The Troubled Building Initiative (TBI): Recovering Chicago in the Face of Segregation, Decline, and the Housing Crisis

Project Overview

Headquartered in Chicago’s Planning Department, TBI targets run-down or “troubled” buildings that are becoming hazardous to their surrounding communities. Through the use of the Housing Court and Receivership process, TBI finds responsible owners/receivers who will take charge of the rehab process for targeted buildings. TBI’s main goal is to limit displacement, maintain affordable housing, and prevent unnecessary demolitions.

This project looks at the period of 2009-2016 and aims to determine whether or not TBI is actually targeting the “worst of the worst” buildings in Chicago. Additionally, this study will identify areas where the Initiative can potentially improve.


The Housing and Foreclosure Crisis of 2008 hit Chicago hardest on the West and South sides of the city. Even as foreclosure filings declined from 2009-2015, the residual impact can still be seen in 2015, as only the West and South sides continue to struggle.

1. From 2009-2016 TBI targeted 1,106 buildings located in 25% of the city’s census tracts.
2. A little over 40% of tracts with serious home value decline (50%+ decline in value) have zero TBI presence.
3. TBI tracts have experienced an overall decline in home value of 22%.
4. Areas with a TBI presence experienced a 9% decline in their Black populations, while the city as a whole saw a 4% decline.
5. 60% of tracts that experienced a significant decline in Black population (over 40% decline) do not have any TBI activity.
6. Only 2 TBI targets overlap with the Problem Landlord and Scoflaw Code lists.

Key Points & Takeaways

1. Continue to target areas struggling with high levels of foreclosure filings.
2. Actively target tracts suffering from extreme home value decline.
3. Focus on areas with significant declining Black populations, and make an effort to ensure that rehabilitated properties will be for the local population.
4. TBI needs to focus its attention to properties with problem landlords and act in a preventative manner so that these properties do not become severely deteriorated in the future.

Program Recommendations

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