

What Do the Neighbors Think?

Assessing the Community Impact of Neighborhood Stabilization Efforts

Appendix C: Resident Quotes about Abandoned, Foreclosed Homes

- Many residents were not aware the home had been foreclosed on.
 - One young woman responded, “I didn’t even know it was closed until you told me.”
 - A male renter commented, “Wow, it’s a foreclosure. Nobody knows about it. “
- For those who did know of the foreclosure, several explained the foreclosure as an outcome of an individual problem rather than a sign of a community issue.
 - An older woman living in her elderly mother’s home recounted how a “Woman, husband and mother owned [the foreclosed home] for over 40 years, and the granddaughter manipulated it out of her hands and she lost it, she was using it for collateral on projects elsewhere.”
 - Another middle aged woman recalled that, “The homeowner of [the foreclosed property] was a very pleasant person. Always greets his neighbors. I think it sad when people lose their homes.”
 - A male owner detailed how the owners got “swindled” by the banks. In each of these resident narratives, their focus is on the individual circumstances of the former owners.
- We rarely heard reports of crime in foreclosed homes.
 - One older female owner attested, “No one goes in there [foreclosed house]. If someone went in there the neighbors would call.”
 - Another older female owner responded similarly, “I’m watchful and would report anything.” Moreover, she reported that the house didn’t concern her very much. “[It] hasn’t affected the block” because “It’s not that run down.”
- Other residents recalled activity in the home, and their response to it.
 - One middle aged female renter told us that one day she saw several children come running out of the foreclosed home. She called the police and a neighborhood group. Soon thereafter, “They came and boarded it up.”
 - A retired male renter living near that same house recalled how at one point, “There was a lot of trash, doors and windows were open. “ He responded by contacting several agencies, including Inspectional services, City Hall and the Mayor’s Office.
- Many residents viewed abandoned lots as an equal, if not greater, threat to neighborhood stability.
 - One middle aged female renter referenced the vacant lot next door to her (the foreclosed home

abutted her on the other side). She commented of that vacant lot, “there goes your sense of community.”

- A female middle-aged renter wrote that, “There is an empty lot beside my apartment, which needs to be kept up. There are bushes over there and the neighbors throw trash over there and I wish the city would do something about it.”
- A female renter noted that, “We have vacant lots. They [the city of Boston] need to put something there instead of just trees and weeds.”
- Another female renter suggested, “If the city of Boston were to maintain its vacant lots and hold property owners responsible for their abandoned lots and units our neighborhood would prosper much faster. “
- A female owner said that she and “a few others, who think [vacant lots] are very distracting. It is going to cause people to hang out there, throw trash.”

These comments, in contrast to those made on the foreclosed homes, suggest that residents perceive abandoned lots to be a threat to community stability. Residents associate empty lots to loss of sense of community and lack of community neighborhood prosperity.