



2022 Impact Report

The Future is

Vibrant



The Center for Community Progress helps people transform vacant spaces into vibrant places. Since 2010, our team of national experts has provided communities with the policies, tools, and resources they need to address the full cycle of property revitalization.

As the only national nonprofit dedicated to tackling vacant properties, we drive change by sharing our decades of legal, strategic, and policy expertise with policymakers, practitioners, and community members. Our approach helps uncover and disrupt systems that perpetuate vacancy and deterioration so all neighborhoods have the power to return vacant properties to productive use.



Letter from the Interim President & CEO

Any community leader will tell you that change takes time. The systemic disinvestment in our communities, and the resulting vacant properties that harm neighbors and neighborhoods, cannot be solved overnight. Having spent over ten years with Community Progress embedded in our program work, and now as Interim President and CEO, I've seen the importance of addressing systemic vacancy with equally systemic solutions.

In this look back on our impact in 2022, we are proud to share not only what our team of national experts has achieved, but also how the Center for Community Progress approached comprehensive change. We set communities up for success. We created lasting networks that strengthened the field. We brought people together to discover solutions to collective problems. We shared our nation-leading expertise with community leaders. And we furthered local, state, and federal policy change.

Transforming vacant spaces into vibrant places takes time, dedication, and a commitment to building relationships. We couldn't do this alone. So I want to thank you—our partners, stakeholders, staff, and funders—for your continued support of our commitment to strengthening communities so all people can thrive.



Courtney Knox

Interim President & CEO

Letter from the Board Chair

In the more than four years I have served on Community Progress' Board of Directors, I am endlessly impressed by what this organization can tackle. Community Progress' staff have proven that their vast expertise can affect change in not just the vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated property space, but the community development field at large—and have an impact equivalent to a much larger organization.

Their impressive scope of work in recent years speaks to how Community Progress recognizes vacancy and abandonment is but one symptom of a larger problem of inequity. To truly prevent properties from falling into disrepair, one must look at the whole ecosystem. What steps can communities take to equitably reform tax foreclosure policies so people can stay in their homes? How can programs that transition tenants to homeownership in one state be replicated across the country? And how is climate change affecting the most vulnerable communities? I am grateful to those also working on the ground and the philanthropic partners with whom the organization works in concert to help all neighborhoods thrive.

By growing its staff capacity, diversifying its funding sources, and expanding their programming and educational work, Community Progress is well positioned to lead the way in the next era of community development.



Don Phoenix

Board Chair

Our impact in 2022, by the numbers



17

state and local policies changed as a result of our work, resulting in:



Increased Funding for land banks, revitalization activities, and more



Advanced Equity through stakeholder engagement and ending harmful policies and practices



