

Intergovernmental Solutions to Return Blighted Properties Back to Productive Use

PA COG 2025 Annual Conference
State College, PA | September 30, 2025



TCLB
Tri-COG Land Bank

An Lewis, Tri-COG Land Bank
Winnie Branton, Branton Strategies

welcoming spirit

public spaces

leadership

good schools

What are some

strong tax base

BLIGHT

town

housing choices

community pride



civic engagement

Cycle of Blight



Hazards Posed by Unmaintained Buildings

- Lead from peeling paint and dust
- Mold, asbestos, and outdoor air toxins brought inside through poor ventilation
- Unstable structures
- Fire hazards
- Electrocution risks
- Diseases carried by rodents and pests



Health and Safety Impacts of Blight

Living near vacant, abandoned, and deteriorating properties is associated with increased rates of:

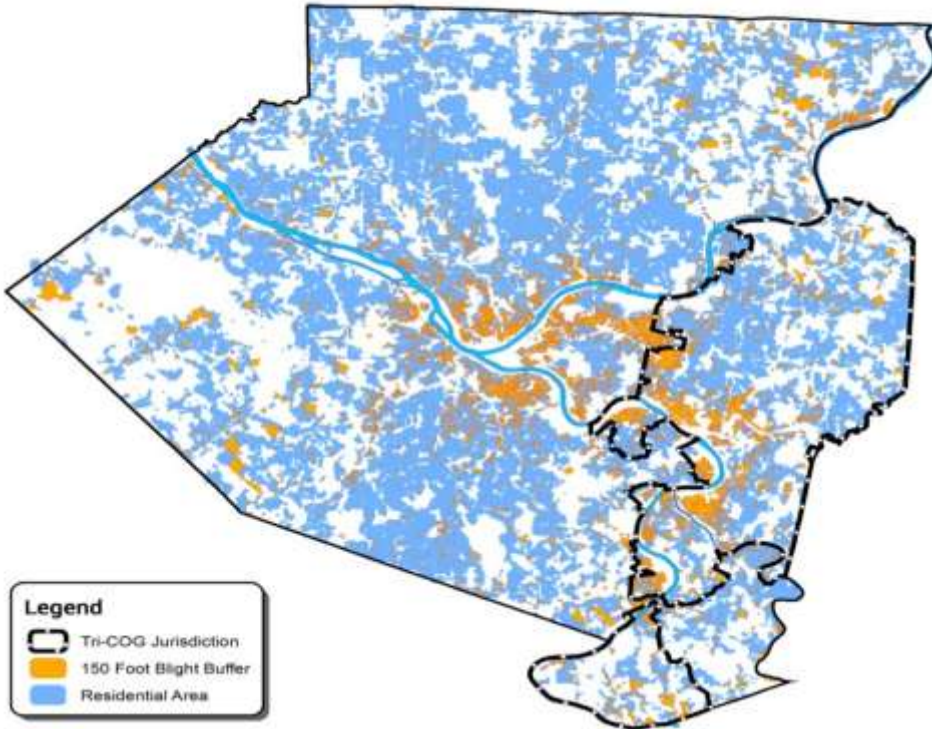
- Hypertension
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Depression
- Stunted development in children
- Violent crime and homicide
- Premature mortality



Cost of Blight

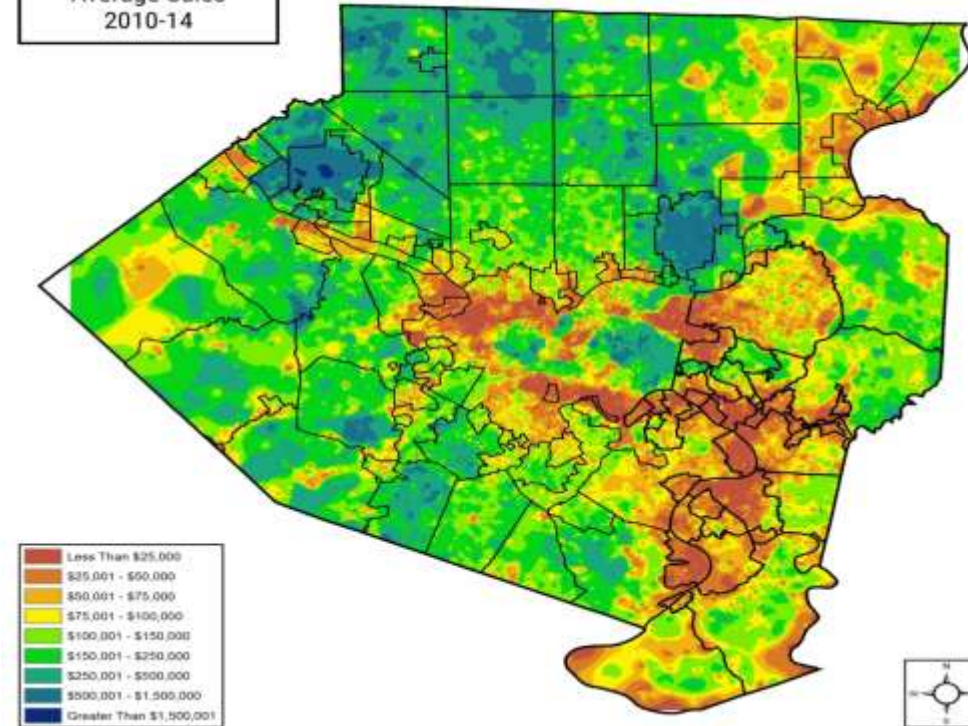
- **Direct Costs:** code enforcement, police and fire, public works, demolition
 - **Direct Costs:** Loss of tax revenues (-15%)
 - **Indirect Costs:** Decreased property values
 - **Future Economic Impacts:** Repurpose vacant residential and commercial sites
-
- **23.7% - 96,916** of Allegheny County residences are affected by blight
 - Loss of value of **\$1,264,490,987**

Allegheny County: Blight

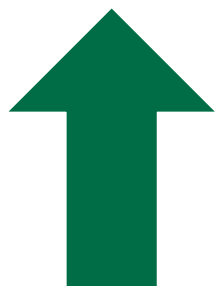


Tri-COG/Mon Valley Region

Allegheny County
Average Sales
2010-14



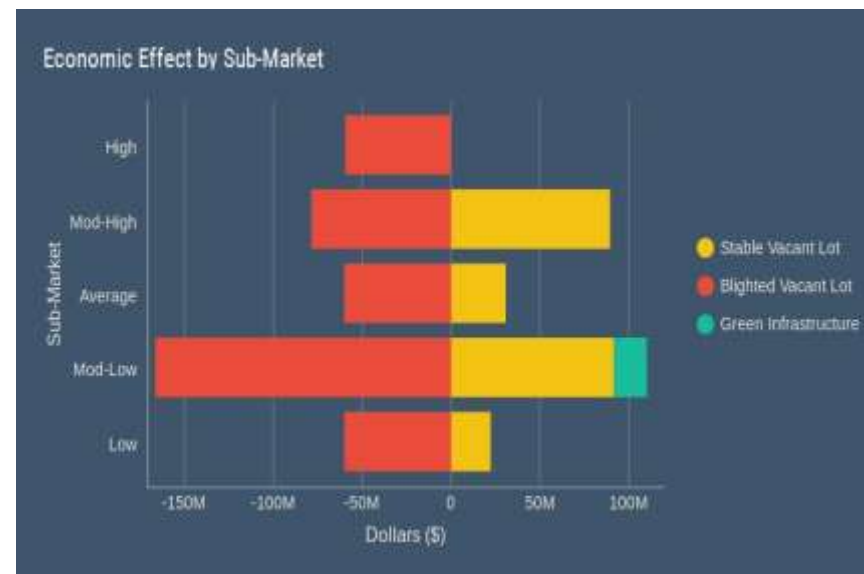
Vacant Land's Impact on Property Values



+1.6% Stable Lots



-6.0% Blighted Lots



If all blighted lots in Allegheny County were stabilized, we would see a total increase of **\$457,620,095**, or **\$5,145 per house**.

Other Benefits from Blight Mitigation

ECONOMIC

Boosts Property Values
Generates Tax Revenue
Supports Economic Growth



SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY

Enhances Public Safety
Fosters Community Pride
Increase Affordable Housing
Creates Gathering Spaces



ENVIRONMENTAL

Improves Public Health
Provides Green Spaces
Supports Climate Resilience



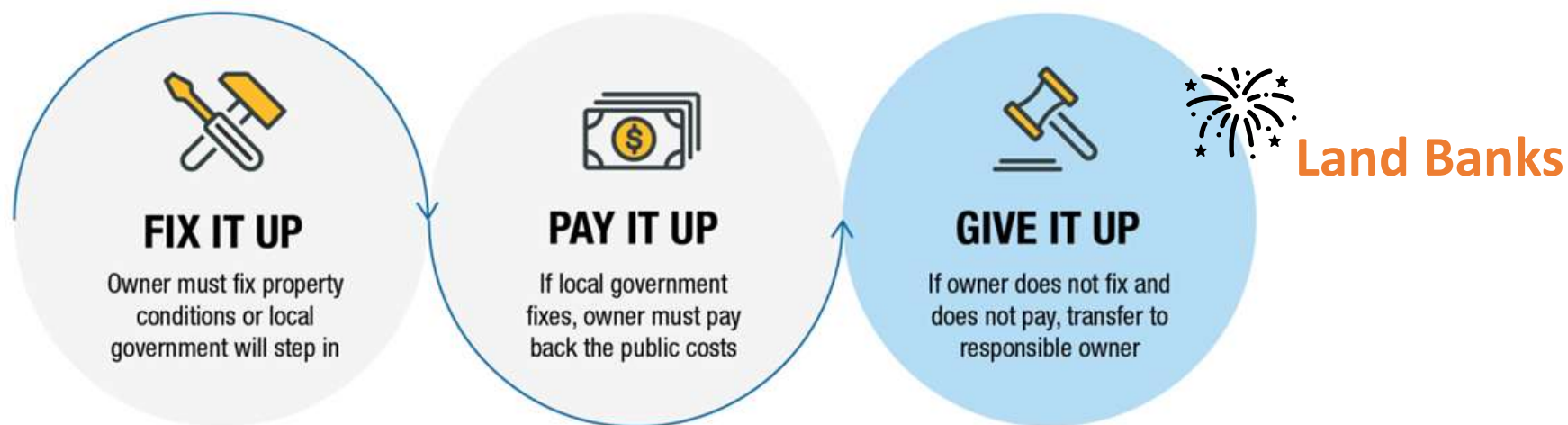
Blighted Properties are Stuck!

Weak or no market
Burdened with debt or needed repairs
Clouds on title

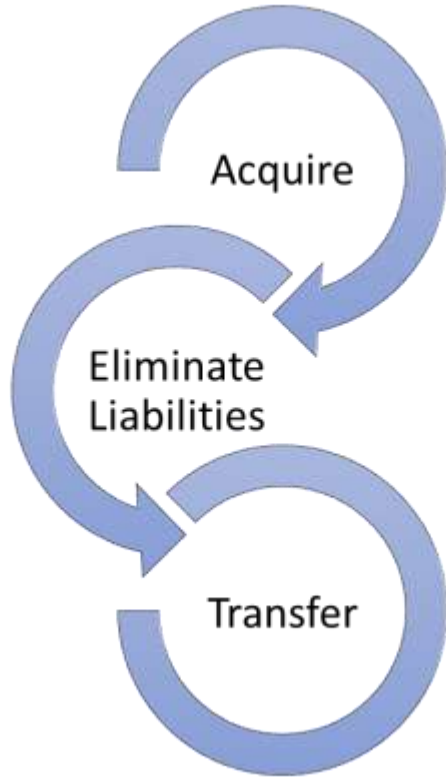
Who's In Charge?

Property owner is responsible for properly maintaining their property in accordance with local codes and state law.

When the owner fails to maintain the property or abandons it all together, the local government is often left to find a solution to address the property.



