



Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: Housing Assessment in Kinston, NC

By CED Program Interns & Students

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The Development Finance Initiative (DFI) and the Kenan Institute at

UNC have teamed up to prepare a comprehensive housing assessment for the City of Kinston. The housing assessment, which combines public records with qualitative data collected through an on-the-ground property survey, will provide City leaders with detailed information on the housing stock in particular areas of town. It will provide a baseline to help staff prioritize redevelopment investments.

The following are anticipated benefits of a comprehensive housing assessment:

Discover Assets and Liabilities

A good housing assessment exposes both the assets and liabilities in a neighborhood's housing stock. Housing assessments quantify problem areas by identifying vacant or dilapidated homes, noting the presence (or absence) of streetlights, and observing the presence of graffiti, boarded up windows, or overgrown yards. Housing assessments also reveal community strengths; they distinguish between the physical condition of a property and its general maintenance. While an owner may not have the money to fix the roof, efforts to keep their home clean and decorated (flower boxes, wreaths, etc.) could be signs that residents are good stewards of their property. Neighborhood leadership and stewardship, which can be identified in a housing assessment, are critical assets for community revitalization.

Identify Legal and Ownership Constraints

Housing assessments identify legal and ownership constraints on properties in a potential redevelopment area. By combining on-the-ground parcel scans with publicly available data, leaders can determine if properties are owner-occupied, renter-occupied, vacant, or part of a more complicated legal issue, such as foreclosure or heirs property. Properties tied down with legal constraints can present significant challenges to redevelopment.

Bolster Grant Applications and Program Initiatives



Housing assessments can provide valuable data to support grant applications for federal, state or private grants. Most grant programs require data on existing conditions as a precondition for funding. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program requires that applicants demonstrate the extent to which targeted areas are blighted or have real need. Housing assessments provide concrete, fact-based data to bolster these sections of grant applications.

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