

Vacancy Collaborative Summit

Summary Report

July 2018

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I. Summit Overview

Nearly 170 individuals – representing the academic, banking, business, community, non-profit and government sectors – participated in a half-day summit on Wednesday, July 11 at St. Louis University. Known as the Vacancy Collaborative, these individual and entities (more than 80 organizations) have been addressing one of St. Louis’ most complex and multi-disciplinary problems – vacant and abandoned properties in the City of St. Louis. Equating to nearly 2,000 football fields or ~20,200 parcels in the City of St. Louis, vacancy leads to neighborhood decline by decreasing property values, depleting the tax base and discouraging investment. The total cost of vacancy is estimated to be more than \$14.8 million annually.

For the past three years, interested stakeholders researched best practices and consulted with vacancy experts. In early 2017, a Vacancy Steering Committee was formed to launch the Vacancy Collaborative. By early 2018, A Guide to Understanding and Addressing Vacant Property in the City of St. Louis was published by RISE, St. Louis University School of Law and Tower Grove Neighborhood Community Development Corporation. This was followed by the hiring of a vacancy coordinator in the summer of 2018 to help staff the collaborative.

The inaugural Vacancy Collaborative summit provided an opportunity for attendees to:

- Learn about the evolution of the collaborative over the past three years;
- Understand the six issue areas (Vacancy Prevention; Reinvestment & Reuse; Stabilization, Maintenance & Demolition; Anti-Displacement & Neighborhood Planning; Marketing & Engagement; and Data Analysis) relevant to resolving the problem;
- Provide feedback, in breakout sessions, about the top priorities within each of the issue areas; and
- Review and provide feedback on the vacancy data portal, a new web-based tool.

II. Key Issue Area Findings

Following roughly an hour of presentations, attendees were directed to travel to any number of issue stations to answer the following questions:

- What is a key priority that must be addressed in this area?
- What makes this priority important to addressing the overall issue of vacancy in the City?
- What individuals or entities are working in this area and/or who else should be invited to contribute their expertise to this area?

Additionally, attendees who had issues or interests outside of the summit’s six primary focus areas were invited to add topics at a seventh breakout session, “What’s Missing?”

Although a compilation of all responses can be found on pages 5 through 19, below are the top three to four priorities by issue area. Based on the number of responses by issue area, the most popular issue areas were Reinvestment & Reuse; Anti-Displacement & Neighborhood Planning; and Stabilization, Maintenance & Demolition.

Issue Area 1: Vacancy Prevention

- Improve legal tools and remedies for retaining properties and improving resident retention rates;
- Assist homeowners with home repair services and low-interest loans; and
- Counsel residents on foreclosure prevention strategies.

Vacancy Collaborative Summit Agenda	
:30	Check-in and Coffee
:10	Welcome – The Honorable Mayor Lyda Krewson and Sundry Whiteside (SLACO)
:15	Vacancy Collaborative Overview – Dana Malkus (SLU Law)
:25	Issue Areas Presentation – Austin Albert (SLDC) and Tara Aubuchon (Community Builders Network of Metro St. Louis)
:70	Issue Areas Station Breakout Sessions
:15	Break
:05	Building Division Data Collection & Enforcement – Frank Oswald (City of St. Louis)
:15	Vacant Properties Portal Presentation – Laura Ginn (Green City Coalition) and Jonathan Leek (Daughtery Business Solutions)
:35	Vacant Properties Portal Working Session
:10	Closing

Issue Area 2: Reinvestment and Reuse

- Develop creative funding (especially for North City parcels) to encourage reinvestment;
- Identify creative, permanent and temporary uses for vacant properties;
- Inform residents, non-profits and developers about alternative uses and when necessary, assist with property acquisition and use implementation; and
- Involve residents in establishing property priorities for reinvestment and/or reuse.

Issue Area 3: Anti-Displacement & Neighborhood Planning

- Develop proactive strategies (e.g., zoning changes, low-income home repair, property tax freezes) to reduce the possibility of displacement;
- Ensure residents are included in the planning process;
- Institute community benefits agreements with developers following the planning process; and
- Track neighborhood changes to determine the impact of redevelopment on resident retention.

Issue Area 4: Stabilization, Maintenance & Demolition

- Prevent decay and ultimately demolition through stabilizing properties (both occupied and vacant)
- Enforce strict and consistent code violations, especially with absentee owners;
- Minimize public health and safety hazards associated with vacant properties and demolition.

Issue Area 5: Data Tracking & Analysis

- Ensure data is fully accessible, transparent and understandable;
- Provide thorough data content, such as property type, ownership information, code violations and tax abatement by parcel; and
- Utilize residents for neighborhood-based data collection.

Issue Area 6: Marketing & Education

- Conduct broad-based community and stakeholder engagement;
- Market properties and neighborhoods to change perceptions, improve image, and attract residents and developers; and
- Educate existing and prospective residents about the vacancy issue, legal remedies and reinvestment and reuse opportunities.

Several of the priorities can be found in multiple issue areas; and those are:

- **Training, Education, Communications and Information Dissemination** – mentioned in all six issue areas
- **Data Tracking, Monitoring and Analysis** – mentioned in the five other issue areas
- **Private Owner and Landlord Accountability** – mentioned in four (Vacancy Prevention; Stabilization, Maintenance & Demolition; Reinvestment & Reuse; and Anti-Displacement & Neighborhood Planning) of six issue areas; and
- **Inclusive Community Engagement** – mentioned in four (Vacancy Prevention; Stabilization, Maintenance & Demolition; Reinvestment & Reuse; and Anti-Displacement & Neighborhood Planning) of six issue areas.