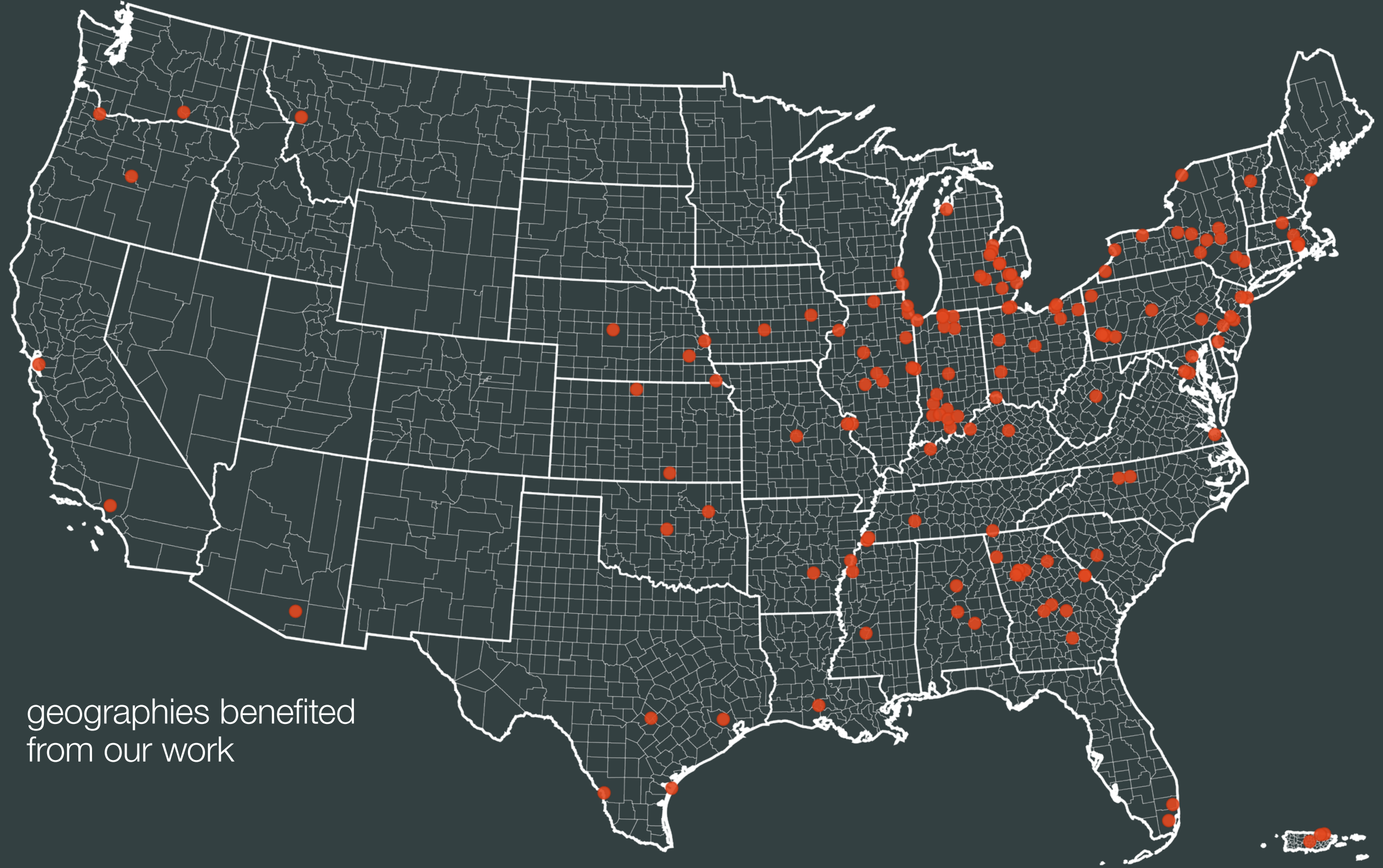
Increased Capacity through staffing, better data, or access to acquire VAD properties



Changed Laws to increase land bank funding, end unjust policies, and advance efficient, effective revitalization

153

geographies benefited
from our work



We Set Communities Up for Success



Systems-Based Policy Reform in Illinois

Moving from education to systemic change requires listening, leadership to pursue change that centers equity, and cultivating genuine partnerships. Our work in Illinois demonstrates this successful approach.

In 2021, the Central Illinois Land Bank Authority sought help through our [Land Bank Incubator Scholarship](#) (LBIS). We learned of vacancy challenges in central Illinois cities and barriers to more effective community development in state law. One of those cities, Decatur, was eager to tackle vacancy with an eye toward equity but unsure where to start.

Following our LBIS assistance, Decatur deepened its ties with the local land bank and galvanized a coalition of five major Illinois cities to participate in our [Vacant Property Leadership Institute](#). At this four-day educational event, we helped a network of leaders identify key state policy reforms that could support more impactful approaches to local vacancy challenges.

Decatur was excited to move from education to action. Local contributions were matched with our scholarship funds to support technical assistance along two concurrent tracks: a review and [reform of Decatur's code enforcement practices](#)

and the launch of the Illinois Problem Property Workgroup.

Spurred by our technical assistance support, heading into 2023, Decatur is committing millions of federal recovery dollars into housing repair programs and piloting more equitable practices, and the workgroup is finalizing statewide legislation that could significantly improve a community's ability to tackle property vacancy and deterioration.

A Strategic Framework for the Nation's Largest Land Bank

The [Detroit Land Bank Authority](#) (DLBA) manages the largest land bank inventory in the United States, with over 75,000 properties in 2022. As the central entity acquiring, managing, and disposing of residential property in Detroit, DLBA has undergone a dramatic evolution with many successes over the past decade.

Surveying their future, DLBA engaged Community Progress to develop a strategic framework as the first step of a multi-year planning process to help establish the direction for DLBA's ongoing work.

