WESTMORELAND COUNTY
**REDEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY**
LANDBANK

Healthy Communities

Repositioned Towns

Transformative Opportunities

Goals for Today

1. Introduce the organization
2. Explain the importance of our work
3. Outline use of ARPA funding for demolition and rehabilitation
4. Present a program design with a scope of work, timeline, and outcomes
5. Discuss next steps

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WESTMORELAND COUNTY
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Westmoreland County Redevelopment Authority & Land Bank

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Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation

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Economic Growth Connection of Westmoreland

Jim Smith, President & CEO

Two Agencies, One Mission

To build healthy and whole communities and reposition our towns by eliminating blight and its influences in the communities of Westmoreland County.
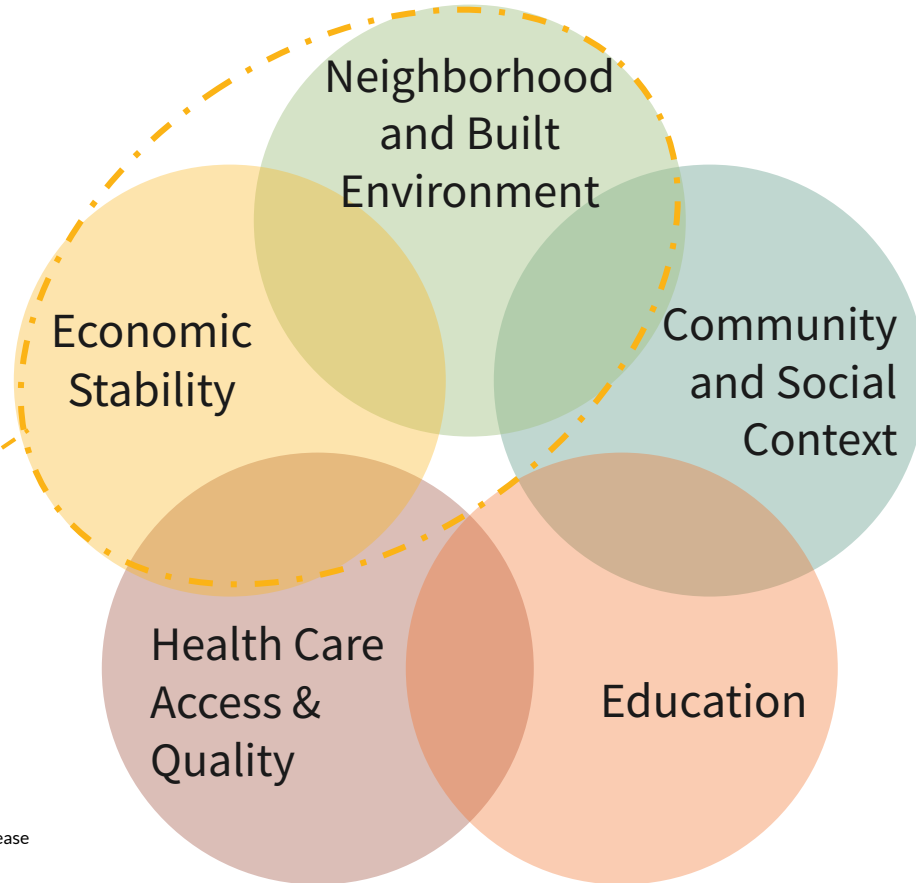
Blight's Impact

Blight is the result of complex factors, but the end result is the same.

GREATER RISK OF TAX DELINQUENCY

DIMINISHED TAX BASE

GREATER RISK OF CRIME & VANDALISM

DECLINING COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

Social Determinants of Health

Our Work

Neighborhood and Built Environment

Economic Stability

Community and Social Context

Health Care Access & Quality

Education

Social Determinants of Health

Question Does the greening of vacant urban land reduce self-reported poor mental health in community-dwelling adults?