Knowing these four priorities overlay issue areas, the Vacancy Collaborative may want to consider including training, data tracking and analysis, owner accountability and community engagement strategies for all issue areas. See page 18 for a full listing of issues and priorities.

Vacancy Prevention Focuses on how to better deploy existing vacancy prevention strategies, such as homeowner repair programs, beneficiary deeds and MO property tax credits; and identifying new vacancy prevention strategies.

What are the key priorities that must be addressed in this area to influence the overall issue of vacancy? What is the rationale for suggesting this priority? What makes the priority important to addressing the overall issue of vacancy in the City?

Priorities	Rationale
<p>Legal Remedies and Education (8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate homeowners and potential heirs about estate planning and beneficiary deed services, especially in north city Assist heirs in donating abandoned, low-value properties to CDC, in the event of homeowner death Determine how to secure deed when properties are in limbo (owned, but abandoned, neglected or vacant) 	<p>Understanding and Implementing Legal Remedies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can provide more leverage to neighborhood associations and CDCs as they address problem properties Can provide an opportunity to secure properties before further decay occurs
<p>Home Repair Resources, Programs and Grants/Loans (7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide homeowners (owner occupied) with the home repair resources (contractors, loans and technical assistance) through partnering; ensure repairs are energy efficient Conduct home repair seminars Provide tax forgiveness for home repair investments 	<p>Assisting Homeowners with Home Repair Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can increase property values, encourage resident retention and hopefully, motivate potential heirs to move into the residence or sell the residence should homeowner die Minimizes the possibility of decay, if and when a house is in probate
<p>Foreclosure Prevention and Resident Retention (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the fundamental reason (s) for resident instability – impending foreclosure, death, tenant eviction, house condition, etc Offer residents counseling and education on foreclosure prevention (e.g., mortgage alternatives, home repairs, mediation) by collaborating with foreclosure prevention entities 	<p>Having a Better Understanding about How to Prevent Foreclosures and Increase Resident Retention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will stabilize neighborhoods while thwarting vacancies before they occur
<p>Private Owner and Developer Accountability (4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold owners responsible for buildings in disrepair and/or poorly maintained vacant lots; Enforce code violations and fine, accordingly Institute claim back provisions if developers fail to perform as expected Partner with building inspectors to learn about addresses showing signs of vacancy 	<p>Ensuring Owner and Developer Accountability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hinders vacancies and increases neighborhood stabilization
<p>Build Social Fabric of Neighborhood (4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage and connect residents to neighborhood associations Institute crime prevention program to ensure quality of life doesn't decline further 	<p>Building the Neighborhoods Social Fabric:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connects and involves residents so they are less likely to vacate properties Provides an opportunity for neighborhood associations to advise residents about vacancy prevention remedies and programs Can reduce crime Can encourage more residents to move into the area because crime is less and neighbors demonstrate their connectedness

Priorities	Rationale
<p>Vacancy Property Data Tracking (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track what is or about to become vacant Partner with building inspectors to learn about addresses showing signs of vacancy 	<p>Early Vacancy Tracking May:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mitigate decay and dilapidation Can possibly reduce properties added to LRA inventory
<p>Other (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide housing for veterans Put all LRA property in every tax sale Right-size the City; St. Louis was built for 800K residents and today the City has ~300K Change tax foreclosure policy Provide higher income job opportunities for residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans can add stability to a neighborhood and are in need of affordable housing Listing all LRA properties in tax sale could possibly reduce the City's inventory quicker

Existing and/or Potential Stakeholders

- Build4StL
- City of St. Louis, CDA
- City of St. Louis, CREA
- Dan Pate
- Hyde Park Neighborhood Association of North St. Louis
- Marine Villa Neighborhood Association
- North Collaborative Communities
- Princeton Heights
- SLACO
- Spanish Lake Community Development
- St. Louis University, Legal Services
- Sterling Bank
- Veteran Vendor Housing
- Washington University, Law Clinic

Reinvestment & Reuse Includes vacant building renovation, financial reinvestment, construction tools and alternative land uses (e.g., greening and stormwater mitigation management). Additional strategies could include addressing title issues and tax sale reforms.

What are the key priorities that must be addressed in this area to influence the overall issue of vacancy? What is the rationale for suggesting this priority? What makes the priority important to addressing the overall issue of vacancy in the City?

