

# Programming to Reduce Vacancy in the City of St. Louis



**THE VACANCY  
COLLABORATIVE**

**Peter Hoffman – Staff Attorney, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri  
Chair – Vacancy Prevention Working Group, St. Louis Vacancy Collaborative**



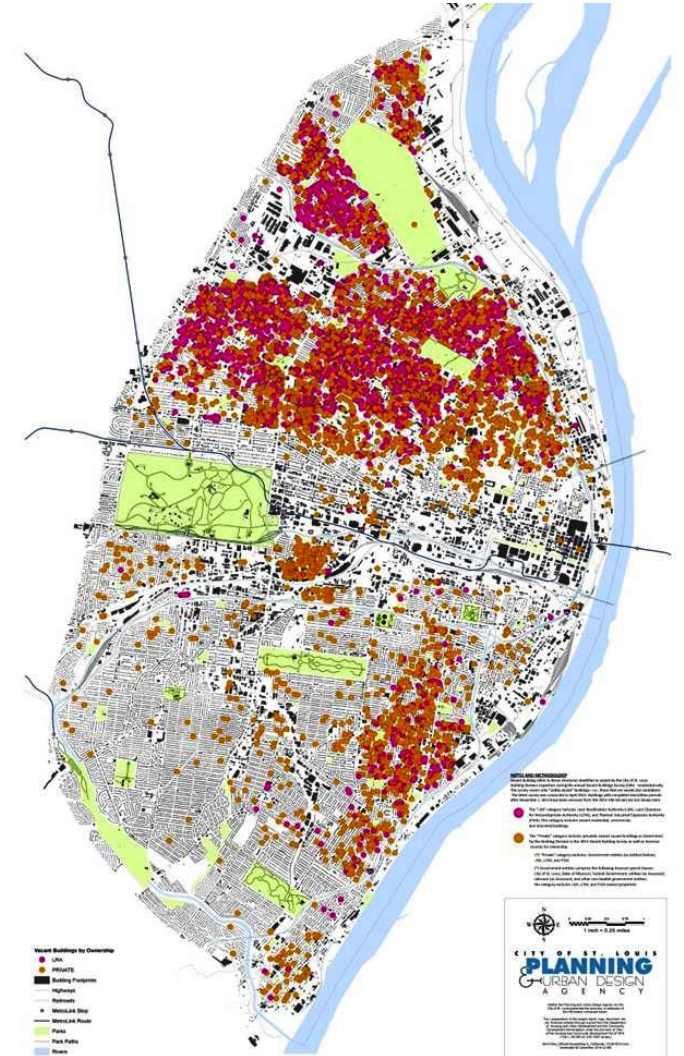
# Vacancy In the City of St. Louis

**Scope of the Problem.** Approx. 25,000 vacant parcels about half privately owned.

**Cause of the Problem.** De-population/sprawl, foreclosure, public policy, predatory investors, etc. Vacancy is contagious!

**Effect of the Problem.** Increased costs for city services, public health and safety concerns, decreased property values, lost tax revenues, decreased neighborhood pride.

**Expense of the Problem.** FY2016 the Forestry Division spent more than \$5 million on maintaining vacant lots and buildings; Board-Up costs Building Division nearly half-a-million dollars/year and \$1.5 million/year on demolitions.



# St. Louis Vacancy Collaborative



**Seeds Planted (2015).** St. Louis Association of Community Organizations (SLACO), Universities, Community Builders Network, RISE, City of St. Louis.

**Learning Best Practices (2015-2018).** Memphis, Kansas City, Baltimore, Center for Community Progress, Asakura Robinson, Guide to Addressing Vacancy in the City of St. Louis.

**Launch (July 2018).** Coalition of 200 Members/Partners – neighborhood associations, residents, CDCs, stakeholders, and City agencies.

**Cross-Sector Collaboration (Current).** Coordinate existing vacancy efforts under one umbrella. Commit to reduction in vacant property as a top priority.

# St. Louis Vacancy Collaborative Cross Sector Working Groups

**Data Analysis.** Understand scope, establish metrics, track progress, drive decision making, improve programs and policies.

**Marketing & Engagement.** Market programs, engage and empower community, change narratives, share strengthen neighborhoods, share successes.

**Anti-Displacement.** Understand development and displacement, ensure equitable outcomes, learn and implement successful strategies.

**Prevention.** Expand resources and legal remedies to prevent vacancy, educate community.

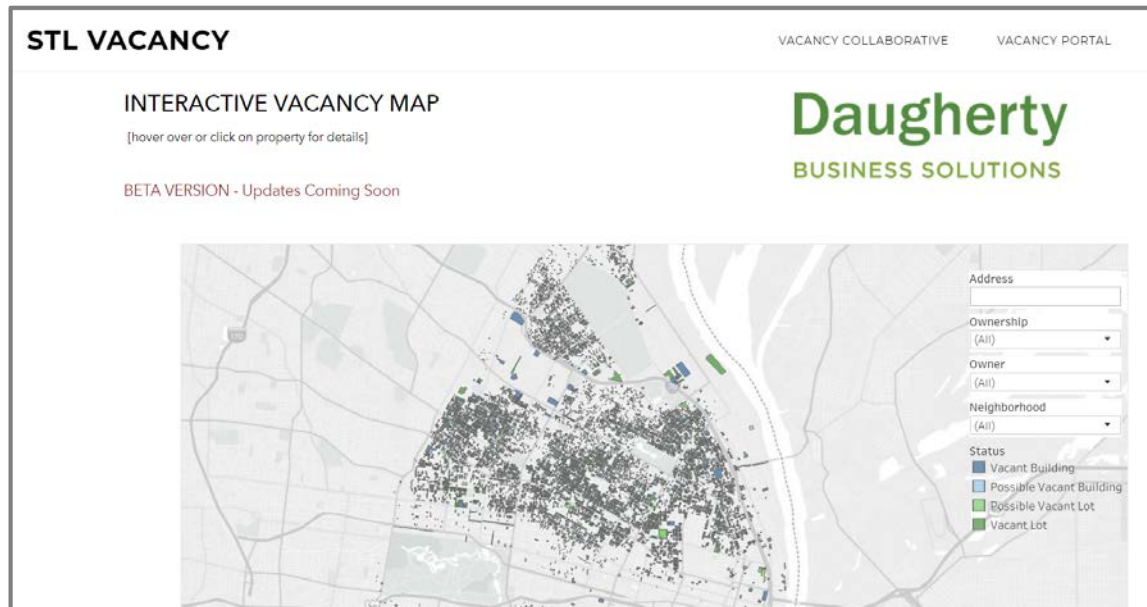
**Reinvestment & Reuse.** Support rehab, establish alternative uses, increase financing, advocate for legislative and programmatic reforms.

