



National Vacant Properties Campaign
CREATING OPPORTUNITY FROM ABANDONMENT

Request for Proposals National Vacant Properties Campaign 2009 Conference

The National Vacant Properties Campaign is a program of Smart Growth America, LISC, the Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech, and Genesee Institute. The Campaign exists to provide everyone – individuals, advocates, government agencies, developers, nonprofits, and others – with information resources, tools, and assistance to support their vacant property revitalization efforts. We are dedicated to helping transform these properties into community assets within vital neighborhoods.

The national conference furthers the Campaign’s mission by providing advocacy and technical expertise to the attendees – those on the front lines of this work. We view the selection of a host city as an indication of support for the city’s commitment to reusing vacant properties in ways that rebuild neighborhoods, improve public safety and health, and spur economic development. We invite your city to submit a proposal to host the 2009 conference.

Please submit all forms and questions to: Jennifer Rigterink
Genesee Institute
452 S. Saginaw Street; 2nd Floor
Flint, MI 48502
(517) 214-0657
Proposal deadline: **April 14, 2008** ballar41@msu.edu (*preferred method for questions*)

This document is designed to help potential conference partners evaluate the commitments and major responsibilities involved in hosting the 2009 conference. This document includes:

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A. SITE SELECTION PROCESS

The NVPC is distributing this Request for Proposals (RFP) to select a host city and principal planning partner and asks that interested not-for-profit or governmental entities respond. The 2007 principal planning partner was the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. Campaign staff will compile a report summarizing the proposals submitted and confer with the Campaign's Advisory Committee to determine the location. We expect to make a selection by April 30, 2008.

B. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Please submit materials electronically and in hard copy. Follow the outline under the Selection Criteria.

The success of the conference depends on the participation of a strong host committee and the local principal planning partner. It is critical that we work together to host the conference, so please take the time to consider what level of commitment the proposed partners are willing to make. Proposals submitted with written commitment of all proposed parties, including the city and potential funders, will receive extra consideration.

Please submit these materials no later than **April 1, 2008**:

1. A letter of interest from the lead not-for-profit or governmental sponsor that will serve as the principal planning partner;
2. Proposals from hotels with open dates available for the conference (including information about guest room and meeting space availability and rates);
3. Letters of support from potential host committee members;
4. Letters of support from key city officials;
5. Letters of fundraising support and/or a proposal for how the community will assist with this effort;
6. List of revitalization organizations or individuals agreeing to work with the host committee and the NVPC to develop quality mobile workshops;
7. Completed answers to the questions on page 3.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals not meeting threshold requirements will not be considered.

Threshold Criteria

- ***An appropriate venue*** to accommodate 750-1,000 attendees (and adequate meeting space defined in Section A);
- ***Strong support from local government leadership*** for improving vacant property strategies (should include one or more leaders, such as local elected and appointed officials, department heads, high level managers, and municipal attorneys);
- ***A committed principal partner*** to help plan and execute the conference, including developing a host committee and convening meetings;
- ***The presence of a significant or improving vacant property problem*** and examples of inspiring stories and champions that will make for interesting mobile workshops;
- ***A combined cash and in-kind commitment of at least \$25,000*** and a proposal for how the host committee will work with the Campaign in designing and executing a local fundraising plan to raise an additional \$35,000-\$50,000.

Additional Criteria

- ***A diverse coalition of public, private, and nonprofit organizations*** involved in your community's vacant property activities;
- ***Previous experience*** hosting or convening conferences or workshops of a similar size or on similar issues;
- ***Convenience and cost*** of travel to your city is important as many attendees travel on a limited budget.

Please answer the following questions in your proposal (*no more than six pages.*)

