



# Clearfield County Planner

## Commissioners To Adopt Housing Needs & Market Assessment

This October the Commissioners plan to adopt a Housing Needs & Market Assessment as an official amendment to the County's Comprehensive Plan. This Assessment is a product of collaboration between the County's Housing Task Force and the County's Planning & Community Development Office.

Contents of the assessment include statistical data, an inventory of housing initiatives, programs & resources, a housing stock analysis, a housing market analysis, data on home affordability & availability, a blighted structures inventory & toolkit, a code enforcement inventory & analysis, results of both a municipal official and a general public survey on housing, and a needs assessment which includes recommendations & possible funding mechanisms.

Some key findings from the assessment include:

- *There is a shortage in affordable and*

*available rental units for lower income renters within Clearfield County.*

- *The number of work hours per week at minimum wage to afford the fair market rent of a two bedroom apartment is currently 62 hours a week.*
- *A householder between the ages of 15-24 or 65+ is more likely not to be able to afford a median valued home (\$80,000).*
- *Additional tools are needed to assist municipalities in addressing blighted properties owned by absentee property owners. Over 300 blighted structures were reported & inventoried by our municipal officials.*
- *In terms of homelessness, the results of the residential housing survey indicate that individuals and families are "doubling*

*up" (living w/ others) in the County due to the inability to afford housing.*

- *Residents are reporting having more difficulties affording utilities and heating bills than paying their rent or mortgage.*

This assessment will be a useful tool for all housing agencies & advocates who rely on such data to support program funding requests as well as for the County when identifying priorities for County Affordable Housing Trust funds. In addition, this assessment will help the County meet the eligibility requirements in applying for housing related funds generated through the Marcellus Shale impact fee legislation, Act 13 of 2012.

For more information on the Clearfield County Housing Needs & Market Assessment or how to become a partner of the Clearfield County Housing Task Force, contact the Clearfield Planning & Community Development Office at (814) 765-5149.

Clearfield County  
Planning and  
Community  
Development Office

### Special points of interest:

- > **Housing Needs & Market Assessment**
- > **Blight Survey Results**
- > **Conservatorship**
- > **Affordable Housing Trust Fund**

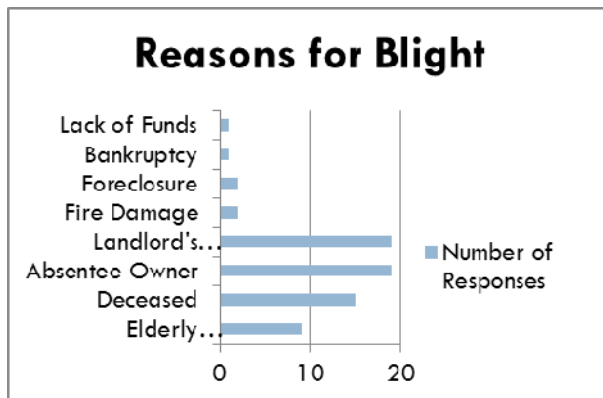
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## Blight Survey Results



Hundreds of thousands of blighted or abandoned buildings are spread across Pennsylvania, impeding community and economic development programs and conveying images of old, worn out communities.



Just here in Clearfield County alone municipal officials have identified over 300 such blighted properties through a county initiated survey.

Last October the Clearfield County Planning & Community Development Office surveyed all 51 of our local municipalities to assess the extent of blighted

structures in their communities. Response rate to the survey was 63% with 32 of our 51 municipalities responding. Twenty-four of those respondents indicated that their municipality had a problem with blighted and/or abandoned properties. Three hundred and thirteen (313) such properties were identified by municipal officials.

When asked for possible reasons that led to the creation of these blighted properties, the top reasons provided in order of significance were: 1) absentee property owner or landlords' lack of maintenance, 2) property owner deceased and family not maintaining property, 3) elderly property owner not being able to maintain, 4) fire damage or foreclosure, and 5) bankruptcy or maintenance too costly for homeowner.

While addressing blight is a local concern, the solutions

are largely enabled by State law. Over the past several years, the Pennsylvania General Assembly, in response to demand by local communities, has begun to modernize antiquated laws that stand in the way of local efforts.

New individual laws are beginning to weave a policy infrastructure to transform blighted and abandoned property into quality homes people can afford, gardens and farms for fresh food, and new businesses and industries that create local jobs.

Conservatorship is Pennsylvania's latest legislative tool for reclaiming abandoned property. It involves the appointment of a third party to take possession and control of a property in order to make repairs and return the property to productive use. The conservator is appointed by the court after a formal process and hearing, including notice to the owner and lien holders. It allows a property to be salvaged when the owner is not able or willing to step forward to make the necessary repairs.

## Conservatorship, A New Tool To Address Blight

The Abandoned and Blighted Property Conservatorship Act (68 P.S. 1101, et seq.) came into effect on February 26, 2009. What is Conservatorship? Conservatorship is court appointment to a third party "guardian" to take care of property because it has been

left vacant and blighted by an absent owner or one that refuses to take care of the property. When appointed, the conservator will be tasked with rehabilitation or demolition of the building. The conservator will have the power to contact for construction of repairs or

demolition, borrow money, lease the property, provide insurance coverage, and exercise all the authority that an owner has. While the owner may still be held liable and responsible for debt incurred as a result of the conservatorship.

