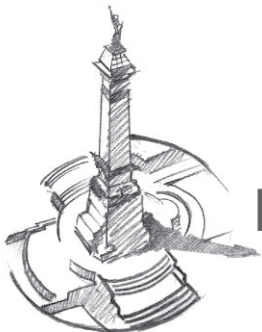# VACANT HOUSING INITIATIVE

Report prepared for the Abandoned House Work
Group meeting December 2nd, 2003

Data collected through August 30th, 2003

City of
Indianapolis
Bart Peterson, Mayor

Introduction

Abandoned and vacant homes, along with being unsightly, attract activity that is detrimental to the quality of life in our neighborhoods. In an attempt to combat this growing problem in Indianapolis, Mayor Peterson announced the war on abandoned houses in February 2003, which included both short and long-term strategies. One of the long-term goals was to create a comprehensive inventory of information on potentially unsafe, vacant housing. The inventory included an assessment of the existing building and site conditions as well as current occupancy status. It is anticipated that the data could be used to identify building/property owners and to help initiate redevelopment interests from non-profit agencies, private developers, and neighborhood groups. Other components of the initiative include: the creation of a Top Ten List of negligent property owners, coordination with law enforcement in tracking vacant houses, exploring potential funding opportunities for the rehabilitation of houses, and the creation of a construction job program.

Vacancy vs. Abandonment

An abandoned house is:

- A chronically vacant and uninhabitable unit whose owner is taking no active steps to bring it back into the housing market;

- To abandon a house is to neglect the responsibilities of ownership regarding minimum functional, financial, and physical upkeep;

- Abandonment is different than vacancy, a status referring to whether a property is occupied or not. Vacancy can be a result of normal turnover or can be temporary, long-term, or permanent.
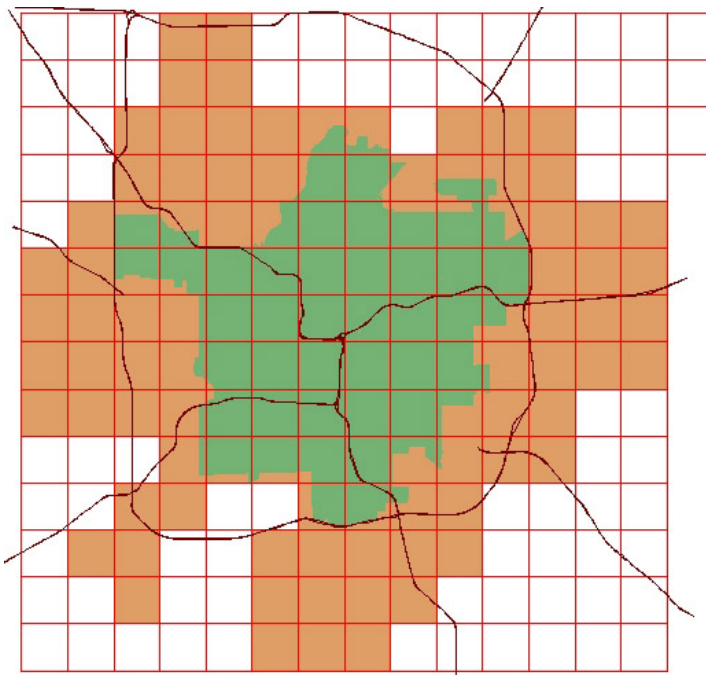
Survey Methodology

Guidance: Administrative Indicators

- Used information from the following sources as vacancy indicators
    1. Marion County Health and Hospital (boarding/repair/or demolition orders)
    2. Marion County Treasurer's Office (property tax delinquencies)
    3. Marion County Sheriff's Department (mortgage foreclosure/ sheriff sale)
    4. IPL (no electricity for 6 months)

The field work was aided and sometimes guided by the various administrative indicators that potentially indicated a vacancy. Among these indicators were the following sets of data for Marion County: Vacant Building Boarding Orders (Marion County Health and Hospital), Vacant Building Repair or Demolish Orders (Marion County Health and Hospital), Property tax delinquent parcels (Treasurer), Mortgage foreclosure/sheriff sale (Civil Sheriff), and homes without electric service for over six months (IPL). Within the old city limits, these indicators aided in the identification of vacant buildings, however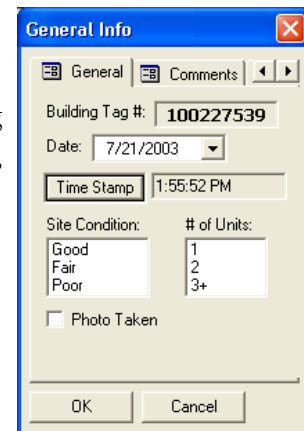 due to a higher incidence of vacant houses, the survey team inventoried the area building by building. Outside these limits, the survey teams were guided by the indicators to specific properties instead of searching building by building.

left: Map of Marion County indicating interstate highways, Old City Limits (green), and vacant housing survey area (orange)

Data collection

We collected five pieces of information on each building that was surveyed (the number of units, vacancy status, building condition, site condition, and a digital photograph).

