

# Center for **COMMUNITY PROGRESS**



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## Ready to Tackle Vacant Properties in Your Community?

Technical Assistance Consultation from  
the Center for Community Progress

The Center for Community Progress is the leading national organization providing expert, high-impact technical assistance to end and prevent entrenched vacancy so that all people can live in safe, affordable, and equitable neighborhoods.

If you're ready to take a comprehensive approach to vacant properties in your community, we can help.



## What is Technical Assistance?

Technical assistance from Community Progress is a consultation service where we provide **expert guidance and analysis to government officials and decision-makers, tailored to your community.** Our team combines decades of legal, planning, and strategic expertise to assess the state of vacancy in your municipality, craft recommendations for policy and practice changes, and help you build long-term capacity so implementation succeeds.

Breaking the cycle of vacancy doesn't happen overnight. That's why Community Progress builds **lasting relationships** to make sure you have the support you need to create and sustain **long-term solutions to reduce vacancy and revitalize neighborhoods.**

**We center racial equity** in all we do, and design solutions to vacancy and deterioration within a framework of equitable community development so local governments can realize goals like resiliency; healthy and affordable housing; and safe, inclusive neighborhoods.

**We assess your existing policies and practices** that affect vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties and the scale of the problem. We help you understand the true costs these properties have on your community, as well as which local and state laws, strategies, and practices are working—and which aren't.

**We recommend policy and practice changes** for your community to equitably, efficiently, and effectively tackle vacant properties. From drafting specific ordinances and laws aimed at addressing problem properties to comprehensive strategic planning, we tailor every recommendation to your unique needs.

**We build your capacity** so you can see policy change through to implementation by delivering locally based, topic-specific presentations, trainings, and customized resources. We coach leaders and staff and produce top-tier reports that share best practices for addressing vacancy to inform the field.

## Our Services

### Comprehensive Assessment and Revitalization Strategy Development



Revitalizing a community takes strategic, coordinated work across multiple policy systems, but coordination doesn't just "happen." Communities need clear strategies that make the most of their time and money, especially when they face big challenges. Our comprehensive approach—blending urban planning, law, public service, and real estate market expertise—creates practical plans that lead to real results.

*If you aren't sure how to move beyond a piecemeal approach to vacant properties, we can help:*

- **Preliminary VAD Systems Assessment:** Overview of the challenges in your local policy and practices on code enforcement, property tax enforcement, public property management, and vacant land stewardship.
- **Vacant Property Plan:** Identify how, where, and when your community will prioritize interventions like demolition, repair, infill, or green reuse.
- **Master or Comprehensive Plan:** Support to make your land use planning efforts directly address neighborhood stability and tackle vacant and deteriorated properties.
- **Strategic or Action Plan:** Assess challenges and opportunities and build consensus around ambitious—but actionable and measurable—goals for your department, land bank, or organization.

### Data and Markets



Widespread problem properties exist because of market imbalances, made worse by bad laws and practices. To create change, a community needs a clear picture of where these properties are, who owns them, and what shape they're in—and then evaluate if current policies to address them are effective. As the nation's leading expert in data-driven neighborhood revitalization, we focus on understanding problem properties and neighborhood market dynamics to help communities leverage their limited resources for the greatest impact.

*If you need to get a handle on vacant properties, break down data silos, or are struggling to make the case for reform, we can help:*

- **Cost of Vacancy Analysis:** Demonstrate the public and private costs of doing nothing to help you make the case for more funding and policy and practice change.
- **Parcel Survey Design:** Ensure your efforts to collect real-time data on property vacancy and conditions is thorough and leads to actionable insights.
- **Data Collection, Management, and Analysis:** Streamline how you collect, share, and analyze data on vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties to enable a proactive, data-driven approach.
- **Neighborhood Conditions Assessment and Mapping:** Map neighborhood trends and community needs using demographic, real estate market, vacant property, and other stability variables.

“The Technical Assistance team had the innate ability to take our concerns and ideas and develop them into the exact messages that our department was trying to convey. We are looking forward to working with the Center for Community Progress in the future as we continue our journey.”

Nicole Woods  
Code Enforcement Officer,  
City of Ogdensburg, New York



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The Center for Community Progress is *the* expert when it comes to vacant, abandoned properties. Every city and town in American needs to contract with them to work on vacant and abandoned property issues. I use them as a resource regularly to help improve our neighborhoods for our city's residents. And you should too!

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**Laura Grabowski**  
 Director, Housing & Community Development, Louisville Metro Government

## Land Banks



Land banks are uniquely equipped to steward and transform vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties according to community goals. We are the leading national expert in land banking, supporting over 300 land banks across the country through our National Land Bank Network.

*If you're considering starting a land bank or looking to maximize your land bank's impact, we can help:*

- **Land Bank Feasibility Assessment:** Determine if a land bank is right for your community.
- **State-Enabling Land Bank Legislation Drafting or Consultation:** Make existing statutes work better, or draft new statutes from the ground up.
- **Land Bank Policies and Procedures Review or Drafting:** Set the foundation for your land bank's operations by developing priorities, policies, and programs.
- **Land Bank Board and Partner Education:** Tailor essential insights about land bank best practices to land bank boards and educate public partners.
- **Racial Equity Analysis:** Ensure decisions around land ownership advance racial equity.

