions, rehabs, and other measures of progress.	New Orleans model
Tax-related Tools	Credits and incentives for developers to rehabilitate state-forfeited parcels.	MS House Bill 1201
Receivership for repairable homes	Empower third parties to rehab with cost recovery via liens.	States of Ohio and Pennsylvania
Transparent property disposition RFPs	Accelerates property acquisition by community members and/or private investors; mandates rehab/reuse with performance requirements, reversion clauses, and affordability targets.	Baltimore, MD

Blight Reduction Implementation Challenges

Implementing a citywide blight reduction strategy is an ambitious undertaking that will present many different types of challenges. Below is a brief listing of challenges government and non-government officials can anticipate facing when seeking to successfully implement Blight reduction strategies:

- Resource Constraints and Sustainability Issues
- Legal and Administrative Issues
- Community Concerns and Equity Issues

- Market Conditions and Investor Interest Issues
- Establishing Measurement and Accountability Issues

To succeed, government and non-government officials should consider adapting a multi-faceted strategy that addresses the legal/regulatory, resources/funding, equity/fairness, private investment, measurement, and accountability issues. Pursuing this type of comprehensive approach can make it easier to overcome the many blight-related challenges that will be encountered.

Key Factors Influencing Successful Blight Reduction Strategies

In examining examples of successful Blight reduction strategies utilized by other cities across the United States, several key factors emerged that consistently contributed to the success of those strategies. Table 3 provides a brief summary of those key factors identified that can greatly influence the success of blight reduction strategies:

Table 3 Examples of Blight Reduction Success factors

Factor	Description	Example
Strong Political Leadership and Collaboration	Mayor-led multiagency coordination	Memphis Blight Elimination Charter
Sufficient and Flexible Funding Streams	Diversified and recurring	Detroit demolition bond
Having a Clear Plan with Targets and Transparency	Public dashboards	New Orleans BlightSTAT
Community Engagement and Collaboration	Neighborhood partnerships	Pittsburgh ReClaim Program
Adaptive Management and Innovation	Pursuing multiple strategies based upon situation	Detroit, New Orleans, Memphis, Pittsburgh
Prioritization and Phasing (Time Sequencing) of Activities	Establishing monthly, quarterly, and yearly goals and objectives	New Orleans, Memphis,

Conclusions

As discussed throughout this resource guide, the process of reducing blight in the city of Jackson is a complex, decades-long problem that has been restricting the city's socio-economic well-being. The evidence presented in this resource guide indicates that Jackson faces a large-scale, systemic blight crisis driven by decades of population decline, economic disinvestment, legal bottlenecks, and insufficient municipal capacity. Yet it also shows that this challenge has been solved by other cities using a coordinated, well-funded, and data-driven strategy. Proven approaches (e.g., land banking, BlightSTAT performance management, targeted demolition and rehab clusters, nuisance litigation, and community-driven greening) from peer cities demonstrate that measurable gains in safety, property values, and neighborhood stability

are achievable when legal tools, sustainable financing, and community partnerships work in tandem. In particular, success will hinge on overcoming persistent implementation hurdles, especially legal challenges to title clearance and securing adequate, sustained financing. The successful implementation of blight reduction strategies can often take years to occur. By implementing a phased "Blight Reduction Plan" centered on political cooperation, cross-agency alignment, transparent data systems, a modernized property-transfer framework, and dedicated funding, Jackson can significantly reduce its inventory of blighted structures.

Recommendations

The following is a listing of legal, administrative, policy, financial, and community-oriented recommendations that can help Jackson (and other Mississippi cities experiencing significant blight issues) develop and implement a successful Blight Reduction Plan.

- Establish a Central "Blight Office"
- Create a Multi-sector Blight Task Force or Working Group
- Negotiate Control of State-Owned Parcels
- Adopt a *BlightSTAT* Performance Reporting System
- Launch Cluster-Based Pilot Projects
- Pursue "Greening" Initiatives as Temporary Development Solutions
- Expand Partnerships with Faith-based, Nonprofits, and Community Organizations
- Create Local Blight Funding Sources / Align City Incentives with State Tax Credits
- Integrate Health and Safety Metrics into Performance Measurement/Reporting System
- Use Data Visualization and Interactive Maps
- Establish Property Maintenance and Accountability Rules
- Pursue Matching Funds and State Collaboration Partnerships
- Ensure Equitable Redevelopment Activities
- Monitor, Evaluate, and Adjust Blight Reduction Strategies

NOTE: As with any viable plan, the recommendations listed in this resource guide will need to be adjusted to fit applicable political, legal, administrative, and financial situations.

Introduction

Jackson, Mississippi, the state's capital and largest city, faces many challenges with reducing residential blight. The city's official *Blight Elimination Program* defines blight as defective or abandoned structures, overgrown lots, litter, graffiti, and unsafe conditions that threaten public welfare and negatively impacts property values and quality of life (City of Jackson, 2025). Many Mississippi communities (large and small) struggle with blighted properties, but Jackson has the highest share in the state (Magnolia Tribune, 2024). The city's challenge is quantified in the staggering number of properties (over 2,000 tax-forfeited properties and over 7,000 abandoned houses) in Jackson not on the tax rolls, sitting vacant and unproductive (Mississippi Free Press, 2022; Census.gov, 2024).

There are many causes contributing to Jackson's current blight crisis such as decades of economic disinvestment, declining population patterns, aging housing stock, growing poverty levels, and declining municipal revenue needed for maintenance of city services (U.S. Census Bureau, 2025; Magnolia Tribune, 2024; Mississippi Free Press, 2022). Blight is not simply an aesthetic or eyesore issue, it has been shown to correlate with higher crime rates, lower investment levels, economic decline, and public health hazards (Governing.com, 2014; Restore Your Economy, 2014; UIED, 2021). Increasing levels of vacant and deteriorated properties create a ripple effect leading to a lowering of property values, reduced tax revenues, a reduction in city services, and perpetuating cycles of decline (Restore Your Economy, 2014; UIED, 2021). The sheer scale of the problem suggests a holistic, comprehensive approach is needed to address this multifaceted problem. Based upon research conducted in assembling this resource guide, the suggested approach should include proven policy interventions and best practices, sustainable funding options, community engagement initiatives, supportive legal frameworks, and knowledge of anticipated implementation challenges.

This resource guide seeks to provide a comprehensive roadmap for addressing blight in the city of Jackson and other Mississippi urban areas. This guide provides a review of the following: (1) blight-reduction strategies utilized successfully in other U.S. cities; (2) current local and state initiatives addressing the issue of blight; (3) specific policy and funding initiatives that have been used successfully in other U.S. cities; and (4) challenges and success factors associated with combating blight in urban areas. This report also includes a recommendation section that can be used by government and other interested parties (e.g., nonprofits, churches, philanthropic organizations) in their efforts to significantly reduce residential blight. Both the city of Jackson's previous mayoral administration, and the city's current mayoral administration, have formally made blight reduction a municipal priority, setting ambitious goals for the removal of blighted structures and the redevelopment of areas containing those structures (City of Jackson, 2025). The overall goal of this resource guide is to provide public, private, and nonprofit officials with insightful, proven information that can help reduce levels of residential blight in urban areas. As part of its mission of using basic and applied research to help improve the quality of life in Mississippi's urban areas, the Jackson State University Mississippi Urban Research Center (MURC) is submitting this resource guide to help achieve that goal.

Resource Guide Methodology

This resource guide was prepared utilizing a descriptive, qualitative research design to examine documentation on local, state, and regional blight-related issues, challenges, best practices, and success factors. The documentation reviewed included proposed and existing state legislation; local city ordinances, programs, and services; peer reviewed journal articles; local news media reports; and special reports from national research organizations. Additionally, this report was prepared with assistance from the ChatGPT 5.0v, Gemini 3.0v, and Copilot artificial intelligence (A.I.) search tools. Those A.I. search tools were used to help identify, sort, and analyze documentation on blight-related issues and initiatives. Key findings were identified and organized by the report authors with a focus on presenting a comprehensive listing of blight-related issues that can assist local officials in developing and implementing blight reduction strategies. In accordance with professional integrity and research standards, all AI-generated content was critically reviewed, fact-checked, and edited by this resource guide authors. These authors accept full responsibility for the accuracy, content, and final conclusions presented in this document.

Historical & Statistical Context of Problem

As briefly discussed earlier, blight in the city of Jackson results from decades of economic disinvestment, population loss, economic restructuring, systemic issues such as racial segregation and redlining, increasing poverty levels, and declining tax revenue sources leading to reductions in city services (U.S. Census Bureau, 2025; Magnolia Tribune, 2024; Mississippi Free Press, 2022). The blight problem presents itself as housing units that are structurally unsound and maintained; neglected lots used for dumping and other illegal activities; abandoned buildings that attract criminal activity; and community residents experiencing high levels of anxiety and/or mental depression. Blighted properties can serve as centers of decay, eroding a city's tax base and requiring disproportionately high expenditures for emergency services, code enforcement, and police activity (Restore Your Economy, 2014; UIED, 2022).

The presence of blighted properties is typically concentrated within areas facing the greatest socioeconomic challenges. Blight in the city of Jackson is geographically concentrated in neighborhoods like South Jackson, West Jackson, and older central corridors (U.S. Census Bureau, 2025; Magnolia Tribune, 2024; Mississippi Free Press, 2022). Many properties have fallen into tax delinquency status, and thus forfeited to the State of Mississippi via the Secretary of State’s Public Lands Division (Magnolia Tribune, 2025). Between 1,900 and 2,431 parcels are now state-owned, with many thousands more being privately abandoned (Magnolia Tribune, 2024). The city also faces several administrative challenges such as having a limited number of active code-enforcement officers to handle thousands of complaints annually, and not having a central office to oversee and coordinate blight reduction activities (City of Jackson, 2024).

Jackson's situation is further complicated by the legal issues surrounding tax-forfeited property. When properties are abandoned and taxes go unpaid, they often revert to the State of Mississippi, where they can sit indefinitely unmaintained and idle (Magnolia Tribune, 2024). This legal limbo is a major historical reason for the large inventory of blighted properties in Jackson; thus preventing the city from efficiently gaining title or control over the properties for

remediation or redevelopment. Thereby also creating an economic problem that hinders the city's ability to intervene and prevent blight from growing and decreasing property tax revenue.

The following table provides a statistical profile of Jackson's housing and demographic conditions. This table helps establish a context for understanding Jackson's current blight issues, and helps provide a baseline for measuring and comparing future blight reduction results.

Table 4 Demographic, Socio-Economic, and Blight Measurement Indicators

Metric	Jackson, MS	Contextual Significance to Blight
Population (2020)	~153,700	Reflects decades of population loss, leaving excess housing stock and infrastructure.
Poverty Rate	~24.9%	Higher poverty correlates strongly with housing insecurity, property tax default, and lack of maintenance.
Owner-Occupied Housing Rate	~50.6%	A lower owner-occupancy rate often leads to lower levels of maintenance and upkeep in rental properties, exacerbating blight issues.
Median Household Income	~$38,000	Low income levels restrict the ability of homeowners to afford necessary repairs, leading to structural decline and possible abandonment.
Total Number of Abandoned/Blighted Properties	Estimated over 7,000 total blighted parcels	Represents the immense scale of the problem and the financial burden on the city to address the problem.
State-Held Tax-Forfeited Properties in Jackson	Over 2,000	Represents the number of properties potentially stuck in legal limbo, preventing city intervention and redevelopment.
City Demolitions Executed (2024-2025)	117 properties	Reflects the limited impact of city efforts in comparison to the overall scale of problem (i.e., potentially over 9,000 properties)
Community/Church-Led Demolitions (2023-2025)	~200 properties	Reflects the limited impact of community and church-based organizations on the overall problem (i.e., over 9,000 properties)

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau (2024); Mississippi Free Press (2021); Magnolia Tribune (2024); WLBT (2025)

Table 4 presented key demographic, socio-economic, and measurement indicators describing the blight problem in the city of Jackson. Taking collectively, the historical and data perspectives illustrate some of the systemic and structural challenges facing Jackson officials as they seek to reduce the city's overall level of blight. The following section summarizes data findings and provides additional insight into Jackson's current blight-related issues:

- **Impact of population decline** --- A decline in city population (from ~173,000 in 2010 to ~152,000 in 2020) reduces demand for new or renovated housing, weakens the tax base, and can exacerbate abandonment in marginal neighborhoods (Magnolia Tribune, 2024).

- **Heavy burden of state-owned inventory** --- Jackson carries a disproportionately large share of abandoned/tax-forfeited properties relative to its municipal capacity to manage them. Because those parcels generate no property tax revenue while in limbo, they reduce the city's fiscal base and complicate cleanup efforts (Clarion Ledger, 2025; Magnolia Tribune, 2024; WLBT, 2025).

- **Legal and administrative complexities** --- Many blighted parcels remain in legal limbo, are expensive to rehabilitate, and are constrained by title defects, absentee ownership, or unclear legal standing. These infrastructure, title, utilities, taxation, maintenance, and absentee ownership issues are among the key causes of blight (Restore Your Economy, 2014; City of Jackson, 2025).

- **Limited funding availability** --- While the city has undertaken numerous demolition projects via grants and community partnerships, those efforts are relatively modest in terms of scale and impact, addressing less than 5 % of total need. For example, the earlier 117 demolitions funded via a $2.95 million grant is significant, but dwarfed by the total scale of vacant/blighted inventory in the city of Jackson (Mississippi Free Press, 2021).

- **Staffing and enforcement issues** --- The backlog in code enforcement and limited staffing (e.g., approximately a dozen active officers) suggests that many substandard or blighted properties go unaddressed for extended periods (WLBT, 2025).

- **Impact of community involvement** --- Community-based efforts (e.g., church-led demolitions) help in localized areas, but lack the scale or integration to broadly reverse the growing number of blighted properties (WLBT, 2025).

In summary, a review of historical and statistical factors indicates the city of Jackson's blight issues are influenced by demographic changes, declining fiscal resources, legal and institutional barriers, and inter-governmental relations constraints. Any effective blight reduction strategy should take these factors into consideration collectively and individually. The next section examines blight's socio-economic impact on cities and surrounding communities.

Blight's Economic, Social, and Health Impact

Blight is a multi-dimensional problem that has impacts far beyond visual appearances. It can also impact a city from various economic, social, and health perspectives. The following section presents information describing blight's impact across several quality-of-life indicators, and also describes how blight has short-, medium-, and long-term socio-economic consequences at multiple levels (e.g., community, city, and state levels).

Economic Impact

Blight negatively impacts the local economy across several measures that include:

- **Depressed Property Values:** The presence of one blighted structure can lower the property value of surrounding, well-maintained homes by up to 20%, contributing to neighborhood decline (Restore Your Economy, 2014).

- **Reduced Tax Revenue:** Lower property values result in a shrinking tax base, reducing municipal revenue available to fund essential public services like schools, police, and fire protection. For example, a single city might incur millions annually in lost property tax revenue due to decline (Restore Your Economy, 2014).

- **Increased Service Costs:** Blighted properties require increased expenditures for fire protection, code enforcement, police intervention (due to crime attraction), and waste management (due to illegal dumping) (Restore Your Economy, 2014).

- **Discouraged Investment:** Blight signals instability, discouraging new business development and private residential investment, reinforcing a cycle of economic disinvestment (Restore Your Economy, 2014).

Social Impact

The social consequences of blight can erode a community's quality of life and sense of belonging through:

- **Increased Crime and Fear:** Vacant lots and abandoned buildings are often used for illicit activities, including drug use, drug sales, and prostitution, leading to increased crime rates. This criminal activity generates fear among residents (UIED, 2021; Penn, 2015; Urban Institute, 2017).
- **Erosion of Social Cohesion:** Persistent blight fosters population turnover, weakens neighborhood networks, and contributes to "flight" from distressed zones (UIED, 2021; Penn, 2015; Urban Institute, 2017).
- **Increased Isolation:** Can lead residents to withdraw from neighborhood life, impeding the development of collective efficacy (that is, mutual trust and shared expectations for the common good), and thus further perpetuating community decline (UIED, 2022; Penn, 2015; Urban Institute, 2017).

- **Stigma and Inequality:** Blight disproportionately affects low-income and minority communities, perpetuating economic and social inequality and attaching a harmful stigma to the neighborhood (UIED, 2021; Penn, 2015; Urban Institute, 2017).
- **Educational Outcomes:** Children living near derelict areas exhibit lower attendance and performance rates, reflecting environmental stress. (UIED, 2022; Penn, 2015; Urban Institute, 2017).

Health Impact

Blighted environments are direct contributors to poor public health outcomes by creating and/or spreading:

- **Physical Hazards:** Dilapidated structures pose physical safety risks, and unkempt yards attract vermin and pests (e.g., rodents, cockroaches). The presence of damaged paint often results in dangerous lead poisoning, particularly affecting children and impeding their development. Collapsing structures and debris increase injury rates among residents and first responders (UIED, 2021; Urban Institute, 2017).
- **Respiratory Illnesses:** Substandard housing can expose residents to mold, dampness, and poor indoor air quality, contributing to high rates of asthma and other respiratory illnesses (UIED, 2021; Urban Institute, 2017).
- **Mental Health and Toxic Stress:** Constant exposure to disorder, crime, and fear causes toxic stress, a maladaptive physiological response. This chronic stress is linked to poor health outcomes such as cardiovascular disease (hypertension), depression, and anxiety. Studies have even associated boarded-up housing with increased rates of diabetes, suicide, and premature mortality (UIED, 2022; Urban Institute, 2017; Penn, 2015).