1. The number of dwelling units (usually one or two) that the building contained was noted and then the information below was collected for each unit within a structure that contained a vacancy.

2. The status of the vacancy was collected for each property in the survey. There was a tiered system for classifying these properties. If a property was vacant, it could also be boarded or for sale. For this reason, we created three categories: Vacant, Vacant for Sale, and Vacant/ Boarded. If a property was deemed as Vacant and boarded, it could also be for sale. However, if the building was rated as Vacant for Sale then it was identified as such, which also indicates that it is not boarded.

3. The third piece of data that we collected was a condition rating for the structure of the building. This rating system included an 'A' through 'E' rating scale. An 'A' rating was given to homes in excellent condition. A 'C' rating was the middle of the scale and included homes that needed minor rehabilitation while an 'E' rating was given to homes that were severely dilapidated.

4. The condition of the site surrounding the building was also collected. The rating system used for this was a very simple good, fair or poor scale. A 'good' yard is well maintained while a 'poor' yard has overgrown weeds or contains dangerous trash and debris.

5. The last piece of information that was collected on each property was a digital photograph of the façade of the building.
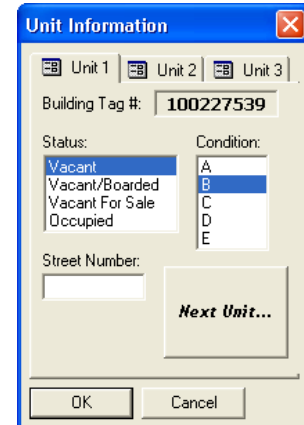
above: Sample screenshots from the PDAs used to inventory the vacant homes.

left: Sample digital photograph of vacant home.

Survey Results

The survey identified 7,913 vacant residential structures in Marion County containing approximately 9,013 vacant units. 85% of these buildings (6,697) were within the old city limits of Indianapolis as delineated by the current public safety district for IPD/IFD. 88.9% of all vacant and boarded buildings are located in areas served by community development corporations (excluding CAFÉ and including the old MLK and ECI CDCs).

Survey teams found 7,913 vacant homes

21%

57%

22%

- Vacant (not boarded or for sale)
- Vacant for Sale
- Vacant and Boarded
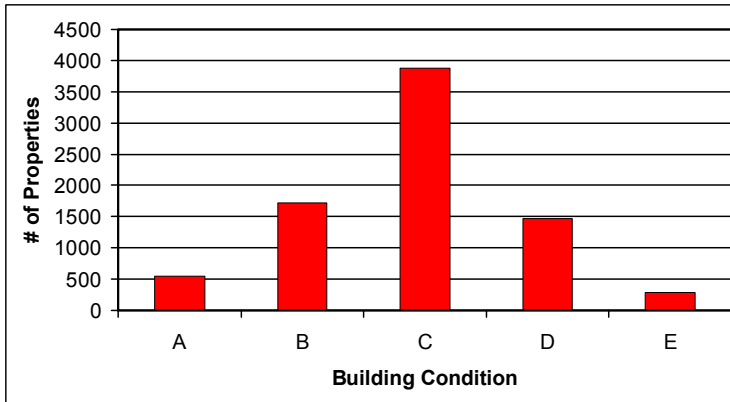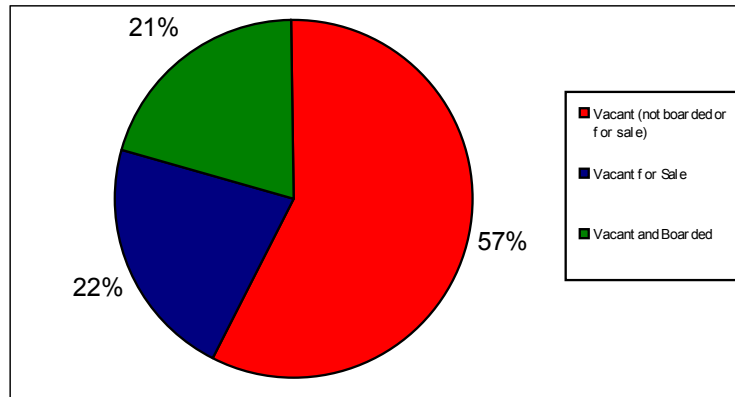
The largest number of the homes surveyed were 'C' condition with few 'A' or 'E' rated structures