Findings In this cluster randomized trial of urban greening and mental health, 110 randomly sampled vacant lot clusters were randomly assigned to 3 study groups. Among 342 participants included in the analysis, feeling depressed significantly decreased by 41.5% and self-reported poor mental health showed a reduction of 62.8% for those living near greened vacant lots compared with control participants.

Meaning The remediation of vacant and dilapidated physical environments, particularly in resource-limited urban settings, can be an important tool for communities to address mental health problems, alongside other patient-level treatments.

Social Determinants of Health

July 21, 2021

Question Are targeted investments in structural repairs to homes of low-income owners associated with reduced crime in Black urban neighborhoods?

Findings In this cross-sectional study using difference-in-differences analysis of 13 632 houses on 6732 block faces in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the housing repair intervention analyzed was associated with a 21.9% reduction in total crime. Increasing the number of houses that received the intervention on a block was associated with a dose-dependent decrease in crime.

Meaning The results suggest that structural, scalable, and sustainable place-based interventions should be considered by policy makers who seek to address crime through non–police interventions.

Demolition and Rehabilitation Programs

Health Outcomes Exacerbated by COVID–19

- Some communities, especially low–to–moderate income, racial and ethnic groups were more impacted by COVID–19
- Poor neighborhood quality and unhealthy built environments, along with economic instability exacerbated existing health inequities, leading to worse outcomes from the pandemic
- Demolition and rehabilitation can improve both neighborhood quality/built environment and economic stability

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Covid-19 racial and ethnic disparities. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved January 27, 2022, from https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/racial-ethnic-disparities/index.html

American Rescue Plan:
State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund
Demolition and Rehabilitation Programs

$10.4 Million for RA/LB to carry out its work

Eligible Use Category

- Public Health and Economic Response
  - Responding to COVID-19's public health impact, along with its economic harms
- Provide Assistance to Households
  - All disproportionately impacted households, including households presumed disproportionately impacted by Treasury, are eligible for uses that respond to the impact & the disparities that led to the disproportionate impact.
- Improvements to Vacant and Abandoned Property

Demolition and Rehabilitation Programs

Eligible Locations

- Disproportionately Impacted Communities
  - Disproportionately impacted households are those that have experienced a disproportionate impact from the COVID–19 pandemic.
  - Households located within Qualified Census Tracts (QCTs) [map](#) of the following communities:
    - Jeannette
    - Monessen
    - Greensburg
    - Arnold
    - New Kensington
    - Vandergrift
    - Penn Borough

Demolition and Rehabilitation Programs

Eligible Properties and Buildings

- Current understanding of blighted, vacant or abandoned properties within QCTs
    - Monessen – 284
    - Greensburg – 32
    - Arnold – 79
    - Jeannette – 42
    - Penn Borough – 10
    - New Kensington – 63
    - Vandergrift – 22

Demolition and Rehabilitation Programs

Eligible Uses

- Rehabilitation, renovation, maintenance, or costs to secure vacant or abandoned properties
- Costs associated with acquiring and securing legal title of vacant or abandoned properties
- Removal and remediation of environmental contaminants or hazards from vacant or abandoned properties
- Demolition or deconstruction of vacant or abandoned buildings
- Greening or cleanup of vacant lots
- Conversion of vacant or abandoned properties to affordable housing
- Inspection fees and other administrative costs incurred to ensure compliance with applicable environmental laws and regulations for demolition

Demolition and Rehabilitation Programs

Timeframe

- Obligate: 2028
    - Orders placed for property and services, contracts and subawards made, and similar transactions that require payment
- Expend: 2028

Demolition and Rehabilitation Programs

Progress on Program Implementation (1 of 2)

- Initial conversations with every municipality
- Gathered demo and rehab worthy properties in all QCTs: ~520
- Increasing capacity
  - Brought on two more engineering firms, four title search companies, two property preservation companies
  - Hired Project Manager
- Met with PHMC/SHPO re: historic review
- Acquired six properties in Monessen QCT
- New Kensington and Arnold joined the Land Bank, acquired seven properties

