

Land Banking and Blight Resolutions

CONNECT Third Congress, 2011:

Resolution 11-20

WHEREAS CONNECT municipalities face significant incidences of residential single family houses and multi-unit apartment buildings that are blighted, abandoned or vacant; and

WHEREAS blighted, abandoned and vacant buildings affect the health, safety, and welfare of a community; and

WHEREAS blighted, abandoned and vacant buildings are an impediment to sustainable development, perpetuate crime, create liability to municipalities and danger to adjacent homeowners, and have adverse impact on quality of life; and

WHEREAS CONNECT municipal officials are challenged because of limited resources and uncooperative property owners to address blighted, abandoned, and vacant properties in their communities.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT will work to address this important community economic development issue on a multi-municipal level by working with local community development organizations, relevant municipal entities, and Allegheny County to develop a uniform method of data collection and storage to facilitate the identification of blighted and abandoned property. This data will help further efforts to mitigate blight through land banking, code enforcement, and vacant property registration with the goal of redevelopment, rehabilitation, and long-term neighborhood stability in CONNECT.

Resolution 11-21

WHEREAS students from the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs prepared a report and tool to create and implement a risk indicator for the potential of blight occurring in CONNECT municipalities; and

WHEREAS information in this report was developed using publicly available data and data available through the Pittsburgh Neighborhood Community Information System (PNCIS); and

WHEREAS the blight risk indicator creates a standard metric that is applicable to all CONNECT municipalities despite their varying degrees of blight, abandonment and vacancy; and

WHEREAS the report outlines the limitations of consistent collection, reporting and storage of information necessary to implement the risk indicator and recommendations across all CONNECT communities.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT members empower the blighted/abandoned property policy working group to review the report, consider its recommendations, and propose methods of implementation on a multi-municipal level across CONNECT.

Resolution 11-22

WHEREAS the members of CONNECT recognize the harmful impact of blighted and abandoned property on municipalities and communities; and

WHEREAS Pennsylvania Act 90 of 2010, the Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization Act, which provides municipalities throughout the Commonwealth with new tools to combat blight and abandonment issues became effective on April 25, 2011.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT recognizes the enactment of Act 90 and commits to exploring ways that member municipalities might utilize the enhanced revitalization tools of Act 90.

CONNECT Fourth Congress, 2012:

Resolution 12-08

WHEREAS a predictable system of review is needed to address recurrent code violations and blighted property; and

WHEREAS the Pennsylvania Urban Development Act has empowered the formation of Blighted Property Review Boards to administer review of blighted properties; and

WHEREAS the Blighted Property Review Board may turn over the blighted property for disposition to public or private development interests.

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED that CONNECT will work with Allegheny County and community based organizations to form a Blighted Property Review Board that will monitor the recovery of blighted and abandoned properties which will include representatives of the city of Pittsburgh and surrounding municipalities.

CONNECT Fifth Congress, 2013:

Resolution 13-06

WHEREAS state enabling legislation for the incorporation of a land bank, Pennsylvania Act 153, became effective December 24, 2012; and

WHEREAS a land bank is a public authority or nonprofit organization created to efficiently acquire, hold, manage and develop foreclosed property as well as other vacant and abandoned properties; and

WHEREAS the land bank will have the authority of property acquisition and disposition, as well as borrow money and issue bonds and notes and be involved in income generating activities.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT recognizes Act 153 and will, with our partners research land bank best practices, develop a protocol for a land bank and conduct necessary outreach to bring together all of the partners needed to develop a multi-municipal land bank that will meet the needs of our member communities.

Resolution 13-07

WHEREAS foreclosed and bank owned properties that remain vacant can have serious negative impacts on communities, especially if they are not properly maintained or secured by owners or lenders; and

WHEREAS significant incidences of miscommunication and misunderstanding about the foreclosure process are evident in CONNECT communities, including homeowners prematurely abandoning property before the foreclosure process is completed by the lender leaving the property with unclear ownership and in disrepair; and

WHEREAS some lenders are conducting improper foreclosure protocol by failing to record deeds or gain legal ownership on foreclosed properties.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT municipalities will investigate the frequency and severity of foreclosure miscommunication and improper recordings of deeds.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CONNECT municipalities will explore opportunities for educating homeowners and municipalities of the foreclosure process, and will bring the issue to the attention of state legislators if deemed necessary.

