

CDBG Code Enforcement Plan

CITY OF LAS VEGAS



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Contents

- Overview: 2
- Broken Windows Theory: 2
- Purpose: 2
- CDBG Funds for Code Enforcement Activities 3
 - Low- and Moderate-Income Area Benefit 4
 - Prevention or Elimination of Slum/Blight on an Area Basis 4
 - Slum Blight Urban Renewal Completion..... 4
 - Activities Designed to Meet Community Needs by Having a Particular Urgency 4
- Data and Analysis Efforts to Date 5
 - Enforcement Priorities and Concurrent Services..... 6
 - Enforcement Violations by Census Tract: 2013-2016..... 6
 - Impact of Demographic Changes 9
 - Section 1: Poverty Level 10
 - Section 2: Public Assistance..... 11
 - Section 3: Employment 12
 - Section 4: Disability 13
 - Section 5: Non- Native birth 14
- Proposed Interventions 14
 - Surveys and Workshops 14
 - Results Vegas..... 15
 - Randomized Control Trials 15
 - Proactive Outreach..... 16

Overview:

The City of Las Vegas code enforcement uses inspections to encourage residents (homeowners and tenants) to maintain the appearance and value of their housing units. It is encouraged that other residents are motivated to keep their housing units in compliance with local codes and up to good conditions along with their surrounding units. Housing units that are well-maintained and meet all local housing standard codes will protect the health and safety of occupants, improve the value of the residential properties in the neighborhood, and give such neighborhood the appearance of being well-maintained. Housing units that do not meet these conditions, or are dilapidated and/or vacant have a high probability of attracting squatters, vandals, and rodents.

Code inspections are done to protect the health and safety of all persons within these communities. The City of Las Vegas' Code Enforcement department assists in monitoring code enforcement and confronting and issues in a safe and routine way.

Broken Windows Theory:

In addition to maintaining the quality of life in neighborhood, active code enforcement can aid in reducing crime in these neighborhoods, as well. The Broken Windows Theory was introduced in 1982 by social scientist James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling. Their research showed that, if broken windows in a structure is not repaired, vandals and criminals are more likely to break more windows. Many often forget the power of a "broken window" policy towards improving code compliance and community responsibility. Crime levels tend to be higher in areas where repairs are not accomplished. Therefore, the City of Las Vegas Code Enforcement monitors and maintains buildings, particularly in urban areas, to prevent vandalism and further deterioration so that neighborhoods are well-maintained and experience less crime.

Purpose:

The CDBG Code Enforcement Plan was created to outline proactive strategies based on current data for specific types of code enforcement cases. This plan will guide strategies to prevent code violations and enact tools for success that the City may use in order to achieve compliance and direct decision making within the City. Overall, this plan aims to guide property

owners, protect neighborhoods, and improve the efficiency of the code enforcement program in Las Vegas.

CDBG Funds for Code Enforcement Activities

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (HCDA) and the CDBG regulations allow CDBG funds to be used for selected code enforcement activities. Provisions of these regulations are codified in 24 CFR 570.202(c). According to the HUD definition of code enforcement, it is defined as “prevention, detection, investigation, and enforcement of violations of statues and ordinances regulating public health, safety, and welfare. National objectives must be met in order for distinct code enforcement activities to be carried out: low- and moderate-income area benefit, prevention or elimination of slum/blight on an area/basis, slum blight urban renewal completion, and activities designed to meet community development needs by having a particular urgency. In addition, CDBG grantees using code enforcement funds must be in compliance with Fair Housing and Civil Rights considerations by not discriminating on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin to both clients and staff members.

Figure 1 shows the census tracts eligible for Community Development Block Grant funds in Las Vegas.

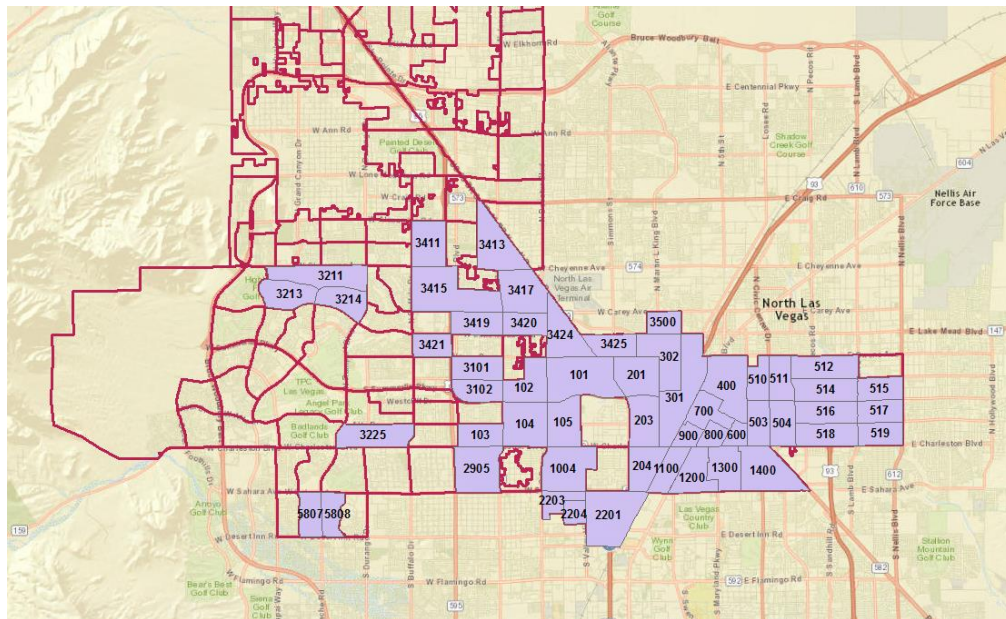


Figure 1: City of Las Vegas CDBG Census Tracts

Low- and Moderate-Income Area Benefit

Code enforcement activities may meet the national objectives of benefitting low and moderate income persons on an area basis under § 570.208(a)(1) (for Entitlements) when carried out in a deteriorated area and when carried out in conjunction with public or private improvements, rehabilitation, or services that may be expected to arrest the deterioration of the area. This national objective may be met when code enforcement inspections are conducted on single or multifamily housing units, commercial buildings, and other publicly or privately-owned buildings. The building or facility being inspected must be located in a primarily residential area where a minimum of 51% of the resident in those area are low- and moderate-income.