Demolition and Rehabilitation Programs

Progress on Program Implementation (2 of 2)

- Completed site visits and photo collection on close to 3/4 of all eligible properties
- Conducting assessments of rehab–worthy projects
- Scoped Public Engagement and Awareness events
- Identified 20+ repository properties (likely dozens more)
- Acquired Advance Furniture Building (repository sale)
- Acquired Jeannette Brewery (August judicial sale)
- Commissioners approved the program (July 14)
- Setup program cost tracking and timesheet controls

QUESTIONS

A — *Redevelopment Authority / Land Bank / Blight?*

B — *Qualified Census Tracts?*

C — *Eligible Uses?*

D — *Timeframe?*

Demolition Program

Demolition Program Objectives

- Do the most significant work while we can and where we can, within a limited timeframe
- Work from the "outside-in"
  - Halt the spread of blight, keep blocks and streets from being lost
- Work in areas to support ongoing neighborhood revitalization efforts, near community assets
- Coordinate in areas where substantial investment is to take place
- Address long-standing blight monsters, economic development
  - Brewery in Jeannette

Demolition Program

Demolition Program Challenges

- Consent to demolish
  - Owner/mortgage holder consent
  - Municipal waiver
  - Local legal action
  - Land Bank acquisition
  - Conservatorship
- Sheer volume
  - Bundle dozens of properties in close proximity for bid packages
- Useful life of program
  - Contract for longer than the typical 60 days
- Environmental review, Asbestos Containing Materials

Demolition Program

Demolition Program Process (1 of 2)

- Project identification
- Project clearance consists of:
  - Title searches
  - Environmental clearances
  - Prevailing wage determination
  - Owner and/or mortgage holder consent OR
  - Municipal waivers OR
  - Local legal action OR
  - Land Bank acquisition OR
  - Conservatorship actions

Demolition Program

Demolition Program Process (2 of 2)

- Bid package development
    - Pack cleared and uncleared projects into groups of 20-40
- Demolition commencement
    - Cleared projects are automatically given notice to proceed
    - Uncleared projects are given notice to proceed as consent/authorization is obtained

Demolition Program

Demolition Program Timeline

- Project identification – Complete (mostly)
- Project clearance – today through 2028
- Bid package development – today through 2028
- Demolition commencement – today through 2028

DEMO PROGRAM QUESTIONS

A *Program Features?*

B *Program Challenges?*

C *Program Process?*

D *Program Timeline?*

E *Priority Areas?*

Rehabilitation Program

Rehabilitation Program Objectives *On Hold

- Stabilize and prepare key buildings for redevelopment
- Acquire and rehabilitate properties with developers ready to go
  - Advance Furniture in Greensburg, Anchor Building in Vandergrift
- Acquire and "mothball" properties without development partners
  - Royer's Building in Greensburg
- Properties on Main Streets, large buildings in residential areas (e.g. fmr schools), historically or architecturally significant, have environmental contamination (asbestos), tax-delinquent or owned by Land Bank

Rehabilitation Program

Rehabilitation Program Challenges

- Project identification and ownership
  - Lack of historic or blight inventories
  - Use Land Bank to acquire, purchase outright, conservatorship
- Contractor availability
  - Some work will require specialized contractors, trades, or professional services (e.g. structural engineers and architects)
- Getting properties to "developer ready"
  - Knowing which improvements to make and when
- "Mothballing" properties
  - Carrying costs and long–term maintenance costs

Rehabilitation Program

Rehabilitation Program Process (1 of 2)

- Project identification
  - Use existing blight inventories and historic inventories
  - Encourage partners to ID priority buildings
- Project acquisition
  - Title searches
  - Land Bank acquisition
  - Market purchases
  - Conservatorship actions
- Project scope
  - Building assessments