Land Banks are a Proven Tool



1. Acquires title to problem properties
2. Eliminates liabilities – liens, claims, clouds on title
3. Transfers properties to new owners in a manner most supportive of local needs and priorities

Putting the Land Bank Together

- A group of COG Presidents and EDs had a conversation about blighted properties being a pervasive problem (2011)
- Land Bank Business Plan
 - Center Community Progress – technical assistance and plan review commissioned by Allegheny County, 2014
- Draft and Negotiate the **Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement**, 2014-2016
- Meet with Elected Officials , 2014-2016
 - Explain Land Banking in General
 - Explain Membership Requirements
 - Explain Governance Structure of Tri-COG Land Bank
- Help Educate Regional Stakeholders, 2014-2016

- **The Tri-COG Land Bank was the first group mobilized to create a suburban/rural multi-jurisdictional land bank (Center for Community Progress)**

Benefits of Working with a Land Bank

- Land Banks work to make existing systems more efficient by:
 - **Initiating the tax sale** on those which it has decided to acquire beforehand. Properties are chosen with an end goal in mind
 - Working with municipalities to determine the **best use of the property**
 - Finding **responsible, vetted buyers** who will continue to maintain the property
 - Protecting buyers by offering all properties with **clear, insurable title**



Membership

- All three taxing bodies must be members- Allegheny County, Municipality, School District
- Commit to the 3 financial components that make the Land Bank fiscally sustainable:
 - Tax Discharge
 - 50% Tax Recapture for 5 Years
 - 5% of Collected Delinquent Real Estate Taxes

Communities Play an Active Role in Governance



Building a Comprehensive Strategy

A land bank is an important tool, but it is not the whole toolkit.



- Land Banking
- Strategic Code Enforcement
- Brownfield Development
- Education and Knowledge Sharing
- Affordable Housing
- Planned Greening
- Urban Agriculture
- Economic Development
- Building Partnerships



Landscaping Projects



Property Clean Outs



TCLB Property Sold to Owner Occupant



Before



After*



Before TCLB Clean Up



After TCLB Clean Up



Renovations in Progress*

TCLB Property Pipeline

241 Properties



54

Acquisition Process



91

Owned Property



10

Applications Accepted



96

Sold Property



34 /58

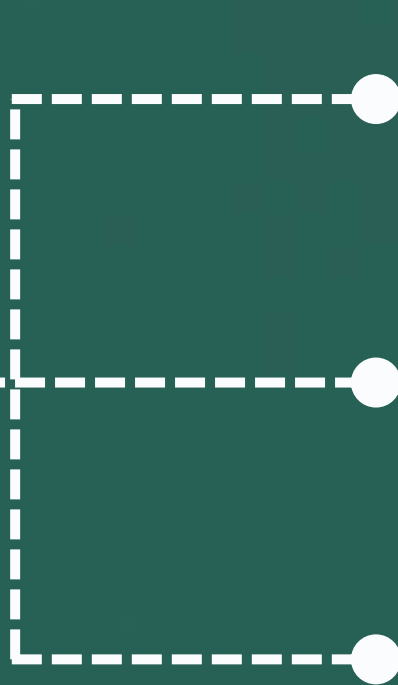
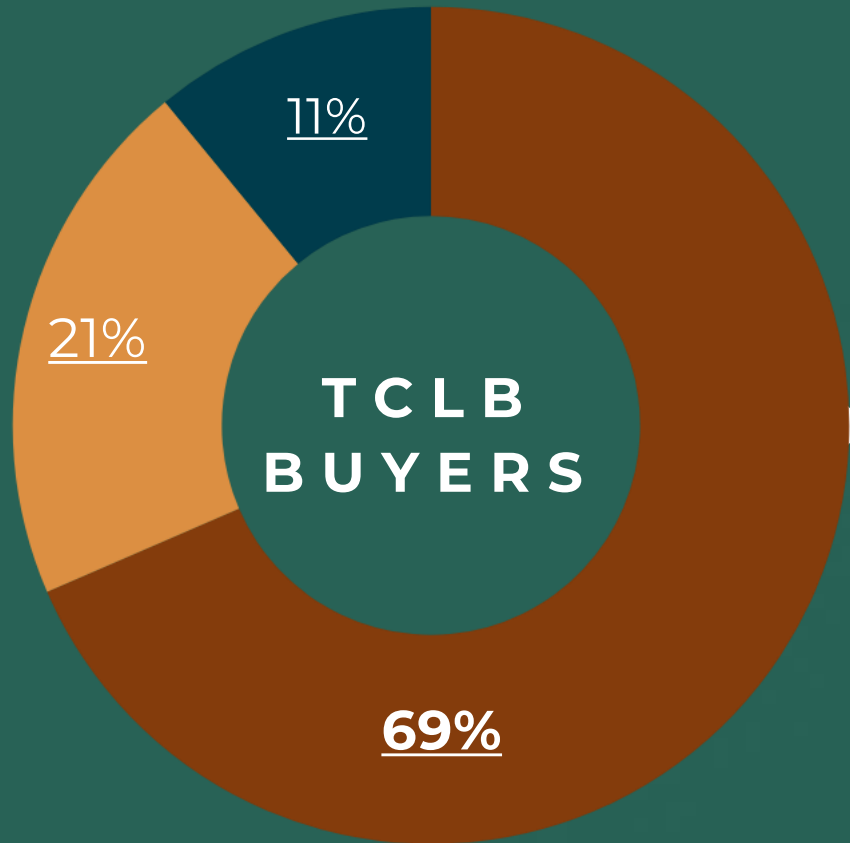
Satisfied Enforcement Mortgage

Sold Property

TCLB Owned Property: 187



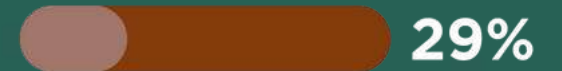
Home Ownership (UPDATE)



Directly to Owner Occupant



Private Developers



Nonprofit



Owner Occupant

NO.	LAND BANK NAME	YEAR ESTABLISHED	NO.	LAND BANK NAME	YEAR ESTABLISHED
1	Dauphin County Land Bank Authority	2013	21	York County Land Bank Authority	2018
2	Philadelphia Land Bank	2013	22	Fayette County Redevelopment Authority	2018
3	Westmoreland County Land Bank	2013	23	Altoona Redevelopment Authority	2018
4	Pittsburgh Land Bank	2014	24	Somerset County Redevelopment Authority	2018
5	Harrisburg Land Bank	2014	25	Armstrong County Redevelopment Authority	2018
6	North East Pennsylvania Land Bank Authority	2014	26	Monroe County Redevelopment Authority	2019
7	Venango County Land Bank	2014	27	Butler County Redevelopment Authority	2020
8	Schuylkill County Land Bank	2015	28	Hazleton Land Bank	2020
9	Northumberland County Land Bank	2015	29	Allentown Redevelopment Authority	2021
10	Lackawanna County Land Bank	2016	30	Cambria County Redevelopment Authority	2021
11	Washington County Land Bank	2016	31	Cumberland County Housing & Redevelopment Authorities	2021
12	Lancaster County Land Bank Authority	2016	32	Williamsport Land Bank	2021
13	Erie (City) Land Bank	2016	33	Johnstown Land Bank	2022
14	Tri-COG Land Bank (Allegheny County)	2017	34	Clarion County Housing and Redevelopment Authority	2022
15	City of Lebanon Land Bank	2017	35	Warren County Redevelopment Authority	2022
16	Lancaster City Land Bank Authority	2017	36	Wilkesburg Land Bank	2022
17	Lawrence County Redevelopment Authority	2017	37	Delaware County Redevelopment Authority	2022
18	Pottstown Borough Land Bank	2017	38	Lower South Valley Land Bank	2022
19	Erie County Land Bank	2018	39	Redevelopment Authority of Clearfield County	2024
20	Sharon Land Bank	2018			



Housing Alliance
of Pennsylvania

PA Land Bank Network

You don't have to do this alone!

- Peer-to-peer networking
- Shared resources
- Quarterly meetings
- Technical assistance

Volunteer-driven now

Funding will allow greater engagement, advocacy, and support for land banks and the communities they serve.



Key Takeaways...

Questions:

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