

## Information Item

**Date:** August 11, 2020

**To:** Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

**From:** Tasha Logan Ford, Assistant City Manager  
Marla Y. Newman, Community Development Director

**Subject:**

Update on assessment of strategies to address vacant, abandoned and deteriorated properties in Winston-Salem

**Strategic Focus Area:** Livable Neighborhoods

**Strategic Objective:** Improve Character and Condition of Neighborhoods

**Strategic Plan Action Item:** Yes

**Key Work Item:** Yes



In late 2018 the Community Development Department (“CDD”) completed a housing study and needs assessment. As staff began the implementation process, assembling tools and resources to create a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy framework, one topic that received limited attention in the study/assessment was how to address privately-owned vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated (“VAD”) properties in Winston-Salem.

City ordinances qualify VAD properties for demolition consideration after 6 months of vacancy and Minimum Housing Code violations, leading to properties continually rolling or returning onto the demolition list. Although many properties are rehabilitated as a result of working with CDD staff, there are always hundreds of homes that could be considered for demolition.

CDD staff engaged a nationally recognized technical assistance nonprofit—Center for Community Progress (“CCP”)—to assist the City with an assessment of our systems and practices related to VAD properties. This assessment primarily explored local:

1. Data and information management systems and practices;
2. Housing and building code enforcement systems and practices;
3. Delinquent property tax enforcement systems and practices; and
4. Acquisition and disposition of VAD properties.

CCP is the only national nonprofit dedicated to eradicating systemic vacancy and abandonment, and promoting a shared understanding of:

1. How current practices of data management, housing and building code enforcement, and delinquent property tax enforcement may either exacerbate or lessen the harm of VAD properties;
2. How local and state laws may block or enable more creative and comprehensive interventions; and
3. The importance of coordinating across departments, collaborating across all sectors and levels of government, and engaging neighborhood leaders and residents.

CCP conducted research and interviewed stakeholders between May and November 2019, culminating in a report outlining recommendations in three of the four broad categories listed above:

1. Data Management Systems and Practices
2. Housing and Building Code Enforcement Systems and Practices
3. Property Tax Enforcement Systems and Practices

Staff is currently assessing how to prioritize the specific recommendations contained in the report, and will collaborate with the County and other key stakeholders to develop an implementation plan.

An electronic copy of the CCP report is included in your packet, and a hard copy will also be provided.