Most of the vacant homes in Marion County are located within the Old City Limits of Indianapolis
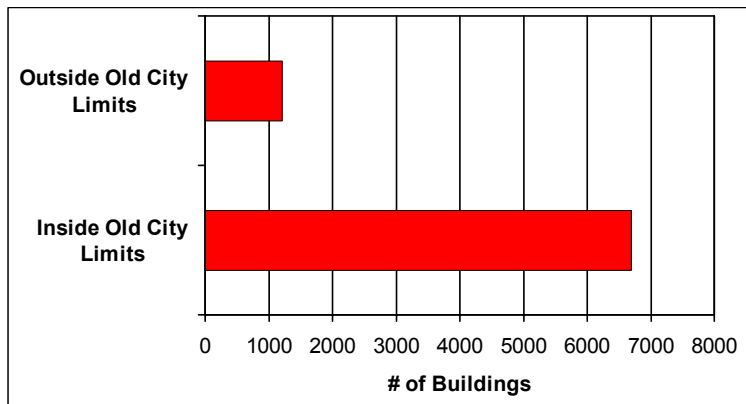
Ongoing Project

- Data will be available on the internet
- Data can be updated easily without having to do another survey

In the future, information from the inventory will be linked with data from other sources and governmental agencies (Tidemark, etc.). The status of the vacant houses identified in the inventory is ever-changing. For this reason, there must be a way to update the information fairly easily without replicating a costly, time-intensive, street by street survey. To ensure that the data can be easily updated, the city is exploring other successful housing-related projects such as the Neighborhood Information System in Philadelphia.

Vacant Housing Survey
Vacancy by Township

LAWRENCE
Vacant and Boarded = 22
Vacant For Sale = 115
Vacant = 224
Bldg Cond
A = 12
B = 144
C = 160
D = 39
E = 6
Total = 361

WARREN
Vacant and Boarded = 28
Vacant For Sale = 211
Vacant = 379
Bldg Cond
A = 62
B = 241
C = 266
D = 35
E = 14
Total = 618

FRANKLIN
Vacant and Boarded = 0
Vacant For Sale = 20
Vacant = 20
Bldg Cond
A = 19
B = 16
C = 5
D = 0
E = 0
Total = 40

WASHINGTON
Vacant and Boarded = 51
Vacant For Sale = 153
Vacant = 325
Bldg Cond
A = 26
B = 164
C = 236
D = 92
E = 11
Total = 529

CENTER
Vacant and Boarded = 1367
Vacant For Sale = 707
Vacant = 2575
Bldg Cond
A = 166
B = 739
C = 2480
D = 1057
E = 207
Total = 4649

PERRY
Vacant and Boarded = 14
Vacant For Sale = 80
Vacant = 133
Bldg Cond
A = 23
B = 101
C = 70
D = 31
E = 2
Total = 227

PIKE
Vacant and Boarded = 3
Vacant For Sale = 112
Vacant = 92
Bldg Cond
A = 102
B = 57
C = 42
D = 4
E = 2
Total = 207

WAYNE
Vacant and Boarded = 180
Vacant For Sale = 299
Vacant = 711
Bldg Cond
A = 86
B = 231
C = 623
D = 209
E = 41
Total = 1190

DECATUR
Vacant and Boarded = 4
Vacant For Sale = 45
Vacant = 73
Bldg Cond
A = 55
B = 36
C = 17
D = 9
E = 5
Total = 122

City of Indianapolis — Bart Peterson, Mayor

IndyGIS — Geospatial Information Services — Indianapolis/Marion County — www.indygov.org/gis

