



COMMITTED TO THE REVITALIZATION OF DETROIT AND ITS NEIGHBORHOODS

## WHY A CAMPAIGN?

Vacant and abandoned property diminishes quality of life, reduces property values, and threatens community stability and/or development efforts. The Detroit Vacant Property Campaign (DVPC) recognizes the need for a comprehensive approach. It advocates for real solutions for reducing blight, restoring neighborhoods, creating wealth-building opportunities for residents, protecting and increasing property values, and increasing local residential and commercial investment. The DVPC is building a coalition of supporters – from communities, to city hall, to the capitol – who are working together to save and strengthen communities.

## WHO'S INVOLVED?

Modeled after the National Vacant Properties Campaign ([www.vacantproperties.org](http://www.vacantproperties.org)), the DVPC is a multi-year partnership funded by Detroit Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), led by Community Legal Resources (CLR), and involving the University of Michigan Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Community Development Advocates of Detroit (CDAD), and the City of the Detroit. Together, the DVPC partners are working together and with the community to create and promote strategies for reusing vacant property in Detroit.

## WHAT'S BEING DONE?

The DVPC is partnering with communities affected by vacant properties (including foreclosed properties) to develop and implement tools and strategies to reduce the negatives effects on neighborhoods and put vacant properties back into productive use.

**The DVPC empowers Detroit communities with the resources, strategies and plans necessary to prevent and address vacant properties.**

The DVPC is working in three ways.

### #1 Vacant Property Plans

First, the DVPC is developing **Vacant Property Plans** in six neighborhoods targeted for investment by LISC and City of Detroit Next Detroit Neighborhood Initiative (NDNI). In each neighborhood, the DVPC selects a sample of vacant properties (both residential and commercial) and conducts a thorough investigation of each property to determine how the property came to be vacant, its current ownership, identification of barriers to

re-use, recommended options for eliminating those barriers, and cost estimates for implementation.

The vacant property plans will also include more global recommendations for the neighborhood so that other community stakeholders (i.e., neighborhood associations, block clubs, residents, churches, businesses, and other nonprofits) have a set of strategies that they can implement.

Once the plans are developed, technical assistance will be given to the CDC's to help them implement the vacant property plans. For example, the DVPC can partner with CDC's and/or other community-based organizations that want to assemble selected vacant properties and ready them for reinvestment. When reinvestment is not feasible, the DVPC assist CDC's with holding and maintaining properties in order to retain their value during periods of low market activity.

## **#2 Toolbox**

Second, the DVPC is creating a **“toolbox” of strategies and resources** to help all Detroit communities affected by vacant properties. Examples of topics to be covered in the toolbox include:

- preventing future vacancy, including foreclosure prevention education;
- securing, boarding, maintaining, beautifying, and monitoring vacant properties;
- acquiring, holding, servicing, rehabbing, transferring, and selling vacant properties;
- preventing dumping and other illegal activity;
- working with the city and county officials on ordinance enforcement and/or nuisance abatement;
- working with investors, banks and servicing companies to maintain foreclosed properties;
- organizing residents, businesses and other community stakeholders;
- building community capacity to implement recommended strategies;
- strategies for cleaning and greening vacant land;
- partnering with the Wayne County and/or State Land Bank Authorities;
- implementing other best practices which are producing results throughout the nation.

Once developed, the DVPC will disseminate the toolbox to community stakeholders including: CDC's, neighborhood associations, block clubs, residents, churches, businesses, and other nonprofits. The DVPC will also conduct seminars to guide communities on how to start their own neighborhood-based vacant property campaigns.

## **#3 Policy Work**

The DVPC provides technical assistance to local and state policymakers to create systems to address Detroit's vacant property crisis. The DVPC utilizes national best practices as identified by the National Vacant Properties Campaign as well as its own collective legal, community development, and land policy expertise in order to develop and advocate for local and state vacant property reforms. The goal of this work is to

improve the vacant property policy environment and expand the tools available to help Detroit communities tackle their vacant properties.

Current DVPC policy work includes:

- advocating for the creation of a Detroit land bank authority;
- working with local officials on drafting a Vacant Property Registration Ordinance;
- collaborating with local economic development officials to review and offer recommendations on improving city and county ordinance enforcement efforts;
- exploring opportunities for a housing court;
- researching possible expanded legal powers, like receivership;
- exploring mechanisms to facilitate “cleaning and greening”; and
- advocating for a community accessible neighborhood indicator data system.

## **WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE?**

Though the activities described above, the DVPC will:

- remove barriers to moving properties back into productive use;
- strengthen the work of nonprofit community development corporations (CDC);
- facilitate physical development in key investment areas;
- increase community and public awareness about vacant properties and strategies for addressing them; and
- create a coordinated and effective system for improving vacant properties.

## **WHAT ABOUT VACANT/FORECLOSED PROPERTIES OUTSIDE DETROIT?**

With support from MSHDA, Community Legal Resources (CLR) has a “**Vacant Property Legal Team**” project that utilizes legal experts who will produce a manual for communities that want to address vacant properties across the State of Michigan. The manual will be available in summer 2008. Please contact CLR for more information or to be added to a mailing list to receive more information about this project.

## **HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?**

Join our campaign today! To be added to our vacant property mailing list, please send your contact information to [sjbaker@clronline.org](mailto:sjbaker@clronline.org). For more information, contact **Community Legal Resources** at (313) 962-3171 or visit our website at [www.clronline.org](http://www.clronline.org).

**Coming Soon: [www.detroitvacantproperty.org](http://www.detroitvacantproperty.org)**