

INTRODUCTION

Project Background

In 2012 the City of Harlem became a member of the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) to address the following concerns:

- Aging public housing facilities: Harlem's Housing Authority properties were initially constructed in the late 1950's.
- Existing private housing stock: A number of aging residents live in older homes that need of repair.
- US Army's Fort Gordon: Veteran housing has become a focus.
- Availability of accessible housing: In 2010, a 15-unit independent living facility was constructed in Harlem. An expansion is in the works and this demonstrates a need for accessible housing.

HOUSING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Assessment Methodology

As part of the City of Harlem's GICH work plan, the Regional Commission's staff conducted a windshield survey to assess the exterior conditions of all housing units located within the city limits. The survey instrument used to assess the exterior condition of the housing was adapted from an instrument used in 1987 by the Augusta-Richmond County Planning Commission. The survey's potential outcomes for a housing unit are:

Classification	Score	
Standard	0-1 points	A
Deteriorated Minor	2-13 points	B
Deteriorated Major	14 - 30 points	C
Dilapidated	31-75 points	D

The classifications are defined as:

- Standard -- The structure provides safe and adequate shelter. It has no structural defects in the primary or secondary components. The defects are slight and require normal maintenance to maintain the standard rating.
- Deteriorated Minor -- The structure provides usable shelter. It has some structural defects in the primary and/or secondary components. The defects have a minor effect on the structure and require minor repairs to meet the standard rating.
- Deteriorated Major -- The structure provides usable shelter. It has major structural defects in the primary and/or secondary components. The defects have a significant effect on the structure and require major repairs to meet the standard rating.
- Dilapidated -- The structure does not provide safe and adequate shelter. The structure has major defects in primary and secondary components. The defects affect all or a large part of the building and require rebuilding or replacing.

Assessment Findings

Information was gathered on 1,136 housing units or 999 structures. Duplexes and multi-unit complexes were graded as one structure. There are four multi-unit apartment complexes in Harlem with three sites having 24 units and one site having 16 units. The Housing Authority was treated as a multi-unit site having 44 units.

UNITS IN STRUCTURE					
Category	Census 2010	%	Category	City Data 2013	%
Total Housing Units	1,064	100.00	Total Housing units	1,136	100.00
Single Units (detached)	833	78.29	Single Units	954	83.98
Single Units (attached)	18	1.69	Duplex	20	1.76
Double Units	34	3.20	Multi-unit sites	132	11.62
3 to 4 Units	79	7.42	Mobile Home	30	2.64
5 to 9 Units	15	1.41			
10 to 19 Units	59	5.55			
20 or more units	16	1.50			
Mobile Home	10	.94			

Results of the windshield survey show:

- 768 structures with a classification of standard (score A);
- 170 structures with a classification of minor deteriorated (score B);
- 47 structures with a classification of substandard (score C); and
- 14 structures with a classification of dilapidated (score D).

The data also revealed that there are 28 vacant properties and 17 houses for sale and five for rent. Results showed that of the 28 vacant properties, six had a score of C (major deteriorated) and eight had a score of D (dilapidated). It should also be noted that there are 266 vacant parcels within the city limits.

CLASSIFICATION OF STRUCTURES (999)							
		Single Units	Duplexes	Multi-Units	Mobile homes		
Classification	Score	#	#	#	#	Total	%
Standard	A	756	5	4	3	768	76.88%
Deteriorated Minor	B	157	5	1	7	170	17.02%
Deteriorated Major	C	29	0	0	18	47	4.70%
Dilapidated	D	12	0	0	2	14	1.40%
Total # structures	999	954	10	5	30	999	100.00%

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall condition of housing within the City of Harlem is well maintained. Of the 14 dilapidated structures eight are already vacant and the city should ensure that no one moves into the property through code enforcement. The remaining, six along with the major deteriorated structures (score C), should be addressed through property maintenance code enforcement. There are neighborhoods that are in need of minor repair (score B). If the areas with a classification of minor deteriorated are not addressed, the condition of the houses over time will worsen, resulting in the creation of slum and blight within the City.

Housing experts say a healthy housing market will have a 3% vacancy rate for owner-occupied housing and a 5% vacancy rate for rental housing. An overall vacancy rate of 7 to 8% is considered a healthy market. Based on the results of the windshield survey Harlem has an owner-occupied vacancy rate of 1.1% and a renter vacancy rate of 3.4%. (According the 2010 Census the vacancy rates are 2.0% and 6.8% respectively)

There is a lack of available owner-occupied housing and rental property within the city. With 266 vacant parcels, of varying sizes, the city has a significant opportunity for in-fill development as well as the creation of new single-family subdivisions and multi-unit complexes with the required amenities for today's young professionals. It should be noted that with the addition of nearly 4,000 cyber and intelligence jobs at Fort Gordon over the next five years Harlem has an opportunity to experience major growth. New subdivisions of single-family homes along with multi-unit apartment complexes with amenities would serve the needs of Harlem as well as this new population and attract new families and residents to the area.