**Issue:** Urban blight and sprawl

**Description:** Blight is “a deteriorated condition” caused by any number of circumstances that worsen over time due to human neglect and disinvestment. Blight generally occurs in areas that are impacted by poverty and lack of economic opportunity. Neighborhoods exposed to blight are at an increased risk of various economic, social, and physical health disparities. Historically, blighted neighborhoods also have higher rates of crime and illicit drug activity.

**What is the risk to Wichita’s:**

**Environment:** Blighted conditions from deteriorating and neglected housing, businesses and industrial sites negatively impact the visual aesthetics of the urban environment and create safety concerns. Dumping of residential and industrial wastes in these areas contribute to air, and water contamination, and create environmental nuisances. Unmanaged waste from deteriorating buildings or vehicles can seep into soils creating ground water contamination.

**Health:** Blight increases depression, stress, apathy, and anxiety. Structures in disrepair can be a safety hazard as they deteriorate. Unkempt yards can attract vermin and other animals. Blighted areas are associated with lead poisoning, public safety risks, reduced physical activity, and decreased availability of healthy foods. Neighborhood blight has been found to be a solid predictor of increased high risk sexual behavior and premature mortality due to malignant neoplasm’s, diabetes, homicide, and suicide.

**Economy:** Failure to address neighborhood blight contributes to decreased property values and discourages business development. Decreased property values mean less tax revenue to support issues relating to healthcare, public safety, and other public services. Urban sprawl contributes to the problem, as people prefer to build new properties rather than reinvesting and rehabilitating existing properties.

**Blight in Wichita**

As of December, there have been 7,695 residential nuisance cases reported in Wichita in 2009. The areas outlined in blue have been identified as containing high proportions of blight and as neighborhood revitalization areas. The areas within it that are shaded green are areas identified as local investment areas.
Urban sprawl contributes to the problem, as people prefer to build new properties rather than reinvesting and rehabilitating existing properties.
Solutions

**Individuals:**
- Perform routine maintenance on your home and grounds. Mow the grass and trim trees/bushes, keep the area free of litter, and board up structures not currently in use.
- Perform routine maintenance on your vehicle, and keep non-operative vehicles off your property.
- Contact city staff to make referrals about blighted properties and/or ask for assistance with your property.
- Organize your neighborhood association to advocate for needed community services to combat blight.
- Make an effort to work near where you live.

**Communities:**
- Citizens can organize community clean ups in an effort to engage neighbors, increase neighborhood pride and build a sense of community. Neighbors can help those who are not capable of doing these things themselves. Existing neighborhood associations need to take action and report to the city inspectors of adverse conditions that need to be addressed by home/property owners.

**Policies:**
- Institute city codes need that set a minimum standard for building and property maintenance. These codes need to be effectively enforced.