Table 5 provides additional insight regarding the socio-economic impact of blight on cities and their communities:

Table 5 Blight's Socio-Economic Impact

Impact Domain	Observed Effect	Documentation Source
Property Values	Decreased 5 % to 15 %	Urban Institute (2019)
Local Crime	Decreases 5 % after lot greening	Penn Institute of Urban Research (2015)
Fire/Police Calls	Increases near vacant houses	Restore Your Economy (2014)
Tax Revenue Loss	Potentially millions annually from non-taxable forfeits	Restore Your Economy (2014)

The information presented in this section illustrates how blight can create systemic, cross-cutting socio-economic problems. Economically, blight can help deplete a city's tax base and increase its service costs (e.g., fire, police). Socially, it can fuel crime, fear, and help break down community trust. From a health standpoint, it can expose residents to lead, pests, mold, and chronic toxic stress, directly contributing to negative health/mental health issues. Blight's

cumulative economic, social, and health effects underscore the need for a comprehensive approach that combines legal/regulatory, demolition, redevelopment, and social services oriented solutions. The next section of this report examines recent efforts by the City of Jackson to address blight and the problems it creates.

Efforts by City of Jackson to Address Problem

The city of Jackson has undertaken ramped-up efforts to combat blight from the mayoral office. Those efforts have included interventions like increased demolitions, property redevelopment, tax abatements, and the greening of open spaces (City of Jackson, 2024). The sections below provide a brief overview of blight mitigation efforts conducted by Jackson's former Mayor Chokwe Lumumba, and Jackson's current Mayor John Horhn. The goal of this section is to provide a working context for: (1) understanding what activities have been, or are currently being, implemented; and (2) provide a comparison point for developing and/or expanding additional blight mitigation efforts for the city of Jackson.

Former Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba (2017-2025)

During his tenure, Mayor Lumumba focused on establishing a strategic framework and improving code enforcement mechanisms. Below is a listing of some blight mitigation activities undertaken by the Lumumba administration (City of Jackson, 2024; Mississippi Free Press, 2021, 2022):

- A 2018 strategic plan, developed with community input, included a specific goal to eliminate 25% of the city's blight by 2021.
- Established a *Blight Elimination Program* which included targeting 500 demolitions per year, strengthening code enforcement, remediating illegal dumping, stabilizing distressed communities, and increasing private investment.
- Partnering with nonprofits (e.g., Habitat for Humanity, Jackson Housing Authority, Design Build Solutions, Midtown Partners, and Voice of Calvary Ministries) and developers to reduce blight and redevelop those cleared areas.
- Procured Requests for Qualifications (RFQs) for demolition contractors (e.g. Innovative Performance Construction, PDT Logistics) as part of the city's implementation pipeline.
- Used a $2.95 million grant from the Mississippi Home Corporation to remove 117 blighted properties via partnerships.
- Established a mechanism for citizens to report dilapidated or blighted properties via the Community Improvement Division (311 telephone portal).
- Identified 13 causes of blight in the city of Jackson (e.g., structural defects, taxation issues, absentee ownership, infrastructure issues, illegal dumping).
- Created a rental registry of landlords to better facilitate code enforcement and accountability for non-owner-occupied properties. The city also utilized *environmental courts* to determine the necessary action (demolition or remediation) for derelict structures.
- Seeking increases in available state funding as a result of current amounts being inefficient due to it prioritizing demolition costs over the high administrative costs required to legally clear property titles, which is often the most expensive hurdle.

Current Mayor John Horhn (2025 - present)

As of this writing, the Horhn administration is in the early stages of implementing its blight reduction agenda. Although relatively new, the administration has inherited from the Lumumba administration several existing institutional structures, contracts, partnerships, and projects addressing Jackson's blight issue. In addition to those inherited initiatives and structures, the Horhn administration has implemented several initiatives aimed at blight elimination and community revitalization. Table 6 and the narrative below presents some of those activities and initiatives pursued thus far:

a) Targeted Demolition Approvals & Focus on South Jackson

- In August 2025, city leaders under the Horhn administration approved demolition of more than a dozen abandoned homes as part of a broader plan to reduce blight. Mayor Horhn commented, "Removing blighted properties remains a top priority … we're first starting in South Jackson; that's where the blight is most prevalent" (WAPT, 2025).
- Horhn administration also referenced blight elimination activities as a priority item in its "Jackson Rising" initiative (Jackson Rising, 2025).

b) Legislative Proposals & State Engagement

- The Horhn administration has advocated that the Mississippi Legislature expand tax incentives (e.g., enterprise / opportunity zones) to encourage reinvestment in Jackson neighborhoods (News From The States, 2025).
- The administration proposes to soon start computing the dollar cost required to reduce blight as a basis for requesting state or federal funding (News From The States, 2025).
- The administration has advocated leveraging opportunity zones, data centers, and redevelopment in corridors to drive economic growth and reduce blight (Clarion Ledger, 2025).

c) Reinforcing Infrastructure, Public Works & Coordination

- Seeking to revive the Jackson's Public Works Department involvement in executing demolition, cleanup, street repair, and urban services (Clarion Ledger, 2025; Jackson Rising, 2025).
- Addressing homelessness, code enforcement, neglected infrastructure, and public safety are also part of Mayor Horhn's holistic agenda to make blighted neighborhoods more viable for redevelopment (Clarion Ledger, 2025) (Jackson Rising, 2025).

d) Engaging Community & Faith-Based Entities

- Strengthening partnerships with congregations and nonprofit actors (e.g. Voice of Calvary, New Horizon) that have been active in demolition efforts and community cleanups in neighborhoods (WLBT, 2025) (Jackson Rising, 2025).

Table 6 Summary of Horhn administration's Blight Actions, Proposals, Challenges

Initiative / Action	Status / Stage	Scope / Focus	Strengths / Potential	Challenges / Dependencies
Initial demolition approvals (~ dozen properties)	Approved / underway	South Jackson & high-blight zones	Demonstrative action; visible signal	Limited scale; need follow-up redevelopment projects
Legacy continuation of Blight Program & partnerships	Ongoing	Citywide blight elimination; using past partner contracts	Institutional continuity, partner relationships	Must scale up to meet backlog of eligible/vacant properties
Tax incentive / zone expansion proposals	In planning / advocacy	Opportunity zones, enterprise zones	May attract private redevelopment capital	Requires legislative cooperation; must be well designed
State funding request & cost estimation	Planning	Develop dollar-based requests for state/federal funding	Data-driven justification	Must align with state programs and compliance requirements
Public works & infrastructure renewal	Early-stage	Strengthen municipal infrastructure capacity	Essential enabler for demolition, utilities, streets projects	Requires capital, management, recruitment
Community / faith-based partner engagement	Proposed	Expand existing church-led demolitions and neighborhood cleanup	Leverages local trust and capacity	Needs coordination, funding, oversight

Initiative / Action	Status / Stage	Scope / Focus	Strengths / Potential	Challenges / Dependencies
Citizen complaint system & code enforcement	Continuation / potential strengthening	Streamline reporting (311, complaints)	Improve responsiveness	Needs staff, legal enforcement and follow-up

Challenges Encountered

Some of the challenges facing the Horhn administration are very similar to those challenges facing previous Jackson mayoral administrations including former Mayor Chokwe Lumumba. Table 6 and the listing below provides a summary of those challenges:

- *Administration issues* --- Establishing and operationalizing internal administrative functions and personnel regarding planning, staffing, partnerships and collaborations, rules and procedures, and political alignment with city, state, and local officials. The administration must build or restore internal operational capacity (e.g. permitting, code enforcement, legal, real estate, contracting) to translate vision into action.
- *Budget issues* --- Obtaining significant additional funding from public, private, and nonprofit organizations for larger demolition, maintenance, and redevelopment activities.
- *Coordination with state-owned parcels* --- Due to many blighted parcels being state-owned, obtaining cooperation with the Mississippi Secretary of State's office to gain access or control over those assets.
- *Local politics and stakeholder alignment* --- Some resistance from property owners or neighborhoods regarding the classification of parcels as blighted, or challenging eminent domain, demolition, or land transfers projects.
- *Equity and displacement risk issues* --- Trying to ensure redevelopment is inclusive of preserving affordable housing options and avoid displacing vulnerable residents.

The City of Jackson's efforts under both mayoral administrations (i.e., Lumumba, Horhn) established blight mitigation as a priority item. Mayor Lumumba focused on data-driven goals and code enforcement infrastructure (like the rental registry), while the Horhn administration is focusing on high-visibility clean-ups and political advocacy for state-level support. Both administrations have recognized that legal and funding challenges, particularly regarding property titles, are major constraints impeding the scale and timeliness of blight mitigation efforts in the city of Jackson. The next section focuses on the State of Mississippi's efforts to address blight in the city of Jackson and other areas of the state.

Mississippi State Government Efforts to Address Problem

In Mississippi, State government is involved with the blight issue due to its ownership of tax-forfeited properties, control over legal/regulatory tools, and its ability to fund large-scale blight mitigation initiatives. This section reviews state-level legislative, regulatory, and

programmatic initiatives (current or proposed) aimed at combating blight in municipalities facing significant blight challenges.

Historical & Legislative Context

Blight, abandonment, and tax-forfeited properties have long challenged Mississippi cities. For decades, cities have lobbied for greater authority, funding, and coordination with the state to address those parcels (Magnolia Tribune, 2025). A major obstacle for cities seeking to address the blight issue is that many distressed parcels are held by the state (via the Secretary of State's Office) after tax defaults, limiting local governments' ability to intervene (Magnolia Tribune, 2025). Mississippi law establishes the broad rules and regulations governing how cities can legally (and timely) handle such distressed properties (Magnolia Tribune, 2025).

State-Level Initiatives & Proposed Measures

In recent legislative sessions, the Mississippi Legislature has introduced and/or passed state legislation making adjustments to how state-owned properties may be redeveloped. The State's efforts are primarily centered on the disposal and reuse of properties that have failed to sell at tax auctions. Below is a summary of the most significant state-level actions or legislative proposals for the years 2026 and 2025.

2026 Legislative Actions

The 2026 Mississippi Legislative session featured several key proposals specifically targeted at urban revitalization and the remediation of blighted properties. Given Jackson's high concentration of abandoned sites, estimated at roughly 25% of the state's total (Magnolia Tribune, 2024/2025), much of the 2026 legislation is aimed directly at the capital city and/or provides new legal frameworks for all Mississippi municipalities to regain control of tax forfeited properties. The following table provides an overview of proposed legislation addressing blight from a tax/property perspective:

Table 7 Proposed Legislation Addressing Blight From Tax/Property Perspective

Bill Number	Proposed Short Title / Topic	General Purpose & Impact on Municipalities
HB 1757 / SB 2679	*Mississippi Land Bank Act*	Creates a legal framework for local governments to establish Land Banks. These entities would have the power to acquire, "quiet" the title of, and redevelop blighted or abandoned properties (including those forfeited for taxes) for the purpose of returning them to productive use.
HB 1943	*City of Jackson Revitalization Act*	Specifically targets Jackson by providing sales tax exemptions on component materials used by developers to rehabilitate blighted property. It also explores the issuance of state bonds to fund large-scale remediation.

Bill Number	Proposed Short Title / Topic	General Purpose & Impact on Municipalities
HB 1843	*Jackson Blight Removal Appropriation*	Proposes a direct appropriation of $300,000 from the State General Fund to the city of Jackson specifically to pay for the demolition and removal of dilapidated houses and other blighted structures.
HB 1841	*Blighted Property Bond Issuance*	Authorizes the issuance of State General Obligation Bonds to provide a pool of funds for the city of Jackson to assist in the acquisition and demolition of blighted properties.
SB 3359	*Hinds County Blight Removal*	While focused on the county level, this bill seeks funding for the acquisition and demolition of blighted properties specifically within Supervisor Districts 3 and 5, which encompass significant portions of the City of Jackson.
HB 426	*Tax-Forfeited Land Amendments*	Amends existing codes regarding the sale of state-forfeited tax lands. It seeks to streamline the patent confirmation process and clarifies that the Secretary of State does not need to include certain past-due municipal taxes in the sale price, making it easier for buyers to acquire state-owned blighted lots.
HB 890	*Downtown Jackson Revitalization Coalition*	Establishes a coalition of federal, state, and local stakeholders to develop a comprehensive revitalization plan for downtown Jackson, specifically addressing the infrastructure and "eyesore" issues that contribute to blight.

Source: Mississippi Legislature (2026) / NOTE: Due to this resource guide being finalized before the end of the 2026 legislative session, the final status (i.e., passed, not passed, vetoed by Governor) of the above legislative proposals cannot be reported.

Key Policy Observations

While the above 2026 proposals seek to provide municipalities with more legal authority over handling tax forfeited properties, the full implementation of those proposals will depend upon the amount of discretionary state funding made available and accompanying those proposals. The following are some additional observations on the 2026 legislative proposals:

- *Shift Toward Local Control:* The "Mississippi Land Bank Act" (HB 1757) represents a significant policy shift toward giving cities the "operational flexibility" of a private owner to clean up and sell properties that are currently stuck in legal limbo.
- *Tax Incentive Strategy:* Represents movement toward using state tax credits and sales tax exemptions to make the expensive process of "blight-to-commerce" conversion more financially viable for private developers.

- *State-Owned Lands:* HB 426 is particularly relevant for Jackson, as it addresses the significant administrative and legal hurdles regarding the purchase of thousands of land parcels currently held by the Secretary of State's office due to tax forfeiture.

2025 Legislative and Non-Legislative Actions

Below is a summary of legislative and non-legislative (e.g., State administrative agencies) actions seeking to assist municipalities in addressing blight-related issues:

A. *House Bill 1201: Incentivizing Redevelopment of State-Forfeited / Blighted Properties*

- The bill sought to create an income tax credit for redevelopment or rehabilitation of state-forfeited properties, conditional on sale to owner-occupants or commercial lease/sale. Developers cannot claim the incentive until the property is sold or occupied.
- The bill is intended as an economic lever to reduce the disincentive to invest in marginal or blighted parcels.
- Its progress was noted in early 2025 as advancing to the Senate (Magnolia Tribune, 2025).

B. *State Cleanup & Incentive Grant Programs*

- Bill sought to establish a property cleanup revolving fund with modest per-property grants (e.g., $2,000 each) for municipalities. The program would be administered by the Mississippi Home Corporation (MHC). The city of Jackson would be eligible for up to 30 such grants.
- The Legislature in 2025 debated a more expansive municipal blight cleanup program to provide broader authority and matching grants. Nearly 4,000 blighted properties statewide were referenced during legislative debate.
- Some legislative language allows entities such as redevelopment authorities or parking authorities (not just municipalities) to apply for funding, a workaround to local administrative limitations (Mississippi Today, 2025).

C. *Reimbursement for State Parcel Cleanup*

- Statutory mechanisms exist for the Secretary of State to reimburse municipalities or counties for cleanup activity on state-owned parcels, but such reimbursement funding was cut in 2016.
- Some legislative initiatives seek to restore or expand such reimbursement authority, enabling municipalities to invest in vacant parcels held by the state (Magnolia Tribune, 2025).

D. *State Appropriation Requests & Jackson's Legislative Push*

- In early 2025, Jackson formally requested $25 million in state appropriations specifically for blight abatement, in addition to nearly $35 million for other infrastructure / capital needs (Mississippi Today, 2025).

- Mayor Horhn (prior to taking office) advocated for expanded tax incentives, redevelopment support, and enhanced infrastructure funding to support city-led cleanup and redevelopment efforts (Mississippi Today, 2025).

The table below provides additional analysis of the previously described legislative initiatives and/or proposals submitted in 2025:

Table 8 Analysis of Mississippi Legislative Initiatives and/or Proposals (through 2025 Session)

Program / Legislation	Purpose / Mechanism	Eligible Recipients / Scope	Strengths	Key Constraints or Risks
HB 1201 – Redevelopment Tax Credit	Income tax credit for rehabilitating state-forfeited/blighted properties	Developers converting state-held parcels (residential/commercial)	Mobilizes private capital; encourages rehab	Requires sale/lease before credit; monitoring overhead; capital needs may exceed credit value
Cleanup Revolving Fund (via MHC)	Grant assistance (e.g. $2,000/property) for remediation/demolition	Municipalities (Jackson eligible for 30 grants)	Supports capitals costs for cleanup	Too small per property; must be supplemented
Broad Blight Cleanup Program (2025 legislative proposal)	Authorize state grants/authority for municipal blight remediation	Cities, redevelopment authorities, other entities	Broader reach; more flexibility	Dependent on appropriation; requires state-local coordination
Reimbursement for state parcel cleanup	Allow cities to be reimbursed for cleaning up state-owned parcels	Municipalities/counties working on State-owned properties	Addresses central bottleneck	Funding cut since 2016; must be reactivated with sustained budget
Jackson's state appropriation request	$25 million request to the Legislature for blight abatement	City of Jackson	Push for dedicated capital infusion	Must compete in legislative appropriations; political negotiations

Source: OpenAI ChatGPT 5.0 Analysis

Additional Implementation Issues

While the initiatives adopted by the Mississippi Legislature in recent years represent meaningful progress in the battle to reduce blight, they do not address all the legislative and non-legislative challenges and gaps associated with such a complex issue. The following is a listing of additional issues, challenges, and gaps influencing a municipalities success in implementing blight mitigation activities:

1. **Scale mismatch** --- The modest size of proposed legislative grant amounts (e.g. $2,000 per parcel) is minor in comparison to full demolition and/or rehabilitation costs which can easily exceed $12,000. To achieve meaningful impact, funding will be needed at a larger at scale.