August 30, 2003

City of Indianapolis Vacant Housing Inventory
Summer 2003

Vacant Units Inventoried as a Percent of
the Total Number of Housing Units as determined during the 2000 Census.
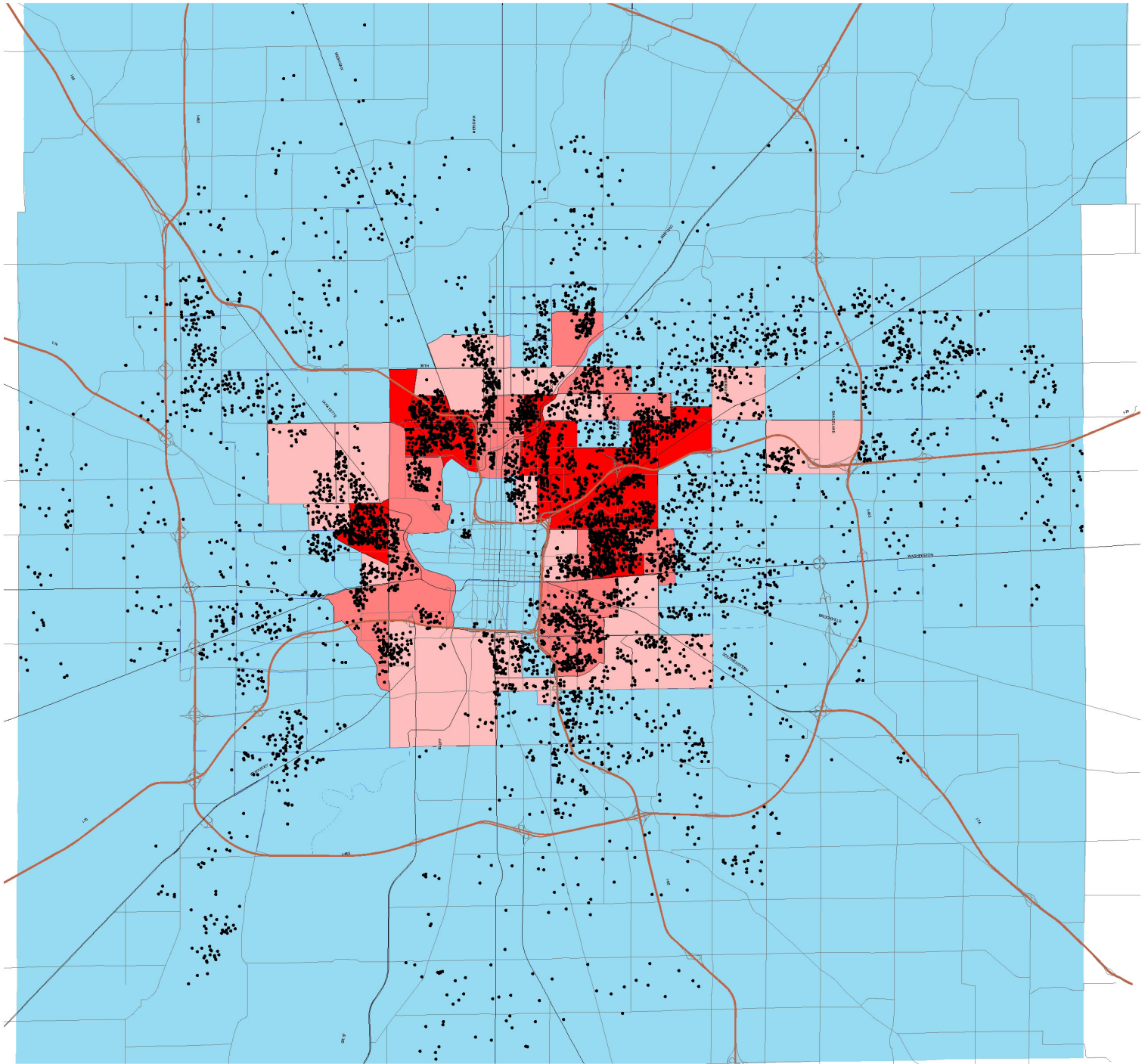
Legend

- •   Vacant Buildings
- ——   Interstate
- ——   Major Thoroughfare
- ——   Primary Arterial