Prevention or Elimination of Slum/Blight on an Area Basis

Under § 570.208(b)(1) (for Entitlements) and § 570.483(c)(1) (for States), code enforcement activities are considered if the area meets the definition of slum, blighted, or deteriorated under State or local law; if at least 25% of properties experience physical deterioration, abandonment, chronic high occupancy turnover rates, significant low property values compare to other areas in that community, or if there is known or suspected environmental contamination; and if in general, public improvement through the area are in a state of deterioration. This national objective must be maintained to demonstrate how code enforcement have been maintaining the decline in an area, and what is needed to do so.

Slum Blight Urban Renewal Completion

Although rare, this national objective is an option for those who have outstanding urban renewal plans for given area. The grantee must be able to document this national objective by having a copy of the Urban Renewal Plan in effect at the time of closeout of HUD financial assistance under title I of the Housing Act of 1949 or financial settlement under Section 112 of the HCDA, and a description of how the inspections for code violations and enforcement of codes are needed to complete the urban renewal plan for the area.

Activities Designed to Meet Community Needs by Having a Particular Urgency

If there is an instance in which CDBG grantees experience natural disasters (tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, and other disastrous events) that do not rise to the level in which Federal

Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds are not received, CDBG funds may be used for code enforcement inspections in these areas to protect their safety and welfare.

Data and Analysis Efforts to Date

The city of Las Vegas' Department of Community Services and Code Enforcement have been in collaboration in gathering useful and trusted information and data in order to create an effective and useful plan to combat blight and deterioration in CDBG areas. Figure 2 shows the total number of blighted properties within all CDBG census tracts (Figure 1) when surveyed in 2012. Using factors such as poverty level, public assistance, employment, disability, and native citizenship from census data, along with Geographic Information Systems, the city has begun to analyze and spatially locate specific issues in each CDBG area, and set high priority areas for code enforcement officers to provide administration. Code enforcement officers will target areas in which more than half of all residents are low-or moderate-income households and where there is a higher need to reduce slum or blight (meaning a higher need to reduce health and safety hazards, property maintenance issues, and dangerous buildings). This partnership also aims to provide prevention and revitalization through the elimination of community blight and deterioration.

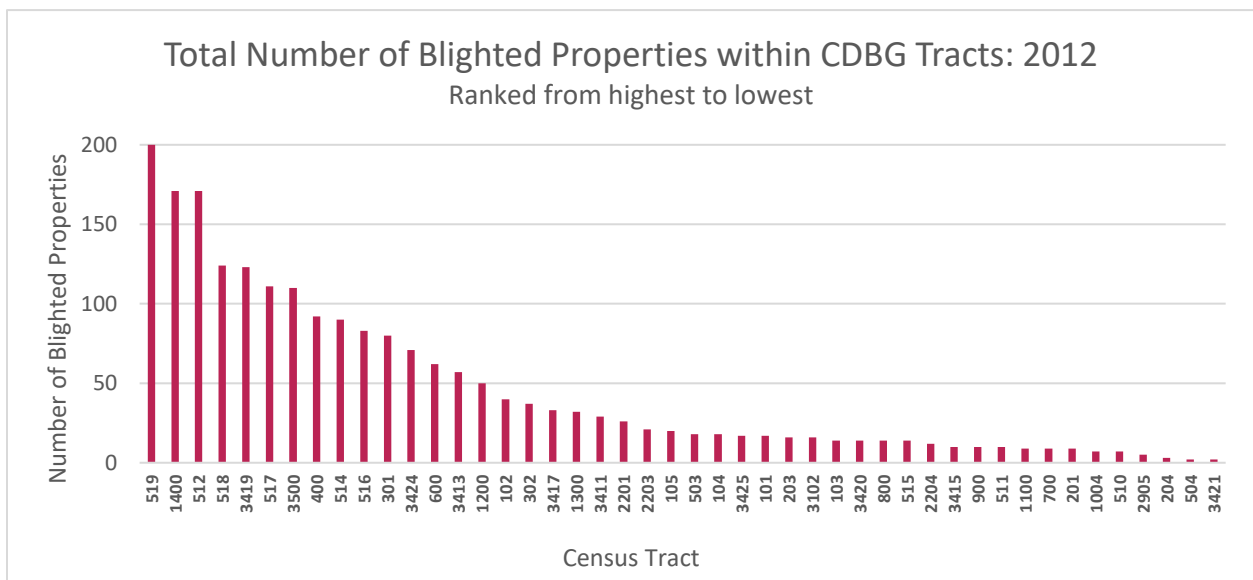


Figure 2: Baseline for Number of Blighted Properties in CDBG Census Tracts

Enforcement Priorities and Concurrent Services

Enforcement, together with the public or private improvements or services to be provided, may be expected to capture the decline of the area. The following variables were considered when analyzing best practices:

- a. Dangerous Buildings
- b. Housing Codes
- c. Nuisance Violations
- d. Identification of other activities to be carried out (whether CDBG-assisted or not) that will arrest the decline of the areas and their funding sources.
- e. Compliance with the procurement standards at § 85.36 when equipment and services are procured.