Priorities	Rationale
<p>Financing and Incentives (17)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with banks to provide creative low-interest equitable financing for North St. Louis • Provide pre-development financing • Incentivize small investors to develop small neighborhood chunks • Establish greenlining fund to mitigate appraisal gap between the property’s value and rehab value • Create a homesteading program with minimum down payment, resident requirement and steady income for homesteader 	<p>Providing Financing and Incentives for Reinvestment and Reuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opens the pool for more people, especially individual homeowners, to invest in North St. Louis • Ensures consistent and available financing for an area that needs it most • Improves property values • Enables non-profits and CDCs to gain property control for future redevelopment • Supports residents with desire, but without the funds (sweat equity) • Addresses the expense of developing non-LRA homes that are too expensive to develop single-handedly • Increases home ownership in distressed areas
<p>Creative Alternative Use Strategies (12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify creative environmentally friendly strategies, such as individual and community gardens, farming, rain gardens and temporary play areas, that contribute to other efforts • Ensure vacant lots are well-maintained, if they aren’t developed • Review temporary urbanism (Pop Up City by the Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative) 	<p>Employing Creative Alternative Use Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhances neighborhood quality of life • Addresses multiple issues (beautification, crime, active living and food production) • Can increase property values due to greater attraction • Identifies temporary uses when immediate permanent use is not possible
<p>Educate & Market (8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute historical information about the neighborhoods, the acquisition process and rehabilitation options • Conduct target marketing to specific households that could benefit from purchasing rehab properties • Inform developers and non-profit entities about development opportunities • Publish ideas for re-use of vacant lots and green projects • Educate residents about creative ways to purchase properties 	<p>Educating Interested Parties and Marketing Neighborhoods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informs and encourages residents living in the area to invest in properties, either for rehab (buildings), gardening or open space (vacant lots) • Markets area to newcomers, especially 20 to 30 year-olds (Millennials) • Generates interest in alternative uses for vacant properties
<p>Strategic Reinvestment through Engagement (7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify neighborhoods with marginal decline, some development and strong community building and begin reinvestment • Help residents establish priorities and goals for reinvestment 	<p>Strategically Reinvesting Through Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces total decline and supports community assets • Stabilizes neighborhood before total decline occurs • Applies limited funding in a strategic and efficient manner • Ensures ideas aren’t imposed upon residents, especially those who have remained in distressed areas • Increases community ownership and support

Priorities	Rationale
<p>CDC Capacity and Public/Private Partnerships (4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen CDC capacity in the most blighted areas Develop a smart pipeline among CDC's, banks, Invest STL and neighborhood associations Partner with small business development programs to create redevelopment opportunities 	<p>Enhancing CDC Capacity and Forming Private/Public Partnerships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expedites the purchase and rehab process Cultivates community investment Improves coordination and direction of investment resources Provides unconventional reuse of lots and economic stimulation
<p>Affordable Housing and Infill Opportunities (4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with SLPS to improve affordability of vacant schools Ensure low-income residents are not forced to move when NGA site is completed Include infill housing to maintain significant percentage of units for existing residents 	<p>Identifying Infill Opportunities and Building Affordable Housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps to revitalize neighborhood, especially blocks with a very few vacant lots (infill housing) Provides housing for low-income and homeless residents Protects residents from being displaced Builds existing fabric of neighborhood's housing stock diversity
<p>Private Owner Accountability (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address issues that result from absentee owners and enforce property upkeep and maintenance or force owners to release properties 	<p>Ensuring Owner Accountability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevents owners from retaining properties, but not being responsible Eliminates the major reason for vacant buildings/lots
<p>Trades Shortage (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivate and build the quantity of contractors and craftsmen through apprenticeship programs and homeowner rehab program 	<p>Addressing the Trades Shortage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases the number of experts available to rehab, renovate and build housing

Existing and/or Potential Stakeholders

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ City of St. Louis ○ Clifton Heights Neighborhood Association ○ Community Builders for Equity ○ Contractor Loan Fund ○ EHO ○ Finest Fifteen ○ Friends of Fountain Park ○ Grace Hill WIBO Program ○ Greenlining Fund Steering Committee ○ Hyde Park Neighborhood Association ○ Invest StL ○ Justine Petersen ○ JVL Whole New Area II Neighborhood Development Association ○ Krantzberg Arts ○ Landmarks Association Revolving Loan Fund | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Legal Services of Eastern Missouri ○ Metro St. Louis Community Reinvestment Association ○ Mission StL ○ Missouri Department of Conservation, Green City Coalition ○ North Collaborative Communities ○ Northside Community Housing, Inc. ○ Project 180 ○ St. Joseph's Housing Initiative (Archdiocese of St. Louis) ○ St. Louis Economic Development Partnership ○ St. Louis Realtors Association ○ Team HuSTLe ○ Young Friends of the Ville |
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Anti-Displacement & Neighborhood Planning Ensures how redevelopment and alternative land uses impact existing residents and communities in an equitable manner.

What are the key priorities that must be addressed in this area to influence the overall issue of vacancy? What is the rationale for suggesting this priority? What makes the priority important to addressing the overall issue of vacancy in the City?

Priorities	Rationale
<p>Pro-Active Anti-Displacement Strategies (12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create significant amount of non-senior housing for those that make 50% AMI and lower • Change zoning policies to regulate an equitable level of housing for existing residents and low-income residents • Insulate existing (especially owner-occupied properties) residents from sharp property tax increases • Maintain equitable property values surrounding rehabbed lots and buildings • Utilize tools, such as lease to own, rent controls and joint ownership • Develop low-income home repair programs and partner with contractors to ensure existing residents are able to stay in homes • Create a land trust system to bring vacant parcels back into private system • Incorporate housing for veterans 	<p>Pro-Actively Executing Anti-Displacement Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protects low income residents, especially black and brown bodies, from being displaced • Provides socio-economic diversity • Mitigates gentrification – solving the vacancy issue should not create issues for pre-existing residents who have remained during disinvestment and abandonment • Allows existing residents to benefit from redevelopment efforts • Raises property values for existing residents, especially those without the means to repair properties • Ensures history and culture of neighborhood are preserved when new residents move in • Preserves housing stock • Provides housing for those who may experience homelessness, but who are reliable neighbors (veterans)
<p>Community Engagement through Inclusive Planning (10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure existing residents are involved in redevelopment planning in an inclusive and equitable manner • Establish process that make decision-making and ownership democratic • Engage with residents prior to proposed development get input to examine their vision, wishes etc. for their neighborhood and incorporate into development • Involve neighborhood d association leaders • Create clear, focused simple, but BOLD neighborhood plans stating unequivocally what should occur • Help neighborhoods create and afford neighborhood plans • Balance development with equitable resident support 	<p>Inclusive and Equitable Engagement and Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases likelihood that redevelopment plans include the voices of existing residents, even those who typically don't attend neighborhood meetings • Minimizes displacement because residents feel valued and may be less likely to move • Ensures redevelopment can occur when funding is secured (planning without funding equals no redevelopment) because many grantors expect residents to be involved in planning and decision-making of their communities
<p>Community Benefits Agreement (4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institute community benefits agreements with developers and residents 	<p>Securing Community Benefits Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures any development occurs with the community first; and protects against displacement • Can dictate local hiring and reciprocal relationships between residents and developers