2. **Conditionality & complexity** --- Legislative tax credit incentives tied to sale or occupancy requirements may discourage speculative redevelopment.

3. **Unfunded authorizations** --- Many legislative mechanisms are "enabling" only (i.e. authorized certain activities, but do not fully fund those activities).

4. **Coordination with the Secretary of State's (SOS) Office** --- Because state-held parcels are central to the problem, municipal blight reduction success depends on cooperation with the Mississippi Secretary of State's Office regarding property transfer, title clearance, and timely disposition.

5. **Administrative capacity at the municipal level** --- Many cities lack the staff, legal expertise, and/or systems to apply and manage grants, oversee redevelopment activities, and ensure compliance with state legal requirements.

6. **Sustainability & reuse** --- Clearing properties is only one step in the blight reduction process. Without viable and sustainable redevelopment plans, cleared lots may revert under new ownership to vacancy, garbage dumping, or crime areas.

7. **Equity and displacement concerns** --- Issues related to gentrification or displacement of vulnerable residents in low-income neighborhoods should also be considered when creating and implementing property redevelopment plans.

In summary, state-level efforts are an integral component in successfully seeking to mitigate blight. Historically-speaking, those efforts have NOT been at the scale needed to significantly address wide-spread blight problems cities like Jackson. However, the State has begun enacting more resourceful and supportive legislation that will allow municipalities to address their blight problems on a larger scale and in a timely manner. The next section examines other policy interventions that have been successfully used across the United States to reduce blight and its many negative effects.

Examples of Successful Blight Reduction Tools

Effective blight mitigation requires a multifaceted strategy that includes such initiatives as proactive code enforcement; policy interventions that streamlining the acquisition, remediation, and reuse of blighted properties; and community-level initiatives designed to sustain and enhance formerly blighted areas. The following is a listing of blight intervention tools that have proven effective in reducing blighted properties in other U.S. cities. These blight intervention tools were identified through a review of literature utilizing OpenAI ChatGPT 5.0v, Gemini 3.0v, and Microsoft Copilot artificial intelligence search tools.

Legal and Regulatory Tools

In examining successful blight mitigation strategies utilized by other U.S. cities, a supportive legal framework provides the structural foundation needed to efficiently address the blight problem. Existing laws and regulations, at both the state and local level, primarily dictate what policy intervention tools cities can use to address their blight problems. Below is a summary of selected tools that have been successfully used in other U.S. cities to reduce and redevelop blighted properties:

Land Bank Enabling Legislation

As discussed earlier, the creation of a Jackson land bank requires action by the Mississippi Legislature. Efforts to pass a land bank bill have stalled multiple times in recent years (Mississippi Free Press, 2022). A strong legal framework for a land bank would allow the acquisition of vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties, as well as the timely clearing of property titles and taxes. Ideally, such legislation would also allow the land bank to expedite "quiet title" actions (so that after a tax foreclosure or donation, the land bank can obtain insurable, marketable title within months rather than years). Many states' land bank laws include special quiet title provisions or allow use of "super-lien" status to wipe out encumbrances (Mississippi Free Press, 2022). The passage of such a Mississippi law would empower fast transfers of blighted property to new owners. Until a law passes, Jackson can work within existing legal channels. For example, the city can bid on tax-forfeited properties from the state and then work with existing organizations such as the Mississippi Center for Justice to quiet title (WLBT, 2025). Updating Mississippi's legal code to permit modern land banking would be one of the most impactful regulatory changes needed for blight elimination in Jackson and other cities struggling with similar issues.

Streamlining Tax Foreclosure and Property Transfer

A common barrier to repurposing blighted property is the complex process of tax foreclosure and resale. In some cases, properties can languish in limbo for years with taxes unpaid and thus later taken over by the state. Mississippi's system, where tax-foreclosed parcels go to the Secretary of State's inventory, is an example of a process that can result in the delay of redeveloping such local properties (Mississippi Free Press, 2022). Some states have adopted an accelerated foreclosure process for vacant and abandoned properties, recognizing that if a home is clearly abandoned, the foreclosure should be expedited to allow intervention before the

structure deteriorates beyond repair (Mississippi Free Press, 2022). Additionally, embracing online auctions or land bank dispositions can speed-up the return of property to the private sector. Another useful legal tool is "*spot blight eminent domain*" that would enable a city to condemn a specific derelict property (even if taxes are current) due to its threat to public welfare, with the intent of conveying it to someone who will fix it (ABA, 2017). States like Virginia have spot blight abatement laws authorizing this type of policy tool (Virginia, 2025). Mississippi could consider such a provision to allow cities to take court action in acquiring an extremely nuisance property if the owner refuses to act.

Building Codes and Inspection Regimes

Local regulatory frameworks (e.g., city ordinances and codes) are major tools in blight mitigation efforts. For example, "*Property Maintenance Codes*" help to ensure common blight conditions (e.g. unsecured buildings, overgrown lots, junk vehicles, fire-damaged structures) are addressed in a timely and effective manner (ABA, 2017). Those codes allow a city to abate nuisances (like boarding up a dangerous building or cutting weeds) and then place a lien on the property for the cost. Strengthening vacant "*property registration ordinances*", and updating city codes for inspections, are other regulatory improvement tools that can be used. Cities could also consider creating (or enhancing if already created) an "*rental property inspection ordinance*" if one does not exist (ABA, 2017). Many blighted homes are former rentals that landlords abandoned after they became uninhabitable. Requiring periodic inspections and minimum standards for rental licensing can prevent those homes from sliding into disrepair in the first place. Another useful legal mechanism is establishing a "*housing court or environmental court*", if one does not currently exist (ABA, 2017). The City of Memphis's success was bolstered by its dedicated environmental court with a judge focused almost exclusively on code cases (ABA, 2017). Jackson could consider a similar type court to prioritize code enforcement cases and assign a specific judge or hearing officer to them. This could possibly help streamline the judicial handling of blight-related orders.

Expedited Judicial Foreclosure/Receivership

Mississippi could consider enhancing its current foreclosure laws to support receivership; that is, a court appointing a third party to rehabilitate a property when the owner fails to do so (ABA, 2017). Some states (like Ohio and Pennsylvania) have statutes allowing nonprofits or even neighbors to petition the court to be a receiver for a blighted property, empowering them to fix it and place a lien for the cost, and potentially take title if the lien is not paid (Ohio, 2015; Pennsylvania, 2008/2014). If allowed by state legislation, this tool would help provide an alternative process to demolishing a structurally sound but neglected house, whereby a receiver could renovate and then return it to productive use. In absence of a specific law, cities or interested nonprofits could approach the chancery court and ask for equitable remedies in extreme cases, but having a defined statute would make it more routine (ABA, 2017).

Nuisance Property Statutes

Another legal policy tool is creating and/or strengthening "*public nuisance laws*". Creating or strengthening these laws (e.g., enabling cities to combine multiple nuisance

violations such as tax delinquency, code violations, criminal activity as cause for court action) could help speed-up the acquisition and redevelopment of blighted properties (ABA, 2017). The City of Memphis' experience prompted a statewide legislative anti-blight agenda in Tennessee in 2018 to bolster such legal tools (ABA, 2017).

Development Regulations Alignment

To help ensure existing zoning and building regulations do not unintentionally hinder blight recovery activities, city development regulations should be examined to ensure they are aligned and supportive of blight reduction efforts. For example, if a small vacant lot is in a zone that requires a large lot size for new construction, it may sit unused. To address that issue, cities could revise existing regulations to create more flexible "*infill development zoning*" or overlay districts for blighted neighborhoods (EPA, 2015). Thus, allowing slightly denser housing or mixed-use developments on formerly blighted sites, thereby helping to make redevelopment more economically viable. Similarly, permitting processes could be streamlined for projects that address blight areas. Such permitting processes could help expedite the demolishing of a dangerous building, or in renovating a vacant one (EPA, 2015). Municipalities could also consider offering "*fee waivers"* or expedited reviews for anyone wanting a permit to fix up a code-violating or vacant structure (EPA, 2015). This is essentially a small incentive built into the existing regulatory framework. The table below provides examples of key legal and regulatory frameworks supporting blight mitigation:

Table 9 Examples of Key Legal and Regulatory Frameworks Supporting Blight Mitigation

Framework	Relevance
Land Bank Legislation	Empowers cities to create and operate local land banks with quiet-title and other legal powers
Tax-Foreclosure Reform	Shortens redemption periods for clearly abandoned properties; allows municipal acquisition priority
Spot-Blight Eminent Domain	Permits targeted condemnation of derelict properties threatening public welfare
Receivership Mechanisms	Authorizes nonprofit receivership for abandoned but repairable homes
Vacant Property Registration & Fee Enforcement	Mandatory property registration with escalating annual fees; creates funding source for blight initiatives
Housing / Environmental Court	Creates a local division to handle code cases more efficiently

In summary, legal frameworks set the stage and provide the structural foundation upon which to initiate and sustained blight mitigation and redevelopment activities. Those frameworks can either facilitate turning around derelict properties relatively quickly, or they can create

bottlenecks that require sometimes years to resolve (ABA, 2017). Effective legal reform can shorten redemption periods and/or allow municipalities a first chance at acquiring tax-delinquent parcels before they become larger problems. Dealing with blighted properties involves "multiple complex, intertwined legal issues" from titles, taxes, estates of deceased owners, to code compliance and beyond (ABA, 2017). A supportive legal environment can help untangle those types of issues faster and more efficiently. Clearly established rules can also help send a powerful message to neglectful property owners about maintenance expectations, and the potential consequences for failing to meet those expectations (ABA, 2017; (Public Interest Law Center, 2018).

City-Based Examples of Specific Policy Tools

The legal and regulatory tools previously listed comprise only a portion of an effective blight mitigation strategy. Other tools, practices, and resources are needed to comprehensively address the multiple causes and impacts of blight. The following table provides "city-based" examples of specific policy tools used to combat blight successfully in other cities across the United States. These examples have been selected to show the types of programs and initiatives available depending upon each city's unique circumstances and resources. A more thorough and in-depth detail description of these policy tools is included in the Appendix section of this resource guide.

Table 10 City-based Specific Policy Tools

Policy Tool	City Example	Results/Outcome
Data-driven code enforcement & interagency BlightStat	*New Orleans, LA* – Conduct cross-departmental "BlightSTAT" meetings to track progress; streamlined hearings and seizures of derelict property	Over 13,000 blighted properties eliminated in 3 years (2010–2013); average enforcement timeline cut by 50%; New Orleans went from one of the worst blight rates to a national model (Source: Governing, 2014)
Mandatory maintenance ordinance for vacant properties	*Philadelphia, PA* – "Doors & Windows" ordinance requiring occupied appearance on vacant buildings (no boards)	Over 3,000 citations issued, securing vacant structures and improving appearance. Adjacent property values rose, and the ordinance contributed to crime reductions on treated blocks. Upheld by PA Supreme Court in 2018 after legal challenges (Source: Pubintlaw, 2018)
Land banking of tax-delinquent properties	*Cleveland, OH* – Cuyahoga County Land Bank acquires vacant houses, clears titles/liens, land assembles lots.	Over 2,400 abandoned houses demolished and 800 rehabilitated in 5 years. Created a pipeline for vacant land to be reused (new housing, side yards, etc.) helping stabilize neighborhoods. Cleveland's model is considered one of the most effective land banks (Source: Restore Your Economy, 2014).

Policy Tool	City Example	Results/Outcome
Public nuisance litigation & blight court	*Memphis, TN* – Suing owners of blighted homes under the Neighborhood Preservation Act; dedicated environmental court for housing.	Hundreds of vacant/problem properties brought into compliance or cleared via court orders. Multi-sector collaboration (city attorneys, legal clinics, judges) built a "Blight Elimination Charter" and sped up remediation. Memphis's approach has become a model in the Southeast for legal blight-fighting strategies (Source: ABA, 2017).
Community "clean & green" vacant lot program	*Pittsburgh, PA* – "ReClaim" initiative training community groups to convert vacant lots into green spaces. Also *Philadelphia, PA – LandCare* program by Pennsylvania Horticultural Society.	Pittsburgh's ReClaim cleaned up 56 acres of vacant land and installed 23 permanent neighborhood green projects. In Philadelphia, greening 12,788 lots led to a 5.6% drop in overall crime citywide (and 20% drop in robberies) (Penn.edu, 2015; NIJ.crimesolutions, 2016). Property values within 1000 feet of greened lots rose ~4% in one year and 13% after six years, showing significant return on investment from community greening (Penn.edu, 2015/2018).

Sources: Governing, 2014; Pubintlaw.org, 2018; NIJ.crimesolutions, 2016; ABA, 2017; Upenn.edu, 2015/2018

Funding Mechanisms for Blight Reduction

Funding is often the greatest barrier to implementing large-scale blight reduction activities. It has been estimated the cost to demolish a single family (detached) wood framed home ranges from $4,800 to $7,000, and from $27,000 to $40,000 for attached row homes built using brick (Urban Institute, 2019). Demolishing or rehabilitating properties, maintaining vacant lots, clearing property titles, foreclosure proceedings, and other supportive services require sufficient and reliable funding (Urban Institute, 2019). This section presents a listing of funding sources that have been used by other U.S. cities to build and sustain their blight reduction initiatives. For the purposes of this resource guide, those funding sources are categorized into two groups: (1) Dedicated Local Revenue Streams; and (2) Federal, State, and Philanthropy Resources.

Dedicated Local Revenue Sources

Local revenue sources typically include sources such as property taxes, fines, fees, and other types of revenue collected by local governmental units. Establishing a dedicated local source of funding to operate and sustain blight-related initiatives is considered essential since combating blight is usually a long-term proposition (Urban Institute, 2019; UIED, 2022).

Neighborhood Blight Remediation Fund (NBRF)

One example of long-term funding is the creation of a *Neighborhood Blight Remediation Fund (NBRF)*. This type of fund can be established through several recurring sources such as:

- Property Tax Revenues: Allocating a small, dedicated portion of new property tax revenue generated in newly rehabilitated areas back into the NBRF.
- Blight Lien Collections: Using the fines and liens collected from code enforcement to replenish the fund.
- Tax-Lien Sales/Expedited Foreclosure: By implementing a more aggressive and efficient tax-lien sales or expedited foreclosure process, a municipality can recoup lost tax revenue and transfer that revenue into the fund (Urban Institute, 2019).

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is another local financing tool that dedicates future increases in property tax revenue within a designated area to fund current improvements occurring in that area (FRBSF, 2013; Urban Land Institute, 2014). To combat blight, a TIF district could be created in a severely disinvested neighborhood targeted for revitalization. For example, a municipality (or private/nonprofit developer) invests in the cleanup and redevelopment of a blighted area, as a result of such investments, property values (and taxes) rise, with the increase in revenue being used to repay bonds or loans that funded the upfront improvements. TIF proceeds typically go toward things like site preparation, demolition of dangerous buildings, and improvements (streetscapes, lighting) that make revitalization areas more attractive to investors (FRBSF, 2013). Mid-sized cities have allocated TIF funds to revitalize blighted areas using the new taxes generated to pay for infrastructure and incentives to developers (Urban Land Institute, 2014). For the city of Jackson, a TIF might be feasible in areas where there is potential private redevelopment interest once blight has been addressed (e.g. the Farish Street district or the Highway 80 corridor). Since TIFs require a certain amount of taxable redevelopment projects to work, cities could consider pairing TIFs with other redevelopment projects in order to generate the scale needed to attract investors (FRBSF, 2013; Urban Land Institute, 2014; Urban Institute, 2019). Mississippi law allows TIFs, and the city of Jackson has done TIFs before mostly for commercial projects (Mississippi Code § 21-45-1).

Issuing Bonds

Another local revenue approach is issuing bonds for blight removal. In 2020, city of Detroit voters approved a $250 million bond specifically to fund demolition or renovation of thousands of vacant houses (Ballotpedia.org, 2020). This approach typically works with the bond being repaid over time from property tax revenues generated, thereby essentially borrowing funds now to remove blight quickly and at scale. If a municipality's debt capacity is limited, it can consider pursuing a smaller bond issue (or using a portion of a general infrastructure bond) to invest in high-impact blight projects (Restore Your Economy, 2014; Governing, 2014). The overall goal is to use the funds as an investment that will pay off by raising property values and reducing municipal costs in the long run (e.g., reducing the number fires in empty homes, police calls, declining tax revenue (Governing, 2014).

