

STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES TO ADDRESS VACANT STRUCTURES, VACANT LOTS, AND COMMUNITY SAFETY



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VACANT STRUCTURES

STRATEGIES:

Disguise vacancy

- Plant flowers to improve landscape
- Mow lawn and clean up leaves
- Install decorative solar lighting
- Decorate with holiday decorations
- Install decorative fencing

Protect structure

- Board up and secure property entrance points
- Install solar motion lights near entrance points

Improve appearance

- Install graphic windows and doors over boards
- Paint boards to look like windows/doors
- Paint boards a neutral color to match exterior
- Hold a mural painting contest with youth on boards
- Start adopt-a-house program where a block or homeowner maintains exterior
- Have a youth survey team survey and clean properties
- Paint over graffiti prone spots with neutral paint or a mural
- Form a code enforcement patrol to frequently report problems and post reports on properties

Occupy property

- Start a neighborhood marketing campaign to attract residents to neighborhood
- Organize a home tour event to display available vacant structures

RESOURCES:

[Detroit Vacant Property Campaign: Vacant Property Toolbox, 2nd ed.](#)

VACANT LOTS

STRATEGIES:

Discourage dumping

- Plant trees in a perimeter to show property is being maintained
- Plant a street edge barrier of plants and flowers (not potted plants)
- Use attractive barricades to prevent entrance into property
- Install fencing between adjacent lots
- Plant large volumes of flowers (i.e. sunflowers, etc)
- Install security lights on lot
- Record and report activity on lot by patrol or camera

Improve appearance

- Mow lawn and clean up leaves
- Clean up debris and items dumped on property
- Start adopt-a-lot program
- Have a youth survey team survey and clean properties
- Install decorative fencing

Reuse lot

- Create a rain garden or natural storm water management area (i.e. bioswales)
- Create an art garden
- Put up free-standing murals and facilitate a mural contest
- Install community garden beds
- Plant a natural area or native planting
- Create a natural neighborhood pathway
- Plant a flower garden (i.e. cut flowers)

RESOURCES:

[Detroit Vacant Property Campaign: Vacant Property Toolbox, 2nd ed.](#)

[Reimagining Cleveland: Ideas to Action Resource Book](#)

[Reimagining Cleveland: Vacant Land Pattern Book](#)

[Philadelphia Horticultural Society: Basic Land Stabilization Treatments](#)

[Philadelphia Horticultural Society: Reclaiming Vacant Lots](#)

COMMUNITY SAFETY

STRATEGIES:

Increase visibility

- Illuminate all areas including doorways, sidewalks and streets
- Ensure visibility of doorways
- Pick up trash and debris
- Eliminate blind spots or areas that cannot be viewed
- Remove debris from alleyways
- Illuminate alleyways with solar lights
- Remove/trim overgrowth/dead foliage

Increase Security

- Start a vacant property patrol
- Start daily neighborhood walking clubs
- Start a walking school bus or other method of safely walking kids to school
- Use signifying elements to flag vacant properties (i.e. reflectors) for easy report and detection

Increase awareness

- Hold a community safety seminar
- Start a neighborhood phone tree, email chain, or text chain to inform about potential security issues

RESOURCES:

[SafeGrowth: Creating Safety & Sustainability through Community Building and Urban Design](#)

[Walking School Bus Guide Book](#)