



LISC's Vacant Properties Initiative (VPI) helps communities intervene in the cycle of property abandonment to stabilize and revitalize neighborhoods. VPI provides practitioners and policymakers with models, research, and technical assistance to support efforts to improve systems, policies, and practices that can help prevent abandonment and return vacant properties to productive use.

VACANT PROPERTIES – THE CHALLENGE

Across America, vacant and abandoned properties inflict tremendous burdens on families and communities. Derelict buildings present safety and fire hazards and degrade community quality of life. Vacant properties strain the resources of local police, fire, building, and health departments, depreciate property values, reduce property tax revenue, and attract crime. While many cities are attempting to tackle the problem, their efforts are often frustrated by antiquated and conflicting laws, burdensome administrative provisions, and inadequate information systems to plan prevention strategies or remarket properties for reuse.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO COMMUNITIES

As a key component of VPI, LISC provides technical assistance to communities across the country to help them address these legal, organizational, and information challenges. In collaboration with the National Vacant Properties Campaign, LISC has worked in over 20 cities to help policy makers, builders, government officials, nonprofits, and residents to turn vacant properties into vehicles for positive change. Typically, VPI teams up national experts on issues such as tax foreclosure, land bank authorities, zoning and code enforcement, and property information systems to help diagnose problems and identify workable solutions tailored to the local context. VPI offers a variety of resources—including referrals to knowledgeable experts, opportunities to exchange information with practitioners and experts via web training sessions and conference calls, basic research, and direct fee-for-service technical assistance.



In New Orleans, Louisiana, VPI and LISC's Gulf Rebuilding Initiative have teamed up with the National Vacant Properties Campaign to create and staff the New Orleans Vacant Properties Initiative. This new local LISC office provides ongoing technical assistance and coordination to the City of New Orleans, the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, nonprofits, and other community groups to assist them in creating effective systems for acquiring and disposing of the thousands of vacant properties left in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

THE NATIONAL VACANT PROPERTIES CAMPAIGN

LISC co-founded the National Vacant Properties Campaign in 2003 with Smart Growth America, the International City/County Management Association, and oversees the Campaign along with Smart Growth America, Virginia Tech, and the Genesee Institute. With support from the FannieMae Foundation, the US Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Housing and Urban Development, the C.S. Mott Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, the Greater Orleans Foundation, and the Surdna Foundation, the Campaign is working to elevate the issue of vacant properties among policy makers, and build the national knowledge base on this topic by developing a national network of vacant property practitioners and experts via annual forums, workshops, and list serves. VPI also provides policy tools, research, and information resources that are accessible through the Campaign's website (www.vacantproperties.org) and offering direct technical assistance to specific localities.

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