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Renovation Revitalization & Repair

Renovating vacant property or revitalizing blighted areas of a neighborhood is a high priority of large, struggling cities around the country, and for good reason. Research produced by the National Vacant Properties Campaign (NVPC) states that more than 12,000 fires break out in vacant structures which costs \$73 million in property damage, not to mention the costs of maintenance in order to prevent buildup of trash, illegal dumping which can lead to toxic waste, and rodent infestation. Vacant areas pose a risk to the physical health of neighboring residents and a threat to community pride. The Vacant Properties report from NVPC explains that with an increase in abandoned buildings comes social fragmentation because these neglected spaces symbolize that residents of that community do not care or cannot afford to upkeep property. These real and unseen consequences of vacant property make the problem economically and socially significant.

THE

PITTSBURGH

PICTURE

Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz School submitted a proposal to the Mayor's Office in 2006 to green the vacant lots of Pittsburgh and noted that more than 14,000 exist. Not only is there a high amount of blighted property in the city, but more than 200 are created every year after demolitions from the Redd Up Initiative, costing at least \$800,000 per year to maintain. There is a significant relationship between the number of vacant lots and the amount of crime in an area, which means the lack of commitment to clean these spaces perpetuates crime in Pittsburgh.

Community gardens in vacant lots can raise the property values of all space within 1,000 feet 9.5% within 5 years of the garden's opening (CMU Heinz School).

SOCIAL

The Sojourner House in East Liberty realized the challenge in promoting drug-free community living with vacant lots that promote crime in the same neighborhood. So with the help of East Liberty Development Incorporated, they acquired two vacant spaces across from Sojourner MOMS and are creating a community garden and natural playground known as MOMS Green. Developments such as these will serve as safe playgrounds for neighborhood children and also put fresh food on the table of the program, not to mention long-term effects of decreased crime and increase property values.

INNOVATION