

Turtle Creek Valley COG Director's Report

TCVCOG Board Meeting
January 22, 2015

Important Dates:

Police Chief Meeting: Jan 23rd 11:00 am

Managers Meeting: Feb. 18th 10:00 am

Annual Dinner Meeting: Feb. 27th 5:30 pm

Land Banking

Woodland Hills School District passed Land Banking Ordinance on December 10th in a vote of 7-2. We are very excited about the vote, and commend Woodland Hills School Board and staff – and community leaders within the school district – for their leadership on this issue. The Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania wrote a favorable press release also praising the important step the Woodland Hills School District took to play a part in the revitalization of its communities.

We are currently waiting for the County to complete its legislative process before we can officially form the land bank. However for those municipalities who are interested in joining, especially those in the Woodland Hills School District, we encourage you to pass the ordinance. Once the county is on board we will form the land bank and officially choose board members. Once that occurs, municipalities who did not join originally will have to wait to the determined opt-in period to join.

Tri- COG Collaborative - Community Planning

We received \$50,000 from the Pittsburgh Foundation to complete a Housing Market Analysis. We will be engaging the Housing Alliance to provide us with expert advice in how the study should take shape. The Housing Alliance developed a Healthy Housing Market Paradigm in 2011 and it will be tested for the first time in the Tri-COG's footprint. Communities that participating in the land bank will take priority.

The County put out an RFP to conduct a Housing Market Analysis for the entire county. Liz will be attending the meetings as they work to select a firm to complete the project.

We have been having been meeting with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy in hopes of establishing a future partnership to better understand vacant land in our region. We will be putting in a joint grant application in order to assess the effects of blighted vacant land on property values, as well as identifying current greening techniques. We will then try to quantifying the success of the various greening techniques at bringing value back to communities. Our two organizations are working on a joint grant application to obtain funding for this project.

We have a grant application in to the Benedum Foundation to analyze the conditions and opportunities for commercial districts in our communities. They will decided on whether or not to fund or project at their March Board of Directors Meeting.

Stakeholder organizations within Allegheny County are analyzing the feasibility of forming an Allegheny County Community Land Trust. They have hired a Michael Brown to consult with stakeholders in the county, of which we were a part of. A Community Land Bank is when a community organization, governed by a board of directors owns a piece of land that becomes permanently affordable. Owners own the homes on the land but not the land itself.

Brownfields

We have been continuing to spend our brownfield site assessment grant on various sites throughout our coalition footprint. Part of the grant funds were for planning efforts to take place on sites that have completed their brownfield assessments. We have begun planning on two sites, the Hanna fruit market site in East McKeesport and the grassy and wooded area in between the Rail line in Homestead. These sites were chosen because of previous and current interest for development. We submitted another grant application for additional brownfield funds and will likely hear the results in May.

Code Enforcement

Our Code Enforcement program is on track to start on March 1st. We received over sixty applications for the position. We have put together a hiring committee to assist with the interview process. Interviews will be taking place next Tuesday Jan. 27th and Thursday Jan 29th.

We have been working with our programmer to update the code enforcement database. It will include a function that will generate notice of violation letters based on the observed violations. There will also be a daily “outstanding violations and permits report.” Once the abatement period for the issues has lapsed, and if the violation is still unresolved it will automatically appear on this report.

We will also be purchasing a GPS device for the vehicle so that its location can be tracked. This way we and the code enforcement officer can be accountable to the towns in which he/she will work. We are still looking to purchase a car for the officer to drive.