Priorities	Rationale
<p>Data Tracking and Monitoring to Understand Gentrification Impacts (4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor price increases and market values to promote inclusivity • Understand current neighborhood composition beyond census and track how it is or isn't changing as redevelopment occurs • Question whether it is really gentrification when a previous middle class neighborhood becomes abandoned due to disinvestment and then returns to its former state of prosperity • Measure displacement to discover how to redevelop an area without gentrification 	<p>Data Tracking and Monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide a better understanding about displacement and gentrification • Helps to ensure socio-economic diversity meets targets
<p>Historical, Cultural and Placemaking Preservation (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about and preserve neighborhood history and culture through engagement • Retain community spaces, such as community gardens 	<p>Preserving Historical and Cultural Aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforces neighborhood history before disinvestment • Demonstrates the value of existing assets (tangible and intangible) • Honors past efforts to create community spaces during disinvestment
<p>Legal Assistance for Tenants (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support creation of tenants' union 	<p>Providing Legal Assistance for Tenants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds people power in neighborhoods of marginalized population to address tenant issues, gentrification and displacement • Ensures tenants know their rights and are not take advantage of by irresponsible landlords • Highlights and incorporates the tenants' voice
<p>Landlord Accountability (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold landlords responsible for poor housing conditions, which could lead to vacancies and abandonment • Enforce code violations • Refrain landlords from evictions when property has code violations 	<p>Addressing Landlord Accountability Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can restore housing stock in a timely manner • Protects residents from living in buildings with code violations
<p>CDC and Neighborhood Association Capacity (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the capacity of CDC and/or neighborhood associations • Encourage contiguous neighborhoods to work together 	<p>Enhancing CDC and Neighborhood Association Capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves redevelopment success • Builds redevelopment continuity across neighborhoods • Provides an opportunity for more effective planning and community learning
<p>Education (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host deed transfer seminars • Educate community about tax assessments, city appraisals and wealth building through homeownership 	<p>Providing Education to Interested Parties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can minimize the number of unclaimed properties after death (deed transfers) • Prepares residents, especially renters, for possible homeownership
<p>Neighborhood Services (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure neighborhoods have service amenities, such as grocery and drug stores 	<p>Adding Neighborhood Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicates a neighborhood's health and improves quality of life for residents • Minimizes travel for basic services and eliminates food deserts
<p>TIF Reform (1)</p>	<p>Reviewing and Possibly, Reforming the TIF Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures money is available to provide important services to all neighborhoods • Can address the improper use of funding (non-blighted neighborhoods identified as blighted)

Existing and/or Potential Stakeholders

- 4theVille
- City of St. Louis Planning and Urban Design Agency
- City of St. Louis, Board of Aldermen
- City of St. Louis, Civil Rights Enforcement Agency
- City of St. Louis, Equity Indicators Project
- City of St. Louis, Prosecutors Office
- DeSales Community Development
- Disability Resource Association
- Equitable St. Louis
- Hyde Park Neighborhood Association of North St. Louis
- Legal Services of Eastern Missouri
- Marine Villa Neighborhood Association
- Missouri Department of Conservation, Green City Coalition
- National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders
- North Collaborative Communities
- Northside Community Housing, Inc.
- Outlaw Invest (Demetrius Outlaw)
- SLACO
- St. Louis Economic Development Partnership
- Team TIF
- Union Communion Ministries
- Useful Community Development

Stabilization, Maintenance and Demolition Covers LRA, strategic code enforcement, land banking property, short term land uses, securing vacant properties from vandalism and weather impacts, and targeted demolition when necessary.

What are the key priorities that must be addressed in this area to influence the overall issue of vacancy? What is the rationale for suggesting this priority? What makes the priority important to addressing the overall issue of vacancy in the City?

Priorities	Rationale
<p>Decay and Demolition Prevention (12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use market analysis to guide choices on stabilization, demolition, temporary use and permanent use • Establish a fund for stabilization • Stabilize properties that can be and sale to families on Section 8 (Housing Authority has program for homeownership) • Inspect roofs, ensure roof is structurally sound and limit water infiltration • Make property look like it has a purpose or owner (maintain grass, secure entry, protect roof) • Demonstrate property’s value by repairing buildings, where possible • Incentivize residents to keep vacant properties free of debris, such as Mow to Own program • Engage with City building inspectors to learn addresses of potentially vacant properties 	<p>Implementing Decay and Demolition Prevention Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps to allocate limited resources • Reduces the number of properties that fall into decline before rehabilitation; water damage is major culprit of decline and increases cost for rehab • Limits mold growth, which can increase rehab cost • Promotes historical, but hidden value of property • Encourages residents to be involved with upkeep of contiguous vacant properties • Allows for early identification of properties that are in early signs of destabilization
<p>Strict and Strategic Code Enforcement (11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce existing policies and penalize owners if properties aren’t maintained • Hold absentee owners and/or heirs accountable to code violations • Penalize absentee landlords more than owner occupants • Limit timeframe for investors to retain properties without improvements • Address private public property owners responsibility to neighborhood residents 	<p>Stricter and More Strategic Code Enforcement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces decay to eliminate possible demolition • Motivates owners to contribute to redevelopment efforts • Demonstrates to existing residents that City is supporting their willingness to improve neighborhood • Reduces burden of those living in affected areas to experience safety hazards, depressive conditions and lower property values • Sends message to owners that speculation (holding properties) requires maintenance • Corrects situation where developers have retained LRA purchased properties without any maintenance or redevelopment
<p>Public Health and Safety Precautions (10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow best practices when demolishing building • Control vegetation and limit dumping on vacant lots and abandoned properties • Secure vacant buildings, especially those in close proximity to schools, so they aren’t havens for vagrancy and criminal activity • Remove debris (trash, abandon vehicles) and environmental hazards from buildings; CDA/SLDC efforts • Limit vandalism and brick thieves • Provide resources for homeless and squatters before demolishing building 	<p>Addressing Public Health and Safety Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protects community health • Frees properties of debris and environmental hazards, which can also facilitate faster rehabilitation • Helps to maintain property’s value and reduces cost to rehab (brick thievery) • Ensures homeless people don’t move to another property when demolition occurs

Priorities	Rationale
<p>Demolition Criteria (6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demolish the right property for the right reasons (questions MSD and City demolishing buildings to address stormwater mitigation; impermeable surfaces, such as concrete lots, may be better alternative) • Spend less on demolition and shift funds to building partners and providing legal services • Question if demolition is really progress • Rate buildings to demonstrate most endangered properties and those needing immediate demolition • Focus on properties that can be rehabbed at the lowest cost • Create a geographic strategy for demolition and renovation • Track and prioritize long-term vacancies 	<p>Establishing and Communicating a Neighborhood's or City's Demolition Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes demolition/rehab hierarchy • Coordinates demolition effort • Protects removal of older interesting buildings • Reinforces City's competitive advantage (all brick buildings) over suburban areas • Maximizes impact, considering limited demolition funding
<p>Legal Tools and Remedies (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fix tax sale code so title companies will insure sale for delinquent taxes as conveying clear title • Develop a legal way of dealing with unresponsive or unavailable private owners of vacant buildings to either stabilize, sell or donate property • Bill private owners for demolition 	<p>Implementing Legal Tools and Remedies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can creates market for properties • Recovers demolition expense
<p>Monitoring and Tracking Code Violations (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and maintain a database of existing vacant property code violations • Ensure information is relevant and updated regularly • Identify properties that require physical work, as well as title/legal issues 	<p>Monitoring and Tracking Code Violations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a quick tool to gather evidence needed for nuisance and AHA cases against absentee landlords/owners • Improves success rate when addressing issues with absentee landlords/owners

Existing and/or Potential Stakeholders

- City of St. Louis
- Grace Hill
- Hyde Park Neighborhood Assn of North St. Louis
- Landmarks Association StL
- Missouri Department of Conservation, Green City Coalition
- North Collaborative Communities
- SLACO
- St. Louis Public School (public art and clean-up using high school students)

Data Tracking and Analysis Includes improving access to vacancy data, increasing transparency of information, tracking the scope of vacancy in order to understand progress towards goals and using data to improve programs and policies to support decision-making.

What are the key priorities that must be addressed in this area to influence the overall issue of vacancy? What is the rationale for suggesting this priority? What makes the priority important to addressing the overall issue of vacancy in the City?

Priorities	Rationale
<p>Full Access to Transparent and Understandable Data (9)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure everyday people can understand and interpret the data and its implications • Create multiple ways of viewing data depending on the audience (i.e., for general public via story maps and for advanced users via raw form (MSDIS style) • Prevent data silos • Ensure data is available without having to visit City Hall, Recorder of Deeds • Provide access to all residents and facilitate residents' contribution to data • Use GIS as a way to analyze/represent data 	<p>Full Access to Transparent and Understandable Data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads to informed action regarding use, vacancy, code violations and possible demolition • Allows all working on issue to know the facts • Improves advocacy and decision-making • Addresses the varying needs of users • Facilitates research and expedites action when all information is available online (e.g., Geo St. Louis works, but information is limited) • Supports neighborhood engagement, ownership and buy-in • Is more engaging when using GIS maps
<p>Thorough and Useful Content (7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ownership information with years vacant and City's cost to maintain • Include qualitative data to support statistically-based data; qualitative data can be crowd-sourced • Combine vacancy data and census data, if possible • Define questions that need to be answered quickly and ensure data can address those questions • Include tax abatement information for all City properties • Need better predictive tools to prevent vacancy and better pricing algorithms for existing stock • Think through research design and data needs so solutions and interventions can be evaluated appropriately 	<p>Thorough and Useful Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains trends and how vacancy impacts neighborhood • Allows community needs and opportunities to become more apparent when combined with census data • Guides next actions, defines highest valued properties and immediate targets • Identifies the initial state of gentrification; tax abatement drives gentrification • Allow users to prioritize resources appropriately demolition may not be the best alternative to mothballing or stabilizing the structure • Provides an opportunity to compare and assess different alternatives – demolition, alternative use, stabilization
<p>Valid, Relevant and Neighborhood-Based Data Collection (4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with more data analysis professionals across a variety of disciplines • Leverage neighborhood associations and residents to collect data about vacant and derelict properties • Use Streetwyze app and on-the-ground data collection by residents • Ensure data is collected in an equitable manner from trusted sources 	<p>Valid, Relevant and Neighborhood-Based Data Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to data analysis • Involves those who know most about the neighborhood • Augments sense of ownership • Increases use of data when source is trusted
<p>User Training (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train users for data collection and assistance with understanding and presenting data to community • Teach organizations (and individual users) how to find and compile data themselves • Focus training on how data can be used to source and apply for grants 	<p>Providing User Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aids in understanding and presenting of information to residents • Empowers organizations and residents and ultimately, aids decision-making

