

Cuyahoga County's Vacant and Abandoned Property Action Council - VAPAC

A Collaborative Model for
Responding to Foreclosure and Property Abandonment
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What is VAPAC?

- A consortium of 19 government and civic agencies working across city and suburban boundaries to:
 - Explore solutions.
 - Share information.
 - Encourage collaboration and coordination of resources.
 - Provide leadership on issues.

VAPAC Members

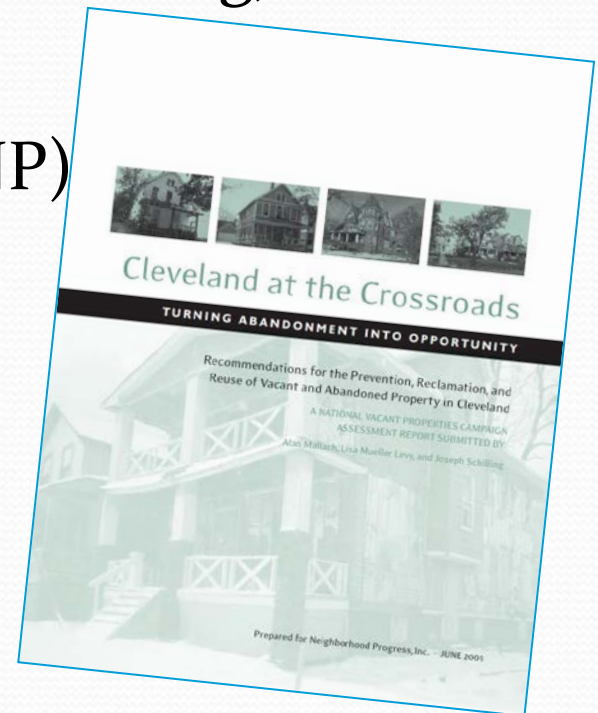
Cleveland City Council	Cleveland Community Development Department	Cleveland Building and Housing Department
Cleveland Mayor's Office	Cleveland Housing Court	Western Reserve Land Conservancy (Thriving Communities Institute)
Cuyahoga Department of Development	Cuyahoga County Executive's Office	Cuyahoga County Treasurer
Cuyahoga County Prosecutor	Cuyahoga County Sheriff	Legal Aid Society
Enterprise Community Partners	First Suburbs Consortium (3)	Cleveland Neighborhood Progress
Federal Reserve Bank – Cleveland	Cuyahoga Land Reutilization Corporation	Ohio Attorney General- Cleveland Office
Cleveland Code Enforcement Partnership		

Staffing and Technical Assistance

- Chaired and Staffed by Thriving Communities Institute
 - Funders include:
 - Cuyahoga Land Bank
 - City of Cleveland
 - Brown Memorial Foundation
 - Cleveland Foundation/Cleveland Neighborhood Progress
- Technical Assistance Provided by
 - Cleveland State University
 - Case Western Reserve University

When and How Was VAPAC Created? What was the Catalyst?

- Recommended by “Cleveland at the Crossroads” a study conducted by Alan Mallach, Joe Shilling, Lisa Levy in 2005.
- The two founding members, NPI (CNP) and CNDC, issued invitations to the Mayor of Cleveland and other key stakeholders in July 2005.



Why Was VAPAC Created?

- Address the “Silo” Problem
 - With many different governments (city, county, state, federal) working the problem simultaneously, and each having multiple departments working the problem – there is a danger of working in isolation, and at cross-purposes.
 - VAPAC provides a single forum where ideas, best practices, programs and resources can be shared and coordinated.

Range of Purposes

Minimum: Coordination

- Coordination of resources and programs among partners.

Advanced: Advocacy for change

- Change **external systems** or behavior causing abandonment and destabilization, e.g. banking industry, flipper/investors.
- Fix or improve **local systems** that address vacant property. Could lead to friction if the desired change is under the control of a VAPAC partner who is resistant to change.

How Does VAPAC Function?

- Meets every 3rd Friday at Noon, lunch provided.
- Topical “Working Groups” meet between meetings
- Monthly agendas:
 - Reports from Working Groups.
 - Updates on key initiatives, e.g. Land Bank, etc.
 - Updates on current research: foreclosure, vacancy and stabilization trends.
 - Guests invited from time to time to discuss specific topics.

Working Groups: Examples

- Demolition Funding
- Delinquent Tax, Tax Lien Sales & State Forfeiture Sales
- Code Enforcement
- REO and Mortgage Servicing

Notable Accomplishments

- Assessment of Cleveland Building and Housing.
- HUD & Fannie Mae - donation of low-value REO property.
- Mobilized testimony and support for county land bank legislation.
- Mortgage Servicer Guidelines for REO Disposition.
- Published study of Tax Delinquency and Tax Lien Sales: Cuyahoga County has adopted some recommendations, exploring adoption of others.

In Summary, VAPAC is:

- The first significant and sustained effort in Cuyahoga County to bring City, County and Suburban officials together on a common agenda.
- A forum where practitioners and civic leaders learn about emerging issues associated with foreclosure, property abandonment and stabilization.
- A means of insuring that foreclosure response assets in Cleveland are “firing on all cylinders,” not working at cross purposes and not duplicating efforts.
- A forum for housing and community development advocates to present positions to public officials.
- The local “go-to” group with expertise on foreclosure, abandoned property and market stabilization.

Operational Issues and Challenges

- Who Should convene and staff a Coordinating Council? City? County? A non-Profit? A charitable Funder? A university?
- Who should set the agenda for meetings?
- What level of representation should be expected from member organizations? Department heads? Senior executives?

Issues and Challenges

- Should banks and mortgage servicing companies be members?
- What if the problem to be solved involves an issue with a government agency that's a member? What if that government agency were the convener and chair of the group?
- Who decides if and when new members should be added?



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