Our research uplifted key strategies to shepherd the next iteration of the nation's



largest land bank. DLBA has the potential to reverse trends of declining homeownership and foster economic opportunity with and for Detroiters. With a keen eye on equity, we helped DLBA identify ways to enhance resident access to property and center community voices in shaping the direction of a land bank that has tremendous impact on their neighborhoods.

Helping Communities Replicate Best Practices

One way to tackle vacancy is to prevent properties from becoming vacant in the first place. In many communities, when landlords fail to pay their taxes and the rental property moves through tax foreclosure, tenants may be evicted and the property might sit vacant and idle. In Detroit, the Make it Home program, crafted by the City of Detroit, United Community Housing Coalition, and Rocket Community Fund (RCF), breaks this cycle by using the City's legal power to acquire tenant-occupied, tax-foreclosed, primarily single-family properties and sells them directly to the tenants. The program also provides tenants with funding for repairs and education to help sustain their homeownership.

With support from and in partnership with RCF, Community Progress launched the [Make it Home National Replication Initiative](#) to assess the potential of other communities in replicating the program. Thirteen cities and land banks in eight states joined our Make it Home Learning Cohort, and Community Progress published a [report](#) to serve as a resource and guide for any community looking to model this program.



“The Center for Community Progress’ staff are not only experts in best-practices on the challenges of addressing vacant and abandoned structures, they are practitioners with real-world experience. Their team has been invaluable in our own development and in achieving our mission.”

- Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank Corporation



We Create Lasting Networks and Strong Relationships



In 2022, Community Progress worked to strengthen the network of land bank practitioners and stakeholders in Georgia. We facilitated the first ever Georgia Association of Land Bank Authorities (GALBA) Summit, where nearly fifty land bank practitioners and supporters shared stories, learned from each other, and planned for GALBA's future as a statewide membership organization.

Building a Support Network for Land Bank Professionals

Land banks are an important tool for community revitalization. Entrusted with special quasi-governmental powers, they are uniquely positioned to help put vacant properties back on the path to productive use. But despite this incredible potential, land banks across the country are underresourced, and their hardworking staff have few opportunities to connect with one another, ask questions that only other land bank experts can answer, or share stories of success.

Recognizing this gap, the [National Land Bank Network](#) at Community Progress launched an online member portal to help land bank leaders build lasting relationships with one another, lean on each other for advice, and exchange resources. To date, approximately fifty land banks are part of our network, participating in discussions, sharing successes, and engaging with regular bulletins from Community Progress that empower them to transform vacant spaces into vibrant places.

Are you affiliated with a land bank but not yet a part of the National Land Bank Network? [Join here](#) and [sign up for our land banking newsletter](#) to get the latest updates on conferences for land bank professionals, award opportunities, and more.

Championing Leaders of Color

Community development unites people to take collective action to build stronger, more resilient places to live. But over time, the field of community development has shifted from grassroots movements to the careers of specialized professionals. This shift has led to less racial diversity across the field and too few people of color in decision-making positions, leading to laws, policies, and practices that have perpetuated white supremacy—delivering excessive privilege to whites while disadvantaging Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities.

Community Progress surveyed stakeholders in the community development field and published [Championing Leaders of Color in Housing Equity and Community Development](#) as part of our effort to uncover and disrupt the systems that perpetuate racial inequity. Through this work, we promote equitable leadership in the field of community development so leaders of color are welcomed, supported, and equipped to succeed in advancing their careers and their organizations' missions.



Programs for Residents and Local Leaders

Residents, artists, and grassroots leaders are the engine that powers communities. Through the [Community Revitalization Fellowship](#) (CRF), we focus specifically on resident leaders—not community development professionals—who are working hard to address community needs. Our goal is to bolster the grassroots network of resident leaders across the country and train them to be more effective leaders in property revitalization.

In 2022, we brought together eighteen fellows from three communities: Syracuse, New

York; Loíza, Puerto Rico; and Braddock/East Pittsburgh/North Braddock, Pennsylvania. Through CRF, the fellows travel to each other's cities to learn how other fellows are addressing their community's challenges and come away with new knowledge and tools that makes change possible and attainable. As a result of this first truly multi-lingual cohort, Community Progress is translating more of our resources into Spanish and better understanding and addressing the needs of Spanish-speaking and Latinx communities dealing with vacant and deteriorated properties.

