

Blight Remediation

Armstrong County has recognized the need to find ways to halt the spread of blighted properties throughout its many communities.

Land Bank

What is a land bank?

A land bank is a governmental body that focuses on acquiring tax delinquent, foreclosed, vacant and abandoned properties for the purpose of returning them to productive use. It is particularly effective in areas that have a large, fragmented inventory of chronically blighted, abandoned or long-term tax delinquent properties. A land bank may acquire properties by donation, transfer, foreclosure, or purchase from a number of sources including private owners, municipalities or tax claim bureaus. The types of properties obtained by land banks are typically unoccupied, foreclosed, vacant and abandoned.

Ordinances, procedures and forms

There are a number of ordinances and procedures that municipalities can use to help slow the progress of blight in their communities. With that in mind, packets of sample ordinances, along with their associated procedures and forms, were distributed to municipalities in 2018 regarding Property Maintenance; Ticketing; Fire Insurance Escrow; Permit Denial/Asset Encumbrance; Buyer Notification. Sample ordinance packets are available to municipalities upon request.

Demolition projects

Several demolition projects were completed in 2018 and early 2019 using a combination of funding streams that included Community Development Initiatives Program Grant from the Department of Community and Economic Development. The grant, which the county received in January 2017, was obtained after discussions between county officials and State Senator Don White (Armstrong/Indiana) about community revitalization.

See Below for more information

Kittanning property razed under County's Blight Remediation plan

A vacant former duplex in Kittanning Borough, slated for demolition in January 2019, was one of the latest projects targeted by Armstrong County in its fight against blight.

The county has worked closely with the borough to identify problem properties. The demolition of 150 Diamond Way was to be the third demolition in the county since late 2018. Two similar projects were completed in Leechburg along Siberian Avenue.

State Sen. Don White (R-41st), who helped the county secure funding to assist in blight remediation efforts, commended Kittanning officials, the Armstrong Board of Commissioners and the Department of Planning and Development for working together to deal with problem properties.



Local, county and state officials gathered Friday, Jan. 18 in front of a blighted structure in Kittanning Borough before its scheduled demolition. From left: Kittanning Councilmen Joseph Kiehlmeier and Scott Davis; Armstrong County Commissioner Pat Fabian; State Sen. Don White; Armstrong County Commissioner Jason Renshaw; Armstrong County Commissioner George Skamai.



Demolition of Blighted Leechburg Property

Demolition of the blighted Leechburg property at 125-127 Siberian Avenue got underway on Monday, Jan. 7 as part of an agreement between Leechburg Borough and the County of Armstrong's blight remediation efforts.



Leechburg Blighted Property Demolished

Armstrong County's blight remediation efforts targeted two vacant properties along Siberian Avenue in Leechburg Borough.

A week before Christmas in December 2018, number 137 was torn down by Baker Excavating & Contracting. The other structure – a former duplex at numbers 125-127 – has also been slated for demolition.

On Friday, Dec. 21, 2018 Armstrong County Commissioner Pat Fabian met with Leechburg Mayor Wayne Dobos at the demolition site. They were joined by the county's Department of Planning and Development's Executive Director Darin Alviano and Program Manager Brigid Beatty.

"It started with this guy," Commissioner Fabian said, giving a nod toward the mayor. "He was the one who brought up the issue of blight and asked us what we could do about it."

The issue of blight was raised in late 2016 during one of the Board of Commissioners' regional town hall

meetings by Mayor Dobos, who at that time was on Leechburg Council. The development of a Blight Remediation Plan followed. Two separate grants – a \$100,000 Community Development Initiatives Program Grant and a \$100,000 Keystone Community Program Grant – both from the Department of Community and Economic Development were obtained after discussions took place between county officials and State Sen. Don White (R-41st) about community revitalization.

In July 2017 the county-appointed Blight Task Force recommended to the commissioners that some of the grant money be allocated to demolish three blighted properties. Those included the two properties on Siberian Avenue in Leechburg and one former duplex on Diamond Way in Kittanning.

In 2018 Leechburg Borough entered into an agreement with the county to acquire the two problem properties out of the county repository and to pay for the structures to be demolished. The county in turn will reimburse the borough for the cost of the demolitions using grant funds. Kittanning Borough has entered into a similar agreement with the county.

The remaining funds from the grant will go toward Land Bank activities. On Dec. 20, 2018 the Armstrong County Board of Commissioners approved an ordinance authorizing the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Armstrong (RACA) to act as a land bank. This will facilitate the return of vacant, abandoned, tax delinquent and blighted properties to productive use. It is one more tool the county can use to combat community deterioration, improve the quality of neighborhoods, foster economic growth and spur investments.