

# Memorandum



DATE: August 1, 2014

TO: Honorable Members of the Ad Hoc Judicial Nominations Committee:  
Scott Griggs (Chair), Philip Kingston (Vice Chair), Jerry Allen,  
Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Monica Alonzo, Dwaine Caraway, Vonciel Jones Hill

SUBJECT: **Improving Quality of Life through City Attorney's Office and ACT  
(Advocates for Community Transformation) Collaborative Effort**

The attached briefing will be presented to the Ad Hoc Judicial Nominations Committee on Monday, August 4, 2014.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me.



Joey Zapata  
Assistant City Manager

Attachment

cc: Honorable Mayor and Members of the Dallas City Council  
A.C. Gonzalez, City Manager  
Warren M. S. Ernst, City Attorney  
Daniel F. Solis, Administrative Judge  
Rosa A. Rios, City Secretary  
Craig D. Kinton, City Auditor  
Ryan S. Evans, Interim First Assistant City Manager  
Jill A. Jordan, P. E., Assistant City Manager  
Forest E. Turner, Assistant City Manager  
Charles M. Cato, Interim Assistant City Manager  
Theresa O'Donnell, Interim Assistant City Manager  
Jeanne Chipperfield, Chief Financial Officer  
Shawn Williams, Interim Public Information Officer  
Elsa Cantu, Assistant to the City Manager – Mayor and Council

# **Improving Quality of Life through City Attorney's Office and ACT (Advocates for Community Transformation) Collaborative Effort**

**A Public-Private Collaboration to  
Combat Blight and Empower Communities**

Presented to:

**Ad Hoc Judicial Nominations Committee**

Presented by:

Executive Assistant City Attorney Melissa A. Miles,  
Chief of Code Compliance Litigation

J. Reid Porter, J.D.  
President and Founder of ACT

August 4, 2014



**Act.**

# **A Public-Private Collaboration to Combat Blight and Empower Communities**

*The City Attorney's Office and Advocates for Community Transformation (ACT) have jointly authored a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaboratively use litigation strategies and community involvement to work to eliminate blighted structures and drug houses from residential neighborhoods.*

# Code Compliance Litigation (Code Lit)

## Section of the City Attorney's Office

*Code Lit employs six full time litigators devoted to obtaining court orders to address negative conditions that impact the quality of life for Dallas citizens.*

- Demolition of vacant substandard structures
- Repair of dangerous substandard structural and living conditions in apartment complexes
- Repair of dangerous substandard conditions in non-residential commercial property
- Enforce group home regulations
- Closure of criminal nuisance properties – drugs, prostitution, gang violence
- Remedy environmental violations
- Cease illegal land uses
- Enforce fair housing laws
- Enforce transportation for hire, non-consent tow and ambulance regulations
- Enforce dance hall and sexually oriented business regulations

# Act.

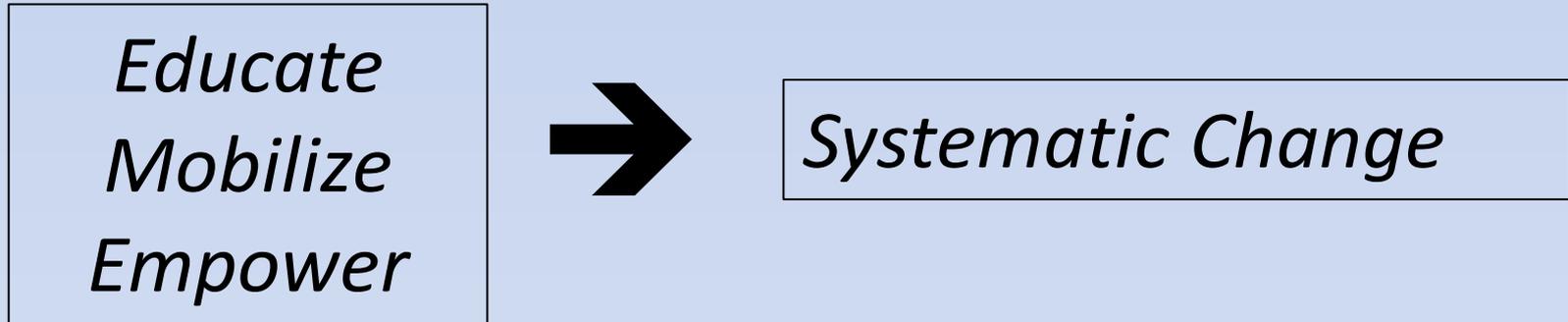
## ***Mission:***

Advocates for Community Transformation uses the justice system to shut down drug houses while also intentionally caring for the residents who have been hurt by them. We empower residents to take back their communities from the drug dealers and encourage them spiritually throughout the process.

## ***Vision:***

Our vision is for inner-city residents to live in communities free of crime and urban blight. We utilize ACT staff and volunteer attorneys from private law firms to work alongside willing residents to file lawsuits in civil courts to eliminate the nuisance properties.

# The ACT Impact



## *Stats Since 2009*

- 41 resolutions to date
- Engaged 116 Clients
- Provided over 200 wills as a crime prevention strategy

# **The Collaborative Goal:**

*Bring Together the Organizational Strengths of CAO & ACT*

## **CAO**

- The CAO is able to utilize legislatively created legal remedies for cities that result in relatively quick and efficient publicly funded demolitions of substandard structures.
- Working with Dallas Police SAFE Team, Narcotics Division and Gang Unit, the CAO also brings lawsuits authorized by state statute against criminal nuisance properties.

## **ACT**

- As a community centered, faith based organization, ACT is able to take a holistic approach to the needs and concerns of individuals and specific neighborhoods.
- ACT's approach cultivates relationships of understanding and trust with neighborhoods that empowers residents to take a stand against conditions that threaten the safety and quality of life in their neighborhood.

# The Collaborative Results

- Expand the information available to each party through legally-permissible information sharing
- Expand the capacity of the Urban Rehabilitation Docket through a Guest Litigator Program
- Capitalize on the efficiency of the Urban Rehabilitation Docket to tackle structurally unsound single-family homes
- Capitalize on ACT's volunteer base to tackle crime-ridden properties
- Encourage active citizenry

# The Memorandum of Understanding

- Guest Litigator Program provides ACT attorneys with an opportunity to participate in the CAO's Urban Rehab (Demo) Docket in Municipal Court
- ACT will refer unoccupied demo worthy properties it identifies to CAO's Urban Rehab Docket, increasing the total number of demo cases
- ACT and Code Lit will actively share information and collaborate on nuisance cases brought in civil court

## **Council Action Needed for Code Amendment**

- The CAO's Urban Rehab Docket is a civil (versus criminal) docket
- To facilitate the Guest Litigator Program envisioned by the MOU, a code amendment will be necessary to extend the existing program to include civil litigation

**Questions?**