We Bring People Together



Going from Training to Applied Learning and Implementation

Even the local leaders who are most committed to addressing problem properties can struggle to overcome common challenges: they're disconnected from peers locally and in other places, have limited knowledge of best practices in other communities, or are stretched too thin to have the time to craft new strategies.

We designed the [Vacant Properties Leadership Institute](#) (VPLI) with these leaders in mind. One of our longest-running programs, VPLI sets local public servants up for success by providing them with tools, knowledge, and networks to address problem properties.

Diverse delegations of cities from a handful of states come together to learn equitable, efficient, and effective strategies for addressing problem properties, problem-solve shared challenges, and make plans to implement those lessons at home.

In 2022, a delegation from the City of Louisville came eager to learn and left inspired to rethink its approach to property vacancy and deterioration. They

applied for a post-institute technical assistance scholarship, seeking our help to conduct a full racial equity audit of their code enforcement program.

After carrying out local interviews, legal research, and data analysis, we designed a day-long summit for more than seventy-five local government staff—from front-line code officers to senior executive team members.

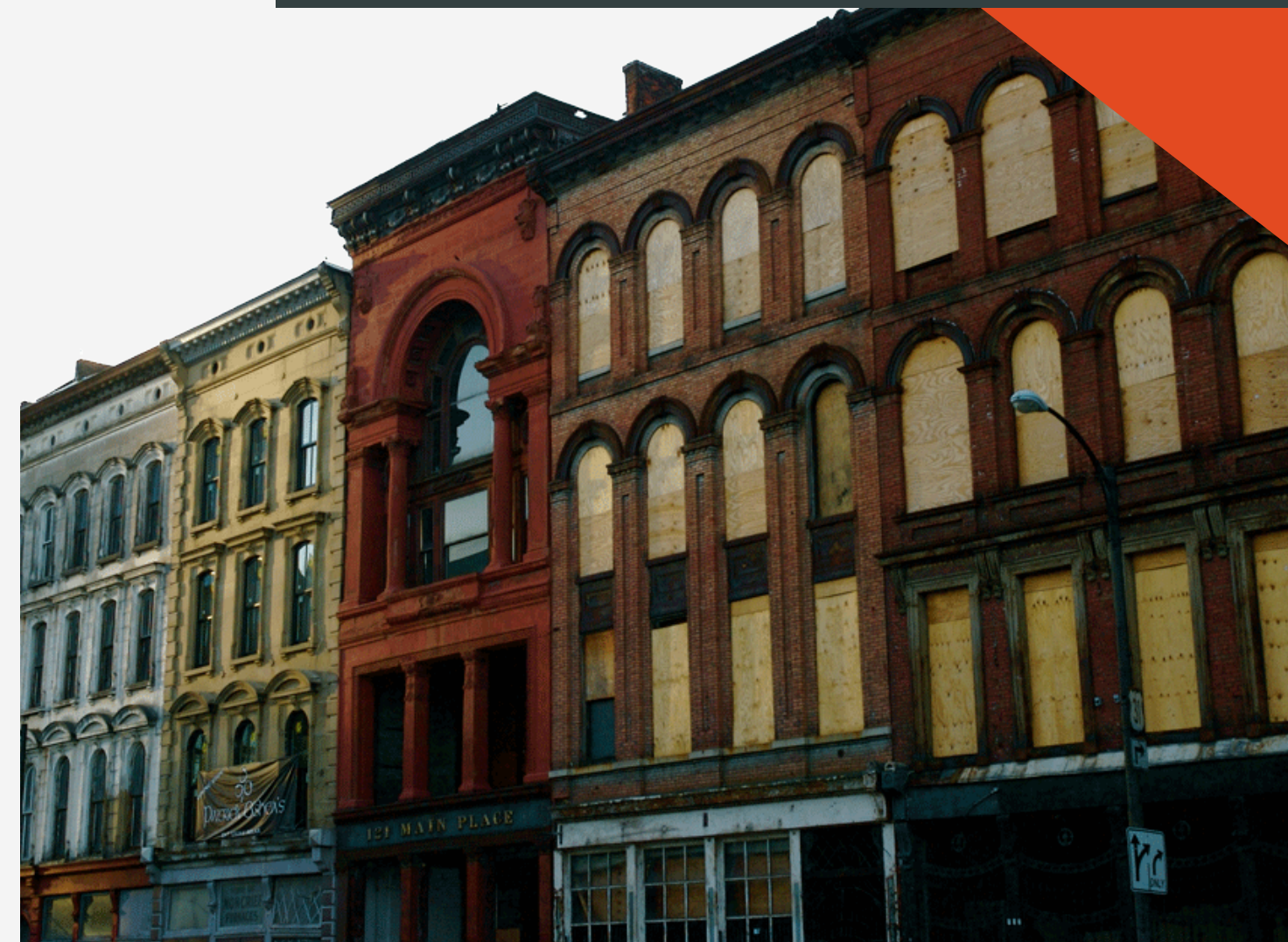
We led honest conversations about the history of racist policies that have shaped neighborhoods, dove deep into Louisville's challenges, and workshopped solutions that would yield more equitable outcomes, culminating in a [memo of recommendations](#).

