

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 197

BY SENATOR HARRIS

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the New Orleans City Council to implement a comprehensive plan to address property blight in New Orleans East.

WHEREAS, dilapidated properties and overgrown lots, otherwise known as blight, have long been among New Orleans' most vexing challenges; and

WHEREAS, concentrations of blighted properties reduce property values, harm quality of life, and threaten public safety; and

WHEREAS, New Orleans East was once a thriving area with quality real estate and a unique place to live, work, play, and do business; and

WHEREAS, "blighted properties" as described in Chapter 26 of the New Orleans City Code specifies the minimum standards to which property owners must comply and provides for enforcement by the city's code enforcement and hearings bureau; and

WHEREAS, in 2010, a strategic plan was implemented by the mayor and city council to reduce blight within the city of New Orleans; and

WHEREAS, the strategy consisted of data-driven decision-making, blight tool alignment and improvement, organizational architecture and processes, strategic deployment of resources and place-based revitalization; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, the strategy put in place to abate the blight problem within the city of New Orleans reduced blight by thousands of properties, and won the prestigious Bright Idea in Government award presented by Harvard University's Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation; and

WHEREAS, that same blight abatement plan also won the Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary's Award; and

WHEREAS, part of the 2012 plan focused on code enforcement and lien foreclosure sales and a monthly meeting called Blight Stat, and with code enforcement, the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority and other city department officials tracking the project's progress; and

WHEREAS, as of May 2021, Blight Stat and the other award winning initiatives are no longer in operation and blighted properties in New Orleans East remain extremely high; and

WHEREAS, state statute authorizes the city of New Orleans to issue sanitation tickets as an enforcement tool for violations of nuisance, sanitation, health, safety, and welfare ordinances of Orleans Parish; and

WHEREAS, state statute also authorizes the use of criminal enforcement when the blighted property owner intentionally or in a criminally negligent manner permits the existence of a condition of deterioration of his property, which is deemed to have occurred when the property has been declared or certified as blighted after an administrative hearing, and after all reviews or appeals have occurred; and

WHEREAS, the city council is encouraged to seek ways to eliminate blight in New Orleans East in order for the area to once again become a thriving place with a pro business climate and an unmatched quality of life which offers the essential elements to ensure the growth and development of the community.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the New Orleans City Council to implement a comprehensive plan to address property blight in New Orleans East.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the comprehensive plan includes a mechanism to address the following:

(1) The appropriate city officials who may issue sanitation tickets in accordance with La. R.S. 13:2575.6.

(2) Expanding the authority of the city's code enforcement department and its employees so as to provide for a more consistent enforcement of the city's sanitation and zoning ordinances and enhance the city's ability to collect payment for fines imposed for violations of these ordinances.

(3) Consideration of enforcing La. R.S. 14:107.3 when the property has been declared or certified as blighted and the property owner has been granted an administrative hearing and all reviews or appeals have occurred.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to New Orleans City Council President Helena Moreno.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE