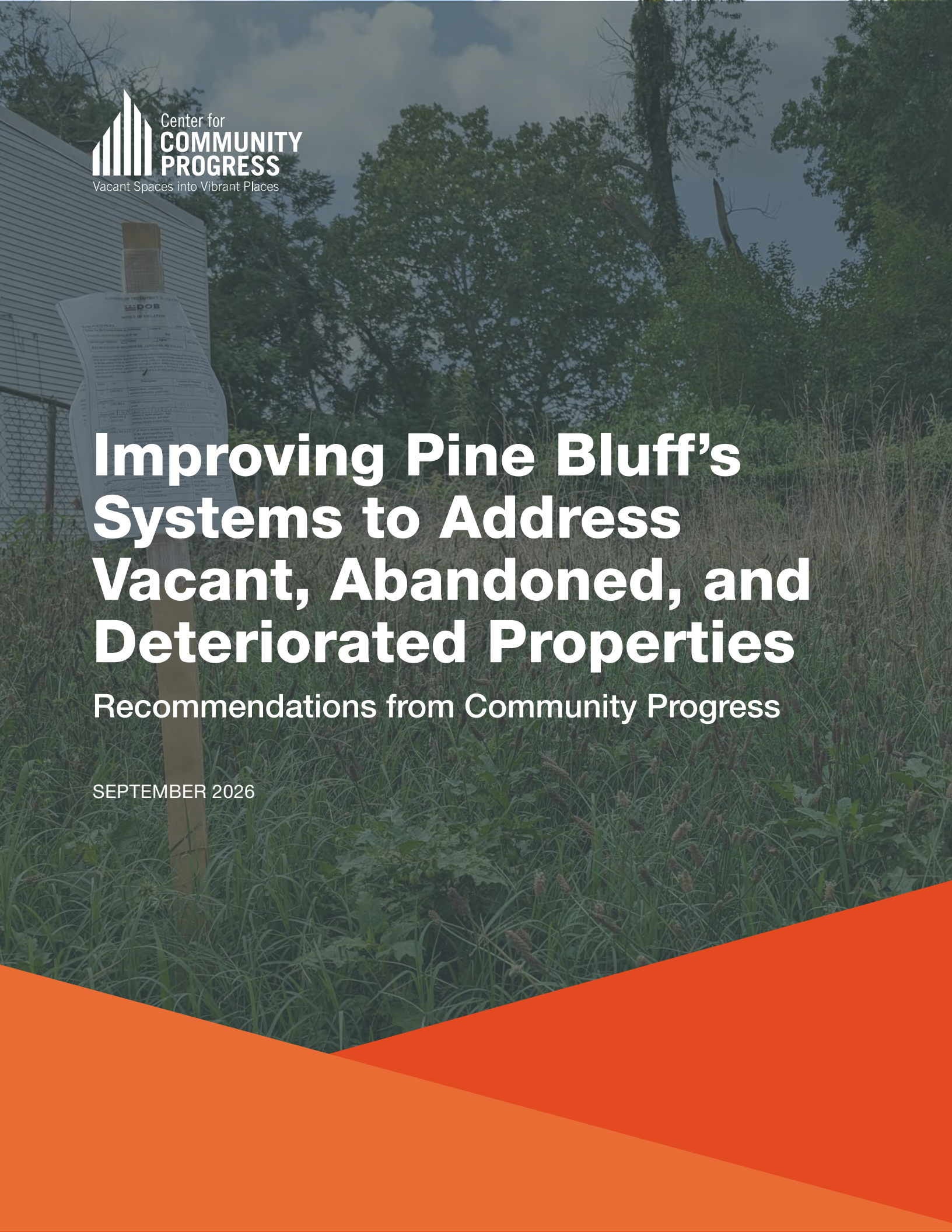


Center for COMMUNITY PROGRESS
Vacant Spaces into Vibrant Places

Improving Pine Bluff's Systems to Address Vacant, Abandoned, and Deteriorated Properties

Recommendations from Community Progress

SEPTEMBER 2026

Center for
COMMUNITY
PROGRESS
Vacant Spaces into Vibrant Places

Authors

Sara Toering
Senior Fellow, Community Progress

Carolina Rodriguez
Associate Director, Technical Assistance, Community Progress

Ryan D. Davis
Community Engagement Advisor and Senior Consultant

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We thank the Walton Family Foundation for their generous support of this work.

Cover Photo: A code enforcement sign is staked into an overgrown vacant lot between two buildings. (Photo: Center for Community Progress)

About the Center for Community Progress

The Center for Community Progress helps people to transform vacant spaces into vibrant places. Since 2010, their team of experts has provided urban, suburban, and rural communities looking to revitalize vacant properties with the tools and resources needed to address those properties at the policy and systems level. As the only national nonprofit dedicated to vacant property revitalization, Community Progress drives change by uncovering and disrupting 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, www.communityprogress.org

info@communityprogress.org

(877) 542-4842

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Introduction

Since 2023, Community Progress has sought to build trust and relationships across Arkansas, serving as an expert resource for communities working to address vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated (VAD) properties. Thanks to generous support from the Walton Family Foundation, our work in Arkansas began with a learning cohort called Delta Rising. Three communities in the Arkansas-Mississippi Delta region, including Pine Bluff, joined a series of in-person and virtual learning sessions on effective and equitable solutions to widespread vacancy and disinvestment. Through the cohort, we also celebrated and uplifted local excellence, learning about the innovations happening in Arkansas with care and attention to tender histories and promising futures. We summarized our cohort learnings and those local stories in our 2024 policy brief, **Addressing Vacant, Abandoned, and Deteriorated Properties in Arkansas**.

While education is a core element of our work, our goal is always systems-level change. To achieve this, we ensure communities have the tools and knowledge to transform VAD properties into assets that serve neighbors and neighborhoods. We consider this work healing and reparative—a pathway to more just and equitable communities. Thanks again to the Walton Family Foundation's support, we saw an opportunity to continue our work in Arkansas with a deeper, focused engagement in Pine Bluff with City leaders and community partners. Over the last year, we have collaborated with Mayor Flowers and her team, as well as local partners, to better understand and assess Pine Bluff's challenges, practices, and policy tools as it relates to VAD properties.

As we explain our goals, findings, and recommendations throughout this report, we want to thank our local partners in Pine Bluff for making this technical engagement possible. We are grateful to the caring professionals and community members who facilitated information-sharing, contributed their expertise to the project, and trusted us with their insights and hopes for a better Pine Bluff.



Executive Summary

In late 2025, the Center for Community Progress was invited by the Walton Family Foundation to continue its collaboration with one of the Foundation's focus cities, Pine Bluff, Arkansas, to help local leaders achieve a widely shared goal: transforming the city's growing inventory of vacant lots into community-serving uses, with a strong emphasis on quality, affordable housing. This 12-month initiative aimed to move Pine Bluff from education to action and implementation. Partnering directly with City Hall and the new mayoral administration was essential to fully understanding the scope and scale of vacancy, the success and limitations of municipal enforcement actions, and departmental resources and capacity constraints. To understand local priorities and aspirations, we engaged and learned from as many local partners and community leaders as possible (full list in **Appendix A**).

Three key findings emerged:

1. Vacancy remains a widespread challenge in Pine Bluff despite impressive local efforts in the last decade to try to minimize the harms of vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated (VAD)[1] properties. **One-third of all parcels in Pine Bluff are vacant residential lots,[2] and nearly all are privately owned and underutilized.**
2. Tackling vacant properties and transforming the city's extensive inventory of residential vacant lots into quality affordable housing and other community-serving uses are **goals shared by virtually all stakeholders, community leaders, and residents**. That alignment is reiterated across several City Council-adopted plans and described in **Appendix E**.
3. Like many cities throughout Arkansas and the country, Pine Bluff has invested significant public attention, discourse, and community engagement in determining which and what kind of public entity should hold ownership of VAD properties and move them back to productive use—including how to best use the Urban Renewal Agency (URA) and whether the City should also create a land banking entity within City Hall. **But very little attention has been paid to how the public might *acquire* ownership of VAD properties in the first place**. Unless and until the City owns the property—not just the problem—discussions about which particular entity should steward which property are premature.

Local leaders posed a key question at the start of this engagement: **Would a land bank help Pine Bluff address VAD properties?** Communities tend

What is "VAD"?

Vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties (VAD) are residential, commercial, and industrial buildings or vacant lots that pose harm to residents and their community. **Vacant property** is inclusive of vacant buildings and vacant lots. A **vacant lot** is a parcel without a structure, which could include a previously developed lot or an unbuildable lot. Their owners or managers have not kept up the property, walked away, neglected paying taxes or utilities, or defaulted on mortgages. **Deteriorated properties** are structures in poor condition with damage or visible signs of deferred maintenance. They may be occupied or vacant.

1 Read why Community Progress uses the words *vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated* properties (VAD) and avoids the term "blight": **https://communityprogress.org/blog/how-vacant-abandoned-buildings-affect-community/**.

2 Jefferson County Tax Assessor Data provided April 14, 2026. Parcels coded as RV or residential vacant.

to create land banks because they have an inventory of abandoned properties presenting public harm, incurring public costs (code, fire, and police calls), and driving further market decline and disinvestment. These land banks, typically created under state-enabling land bank legislation, almost universally rely on the property tax foreclosure pipeline as a primary source for routine, cost-effective acquisitions.

Arkansas has no state-enabling land bank legislation, and its property tax foreclosure process presents barriers to local governments seeking to acquire tax-delinquent properties cost-effectively and predictably. Given these constraints, the more urgent questions for Pine Bluff are: **What tools, if any, can the local government use to *acquire* vacant, abandoned lots? And which vacant, harmful lots (and structures) should the City prioritize for acquisition?**

These questions led us and our partners to deeper investigation, insight, and recommendations. They helped reveal the underlying systems perpetuating and even worsening Pine Bluff's vacancy challenges. Centering these questions uncovered how Pine Bluff's public investment in removing hazardous, abandoned structures is ultimately lost to a cycle of private acquisition and speculation that only grows the City's vacant lot problem. This inquiry also pointed to municipal code lien foreclosure, a unique enforcement tool authorized by state law, as a strategy Pine Bluff could pilot for acquisitions. Piloted effectively on strategically selected vacant and abandoned lots, this tool could help Pine Bluff break the cycle of decline and private speculation and achieve more community-driven outcomes and local ownership. Implemented well, it could also serve as a model for other cities across Arkansas. **Pine Bluff can lead this endeavor—it cannot afford to get distracted.**

This report opens with a complete list of our recommendations. Section Two details our efforts and findings on the scope and scale of vacancy in Pine Bluff, along with recommendations for strengthening interdepartmental and cross-sector collaboration, improving data collection and management, and using data more effectively to drive decisions, investments, and reuse. Section Three uses a hypothetical abandoned property in Pine Bluff to show how the status quo worsens vacancy and speculative activity, and how municipal code lien foreclosure could serve as an "off-ramp" from that cycle of decline—all while advancing the common goal of transforming vacant lots into affordable housing for Pine Bluff residents. The final section offers closing thoughts on future considerations for public stewardship of VAD properties. This report also includes several appendices with additional relevant information and recognition of the many generous partners who contributed to this work in Pine Bluff.

The recommendations in this report are subject to the advice and guidance of local legal counsel. In particular, recommendations for piloting a municipal code lien foreclosure tool will require careful leadership from, and coordination with, the City Attorney's office, which would be responsible for implementing the pilot in partnership with the administration and department leaders. Crucially, the City Attorney's office will need adequate funding and support to provide the competent, excellent real estate litigation services the pilot will require.

Recommendations

Pine Bluff is led by caring, courageous people across government, the nonprofit and faith community, and the business sector. Our recommendations are organized across three lines of effort: (1) capacity and coordination, (2) data and planning systems, and (3) a pilot of the municipal code lien foreclosure tool. Implemented together, these will position Pine Bluff as a statewide leader in converting VAD properties into community assets.

Figure 1. Recommendations for Pine Bluff to Improve VAD Systems

#	Recommendations
1	**Strengthen capacity and coordination across public and private partners.** • Establish a VAD Activation Taskforce to lead the pilot in Recommendation #3. See **Appendix B** for a sample structure, budget, and work plan. • Develop a cadence for the VAD Taskforce to provide regular briefings and opportunities to seek feedback and input from cohorts throughout the city, including faith leaders, neighborhood watch leaders, and business leaders. See **Appendix C** for a template and sample briefing document. • Maintain active participation in the Arkansas Municipal League.
2	**Improve and integrate local data and planning systems.** • Fund a position to hire a staff member within local government with expertise in data systems. Consider partnering with the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. • Use geographic information systems (GIS) to integrate spatial data and develop a master inventory of VAD properties. Include data such as condemnation, mowing, liens, tax delinquency, water service shut-off data (meters inactive for six months or more), and fire hazards. • Start to identify "priority blocks" where several contiguous or nearby residential vacant lots could present opportunities for public acquisition and infill construction. Identify and track whether priority blocks are located within established Urban Renewal Areas or outside of those parameters. • Track the success rate of existing public interventions that do not lead to public acquisition. For example, routine, authorized code enforcement practices that lead to voluntary compliance. • Implement future land use and zoning changes recommended in the Comprehensive Development Plan to allow a variety of housing types to be built on residential vacant lots. • Track how actions on VAD property implement community adopted plans. • Include an update to the Urban Renewal Plan, areas, and policies in the next Comprehensive Development Plan. • Put circuit breakers in place to assist legacy residents as property tax burden increases due to public investment. Ensure homeowners participate in qualifying and available homestead exemption programs. • Conduct a field study and census of VAD properties.

3 Pilot the municipal code lien foreclosure tool.

- Hire an attorney within the City Attorney's office to focus on real estate litigation and use of municipal code lien foreclosure.
- Review and update local ordinances that purport to remove vacant, abandoned, single-family homes from demolition consideration such that abandoned single-family homes (and resulting vacant residential lots) may be appropriately considered for the pilot.
- Select 10 VAD properties on the demolition list for a pilot. Focus on properties with defunct corporate and non-responsive owners and where public debt owed surpasses the fair market value of the properties. Consider properties within a small geographic footprint—e.g., five properties within the Urban Renewal Areas and five properties outside those areas. Use the framework in **Appendix D** as a starting point.
- Adopt acquisition and disposition policies to guide decision-making and actions. For parcels acquired within Urban Renewal Areas, coordinate policies with the Urban Renewal Agency. Where appropriate, consider disposition to local nonprofits, developers, churches, and others with a plan for productive use for the property.
- For parcels acquired elsewhere in the city, develop pathways that implement community-adopted plans and identify and empower the appropriate City department to manage, maintain, and dispose of such properties in alignment with local priorities and laws. For example, prioritize a parcel that can go to the Pine Bluff Housing Authority to transition a Housing Choice Voucher renter to homeownership.[3] Prioritize acquiring properties near good jobs and high-quality learning opportunities. Prioritize parcels in the floodplain for conservation.
- Evaluate the pilot, make appropriate adjustments, and scale to full program rollout.
- Consider testing other acquisition pathways such as property donations by owners with no interest in maintaining the property or satisfying potential public liens.

3 Center for Community Progress, *Creating Homeownership Opportunities in Newark through Housing Choice Vouchers*, December 6, 2024, https://communityprogress.org/publications/new-jersey-hcv-homeownership.

The Scope of the VAD Challenge in Pine Bluff

Starting with a clear understanding of the nature, scope, and scale of vacancy is critical. It helps identify which policy or practice interventions will be most impactful, informs priorities and resource allocation, helps communicate success and challenges, and can inspire confidence, trust, and hope from the community.

It is critical to clarify the terms used in the report. Vacancy, while a seemingly simple issue, means different things to different community members—an empty house, a vacant storefront, a former industrial factory, or an empty lot where a structure once stood. Nor is all vacancy harmful. A healthy housing market needs a certain level of vacancy, typically in the 4-8 percent range. If a vacant property carries no delinquent taxes or does not present recurring property maintenance code violations, then it is not on our radar when defining the nature, scope, and scale of VAD properties.

It is no surprise, then, that the most useful *local* data points for defining VAD properties are tax delinquency and property maintenance code violations. Demographic and parcel-level data also suggest the scope of the problem and whether it is worsening or improving.

Starting with the latter, there are strong indicators suggesting that Pine Bluff struggles—and may continue to struggle—with a level of vacancy that demands urgency. Alan Mallach defines hypervacancy as a scenario in which 20 percent or more of housing units are vacant.[4] When a neighborhood reaches hypervacancy,

> "the market effectively ceases to function. Houses sell, if they sell at all, only to investors at rock bottom prices while the neighborhoods become areas of concentrated poverty, unemployment, and health problems."[5]

Pine Bluff's housing vacancy rate is 18 percent. Between 2014 and 2024, residential vacancy in Pine Bluff more than doubled, from 1,600 vacant housing units to 3,481.[6] Ward 4, in the northwest part of the city, has the highest concentration of vacant residential parcels.[7]

Pine Bluff's population dropped 15.5 percent between 2010 and 2024, and approximately 32 percent over the last 45 years.

Geography	% Pop. Change (2010–14)
Pine Bluff	-15.5%
Jefferson County	-13.2%
Arkansas	+3.5%
United States	+6.6%

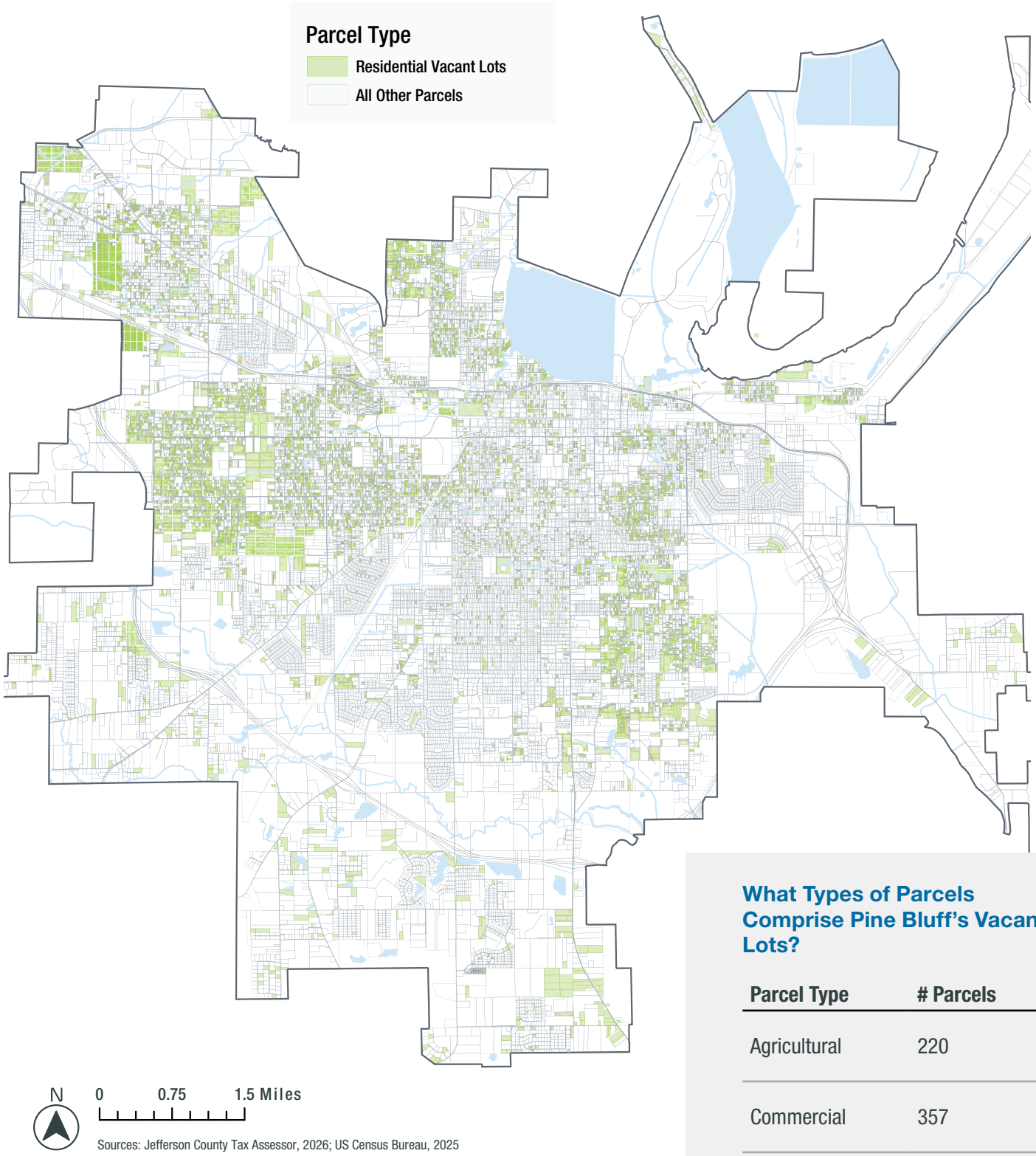
4 Mallach, *The Empty House Next Door*, 15.

5 Mallach, *The Empty House Next Door*, 5.

6 US Census Bureau, "Vacancy Status," American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, Table B25004, accessed on April 14, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2024.B25004?q=pine+bluff+arkansas+vacancy.

7 Erin K. Rothman, "A Data-Driven Approach to Addressing Housing Security and Neighborhood Preservation in Jefferson County, AR" (slide presentation, Manzana, August 6, 2025).

Figure 2. 33 Percent of Parcels in the City of Pine Bluff are Vacant Lots



Sources: Jefferson County Tax Assessor, 2026; US Census Bureau, 2025

What Types of Parcels Comprise Pine Bluff's Vacant Lots?

Parcel Type	# Parcels
Agricultural	220
Commercial	357
Industrial	70
Residential	10,083

Steep population loss is the primary culprit of hypervacancy. Indeed, Pine Bluff's population dropped 15.5 percent between 2010 and 2024,[8] and approximately 32 percent over the last 45 years (1980–2025).[9]

This mirrors the steep population losses—from 40 to 60 percent—that many northeastern and midwestern legacy cities experienced between 1970 and 2010, all of which faced significant vacancy challenges as a result. Pine Bluff has too many homes for its much smaller population, which has created a severe imbalance in the housing supply that drives abandonment and ultimately demands significant public resources for demolition.

Pine Bluff has not avoided this challenge by any means. The City has deployed available resources to identify abandoned, heavily deteriorated properties in need of demolition and carried those demolitions out. But such efforts provide further evidence of the scale of the challenge:

- 33 percent of all parcels in Pine Bluff (10,083) are residential vacant lots, most likely the legacy of decades of demolition.
- The number of housing units decreased by about 10 percent over the last 15 years, another indicator of recurring publicly funded demolitions over the years.
- According to the Pine Bluff Code Enforcement Department, approximately 700 properties have been condemned and ordered to be demolished since 2016, with about 250 demolished by the City or the Pine Bluff Urban Renewal Agency (URA).[10] At an estimated cost of $7,500 per demolition, this decade-long campaign represents a public investment of nearly $1.9 million. Unfortunately,

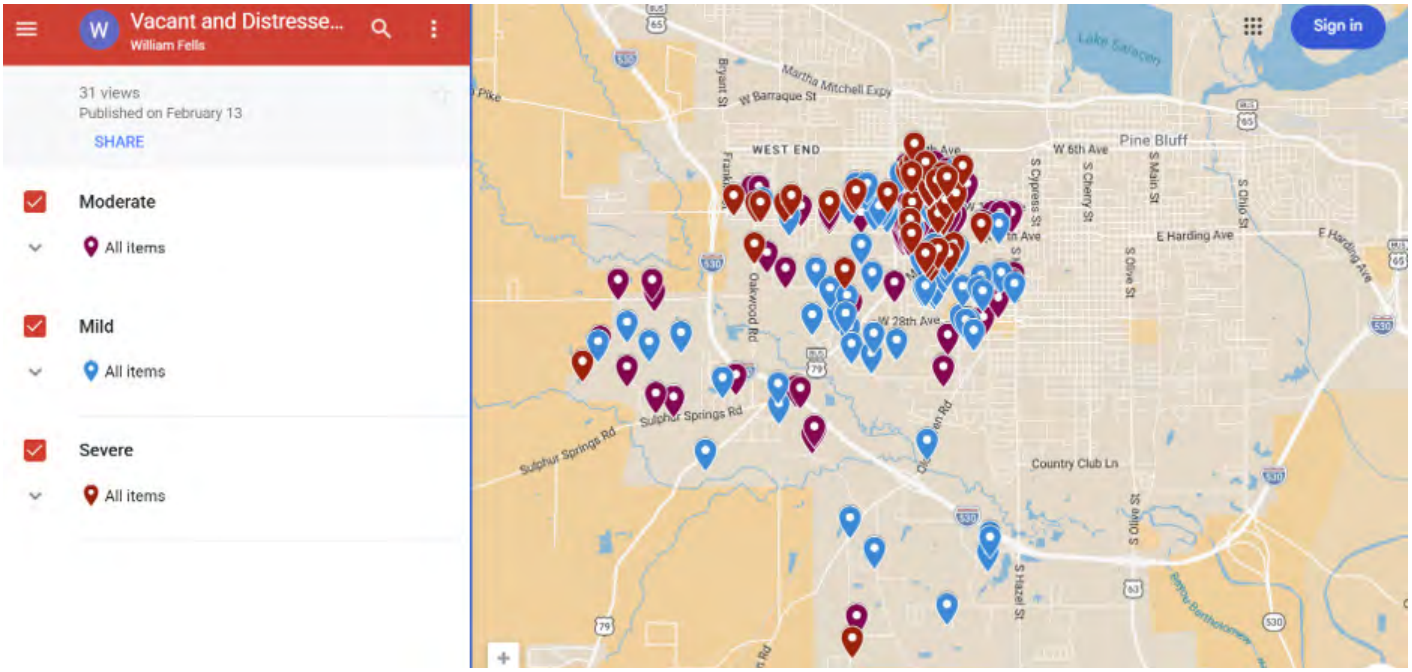
8 American Community Survey, 2010-2014 and 2020-2024.

9 Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, "Population Estimates - Census (Pine Bluff city)," Discover Arkansas, accessed September 4, 2026, **https://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Data-Search-Tool/Population-Estimates-Census**.

10 Data provided by the Pine Bluff Code Enforcement Director on March 6, 2026 and current as of January 4, 2026. included a number of manual entries which required our interpretation.



Figure 3. Councilmember Fells' Assessment of VAD Properties in Pine Bluff



when the resulting vacant lots are eventually sold at negotiated sale by the Commissioner of State Lands, most fall back in the hands of private speculators many years later for pennies on the dollar, as the next section documents. **This is a key system-level failure that Pine Bluff and partners can and must address.**

The Pine Bluff Fire Department shared a list of all citywide properties damaged by fire 2021–2025. Of the 166 properties listed, 114 sustained severe (total loss) or major damage. It is reasonable to assume most will ultimately become Pine Bluff taxpayers' responsibility to demolish.

Councilmember William Fells, who represents an area with a high concentration of VAD properties, shared findings from his own effort to photograph and catalogue problem vacant properties in Ward 3 (Figure 3). He characterized 46 of the 225 VAD properties as "severely" deteriorated and another 90 as "moderately" deteriorated. Some of these properties appear on the Fire Department's list, the Code Department's list of condemned properties, or both.

These efforts to identify and track some of the most problematic vacant properties are admirable but need better coordination. See a sample map with available summary information in **Appendix F**. Robust data collection, management, and analysis are foundational to achieving a comprehensive and coordinated approach to tackling VAD properties. No community has succeeded in halting and reversing systemic vacancy without first building this foundation. Pine Bluff already has some key data points. It now needs stronger, more coordinated data-sharing to guide future decisions and investments.

Building this data foundation is essential, but so is understanding the complex legal enforcement systems—defined by state statute—that can help or hinder a community's success. The next section uses a hypothetical property to show how the status quo, and Arkansas's statute governing delinquent property tax enforcement, are not only contributing to Pine Bluff's vacancy challenge but actively worsening it.

Pine Bluff Owns the VAD Problem but Not the VAD Property

To explore Pine Bluff's options for acquiring and stewarding VAD properties, we will trace the story of the a hypothetical property at "123 Pine Bluff Street." Properties become candidates for demolition when they deteriorate to a point of constituting a public nuisance—a danger to neighbors, neighborhoods, and first responders called to the address fires or other dangers. After demolition, when public funds cannot be recouped, Pine Bluff needs a way to acquire these properties. Currently, it owns the problem, but not the property.

Assume 123 Pine Bluff is vacant, apparently abandoned, and rapidly deteriorating into a danger to the surrounding community. Its owner is a defunct, out-of-state limited liability corporation (LLC) that has long been unresponsive to Pine Bluff Code Enforcement Department—the first responder and primary enforcer of Pine Bluff's nuisance abatement ordinances.[11] All real property in Pine Bluff is subject to the International Property Maintenance Code adopted by Pine Bluff in 2021 and amended from time to time.[12]

As a first step, 123 Pine Bluff enters the system when a neighbor calls the code enforcement department to report an abandoned property, or the code enforcement team spots it during a routine windshield survey. What happens next?



Fix it Up

If Code Enforcement determines that 123 Pine Bluff is a public nuisance, the case must be presented to the Pine Bluff City Council to determine next steps. The Council may order the "removal, abatement, or prevention of the nuisance," direct the removal of the nuisance within a reasonable amount of time, and order the City to abate the nuisance if the "owner or person in control of the property" fails to do so.[13] Single-family

11 See Pine Bluff Code of Ord. 7-41-42.

12 See Pine Bluff Code of Ord. 7-301 *et seq*.

13 See Pine Bluff Code of Ord. 16-1(a)-(b).

residences appear to be specifically excluded from this process.[14]

Property owners who fail to abate a nuisance are guilty of a misdemeanor and face fines or even incarceration under Pine Bluff's code.[15] A full assessment of whether criminal enforcement is the right approach to public nuisances is beyond the scope of this report,[16] however, it is clear such penalties are essentially meaningless given 123 Pine Bluff's ownership structure. A defunct LLC cannot be fined or jailed, and an out-of-state owner of record cannot be forced to pay fines or face incarceration in Pine Bluff. As a result, when VAD nuisance properties in Pine Bluff have non-responsive or unlocatable owners, Pine Bluff Code Enforcement, as authorized by the Council, will often need to proceed with publicly-funded demolition to abate the nuisance.[17]



While 123 Pine Bluff St. is hypothetical, above is a real, LLC-owned property in Pine Bluff, located at 1421 S Myrtle St less than 1 mile from Greenville Elementary School. The photo was taken by Councilmember Fells as part of his windshield survey. Property condition surveys are one way citizens can get involved to address VAD. (Photo courtesy of Councilmember Fells)

In particular emergency situations, upon certification by the police chief, fire chief, or chief inspector, immediately dangerous properties may be summarily razed or made secure, with notice subsequently posted on the property and mailed to all owners of record.[18] Similar rules apply to burned-out structures. Where fire or other casualty has left a structure's interior "open to the elements and is unfit for human habitation," Code Enforcement may move to secure it and owners who fail to remediate, raze, or repair the structure are "liable at law to the city for the full amount of the costs incurred by the city in remediating the burned-out structure."[19]

Beyond authority to demolish nuisance structures, the City can also order property owners to clear and remediate lots—i.e., cutting weeds, removing refuse and garbage, and "eliminat[ing] stagnant pools of water or any other unsanitary thing, place, or condition."[20] If property owners fail to comply after proper notice, the City is authorized to abate the condition and charge the owner for the cost.[21]

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14 See Pine Bluff Code of Ord. 16-1(b) "Whenever a property, excluding a single-family residence, has been determined to be a public nuisance by action of the city council, it shall be the affirmative duty of the owner or person in control of the property to remove or abate the nuisance within the time period specified by the city council in the order, resolution, or notice determining the property to be a nuisance."

15 See Pine Bluff Code of Ord. 16-1(b)(2-3).

16 Based on our decades of experience working with communities struggling with vacancy and disinvestment, Community Progress generally finds criminal enforcement problematic for various reasons. Most importantly, it is ineffective against out-of-state owners and unresponsive LLCs, and potentially harmful to those most vulnerable members in a community, such as senior homeowners and low-income tenants. To read more about the harms of traditional code enforcement and the need for local governments to shift to strategic code compliance, see "Progress Point: Strategic Code Compliance," **https://communityprogress.org/publications/progress-points-code-enforcement/**, and *Reevaluating Code Enforcement: A New Approach to Addressing Problem Properties* (2024) **https://communityprogress.org/publications/code-enforcement-report/**.

17 Pine Bluff Code of Ord. 16-1(b)(4) "The city retains the authority, after expiration of the period in which the owner or person in control was to abate the nuisance, to enter upon the property and take all necessary steps to raze and remove the offensive condition . . .".

18 Pine Bluff Code of Ord. 16-2.

19 Pine Bluff Code of Ord. 16-3(e).

20 Pine Bluff Code of Ord. 16-29.

21 Pine Bluff Code of Ord. 16-30.

In the case of 123 Pine Bluff, assume the City demolishes the dangerous structure and clears the resulting lot of debris and unsanitary conditions. All costs incurred are then assessed and collected as a lien against the property.[22] At this point, the dangerous conditions have been remediated, paid for entirely by Pine Bluff taxpayers, but ownership of 123 Pine Bluff has not changed. The City has paid to fix every problem at the property without acquiring the property itself. Put simply: The City owns the problem but not the property. So, what options do Pine Bluff residents have, collectively, to move 123 Pine Bluff into responsible ownership and productive use?

"The dangerous conditions have been remediated, paid for entirely by Pine Bluff taxpayers, but ownership of 123 Pine Bluff has not changed.

Pay it Up

Once the City has demolished 123 Pine Bluff and cleared the lot per procedures in the City Code, it holds a lien against the property for the amount taxpayers incurred remediating the property. The City can collect on that lien in two ways: (1) through the County or State via the delinquent property tax enforcement process, or (2) through the City Attorney via municipal code lien foreclosure.

Option 1: Collecting Municipal Code Liens Through Delinquent Property Tax Enforcement

Municipal code liens for nuisance abatement, including demolition and lot clearing, may be collected through the delinquent tax enforcement process. The lien amount is first determined at a city council hearing, after appropriate notice to property owners. Various state and local procedures must be followed to ensure the City's lien qualifies as a *priority* lien, including providing seven business days' notice before any work begins at the property.[23] The lien amount set at the city council hearing, plus a 10 percent collection penalty, is then sent to the Jefferson County Tax Collector for collection.[24] This is the currently Pine Bluff's only method of lien collection and, according to available data, rarely results in payment—particularly when a lot's value is lower than the combined liens and delinquent taxes assessed.

When owners fail to pay property taxes, the Jefferson County Tax Commissioner may certify properties for sale at public auction, managed by the Arkansas Commissioner of State Lands. These tax sale results offer another way to understand property abandonment. The median sale price at the 2025 auction was about $400, indicating that most sales recoup very little money back for the public. When tax sale buyers lack the resources or intent to redevelop properties, the public ends up maintaining these properties as they continue to sit vacant.

It is critical to note that the office of the Commissioner of State Lands' office is implementing delinquent tax enforcement precisely in line with Arkansas law, including recent amendments that specifically prohibit donating or transferring

22 Pine Bluff Code of Ord. 16-31-32.

23 Ark. Code Ann. 14-54-903(c)(7).

24 Pine Bluff Code of Ord. 16-32(a)(2).

unsold land to public and nonprofit entities. Figure 4 describes a property's journey through delinquent tax enforcement. The State Lands Office maintains meticulous records and operates a system, consistent with Arkansas law, that largely ensures property taxes are collected—a mission foundational to local governments' operations and services statewide.

As with delinquent tax enforcement systems around the country, Arkansas's system is designed so that most delinquent taxes are ultimately paid. Redemptions occur at various stages of the process, giving property owners every opportunity to satisfy their debt and retain ownership. Of the 1,374 properties certified for public auction in 2025, two-thirds were redeemed before reaching auction.

However, this system produces frustrating outcomes for tax-delinquent VAD properties where the land is worth less than the public debt owed against it. For that exact universe of properties—the ones causing the most harm in Pine Bluff neighborhoods—the delinquent property tax system simply is not designed to give the public a meaningful way to acquire the land and return it to productive use. A different tool is needed.

Figure 4. Journey of Properties Through the Tax Sale Process

Year Tax Delinquent	Year Certified for Tax Sale	# Parcels Certified	# with Municipal Liens	# Redeemed Prior to Sale	# with Municipal Liens
2020	2023	1,374	617	875	251
2019	2022	768	281	513	116

Year Tax Delinquent	Year of Auction	# Offered for Sale	# Sold	Year of Online Auction	# Sold	# Negotiated
2020	2025	499	290	2026	future	future
2019	2024	255	175	2025	65	6

Source: Arkansas Commissioner of State Lands

Option 2: Leveraging Code Liens via Municipal Lien Foreclosure

As an alternative to collection through delinquent tax enforcement, the City Attorney could file a foreclosure action within 18 months of completing work on 123 Pine Bluff and foreclose on the resulting lien.[25] A foreclosure simply means a court-ordered sale of property to satisfy debt. Beyond the City's abatement costs, such an action may also recover attorneys' fees equal to 10 percent of the total lien amount. The owner may satisfy the lien and attorneys' fees before any court-ordered sale, removing the property from foreclosure. Otherwise, the property proceeds to a court-ordered sale.

If the private market bids at or above the lien amount, the City recovers its debt and the successful bidder takes ownership. Pine Bluff has never used this municipal code lien foreclosure process, and doing so would require real estate litigation counsel in the City Attorney's Office (either on staff or retaining an outside firm).

25 Pine Bluff Code of Ord. 16-33.

Figure 5. Likely Outcomes by Collection Processes for 123 Pine Bluff

Action	Ownership Status	Subject to Delinquent Property Taxes	Fair Market Value	Likely Owner Response	Impact on Property Ownership	Recoup Public Costs?	Next Steps Needed
Enforce High Priority Municipal Demo/Lot Clearing Lien	Active Owner (Corporate or Individual)	No	FMV ≥ Municipal Code Lien	Pay off liens to avoid foreclosure sale	Possibly in now responsive, active ownership	**Yes**	None
Enforce High Priority Municipal Demo/Lot Clearing Lien	Abandoned Property or Highly Fractured Title	Yes	FMV ≥ Municipal Code Lien + Tax Debt	None	State Land Sale likely to generate private bids; new private ownership	**Yes**	None
Enforce High Priority Municipal Demo/ Lot Clearing Lien through State Land Tax Sale	Abandoned Property or Highly Fractured Title	Yes	FMV ≤ Municipal Code Lien + Tax Debt	None	State Land Sale unlikely to generate private bids sufficient to satisfy municipal code lien; likely sold for $100 in online auction to speculative investor; municipal code lien extinguished; new private owner with poor quality of title	**No**	Likely ongoing public costs to address uncared for lot
Enforce High Priority Municipal Demo/Lot Clearing Lien Through Municipal Code Lien Foreclosure	Abandoned Property or Highly Fractured Title	Yes	FMV ≤ Municipal Code Lien + Tax Debt	None	City acquires the property subject to tax debt in absence of private bids	**No**	Satisfy tax debt—a portion of which would come back to the City itself; no taxes assessed during public ownership; transfer the property for productive use
Enforce High Priority Municipal Demo/Lot Clearing Lien Through Municipal Code Lien Foreclosure	Abandoned Property or Highly Fractured Title	No	FMV ≤ Municipal Code Lien	None	City acquires the property in absence of private bids	**No**	Sell or otherwise transfer the property for productive use

Give it Up

For most Pine Bluff parcels carrying demolition liens, lot-clearing liens, or both, the typical outcome is an uncollectible lien and a property transferred to the Commissioner of State Lands, where, as a *legal* matter, title to the property vests for years. As a *practical* matter, though, the City remains responsible for whatever problems accrue on these parcels (e.g., dumping, dangerous weed accumulation, fires, etc.). If years of tax delinquency and lien assessment lead to a public auction with no bids covering the taxes and liens owed, the State Land Commission may then sell the property through an online auction at a negotiated amount—typically beginning at $100.