**Stabilization, Maintenance, Demolition.** Secure/stabilize vacant properties, strategic code enforcement, effective land banking programs, best practices for demolition and deconstruction.



# St. Louis Vacancy Collaborative

**WWW.STLVACANCY.COM.** Comprehensive website for vacancy-related data.



**Vacancy Guide.** [www.risestl.org/what-we-do/public-documents/vacancy-guide/](http://www.risestl.org/what-we-do/public-documents/vacancy-guide/)

# Neighborhood Vacancy Initiative

**Organizational Assistance:** Assist community groups (neighborhood associations and small community development organizations) with legal organization (incorporation, tax exemption, bylaws, etc.).

**Vacancy Prevention and Title Clearance.** Help low-income residents with title issues / assist homeowners prevent vacancy & protect family wealth through transfer on death deeds.

**Problem Property Litigation.** File lawsuits on behalf of community groups to compel the owners of vacant, run-down properties to sell, repair, or gain legal control of the property so repairs can be made.



# Neighborhood Vacancy Initiative



**Problem Property Litigation.** Community-driven supplement to municipal solutions (code enforcement, tax foreclosure, land banking).

**Nuisance.** Neighborhood Associations can seek court-compelled repairs, neighbors can ask for money damages.

**Receivership.** Community organization asks court for third party to be appointed control.

**Abandonment.** Allows nonprofit organizations to make court-supervised improvements to vacant nuisance property in exchange for clean title.



# Neighborhood Vacancy Initiative

**Abandoned Housing Act.** Nonprofit community organization petitions circuit court for legal control of qualifying property.

**Qualifying Property.** Vacant six months; tax delinquent one year; nuisance/code violations.

**Process.** Court protects investment to eliminate nuisance conditions.

**Outcome.** Interested owners required to reimburse nonprofit before abatement or clean title is conveyed to nonprofit.





# Neighborhood Vacancy Initiative

## First Year Statistics

**Organizational Assistance** – Ten (10) cases opened to provide corporate/governance assistance to place-based nonprofit organizations (by-laws, tax exemption, incorporation, etc).

**Problem Property Litigation** – 25 (Addresses) Problem Property Cases Opened on Behalf of Nine (9) Neighborhood Group Clients; Eleven (11) Lawsuits Filed Representing 35 Units of Housing, Situated in Six (6) Low-Income Neighborhoods.

**Vacancy Prevention & Title Clearance** – Forty Seven (47) Individual Clients Served; Four (4) Beneficiary Deed Clinics in 2018.

**Other Statistics** – 85 Total Cases, 290 Community Meetings/Outreach, Services Provided in 28 Neighborhoods/19 Wards, 1,763 Volunteer Hours.

# Useful Websites

**LEGAL SERVICES OF EASTERN MISSOURI: [WWW.LSEM.ORG](http://WWW.LSEM.ORG)**

**STL VACANCY COLLABORATIVE (AND PORTAL): [WWW.STLVACANCY.COM](http://WWW.STLVACANCY.COM)**

**GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING VACANT PROPERTY IN THE CITY OF ST. LOUIS: [WWW.RISESTL.ORG/WHAT-WE-DO/PUBLIC-DOCUMENTS/VACANCY-GUIDE/](http://WWW.RISESTL.ORG/WHAT-WE-DO/PUBLIC-DOCUMENTS/VACANCY-GUIDE/)**

**A PLAN TO REDUCE VACANT LAND AND BUILDINGS BY LYDA KREWSON: [WWW.STLOUIS-MO.GOV/GOVERNMENT/DEPARTMENTS/MAYOR/INITIATIVES/VACANCY.CFM](http://WWW.STLOUIS-MO.GOV/GOVERNMENT/DEPARTMENTS/MAYOR/INITIATIVES/VACANCY.CFM)**

**Peter Hoffman**  
**314.256.8744**  
**800.444.0514 x 1333**  
**[www.lsem.org](http://www.lsem.org)**  
**[pjhoffman@lsem.org](mailto:pjhoffman@lsem.org)**



**Special Thanks - Tara Aubuchon, Vacancy Coordinator**  
**[Tara@communitybuildersstl.org](mailto:Tara@communitybuildersstl.org)**  
**Community Builders Network of Metro St. Louis**



**Main Office**  
4232 Forest Park  
Ave.  
St. Louis, MO  
63108

**Family Court Program**  
105 South Central Ave.,  
Suite 555  
Clayton, MO 63105

**Hannibal Office**  
801 Broadway  
PO Box 1276  
Hannibal, MO  
63401

**Union Office**  
20 South Church St.,  
Suite C  
Union, MO 63084