Federal, State, and Philanthropy Resources

These types of funding sources are typically generated by Federal and State governmental units, as well as public and private philanthropic organizations. The following are examples and descriptions of such funding sources.

Federal and State Grants

Key federal sources include HUD's Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership funds (HUD, 2025). These funds can be targeted in blighted areas toward code enforcement, demolition, and housing rehab. Other examples of federal funding sources include the *Neighborhood Stabilization Program* (NSP) which has been used by many cities to fight blight; and *Disaster recovery grants* (from HUD or FEMA) which can be used to address blight if linked to disaster impacts (FEMA, 2025). For example, New Orleans post-Katrina used FEMA funds to demolish hundreds of ruined homes (FEMA, 2025). The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds have also been used by various cities for blight removal (NACO, 2021).

At the State level, Mississippi's new *Property Cleanup Revolving Fund* will provide small grants to municipalities for blight cleanup on tax-forfeited properties (Magnolia Tribune, 2025). Jackson would be eligible for up to 30 grants of $2,000 each (total $60k) under this program (Magnolia Tribune, 2025). This funding source can be used to help clear trash or secure structures. Mississippi's H*istoric Preservation Tax Credits* program (if buildings are historic) and the new R*ehabilitation Tax Credit* program can also be leveraged with private investment (Magnolia Tribune, 2025).

Another example of federal/state funding is a $2.95 million grant the city of Jackson received (via the Mississippi Home Corporation's Blight Elimination Program) to acquire, clear title, demolish, and/or maintain 117 blighted structures (Mississippi Free Press, 2021). This grant, which required partnering with nonprofits like Habitat for Humanity and local CDCs, can be used to cover expensive blight mediation steps (e.g., asbestos abatement, demolition, back taxes) that can cost well over $20,000 per property (which sometimes exceeds the property's market value) (Mississippi Free Press, 2021).

Public-Private Partnerships and Philanthropy

Since blight reduction benefits the whole community, partnerships with businesses, nonprofits, and philanthropy can unlock resources beyond government sources. For example in Flint (MI), the Genesee County Land Bank's large-scale demolition and *Clean & Green lot maintenance* program was funded in part by grants from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and others, as part of a comprehensive community improvement effort (Mott, 2024). Municipalities such as Jackson could engage local and national foundations (e.g., those focused on community development or Southern cities) to fund pilot programs offering grants/loans to homeowners on fixed incomes to fix code issues (thereby preventing blight), or funding for greening vacant lots in heavily blighted areas (Mott, 2024; Penn.edu, 2015).

Another potential revenue source is corporate partnerships, including local employers and banks who have a stake in healthy cities, and might sponsor blight cleanup in specific neighborhoods (e.g., "adopt-a-spot" beautification programs; offering naming rights or sponsorships for cleanup zones) (Restore Your Economy, 2014; EPA, 2016). Public-private development deals can also turn blight into an investment opportunity. For example, cities could offer to write down the cost of land (or provide infrastructure) if a private developer agrees to build affordable housing on a cluster of vacant lots (Restore Your Economy, 2014; EPA, 2016). Land banks often act as intermediaries in such deals, assembling land and then issuing Request-for-Proposals (RFPs) to private builders. *Community Development Corporations (CDCs)* based in neighborhoods are another potential partner. For example, groups like Jackson's Midtown Partners and Voice of Calvary (which already participated in some Jackson's blight demolition activities) can leverage grants and donations to renovate homes or build new ones on cleared lots (Mississippi Free Press, 2021, 2024).

Finally, *Social Impact Bonds* (sometimes called "Pay for Success" initiatives) could also be utilized to remedy blighted conditions (Urban Institute, 2019). With these types of bonds, investors provide upfront capital to remediate blight, and are repaid by the government only if specified outcomes (e.g. reduced maintenance costs, increased property values) are achieved (Urban Institute, 2019). While still an emerging concept, cities like Baltimore and Memphis have considered pay-for-success programs for blight, and cities like Jackson could pilot this type of intervention in a small area if a willing intermediary and investors are found (Urban Institute, 2019). Below is a table providing examples of successful revenue sources used by other cities to fund various aspects of their blight reduction programs:

Table 11 Examples of Revenue Sources Used to Fund Blight Reduction Programs

Mechanism	Example City	Outcome / Note
Federal CDBG / HOME	Nationwide	Sustained funding for code enforcement
State Cleanup Fund	Mississippi (2025)	Seed grants for municipalities
TIF District	Macon, GA	Redevelopment of blighted corridor
Bond Issue	Detroit, MI	Funded demolition of 20,000 homes
Philanthropic Partnership	Flint, MI	$70 million leveraged for Clean & Green program

Establishing sustainable funding for blight reduction initiatives requires a transition from relying on "sometimes available" grant programs, to relying more on stable funding sources. It will require establishing dedicated local funding mechanisms that are typically part of a "stacked" funding strategy consisting of:

(1) Leveraging federal/state grants as the foundation for immediate, short-term actions (e.g., demolitions, acquisition, rehab loans)

(2) Using local tools like TIFs or bonds for gap funding in targeted areas for mid- to longer-term activities (e.g., infrastructure repair and upgrades; housing and commercial developments)

(3) Cultivating ongoing public-private partnerships for supplemental support and innovation for long-term activities (e.g., maintenance initiatives, residential and commercial reinvestments). (Sources: Restore Your Economy, 2014; CRCM, 2022)

Sustainable funding also requires ensuring funds are available for the maintenance of blight mitigated areas once they are cleared. For example, whenever a house is demolished, money (and/or human resources) need to be reserved for lot upkeep (e.g., mowing, debris removal) so that "cleared" blighted properties do not become overgrown blighted properties (Restore Your Economy, 2014; Penn.edu, 2015). Building such maintenance costs into funding proposals and partnership agreements will help sustain blight reduction activities. The key is to ensure money generated (e.g., TIFs, fines, bonds) is continuously reinvested into providing the long-term consistency-of-effort required for sustainable blight mitigation.

Community-Based Strategies and Their Effectiveness

Community-based strategies have been shown to be a vital component in addressing wide-spread blight issues (Governing, 2014; Restore Your Economy, 2014). For example, *Greening and clean-ups initiatives* have been shown to reduce crime and improve mental health, while also laying the groundwork for renewed investment (Penn.edu, 2015; NIJ, 2016). Another example is involving community members to help sustain any results achieved from blight

Table 12 Examples of Successful Community-based Blight Reduction Strategies

City Example	Strategy	Key Outcome/Lesson/ Measured Outcome
New Orleans, LA	Integrated, data-driven code enforcement.	- Produced measured reduction in blighted inventory and increased property values
Philadelphia, PA	Doors and Windows Ordinance.	- Reduced risk of structural collapse, squatting, and criminal activity - Decrease in gun violence by 5 % - Increase in property values by 4–13 % - Citywide mowing of 12,000 lots
Flint, MI	Community Gardens on Land Bank parcels.	- Effective reuse of small, difficult-to-develop lots and enhanced neighborhood aesthetics. - Over 1,000s of lots reused
Jackson, MS	Citizens Reporting of Blighted Conditions	- Increased visibility of issue; faster resolutions of blighted conditions
Warren, MI	Neighborhood Cleanups	- Over 30,000 violations corrected voluntarily.

reduction activities. A newly cleared lot is less likely to be trashed again if nearby residents have a stake in maintaining it. Additionally, community-led efforts can help encourage local officials to keep blight a priority on their public policy agenda. For example, attendees at New Orleans' BlightSTAT meetings were noted for holding public officials accountable and helping to keep agencies focused on the blight problem (Governing, 2014). Finally, community-based solutions often address the *"social dimensions"* of blight since vacant houses represent not just bricks and wood, they can also indicate broken social ties and economic hardship (Urban Institute, 2017; Penn.edu, 2015). By mobilizing neighbors to help neighbors (e.g., painting a peeling house for an elderly homeowner or turning a dumping ground into a community garden), these community-involved strategies can help rebuild social capital. This makes neighborhoods more resilient and can help prevent blight from occurring in the future (Urban Institute, 2017; Penn.edu, 2015). For all the previously reasons, community-based initiatives should be considered as a vital companion complement to government-based blight initiatives. Table 12 provides a listing of community-based strategies that have proven effective in other cities.

In summary, community-based strategies have proven to be a vital component in developing and implementing a blight reduction program. They can help to empower neighborhoods to take action, accelerate community cleanups, foster neighborhood involvement and ownership, and help maintain blight-free properties (Governing, 2014; Penn.edu, 2015). They can also help to ensure that neighborhood stabilization efforts have both short- and long-term benefits, and can be tailored to meet the needs of residents living in or near blighted areas. Grassroots and resident-led efforts can complement and help sustain government, private, and/or nonprofit blight reduction strategies. Therefore, it is advisable to build-in community-based initiatives and involvement as part of any blight mitigation plan.

Likely Blight Reduction Implementation Challenges

Successfully implementing blight reduction strategies will often require overcoming some common challenges typically encountered when addressing this problem. Below is a brief listing of challenges government and non-government officials have faced when seeking to successfully implement blight reduction strategies:

- **Resource Constraints and Sustainability:** One of the foremost challenges is sustaining funding and staffing over the long term. Blight elimination is often not a one-year project, it is typically a long-term undertaking that can last over a decade to complete (Restore Your Economy, 2014; ABA, 2017; Mott, 2024). It can require sustainable funding for demolition/rehabbing activities; ongoing maintenance of demolished/rehabbed properties; and ensuring adequately trained staff are available to handle the increased workload of inspections, legal filings, and property maintenance (ABA, 2017).

- **Legal and Bureaucratic Hurdles:** The various administrative processes involved in addressing blight can be daunting, complex, and numerous. For example, foreclosing on a tax-delinquent property and clearing its title can take many months or years if an owner cannot be found or if there are multiple heirs (ABA, 2017). Navigating court procedures, notice requirements, historic preservation reviews (if applicable), and sometimes pushback from owners or neighbors can delay action (Restore Your Economy, 2014;

ABA, 2017; Mott, 2024). Additionally, coordinating multiple agencies (city, county, state) will often require time and formal agreements (ABA, 2017).

- **Community Concerns and Equity Issues:** While most residents desperately want blight addressed in their neighborhoods, several community concerns may surface. Some of those concerns could include the fear of displacement or gentrification; rising property taxes; and other affordability issues (ABA, 2017). Other potential concerns include ensuring historic preservation of some structures and neighborhoods that might have historical value or at least sentimental value to the community; and issues involving distrust of government due to past neglect or broken promises (Restore Your Economy, 2014; ABA, 2017).

- **Market Conditions and Investor Interest:** Removing blight alone does not guarantee that new development will follow. Cities like Detroit and Cleveland, despite massive demolition programs, still struggled to attract enough redevelopment for all the vacant land created (Restore Your Economy, 2014). Jackson could face a similar situation where certain areas have many cleared lots with no immediate buyers or redevelopers. Aligning selected blight strategies with economic development efforts (e.g., job creation, improving schools, reducing crime) is essential to create a context where investment will flow (Restore Your Economy, 2014; Urban Institute, 2019).
- **Measurement and Accountability:** Another implementation challenge is tracking progress and proving success. A robust data system will be needed to track how many properties are addressed, in what way (e.g., demolished vs rehabbed), help determine current and future property values, and other informative data metrics (Governing, 2014). Without good data, it will be hard to prioritize strategies, or show what strategies are working. Cities should be prepared to collect both quantitative data (e.g., counts of demolition/rehabs conducted, dollars allocated, crime stats, property values) and qualitative success stories (e.g., families moving into refurbished homes, community events in formerly blighted lots) in order to paint a full picture of the impact achieved (Governing, 2014; Restore Your Economy, 2014). Also, including a comprehensive evaluation component can also help make any needed program adjustments.

In summary, implementing a citywide blight reduction strategy is an ambitious undertaking that will be accompanied by many different types of challenges. To succeed, government and non-government officials should consider adapting a multi-faceted strategy that considers legal/regulatory frameworks, resources/funding needs, equity/fairness criteria, private investment involvement, measurement and accountability standards. Pursuing this type of multi-faceted strategy can make it easier to overcome the many blight-related challenges that will likely be encountered.

Key Factors Influencing Successful Blight Reduction Strategies

In examining examples of successful blight reduction strategies utilized by other cities across the United States (Restore Your Economy, 2014; Governing, 2014; ABA, 2017; Urban Institute, 2019), several key factors emerged that consistently contributed to the success of those strategies. Below is a brief listing of factors identified for this resource guide:

- **Strong Political Leadership and Collaboration:** Strong, consistent political leadership involving both the Mayor's office and City Council officials is often the first step in implementing a successful Blight reduction agenda (ABA, 2017). Collaboration across government levels is also considered an absolute necessity given that problems associated with blight reduction often span across multiple agencies and departments (Restore Your Economy, 2014; Governing, 2014; ABA, 2017; Jackson Rising, 2025). In cities with successful blight reduction initiatives like New Orleans and Memphis, the mayors worked closely with county officials, judges, universities, and community leaders (ABA, 2017; Governing, 2014).

- **Having a Clear Plan with Targets and Transparency:** A well-defined action plan, containing specific targets (e.g. removing "X" number of blighted structures per year; rehabbing "X" number of blighted structures; clearing "X" number of tax foreclosures per year) can create unity and momentum towards achieving established benchmarks (Governing.com, 2014). Publishing the progress of blight reduction strategies (e.g., creating a public dashboard reporting on the number demolitions, rehabs, and other measures achieved) can also help build accountability and support (Governing.com, 2014).

- **Sufficient and Flexible Funding:** As discussed earlier, having adequate and sustainable funding is a necessity for successfully achieving blight reduction. Cities that succeeded often braided funding from many sources and had contingency plans if one source dried up (FRBSF, 2013; Urban Land Institute, 2014; Urban Institute, 2019). Financial creativity and good stewardship are also factors that can help achieve successful blight reduction outcomes (Restore Your Economy, 2014; Governing, 2014).

- **Community Engagement and Communication:** Getting community involvement for the achievement of both short- and long-term blight reduction goals is also a key success factor (Governing.com, 2014; Restore Your Economy, 2014). Cities that reduced blight effectively often had strong engagement and ongoing communications with local with residents (Governing.com, 2014). When residents feel heard and see tangible actions (e.g., a cleaned lot, rehabbed housing), their support can help bolster future blight reduction activities.

- **Prioritization and Phasing of Activities:** A success factor often found in other cities' blight reduction strategies involves prioritizing implementation strategies targeting resources where they will have the most impact (ABA, 2017; Urban Institute, 2019). Examples of prioritizing could include focusing blight elimination efforts around community assets (e.g., schools, parks, major corridors) to maximize property value gains and promote neighborhood stabilization. The "Phasing" of activities can help better manage resources by timing the expenditure of resources, funds, and actions for maximum effect.

- **Adaptive Management and Innovation:** The ability to adapt and be innovative is also viewed as an important success factor, especially given the many challenges likely to be encountered with blight reduction strategies (Restore Your Economy, 2014). If certain strategies are not working, being adaptive and flexible will allow officials to pivot and try

more effective strategies. Embracing and utilizing technology can also help government and non-government officials innovate and adapt quicker for better results (e.g., using GIS mapping to predict which properties are at risk of becoming blighted so preventive action can be taken) (Governing.com, 2014).

Just as there are many types of challenges that can impede the achievement of successful blight reduction strategies, there are also several key factors that can influence the success of those same strategies. One goal of this resource guide is to help cities and other organizations save time, energy, and resources in addressing blight. By knowing key success factors, city and other officials can prioritize their actions and resources for greater impact. Table 13 provides a brief summary of those key factors that can greatly influence the success of blight reduction strategies:

Table 13 City-based Examples of Blight Reduction Success Factors

Factor	Description	Example
Leadership	Mayor-led multi-agency coordination	Memphis Blight Elimination Charter
Funding	Diversified and recurring	Detroit demolition bond
Data Transparency	Public dashboards	New Orleans BlightSTAT
Community Collaboration	Neighborhood partnerships	Pittsburgh ReClaim Program
Adaptive Management and Innovation	Pursuing multiple strategies based upon situation	Detroit, New Orleans, Memphis, Pittsburgh

Conclusions

As discussed throughout this resource guide, reducing blight in the city of Jackson is a complex, decades-long problem that has been restricting the city's socio-economic well-being. Population decline, high poverty levels, housing abandonment, administrative challenges, and limited funding have all helped to undermine the city's ability to consistently and effectively address the blight problem. The sheer volume of blighted properties in Jackson, particularly those held in legal limbo by the state of Mississippi, demonstrates how past approaches have not been able to significantly decrease the problem and its societal impact. By examining blight reduction strategies in other U.S. cities, Jackson (and other cities struggling with similar blight-related issues) can implement strategies that have proven to work in reducing blight and its related problems. As documented throughout this resource guide, blight is a problem that can be overcome with versatile, well-funded, and well-coordinated strategies.

