NEW LIFE FOR OLD HOMES

A DESIGN GUIDE FOR THE LOW-COST
REHAB OF VACANT & ABANDONED HOUSING
**NEIGHBORHOOD**

Is the average sales price for a home in the neighborhood high enough to cover the anticipated costs of improvements?  

Y → Is there a community development corporation or other partner that could provide support for the project?  

Y → Is the house located close to transit, bike facilities, or strong commercial/retail areas?  

Y → Are there many other vacant houses or parcels in the neighborhood?  

Y → Is the property in the City or County Land Bank?  

Y OR N → Is the property in foreclosure or tax delinquency?  

N → A privately-held property with an tax-paying owner will be harder (or more expensive) to acquire.

N → It’s hard to predict what the final sales price of a rehabbed home might be, but if the cost of improvements is likely to be significantly higher than what similar houses in the neighborhood sell for, the project may not be financially feasible.

N → Without a strong neighborhood organization to provide advice, technical support, and an assessment of local market conditions, the project will be more difficult.

N → Lack of these may affect the eventual resale of the property.

N → If there are lots of other vacancies, this one project might not have as much of an overall impact.
MAKING A LOFT SPACE

A lofted interior can transform a vacant house and increase its market appeal. This technique is best confined to upper floors where the modification will not be visible from the street. Some interior walls bear weight from above, so you can’t simply remove them without adding beams and columns and bracing the exterior walls. Consult an architect or a structural engineer for guidance.

OPEN THE STAIRCASE

Metal guardrail
$ - Cost depends on complexity of design and choice of metal
? - High skill level required

Cable handrail
$ - Moderate cost
? - Be sure to comply with building codes
Low-flow faucet
$ : Low cost

New shower head
$ : Moderate cost
? : Shower heads are the fixtures where Americans waste the most water.

Low-flow toilet
$ : Moderate cost

Old enamel bathtubs can often be re-glazed—look into it before replacing a tub.

You don’t need to buy a traditional vanity cabinet. Try cutting a sink opening in a salvaged table.

Custom-cutting a large mirror rather than buying a medicine cabinet makes the bathroom feel modern and spacious.

Concrete
$ : Low cost if DIY
Moderate to high cost if professionally installed
? : Takes skill to get a good finished look

High-pressure laminate
$ : Moderate cost
? : Mimics granite, low-cost but not heat-resistant

Butcher block
$ : Moderate to high cost
? : Needs to be sealed to keep sanitary & reduce staining
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