

# Community Housing Improvement Strategy

## CHECKLIST

This checklist was created to help guide you through the process of preparing a Community Housing Improvement Strategy or Strategic Plan, a required component of the application for *Moving Ohio Forward* grant funds.

### 1. ASSEMBLE DATA ON EXISTING CONDITIONS

A thorough analysis of existing conditions will provide a sound basis for a Community Housing Improvement Strategy, but keep in mind that not all of these data sources will be available and relevant for every community.

- Vacant/deteriorated buildings  
*Map locations using inspection records and/or windshield surveys*
- Vacant sites: map publicly and privately held vacant sites  
*Data sources include city or county land use maps, recent aerial photos, or Google Earth™*
- Tax delinquent properties  
*Map locations using County tax records*
- Public safety: document the correlation between vacant houses and criminal activity; map proximity of vacant houses to schools, playgrounds, and other neighborhood amenities  
*Property crime data and arrest records for drug-related crimes, prostitution, and loitering from the Police Department; arson records from the Fire Department*
- Public health: document any correlation between vacant houses and childhood lead exposure  
*Lead toxicity records, listing the place of residence for children who have tested positive for elevated blood lead levels, are typically available through city or county health departments.*
- Market demand: based on property values, appreciation, listing and sales prices  
*Consult with local real estate agents to identify areas of relatively high and low market demand in your community.*
- Historic or architectural significance: based on local landmark designation or listing on the National Register of Historic Places.  
*Local landmarks commission or historical society can provide guidance regarding local designations. The Ohio Historic Preservation Office maintains a searchable database of all properties and districts listed on the National Register.*  
<http://ohsweb.ohiohistory.org/ohpo/nr/index.aspx>
- Redevelopment potential: based on recent investments, infrastructure conditions, proximity to transit or other amenities  
*Consult with local developers or community development corporations. If your community has an existing comprehensive plan or strategic plan, your community housing improvement and demolition strategy should be consistent with this plan.*
- Ecological potential: based on soil characteristics; proximity of vacant houses to existing parks, green spaces, and waterways  
*Data sources include local and regional green spaces plans, the Ohio Soil Survey, and the Ohio GreenPrint <http://ohiogreenprint.org>*
- Energy potential: based on wind and solar exposure, proximity to natural gas and shale gas resources

## 2. ESTABLISH PRIORITIES AND CRITERIA FOR DEMOLITION

- Determine whether to demolish the worst properties in your community first, regardless of where they occur, or whether demolitions can be targeted to a specific area or neighborhood for greater impact.
- Consider the political implications of demolition. Are residents and local officials advocating for housing demolition in specific parts of your community? Or should demolition funds be distributed evenly throughout neighborhoods, council districts or wards for reasons of fairness or expediency.
- Is your community trying to eliminate blighted houses in scattered locations that are draining value from otherwise stable neighborhoods? Or is the priority to assemble larger parcels of vacant land for future development?
- Are there historic preservation priorities or public health concerns that should be factored into your demolition strategy?
- Are there any infrastructure investments planned for your community—new roads, sewers, transit projects, public facilities, etc? Is there an alignment between vacant housing in need of demolition and current/future infrastructure investments?
- Is the potential for economic development stronger in certain parts of your community? Are there areas where the vacant land created through a targeted demolition program could be used to generate revenue through new development, agricultural uses, or energy generation/extraction?

## 3. DEFINE THE AREA WHERE DEMOLITION WILL OCCUR

- Using the data collected in Step 1 and the priorities/criteria identified in Step 2, define and map the target area for demolitions. Distinguish between immediate priorities for demolition, later phases of demolition, and properties/areas where demolition should be avoided.

## 4. OUTLINE A POST-DEMOLITION STRATEGY

Demolition creates vacant land, a valuable resource for community development and reinvestment. Using the map you generated in step 3, identify potential locations for various vacant land reuse strategies, including:

- HEALTH and SAFETY ISSUES:** land stabilization strategies to reduce crime, improve safety, and improve perceptions of a neighborhood.
- INFILL DEVELOPMENT:** new housing or other kinds of development.
- LOT CONSOLIDATION:** areas where adjacent property owners can be encouraged to take title to vacant sites and assume responsibility for permanent maintenance.
- GREEN SPACE EXPANSION:** demolition sites that abut or connect existing green spaces can be used to expand a park system, create bicycle and pedestrian connections, manage stormwater runoff, restore tree canopy, and increase biodiversity in an urban context.
- ENERGY GENERATION/EXTRACTION:** areas with good wind or solar exposure; sites with underlying energy resources such as natural gas or shale gas might be consolidated for energy production.
- AGRICULTURE/FOOD PRODUCTION:** areas with good soil conditions or sites located within urban food deserts can be set aside for urban agriculture, green houses or small-scale food-processing.
- STABILIZATION/HOLDING STRATEGIES:** for sites that have future development potential.