The successful implementation of blight reduction strategies can often take years to occur. It generally requires strong political leadership, inter-agency collaboration and coordination, organizational persistence, sustainable funding, ongoing community engagement,

and innovative/adaptive ways of overcoming anticipated challenges (e.g., legal, legislative, financial, and administrative). The city of Memphis's decade-long fight against blight taught there is no quick fix (ABA, 2017), but it also taught that steady progress is achievable with a dedicated team and comprehensive approach.

In terms of essential actions needed to address the scale and volume of the blight problem in Jackson, a review of the literature indicates the creation of a Land Bank can be a game-changer in terms of efficiently and effectively addressing the blight problem. The creation of a Land Bank, paired with other administrative and policy strategies discussed in this resource guide, can provide a sustainable infrastructure capable of achieving long-term success. Other proven strategies (e.g., embracing data-driven decision-making, utilizing all available legal tools such as receivership and expedited foreclosures, prioritizing community-based strategies like community greening and maintenance initiatives), can help cities like Jackson systematically address the many problems associated with blight. By pursuing the administrative, policy, legal, community, and financial interventions discussed in this resource guide, Jackson and other cities struggling with blight-related problems can make significant strides towards reducing blight and thereby improving the overall quality of life in their communities. Each dilapidated structure removed or restored can be one step closer towards having safer streets, higher property values, a more productive workforce, higher educational gains, and healthier communities (Restore Your Economy, 2014).

A final key takeaway from this resource guide is blight reduction is not just about demolition and removal; it is also about neighborhood revitalization and creating a sustainable environment where decline does not occur in the first place. With the best practices and strategies identified in this resource guide, cities like Jackson can tailor a Blight Reduction Plan that fits their political, administrative, financial, and community characteristics. In doing so, those strategies can help ensure their communities are moving towards becoming more thriving places where people can enjoy a higher quality of life for years to come.

Recommendations for Implementing Proposed Blight Reduction Strategies

The following section provides a listing of key legal, administrative, policy, financial, and community-oriented recommendations that can help Jackson (and other Mississippi cities experiencing significant blight issues) develop an overall Blight Reduction Plan. These recommendations are based upon an examination of blight reduction initiatives utilized successfully by other cities across the United States. These recommendations also take into consideration the unique political, financial, and socio-economic characteristics of Jackson. As with any viable plan, the recommendations listed in this resource guide will need to be adjusted to fit applicable political, legal, administrative, and financial circumstances. The suggested recommendations are as follow:

- **Establish a Central "Blight Office"** --- Create a central "Blight office" that combines and coordinates blight-related legal, real estate, code enforcement, community outreach, and grants management activities.

- **Create a Multi-sector Blight Task Force or Working Group** --- Establish a formal/official group that meets regularly and includes city officials, county officials, nonprofits, neighborhood representatives, and state officials. The group's overall purpose is to help plan, develop, coordinate, and assess blight reduction activities occurring in the city of Jackson. The city of Memphis established a similar working group in its "Blight Elimination Charter" that got diverse stakeholders to agree on roles and coordinate blight reduction activities (ABA, 2017).

- **Negotiate Control of State-Owned Parcels ---** Pursue MOUs with the Mississippi Secretary of State's office for land parcels' transfers and/or joint redevelopment projects (e.g., Transferring state-held parcels into a local Land Bank institution).

- **Adopt a *BlightSTAT-style* Performance Reporting System ---** Establish a public reporting data metrics system to regularly track (and report) the number of demolitions, rehabs, lot maintenance, and other important blight reduction metrics (See city of New Orleans for successful model) (Governing.com, 2014) (Jackson Rising, 2025).

- **Launch Cluster-Based Pilot Projects ---** Concentrate initial demolition and infill development projects on small geographic clusters of properties (e.g., 3–5 contiguous lots, green spaces, abandon/vacant structures) for more visible impact, economic development potential, and to reduce "safe havens" for crime (Restore Your Economy, 2014; Jackson Rising, 2025).

- **Pursue "Greening" Initiatives as Temporary Development Solutions ---** Convert difficult-to-develop or small demolished lots into green spaces maintained by local neighborhood organizations until higher level redevelopment activities can occur. This is a direct, low-cost intervention that can help improve neighborhood aesthetics and property values.

- **Expand Partnerships with Faith-based, Nonprofits, and Community/Neighborhood Organizations ---** Continue developing, implementing, and incentivizing collaborations with local faith-based, nonprofits, and neighborhood associations for the purpose of promoting local community cleanup activities (Jackson Rising, 2025). Incentives can include such things as providing "mini-grants", tool assistance services, and special recognition activities.

- **Create Local Blight Fund(s) ---** Create dedicated "Blight Reduction" revenue stream(s) to sustain efforts (e.g., using a portion of collected municipal code enforcement fines and liens; using a defined percentage of property tax revenue from newly revitalized areas; using portions of tax-lien sales to generate immediate revenue; and/or using special revenue bond funding dedicated for blight reduction activities).

- **Align City Incentives with State Tax Credits ---** For example, match Mississippi legislative HB 1201 tax credits with local abatements to attract and promote private rehab development projects.

- **Integrate Health and Safety Metrics into Performance Measurement/Reporting Systems** --- Track and incorporate "non-typical" (but important) health and safety metrics such as reductions in crime, fires, and mental health service calls as key outcomes of successful blight reduction activities (Governing.com, 2014).

- **Use Data Visualization and Interactive Maps** --- Update and publish interactive maps of blighted parcels to enable community transparency and to prioritize interventions.

- **Establish Property Maintenance and Accountability Rules** --- For any redeemed or redeveloped land parcel, require performance guarantees, reversion clauses, or scheduled monitoring activities to help reduce the chances that a property will relapse into a future blighted condition (ABA, 2017).

- **Pursue Matching Funds & State Collaboration Partnerships** --- Aggressively apply for state funding (e.g., HB 1201, HB 733, state cleanup grants) or federal grant programs that align with city blight reduction strategies, and can be used to match philanthropic investments.

- **Ensure Equitable Redevelopment Activities** --- Ensure that blight reductions and neighborhood redevelopment activities include historically underinvested neighborhoods, incorporate affordable housing goals, and require performance thresholds to guard against the displacement of community residents.

- **Monitor, Evaluate, and Adjust Blight Reduction Strategies** --- Implement a "monitoring and evaluation system" to assess annual performance goals (e.g. demolitions, rehabilitations, community clean-ups, property titles' cleared, reinvestment commitments), and adjust strategies based on results and feedback obtained from that system. Utilize university-based services (e.g., **JSU's Mississippi Urban Research Center (MURC**) research and evaluation expertise to provide ongoing research, assessment, and evaluation feedback on the city's blight reduction activities.

NOTE: Due to the timing of this report's release, many of the above recommendations either have been (or are currently being) implemented by Jackson's past mayor (e.g., Mayor Lumumba), current mayor (Mayor John Horhn), and/or the state of Mississippi. Some of those recommendations implemented (or being implemented) include creating a multi-sector Blight Task Force; setting targets for the demolition of blighted properties; seeking State funding and legislative approval for blight reduction initiatives and policy directives (e.g., creating Municipal Land Banks); promoting community clean-up campaigns with local neighborhood groups; and using environmental courts to address delinquent property owners.

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Epilogue

The strategies and tools outlined in this resource guide provide the historical, statistical, technical, and administrative framework needed to understand and address the blight crisis in Jackson. However, the ultimate success and sustainability of that framework depends on a factor far more resilient and powerful than legislation or funding --- that is, the residents of Jackson themselves. While government intervention can help initiate large-scale blight reduction changes, maintaining those changes at the local level is fundamentally a community-driven activity heavily dependent upon the actions (or inactions) of local residents.

The Power of Local Resident Involvement

Public policy often focuses on the "bricks and mortar" and "dollars and cents" aspects of blight reduction projects, yet some of the most effective resources for maintaining those projects are local residents and community associations. Local communities possess a unique form of self-interest and willpower that no governmental department can replicate. For those communities, blight reduction is not just a business transaction, it is a very personal experience that affects their daily quality of life. As discussed in this resource guide, even with very limited resources, resident-led initiatives had the capacity to sustain cleared properties (e.g., keeping grass mowed, lots free from accumulating debris, reporting illegal activities) until firmer redevelopment activities can occur. Those types of grassroots efforts can serve as a vital bridge between demolition and revitalization, ensuring that progress is not lost to immediate relapse. While it is true that most local communities in economically depressed areas do not have the financial and technical resources to conduct large-scale blight reduction activities, they do have more than enough self-interest and will power to sustain efforts for years to come, if they collectively and individually desire to do so.

Unspoken Missing Piece --- Moral and Civic Engagement

Sustainable neighborhood well-being requires more than just the removal of dilapidated structures and overgrown lots, it also requires the restoration of civic pride and a renewed sense of personal responsibility. A significant challenge in community development is the often

unspoken missing piece of "moral and behavioral commitment" to assume responsibility to care for one's own property and local community. For too long, an "unspoken" culture has persisted where residents in blighted areas feel it is exclusively "someone else's responsibility" to maintain their personal property and immediate surroundings. While this is certainly not the case in most economically depressed communities, it does unfortunately occur in some communities. To be perfectly clear and non-judgmental, the previous statement is not intended to "blame the victim" or ignore long-standing political, social, and economic factors helping to create many blighted conditions (e.g., harmful urban renewal initiatives, intentional residential redlining, racial and social discrimination; economic outsourcing and relocation of viable employment; selfish and unethical land speculators). If the ultimate goal is to engage in, and sustain, long-term blight reduction strategies, then all issues, systemic and personal, need to be addressed such as moral, ethical, and civic behaviors.

This is a difficult truth that is often deliberately avoided ("unspoken") in political discourse and community forums. Leaders (whether national, state, or local) frequently fail to address the "personal responsibility, ethical, and moral behavior" aspect of blight, fearing it may be perceived as shifting blame away from the systemic, social, and economic factors listed earlier. Yet, having an open and honest conversation about residents assuming behaviors that help reduce blight is a major, indispensable piece of the sustainability puzzle. Without an expectation of organizational and individual accountability, responsibility, and involvement, even the most well-funded government programs will struggle to achieve lasting blight reduction impact. One of the goals of this resource guide is to comprehensively address the many issues associated with blight and its reduction. Addressing the personal responsibility, ethical, and moral behavior aspect is part of meeting that goal.

A Path Forward for Jackson

As mentioned throughout this resource guide, blight reduction is not a one-year project; it can be a decade-long commitment to neighborhood stabilization and a higher quality of life. As this report concludes, it is clear that Jackson's path to achieving its blight reduction goals involves an alignment of diverse strategies, stakeholders, resources, activities, and personal commitments. By fostering an environment where neighbors help neighbors, and individuals take pride in their own properties and communities, Jackson can rebuild the social, economic, and political capital necessary to prevent future blight-related decline.

The Horhn mayoral administration now stands at a historic crossroads. It has directly and unapologetically embraced the challenge of reducing blight in the city of Jackson. It has reached out to previously estranged partners for assistance, and it has embraced both traditional and non-traditional methods for addressing blight. Because of those actions, there is a unique opportunity to reverse the growing blight trend by simultaneously addressing the systemic, technological, financial, socio-economic, and administrative hurdles identified in this resource guide, while also championing the moral and civic elements needed for short- and long-term community sustainability and upkeep. By continuing to integrate the many facets, initiatives, and recommendations listed in this resource guide, the City of Jackson (. . . and other cities also battling significant blight-related issues . . .) can enter a new era of sustained blight reduction and economic prosperity that will benefit generations to come. If this resource guide can help

public, private, and non-profit officials and organizations achieve those outcomes, then it has accomplished its stated purpose of helping to improve the quality of life in urban communities.

Pictures of What's Possible

Image 1: Vacant Lot Green-Up (The "Mow-to-Own" Model)

This comparison focuses on environmental stabilization. It shows how the transformation of a trash-strewn, overgrown parcel, common in areas with many state-forfeited properties, can become a usable community asset that immediately improves neighborhood perception and value.

Image 2: Structural Rehabilitation and Code Enforcement

This image focuses on the revitalization of a structurally sound but neglected single-family home. The transformation shows the result of effective code enforcement (compelling repair) paired with rehabilitation incentives, returning a property to the tax rolls.

Image 3: Curb Appeal and Infrastructure Investment

This image visualizes how simple public infrastructure improvements (e.g., new sidewalks, curbs, and street trees) can serve as a catalyst for private investment. The 'After' photo shows how professional "curb appeal" improvements motivated adjacent homeowners to improve their own properties, addressing the behavioral aspect of blight mentioned in the Epilogue section.

Image 4: Neighborhood-Scale Spillover Effect

The final comparison moves beyond a single lot to show the "spillover effect" of targeted, clustered blight reduction. By addressing multiple adjacent properties simultaneously ("Clustering" - a core recommendation in this report), an entire street segment is stabilized. The 'After' photo clearly shows increased pride in ownership, with adjacent houses (previously untouched) also showing signs of improvement.

Appendix Section

Examples of Policy Inventions Utilized

Data-Driven Code Enforcement & Blight Tracking

Strengthening code enforcement is often the first line of defense at the local government level. This means proactively inspecting properties, citing code violations, and following through with penalties or remediation. New Orleans, LA overhauled its code enforcement after 2010 by launching *BlightSTAT* – a data-driven performance management system (Governing.com, 2014). In New Orleans, agencies meet regularly to set targets and publicly report progress, with residents invited to BlightSTAT meetings to hold officials accountable (Governing.com, 2014). The city also streamlined its enforcement process so that after inspection and a hearing, land owners must repair their property or the city will either demolish it or seize it for sale (Governing.com, 2014). Stronger enforcement also included stronger follow-through. If owners neglected adhering to fines and court orders, the city would move quickly to condemn and clear the owner's dangerous structures (Governing.com, 2014). This aggressive approach yielded dramatic results. In three years, New Orleans reduced its number of blighted homes by 13,000, cutting the average enforcement timeline by half (Governing.com, 2014). Cities such as Jackson could emulate this approach by enhancing/expanding its code enforcement department; using software to map and track vacant structures; holding regular "blight status" meetings with public dashboards of progress; and focusing enforcement on high-priority targets (e.g., structures near schools, parks, and high-crime areas) to maximize impact.

Land Banking to Repurpose Vacant Property

As discussed in the *Legal & Regulatory Framework* section, Land banking is a proven strategy for cities with a surplus of abandoned properties. A land bank is a public or quasi-public entity that can acquire tax-delinquent or vacant properties, clear title, maintain them, and then reposition the property for productive use (e.g., converting into affordable housing, side-lot sales, green space, etc.) (Mississippi Free Press, 2022). Establishing a land bank authority can greatly expand a city's abilities to reduce blight. Some case studies have shown land banks can dramatically improve blight outcomes (Source: Restore Your Economy, 2014; Mott, 2014). For example, the Cuyahoga Land Bank (Cleveland, OH) acquired thousands of foreclosed properties and, in its first five years, demolished 2,401 severely blighted structures while facilitating the rehab of 796 others (Restore Your Economy, 2014). Likewise, the Genesee County Land Bank in Flint, MI accepted over 14,800 tax-foreclosed properties over 10 years, demolished nearly 5,000 derelict buildings, and resold or leased thousands of lots for reuse; thus leveraging over $70 million in new investments to stabilize neighborhoods (Mott, 2014). These examples of land banks utilized special legal tools such as the ability to delete back taxes and liens, hold property tax-free, and clear titles quickly (Mississippi Free Press, 2022). As for possibly operating in the city of Jackson, a land bank could potentially partner with the Mississippi Secretary of State's Office to acquire and redevelop the approximately 2,000 tax-forfeited parcels in the city (Mississippi Free Press, 2022). Until obtaining the legal authority to establish land banks, cities like Jackson can continue identifying priority vacant property clusters and implementing

temporary maintenance plans (e.g., mowing, boarding up vacant property) until a land bank or similar mechanism can assume those responsibilities.