Enforcement Violations by Census Tract: 2013-2016

After a baseline survey was conducted in 2012, the City of Las Vegas focused on enforcing three key types of violations in the CDBG census tracts: dangerous buildings, housing code violations, and nuisance violations. As shown in Table 1 and Figure 3, enforcement in these categories increased significantly each year from 2013 to 2016. In 2016, violations in these categories were more than double the amount in 2013. Figures 4 through 7 provide detail on violations by census tract.

Violations	2013	2014	2015	2016	Grand Total
Dangerous Building	656	1,093	1,314	1,328	4,391
Housing Code	866	974	1,385	1,976	5,201
Nuisance Violations	9,727	12,219	16,378	19,668	57,992
Grand Total	11,249	14,286	19,077	22,972	67,584

Table 1: Enforcement of Targeted Violations in CDBG Census Tracts by Year

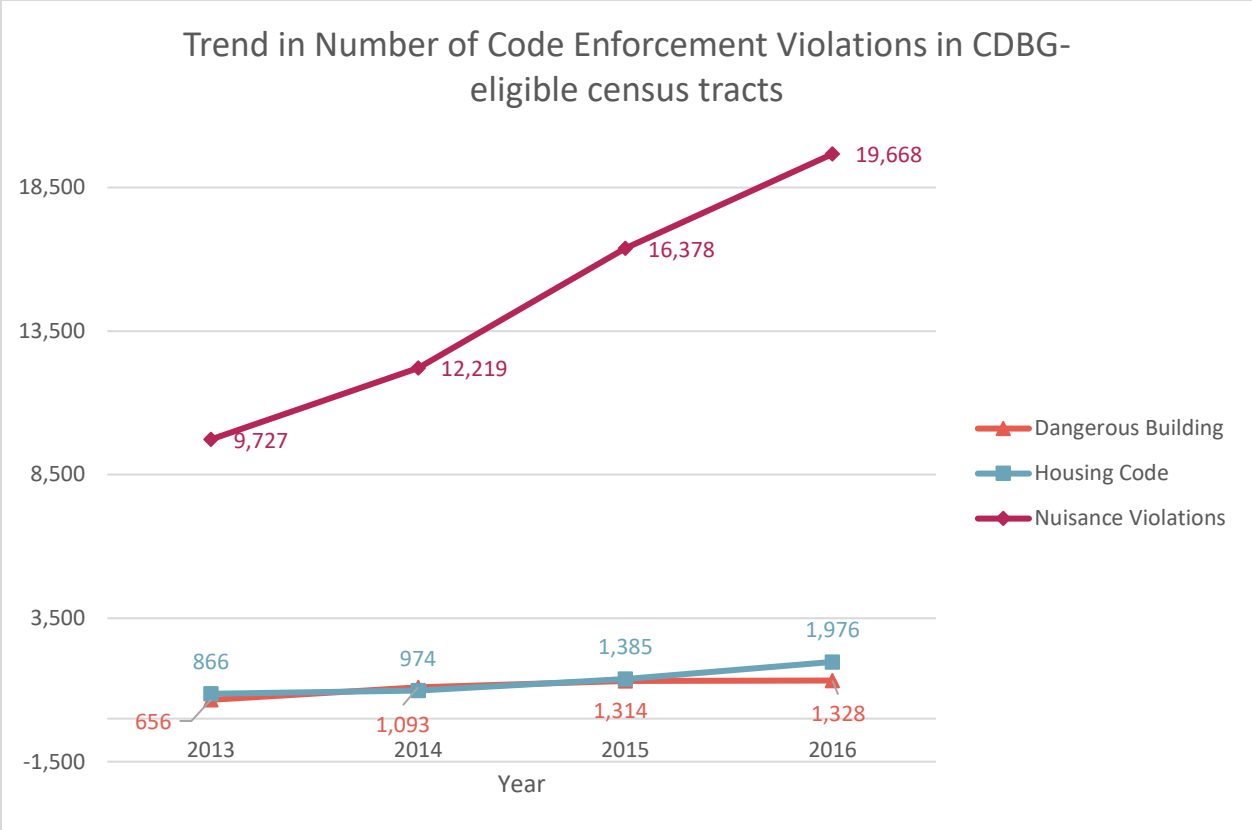


Figure 3: Trend in Enforcement of Targeted Code Violations in CDBG Census Tracts

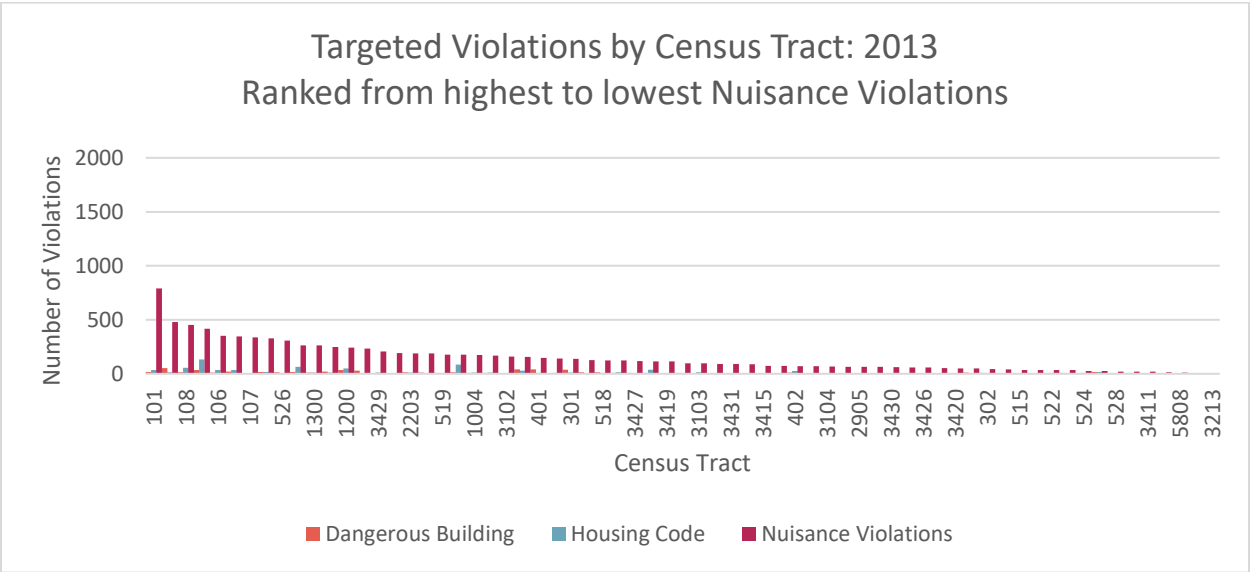


Figure 4: Violations in CDBG Census Tracts 2013