Rehabilitation Program

Rehabilitation Program Process (2 of 2)

- Project procurement
  - Conduct RFP's to solicit developers or bid for construction activities
- Project commencement
  - Building permits, zoning permits
  - Construction
- Project completion
  - Occupancy permits
  - Sell or hold

Rehabilitation Program

Rehabilitation Program *SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY*

- No repayment requirements on the use of ARPA funds for rehabilitation
- Proceeds generated from sale of rehabilitated properties could be earmarked for a Redevelopment Fund (RF)
- RF would be a flexible source of funding for future redevelopment projects beyond ARPA, match to local, state, and federal resources
- Could feature a Revolving Loan Fund with more favorable loan terms and lower interest rates than market for redevelopment projects
  - Ideally, a RLF would become self-perpetuating, therefore extending the impact of ARPA funds for decades, potentially

Rehabilitation Program

Rehabilitation Program Timeline

- Project identification – Complete (mostly)
- Project acquisition – today through 2028
- Project scope – today through 2028
- Project procurement – today through 2028
- Project commencement – today through 2028
- Project completion – today through TBD 2028

REHAB PROGRAM QUESTIONS

A *Program Features?*

B *Program Challenges?*

C *Program Process?*

D *Special Opportunity / Timeline?*

Relevant Municipal Officials & Staff

To ensure the demolition process moves quickly and without issue

- Elected Officials
  - Council Members
  - Mayors
  - Managers
- Staff and Professional Services
  - Solicitors
  - Relevant Administrative Staff
  - Code Enforcement Officials

Who else in your municipality should be involved?

Solicitor Participation is Vital

What role will the solicitor play in this work?

- Consent to demolish
    - Condemnation
    - Administrative warrant
    - Conservatorship

How are we communicating and engaging?

Key Stakeholder Groups

- County Commissioners ⟶ ARPA Reporting Requirements
- Municipal Officials
    - Council members ⟶ ARPA Program Dashboard
    - Administrative staff ⟶ ARPA Program Dashboard
    - Code enforcement officers ⟶ *codePRO* application
    - Solicitors ⟶ *codePRO* application
    - Police and fire ⟶ *codePRO* application
- Developers ⟶ *redevPRO* application
- Members of the public ⟶ ARPA Program Dashboard?

ARPA Reporting Requirements

Quarterly and Annual Reporting on

- Program status
- Obligations and Expenditures
- Program income
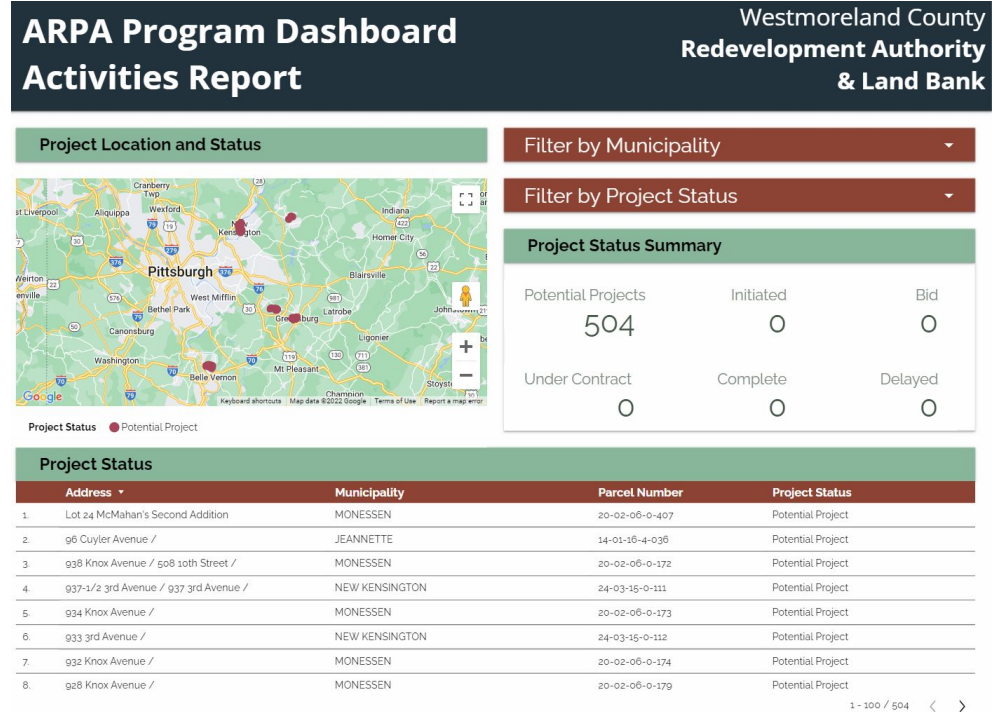- Program demographic distribution
- Contract awards

