IAAI/USFA Vacant and Abandoned Buildings Community Leader Presentation Outline

Objectives

1. To make community leaders aware of the problems and hazards that vacant and abandoned buildings represent in their community.

2. To identify specific strategies that communities can implement to deal with vacant and abandoned buildings

Discussion Points

- **Introduction – Vacant buildings and the community; The "Broken Windows" theory of disorder**

- **Discuss the issues related to vacant and abandoned properties in the community**

  - Vacant properties are a contagious phenomenon
    - Community image – Blight
      - Rats and vermin
      - Accumulated trash – unsightly and a potential fuel source for fires
    - Crime
    - Public safety
- **What are vacant/abandoned buildings**

  - Building code definitions
  - Black's Law definitions of vacant and abandoned. Review statistics

- Review statistics
  - 18% of urban structures unused
  - More than 21,000 "idle" properties of over 15000 square feet in US
  - Thousands of fires in these properties each year
    - About 72% are incendiary or suspicious
    - Over 5% are set by children
  - More than 6000 fire fighter injuries each year involving these properties
  - A significant threat of fatal injuries such as the deaths of six fire fighters in a vacant property in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1999

- **The problem within the community**
  - Discuss the relationship of fire and these properties
  - Discuss the relationship of fire and abandonment
  - Discuss the hazards posed by vacant and abandoned buildings in the community

- **How can a community deal with vacant properties?**

  - Discuss "Fixing Broken Windows" the quote by Kelling and Wilson found in the background material
  - Team work and cooperation is essential
  - Does the community have the codes and ordinances it needs to control the problem?
  - Know the problem
    - Identify vacant properties
    - Look for early warning signs before properties become vacant
    - Attempt to locate owner
    - Keep the public informed
  - Train inspectors and public safety personnel
  - Evaluate the building
  - Organize data so that is available to those who need it
  - Secure the building to prevent unauthorized access
  - Provide surveillance to monitor security
  - Mark the building to alert fire fighters
  - Determine if the building is a viable candidate for reuse or rehabilitation
  - Schedule for demolition if it is not reusable

- **Where does the money come from?**

    - Federal funds
        - CDBG
        - Brownfield
        - Livable Communities
        - Crime Prevention funds from the U.S. Dept. of Justice?
    - Local funding
    - Private involvement

- **Discuss potential funding sources within the community.**

- **What needs to be done in the community?**

    - Review the strategies handout that is included in this package
    - Identify action items for the community
    - Identify buildings or neighborhoods were action is required

The instructor can find support information in the Background Information package provided with this program. Support slides for this presentation are provided as part of the IAAI/USFA Abandoned Building Program.

Using the PowerPoint Support Slides

The PowerPoint support slides provided with this lesson plan are intended to provide a graphical element to this presentation. While the talk can be delivered without the slides, seeing examples of what is being discussed will make a lasting impression on the audience.

The PowerPoint file can be projected using a computer and projector or the slides can be printed as transparencies. The presenter can use the features provided with PowerPoint to provide handouts to the participants by printing the Handout view from the file. Presenters should also review the Notes view of the file as additional information regarding most of the slides is provided.

For those with the capability, photos of buildings and issues from the local community can be easily added to the program to customize the program.

Strategies for Handling Vacant and Abandoned Buildings

- Determine the legal authority provided by building and fire codes and ordinances adopted by the community.
- When necessary, adopt an anti-blight ordinance that empowers the community to take proper action to secure and mitigate vacant and abandoned properties.
- Develop a system to identify at-risk properties and track those that are vacant or abandoned.
- Evaluate vacant and abandoned properties
- Institute a system that communicates potential hazards found in vacant and abandoned buildings to responding fire fighters.
- Develop a marking system that alerts firefighters of potential hazards for vacant and abandoned buildings.
- Initiate programs for local government to mandate proper security for vacant and abandoned properties.
- Enforce requirements for the securing of vacant and properties by owners.
- Monitor the integrity of security provided for vacant and abandoned properties and provide a system to initiate repairs when required.
- Identify potential public and private funding sources that are available for securing, rehabilitating or demolishing vacant or abandoned buildings.
- Develop programs to identify those properties that require demolition.
- Develop programs that assist in the rehabilitation of viable properties.