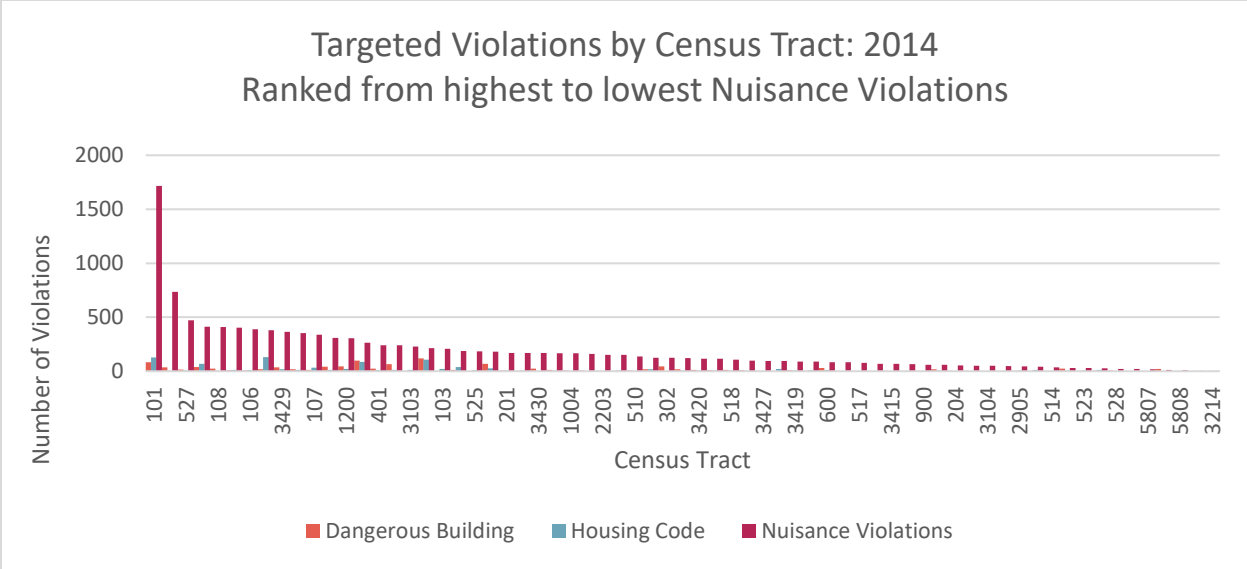


Figure 5: Violations in CDBG Census Tracts 2013

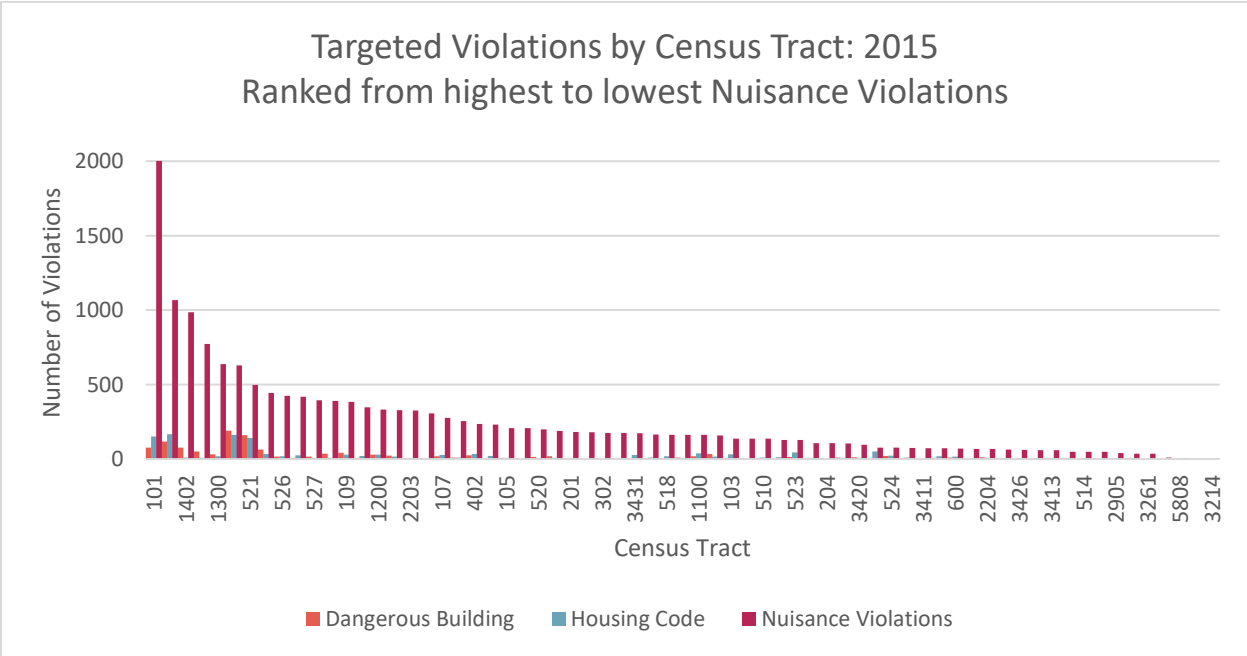


Figure 6: Violations in CDBG Census Tracts 2013

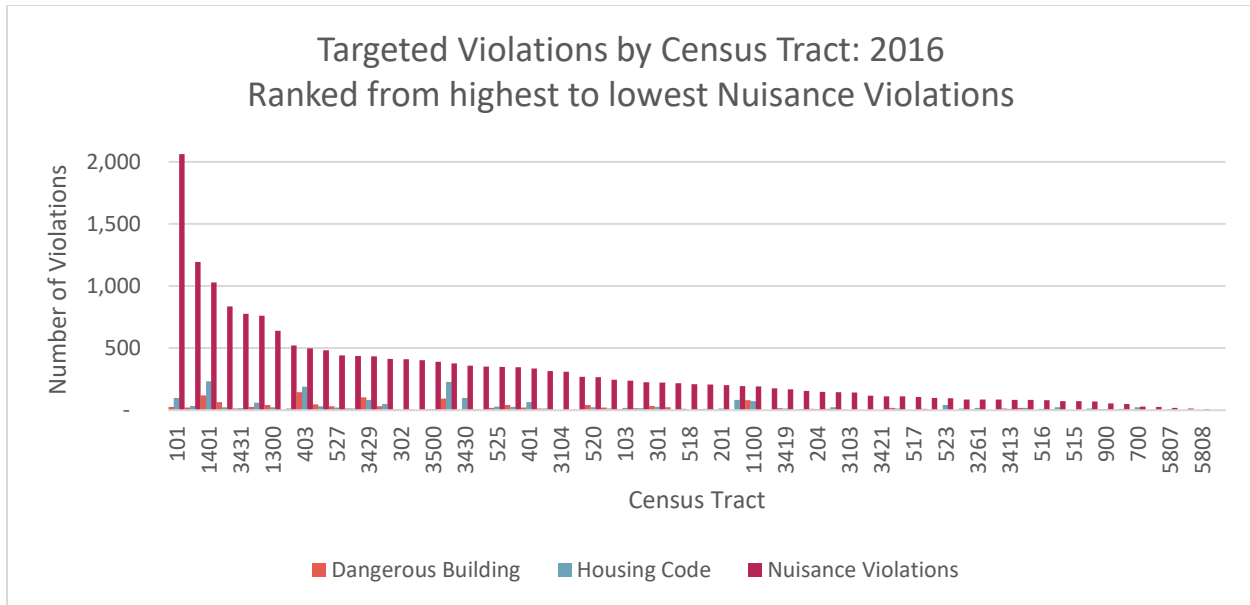


Figure 7: Violations in CDBG Census Tracts 2013

Impact of Demographic Changes

While enforcement efforts have increased significantly since the 2012 baseline, there have also been demographic changes that have contributed to ongoing blight. Table 2 shows the overall trends for CDBG census tracts for poverty, public assistance, unemployment, disability status, and non-native population. Table 2 illustrates that several key indicators increased from 2012 to 2015: percent of families below poverty level, percent of families with cash public assistance or Food Stamps/SNAP, and individuals with disabilities. In contrast, unemployment and the percent of foreign born individuals decreased. Detail on each indicator can be found in the sections below.

Census Statistics	2012	2015	Change in Percentage Points
Average percent of families below poverty level within all CDBG tracts.	20.7%	23.7%	+3.0%
Average Percent of families with cash public assistance or Food Stamps/SNAP within all CDBG tracts.	6.6%	8.9%	+2.3%
Average of Unemployment rate within all CDBG tracts.	16.6%	15.0%	-1.6%
Average Percent of individuals with a disability within all CDBG tracts.	14.0%	16.3%	+2.3%
Average Percentage of non- native (born outside U.S.) individuals within all CDBG tracts.	1.29%	1.27%	-0.02%

Table 2: Demographic Changes for CDBG Census Tracts from 2012 to 2015

Section 1: Poverty Level

The overall average estimated percent of families below the poverty level in all CDGB tracts was 3.0 percentage points higher in 2015 than 2012. In 2015, roughly 30% of the census tracts had a reduction in poverty, and nearly 70% had an increase in poverty. However, when comparing individual tracts in 2012 to 2015 census data shows the highest majority of poverty reduction has taken place in the CDBG tracts that had the highest poverty percentage in 2012.