1. Describe the scope of your locality's vacant property challenges. Discuss the particular obstacles your community is facing in terms of addressing vacant and abandoned properties.
2. Discuss your community's vacant property revitalization activities and programs to date. What specific strategies and tools have worked? Who are the champions and how is the community engaged? Feel free to use specific examples.
3. Please describe the level of commitment by local elected officials, state officials, business leaders, developers, not-for-profit or civic organizations (e.g., an organization with a community development mission) to making vacant property revitalization a top policy priority, as well as the departments of local government involved (e.g., planning, public works, economic development, housing). If you are a non-governmental applicant, please provide evidence that the local government is supportive of this work.
4. Discuss the support we can expect from diverse community partners in planning and executing this conference. Local expertise is invaluable in helping to plan content, select speakers, organize mobile workshops, and assisting with regional outreach and marketing. We will rely on this expertise to help show the city to its best advantage. Availability from local organizations to help staff the conference (e.g. registration tables) is beneficial.
5. Financial support from the host city and region is essential. The Campaign must raise funds to keep the conference affordable to a wide-range of attendees, fund a scholarship program, and provide a high-quality learning event. In 2007, national sponsors (including federal agencies) covered approximately half of the conference cost, but this support is not guaranteed. Please explain the type, level, and also an estimate of the amount of local/community matching funds and in-kind support that you will be able to dedicate to this project. Actual commitments of funding in the proposal are especially valued in the selection process.
6. Please describe any previous experience you have convening conferences or workshops.

C. PROFILE OF THE NVPC RECLAIMING VACANT PROPERTIES CONFERENCE

Purpose: The national conference furthers the Campaign's mission by providing advocacy and technical expertise and networking opportunities to those on the front lines of community revitalization – public officials, housing, community development, smart growth, environmental, and economic development advocates and practitioners, researchers, and others.

Attendance: We expect approximately 750-1,000 attendees from across the country.

History: The inaugural national conference was held in Pittsburgh on September 24-25, 2007 (Monday-Tuesday), at the Omni William Penn. The conference drew 600 attendees. Read more at vacantproperties.org/reclaimingconference.html.

Guest Profile: Approximately 70 percent of the attendees at the first conference represented local or state government or nonprofit organizations. The remainder included representation from a range of professional fields including planning, lending institutions, and development.

Dates: The 2009 conference will take place in spring 2009 (April-June.) The conference will last 2.5-3 days with a separate day for mobile workshops. We will not meet during dates that conflict with the entirety of Passover and Easter holidays (April 9 – 16), Memorial Day (May 25), April 25-29, or May 11-16.

Guest Rooms: An estimate of the number of peak room nights is 400-450 *per night* based on 750-1,000 attendees. In 2007, a *total* of approximately 550 room nights were used with about 500 of those rooms used on the two peak nights of Sunday and Monday. Room use in 2007 was based on a 600-person attendance.

Overflow hotels may be used if they are within five blocks from the main hotel.

Attendees will make their reservations directly with the hotel and they will be responsible for payment of all charges. A master account will be established at the conference hotel for staff, and those rooms will be paid for by Smart Growth America (the fiscal agent for the National Vacant Properties Campaign.)

Meeting Space: The conference requires a hotel venue that fits the meeting and exhibit requirements as well as the guest room requirements. The venue should be centrally located and walkable to nighttime activities.

Meeting and exhibit space requirements are as follows:

- General session space to accommodate between 750 and 1,000 attendees, set with a stage and rounds for lunch.
- Five to six rooms for concurrent sessions, each accommodating between 50 and 200 persons set in a variety of seating arrangements – rounds (most preferred), classroom, or theater (least preferred.)
- Food functions include daily continental breakfasts, plenary meeting luncheons, and refreshment/coffee breaks. There will be a major opening reception one evening and a smaller VIP reception.
- Exhibit hall space to accommodate approximately 25-50 tables from a variety of private, public, and nonprofit sector exhibitors.
- Registration tables to be set up the night before the conference opens through the morning of the final day.

About the National Vacant Properties Campaign

The National Vacant Properties Campaign was founded in 2003 to help spur a national dialogue about vacant properties, which are key barriers to vibrant communities. The Campaign is a unique partnership between Smart Growth America, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech, and the Genesee Institute. The Campaign brings together hundreds of housing, community development, smart growth, environmental, and economic development advocates and practitioners, researchers, elected officials, and others – all pursuing the goal of strengthening our communities and all realizing that vacant properties, in their many different forms, lie at the center of community rebirth.

NVPC is the only national organization dedicated solely to providing information resources, tools, and assistance to support vacant property revitalization efforts. The Campaign has a robust technical assistance program and has sponsored four large forums and in September 2007 convened the first national conference focused on the potential of vacant properties as community assets.

Find out more about the Campaign at vacantproperties.org.