

# Hiawatha CARE Project: Fact Sheet

## Issue: Community Blight



### Why is Community Blight Important?

Blighted conditions may stem from deteriorating buildings, empty storefronts, foreclosed properties, stalled developments, and poorly maintained properties. Blighted conditions negatively impact the visual aesthetics of the urban environment and create safety concerns.

Blight diminishes business and community vitality and may discourage people from living, working, or visiting an area. Neighborhoods exposed to blight have an increased risk of physical-health, economic, and social disparities.

### How Does Blight Affect Us Locally?

Blighted conditions worsen over time due to neglect and disinvestment. Several factors contribute to blight: building age, crime, economic conditions, property ownership, property values, and vacant and foreclosed properties.



### Health Impacts

- Blight can increase depression, stress, apathy, and anxiety.
- Poorly maintained buildings can be a safety hazard as they deteriorate.
- Unkempt yards can attract vermin and other animals.
- Blighted areas may have issues with lead in homes, underground tanks, and contaminated soil.

### Environmental Impacts

- Blighted areas attract illegal dumping, which contributes to air and water contamination and creates environmental nuisances.
- Waste from deteriorating buildings or vehicles can seep into soils or run off into the groundwater and nearby creeks, rivers, and lakes.

### Financial Impacts

- Blight can occur in conjunction with poverty and lack of economic opportunity.

- Blight contributes to decreased property values and discourages business development – which leads to less tax revenue to support public infrastructure and services.
- Vacant and boarded properties may attract vandals, squatters, graffiti, and arsonists.

### Hiawatha CARE Project Partners

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| Alexander's Import Auto Repair               | Hennepin County  | Minnesota Department of Health               |
| American Lung Association of Minnesota       | Hennepin - University Partnership                                  | Minnesota Pollution Control Agency           |
| Blue Construction                            | Little Earth of United Tribes                                      | Mississippi Watershed Management Org.        |
| City of Minneapolis                          | Longfellow Business Association                                    | Preventing Harm Minnesota                    |
| East Phillips Improvement Coalition          | Longfellow Community Council                                       | St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church |
| Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota | Minnehaha Communion Lutheran Church & Longfellow Lutheran parishes | US Environmental Protection Agency           |
| Gardening Matters                            | Minnehaha Creek Watershed District                                 | Women's Environmental Institute              |

# Hiawatha CARE Project - A project of Minnehaha-Hiawatha Community Works

## What Can Individuals Do?

- Report suspicious or illegal activity by calling 9-1-1.
- Maintain businesses, homes, and yards.
- Keep non-operative vehicles off properties.
- Report conditions that need to be addressed by property owners to city inspectors.

## What Can the Community Do?

- Join with neighbors to "adopt" vacant and abandoned buildings and properties.
- Organize community clean-ups to build a sense of community.
- Operate financing programs that help residents and businesses maintain and improve their properties.
- Organize volunteers to help those who are not capable of maintaining their properties by themselves.
- Start and maintain community gardens to help neighbors be involved in the community.

## What Can the City, County, and State Do?

- Enforce city codes for building and property maintenance.
- Support grant and low-interest-loan programs that help residents and businesses maintain and improve their properties.

## For More Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov/nceh/publications/books/housing/cha03.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/publications/books/housing/cha03.htm)

City of Minneapolis, [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/residents/housing.asp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/residents/housing.asp), [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/residents/neighborhoods.asp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/residents/neighborhoods.asp), [www.minneapolis.mn.gov/results/vacant.asp](http://www.minneapolis.mn.gov/results/vacant.asp)

Gardening Matters, [www.gardeningmatters.org](http://www.gardeningmatters.org)

Hennepin County, [www.hennepin.us/](http://www.hennepin.us/), search: Neighborhood Stabilization Program

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## What is the CARE Project?

The Hiawatha CARE Project is a new effort to address environmental toxins in western Longfellow and East Phillips. The project brings together two dozen business, community, government, and non-profit agencies in a community-

driven effort to identify, prioritize, and address environmental risks in the area.

The project was initiated in December 2010 when Hennepin County received a \$100,000 Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) award from the

US Environmental Protection Agency. The CARE program supports local collaborations to reduce toxins in the local community.

### More Information:

[www.minnehaha-hiawatha.com/care](http://www.minnehaha-hiawatha.com/care)  
612.348.9344.