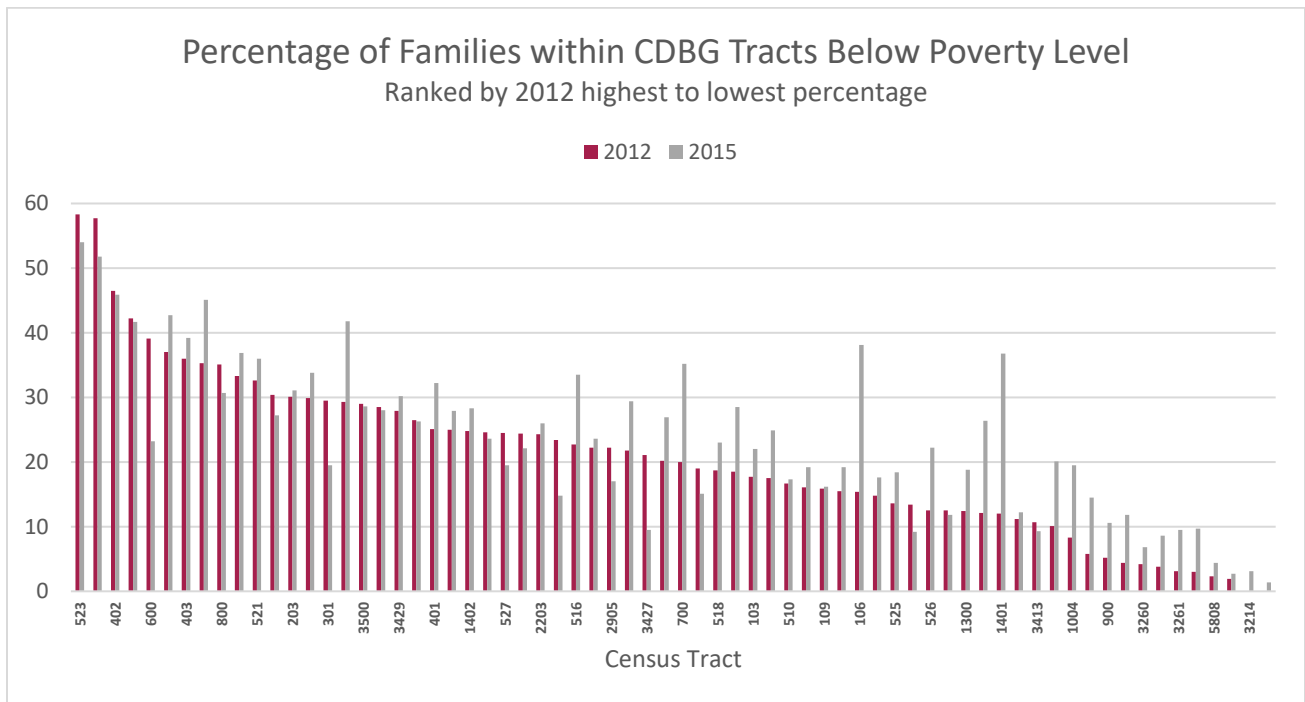


Figure 8- Poverty Level by CDGB Census Tract
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Table S1702

Section 2: Public Assistance

Overall, the estimated average percent of families with cash public assistance or food stamps/SNAP in all CDGB tracts was higher in 2015 by 2.3 percentage points. In 2015, roughly 16% of census tracts had a reduction in the percentage of families on public assistance, and roughly 84% of census tracts had an increase in the percentage of families on public assistance. When comparing individual CDBG tracts in 2012 to 2015, census data shows very few areas have had a reduction in the percentage of individuals on public assistance.

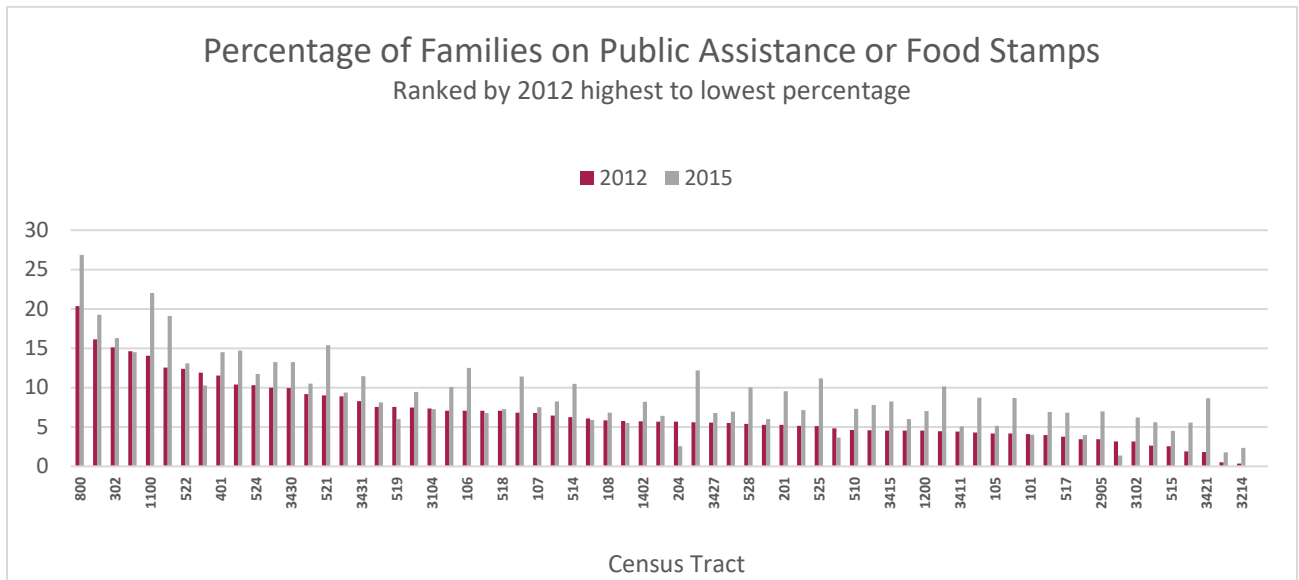


Figure 9- Public Assistance Percentage by CDBG Census Tract
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Table B1905

Section 3: Employment

On average, the overall unemployment rate throughout all CDBG tracts decreased by 1.6 percentage points from 2012 to 2015. In 2015, roughly 40% of census tracts had an increase in unemployment rates, whereas 60% of census tracts had a decrease in unemployment rates. A majority of the census tracts that had the highest unemployment rates in 2012 have had a reduction in unemployment. In contrast, the census tracts that ranked lower in 2012 have a higher percentage increase in unemployment.