Incentives for Rehabilitation and Redevelopment

Since blight is often a symptom of economic disinvestment, creating incentives for the private sector to reinvest in distressed properties is often a critical step for effectively mitigating and redeveloping blighted areas (Restore Your Economy, 2014; Mott, 2014). One approach to getting private sector involvement is implementing a targeted tax incentive program. For example, Mississippi lawmakers in 2025 enacted a *State Tax Credit program* to encourage rehabilitating blighted properties (Magnolia Tribune, 2025). That program provides a 25% state tax credit (up to $50,000 for a home, $100,000 for a commercial building) for eligible rehab costs, with a portion of the credit refundable as a rebate (Magnolia Tribune, 2025). Cities like Jackson could use of this type of tax credit incentive to assist local developers, nonprofits, and homeowners looking to fix up abandoned houses. Additionally, cities can consider local incentives such as *Tax Abatements* on property improvements (e.g. freezing property tax assessments for a number of years after a blighted home is renovated) to make rehabilitation financially feasible (Restore Your Economy, 2014). Other cities have found creative ways to spark investment such as "*Baltimore's 'Vacant to Value' program*" which streamlined the sale of city-owned vacant rowhouses to qualified rehabbers. The program also offered incentives like discounted purchase prices and rehab loans, resulting in thousands of vacant properties being restored or demolished for new development (CCP, 2017). Cities like Jackson could implement a similar program for their surplus properties, using a land bank (once established) or existing authorities to sell parcels to responsible owners with requirements to improve them. Another incentive tool that could be used is *Upzoning or Adaptive Reuse Flexibility*. With this tool, zoning or code requirements are relaxed to allow vacant residential structures to be repurposed (for example, into duplexes or community centers) by investors more easily (Mott, 2014). Some cities have used local community development financial institutions (CDFIs) to assist with spurring private sector reinvestments into blighted properties (Restore Your Economy, 2014; Mott, 2014). In terms of speeding up property disposition and rehabilitation processes for private investors, an incentive package of various types (e.g., tax credits, abatements, low-interest rehab loans), along with faster permitting for blight rehab-related projects, can help enlist private and nonprofit developers in the fight to reduce blight.

Nuisance Abatement Laws and Legal Action

Strengthening legal options available for cities to compel property cleanup can be another effective policy tool. Mississippi cities have some existing legal powers to compel property cleanup (e.g., the ability to condemn unsafe buildings and assess the cost to the owner). However, there are other innovative legal strategies and models that can be utilized by cities (ABA, 2017). One such model is called "public nuisance litigation" as used in Memphis, TN. Starting around 2010, Memphis began aggressively using the state's Neighborhood Preservation Act (NPA) to sue the owners of chronically derelict properties in court (ABA, 2017). This approach treats severe blight as a public nuisance and, through litigation in an environmental court, presses owners either to rehabilitate the property or lose it. Over a decade, Memphis filed hundreds of these lawsuits, forcing many absentee owners to fix code issues or face receivership

(ABA, 2017). The city partnered with the University of Memphis law school to create a Neighborhood Preservation Clinic, effectively boosting its legal capacity to pursue blight cases (ABA, 2017). By doing so, Memphis built a "culture of collaboration" around blight enforcement and saw many problem properties either repaired, demolished, or put under new ownership for redevelopment (ABA, 2017). Enacting nuisance abatement ordinances (for example, allowing an expedited process to declare a long-vacant house a public nuisance and assign a receiver to fix it) could help speed-up blight mitigation efforts. Cities like Jackson could emulate Memphis' model by working with legal aid organizations and the courts to hold negligent property owners accountable. For example, a partnership between the city of Jackson and the Mississippi Center for Justice is attempting such a model of providing free legal services to help the city and nonprofits **"**hold absentee landlords accountable", clear property titles on blighted properties, and then redevelop the properties as affordable housing (WLBT, 2025).

As discussed earlier in this resource guide, creating and/or fully enforcing an existing "*Vacant Property Registry*" (that is, requiring owners of vacant structures to register and pay a fee) could also help reduce blight. Many cities use such ordinances to fund monitoring of vacant homes and impose fines if owners fail to maintain them (Restore Your Economy, 2014; Mott, 2014; NIJ, 2016). Philadelphia's "*Doors and Windows Ordinance*" is a notable example of such an enforcement tool. It requires on neighborhood blocks that are at least 75–80% occupied, any vacant building must have actual functioning doors and windows (no plywood boards), or the owner is fined $300 per opening per day (NIJ, 2016). Philadelphia inspected over 13,000 properties under this law and issued approximately 9,000 citations; which in turn spurred many property owners to fix those broken doors and windows (NIJ, 2016; Restore Your Economy, 2014). This not only improved aesthetics, but also increased adjacent property values and brought in an estimated $2.2 million in additional property transfer taxes as formerly blighted buildings got re-occupied or sold (Restore Your Economy, 2014). Cities like Jackson could consider a similar ordinance to reduce and/or prevent "visible blight" like broken windows and doors on otherwise salvageable structures in stable blocks. Stronger vacant property laws, coupled with diligent enforcement and legal follow-through (e.g., pursuing liens, lawsuits, or even eminent domain for blight removal in extreme cases), can help deter neglectful owners and speed-up the turnaround of blighted houses.

"Clean and Green" Programs

With these types of programs, it is possible for communities and local volunteers to transform vacant lots from being unproductive properties into valuable community assets. Many cities have experienced success working with community groups on cleaning, mowing, and beautifying vacant properties (Restore Your Economy, 2014; Upenn.edu, 2015). For example, *Pittsburgh's "ReClaim program"* provides training and mini-grants to local volunteers who adopt vacant lots, which has contributed to 56 acres of blighted land being cleaned and turned into gardens, pocket parks, or maintained green spaces (Restore Your Economy, 2014). Similarly, the *Philadelphia LandCare program*, run by the nonprofit Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, hires local crews to regularly mow and landscape thousands of vacant lots citywide (Restore Your Economy, 2014). The impact of such greening programs can be significant. A randomized study in Philadelphia found that professionally greening vacant lots helped reduced nearby gun violence by over 5%, and also significantly improved residents' self-reported

feelings of safety and mental health (e.g., depression rates dropped 41% among residents near greened lots) (Upenn.edu, 2023). Another analysis showed property values within a 1000 foot radius of a cleaned-and-greened lot increased by 4.3% in one year, and up to 13% over six years (Upenn.edu, 2023). These results show that even basic landscaping has the potential to yield measurable economic benefits.

An *"Adopt-a-Lot"* program is another example of a greening strategy where neighborhood associations, churches, youth groups, and nonprofits commit to maintaining specific vacant properties in exchange for a small stipend or eventual ownership. Such efforts not only keep blight from worsening, but can also help build community pride and cohesion. With this type of program, residents see immediate visual improvements which can sometimes snowball into further community reinvestment by internal and external sources (Upenn.edu, 2023). The city of Jackson (MS) has also identified "green space maintenance" as part of its blight reduction strategy (Jacksonms.gov).

Figure __ Green space in downtown Jackson, Mississippi

Neighborhood Beautification and Code Compliance Campaigns

Community-led clean-up projects can rally residents to address minor blight issues before they escalate in larger problems. Cities like Warren, MI conducted *House-by-House Code Inspection Sweeps* with volunteers and city staff; those sweeps issued over 30,000 violation warnings since 2008, and helped get thousands of blighted properties fixed without needing formal court enforcement (Restore Your Economy, 2014). These types of efforts could be implemented in Jackson neighborhoods and coupled with periodic *"Clean Sweep"* events to identify overgrown yards, broken windows, or trash. City code officials could coordinate providing assistance to those property owners with violations (especially elderly or disabled residents) to remedy the issues. If no progress is made restoring the blighted property, the city could then issue a citation for non-compliance (Restore Your Economy, 2014). Other cities have

also started a "T*ool Loan Library or Mini-grant program*" providing lawn mowers, paint, lumber for boarding up structures, and other resources to neighborhood groups assisting them with maintaining their communities (Restore Your Economy, 2014). Such small-scale interventions can help prevent blight from occurring/re-occurring, and can help make sustaining blight reduction activities more feasible and economical (Restore Your Economy, 2014).

Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and Land Trusts

Community Development Corporations (CDCs) are nonprofit organizations based in local neighborhoods that help develop housing and commercial projects, promote job training and workforce develop initiatives, and often rehab blighted properties (Case.edu, 2020). The city of Jackson has several existing CDC-type organizations (e.g., Midtown Partners, New Horizons CDC, the Jackson Housing Authority, Voice of Calvary) that have been involved to various degrees in blight reduction activities (Jacksonms.gov; Mississippi Free Press, 2022). In coordination with government organizations, CDCs and community land trusts often build new affordable homes on recently cleared lots to help revitalize the existing community. A *Community Land Trust (CLT)* is a nonprofit organization that owns land, and then sells or rents the homes on that land at affordable rates, with resale restrictions to keep housing affordable long-term (Case.edu, 2020). CDCs and CLTs can help repurpose vacant land in low-income areas, while also preventing the displacement of local residents after blight has been removed.

Engaging residents in the planning process for repurposing empty lots (e.g., creating gardens, playgrounds, or sites for new homes) can be very important for short- and long-term community buy-in. Cities such as Jackson can facilitate *Neighborhood Planning Workshops* in blighted areas to let the community envision what they want to see happen on formerly blighted sites (Governing.com, 2014). This bottom-up approach was part of New Orleans' success, whereby residents' feedback was used to prioritize which properties to tackle first (e.g., houses near schools or those causing safety concerns) (Governing.com, 2014).

Eyes on the Street – Reporting and Monitoring

Encouraging residents to report blight and participate in its reduction can be a very important component. One simple but effective practice is to establish a "blight hotline", or use a city's 3-1-1 reporting service for citizens to report overgrown lots, illegal dumping, or not-secured vacant buildings (Restore Your Economy, 2014). Using a city's local media assets (e.g., TV and Radio stations) can also help build community engagement. For example, Jackson's "Fight the Blight" initiative with WLBT (a local TV station segment highlighting blighted properties) has spurred resident involvement (WLBT.com, 2025). Cities can support this type of community engagement by maintaining a public list/map of reported blighted properties (similar to New Orleans' *BlightStat* website that let citizens look up any address' case status) (Governing.com, 2014). When community members see that their complaints can lead to action, they are more likely to stay engaged. Neighborhood groups can also watch out for property decline (for example, noting if a vacant house is unsecured and then alerting authorities quickly to have it re-boarded). Such community involvement activities can help prevent blighted structures from turning into larger problems.

Comparison of Neighboring Southern States' Legislative Initiatives & Best Practices

The table below provides a brief comparison of legislative initiatives and best practices being used in states bordering Mississippi to combat systemic property abandonment and blight. This information is being included to provide the reader with additional insight on how other states are addressing issues related to blight and abandoned properties.

Table 14 Comparison of Legislative Initiatives & Best Practices in Bordering States

Policy Area	Mississippi 2026 Legislative Reference	Southern "Best Practice" Model & Citation	Gap/Advantage Analysis
Land Banking	*HB 1757 / SB 2679*: Would enact the "Mississippi Land Bank Act" to allow local governments to acquire, quiet title, and dispose of blighted property.	*Georgia Land Bank Act (O.C.G.A. § 48-4-100)*: A robust "conduit" model that allows land banks to hold property tax-free while assembly/financing occurs.	Alignment: MS is attempting to adopt the GA model, which is the regional standard for moving land back to commerce.
Title Clearing	*HB 426:* Amends MS Code § 29-1-3 to streamline the patent confirmation process and cap fees for purchasing state-forfeited land.	*Louisiana Administrative Adjudication (LA R.S. 13:2575)*: Allows New Orleans to use quasi-judicial hearings to clear titles faster than a typical civil suit.	Gap: MS still relies on the Secretary of State's administrative process; LA's model is more decentralized and faster for local cities.
Direct Funding	*HB 1843 / HB 1841*: Proposes a $300,000 appropriation and state bond issuance for Jackson demolition costs.	*Alabama "50/5" Tax Recapture (AL HB 402 / Code § 24-9-1)*: Land banks keep 50% of new property tax for 5 years to self-fund future blight removal.	Advantage: MS relies on "one-time" state funds injections (e.g., bonds/grants), whereas the AL model creates a sustainable, revolving fund.
Tax Incentives	*HB 1943*: Creates the "City of Jackson Revitalization Act" providing sales tax exemptions for blighted property redevelopment.	*South Carolina Abandoned Buildings Revitalization Act (§ 12-67-100)*: Provides a 25% state income tax credit for rehabilitation costs.	Strategy: MS is using consumption-side incentives (e.g., sales tax); SC's model attracts higher-wealth equity investors via income tax credits.

Source: Gemini 3.0v Artificial Intelligence search of comparison Southern states' legislative initiatives addressing the issues of blight and/or abandoned properties in local municipalities.

Proposed Blight Reduction System Components

Leadership & Steering
- Mayor's Office
- Jackson City Council
- Blight Reduction Task Force
- External Partners

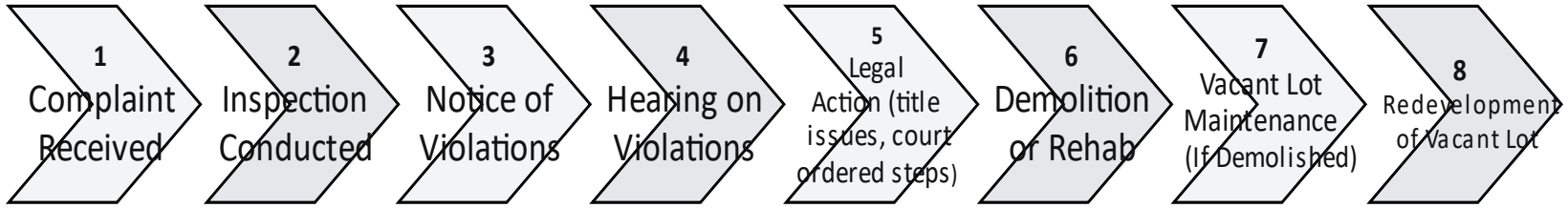
City Depts. Roles/Responsibilities
- Code Enforcement – inspections, violations
- Public Works– lot clearing, maintenance
- Planning & Development – redevelopment, oversight
- Legal Department – hearings, liens, enforcement
- Finance– taxes-related, funding, accounting

Blight Data Elements
- Parcel-Level Database
- Case Management System
- GIS Mapping & Property Records
- Inspection & Demolition Tracking
- Funding & Staffing

Research & Analysis Support
- Mississippi Urban Research Center (MURC)
- University research partners
- Policy/Data analysis and evaluation
- Neighborhood impact assessments

Data Performance Monitoring
- Monthly performance dashboard
- Demolition and rehabilitation metrics
- Neighborhood trend metrics
- Program effectiveness monitoring

Proposed Blight Reduction Process: Operational sequence from Initial Complaint to Redevelopment



Data is collected and analyzed from each process step / Timeframe for each step is dependent on property disposition complexity (e.g., locating property owner, title clearance, rehab needed, costs)

Proposed Blight Data Tracking System Framework

Effective blight reduction requires not only enforcement and redevelopment tools, but also a comprehensive data tracking and management system that allows city officials to identify, monitor, and resolve blighted properties in a systematic way (Restore Your Economy, 2014; Governing.com, 2014). Many U.S. cities (e.g., New Orleans, Detroit, Baltimore, and Philadelphia) have implemented parcel-level data platforms and public dashboards that track complaints, inspections, demolitions, and redevelopment outcomes (Restore Your Economy, 2014; Governing.com, 2014). These systems enable city officials to coordinate with multiple agencies, prioritize the most dangerous properties, and evaluate the impact of blight reduction initiatives over time.

The proposed framework below is designed as a *Parcel-based, Interagency Blight Intelligence System* for the city of Jackson (OpenAI, 2026). In practical terms, the proposed framework would allow Jackson to move from a fragmented, complaint driven, project-by-project tracking system, to a more integrated system that follows each property from initial complaint, inspection, title research, and enforcement (e.g., through demolition, rehabilitation, lot maintenance, disposition). The framework design draws heavily from the city of New Orleans' structured BlightSTAT system where 3-1-1 intake reports and parcel-based case management services (e.g., inspections, title research, hearings, liens, and post-judgment actions) are linked together; and from the broader public-data practices seen in Detroit, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Memphis (see full references listed after table). For Jackson, this type of framework could help support blight-reduction strategies in four ways:

(1) Help improve **Prioritization** by focusing limited city staff and funding on the most dangerous and highest-impact properties.

(2) Help improve **Coordination** among legal, code enforcement, public works, finance, and community partners by having all parties working from the same parcel-level record.

(3) Help improve **Transparency and Accountability** through a Jackson-style BlightSTAT dashboard that reports demolitions, rehabs, vacant-lot maintenance, state-parcel transfers, and neighborhood outcomes.

(4) Help improve **Long-term Strategy** by assisting city leaders in analyzing whether blight reduction strategies are actually reducing repeat violations, improving neighborhood safety, increasing productive property reuse, and advancing equitable redevelopment across Jackson's most affected communities.

By organizing information around a unified (property-based) database system that integrates GIS mapping with public dashboards, the framework supports a data-driven performance management system similar to the one used successfully in New Orleans. Below are two narrative versions (an Abridged version; and an Expanded version) of the proposed "Blight Data Tracking System Framework" that could be adopted by cities like Jackson (MS).

Abridged Framework Narrative

Table 15 Proposed "Jackson Blight Data Tracking System Framework"

Major System Component	Description
Central Blight Data Hub	Unifies database integration of code enforcement, legal actions, demolitions, and redevelopment outcomes across city departments.
Parcel-Level Property Records	Contains unique parcel records including ownership, tax status, occupancy, complaint history, and enforcement actions.
Citizen Complaint Intake System (3-1-1 Integration)	Allows residents to report suspected blight issues and generate trackable service requests.
Field Inspection and Documentation Module	Mobile inspection system allowing inspectors to upload photos and record violations while in the field.
Property Risk and Priority Scoring Tool	Ranks properties based on structural hazards, repeated violations, and neighborhood impact.
Ownership and Title Status Tracking	Tracks property ownership, tax delinquency, liens, heirs' property issues, and state-owned parcels.
Enforcement and Legal Workflow Tracker	Records notices, hearings, compliance deadlines, and legal outcomes.
Abatement and Disposition Decision Module	Tracks chosen remediation strategy such as repair, demolition, stabilization, or redevelopment.
Demolition and Lot Clearing Tracker	Monitors demolition scheduling, contractor assignments, and site stabilization.
Rehabilitation and Property Reuse Tracker	Tracks repairs, permits, redevelopment projects, and occupancy approvals.