ARPA Program Dashboard

View Key Stats, Track Projects, Dynamic Updates

To find this on the web:
bit.ly/arpadashboard

Public? Non-public?

codePRO Project Tracking

codePRO will allow you to enter, record, and track the progress of blight remediation projects in your community. It will serve as the primary means of communication for the ARPA Program.

redevPRO Pre-Qualified Developer App

redevPRO will allow pre–vetted developers to offer rehabilitation proposals on eligible projects and properties through the Westmoreland County Land Bank.

Final Disposition of Land Bank Properties

Addendum to Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement

Main Points

- ○ Role of municipality and community in site transformation
- ○ Role of Land Bank in returning property to tax rolls
- ○ Disposition to municipality

MUNICIPAL ROLES QUESTIONS

A — *Municipal Officials & Staff Roles?*

B — *Solicitor Role?*

C — *codePRO App?*

D — *redevPRO App?*

E — *ICA Addendum?*

Community Engagement

ARPA Program Kickoff Event

An opportunity build a sense of community among residents of ARPA-qualified areas while increasing resident awareness of how ARPA funds are being spent for the betterment of their community.

A brief (~1 hour) midmorning event offering coffee, juice, water, and donuts, showcasing a large demolition project that will make a noticeable, marked positive impact on the community.

Ashley Vidale, *Communications Associate* avidale@co.westmoreland.pa.us

Next Steps (non-exhaustive list!) 1 of 2

- *Finalize and execute agreement with County*
- *Begin ordering title searches in priority areas defined by municipalities*
- *Examine Land Bank owned property for rehab vs demo ~20*
- *Investigate acquisition of repository properties ~20*
- *Investigate acquisition of judicial sale properties in November and December*

Next Steps 2 of 2

- *Munis begin/continue enforcement efforts and local legal action*
- *Investigate hardest cases for use of Conservatorship*
- *Training on use of codePRO*
- *Launch Pre-Qualified Developer Program and redevPRO*
- *Continue assessments of properties for ARPA Rehabilitation Projects*
- *Execute ICA addendums*
- *Anything else?*

GENERAL Q&A / DISCUSSION

- ***Brian Lawrence, AICP***
  - *Executive Director*
- ***Hallie Chatfield***
  - *Senior Project Manager*
- ***Marty Knizner***
  - *Project Manager*
- ***Eric Bononi***
  - *Land Bank Solicitor*
- ***Tim Andrews***
  - *Redevelopment Authority Solicitor*

Solicitor / Code Enforcement Officials Follow-Up

Overcoming Challenges in Obtaining Consent to Demolish

- *Utilizing International Property Maintenance Code to Expedite Consent to Demolish*

codePRO Virtual Training

- *Send us a list of users, with emails*

STAY
TUNED
FOR MORE
DETAILS!

Thanks!

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www.WestmorelandRedevelopment.com

www.WestmorelandLandBank.com

Thanks to:

Smashicons, Darius Dan, Freepik, surang, photo3idea_studio for the use of icons at www.flaticon.com