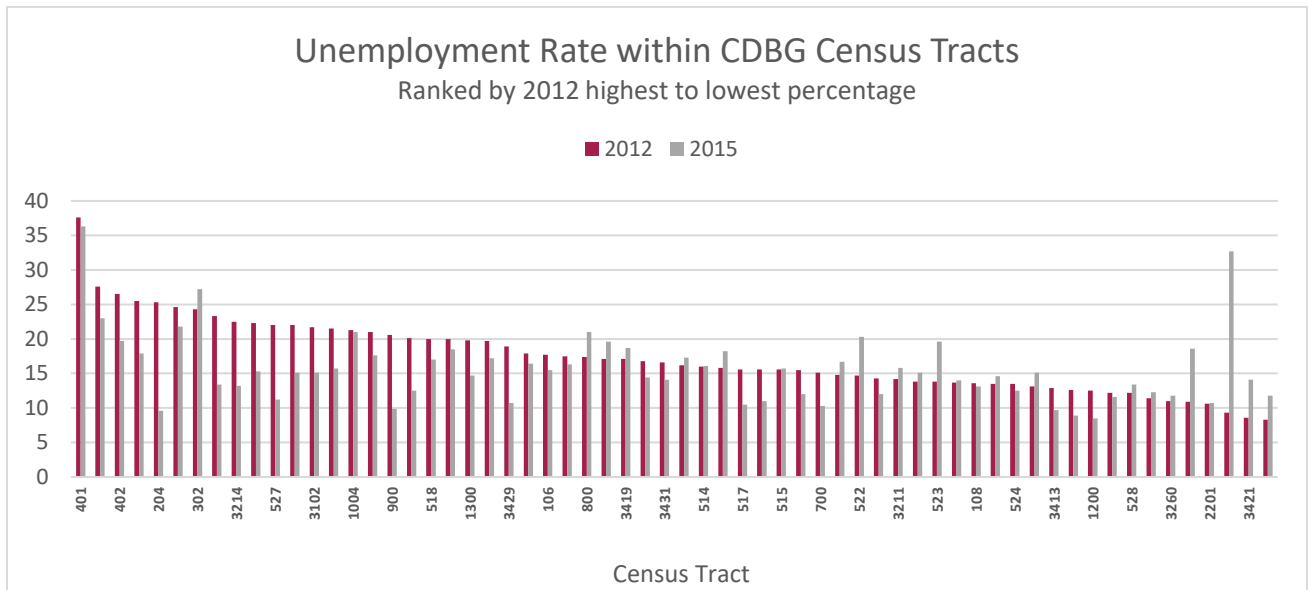


Figure 10- Unemployment Rate by CDBG Census Tract
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Table S2301.

Section 4: Disability

Overall, the percentage of residents with a disability has increased in the specific census tracts by 2.3 percentage points from 2012 to 2015. In 2015, over 26% of CDGB census tracts had a decrease in the percentage of individuals with a disability, yet 74% had an increase in the percentage of individuals with a disability.

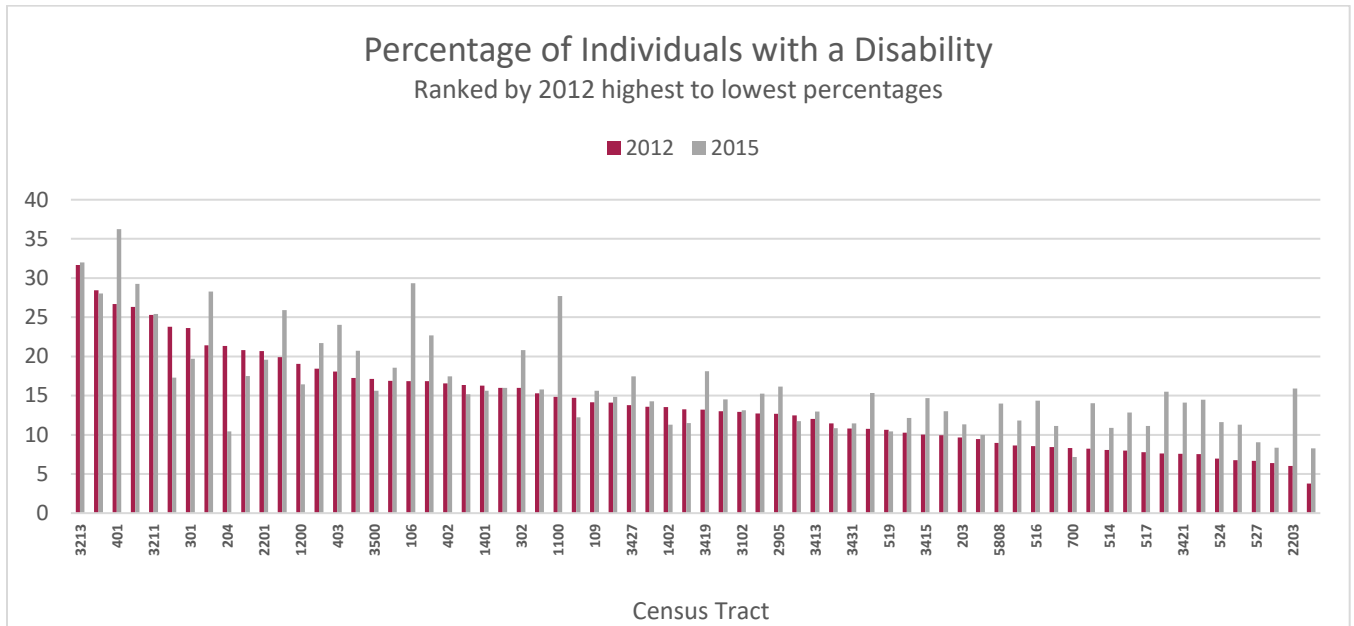


Figure 11- Percentage of Persons with a Disability by CDBG Census Tract

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Table S1810

Section 5: Non- Native birth

Overall the average percentage of non-native births within all census tracts shows a slight decrease (-.02 percentage points) from 2012 to 2015. In 2015, over 26% of CDGB census tracts had an increase in the percentage of individuals with born outside the U.S., and 74% had a decrease in the percentage of individuals born outside of the U.S. Comparing 2012 to 2015 census data by tract, the highest ranked percentage of individuals born outside the U.S in 2012 had the greatest reduction in 2015, whereas, tracts that had a lower percentage in 2012 had the greatest increase in 2015.

