



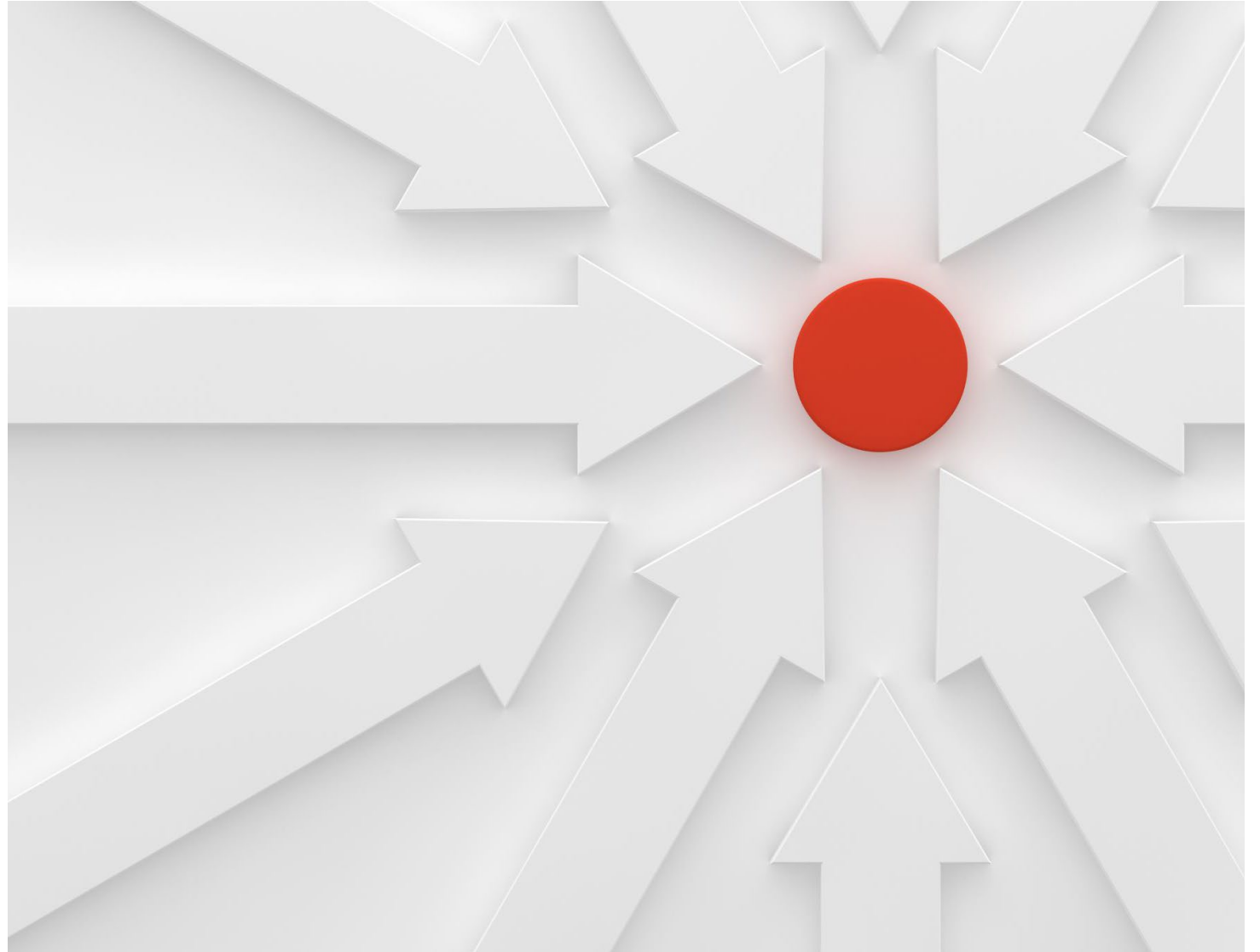
Blight Remediation Reimagined

PACOG Lunch and Learn

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Topics

1. Understanding the strengths and limitations of traditional blight remediation tools
2. Intersections with Land Use, Zoning and General Regulations
3. Redevelopment Tax Incentive Programs
4. Land Recycling
5. Question and Answer/Hypotheticals