Major System Component	Description
Vacant Lot Maintenance and Greening Tracker	Tracks mowing schedules, cleanup activities, and community reuse of cleared parcels.
Land Bank and Property Transfer Interface	Tracks properties acquired through tax foreclosure or land banking, and their redevelopment status.
Funding and Cost Accounting Module	Records project expenditures and funding sources.
Interagency Coordination Platform	Provides shared workflows for city departments and external partners involved in blight reduction.
GIS Mapping and Spatial Analysis Dashboard	Interactive map displaying blight cases, demolitions, and redevelopment patterns.
Public Transparency Dashboard	Public dashboard showing progress indicators such as demolitions and property reuse.
Outcome Measurement and Performance Metrics	Tracks long-term outcomes such as reduced blighted properties and improved neighborhood conditions.
Equity and Neighborhood Impact Monitoring	Evaluates whether blight interventions are equitably applied and implemented across neighborhoods.
Performance Review and Strategy Adjustment Process	Supports regular performance review meetings and strategic adjustments.
Records and Document Management System	Stores inspection reports, legal notices, photos, and other documentation for each property.

Expanded Framework Narrative

Table 16 Proposed "Jackson Blight Data Tracking System Framework" (20 Components)

Major Component	Description of Component / Role in Overall System
1. Central Blight Data Hub	A single citywide system that serves as the authoritative record for all blight-related cases, properties, actions, and outcomes (see Philadelphia's system). This data hub could function as Jackson's "master platform," combining code enforcement, legal, demolition, land bank, public works, and neighborhood data so that departments are not operating from separate spreadsheets or disconnected databases. This component aligns directly this resource guide's recommendations for a central blight office and stronger data-driven coordination.
2. Parcel-Level Property Record	Each parcel would have a unique record tied to parcel ID, street address, ownership status, tax status, land-use classification, occupancy/vacancy status, code history, complaints, liens, demolition status, and redevelopment status. A parcel-level design is essential because blight work ultimately happens property-by-property, even when the city is pursuing neighborhood-scale strategies. New Orleans' data system is built around parcel-based case management.
3. Resident Complaint Intake Module / 3-1-1 Contacts	Integrate a front-end intake feature to capture resident complaints, council referrals, inspector observations, nonprofit referrals, and neighborhood association reports. New Orleans uses 311 contacts as an entry point for blight complaints, and Philadelphia's system similarly relies on 311-linked property neglect reports. For Jackson, this module could improve early identification, transparency, and citizen trust by giving every complaint a trackable case number.
4. Inspector Field Assessment Module	This component would allow inspectors to conduct site visits using mobile devices, upload photos, record violations, geotag conditions, and assign severity levels. New Orleans' code enforcement process includes inspections supported by digital photography and ordinance-specific findings. Jackson could also utilize the same standardized evidence collection methods.

Major Component	Description of Component / Role in Overall System
5. Case Prioritization / Risk Scoring Engine	A rules-based scoring tool would help rank properties by urgency and public impact. Variables could include structural danger, fire risk, illegal dumping, repeat violations, proximity to schools/parks, crime concentration, ownership inactivity, and neighborhood redevelopment opportunity. This would help Jackson direct limited staff and funding toward the highest-risk and highest-impact properties first, rather than addressing cases only in the order received. The need for prioritization and phasing is documented earlier in this resource guide.
6. Title, Ownership, and Tax Status Tracker	Because Jackson has many tax-forfeited and legally complicated properties, the system could include fields for title status, heirs/property research, state ownership status, tax delinquency stage, lien status, and legal barriers to transfer. New Orleans' system specifically includes title research before notice and hearing, this would be especially beneficial since title and state-parcel related issues are major administrative hurdles in Jackson.
7. Notice, Hearing, and Adjudication Workflow	The system could track whether notices have been sent regarding property owners' notifications, compliance deadlines, hearing dates, hearing outcomes, appeals, judgments, and post-judgment status. New Orleans' system has a structured path from inspection to notice, hearing, judgment, lien, and abatement decisions. Jackson could adapt a similar legal process that adheres to Mississippi law.
8. Abatement Decision Module	After legal review, each case would move into a formal disposition category such as repair by owner, city abatement, lot clearing, demolition, receivership, temporary stabilization, land banking, sale/RFP, or community greening. This creates clarity about what action the city is actually pursuing and prevents cases from stalling after citation or hearing. This would be consistent with resource guide recommendations regarding demolition, rehab, greening, receivership, and property transfer as major disposition tools.
9. Demolition and Lot-Clearing Tracker	This component would monitor demolition orders, contractor assignments, environmental reviews, asbestos clearances, utility disconnects, demolition completion dates, costs per property, and post-demo maintenance schedules. New Orleans publishes a demolition dashboard, explains the stages, and post reasons delaying demolition. Jackson could incorporate a similar tracking model.

Major Component	Description of Component / Role in Overall System
10. Rehabilitation / Stabilization Tracker	As discussed earlier in this resource guide, not all blighted properties should be demolished. This module would track repair orders, owner compliance, nonprofit rehab projects, developer commitments, permits, certificates of occupancy, and completion dates. It would help city officials distinguish between properties removed from inventory through demolition versus those returned to productive use through repair or redevelopment.
11. Vacant Lot Maintenance and Greening Tracker	Once structures are removed, the system could track mowing schedules, illegal dumping complaints, interim fencing, community adoption, side-lot transfers, gardens, and beautification projects. This is important because cleared properties can quickly relapse into nuisance status if they are not maintained. Philadelphia and other cities' data models show the value of tracking the condition of secured or maintained vacant properties, not just demolitions.
12. Land Bank / State Parcel Transfer Interface	If Mississippi passes legislation authorizing land-bank tools and/or Jackson makes formal transfer arrangements with the Secretary of State' Office, the tracking system could include parcel acquisition data, transfer pathway, quiet-title progress, holding status, disposition strategy, and reuse restrictions. This would align with resource guide recommendations on state-owned parcels and land banking.
13. Funding and Cost Accounting Module	This module would allow officials to track every property and project by funding source and expenditure category (e.g., city general funds, grants, federal funds, philanthropy, bond proceeds, contractor costs, legal costs, cleanup costs, and maintenance costs). This would help make the system useful not only for operations, but also for budget requests, audits, grant compliance, and state/federal reporting. This framework element is consistent with this guide's findings regarding the need for dedicated funding and measurement of financial impact.
14. Partner and Interagency Coordination Layer	To help measure and assess system coordination activities, the framework could include user roles and work queues for officials such as code enforcement, legal, planning, public works, police/fire, finance, community organizations, and external partners. Examples include New Orleans' blight system which involves multiple offices; Baltimore's vacant-building data and dashboards; Detroit's portal linking property and blight information; and Memphis using a dedicated blight taskforce model. For Jackson, a coordination layer is essential because reducing blight typically spans multiple departments and outside partners.

Major Component	Description of Component / Role in Overall System
15. GIS Mapping and Spatial Analysis Dashboard	The system could include an interactive map showing complaint locations, active cases, demolitions, vacant lots, tax-forfeited parcels, code hotspots, redevelopment activity, and neighborhood trends. Baltimore's vacant-building platform and Detroit's open-data environment provide examples of map-based visibility that is consistent with this resource guide's recommendation of using interactive maps.
16. Public Transparency Dashboard ("Jackson BlightSTAT" system)	Jackson could publish a public-facing dashboard that reports key outputs and outcomes by month, quarter, and year. New Orleans' BlightSTAT approach and demolition dashboard provides a strong model for public performance tracking, while Detroit' system also makes blight and parcel status tracking information publicly accessible. This module would turn the system into a "management and accountability" tool and not just an internal database.
17. Outcome Metrics Module	Beyond just counting/tabulating blight-related activities, Jackson's blight model could also measure outcomes such as reductions in active blighted parcels; reductions in repeat complaints; declines in open dangerous structures; increases in tax-generating reuse; changes in nearby property values; reductions in fire/police calls; and changes in neighborhood satisfaction. These metrics would be consistent with this resource guide's recommendation to broaden outcome measures that also include health and safety indicators.
18. Equity and Neighborhood Impact Screen	The proposed system could also track whether interventions are equitably distributed across neighborhoods, especially historically underinvested, low income areas. Measurement categories could include census tract, poverty concentration, race/ethnicity context, displacement risk, affordability goals, and community-benefit commitments. Including this module could help Jackson ensure blight strategies are supporting equitable redevelopment, and is consistent with this guide's recommendation regarding ensuring equity with implementing blight reduction strategies.
19. Performance Review and Continuous Improvement Cycle	This component could support monthly internal review meetings and quarterly public reporting sessions where agencies assess administrative bottlenecks, compare blight reduction targets to actual results, and adjust implementation strategies. This feedback component would promote monitoring, evaluation, and strategy adjustments at multiple internal and external organizational levels.

Major Component	Description of Component / Role in Overall System
20. Records, Audit Trail, and Document Repository	With this component, every parcel file would include notices, photographs, inspection notes, hearing results, contractor records, title documents, liens, property cleanup receipts, and redevelopment agreements. This would help to enhance recordkeeping capabilities, and provides a built-in audit trail that could help strengthen legal defensibility, provide continuity across mayoral administrations, and help support institutional memory (especially regarding long-running blight resolution cases).

References --- Blight Data Tracking System Framework

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Proposed Blight-related Data Metrics for Tracking

Table17 Proposed Blight-related Data Metrics for Tracking

Complaint Activity	• New blight complaints • Complaints resolved • Average response time
Inspection Activity	• Properties inspected • Violations issued • Repeat violations noted
Legal Enforcement	• Notices issued • Hearings conducted • Compliance orders issued
Property Abatement	• Demolitions completed • Properties rehabilitated • Vacant lots cleared
Property Reuse	• Properties returned to occupancy • Properties transferred for redevelopment • Land bank acquisitions
Neighborhood Outcomes	• Reductions in active blighted properties • Reductions in nuisance complaints • Reductions in police calls, fire calls, crime rates, mental health cases • Changes in nearby property values

Estimated Cost --- Blight Data Tracking System

Based upon reviewing documentation costs associated with blight data tracking systems, implementing such a system in Jackson could cost between $350,000 to $1.5 million, with annual operating costs ranging between $150,000 to $700,000 for a fully functional system that includes parcel-level case management, GIS mapping, and public performance dashboards (Accela, 2023; ESRI, 2023; Tyler Technologies, 2023; TechForGov, 2026). Those costs could be significantly reduced by $200,000–$400,000 for cities that build their systems internally, utilize the help of university partnerships, and utilize GIS and open-source platforms (Harvard, 2016; Accela, 2023; ESRI, 2023; Tyler Technologies, 2023; TechForGov, 2026; OpenAI ChatGPT Analysis of Municipal Blight Data Tracking Systems, 2026).

When implemented effectively, blight data tracking systems can help cities prioritize which blight affected properties to address first; coordinate blight reduction activities across multiple agencies; increase transparency regarding strategies and activities implemented; and measure the effectiveness of blight reduction initiatives (Governing.com, 2014; Harvard, 2016). All of which should ultimately help with improving neighborhood stability and property redevelopment outcomes. Based upon a limited review of blight data tracking systems implemented in cities such as New Orleans, Detroit, Baltimore, Memphis, and Philadelphia, the costs for establishing and operating a system like the one proposed for Jackson would generally fall into three tiers depending on system complexity, staffing, and technology choices (OpenAI ChatGPT, 2026). Below is a listing of those three general tiers:

(Tier 1) Low implementation scenario (basic system)
$350,000 – $500,000

(Tier 2) Moderate implementation scenario (basic system with expanded features)
$500,000 – $900,000

(Tier 3) Advanced implementation scenario (comprehensive fully integrated system)
$900,000 – $1.5 million

Below is an estimated cost range derived from a review of municipal technology procurement reports, open-data dashboards, and case-management platforms used for code enforcement and blight tracking.

Table 18 Estimated Cost to Establish the System (Startup / Implementation)

Cost Component	Estimated Cost Range	Description
Software platform / case management system	$150,000 – $600,000	Procurement or customization of a municipal code-enforcement and property case-management system. Many cities use platforms such as Accela, Tyler Technologies, Cityworks, or custom GIS-based systems.
GIS mapping integration	$ 50,000 – $200,000	Integration with GIS platforms (e.g., ESRI ArcGIS, parcel databases, spatial analytics dashboards).
Database development and integration	$ 75,000 – $250,000	Building the central parcel database and integrating existing systems such as tax records, code enforcement records, and property ownership data.
Public dashboard / transparency portal	$ 25,000 – $100,000	Creation of a "New Orleans-style" BlightSTAT dashboard displaying performance indicators, maps, and project status.
Mobile inspection tools and equipment	$ 25,000 – $80,000	Tablets, mobile inspection apps, photo documentation tools, and field data collection platforms.
Data migration and cleanup	$ 40,000 – $150,000	Converting legacy spreadsheets, records, and property data into a standardized digital system.
Staff training and system rollout	$20,000 – $75,000	Training inspectors, administrators, and leadership on how to use the system.

(Sources: Accela, 2023; ESRI, 2023; Tyler Technologies, 2023; TechForGov, 2026; OpenAI ChatGPT Analysis of Municipal Blight Data Tracking Systems, 2026)

Estimated Annual Operating Cost

Table 19 Annual Operating Cost Range

Low-cost system	Moderate system	Advanced analytics system
$150,000 – $250,000 per year	$250,000 – $450,000 per year	$450,000 – $750,000 per year

Once the system is established, the largest costs typically are for staffing, maintenance, and data analysis. Below are descriptions and categories of estimated annual costs for a Blight Data Tracking System:

Table 20 Description of Estimated Costs by System Components

Operating Cost Component	Estimated Annual Cost	Description
System maintenance / software licensing	$ 50,000 – $200,000	Software licensing, cloud hosting, cybersecurity, and system updates.
Data management and IT support	$ 60,000 – $150,000	Database administration and technical support.
Data analysis and reporting (e.g, BlightSTAT)	$ 80,000 – $180,000	Analysts who track performance metrics, produce reports, and manage dashboards.
System upgrades and improvements	$ 25,000 – $75,000	Periodic enhancements, integrations, and new features.
Training and operational support	$ 10,000 – $30,000	Ongoing training for inspectors and administrative staff.

(Sources: Accela, 2023; ESRI, 2023; Tyler Technologies, 2023; TechForGov, 2026; OpenAI ChatGPT Analysis of Municipal Blight Data Tracking Systems)

Potential Cost Reduction Strategies

If city of Jackson officials decide to pursue establishing a "Blight Data Tracking System", there are several strategies that could be utilized to help lower the cost of establishing and maintaining such a system. The following are several cost-saving options that could be pursued to significantly reduce operational costs:

- Utilizing existing city planning data and GIS infrastructure rather than purchasing a new mapping platform.
- Building the public facing dashboard using open-source tools (e.g., PowerBI, Tableau Public, ArcGIS dashboards).
- Utilizing university research staff and graduate assistants to conduct data analysis activities (e.g., JSU's Mississippi Urban Research Center; Department of Urban and Regional Planning; Department of Public Policy and Administration).
- Leveraging federal or philanthropic grants focused on urban revitalization and housing stabilization.

By utilizing the above options and proposed collaborations, potential startup costs could be reduced to approximately $250,000–$500,000, with annual operating costs of ranging between $150,000–$300,000 (Source: OpenAI ChatGPT Analysis of Municipal Blight Data Tracking Systems).

Example Benchmark Cities - Approximate Cost Estimates

Table 21 Examples of Benchmark Cities' Approximate Cost Estimates

City	System Type	Estimated Cost Category
New Orleans	BlightSTAT + code enforcement tracking	Moderate to high
Detroit	Open data + parcel-level blight violation system	Moderate
Baltimore	Vacant building open-data dashboards	Moderate
Philadelphia	311 integrated property system	High

(Sources: Accela, 2023; ESRI, 2023; Tyler Technologies, 2023; TechForGov, 2026; OpenAI ChatGPT Analysis of Municipal Blight Data Tracking Systems)

The above cost estimates illustrate how blight management data systems can require a significant initial investment. However, that investment can also produce significant short- and long-term benefits such as improving the targeting of demolition funds; reducing the number of citizen complaints received; facilitating the faster redevelopment of blighted properties; increasing the amount of property tax revenue generated from redevelopment activities; and providing vital feedback to city officials and others on the effectiveness of blight reduction strategies. Having an effective blight management data system is a vital component in addressing blight reduction activities across multiple areas, services, and organizations.

