

May 10, 2018--The City of Bethlehem today released findings from a comprehensive nine-month long blight analysis of the city. The Blight Remediation and Mitigation Plan identifies a set of activities to guide the City's approach to fighting blight into the 21st century. The City will now move to implement recommendations based on the study's findings.

"This study puts us on the path to ensure a more data-driven approach to mitigating blight in Bethlehem," said Mayor Robert Donchez. "The findings provide a framework to help the City target future housing, recreation and public works investments, build partnerships with community organizations on initiatives and amend policies to better combat blight."

The study was developed by a team led by Reinvestment Fund, which is based in Philadelphia. The team worked in close consultation with the Bethlehem Blight Betterment Committee, a group of 22 government, private sector and non-profit organizations, to maximize the input from the stakeholders that are impacted by neighborhood conditions. The study was supported with generous funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development.

The first phase of the study was a Market Value Analysis conducted by Reinvestment Fund. The analysis examined the City's different housing markets to identify neighborhoods that are showing signs of residential distress that may be vulnerable to blight. After this initial phase of the study, the team examined a range of legal tools to address blight, including the current policies and ordinances the City employs.

The resulting report recommends a range of activities to best equip the City and its partners to effectively address blight. The implementation will require collaboration across City and County governments as well as between the City, City Council and community organizations as they coordinate existing capacities and resources to target the neighborhood where their efforts will have the highest impact.