Traditional Tools for Addressing Blight





Barriers to Success

Resources and
Knowledge

Value
Proposition

Investment
Position



Land Use Planning and Ordinances

Land Use & Blight: Why the Connection Matters

Blight creates planning challenges

- Reduced tax base
- Public safety concerns
- Infrastructure inefficiency
- Declining neighborhood confidence

Poorly coordinated land use policies can accelerate blight

- Zoning can discourage reinvestment in blighted areas
- Oversupply of developable land may have barriers in zoning
- Infrastructure expansion often pulls investment away from existing neighborhoods

Effective planning integrates blight strategies

- Strategic land reuse
- Targeted reinvestment areas
- Vacant property inventories

Land Use & Blight: Planning Tools

Data-Driven Blight Identification

- Property condition surveys
- GIS mapping of vacant/abandoned parcels
- Blight dashboards for decision-makers

Strategic Land Use Policy

- Right-size zoning to reflect market demand
- Encourage infill and adaptive reuse
- Reduce barriers to redevelopment

Coordinated Redevelopment Tools

- Land banks and tax foreclosure programs
- Targeted code enforcement
- Redevelopment incentives in priority areas

Neighborhood Stabilization Approaches

- Focus investment in “tipping point” neighborhoods
- Support housing rehabilitation
- Align infrastructure spending with revitalization goals



Driving Broad Solutions with Data and Vision

AND not **OR**

Solving Individual Problems with Focus

Zoning Ordinances Questions

Reimagining an opportunity for a blighted property begins with the question of:

“What can this property be used for?”

What is the current zoning? Is there an existing nonconforming use? What does the occupancy permit say?

Does the Comprehensive Plan have information to inform a transformative moment?

Are you trying to encourage or guard against certain uses or impacts?

Does the zoning ordinance help or hurt?

Is there a zoning violation as part of the blighted condition?



Other General Regulation Ordinances Matter Too

On-Lot Sanitary Sewage Regulations

Property Maintenance Code

Nuisance Ordinance

Rental Registration Ordinances

Vacant Property Registration Ordinances

Garage and Solid Waste Ordinances

Stormwater Ordinance

Act 20 Ordinances

Ticketing Programs

Act 90 - Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization Act

The Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization Act (Act 90, 2010) provides a variety of powerful tools to fight blight to take action against property owners whose property is in serious code violation or whose property is determined to be a public nuisance. Under Act 90 (2010), municipalities may:

- place a lien against the personal assets of an owner of real property that is in serious violation of a building code or is regarded as a public nuisance,
- take property owners to court, to seek judgments against an owner's assets,
- deny municipal permits (included building permits and zoning approvals) to property owners who have other property within the municipality in similar violation or who are behind in taxes or other municipal service accounts such as water, sewer or refuse collection,
- require property owners to remedy existing violations and/or delinquencies with regard to other property they own in the municipality prior to being granted municipal permits for future projects,
- extradite out-of-state property owners back to Pennsylvania to be charged with property-related violations



Redevelopment Incentives

Redevelopment: Other Side of Blight Coin

Pennsylvania municipalities use redevelopment programs to revitalize blighted or underutilized areas and stimulate economic growth.

Programs are commonly administered through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and local redevelopment authorities.

Key goals include:

- Attracting private investment
- Increasing employment opportunities
- Reusing vacant or contaminated properties
- Expanding the local tax base.

Local governments often partner with private developers, nonprofits, and state agencies to implement redevelopment projects. Redevelopment authorities help acquire, manage, and redevelop properties to support community revitalization. Land banks also can play a role.

Redevelopment: Other Side of Blight Coin

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Uses future increases in property tax revenue within a redevelopment district to finance infrastructure and development projects. Common for large redevelopment areas such as brownfields or commercial districts.

Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA)

Provides temporary property tax abatements for improvements to deteriorated industrial or commercial properties. Incentivizes investment and renovation by reducing taxes on new construction or improvements.

Keystone Opportunity Zone Program (KOZ)

State designates distressed areas for targeted economic development and investment strategies. Helps developers qualify for additional funding and business incentives.