## Delinquent Property Tax Enforcement



Tax delinquency is the greatest predictor of future property abandonment. Property tax enforcement is one of the strongest legal tools available for local government to address vacant properties and transfer them to new, responsible owners. We have a proven track record of rallying local and state support to reform inefficient and inequitable tax enforcement systems.

*If you have properties stuck in a cycle of tax delinquency, or want to build a coalition for state-wide reform, we can help:*

- **Property Tax Collection Enforcement Assessment:** Examine your tax-delinquent inventory and property tax enforcement legal framework, programs, and capacity—and identify your pain points.
- **Tax Lien Sale Analysis:** Determine the public and private costs of the sale of tax liens and identify areas for reform, focusing on solutions to vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties.
- **State Legislation Drafting or Consultation:** Improve the collection of delinquent taxes, reduce legal barriers to property reuse, and efficiently transition vacant and abandoned properties to new, responsible owners.
- **Local Ordinance Drafting and Program Design:** Implement state law locally to best meet community needs and promote equitable outcomes for tax-delinquent properties.

## Code Enforcement



Property maintenance code enforcement can stabilize and strengthen neighborhoods, but many communities find it hard to use code enforcement effectively. Relying on complaints and penalties often fails in weak real estate markets and when owners don't have the means to make repairs. We help communities change policies and practices to create a compliance-focused—and more equitable, efficient, and effective—approach to code enforcement.

*If you've been writing citations but not seeing change, we can help:*

- **Code Enforcement System Assessment:** Examine your problem property inventory and code enforcement legal framework, programs, and capacity to identify your key challenges.
- **Priority Code Enforcement Liens for Vacant Properties:** Draft or consult on state legislation that ensures local governments can recoup the costs of fixing up vacant properties or transitioning such properties to new ownership.
- **Advance Rental Property Licensing and Inspection:** Draft or consult on state legislation that ensures local governments can uphold the health and safety of rental properties with proactive, periodic inspections.
- **Local Ordinance Drafting and Program Design:** Support the development of ordinances that tackle vacancy and improve rental property conditions.
- **Design Repair Programs for Deteriorated Properties:** Foster partnerships and focus limited resources to address the most urgent property repair needs.

## Vacant Land Stewardship and Reuse Strategies



Large inventories of vacant land can seem overwhelming, but they offer incredible opportunities to address key issues like stormwater management, climate resiliency, food security, environmental justice, neighborhood safety, and community wealth. Community Progress has proven expertise to help communities develop comprehensive, city-wide strategies to vacant land stewardship.

*If you have a lot of vacant land and feel like there's a better use for it, we can help:*

- **Cost of Vacant Land Analysis:** Demonstrate the costs of the status quo and build support for investing in new strategic uses for underutilized land.
- **Stakeholder and Community Education and Facilitation:** Build consensus around strategies for vacant land maintenance and long-term ownership models.
- **Open Space Action Plan:** Create a framework for future uses of vacant land aligned with community goals.
- **Policies and Procedures Review or Drafting:** Guide vacant land disposition and repurposing decisions for entities holding large inventories of vacant land.
- **Learning Exchange Design and Implementation:** Foster peer learning across jurisdictions to spark local action and strengthen the national field of vacant land reuse.







## About Us

**The Center for Community Progress** helps people to transform vacant spaces into vibrant places. Since 2010, our team of experts has provided urban, suburban, and rural communities battling systemic vacancy with the policies, tools, and resources needed to address the full cycle of property revitalization. As the only national nonprofit dedicated to tackling vacant properties, Community Progress drives change by uncovering and disrupting the unjust, racist systems that perpetuate entrenched vacancy and property deterioration.

Community Progress has delivered customized, expert guidance to leaders in over 300 communities and provided hundreds of hours of free educational resources as well as leadership programming to help policymakers, practitioners, and community members across the country return properties to productive use. To learn more and get help for your community, visit [communityprogress.org](https://communityprogress.org).

## Ready to Tackle Vacancy?

Community Progress has helped more than 300 communities across the country in their pursuit to reduce and prevent vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties, and we're excited to work with your community. Thanks to the generous support of our funders, we may be able to offer reduced-cost technical assistance for specific communities.

Learn more at [communityprogress.org/technical-assistance](https://communityprogress.org/technical-assistance)

Send us an email to find out how we can help you!  
[technicalassistance@communityprogress.org](mailto:technicalassistance@communityprogress.org)



“Community Progress did an awesome job and handled the political climate of this process with care. They were easily accessible and really made sure we understood the next steps in the process. More importantly, they have helped bridge gaps that we have not been able to do with community stakeholders.”

**Cordaryl Patrick**  
Director, Economic and  
Community Development,  
Decatur, Illinois





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