

Transforming Neighborhoods

Developing Strategies and Tools for Addressing Vacant, Abandoned and Deteriorated Properties in Westmoreland and Indiana Counties

June 25, 2019

University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg, 150 Finoli Drive, Greensburg, PA 15601

AGENDA

8:30 - 9:00 AM

Welcome and Introductions

9:00 - 9:30 AM

Fundamentals of Property Market Dynamics

How real estate markets work, and the flow of demand and supply for a neighborhood's land and buildings, determines many aspects of a neighborhood's trajectory. When trying to address issues of vacancy and abandonment, it is crucial to understand the role markets and demand play in creating and perpetuating problem properties, including abandonment, tax delinquency, and the activities of predatory landlords. This session explores how markets work, the relationship between markets, vacant properties, and owner behavior, and how those three factors combined impact neighborhood outcomes.

Speaker: Liz Kozub, Center for Community Progress

9:30 - 10:15 AM

Analyzing Data to Understand Neighborhood Conditions

Revitalization strategies are not one-size-fits-all. An intervention that works well in one neighborhood may be ineffective or even harmful in another. In some cases, neighborhood conditions can vary dramatically even block by block. Data, therefore – at the most granular, parcel-based level, and at the neighborhood and city levels – should inform any interventions. This session examines how to tailor, and evaluate, revitalization strategies to meet community goals based on the nuances uncovered through data analysis. Participants will explore how to use a neighborhood market assessment as a tool for strategy development.

Speaker: Karen Black, May 8 Consulting

10:15 - 10:30 AM

Break

10:30 - 11:30 AM

Exploring Local Data Sets

Both Indiana and Westmoreland County have embarked on systematic approaches to understand their jurisdiction's inventory

of blighted properties. Indiana County piloted a Blighted Property Inventory program in 13 municipalities. The county engaged in outreach and field work to identify properties that are abandoned, unmaintained, or present other public nuisances. Westmoreland County conducted a countywide data assessment and analysis to better understand demographics, market conditions, and opportunities for interventions. Westmoreland also has taken a more targeted approach in the City of Monessen by gathering parcel-level blighted property data. This session will provide participants with an understanding of the process each county used for collecting data, what they are learning, and how they plan to use this data to inform future blight related planning and policies.

*Speakers: Brian Lawrence Deputy Director, Westmoreland County Department of Planning and Development
Josh Krug, Chief Planner, Indiana County Office of Planning & Development*

11:30 - 12:15 PM

Strategic Code Enforcement 101

A successful strategic code enforcement program moves beyond inspections and notices. It thoughtfully weaves together regulation, policy, cost recovery, and “carrots and sticks” into a comprehensive strategy to benefit community residents. Using real-world examples from around the country, this module will equip participants with an overview of the pros and cons of various code enforcement strategies and how to implement a more strategic approach.

Speaker: Liz Kozub, Center for Community Progress

12:15 - 1:00 PM

Lunch

1:00 - 2:15 PM

The Pennsylvania Problem Properties Toolkit

Pennsylvania law provides local governments with powerful tools to address problem properties, including conservatorship, quality of life ticketing and vacant property registration. Through this interactive session, participants will explore these and other state authorized tools, including when and how they can be best utilized to address vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties.

Speaker: Karen Black, May 8 Consulting

2:15 - 2:30 PM

Break

2:30 - 4:00 PM

Understanding Opportunity Zones

Opportunity Zones are a new federal tax incentive designed to incentivize investment of private capital into real estate projects and businesses located in low income census tracts designated as

Opportunity Zones. This session will provide participants with an understanding of Opportunity Zone regulations, how they are intended to incentivize investments, and the roles of the public and private sectors in encouraging the private investment activity. Using Erie, Pennsylvania, and the Flagship Opportunity Zone as a case study, participants will learn how to prepare the Opportunity Zones in their own communities for investment.

Speaker: Timothy S. Wachter, Knox Law

4:00 - 4:15 PM

Training Wrap-Up

This training is made possible thanks to the support of:

