



National Vacant Properties Campaign

CREATING OPPORTUNITY FROM ABANDONMENT

Talking Points for the Regeneration Act (H.R. 932)

PROBLEM: POPULATION LOSS, VACANCY, AND BLIGHT

- In many older cities and towns, population loss and economic decline has caused widespread housing vacancy and abandonment. Fifty-five of the largest 600 cities in the nation have lost 15 percent or more of their population in the last 30 years, some well over 30 percent.
- Mounting vacant property inventories drain municipal budgets, decrease tax revenues, and pose health and safety threats, harming residents and municipalities.
- Vacant buildings and land often serve as a breeding ground for illicit activity that harms neighborhood stability and threatens community efforts to strengthen the area. Shrinking municipal budgets mean cities cannot keep up with basic maintenance demands, let alone the strategic planning to tackle the challenges.
 - A study in Austin, Texas found that blocks with unsecured vacant buildings had over 3 times as many drug calls to police, nearly twice as many theft calls, and twice the number of violent crime calls as blocks without vacant buildings.
 - Houses within 150 feet of a vacant or abandoned property experience a net loss of nearly \$8,000 in value, according to a 2001 study of property values in Philadelphia.
 - Each year from 2003-2006, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated average of 31,000 structure fires in vacant buildings. These fires resulted in 50 civilian deaths, 141 civilian injuries, and \$642 million in direct property damage.
- **Even with stimulus funds and CDBG funds, there is no federal funding stream to develop the kind of solutions necessary to solve the ripple effects of long-term population loss and vacancy that many of these cities face.**

SOLUTION: THE REGENERATION ACT

All Americans deserve to live in safe, healthy, and vibrant environments, but this isn't something that will just happen, especially given the shortage of funds these cities are facing.

- The Regeneration Act would create a new pilot program and a dedicated funding stream within HUD targeted toward cities experiencing large-scale property vacancy and population losses. The program would provide for collaborative strategic planning and innovative reuse of vacant land.
- The Regeneration Act would build the capacity of local governments and collaboratives to prevent, demolish, manage, and reclaim vacant and abandoned properties through an array of effective strategies.
- The legislation authorizes a host of projects including renewable energy production, urban agriculture, and green infrastructure that helps residents re-imagine abandoned lots, vacated homes, and empty storefronts.

BENEFITS

Collaborative strategic planning and innovative reuse of vacant land can provide the green infrastructure, urban food systems, and public amenities like parks and markets that make neighborhoods thrive.

- Regeneration activities can increase property values, food security, and neighborhood stability.
- Regeneration activities can create jobs and produce renewable fuels.
- Regeneration activities can prevent further abandonment.