



Vacant Land Stewardship



Transforming Spaces, Building Communities

VAD Academy

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Doctor of Social Sciences

- Landscape Architecture
- Community Development
- Public Policy
- Non-Profit Management
- Social Science Research and Evaluation

Quick Poll:

Who's in the audience today?

What is your relationship to vacant land stewardship?





Understanding Vacant Land



Defining Terms

- Vacant lot: a parcel without a structure, which could include a previously developed lot or unbuildable lot
- Vacant land stewardship: the comprehensive, long-term repurposing and maintenance of vacant lots



On average, vacant lots make up

76%

of vacant properties in community inventories

2019 National Survey on Greening



Drawbacks of Vacant Land to a Community

Immediate

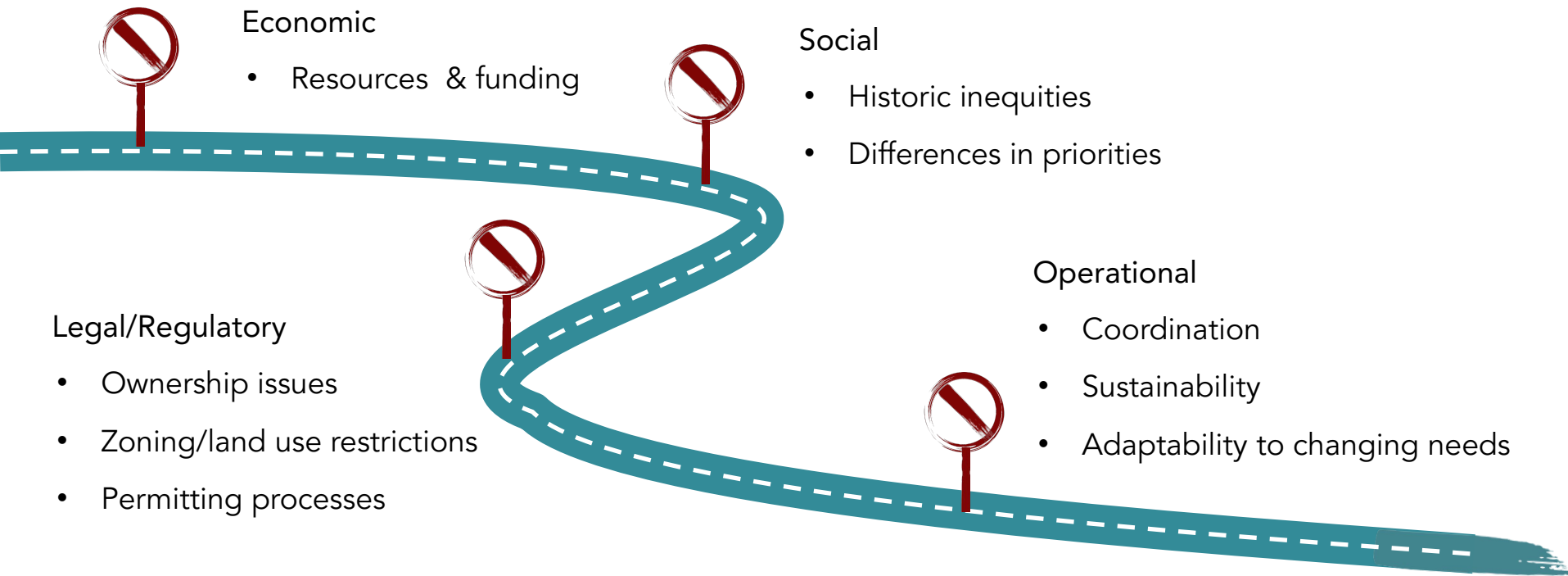
- Blight & Visual Deterioration
- Safety & Security Concerns
- Maintenance & Upkeep Costs

Long-Term

- Economic Impact
- Environmental Hazards
- Health Concerns
- Effect on Well-being



Challenges to Addressing Vacant Land





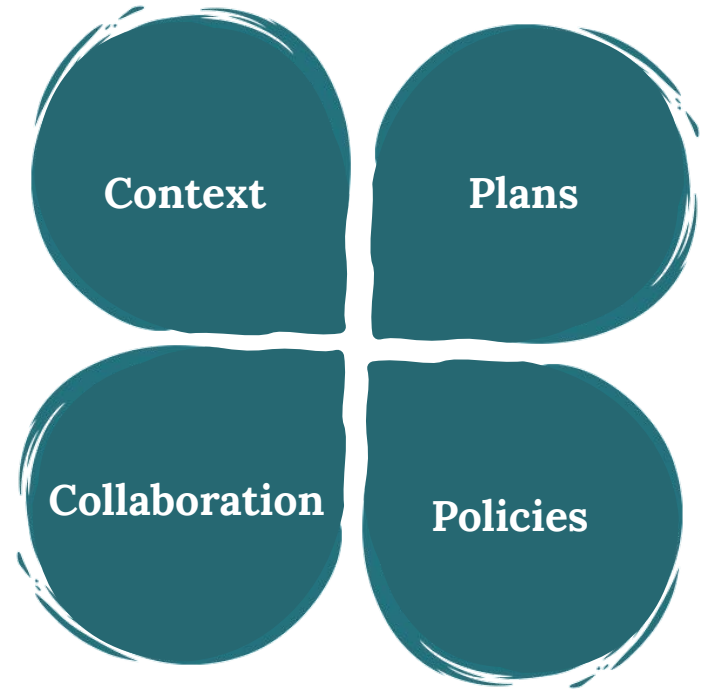
VLS as a System

Comprehensive approach to vacant land stewardship



VLS Integrated Approach

Viewing VLS as a system, these components work together, wherein: **Context** informs **Plans**; **Plans** are executed through **Collaboration** while **Policy** frameworks support and reinforce the efforts to enable implementation.





