

What is ‘Blight’?¹

Blight is “a deteriorated condition” caused by any number of circumstances that worsen over time due to human neglect and disinvestment. 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 Are The Risks?

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 can create environmental nuisances.

Health: 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, and health issues. Neighborhood blight has been found to be a solid predictor of increased high risk sexual behavior, crime, drug use, 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. A compounding effect arises because people prefer to build new properties rather than reinvesting and rehabilitating existing properties whenever blight is present.

¹ Source: City of Wichita KS, 2007