

Good Morning! I would like to thank the Republican House Committee - Chairman Saylor, Representative's Marshall and Christiana for inviting me as a panelist for this hearing on Blight in Western Pennsylvania. I am honored to be here as Borough Manager of Monaca and for the record I am also an elected official in neighboring Hopewell Township for the last 12 years so I am well informed on the issues municipalities in Beaver County are encountering with Blight both Townships and Boroughs.

What is Blight? It is defined as;

1. Something that Frustrates Plans and Hope
2. Something that Impairs or Destroys
3. A deteriorated condition -

When these conditions exist in Municipalities it is then referred to as;

Urban Blight

Urban Blight: Is a typical sight in most Beaver County municipalities. As towns get older some buildings or properties are not maintained and become run-down, abandoned or condemned. People who cannot afford to live elsewhere must sometimes live in properties that are without appropriate maintenance.

Urban Blight is not simply cosmetic issues. As homes or *properties* become condemned and decay they can affect other well-maintained properties surrounding them. Just as blight in plants can affect other healthy plants, blight in municipalities can spread to - or affect other properties. They bring down surrounding property values, may become havens for illegal activity like drug dealing, and are more prone to fires, which can spread to other buildings.

These are all current situations that we are experiencing in the Borough of Monaca, and I have distributed packets containing 14 exhibits of pictures of properties in the Borough of Monaca that were just taken this week. So these conditions all currently exist today as I speak. I would like to share our experiences and hardships in resolving these Blighted properties.

Our Blight does not discriminated between Residential, Commercial, and/or Industrial properties. It has no boundaries.

Exhibits #1, #2, and #3

Are pictures of an Industrial Property located in the middle of our town referred to as the Pittsburgh Tool Plant. This business went into bankruptcy, during the bankruptcy period the plant experienced several fires that destroyed a large portion of the plant. The property then went into foreclosure and about 1 1/2 years ago the property was sold at a judicial tax sale. The new owner is being made to secure the structure now that there is a party to make responsible for conditions of this blighted property. They are very reluctant in doing so as the property sat in this same conditions for several years before they became the owners. This structure needs to be razed and redeveloped for a new use. This site needs the assistance of the State, County and Local Governments to remedy the blighted conditions that exist at this property.

Exhibit #4

Is a picture of a residential property that was destroyed by fire over 2 years ago. This incident was suspected to be an arson and the insurance company refused to pay the claim. The property went into foreclosure, but due to litigation between the property owner and their insurance carrier the bank foreclosure on the property was held-up. Just recently there has been a settlement between the Homeowner and the insurance company. The property owner currently resides out of state in Georgia. There is approximated \$35,000 in liens and back taxes on the property. As you can see the property is worth less than what is owned on it, and we believe that the property owner is going to just abandon this property.

Exhibit # 5

Is a residential property which has been condemned. However, the property owner moved back to Yugoslavia is now deceased. His estate is in probate and we are unable to properly serve anyone to have a court order to permit us to have this structure demolished. Nor do we really have the funds to legally pursue this matter further or absorb the demolition costs. Estimated at \$10,000.

Exhibit #6 and #7

Are examples of nuisance blight where property owners neglect to cut their grass. This problem has grown with the tremendous rise in the amount of

foreclosure properties. The amount of time that is needed to address these properties is becoming a hardship to municipalities. The Real Estate companies and/or Banks are not taking responsibility to these properties as they are not the current deed holders to the properties. There needs to be new legislation adopted on how these situations can be address for the health and safety of the residents of our Commonwealth. They must be made to accountable as responsible agents to these respective properties. Local municipalities can not afford to be in the grass cutting/landscaping business. We do not have the work force or the budgetary dollars to do so.

Exhibit # 8

Is a 6 unit apartment complex that was damaged by a fire.

Exhibit # 9 and # 10

Are Downtown store fronts that are unoccupied and blighted. Our challenges here are a little different from the others. Most of these properties have apartments on the 2nd floor which are rented and pay for the landlords expenses. However, they face extreme challenges in bringing the store fronts up to current building codes and (*ADA*) Compliance. Therefore these properties are left vacant because of the high costs associated to renovate them to code. There needs to be modification to the State guidelines regulations in regard to the (*UCC*) Uniform Construction Code with these types of property that where built over 75 years ago.

Exhibit #11, #12, and #13

Are 3 additional properties for reference purposes only

The Last Exhibit is #14

A picture of a house with some wild Ivy growing up the side. The purpose of this exhibit is to ask the question. Is this Blight?

Blight is like Beauty: The answer lies in the eyes of the beholder, and that is what makes this issue so difficult to control and enforce at times.

Blight is a **disease**: Much like Cancer; there is not a simple cure or magic dust to sprinkle on the problem to make it go away.

Together we are going to have to experiment with new ideas and legislation. I believe that together we are going to be able to tackle this problem.