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**09/27/12-Clearfield County Planning and Community Development Office will sponsor a presentation on Conservatorship Act**

Time: 12:30 p.m.

Where: Hyde Fire Hall  
1618 Washington Ave.  
Hyde, PA 16843

Description: The Butler County Redevelopment Authority will conduct a 3-hour presentation on the PA Conservatorship Act, which includes real life examples of how they have used it to redevelop once blighted properties in their communities. The training is open to municipal leaders, non-profit corporations, and legal professionals wanting to learn more about the Conservatorship Act.

To register contact (814) 765-5149.

## Conservatorship, A New Tool To Address Blight *continued*

The Conservatorship Law offers municipalities a prompt method to eliminate spot blight in rural communities where neighbors feel the effect of these vacant blighted properties as they suffer loss of their own property value. Allowing officials to have some control of the vacant eyesore properties that plague neighborhoods and threaten the health and safety of the public.

Who can petition the Court for Conservatorship?

Current lienholders or other secured creditors of the

owner, adjacent owners and business within 500 feet of the building, non-profit corporations, redevelopment authorities, municipalities and school districts where the buildings are located.

To start the process, one petitions the Common Pleas Court, notifies the owner and lienholders, and must show that property is eligible. In addition, the petitioner must show that a preliminary plan for the property is in place and finances.

Government entities, redevelopment authorities,

and non-profit developers are currently utilizing the Conservatorship Act to remediate blighted vacant structures across the Commonwealth with positive results. The Housing Alliance of PA has been instrumental in the development and passage of the Conservatorship Law. The Alliance continues to keep municipalities and developers informed by maintaining an on-line clearinghouse at [www.housingalliancepa.org/issues/conservatorship](http://www.housingalliancepa.org/issues/conservatorship) this site offers many resources for those interested in utilizing the Act.

## Moving Forward with the County's Affordable Housing Trust Funds

Last January, we held Clearfield County's first solicitation of applications for affordable housing activities to be funded by the Clearfield County Affordable Housing Fund. Looking for projects which increase the availability of quality affordable housing either through sales or rental to any County resident whose annual income is less than the median income of County were considered.

Eligible projects included owner occupied rehabilitation, rental rehabilitation, first time home buyers programs, housing counseling programs, emergency repair programs, elderly, special needs, & disabled housing,

veterans housing, new home construction, land banks, transitional housing, homeless shelters, community stabilization programs, foreclosure prevention, emergency rental assistance, and bridge loans for rental housing development.

The Clearfield County 2012 Affordable Housing Trust Funding assisted five different organizations with programs and projects that addressed housing:

### **Cen-Clear Child Services – (Specialized Housing Counseling Initiative)**

Counselor to determine housing needs for low income families and individuals; providing counseling & training and

linking them to the housing services they need. To serve 60 families over 12 month period.

**\$15,000.00**

### **Central PA Community Action – (CHORE Service)**

Improve housing stock by assisting low income families/ individuals with necessary repairs (health/safety) needed to keep them in their homes.

**\$10,000.00**

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Determining Eligible Properties: Residential, commercial and industrial

ALL must apply:

- Not legally occupied for 12 months
- Not marketed for 60 days
- No foreclosure action
- Current owner longer than 6 months
- Owner not on active Military service

AND at least three (3) of these:

- A public nuisance
- Needs substantial rehab and nothing done in past 12 months
- Unfit for occupancy
- Poses risk of fire
- Subject to entry and dangerous
- Attractive nuisance
- Health or safety hazard
- Decreases property values or business activity
- Illicit activities

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**TO:**

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## **Moving Forward with the County's Affordable Housing Trust Funds**

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**City of DuBois Redevelopment Authority-** (Redevelop Blighted Properties) Funding to acquire strategic blighted properties in the City to rehabilitate for the purpose of getting those properties back into hands of responsible homeowners and back on tax rolls. **\$10,000.00**

**Young People Who Care, Inc. -** (Marian House Shelter) New roof for homeless shelter. The Marian House Homeless Shelter for women and children was in need of a new roof. In 2011, it is estimated that the shelter assisted 81 individuals with a total

of 1,867 days of shelter. The previous roof was leaking onto the second floor and posed health and safety risks for those staying at the shelter. **\$7,500.00**

**Clearfield Presbyterian Church- (Presbyterian Hammers)** The Presbyterian Hammers is a group of members that provide emergency housing repairs for Clearfield County residents in need. This group serves residents with physical and/or mental disabilities who have limited income and no other support system to help them with emergency house repair. **\$7,500.00**

Clearfield County will solicit for 2013 Affordable Housing Trust Fund applications in October 2012 with applications being due on November 1, 2012. We strongly recommend applicants utilize the recommendations found in the Clearfield County Housing Needs & Market Assessment available in draft form on our website at: [www.planning.clearfieldco.org/](http://www.planning.clearfieldco.org/). For more information on the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, contact Lisa Kovalick at (814) 765-5149