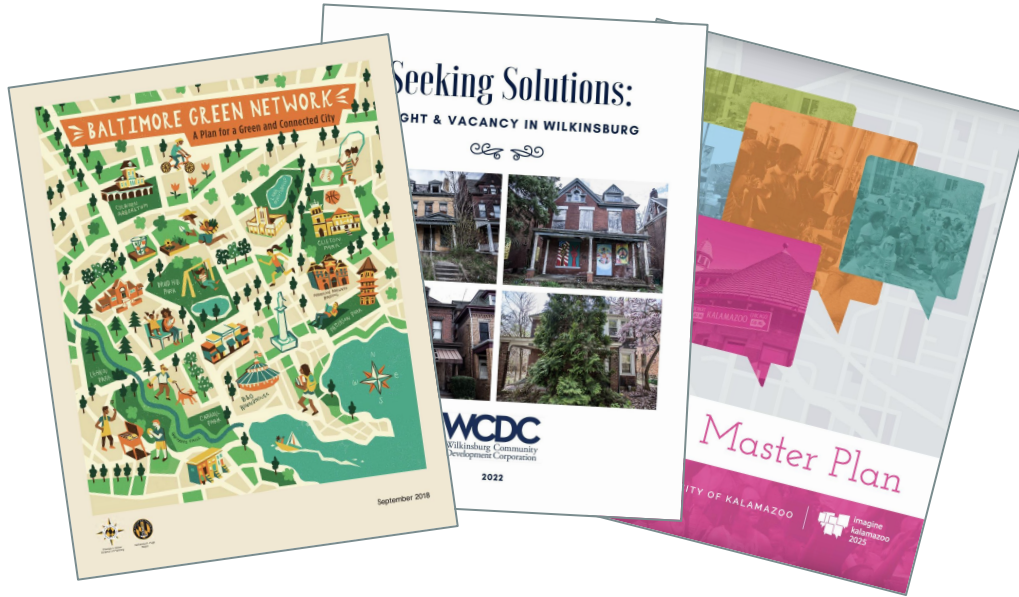
Context

- Identifies unique characteristics and needs of community
- Provides baseline for informed decision-making and tailored interventions
- Data collection, inventories, history, resident input and goals





Plans



- Establishes a clear roadmap for interventions and resource allocation
- Ensures alignment of effort across projects and stakeholders
- Master plans, zoning regulations, short- and long-term goals, specific project designs and templates



Collaboration

- Leverages diverse resources, expertise, and perspectives
- Enhances community buy-in and long-term sustainability
- Diverse working groups, public participation events and engagement activities





Policies

DID YOU KNOW?



PURCHASING VACANT LAND

SIDE LOTS

Side Lots are a piece of residential vacant land adjacent to occupied homes and sell for \$100 each.

If your house shares a property line with or is across the alley from a Side Lot, you may be eligible to purchase the Side Lot.

After 6 months, Side Lots graduate to a Neighborhood Lot.

NEIGHBORHOOD LOTS

Neighborhood Lots are offered to residents within 500 feet of the lot and are sold for \$250. These lots require a Neighborhood Lot Endorsement.

Find available lots and more information about DLBA Land Reuse Programs by going to www.buildingdetroit.org/land-reuse-programs



DETROIT LAND BANK AUTHORITY
BuildingDetroit.org

PITTSBURGH ADOPT-A-LOT PROGRAM





MOW TO OWN PROGRAM

The new program allows residents to use the blighted property next door to expand the boundaries of one's yard or potentially expand the structure of one's home, depending on the specific zoning and land use regulations for that property.

For more information, please visit bit.ly/mownola



- Provides regulatory framework and incentives for sustainable practices
- Ensures consistency, transparency, and accountability in land mgmt
- Land use policy, environmental regulations, financial incentives, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms



VLS as a Process

Becoming a steward to a vacant lot project

Assess the
Land



Plan and
Design



Implement
and Maintain



01

02

Engage the
Community

03

04

Securing
Funding and
Permissions

05





Creative Reuse

Benefits of vacant land (that has been stewarded)



Support Environmental Initiatives

- Raingardens and bioswales
- Meadows
- Orchards
- Community farms
- Reforestation and native planting





Creative Third Places

- Creative places where community can gather, learn, and support each other
 - Outdoor classrooms
 - Community gathering spaces
 - Pop-up parks and plazas





Amenities to Attract Investment

- Food truck parks
- Farmer's markets
- Extended office or restaurant space
- Pop-up shops
- Infill development





Artistic and Cultural Expression

- Murals and public art
- Performance spaces
- Pop-up art installations
- Interactive art parks
- Historical and cultural monuments
- Festivals and markets





Improve Physical Health and Mental Well-being

- Playgrounds / play spaces
- Fitness parks
- Healing gardens / meditative spaces
- Urban garden oasis
- Pop-up clinics and health fairs



Being a good steward means embracing the potential of vacant land. With it, we have the power to turn forgotten spaces into thriving, green sanctuaries and new opportunities that uplift communities.





Thank You!

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<https://communityprogress.org/resources/vacant-land/>