Cost Estimation Methodology

The blight data tracking system cost estimates presented in this resource guide were derived using three primary sources of information: (1) municipal blight data systems implemented in other U.S. cities; (2) pricing and implementation information from commonly used municipal government software platforms; and (3) policy research literature examining the use of data-driven systems for managing vacant and blighted properties (Accela, 2023; ESRI, 2023; Harvard, 2016; Tyler Technologies, 2023; TechForGov, 2026; OpenAI ChatGPT Analysis of Municipal Blight Data Tracking Systems). The following sections provide a summary of the process and limitations used to derive the cost estimations for establishing a Jackson-based blight data tracking system:

(1) The analysis reviewed existing blight data tracking systems used by municipalities such as New Orleans, Detroit, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Memphis. Public documentation from those cities (including open data portals, municipal technology descriptions, and blight reduction initiatives) were examined to identify the key components typically included in municipal blight management systems. Those components generally included parcel-level property databases,

inspection and enforcement case-management systems, geographic information system (GIS) mapping tools, demolition tracking platforms, and public transparency dashboards. Reviewing those system components provided insight into the technical scope and functional requirements of comparable municipal systems (Source: OpenAI ChatGPT Analysis of Municipal Blight Data Tracking Systems).

(2) Cost estimates were derived from publicly available pricing information and procurement documentation from municipal software vendors that commonly provide code enforcement and property management platforms to local governments. Those platforms typically included case management tools, property records databases, GIS integration, mobile inspection applications, and reporting dashboards. Vendor documentation and industry reports were used to identify the typical cost structure associated with implementing municipal code enforcement and property management systems, including software acquisition, system configuration, data integration, staff training, and ongoing maintenance (Source: OpenAI ChatGPT Analysis of Municipal Blight Data Tracking Systems).

(3) A review of urban policy research and municipal management studies were incorporated to examine how cities use data systems to track vacant and abandoned properties (Source: OpenAI ChatGPT Analysis of Municipal Blight Data Tracking Systems). Those studies provided context on the operational and technological investments required to establish and maintain property data systems that support demolition programs, rehabilitation initiatives, and neighborhood stabilization strategies. Those sources were particularly useful for identifying the institutional and operational costs associated with implementing blight management data programs, including staffing, analytics capacity, and performance monitoring systems.

Based on the combined review of other cities' data systems, technology platforms utilized, and policy research literature findings, the estimated cost ranges presented in this resource guide represent preliminary approximations of the financial resources typically required to implement a municipal blight data tracking system in a mid-sized U.S. city. Actual costs may vary depending on the level of system integration, the use of existing municipal technology infrastructure, the degree of customization required, and the extent to which research partners or open-source platforms are utilized (Source: OpenAI ChatGPT Analysis of Municipal Blight Data Tracking Systems).

Limitations of Cost Estimates

Although the cost estimates presented in this resource guide are based on benchmarking and publicly available information, the following listing of factors can significantly impact the estimated costs of implementing a blight management data system. First, municipal technology procurement costs vary widely across jurisdictions, depending on factors such as population size, the number of departments integrated into the system, and whether the system is purchased as a commercial platform or developed internally using existing government technology infrastructure (Source: OpenAI ChatGPT Analysis of Municipal Blight Data Tracking Systems).

Second, many municipal blight data systems are implemented as part of broader municipal technology modernization initiatives, such as enterprise code enforcement platforms,

integrated permitting systems, or citywide open-data programs (Accela, 2023; ESRI, 2023; Tyler Technologies, 2023; TechForGov, 2026). In those cases, the full cost of the system may be distributed across multiple programs, making it difficult to isolate the exact financial investment associated solely with blight tracking functions.

Third, vendor pricing structures are typically customized for each municipality, and publicly available information often reflects estimated ranges rather than exact contract values. Implementation costs may also vary depending on whether the system requires extensive customization, integration with legacy databases, or additional cybersecurity and cloud hosting infrastructure (Accela, 2023; ESRI, 2023; Tyler Technologies, 2023; TechForGov, 2026).

Finally, the cost projections presented in this resource guide assume that the city of Jackson would implement a moderately integrated blight data system combining parcel-level property tracking, GIS mapping, inspection management, and a public BlightSTAT-style dashboard. If the city were to pursue a more limited system using existing infrastructure and open-source tools, implementation costs could be significantly lower. Conversely, implementing a fully integrated enterprise platform across multiple municipal departments could increase the overall cost (OpenAI ChatGPT Analysis of Municipal Blight Data Tracking Systems).

For the above reasons, the cost estimates presented should be used as preliminary planning estimates and not precise procurement projections. A detailed cost analysis conducted during the procurement phase would be necessary to determine the exact financial requirements for implementing a blight data tracking system in the city of Jackson.

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Proposed Implementation Timeline --- Blight Data Tracking System

Table 22 Proposed Blight Data Tracking System - Implementation Timeline

Implementation Phase	Timeline	Key Activities	Expected Outcomes
Phase 1 – Strategic Planning and System Design	Months 1–3	• Establish a Blight Data System Steering Committee • Identify participating city departments (e.g., Code Enforcement, Planning, Public Works, Legal, Finance) • Define system goals and performance indicators • Inventory existing property and code enforcement data systems • Develop system architecture and data governance framework	Develop a system design and governance structure for the blight data tracking system
Phase 2 – Funding and Procurement	Months 4–6	• Identify funding sources (e.g., HUD, ARPA, municipal funds, philanthropic support) • Develop system budget and procurement specifications • Issue Request for Proposals (RFP) for software platform or development services • Select vendor or technology platform	Technology provider selected and funding secured for system implementation
Phase 3 – Technology Development and Data Integration	Months 7–12	• Develop central parcel-level database • Integrate city datasets (e.g., tax records, code enforcement data, demolition records) • Build GIS mapping platform • Develop inspection tracking and case management modules • Create BlightSTAT-like performance dashboard prototype	Develop operational prototype of the blight data tracking system
Phase 4 – Pilot Implementation	Months 13–16	• Launch pilot system in selected neighborhoods or wards • Train inspectors and city staff on system use • Test complaint intake, inspection documentation, and enforcement workflows • Identify technical issues and refine system design	Test and improve system based on real operational use
Phase 5 – Citywide Deployment	Months 17–22	• Expand system to all neighborhoods within Jackson • Implement public transparency dashboard • Integrate BlightSTAT-like reporting into city management meetings • Establish routine data reporting procedures across departments	Fully operational blight data tracking system serving the entire city
Phase 6 – Performance Evaluation and Continuous Improvement	Months 23–24	• Evaluate system performance and user feedback • Refine data analytics and reporting tools • Publish annual blight reduction performance report • Adjust operational strategies based on data insights	Long-term data-driven management framework for blight reduction

Evaluating Proposed Blight Reduction Strategies

As discussed throughout this resource guide, city officials and other interested parties will need to know what blight reduction strategies are working or not working. In order to gain that type of information in a structured and timely manner, it will be necessary to systematically evaluate those strategies to determine what policy, programmatic, administrative, and/or financial adjustments are required. The evaluation framework discussed below is designed to provide city of Jackson officials with such a structured approach for monitoring the strategies presented in this resource guide. The proposed framework will help provide a comprehensive assessment of the city's blight reduction strategies across multiple activities ranging from receiving the initial property complaint to seeing the property redeveloped.

The Jackson State University Mississippi Urban Research Center (MURC) can help provide city officials with evaluation feedback needed to navigate the legal, administrative, and re-/development hurdles discussed throughout this resource guide. The following sections present the basic elements of a comprehensive evaluation framework intended to provide city officials with timely and relevant feedback.

Description of Evaluation Activities

Evaluator: Mississippi Urban Research Center (MURC) @ Jackson State University

Primary Stakeholder: City of Jackson officials

Evaluation Focus: Formative assessment of the implementation and early impact of proposed blight reduction strategies.

Basic Evaluation Questions

The evaluation will seek to answer the following key questions:

- Implementation Effectiveness: To what extent are the proposed legal, administrative, development/redevelopment, and financial recommendations (e.g., Central Blight Office, BlightSTAT, funding sources) being implemented as designed?
- Process Efficiency: Are the administrative bottlenecks identified (e.g., title clearance, state-owned parcel transfers) being reduced through the city's blight reduction strategies?
- Engagement: How effectively is the city collaborating with public agencies, faith-based organizations, and non-profit/community groups to address blight at the neighborhood level?
- Early Impact: Is there a measurable change in the volume of blighted properties documented, reported code violation rates, and neighborhood redevelopment activities (e.g., "greening" projects; homes constructed or renovated)?
- Adaptation: What implementation challenges are arising, and how can city officials adjust their management strategies to improve outcomes?

Evaluation Design

A *Formative, Mixed-Methods Evaluation Design* will be utilized. This design is appropriate for a program in its early stages where evaluation findings can be used to adjust activities in a timely manner, thus promoting faster blight reduction and redevelopment activities. This evaluation design will combine the quantitative tracking of performance metrics (e.g., number of structures demolished; number of code violations reported) with qualitative assessments of organizational coordination and community engagement (e.g., verbal and written feedback from city personnel, community residents). Thus, providing both statistical evidence of blight reduction progress, and a contextual understanding regarding the operational processes being used to implement blight reduction strategies.

Data Collection Methodology

The proposed data collection methodology will employ a systematic, mixed-methods approach targeting multiple stakeholder groups, program components, and data sources throughout the evaluation period. The following sections below present the major elements comprising the proposed data collection methodology:

- BlightSTAT ("Data") Dashboard Analysis: Regular review of the city's proposed data tracking system to monitor results posted and the use of those results.
- Stakeholder Interviews: Structured interviews with members of the Blight Task Force, city department heads, state officials, and other key stakeholders.
- Field Inspections and Surveys: Parcel-level assessments of "blight reduction targeted areas to verify property status (e.g., titles cleared/quieted) and redevelopment status (demolished, rehabbed, stabilized, or newly constructed).
- Community Listening Sessions: Conduct focus group sessions with neighborhood associations and organizations to assess perceptions of safety, health, displacement risks, and effectiveness of selected blight reduction strategies.

Types of Data to be Collected

Evaluation data will be collected utilizing a variety of sources that includes:

- Quantitative Metrics: For example, the number of demolitions executed, properties returned to tax rolls, number of titles "quieted," and acres of blighted land converted to "green space."
- Financial Data: For example, total expenditures per property, grant funds obtained and/or leveraged, and revenue generated from property dispositions.
- Qualitative Data: For example, feedback on inter-agency coordination, resident satisfaction indicators, and narratives regarding legal/bureaucratic hurdles.

Data Analysis Methods

The most appropriate data analysis methods will be utilized to answer the Formative (and to a lesser extent, Summative) questions developed for this evaluation. Quantitative data will be analyzed using frequency counts, mean scores, bar charts, trendline analysis. Qualitative data will be analyzed using narrative analysis techniques (e.g., content analysis of program documents and activity logs, thematic coding, word/phrase groupings, summary compilations) to identify prevailing themes, patterns, and messages. Below are some specific data analysis methods that may be particularly relevant for assessing blight reduction activities and processes:

- Trend Analysis: Tracking measures such as "vacancy rates", "neighborhood conditions", and "public safety/health indicators" over time to determine if blight is decreasing.
- Comparative Mapping (GIS): Using Geographic Information System's data to visualize and assess progress being made to reduce blighted conditions.
- Gap Analysis: Comparing actual performance against established monthly, quarterly, and yearly targets identified in the city's Blight Reduction Plan.
- Thematic Coding: Analyzing interview and focus group data to identify recurring implementation barriers, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

Proposed Timeline

The following section presents a very preliminary "evaluation timeline" for assessing and monitoring selected blight reduction activities and strategies. The timeline is based upon providing an initial "one-year" assessment that will allow city officials and others to make needed implementation adjustments. The actual timeline should be established after the selection of which blight reduction strategies/activities are to be evaluated, and the availability of needed data and processes upon which to begin assessment and monitoring activities.

- Months 1–3 (Baseline measurements): Establish initial baseline blight metrics (e.g., current number of blight properties, code violations, legal proceedings); finalize evaluation and data collection instruments and processes; begin initial data collection activities.
- Months 4–9 (Process-focused): Monitor the launch of the Central Blight Office; begin assessing specific blight reduction strategies and activities; conduct interviews and focus group activities; continue data collection and analysis activities; conduct monthly feedback sessions with city officials.
- Months 10–12 (Preparing/Presenting Preliminary Results): Finalize preparation of comprehensive results based upon first-year assessment outcomes; prepare preliminary final report highlighting implementation challenges, successful blight reduction strategies, and recommended adjustments for future blight reduction activities.

The above evaluation framework will support the blight reduction strategies discussed in this resource guide; and it will provide a structured reporting process that includes measurement, accountability, and transparency standards. Through the use of performance reporting and

operational monitoring, this proposed evaluation framework will help ensure limited resources (financial and non-financial) are directed toward evidenced-based high impact areas. Thereby allowing this evaluation framework to serve as a vital management tool that can help city leaders adjust their tactics; and pursue short- and long-term goals of improving public health, increasing property values, and promoting neighborhood safety for the residents of Jackson.

Estimated Cost Range for Blight Evaluation Framework

Based on the evaluation framework previously discussed, and utilizing typical industry standards for municipal program evaluations, below are cost estimates for the JSU Mississippi Urban Research Center to conduct formative evaluation activities described in this resource guide.

Table 23 Estimated Cost Range for Blight Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Services Tier	Scope of Activities	Estimated Cost Range	Key Deliverables
Basic / Minimum	Primarily secondary data analysis focusing on evaluating the implementation of the Central Blight Office, and BlightSTAT ("Data") dashboard using existing city records. Includes basic progress reports; limited stakeholder interviews.	**$45,000 – $75,000**	Quarterly status reports, One-year process evaluation report with initial recommendations.
Standard / Mid-Level	Incorporates above basic tier services, and adds stakeholder interviews (City/State officials) and qualitative focus groups with community leaders. Includes reviewing GIS mapping outputs and uses.	**$80,000 – $145,000**	GIS impact maps, stakeholder interview and survey summaries, community feedback report, and adjustment management recommendations.
All-Inclusive / Full-Scale	Incorporates Basic and Standard tier services, and includes parcel-level field inspections to verify blight reduction stabilization and development activities. Includes resident surveys and limited economic impact modeling (return on investment/tax-base restoration) of strategies utilized.	**$150,000 – $250,000 and above**	Above tiers' outputs plus resident perception surveys, parcel-by-parcel reviews, and a comprehensive final impact report.

The above evaluation framework and cost estimates are provided to help officials identify what type of evaluation activities they would like to pursue. The framework and cost estimates were developed without knowing what specific priorities, resources, and/or constraints would be established to guide potential evaluation activities. Actual evaluation procedures and associated costs will be determined based upon the project needs identified by city officials.

Summary of Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework described in this resource guide is designed to help move beyond a "piece-meal" assessment system (that is, one that only looks at individual system components in isolation). This framework utilizes a more "integrated comprehensive" approach whereby all major blight reduction components are examined for their individual effectiveness, AND inter-relatedness to a common purpose (that is, helping to reduce the overall level of blight).

As discussed throughout this document, reducing blight from a city-wide perspective is a complex endeavor due to its multiple causes (e.g., population decline, economic disinvestment, absentee property owners); multiple administrative functions (e.g., legal, code enforcement, public works, finance); multiple stakeholders involved (e.g., public and private organizations, non-profit groups, local residents); and the numerical scale of Jackson's blight challenges (e.g., more than 7,000 blighted and/or abandoned properties). This evaluation framework supports the blight reduction strategies discussed by objectively gathering, assessing, and sharing evidence on the effectiveness of strategies implemented. The framework can be scaled up or down to address those assessment areas considered high priority by city officials. Implementing an effective evaluation strategy can help officials and other interested parties achieve higher levels of blight reduction success.

The JSU/Mississippi Urban Research Center

The Jackson State University Mississippi Urban Research Center's (MURC) mission is "to conduct basic and applied research into urban problems and public policy, and to make available the results of this research to private groups, public bodies, and public officials." MURC was authorized through Mississippi Senate Bill 2720, Chapter 512, Section 1, cited as the "Universities Research Institutes Act of 1983" (MS Code § 57-55-17 (2019).

MURC conducts a wide array of urban-related research in areas such as education; health; community and economic development; mental health; changing family structures; crime and public safety; and local government operations. MURC conducts both basic ("discovery") and applied ("solutions-oriented") research into urban problems and public policy. Specific research activities include Policy analysis; Program evaluation; Census data research and training; Focus group facilitation; Survey development, distribution, and analysis; Statistical analysis services; and Needs assessment services. MURC also conducts instructional programs, forums, conferences, and workshops on current urban-related topics and issues.

To help disseminate its research findings, MURC utilizes several methods including its peer-reviewed Online Journal of Urban and Rural Research; MURC Digest Reports; MURC Research Briefs; newsletters; social media posts; data infographics; and forums, conferences, and workshops. The primary goal of all MURC research-related activities is to help improve the overall quality of life in urban areas located in Mississippi and throughout the world.

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