% of Housing Units

- 0.00 - 1.50
- 1.57 - 4.00
- 4.02 - 7.00
- 7.22 - 12.00
- 12.01 - 20.00

This map does not represent a legal document, it is intended
to serve as an aid in graphic representation only. Information shown
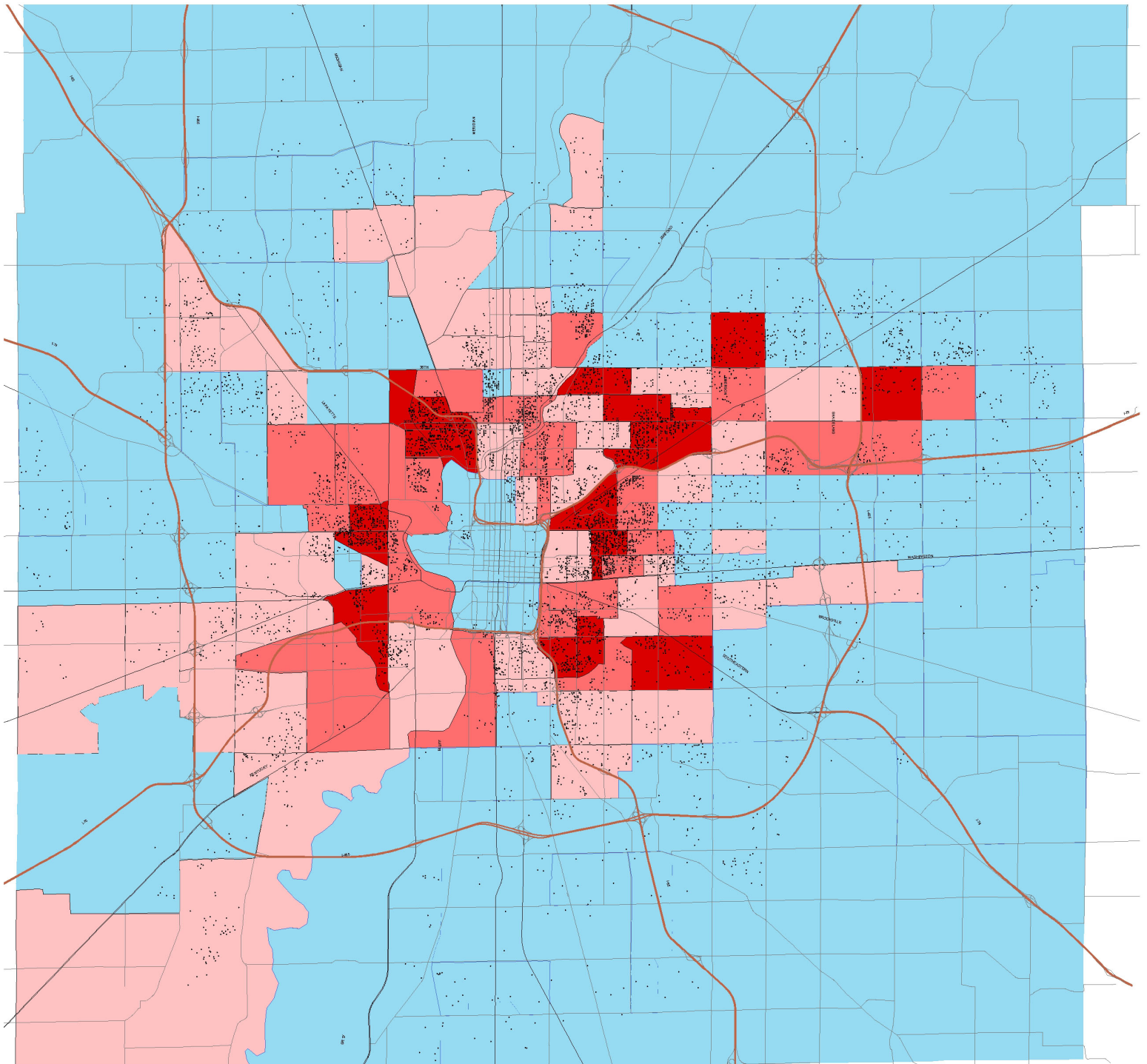on this map is not warranted for accuracy or merchantibility.

November 24, 2003
Produced by: Division of Planning, City of Indianapolis
Data Source: The City of Indianapolis
Vacant Housing Inventory, July-August 2003,
U.S. Bureau of the Census
Table H3
Census 2000 Summary File 1 (100-Percent Data)

City of Indianapolis Vacant Housing Inventory
Summer 2003
Vacant Housing Units Inventoried as a Percent of
Vacant Housing Units located during the 2000 U. S. Census

Legend

- Vacant Buildings
— Interstate
— Major Thoroughfare
— Primary Arterial

% of Vacant Housing Units

- 0.00 - 10.00
- 10.01 - 25.00
- 25.01 - 45.00
- 45.01 - 65.00
- 65.01 - 100.00

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to serve as an aid in graphic representation only. Information shown
on this map is not warranted for accuracy or merchantibility.

0.7 0.35 0   0.7   1.4   2.1 Miles

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