Priorities	Rationale
<p>Other (4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use GIS labs and website (updated by users via Waze); cease using proprietary owned software (e.g., Laredo & Tapestry) • Question demolition of buildings for stormwater mitigation, especially when removal of impermeable surfaces has greater impact • Improve real estate industry by increasing the number of developers with expertise in urban opportunities • Access, collect and share data in St. Louis County for municipalities with fewer resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misallocates resources and isn't supported by data

Existing and/or Potential Stakeholders

- Better Together St. Louis
- Cassie DeClue
- City of St. Louis
- City of St. Louis, Board of Aldermen
- City of St. Louis, Recorder of Deeds
- Clifton Heights Neighborhood Association
- Hyde Park Neighborhood Assn.
- Marine Villa Neighborhood Association
- North Collaborative Communities
- RISE
- SLACO
- SLU GIS Labs

Marketing & Engagement Includes ensuring that all stakeholders are on the same page. It includes ways to reduce complexity, highlight progress and past successes, discuss opportunities, and share ideas. Communications and engagement are key ingredients to this process.

What are the key priorities that must be addressed in this area to influence the overall issue of vacancy? What is the rationale for suggesting this priority? What makes the priority important to addressing the overall issue of vacancy in the City?

Priorities	Rationale
<p>Broad-Based Community and Stakeholder Engagement (12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage neighborhood associations and residents (especially, renters, seniors and those without internet access) in the decision-making process Amplify the voice of ordinary residents, activists and small-time investors Reach the unorganized Involve high school and college students in marketing and engagement Ensure all city leaders and elected officials are informed and on the same page Develop creative engagement techniques; meetings are not the only tools for engagement Connect like-minded stakeholders with opportunities; greatest impact originates with collaboration 	<p>Broad-Based Community and Stakeholder Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds trust, stronger relationships and sense of belonging Reduces the likelihood of undesirable behavior when connected to a greater vision Encourages diverse participation and action to address vacancy issue Attempts to reach the disenfranchised Introduces students early in the process, as they could be current and future stakeholders
<p>Marketing & Branding (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market LRA properties more Change perceptions by keeping neighborhoods clean, neatly trimmed and pleasant looking Improve public perception and self-image of the City by publicizing the “good” things about the region Create unique brand for neighborhoods, spotlighting history, arts, jazz and or food 	<p>Marketing & Branding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could reduce City’s LRA inventory much faster; and ultimately reduce City’s maintenance and demolition expenses Attracts development Convinces people that the mission is real and sustainable, instead of being unrealistic Helps restore business districts and stimulates development
<p>Education, Communications and Information Dispersion (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familiarize residents with rehab – inspections, estimating costs and sourcing loans Communicate openly, transparently and in a timely manner Distribute information to residents about process, options and resources Widen the target audience and stress opportunities for redevelopment Educate residents on real estate investing and the immediate benefits 	<p>Education, Communications and Information Dispersion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages success through being fully informed Builds community trust and unity among residents and other stakeholders Connects resources to residents, so they can initiate change and action Accelerates interest in neighborhoods
<p>Sense of Community and Belonging (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop block units and host block parties; ensure both renters and homeowners are included Share neighborhood successes, especially when board based engagement is conducted 	<p>Sense of Community and Belonging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages neighborhood connection and bonding; spurs the desire to stay in the neighborhood Unifies neighborhood when residents can share successful moments

Existing and/or Potential Stakeholders

- Academy/Sherman Park Neighborhood
- Arch of Park
- Cassie DeClue
- Central West End Neighborhood
- City of St. Louis
- Clifton Heights Neighborhood
- Danny Veit REI (South County/South City)
- Downtown West
- Dutchtown South
- Hyde Park Neighborhood Association of North St. Louis
- Landmarks Association St. Louis
- Legal Services of Eastern MO, Neighborhood Vacancy Initiative
- Marine Villa Neighborhood Association
- Missouri Department of Conservation, Green City Coalition
- Mosaic Project
- NextDoorStL
- North Collaborative Communities
- Northside Community Housing, Inc.
- Outlaw Invest
- SLACO
- St. Louis Regional Chamber
- Thompson Coburn, LLP
- Union Communion Ministries
- University of Missouri, St. Louis
- Urban Land Institute
- W. Blue
- Washington University, Brown School of Social Work

What's Missing? Includes other issue areas, priorities and ideas that should be considered by the Vacancy Collaborative and identifies organizations and individuals working on vacancy initiatives in this area.

