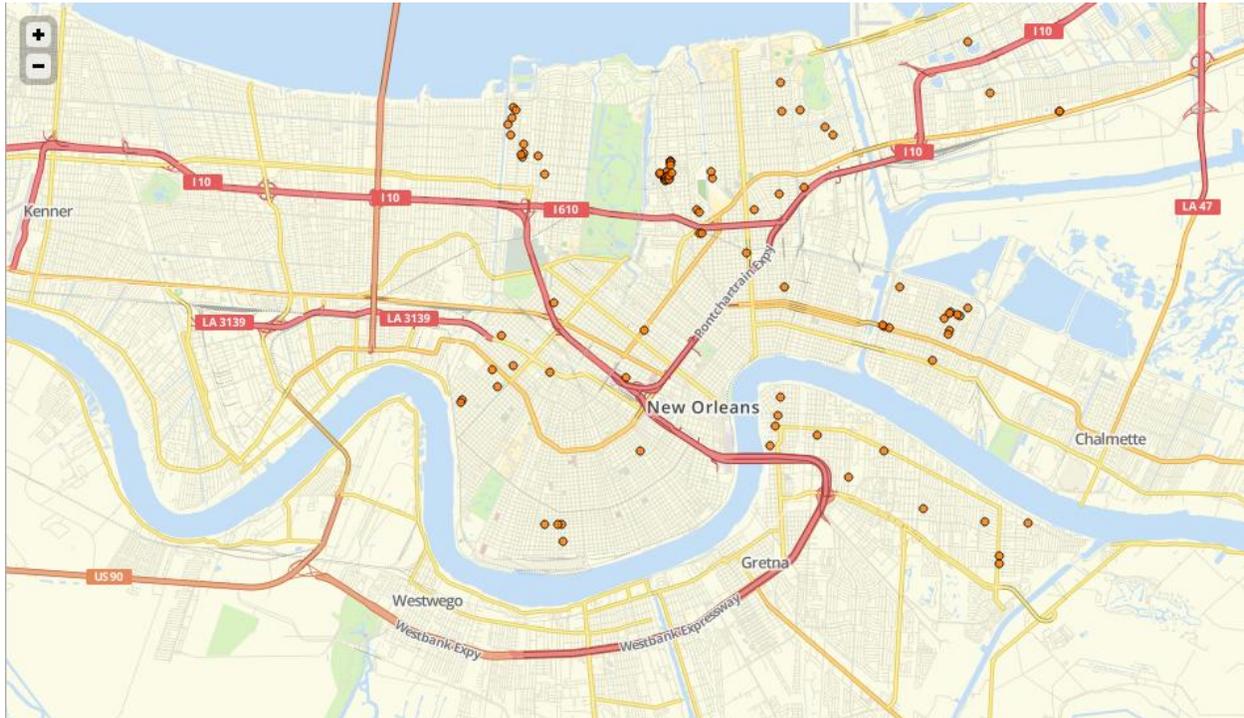


New Orleans Launches Blighted Property Web App (VIDEO)

Sarah Rich | October 12, 2012



When New Orleans became partnered with fellowship program Code for America this year, the city had one goal: develop a system that focuses on the city's blighted properties.

And the [Code for America](#) fellows are on the job, spending this year working with the city to improve data transparency on those blighted properties.

When the city declares a property as blighted, steps to determine a resolution — whether it's to be demolished or sold at auction, for example — are taken.

So to track the progress of the city's blighted properties, the fellows developed an interactive, open source Web tool called BlightStatus, which officially launched Thursday, Oct. 11.

BlightStatus lets users search for a property within city limits, and shows its case history and maps the property's location. And users who register with a user name and password can create a personalized watch list to view and track the progress of more than one property. When a blighted property's status changes, users can receive email or text notifications to alert them of the modification.

Using a public forum called BlightStat, which was in place prior to BlightStatus' launch, city officials and citizens discuss blighted properties and every step of the blight

eradication process from inspections to resolutions. CIO Allen Square Jr., said the city aims to meet monthly targets on blight progress and through the public forum, citizens can inquire about those targets.

Information on blighted properties already existed within City Hall, but the Code for America fellows representing New Orleans said the data wasn't easily accessible to citizens.

"What's happening is that citizens are collecting information about their neighborhoods and the state of properties and then presenting it to the city saying, 'Hey, fix these properties. This is a problem in my neighborhood,'" said Alex Pandel, one of the fellows who worked on BlightStatus.

Eddie Tejada, another fellow, said that when the BlightStatus project began, much of the blighted property data was in raw form and spread across multiple systems and in different data formats. " We spent months just making sense of the data and figuring out how we can tell stories from this information."

As this year's Code for America program wraps up, New Orleans officials will need to decide how to sustain the BlightStatus application. Square said no official decisions have been made, and the city must ask itself if a Code for America fellow will stay on to keep BlightStatus up and running, or if a new coder should be hired to oversee the application.

<http://www.govtech.com/e-government/New-Orleans-Launches-Blighted-Property-Web-App.html>