Assuming 123 Pine Bluff is tax-delinquent and carries a demolition lien exceeding the lot's market value, we can expect it to sell online for $100 several years after demolition. Pine Bluff's lien would be wiped out in the sale and never collected. The private bidder, if seeking construction financing to build on the parcel, would then need a costly quiet title action to obtain the clear, marketable, insurable title that financing requires.

For VAD properties like 123 Pine Buff, this process leaves the City of Pine Bluff holding all the costs of VAD properties with no ability to actually own them or direct them toward productive, community-serving uses.

Figure 6. The Fix It Up, Pay It Up, GIve It Up Framework



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Conclusion

If Pine Bluff Gets It, Where Does the Property Go?

If the City successfully acquires and obtains clear title to VAD properties through the municipal code lien foreclosure pilot, it should carefully consider how to hold, steward, and dispose of them. A key objective should be ensuring property disposition advances community-adopted plans and local priorities.

Arkansas law gives municipalities *some* flexibility to dispose of real property, including negotiating sales below fair market value in certain circumstances. These sales must still be supported by adequate consideration to comply with the Arkansas Constitution. In practice, this allows Pine Bluff to design disposition strategies—such as redevelopment-focused RFPs, side lot or mow-to-own programs, and farm-to-own models—that prioritize community outcomes like redevelopment and economic activity. Any below-market transfer would need careful review by legal counsel to ensure it provides adequate consideration, including non-monetary consideration such as public benefits or meeting defined community needs.

As noted earlier, Pine Bluff and communities throughout Arkansas has devoted significant attention to whether local land bank commissions should be created to hold VAD property. A handful of Arkansas communities have created such commissions. Absent state-enabling land bank legislation, these are simply creations of local government, with only the powers the local government grants them. For Pine Bluff, creating a local land bank commission is premature until the City has a working means of acquiring VAD properties to place into one.

As a practical matter, if Pine Bluff succeeds in using municipal code lien foreclosure to acquire VAD parcels, it will face a universe of at least hundreds of such properties. The VAD Taskforce and the City Attorney's office will need sufficient capacity and expertise to implement—and eventually expand—a municipal code lien foreclosure pilot program. But once the City obtains these properties, it will need additional capacity for real estate management, strategic disposition, and community development. That expertise already exists in Pine Bluff, notably at the URA and among several nonprofit real estate development and affordable housing entities. Seeking guidance and partnership from these public and private partners—who have long grappled with the lack of public acquisition tools—will be a critical step.

Given the scale of VAD property at hand, every potential stewardship partner, particularly those with deep experience remediating and developing VAD

property in line with community goals, should be engaged. No single person, department, or organization in Pine Bluff can address this challenge alone. But together, Pine Bluff can absolutely make meaningful changes in service to the larger community.

Conclusion

The scale Pine Bluff's VAD property problem is vast, and its toll on long-time residents' quality of life and the City's ability to attract newcomers is clear. What is promising is the broad consensus among leaders to do something about it. The City already uses the tools available to it to enforce property maintenance codes. The next step is to extend that enforcement through a municipal code lien foreclosure pilot. This report provides actionable recommendations for the City and its partners to test a new approach. By focusing on evidence-based decisions around a test batch of properties, Pine Bluff can begin repairing a system that keeps land trapped in a cycle of deterioration and start putting its plan into motion to support homeownership and community development.

Community Progress is honored to offer these observations and recommendations, from our outside perspective, to the diverse leaders of Pine Bluff. Decisions about whether and how to implement any of these recommendations remain, as they should, in the hands of Pine Bluff leaders and community members.

Appendices

Appendix A

Community Members Engaged

Community Progress is grateful for these individuals who gave their time and expertise, along with a focus group of 35 local pastors.

First Name	Last Name	Role	Organization
Kelly	Beaty	Tax Assessor	Jefferson County
Glen	Brown, Jr.	Council Member, Ward 2	City of Pine Bluff
LaTisha	Brunson	Council Member, Ward 1	City of Pine Bluff
Joyce	Campbell	Chief of Staff	City of Pine Bluff
Randy	Compton	Fire Chief	City of Pine Bluff
Yvonne	Denton	Council Member, Ward 2	City of Pine Bluff
Tiger	Dockett	Director of Streets Department	City of Pine Bluff
William	Fells	Council Member, Ward 3	City of Pine Bluff
Vivian	Flowers	Mayor	City of Pine Bluff
Lanette	Frazier	Council Member, Ward 3	City of Pine Bluff
Chandra	Griffin	Director of Urban Renewal Agency	City of Pine Bluff
Althea	Hadden-Scott	City Attorney	City of Pine Bluff
Charity	Hallman	SVP Community and Economic Development	ACHANGE
Lloyd	Holcomb, Jr.	Council Member, Ward 1	City of Pine Bluff
Felicia	Johnson	Director	Little Rock Land Bank
Patrick	Lockett	Director of Code Enforcement	City of Pine Bluff
Bruce	Lockett	Council Member, Ward 4	City of Pine Bluff
Steven	Mays, Sr.	Council Member, Ward 4	City of Pine Bluff
Caleb	McKinzie-Alexander	Legal and Inquiry Counsel, Municipal Law	Arkansas Municipal League
Martie	North	President	ACHANGE
Lisa	Pelton	Real Estate Administrator	Arkansas Commissioner of State Lands
Larry	Reynolds	Planner	Southeast Arkansas Regional Planning Commission
Mitzi	Ruth	Director of Inspections and Zoning	City of Pine Bluff
Gloria	Tillman	Tax Assessor	Jefferson County
Lori	Walker	Director of Economic and Community Development	City of Pine Bluff
Tony	Washington	Tax Collector	Jefferson County
Ryan	Whatley	Director of Go Forward Pine Bluff	Go Forward

Appendix B

Sample VAD Activation Taskforce Work Plan

Purpose: Addressing VAD property in Pine Bluff requires a formally activated, empowered leadership structure to oversee implementation. A VAD Activation Taskforce will bring together the diverse agencies responsible for VAD property actions. The Taskforce will report to the Mayor and City Council on implementing the recommendations in Community Progress' report, *Recommendations for the City of Pine Bluff, Arkansas to Improve Systems to Address Vacant, Abandoned, and Deteriorated Properties*.

Objective: Complete all recommendations by Q4 2027.

Deliverable: A written report to the Mayor detailing completion of the recommendations, evaluation of the pilot, and transition plan to a full VAD Activation Program.

Scope: The taskforce must keep a laser focus on implementing these recommendations. Given how widespread the VAD problem is, it will be tempting to take additional actions, but scope discipline is essential.

Focus on.	Avoid.
• Testing a group of 10 properties, 5 for ultimate transfer to URA, 5 for ultimate transfer to City Department or City-managed "land bank program" in appropriate department. • Piloting Municipal Code Lien Foreclosure.	• Creating new programs. • Trying to test more than 10 properties.

Budget: Use the worksheet to construct a budget for the pilot. Use lessons learned to inform the budget for a full program following pilot completion.

Total	$200,000
Personnel: .25 FTE real estate litigation attorney (assumes a $20,000 increase in salary to recruit for an existing position) and 1 FTE for data and systems role (ex. GISP)	$100,000
Acquisition: Court and legal costs, title work (10 properties)	$30,000
Maintenance: Demolition, mowing, boarding, clean and close	$30,000
Disposition: Contracts, deeds, development funds	$40,000

Taskforce Members

Member	Taskforce Role
Chief of Staff or Executive Accountable to the Mayor	• Taskforce leader
City Attorney + New Attorney	• Oversee municipal code lien foreclosure
Director of Economic and Community Development + New Data Systems Hire	• Lead preliminary identification of 10 properties • Lead data systems improvement • Lead the formulation of disposition policies to advance community plans
Director of Code Enforcement	• Ensure completeness of field work. Lead VAD properties condition survey
Director of Urban Renewal Agency	• Contribute to identification of 10 properties and serve as transferee for portion of initial pilot properties in Urban Renewal Areas • Contribute to formulation of disposition policies especially to implement Urban Renewal Plan • Contribute expertise in property management and development and disposition in accordance with local community goals and plans
Fire Chief	• Contribute to the data systems • Lead identification of hazardous VAD properties
Director of Inspections and Zoning	• Advance land use and zoning implementation to enable by-right permitting for activated VAD properties