Note: Many of the issue areas and priorities mentioned below were covered in one or more of the six issue areas. Where appropriate, they have been identified by **bolding**.

New Issue	Priority	Rationale
Absentee Owner Incentives	Dissuade owners from holding on to properties too long because of low taxes; there is no financial incentive for development	Absentee owners contribute to the vacancy problem without being financially motivated to develop property
Additional VC Members	Invite St. Louis Public School District to join the collaborative	Involves the District to look at revitalizing schools for education or re-purposing them for housing and businesses; plus, vacant schools along routes to schools can traumatize students
City/County Partnerships	Share best practices between counties	Unifies overall vision for St. Louis region
Cultural & Historic Preservation	Prevent cultural assets, significant to heritage and history from being erased	Protects assets (some included in LRA inventory) from being demolished
Education & Outreach	Educate stakeholders about the Vacancy Collaborative at neighborhood meetings	Provides a resource of information from SLACO and other partners
Financial Education & Wealth Building	Offer financial education, literacy and wealth building classes and information to residents	Builds awareness about the value of building wealth through homeownership; can eliminate foreclosures, which is a major reason for vacancies
Homelessness	There is a connection between vacancy and homelessness – homeless people may use vacant buildings	Finding a complementary approach to addressing vacancies and homelessness
Illegal Dumping & Trash at Vacant Lots and Buildings	Deter dumping and improve clean-ups	Leads to a pest and rodent problem around vacant buildings and lots
Immigrant Housing	Provide affordable housing for immigrants	Converts buildings to livable housing and increases homeownership
Legislative Changes	Reform legislation to nuisance statute, AHA and related statutes	Gives neighborhood association more leverage when litigation is required
LRA Inventory	Increase taxes on vacant properties and move properties to LRA tax sale faster; only allow redemption, if the property is owner occupied	Allows for faster sale, development and reuse of vacant properties (look at urban user fee legislation)
Marketing & Promotions	Develop creative human interest stories about neighborhoods	Changing the narrative about the issue will help
Safety	Acknowledge and address the public safety aspect of how vacancies and abandoned properties lead to criminal activity	Unsecured vacant buildings are a public safety issue and leads to crime and problem behavior
Small Individual Developers	Provide financial assistance, forgivable loans, low interest loans	Large developers can and often do leave the community and its residents outside of the loop; small developers tend to be more sensitive about community engagement
Tenants' Rights	Educate tenants about their rights	Reduces displacement and gentrification
Tourism	Increase awareness about neighborhoods	Can increase revenue that can be reinvested in community

Existing and/or Potential Stakeholders

- 4TheVille – preservation of historic and cultural assets decaying in the Ville and Greater Ville areas
- Hyde Park Neighborhood Association
- Archdiocese of Greater St. Louis, St. Joseph’s Housing – immigrant housing
- North Collaborative Communities
- Dutchtown South Community Corporation – tenants’ rights
- EHO – tenants’ rights

Vacancy Priorities by Issue Areas

Priority	Issue Areas						Total Issue Areas Included in Priority
	Vacancy Prevention	Stabilization, Demolition & Maintenance	Reinvestment & Reuse	Anti-Displacement & Nbhd Plng.	Data Collection, Analysis & Use	Marketing & Engagement	
Training, Education, Communications and Information Dispersion	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
Data Tracking and Monitoring (Demos, vacancies, code violations)	X	X	X	X	X		5
Private Owner and Landlord Accountability	X	X	X	X			4
Inclusive Community Engagement	X		X	X		X	4
Affordable Housing	X		X	X			3
CDC and Neighborhood Assn Capacity Bldg. and Partnering	X		X	X			3
Legal Assistance (owner code enforcement)	X	X					2
Marketing & Branding			X			X	2
Decay and Demolition Prevention	X	X					2
Public Health and Safety Precautions	X	X					2
Strict and Strategic Code Enforcement	X	X					2
Homeowner Repair (Anti-Displacement Strategies)	X			X			2
Legal Assistance (tenants)	X			X			2
Appraisal Process and Title Clearance	X		X				2
Thorough and Useful Data	X				X		2
Feeling of Belonging	X					X	2
Historical, Cultural and Placemaking Preservation			X	X			2
Financing and Incentives	X		X				2
Full Access to Transparent and Understandable Data	X				X		2
Demolition Criteria		X					1
Community Benefits Agreements				X			1
Land Trust (Anti-Displacement Strategies)				X			1
Neighborhood Services Creation				X			1
Policy Reform (TIF/Zoning, Anti-Displacement Strategies)				X			1
Property Tax Increase Protection (Anti-Displacement Strategies)				X			1
TIF Refrom				X			1
Alternative Use Strategies			X				1
Construction Trades Shortage			X				1
Infill Opportunities			X				1
Valid, Relevant and Neighborhood-Based Data Collection					X		1
Homeowner Repair Loans	X						1
Foreclosure Prevention and Resident Retention	X						1

III. Vacancy Data Portal Feedback

Following the issue area breakouts, attendees learned about the vacancy data portal, a web-based tool providing information about properties. Attendees were asked to review the portal and offer comments about what was useful, unclear, missing and/or confusing.

