Programming to Reduce Vacancy in the City of St. Louis

Peter Hoffman – Staff Attorney, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri
Chair – Vacancy Prevention Working Group, St. Louis Vacancy Collaborative
Vacancy In the City of St. Louis

Scope of the Problem. Approx. 25,000 vacant parcels about half privately owned.

Cause of the Problem. De-population/sprawl, foreclosure, public policy, predatory investors, etc. **Vacancy is contagious!**

Effect of the Problem. Increased costs for city services, public health and safety concerns, decreased property values, lost tax revenues, decreased neighborhood pride.

Expense of the Problem. FY2016 the Forestry Division spent more than $5 million on maintaining vacant lots and buildings; Board-Up costs Building Division nearly half-a-million dollars/year and $1.5 million/year on demolitions.
St. Louis Vacancy Collaborative

**Seeds Planted (2015).** St. Louis Association of Community Organizations (SLACO), Universities, Community Builders Network, RISE, City of St. Louis.


**Launch (July 2018).** Coalition of 200 Members/Partners – neighborhood associations, residents, CDCs, stakeholders, and City agencies.

**Cross-Sector Collaboration (Current).** Coordinate existing vacancy efforts under one umbrella. Commit to reduction in vacant property as a top priority.
St. Louis Vacancy Collaborative Cross Sector Working Groups

**Data Analysis.** Understand scope, establish metrics, track progress, drive decision making, improve programs and policies.

**Marketing & Engagement.** Market programs, engage and empower community, change narratives, share strengthen neighborhoods, share successes.

**Anti-Displacement.** Understand development and displacement, ensure equitable outcomes, learn and implement successful strategies.

**Prevention.** Expand resources and legal remedies to prevent vacancy, educate community.

**Reinvestment & Reuse.** Support rehab, establish alternative uses, increase financing, advocate for legislative and programmatic reforms.

**Stabilization, Maintenance, Demolition.** Secure/stabilize vacant properties, strategic code enforcement, effective land banking programs, best practices for demolition and deconstruction.
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WWW.STLVACANCY.COM. Comprehensive website for vacancy-related data.

Organizational Assistance: Assist community groups (neighborhood associations and small community development organizations) with legal organization (incorporation, tax exemption, bylaws, etc.).

Vacancy Prevention and Title Clearance. Help low-income residents with title issues / assist homeowners prevent vacancy & protect family wealth through transfer on death deeds.

Problem Property Litigation. File lawsuits on behalf of community groups to compel the owners of vacant, run-down properties to sell, repair, or gain legal control of the property so repairs can be made.
Neighborhood Vacancy Initiative

**Problem Property Litigation.** Community-driven supplement to municipal solutions (code enforcement, tax foreclosure, land banking).

**Nuisance.** Neighborhood Associations can seek court-compelled repairs, neighbors can ask for money damages.

**Receivership.** Community organization asks court for third party to be appointed control.

**Abandonment.** Allows nonprofit organizations to make court-supervised improvements to vacant nuisance property in exchange for clean title.
Neighborhood Vacancy Initiative


Qualifying Property. Vacant six months; tax delinquent one year; nuisance/code violations.

Process. Court protects investment to eliminate nuisance conditions.

Outcome. Interested owners required to reimburse nonprofit before abatement or clean title is conveyed to nonprofit.
Neighborhood Vacancy Initiative

First Year Statistics

Organizational Assistance – Ten (10) cases opened to provide corporate/governance assistance to place-based nonprofit organizations (by-laws, tax exemption, incorporation, etc.


Vacancy Prevention & Title Clearance – Forty Seven (47) Individual Clients Served; Four (4) Beneficiary Deed Clinics in 2018.

Other Statistics – 85 Total Cases, 290 Community Meetings/Outreach, Services Provided in 28 Neighborhoods/19 Wards, 1,763 Volunteer Hours.
Useful Websites

LEGAL SERVICES OF EASTERN MISSOURI: WWW.LSEM.ORG

STL VACANCY COLLABORATIVE (AND PORTAL): WWW.STLVACANCY.COM

GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING VACANT PROPERTY IN THE CITY OF ST. LOUIS: WWW.RISESTL.ORG/WHAT-WE-DO/PUBLIC-DOCUMENTS/VACANCY-GUIDE/

A PLAN TO REDUCE VACANT LAND AND BUILDINGS BY LYDA KREWSON: WWW.STLOUIS-MO.GOV/GOVERNMENT/DEPARTMENTS/MAYOR/INITIATIVES/VACANCY.CFM

Peter Hoffman
314.256.8744
800.444.0514 x 1333
www.lsem.org
pjhoffman@lsem.org

Special Thanks - Tara Aubuchon, Vacancy Coordinator
Tara@communitybuildersstl.org
Community Builders Network of Metro St. Louis