

# Systemic Vacancy

## How People, Policies, and Processes Contribute to Large-Scale Vacancy

Every community has a few vacant properties. But when vacant properties become so widespread that they completely change how a neighborhood looks and feels, that neighborhood becomes trapped in the harmful cycle of systemic vacancy.

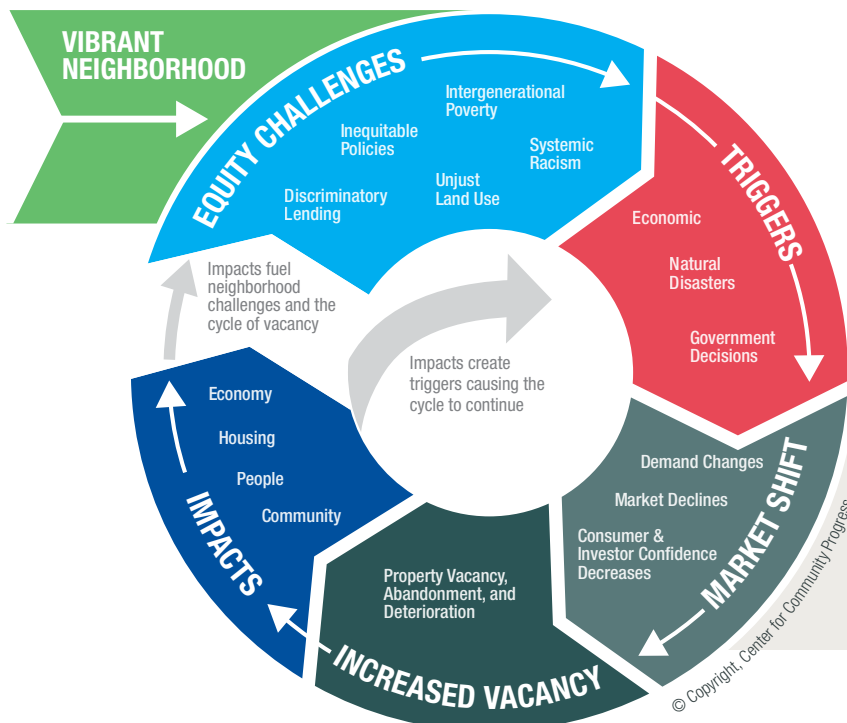
Because of a legacy of unjust policies and racist systems, empty structures and lots remain in certain communities for years, deteriorating in condition, weakening the housing market, driving residents out of the neighborhood, and fueling more vacancy. These vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties, sometimes called “blighted” properties, become so widespread that doing anything about them at scale feels extremely difficult.

Historically inequitable land ownership policies, lending practices, and legal systems lead to neighborhoods where vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties are common. Systemic vacancy takes root over years, but global crises (like the pandemic and the Great Recession) and natural disasters (like hurricanes) hit communities experiencing these equity challenges harder, creating more vacant properties.

As vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties spread, the quality of life worsens in neighborhoods, impacting the local economy, property values, and quality of housing stock. Shifts in the market such as demand changes, market declines, and decreases in consumer and investor confidence fuel the negative cycle.

High levels of vacancy and abandonment hurt the physical and mental health of the community, reduce individual wealth, and strain local government finances. This triggers more abandonment, more disinvestment, and deepens the equity gap.

## The Cycle of Vacancy



**Systemic vacancy is the community experience of widespread property vacancy caused by the combined actions of people, policies, and processes.**

**Learn More** about addressing systemic vacancy at [communityprogress.org/vacancy](https://communityprogress.org/vacancy)