The City's code enforcement team has already [implemented a number of reforms](#) that will reduce harms to and help vulnerable tenants and low-income homeowners, setting them on a path of racial healing and neighborhood repair.

"I think the awareness and the equity review is moving us in a positive direction ... It's a better understanding of the lack of resources, the lack of finances, just being able to make people aware of what they're responsible for and what the department's role is."

Don Gentry, Louisville code enforcement officer

"Why Louisville is changing the way it handles neglected properties," [The Courier Journal](#)



Gateway to Green Infrastructure Learning Exchange

Vacant lots make up the vast majority of vacant properties held by public entities. These lots present an opportunity and solution for challenges communities face, including reducing the effects of climate change through green infrastructure. Many cities are figuring out these solutions on their own, but don't often have the time or resources to look outside of their communities to find new solutions, see best practices, or connect with their peers.

Recognizing these needs, Community Progress hosted a peer learning exchange in St. Louis for a small group of land and water management professionals from St. Louis, Missouri; Gary, Indiana; Detroit, Michigan; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Over three days, City staff, land bank professionals, and nonprofit leaders toured large- and small-scale green stormwater infrastructure projects throughout St. Louis, learned from their counterparts from the other participating cities, and brainstormed strategies to leverage vacant land for green stormwater infrastructure back home. Participants returned with new ideas, energy, and connections to elevate their work.



"I appreciated the space to connect with partners and colleagues in my city in ways we don't often find time to do back home."

Participant, Gateway to Green Infrastructure Learning Exchange

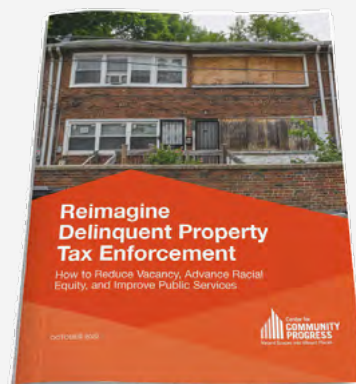
We Are the Authority in Our Field



Reimagine Tax Enforcement

Property taxes are rarely a favorite dinner party conversation. But did you know that delinquent property tax enforcement is one of the most critical elements of the vacant property cycle? In 2022, Community Progress published the definitive national guide to delinquent property tax enforcement—written for everyone, not just tax attorneys. [Reimagine Delinquent Property Tax Enforcement](#) explains how rethinking the way a community handles property tax enforcement can help reduce vacancy, advance racial equity, and increase economic opportunity, while still generating the revenue needed to improve public services.

This is the first national publication to break down delinquent property tax enforcement in an accessible manner. It also uplifts communities that have implemented reforms, and gives recommendations for steps all communities can take to implement equitable, efficient, and effective delinquent property tax system reforms.



Georgia Land Banks from A to Z

Starting and running a land bank requires lots of paperwork and often expensive legal support. Understaffed land banks—particularly small and rural land banks—face enormous bureaucratic and financial challenges in hiring attorneys to draft template documents, agendas, and lease agreements. That’s why we were excited to launch the [Resource Guide for Georgia Land Banks](#), a free A-to-Z guide featuring examples and sample documents to help land banks initiate or ramp up their activities.

Educating Emerging Leaders

When policymakers, practitioners, and community members realize vacant properties are a problem in their neighborhoods, they may not know why or where to begin. We share our decades of legal, strategic, and policy knowledge through free webinars and online courses. In 2022, we broadcasted ten [Cornerstone webinars](#) on topics like leaders of color in land banking, accessing ARPA funds to address vacancy, and more. Over 1,500 people registered for our annual [VAD Academy](#), a 101-level online boot camp to help educate community leaders who want to strengthen their neighborhoods.

Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference

Chicago 2022

Last year marked our tenth Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference, the only national conference to bring people together around the latest strategies to address vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties and equip them to return home and create real, on-the-ground change. Practitioners, policymakers, resident leaders, and activists joined us in Chicago for three days of training, problem-solving, and traveling to sites of community revitalization around the city.



We are grateful to the following organizations and institutions for their generous support of RVP

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DAWGS

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We Drive Policy Change



A Major Win for Michigan Communities

On June 30, 2022, the Michigan State House and Senate passed the State budget, which included a critical appropriation of **\$21.55 million for a statewide grant program**, part of a larger \$75 million investment, to address vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties in the state.

All land banks are eligible for a guaranteed minimum allocation of \$200,000 for demolition, stabilization, or remediation of residential, commercial, and industrial public and private properties.

This is a huge victory for communities in Michigan struggling with problem properties and population decline. Community Progress' guidance to the Michigan Association of Land Banks (MALB) in their efforts to secure this appropriation was critical in initiating and shaping the program and shepherding it to passage.

Laying the Groundwork for Property Tax Reform in West Virginia

In 2017, Community Progress laid the foundation for significant policy change in West Virginia. After years of stakeholder advocacy, West Virginia passed critical reforms to its property tax system and land bank law in 2022, incorporating many of **Community Progress' recommendations**. These changes reduced the time it would take to transfer a tax-delinquent property to a new owner and set new priorities for the disposition of those tax-foreclosed properties so they could first benefit community residents, rather than out-of-state investors.

Modernizing the Community Reinvestment Act

On August 5, 2022, Community Progress and forty-three supporting organizations across the country **submitted a public comment** calling for the modernized Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) to center racial equity and embed land banking strategies. Passed in 1977, the CRA is one of the most important pieces of legislation working to bring financial resources into historically underserved neighborhoods nationwide. However, despite its core purpose of combatting the legacy of redlining, CRA



regulations have always been “color-blind” and have failed to adequately change persistent racial disparities in lending, banking, and investments. Community Progress and our coalition of stakeholders urged bank regulators to explicitly consider race-conscious decision-making and to be explicit in acknowledging the impacts of unjust and racist policies.



Unlocking the American Rescue Plan Act

The long-awaited Final Rule on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) was released by the U.S. Treasury Department in January 2022. It included significant wins for communities hoping to address vacancy and abandonment in the wake of the pandemic. Since this \$350 billion recovery package was passed in March 2021, Community Progress has provided critical resources and technical assistance to our partners, local governments, and land bank leaders about this transformative infusion of flexible federal funding.

Treasury's Final Rule adopts the recommendations proposed in Community Progress's public comment letter. Thanks to the overwhelming amount of public advocacy from land bank leaders, county treasurers, and local government leaders from around the country, it explicitly authorizes activities that address vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties as eligible uses of ARPA SLFRF. This is a huge win for communities working to address problem properties, particularly those that have been disproportionately impacted by health and economic consequences of the pandemic.

Leading Federal Policy Change

Federal policies can tremendously help or harm local efforts to tackle vacancy. With a foot in national research, policy expertise, and lived experience, Community Progress is a national thought-leader and champion at the federal level for the disinvested communities we represent.

In 2022, we were invited to testify before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means in a hearing entitled "Nowhere to Live: Profits, Disinvestment, and the American Dream," to share our perspectives on homeownership, vacant properties, and the racial wealth gap.

In collaboration with a broad network of peers who share our mission of supporting equitable community revitalization, we continued the drumbeat on key meaningful legislation, including the National Land Bank Network Act (reintroduced in Congress in 2022), the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act, and the Restoring Communities Left Behind Act. As the only national nonprofit dedicated to addressing vacancy, we are proud to continue to be partners and thought leaders to drive federal policy change.

Thank You

The Center for Community Progress relies on the generous support of a diverse revenue base. The following list reflects all funding received and total active agreements between January 1 and December 31, 2022.

Addressing vacancy is a big problem that requires big solutions and it cannot be solved overnight. We are especially thankful for our long-term partnerships with the visionary individuals, organizations, and institutions whose gifts span multiple years. We are grateful for your continued support of our mission to foster strong, equitable communities and end systemic vacancy and abandonment.

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