

What Do the Neighbors Think?

Assessing the Community Impact of Neighborhood Stabilization Efforts

Appendix B: Methodology

We decided that the intervention would have the greatest impact on those who live closest to the abandoned buildings; therefore, we included in our universe all residents of buildings that directly abut an abandoned property, all buildings that were one house away from the abandoned house and all buildings directly across the street from these houses. The figure below illustrates a typical block and the houses that would have been considered in our sample. In certain instances we included houses that did not fit these rules. This occurred when upon visiting the block we noted that a house outside of this area had a very clear view of the house, thus suggesting that the residents of the building would be aware of and potentially influenced by the abandoned building.

Upon identifying these buildings we visited every street and attempted to conduct an in-person interview at every unit in the buildings that were in our universe. We rang the door-bell or knocked on the door. If someone answered the door, we introduced ourselves and explained the survey. If a resident was willing to participate, we administered the survey in the entryway or in some instances inside the respondent's home. We administered the survey to every resident over 18, who was present and willing to participate in the survey. All participants were given a money order for \$20. In a few instances, residents indicated that they were not interested in participating, in which case we removed the unit from our list. If no one answered the door, we would leave a flyer with our phone number telling the resident that if they were eligible to participate in a short survey and we would pay them \$20 for participating. We visited neighborhoods and conducted surveys between the hours of 2pm and 8pm on weekdays and Sundays in the months of June and July.

Given the fact that many residents either did not answer their doors or were not home when we visited their homes, we decided it was important to attempt to contact these residents by other means. We therefore decided to do a mailing in addition to the door-to-door surveys. In order to personalize the mailing we used the Boston Resident List, which was obtained from the Boston Elections Department. The list contains the names and addresses of Boston residents and is collected annually. The list is not comprehensive. We compared the names of the people we interviewed in person to the list and found that roughly 20 to 30 percent of the respondents were not included on the list. In most cases the people who were not on the list reported moving within the last year. Though there were some long time residents who were not on the list. While the list was imperfect we felt that a personalized letter and mailing would be more likely to produce a response than an anonymous mailing.

Therefore we used the Resident List to generate a mailing list with every resident of the buildings that were in our universe. We removed from the mailing list any resident who we had interviewed in person and all of the residents of the unit that the respondent lived in. In addition, we removed from the list the residents of any unit where we had been told that they were not interested in participating. The list contained 410 residents of addresses that were contained within our buildings of interest.

We followed the Dillman Taylor Design Method (2009): after our initial mailing we mailed a reminder postcard to all unresponsive households. Finally, we mailed a reminder letter with a replacement survey to all residents of non-responding units. If the mailed surveys were returned marked "vacant," we removed this household from our list, leaving us with an estimated total of 256 households, 123 of which responded to our survey (response rate 48%).