Resolution 13-08

WHEREAS CONNECT communities have identified the need for a designated solicitor with experience in tax delinquency, abandonment, blight, vacancy and other related issues separate from the work of their individual solicitors; and

WHEREAS our communities wish to collectively identify, select and hire a firm or individual to ensure quality and receive advice and counsel at affordable, fair rates.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT will develop an RFP and provide the municipalities the support they need to retain professional assistance to help communities with specific issues related to blighted, abandoned and/or tax-delinquent property.

CONNECT Sixth Congress, 2015:

Resolution 15-13

WHEREAS CONNECT has selected the legal firm of Goehring, Rutter & Boehm (GRB) to work with our municipalities on issues of blight, abandoned, and vacant properties, with the intent that the selected firm will work with the hiring municipalities and CONNECT to develop a programmatic approach to blight mitigation; and

WHEREAS GRB and CONNECT view data gathering and data sharing as a vital part of quantifying, prioritizing and mitigating the problems of blight; and

WHEREAS significant work to collect, synthesize and analyze blight, vacant and abandoned property data has been done by Allegheny County, the University Center for Social and Urban Research (UCSUR), TriCOG Land Bank, Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania, Growth Through Energy and Community Health (GTECH), and other local organizations.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT and GRB will work with those organizations to utilize established blighted, vacant and abandoned property data standards, create standards for relevant data that is not currently collected or standardized, and utilize or develop a process regularly update and share the collected data with all CONNECT municipalities.

Resolution 15-14

WHEREAS in Resolution 11-22 CONNECT resolved to explore ways that member municipalities might utilize the enhanced revitalization tools of Act 90 (the Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization Act); and

WHEREAS Act 90, allows a municipality to prevent property owners with code violations in Pennsylvania from obtaining building permits; and

WHEREAS CONNECT is working with GRB to create a database of blighted, abandoned and vacant properties, including information about current code violators.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT will draft and encourage all members to sign and enforce an Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement that would prevent housing code violators from obtaining building permits in cooperating municipalities.

CONNECT Seventh Congress, 2016:

Resolution 16-06 ADOPTED 4.21.16

WHEREAS following the passage of enabling legislation for the incorporation of a land bank, Pennsylvania Act 153, CONNECT passed Resolution 13-06 resolving to research land bank best practices, develop protocols, and conduct outreach to bring together partners to develop a multi municipal land bank; and

WHEREAS the members of the Tri-COG Collaborative, the Steel Rivers COG (formerly Steel Valley COG and Three Rivers COG), and the Turtle Creek Valley COG took the lead on this effort and conducted extensive research on land bank best practices, developed a multi-faceted and comprehensive Tri-COG Collaborative Land Bank Business Plan, and conducted a widespread outreach effort to municipalities and school districts throughout Allegheny County; and

WHEREAS the Center for Community Progress conducted an independent evaluation of the Tri-COG Collaborative Land Bank (TCC Lank Bank) Business Plan that was a comprehensive assessment of the plan that stated “the proposed TCC Lank Bank could serve as a key component within a more comprehensive and coordinated blight prevention strategy as well as a model of success on how to enact regional collaboration, build consensus around a shared vision, and coordinate actions and investments by multiple levels of government to achieve healthier, safer, and more vital communities for all;” and

WHEREAS 15 municipalities and four school districts have signed resolutions indicating their intent to become members of the TCC Land Bank and a number of additional CONNECT communities are considering membership.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT endorses the Tri-COG Collaborative Land Bank.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CONNECT calls on the taxing jurisdictions to move as expeditiously as possible to pass resolutions to become members of the land bank so the TCC land bank can begin operations.