



Prioritizing Properties Instructions

Determining the vacant and dilapidated buildings to be addressed by either a community group or municipality must be done in a systematic way that is as objective as possible. In order to avoid conflicts over someone feeling like their property was identified unfairly, it is important to be able to show that there was a process of selection.

1. A survey of every property that appears to meet the criteria for vacant and dilapidated buildings needs to be filled out and kept on file. This criteria is on the survey form in the toolkit.
2. The survey attached to the toolkit has a list of criteria to help the survey taker to determine whether to put the property in a category of “good”, “fair” or “poor.” The community can change the rating system to meet its own needs or values but the criteria need to be written down and agreed on ahead of time.
3. The next step is to prioritize the properties because it is impossible to work on all the problems at once and again you need to have an objective reason for addressing one property over another.

The Prioritization Grids in the toolkit help a community to determine which properties are important to address first. It would be helpful to have the sample grid from the toolkit in front of you as you read the following guide.

Grid 1:

The first grid determines which property is the worst according to the following criteria:

- Health and Safety Hazards
- Visibility (A dilapidated property that is on the main road is worse than one that is off the beaten path.)
- Obsolescence (probably should be demolished; no re-use seems feasible.)
- Criminal Activity
- Blight Concentration (The property is next to or very near other vacant and dilapidated properties.)

On the grid, the properties are listed across the top and the criteria are in the left hand column. If there is an overwhelming number of properties, the community may choose to prioritize those properties first, that are in the “poor” category as determined by the survey. If possible, all the properties should be prioritized with the grid process. **This grid uses a one to three scale with three being the worst. The properties with the most points would be the worst properties.**

Grid 2:

Determining the worst properties is only the first step. Other criteria that reflect the community vision, affordability and economic development potential are important in the prioritization process. The second grid can be used to select properties according to the community's values and abilities. Some examples of this type of criteria are:

- Economic Development Potential (Locally this may be further refined to reflect a certain need for a grocery, gas station etc.)
- Consistent with a Community Vision agreed on by the group.
- Achievable in a certain time period. (Maybe there is a grant available to use for this property but it has to be spent by a certain time.)
- Least Complicated Title Issues (Resolving these issues can take time or money that the community may not want to spend.)
- Affordability of Demolition
- Property is consistent with the need of potential partners/investors.
- Historical Property
- Brownfield Property
- Potential for Re-use that meets a community need

The community can add or subtract from this list. The important thing is to be as objective as possible.

Grid Two also uses a three-point scale however in this case “1” indicates the least consistency with the community’s values and abilities and “3” represents the most consistency or the best potential.

It is suggested that individual group members fill out a prioritization form for each property and then have a meeting whereby a consensus can be reached. The responsibility of the prioritization should fall to the whole team and not just to one individual.

At the bottom of Grid 2, there is a place to add the rankings from both grids for a Grand Total. The highest number indicates the top priority.

It is recommended that a recorder take notes as to the reasons given for the final determination of the group.

Further guidance on Rating Factors:

Each community can set their own criteria for the rating factors. The following are illustrative examples of how a community may want to explain their criteria.

Criteria for Grid One

Health and Safety Hazards:

- 1= No Health and Safety Hazard Present; building is secure.
- 2= Building is not secure but there is no evidence of infestation, illegal use and/or is not in imminent danger of collapsing
- 3= Evidence of infestation or illegal use of building and/or appears to be in imminent danger of collapsing, and causing injury

Visibility of Eyesore:

- 1= Not visible to most residents or visitors
- 2= Highly visible on main streets or within two blocks of main streets and requiring relatively minor rehabilitation, such as painting or replacing a chimney flue....
- 3= Highly visible on usual main routes through town and appears to need major rehabilitation or demolition

Appears Structurally Unsound

- 1= No sign of roof collapse, or leaning; cracks in foundation negligible
- 2= No more than two cases of minor structural damage that could be repaired. (ie. Small Cracks between foundation blocks; missing several roof shingles; one or two rotting window frames)
- 3= Cracks go through foundation blocks or blocks are missing altogether; roof is sagging indicating rotting joists; building is off its foundation; building is leaning and is in danger of collapse.

No Apparent Alternative use for the building

- 1= Appears structurally sound and is in good business location
And/OR is structurally sound and can be rehabilitated economically.
(ie. Property cost + rehabilitation = appraised value)
- 2= EDA indicates a request for this type of space but financing or other obstacles have prevented development
- 3= EDA indicates that there is no demand for building.

Criteria for Grid Two

Economic Development Potential

1= No economic development potential (single family in residential neighborhood) OR No development potential without substantial investment in infrastructure by local government.

2= Property has good location, utilities and otherwise exhibits development potential, but no current interest has been shown by investors.

3= EDA indicates that several developers have shown an interest in the property.

Affordability

1= Demolition or rehabilitation of the property are beyond the means of the owner, non-profit/for-profit developers or local government.

2= Funding, permissions from regulatory agencies and other pre-development steps can be completed within 12 months

3= Funding is available for rehabilitation or demolition through available grants and resources, and pre-development steps are complete, allowing for the project to start within 90 days.

Shortest Time Frame

1= Rehab, reuse or new development will require a 3-5 year timeframe.

2= Rehab, reuse or new development will require a 2-3 year timeframe including overcoming funding and other obstacles such as title issues.

3= Rehab, reuse or new development can be completed in 1-2 years.

Consistent with Community Vision

1= Action on this building or land will not advance the vision or the values of the group as expressed in documents approved by the group.

2= Action on this building or land will address complementary issues towards achieving the goals of the group.

3= Action on this building or land directly addresses the goals of the group.