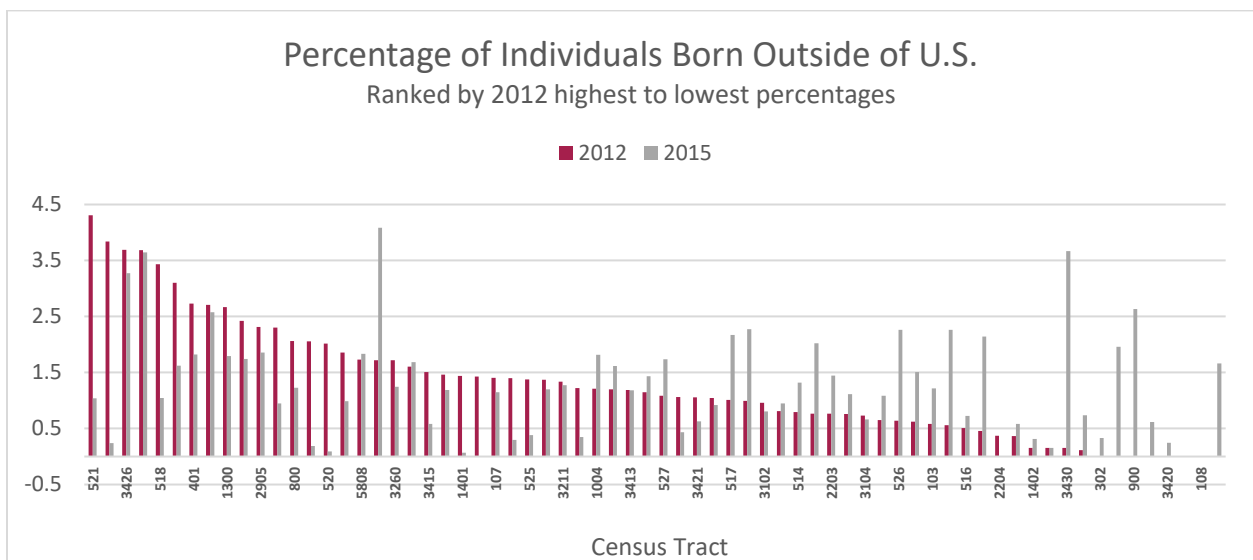


Figure 12-Percentage of Individuals Born Outside of U.S. by CDBG Census Tract
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Table S0602

Proposed Interventions

Surveys and Workshops

Currently, the City of Las Vegas Code Enforcement officers survey CDBG areas to identify blight, and Community Services Department holds round tables and community technical assistance workshops where providers and city staff members exchange feedback.

Moving forward, the city of Las Vegas Code Enforcement and Community Services Department will collaborate to share information gathered from surveys to present at roundtable events and community technical assistance workshops. In turn, the information

gathered from roundtable events and workshops will also be shared with code enforcement in an effort to increase and sustain code compliant properties.

Results Vegas

The city has an outcome-oriented performance management system called Results Vegas. The Planning Department's Key Performance Indicator is to improve livability by increasing the STAR Communities Livability Score. One of the supporting measures to help achieve this goal is to decrease the number of blighted properties in CDBG areas by 50% from the 2012 baseline by 2022. The proposed interventions included in this plan are intended to help achieve this goal.

Randomized Control Trials

Las Vegas is taking a proactive approach to increasing compliance with codes that focus on dangerous buildings, housing, and nuisances in CDBG-eligible census tracts. In FY 2018, the city is partnering with the Behavioral Insights Team as part of the What Works Cities initiative to develop two randomized control trials to determine what message generates the best compliance rate. This is a low-cost evaluation method that will use data to determine the most effective way to increase code compliance.

The city currently sends postcards to inform property owners that they need to address common violations, such as overgrown weeds, and then sends an inspector to determine which properties are in compliance. This is a proactive approach to code enforcement that seeks to increase compliance for a larger number of properties than could be addressed through inspections driven by complaints.

The first trial will test the effectiveness of the language on the current city postcard vs a new post card that contains language using behavioral insights concepts from psychology and economics. CDBG-eligible census tracts with historically high rates of noncompliance will be selected and approximately 1,200 addresses will be randomly assigned to the control group (current postcard) or the treatment group (new postcard). The postcard will indicate that property owners have two weeks to correct any violations. After two weeks, the city will send inspectors to do a survey to determine compliance. Statistical analysis will be used to determine

if there are any significant differences between the current and new postcard. Using a large random sample will allow the city to be confident that the result is not due to other factors.

Once the most effective message has been identified, the city will do second randomized control trial in another geographic area with historically high violation rates. In this trial, the control group will feature the winning message from the first trial and the treatment group will have this message in both English and Spanish. The same methodology will be used to determine compliance and whether there is a significant difference in the treatment group.

Once the two trials have concluded, the city can use the most effective message for postcards in the future, which has the potential to significantly increase code compliance in CDBG-eligible areas.

Proactive Outreach

Code Enforcement will be expanding focus and services to address allocated areas of blight through various proactive measures. The Office of Community Services will collaborate in these efforts to assist Code Enforcement in these actions. Stronger communication between these two departments is needed when it comes to code enforcement violations in the community. The City of Las Vegas understand that property values and the quality of life for our residents are directly impacted by the performance of the City and its departments, and the City plans on operating with a more aggressive, systematic and proactive approach.

The first proactive measure will be an increase of educational mailings and use of social media to communicate with neighborhoods. Code Enforcement will use this to increase the number of neighborhood clean ups, or sweeps in order to be more present and hands-on in the communities that they serve. Additionally, there will be an increased use of post card notifications (as seen with the randomized control trials) to homeowners about initial complaints or to address blanket neighborhood issues. Through participatory and active community policing, it will assist not only communities, but the City in determining where enforcement action is needed.

Through completion the survey of all potential abandoned properties and categorizing level of blighted conditions, the hope is to increase enforcement activities in these identified areas with blighted neighborhoods.