Although the information below is not a full summary of their feedback, attendees provided the following information to further assist the web portal designers:

USEFUL ASPECTS (A Sampling of Responses)

- Different terms defined on the portal
- Photographs of LRA owned properties
- A delineation between LRA and privately owned properties
- Ability to download data in multiple formats
- Ability to filter and sort parcels
- Property history
- Intuitive map

MISSING ASPECTS (A Sampling of Responses)

- Financial burden by property and maintenance costs by neighborhood
- Census tract information
- Outstanding building code violations
- Property lien information by property
- Ability to search by ward and/or neighborhood
- Better map orientation to include street names, park names, landmarks and neighborhood boundaries
- Additional filter capabilities (by code violations, property type)
- Zip code information in the address field

III. Organizational Expertise and Participant Interest

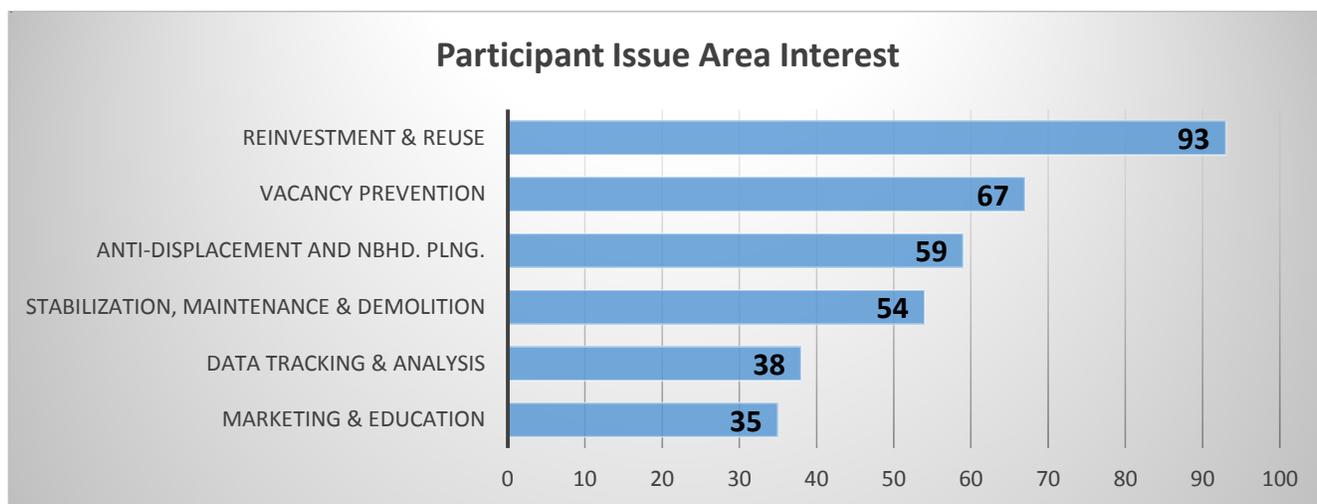
With at least 80 unique organizations represented, summit participants were asked to identify their entity's expertise by choosing among fourteen different areas. As shown below, the greatest expertise among collaborative entities is in community and neighborhood organizing and building; economic development; and community and stakeholder engagement.



With two of the three top organizational expertise areas being “community organizing” and “engagement”, the Vacancy Collaborative has significant knowledge, and possibly, capacity to address one of top priorities (see table, page 20) mentioned for the following issue areas:

- Vacancy Prevention;
- Stabilization, Maintenance & Demolition;
- Reinvestment & Reuse; and
- Anti-Displacement & Neighborhood Planning.

Of the attendees who checked in at the registration table (168) and completed post summit survey (129), 100% want to receive regular updates about the Vacancy Collaborative’s progress. By issue area and/or potential working groups, the greatest number of attendees are interested in Reinvestment & Reuse; Vacancy Prevention; Anti-Displacement and Neighborhood Planning; and Stabilization, Maintenance & Demolition. The high number of attendees interested in “Reinvestment and Reuse” possibly correlates with the number of entities having economic development expertise (see table above).



IV. Conclusion

Addressing vacancy in the City of St. Louis requires a strategic and coordinated approach. Over the past three years, several organizations have worked in concert to lay the foundation for this effort. The Vacancy Collaborative’s success is predicated on a multi-pronged approach, which includes working with community, government, neighborhood, legal, banking and academic stakeholders to create and implement strategies that will:

1. Slow and eventually decrease the number of properties vacant in neighborhoods;
2. Hold absentee owners and landowners responsible and accountable for maintaining their properties;
3. Develop community-based alternative uses for existing vacant lots;
4. Lead to residential and commercial redevelopment in neighborhoods; and
5. Support existing residents, both renters and homeowners, who want to remain in their neighborhoods when redevelopment occurs.

As other urban cities such as Cleveland, Baltimore and Philadelphia, have grappled with this issue, there is much to be learned from their best practices. Of course, St. Louis is different and there are fewer examples of collaboration, especially multi-sector collaboration. However, stakeholders who attended the Vacancy Collaborative’s inaugural summit see the value and effectiveness of working together. Many partners have spent countless hours addressing this issue in their own neighborhoods and targeted areas. The next step is to form working groups, where necessary, to address the issue priorities presented at the summit. These groups will be tasked with developing effective strategies that can be implemented throughout the City of St. Louis. The challenge is great, but the rewards are even greater for a city that has so much to offer its residents in the form of cultural, historic, recreational and entertainment amenities.