Tackling Vacant, Abandoned, and Deteriorated Properties: Applying National Lessons to Rural Communities

National Association of Realtors Webinar
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About us

Center for Community Progress

- **Mission**: To foster strong, equitable communities where vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties are transformed into assets for neighbors and neighborhoods.

- **Services**: Technical assistance, education and training, policy, and research. Focus on systems-level change.

- **Snapshot**: In 2017, fielded 200+ technical assistance inquiries, supported policy/programmatic change in dozens of communities, reached 4,350 through education, distributed 1,000s of publications

- **Join us!**

  Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference  
  October 2-4, 2019, in Atlanta  
  www.reclaimingvacantproperties.org
Challenges in Smaller and Rural Communities

*Let’s be honest…*

1. Our work has been predominantly with urban centers, but more and more engagements with and inquiries from rural communities.

2. Many of the tools to tackle systemic vacancy and abandonment are “urban centric.”

3. Small and rural communities often don’t even have property maintenance codes, let alone full-time officers to enforce the codes.

4. Small and rural communities are fiscally strained and struggling just as much as, if not more than, high-density urban centers.

5. A culture, real or perceived, of “rugged individualism” and how that may play out in courts could make it difficult to address privately-owned vacant properties that are causing harm to the community.

*…yet, there are still insights to share.*
The Underlying Problem

Job Loss, Population Loss
Not Limited to Major Urban Centers: Smaller Counties, Same Challenges


<table>
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<th>JURISDICTION</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>NET CHANGE</th>
<th>% Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>City: Corning</td>
<td>17,684</td>
<td>11,183</td>
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<td>County: Steuben</td>
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<td>County: Chemung</td>
<td>86,827</td>
<td>88,830</td>
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The Underlying Problem

This is fundamentally a problem of the underlying economics, exacerbated by ineffective, inefficient, and/or inequitable systems.

- Data Management Systems
- Code Enforcement Systems
- Delinquent Property Tax Systems
- Mortgage Foreclosure Systems
- Land Banking and Reuse Systems
A Data-driven, Systems-based Approach

Data Predictors for VAD Properties

- Tax delinquency
- Code violations
- Utility shut-off
- Police and fire service calls
- Mortgage delinquency
A Data-driven, Systems-based Approach

Owners need to maintain properties + pay mortgage/taxes
Which is why housing and building code systems and delinquent property tax systems are so important.

First, EQUITABLE strategies must be in place – like repair programs for income-eligible senior homeowners or tax payment plans for family who lost their job.

Then, if problem with VAD property persists, the goal is to have EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE systems that compel the transfer of the property to a responsible owner.
Services: Place-based Training

Place-based trainings are customizable learning opportunities that equip your community and partners with the knowledge and skills needed to strengthen your revitalization work.

We work closely with partner communities to design training based on our six-unit curriculum:

1. Using Data to Strengthen Neighborhood Intervention
2. Strategic Code Enforcement
3. Rental Regulations
4. Property Tax Systems
5. Land Banks and Land Banking
6. Vacant Land Reuse

We blend classroom presentations with interactive discussion, small group activities, and hands-on learning.

We can customize to engage any constituency: elected officials; government staff; private sector partners; nonprofit community organizations; and resident leaders.
Services: Place-based Training

High Point, NC, REALTORS ® Association Training

- Educated participants on tools and resources available to communities in North Carolina that can be used to address vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties in High Point
- Opened dialogue among key stakeholders in High Point’s revitalization efforts
- Provided a better understanding of the role of each stakeholder in the city’s revitalization efforts

“I feel more connected to officials, who is over what department, and how to reach them”

“I can better explain affordable housing development opportunities to my investor network.”

“I am more knowledgeable about the mechanisms in place to affect revitalization”
Services: Technical Assistance

Expert staff providing high-impact, cutting-edge technical support to help communities assess, reform, develop, and/or implement systems and policies to tackle VAD properties in an effective, efficient, and equitable manner.

- We offer technical assistance through both traditional fee-for-services and scholarship opportunities, when possible.

- We are former practitioners and policymakers that defy the traditional consultant model—we **challenge** communities, then position them for **success**.

- No cookie cutter approach—we help custom design a focused project that is informed by local conditions, needs, and priorities.

- We work with partners to design innovative and impactful deliverables: cost of blight studies, technical memos, draft legislation or policies, open space action plans, and more.
Services: Technical Assistance

General Assessment of Systems, City of Ogdensburg, NY

- Population of 10,680 in a rural county in northern NY
- Represents a 34% decrease from peak (1960)
- Major employer are state prisons
- Fiscally-strained with little capacity

Impacts:

- Created a new Land Bank and already acquired the “Dirty Dozen”
- Shifting from sale of tax liens to judicial in rem foreclosure
- Tapped statewide grants to boost capacity in code enforcement
- Re-organized internal inter-departmental workgroups
- Exploring formal relationship with regional economic development agency to provide GIS support for parcel data mapping and analysis for nominal fee
Additional Resources

Practical Guide for Finding and Using Parcel and Market Data
(2017)

Technical Code Enforcement Report for Mobile, AL
(2016)

Seminal book on Land Banks and Land Banking
(2015)

Many reports and resources available for review at www.communityprogress.net.

THANK YOU!