Sample Work Plan

#	Action	Responsible	Complete by	Progress
1	Receive final report with recommendations.	Chief of Staff, Community Progress	November 2026	100%
2	Adopt all recommendations in the Community Progress report.	Mayor/Council	December 2026	50%
3	Stand up VAD Activation Taskforce. Approve work plan. Set up regular meetings.	Mayor, Chief of Staff, and City Attorney	December 2026	75%
4	Hire real estate attorney and data systems staff. Task data systems staff to integrate data.	City Attorney, ECD Director	March 2027	0%
5	10 properties for testing municipal code lien foreclosure. Use Appendix D Framework.	Mayor, Chief of Staff, City Attorney/ URA/ City Dept. with Authority to Manage Property	April 2027	25%
6	Foreclose on municipal liens for 10 approved properties.	City Attorney, Real Estate Attorney	December 2027	0%
7	Adopt disposition policies to implement community plans.	ECD Director, URA Director, Taskforce	June 2027	25%
8	Amend land use and rezone if needed.	Zoning Director	June 2027	0%
9	Deliver report to the Mayor.	Chief of Staff	March 2028	0%

Appendix C

Sample Community VAD Briefing

Pine Bluff has an actively engaged community of faith leaders, whom the City convenes regularly for insight and guidance on a various initiatives, including efforts to address VAD properties. The briefing below, prepared by the Flowers administration, shares information on Community Progress' VAD assessment and seeks the faith leaders' guidance on the process. It is an excellent example (and template) of the clear, tangible, transparent community engagement a VAD taskforce should regularly use to build a feedback loop between City leadership and the community. Similar briefings could be prepared for faith leaders, business leaders, neighborhood watch groups, and other community stakeholders.

Pine Bluff Pastors' Briefing – January 2026

Prepared by Flowers Administration for Faith Leaders

Focus Group on VAD Properties, Pine Bluff

Center for Community Progress Initiative

Opening

- Vacant properties didn't happen overnight—and they won't be fixed overnight.
- This process is about **listening first**, then acting wisely.

Why We're Doing This

- Vacant and abandoned properties impact safety, pride, and opportunity.
- We want solutions that:
  - Protect people already living here
  - Strengthen neighborhoods
  - Are legal, fair, and sustainable

What This Partnership Brings

- National experts who have helped cities like ours
- More than $100,000 in technical support—at no cost to Pine Bluff
- A focus on **what actually works**, not quick fixes

What Will Happen First

- Interviews with residents, neighborhood leaders, churches, city staff, and community organizations
- A citywide look at vacant properties and how they affect daily life

What This Is *Not*

- Not about taking people's homes
- Not about pushing people out
- Not about making decisions behind closed doors

How the Community Shapes the Outcome

- Residents help define the problem
- Draft recommendations will be shared publicly
- Feedback matters before anything is finalized

What Success Looks Like

- Clear information instead of confusion

Appendix D
Decision-Making Framework

Building on the *123 Pine Bluff Outcomes Chart* on page 17, the framework below shows how the City can identify priority properties by combining key data points with local priorities. This provides leaders a data-driven starting point for reaching consensus.

Step 1. List vacant residential properties and their market value per county tax records.

Step 2. Identify which properties have been demolished with recorded liens, or are on the approved demolition list.

Step 3. Assess the likelihood of active ownership. **Remove properties held in estates or showing indicators of fractured or heirs' property[26] ownership.**[27]

Sample Property Analysis Framework

	123 Pine Bluff St.	Property 2	Property 3	Property 4	Property 5
Value	$3,000	$9,900	$5,300	$4,800	$3,500
Vacant	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demolition Lien	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Active Owner	Not likely	Not likely	Not likely	Not likely	Not likely
Priority Area	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Flood Hazard	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Taxes Owed	$500	$1,000	---	$250	---
Code Liens	$9,900	$12,000	$7,500	$8,500	$7,500
Total Public Debt	$9,500	$13,000	$7,500	$8,750	$7,500
Difference Between Debt and Value	-$6,500	-$3,100	-$2,200	-$3,950	-$4,000
Consider Enforcing High Priority Lien?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

26 A recent study, commissioned by Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and Project Guardian, reveals 5 percent of residential parcels in Jefferson County may be heir property. See: Erin K. Rothman, "A Data-Driven Approach to Addressing Housing Security and Neighborhood Preservation in Jefferson County, AR" (slide presentation, Manzana, August 6, 2025).

27 For ethical frameworks to assist families and heirs, see this resource: John J. Green et al., *Ethical Engagement in Heirs' Property Work: A Guide to Inform Dialogue and Practice* (Mississippi State, MS: Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University; Alcorn State, MS: National Policy Research Center at Alcorn State University, 2026), 6, Scholars Junction, Heirs' Property, 6, https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/srdctopics-heirsproperty/6.

Step 4. Determine which properties fall in priority geographic areas or align with important community goals.

Step 5. Total the taxes and liens owed to calculate overall public debt on each property.

Step 6. Calculate the difference between that public debt and the property's value.

Step 7. Decide whether to consider enforcing a high-priority lien.

Step 8. Use the resulting list to build consensus through collaborative conversations with community development partners.

Step 9. Once leadership reaches a decision, direct the City Attorney's office to begin the lien enforcement process.

Appendix E

Implementing Community Plans

One of Pine Bluff's strengths is community planning and follow-through on plans adopted by City Council. The *Urban Renewal Plan,* adopted eight years ago, activated the public Urban Renewal Agency (URA) and its revitalization powers under state law. It also led the creation of Go Forward Pine Bluff, a local nonprofit that leverages private funds to implement the plan across three areas of the city.

The *Consolidated Plan* and the work of the Economic and Community Development Department have received praise from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development for exceeding goals despite steep challenges. The plan identifies cost burden and vacant lots as the community's primary housing challenges. Most residential property tax assessments in Pine Bluff fall between $4,800 and $17,800. With over 11,000 residential vacant lots, that represents between $3.5 million and $13 million in lost revenue and housing opportunities.

As climate change drives more frequent and severe flooding events nationwide, Pine Bluff's flood risk areas deserve close attention, given how much of the city is built over creeks and bayous. Of the City's condemned properties, 294 fall within 50 meters of a flood hazard area.[28]

Much of Pine Bluff's property deterioration stems from the age of its housing stock and the growing maintenance burden on households with limited resources—67 percent of homes were built before 1980.[29] Homes built before 1978 likely have lead-based paint, posing health risks to occupants, especially children. Making sure homes are healthy for child development is a shared goal across many community violence intervention programs.

Through active planning and programming, Pine Bluff has secured funding to convert once-vacant properties into commercial and public assets. The US Environmental Protection Agency recently awarded the City $500,000 to test key downtown sites, including a former theater, hotel, and bus terminal.[30] The URA completed the Magnolia Food Market & Bar, a project made possible by vacant property transfers from Simmons Bank and the University of Arkansas. The City also invested local and state dollars to convert an underutilized

28 USA Flood Hazard Areas," Esri, ArcGIS REST Services Directory, feature service, accessed October 9, 2026, https://services5.arcgis.com/7weheFjxuNkGGiZi/arcgis/rest/services/USA_Flood_Hazard_Areas_view/FeatureServer.

29 US Census Bureau, "Year Structure Built," *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, Table B25034*, accessed on May 26, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2024.B25034?q=average+year+built&g=160XX00US0555310.

30 US Environmental Protection Agency, "ACRES Property Fact Sheet," Assessment, Cleanup and Redevelopment Exchange System (ACRES), accessed June 12, 2026, https://java.epa.gov/acrespub/gfs/factsheet/12851.

parking lot into a wellness plaza as part of Pine Bluff's Delta Rhythm and Bayous Cultural Park.

The Mayor's Mandate reinforces leadership's commitment to creating coordinated pathways to homeownership through VAD property reuse.[31] The Mayor and her team have called on faith community members who own VAD properties to join this effort. Pine Bluff's leaders continue to rightly invite the community to envision their city's future, and the key to realizing that vision is unlocking the land.