Land Recycling

Municipal Claim and Tax Lien Law

Purpose: Provides municipalities with a **legal mechanism to collect unpaid charges** for municipal services and improvements.

Protects public finances by allowing municipalities to **secure debts through property liens**.

What Can Become a Municipal Claim:

- Unpaid property taxes, sewer and water charges, trash collection fees, sidewalk or curb construction/repairs, demolition costs, municipal utility services, certain municipal penalties or costs

Key Feature: Claims are filed as **liens against real property** in the county Prothonotary's office.

Important Principles:

- The **property—not the individual—is liable** for the debt.
- Liens attach to the property and may affect **sale or refinancing**.
- Municipal claims typically have **priority over many other liens** except certain tax liens.
- The process can end in a sheriff sale thereby recycling the property back into productive use.

Act 46 of 2006 - Property Donation to Municipality By Taxpayer

The Municipal Claim and Tax Lien Law of 1923 was amended in 2006 to allow for donation of tax lien encumbered properties to a municipality in lieu of tax payments. 53 P.S. Section 7108.1.

- Cleans the title of delinquent taxes
- Facilitates new ownership to the municipality
- Relatively quick and inexpensive
- Caveat: Does not exonerate mortgages
- Disposition via applicable municipal code
- May need to apply for tax exempt status
- Pro Tip: Weave this invitation into various communications with property owners, including demolition targets (See Example)

Pennsylvania Real Estate Tax Law (RETL)

OVERVIEW

- Pennsylvania's real estate tax collection process is governed primarily by
 - **Title 68 (Real and Personal Property)** and
 - **Real Estate Tax Sale Law.**
- Delinquent taxes can lead to **liens, enforcement actions**, and ultimately **tax sales** if not resolved.

PROCESS:

- Taxes become delinquent when unpaid after local deadline.
- The County Tax Claim Bureau begins enforcement, including notices and attempts at personal service.

Pennsylvania Real Estate Tax Law (RETL)

PROPERTY OWNER RIGHTS

- Owner must receive adequate NOTICE prior to any judicial sale.
 - Must *personally serve Owner*; and seek Court Order for Alternative Service if needed.
- Owner can challenge sale if due process protections not followed.

ENFORCEMENT AND TAX SALES

Upset Tax Sale - Property sold *subject* to unpaid tax liens

Judicial Sale – Property sold *free and clear* of all unpaid tax liens

Land Banks in Pennsylvania

What is a Land Bank?

- A public entity created by local governments to acquire, manage, and redevelop vacant or abandoned properties
- Helps return underused properties to productive use and the local tax base

Legal Authority

- Established under the Pennsylvania Land Bank Act
- Allows municipalities or counties to create land banks through local ordinances or agreements

Land Banks in Pennsylvania

Key Functions

- Acquire (targeted and donated) tax-delinquent, vacant, or abandoned properties
- Clear title issues and address tax liens
- Maintain, rehabilitate, or demolish properties
- Transfer properties to developers, nonprofits, or new homeowners

Community Benefits

- Reduces blight and neighborhood decline
- Stabilizes property values
- Encourages redevelopment and investment
- Returns properties to the local tax rolls

Act 33 of 2021 - Amendment to the Real Estate Tax Sale Law

Act 33 creates a pre-registration requirement for potential bidders at tax sales. Any potential bidder must appear at the county tax claim bureau no less than 10 days before the scheduled sale to register. Under the new law, counties may also establish a registration fee.

Registration requires providing contact information and a signed affidavit stating the bidder is not delinquent on any taxes or municipal utility bills or engaged in any unsafe property management activity. The tax claim bureau then provides the list of applicants to the municipality at least five days prior to the sale.

Act 135 of 2008 - Abandoned and Blighted Property Conservatorship Act, As Amended

Conservatorship is a civil litigation process that allows parties in interest to upon petition and order become the legal guardian of a blighted property. Conservators are expected to bring the property up to code and remediate the blighted condition. The Conservator can act in the same ways as the legal owner of the property with mitigated risk. At the conclusion, the Conservator can sell the property while recouping the costs of the conservatorship and repairs.



Questions?

Thank You!

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