More recently, the City partnered with the Southeast Arkansas Regional Planning Commission to develop and adopt the *2022 Comprehensive Development Plan*. Prepared by one of the country's preeminent design and planning firms,[32] the plan reflects extensive community engagement and envisions an urban infill program to fill the gaps left by vacant lots. As the City implements the plan's recommendations, new land use and zoning rules will allow for a greater variety of housing types to be built especially on small neighborhood residential lots. The plan offers recommendations for strengthening Pine Bluff's systems to reduce VAD properties.

A summary its key recommendations follows below. Community Progress' recommendations build on this plan and incorporate learnings from our technical assistance engagement.

31 Pine Bluff Transition Advisory Board, The Mayor's Mandate: The People's Plan for the City of Progress (Pine Bluff, AR: City of Pine Bluff, 2025).

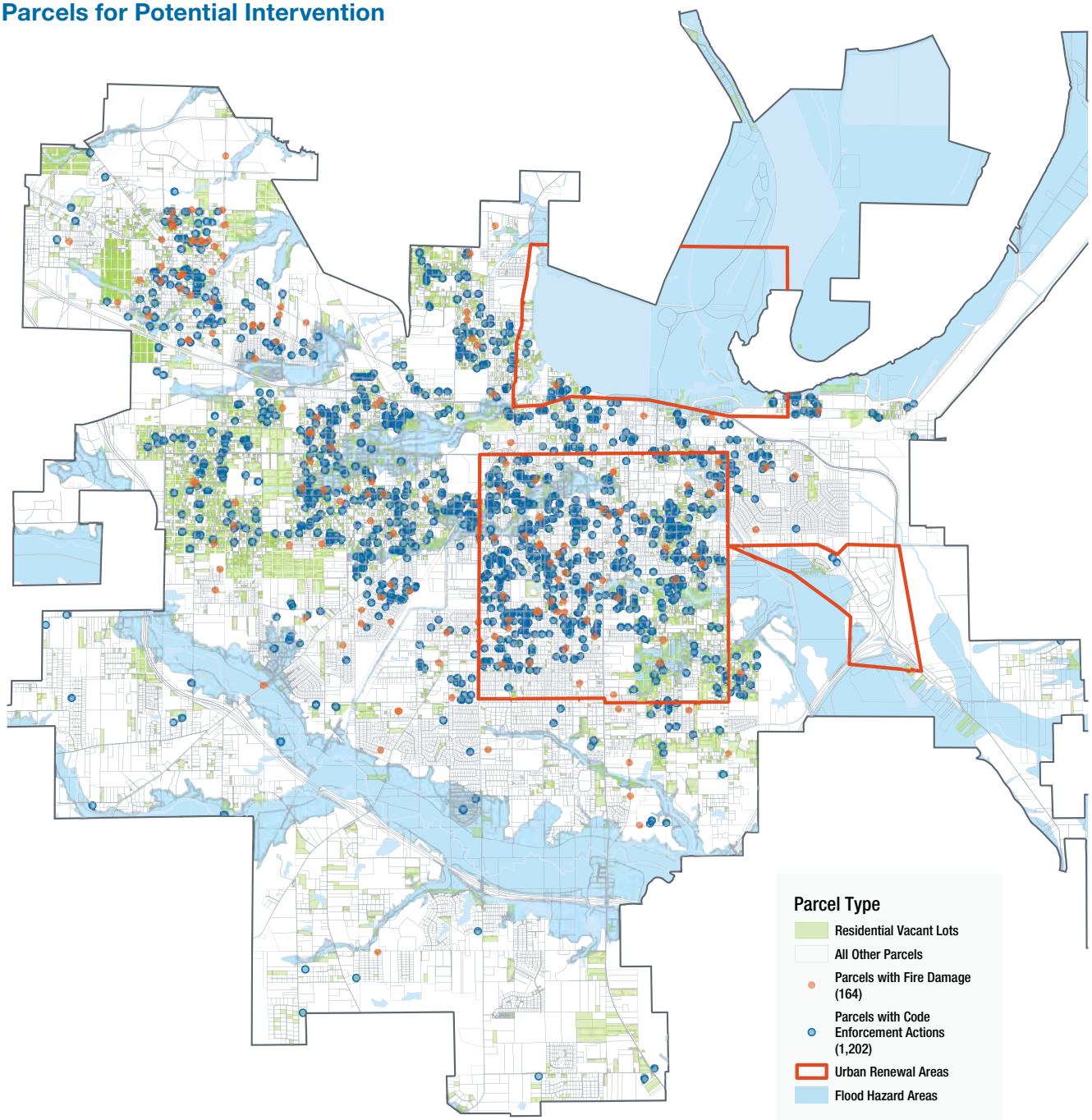
32 The Congress of New Urbanism annual conference, May 2026, was held in Northwest Arkansas. One of the firms that prepared the plan, DPZ Codesign, are founders of the movement.

Land Transfer Step	Plan Recommendation	Community Progress Recommendations
1a. Create a blight study for each of the 3 urban renewal areas.	"Future blight studies should include coordination between the Pine Bluff Urban Renewal Agency, Fire Department, and the Department of Code Enforcement. A boundary for the study area should be determined based on recurring code enforcement violations within a quarter mile of each other in the last five years, and areas that have burned down or are known dangerous liabilities according to the fire department. Pg. 191	Continue to build on the analysis provided in this report. Continue to build city capacity for collecting and analyzing spatial data.
1b. Create a rubric to narrow down properties.	"Yes-No" coded rubric for Pine Bluff's department of Code Enforcement to narrow down exactly which properties are blighted and which can be remediated.	See Appendix D for a suggested framework.
1c. Implement a hotspot analysis.	"Mobile, Alabama performed a similar study and discovered that 22% of the 'blighted' homes they studied fell within such a hot spot."	Conduct a parcel conditions field survey like the one in **Jackson**.[33]
1d. Pass an ordinance to reinvent Pine Bluff's meaning of a code violation.	"Instead of issuing fines, issue noticeable stickers alerting property owners of a set period of time to fix their property, otherwise a lien will be placed. This will indicate to the community at large that the city is addressing deteriorating lots."	Seek guidance from City Attorney to ensure the municipal code lien foreclosure process is adequately reflected in both City Code and Code Enforcement processes.
2a. Acquire properties.	Place and enforce liens.	Pilot the municipal code lien foreclosure tool.
2b. Create a deed-to-city application.	"Creating an application for residents to voluntarily deed lots to the City of Pine Bluff would allow a final avenue to explore before extending additional liens and taking the property to Arkansas State Court , or prior to PBURA acquiring the property through eminent domain."	Seek guidance from City Attorney to create template documents for this program.
2c. Establish a Land Bank.	"Once it is set up, a Pine Bluff land bank could be used to "preserve public spaces for future public needs and priorities, all while converting perceived liabilities into realized assets." Establishing a land bank will allow for speedier obtainment of clear title, thereby increasing the rate of redevelopment. It is recommended that properties acquired and managed by the land bank be sold to qualified contractors for redevelopment (see Urban Infill Strategies, page 194). Legal advice is recommended on this issue."	It is premature to create a land bank commission in the absence of state enabling legislation or a meaningful method for the City to acquire ownership of VAD property. If the city can obtain ownership of key VAD properties through municipal code lien foreclosure, such properties could be held and stewarded by the City itself or by the URA as appropriate.
3. Clear title.	"Aside from the creation of a land bank, the next best strategy for increasing obtainment of clear title is pursuing state legislation that would allow municipalities to acquire properties based on outstanding liens rather than tax delinquency."	Run the municipal code lien foreclosure pilot using the code lien tools already available in Arkansas. Coordinate with the Arkansas Municipal League and others to support and guide legislative reforms based on experience of utilization of the tool.
4. Put property to good use.	"The Plan recommends five categories of redevelopment strategy: requests for proposals, mow-to-own, farm-to-own, mortgage assistance, and rewilding."	Community Progress supports these five program tracks. Once the City can acquire properties, it should work with possible property grantees on disposition policies to ensure positive outcomes.

33 Center for Community Progress, *West Jackson, Mississippi Property Condition Survey Memorandum* (Flint, MI: Center for Community Progress, March 2026), **https://communityprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/2026-03-west-jackson-ms-property-condition-survey-memo.pdf**.

Appendix F
Summary Information for Pilot Parcel Consideration

Parcels for Potential Intervention



Sources: Jefferson County Tax Assessor, 2026; US Census Bureau, 2025