Wilkinsburg

A Call for Sustainability

Fall 2007 Systems Project

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I. Executive Summary

Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania, has spent the last half-century as a borough in decline. The crippling economic regression faced during the collapse of the region's steel and manufacturing industry was compounded by a national trend of urban out migration. As both trends stabilized, neighboring communities experienced new growth. However, Wilkinsburg continued to decline. Many believe that Wilkinsburg's property tax rate is a major obstacle to growth and cause of disinvestment and blight. Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation (PHLF) sponsored this study to investigate the impact of Wilkinsburg's property tax rate on disinvestment and identify policies that can spur revitalization in the borough.

Clearly, Wilkinsburg's property tax rate is the highest in Allegheny County. However, our research shows that while the tax rate is high, Wilkinsburg's tax burden, the actual amount an individual pays in taxes, is average. This means that Wilkinsburg is not overtaxed compared to other boroughs in the County, despite its high property tax rate. Thus, the property tax rate alone explains only a small part of Wilkinsburg's current situation.

Municipalities compete for residents and investment based on a combination of public services, neighborhood characteristics, and amenities which economists refer to as the "basket of goods." Thus, property taxes have a critical role in providing public services and ultimately impacting municipalities' respective "baskets." While Wilkinsburg's tax burden is not high, its declining population, falling median income, depressed median home value and high vacancy rates indicates that Wilkinsburg is not competitive.

Consequently, Wilkinsburg is caught in a "tax trap" where lowering or raising the existing tax rate will not impact property values and the borough's "basket of goods." To escape this "trap," Wilkinsburg must increase its total assessed property value and expand its tax base. Only then can Wilkinsburg lower the tax rate.

However, Wilkinsburg must first remove its major investment barriers to escape the "tax trap." These are:

- Vacant parcels, which significantly depress surrounding property values and reduce residents' incentives to invest
- Tax delinquency and other property debts, which dissuade new owners from purchasing property
- The impact of the property tax rate on individual investment, which discourages investors and current residents from investing in their homes

Wilkinsburg can reclaim control of vacant and liened properties through either sheriff's sale or eminent domain. Moreover, an existing tax abatement program, Act 42, can provide tax relief to investors and residents who want to improve their homes.

Property values must rise dramatically for Wilkinsburg to realize a tax rate reduction. Given such a large hurdle, removing investment barriers without a complementary development strategy will not propel Wilkinsburg out of its "tax trap." Initiatives, such as sustainable development, should be explored and undertaken to increase property value without substantial investment in reconstruction.

Sustainable development, which uses an environmental approach, has successfully revitalized communities similar to Wilkinsburg. These communities implemented four major sustainable strategies:

- vacant lot management
- new parks and pathways
- energy efficiency programs
- green building

As a result, these communities successfully created a new image and improved community livability, which in turn, attracted new residents and investment. Consequently, most of these communities experienced an increase in property values and tax base, an increase in population or stabilization of population, and transformation of vacant lots over a 10-year period.

All these strategies and methods necessitate the coordination of actions and efforts. At the heart of this should be a comprehensive community plan, which addresses the concerns and desires of all residents. This plan is then executed by a non-profit community development corporation (CDC), which works with government and the community to implement the comprehensive strategy.

Wilkinsburg can move towards escaping the "tax trap" by utilizing methods within their control to remove barriers to investment and implement sustainable development strategies. However, for Wilkinsburg to secure an economically, socially and environmentally healthier future, a comprehensive approach must be taken to address important factors which impact the quality of its "basket of goods."

II. Introduction

Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania has spent the last half-century as a borough in decline. Though it underwent the same economic regression much of Allegheny County faced during steel's exodus, Wilkinsburg's decline is compounded with the larger national trends of urban outmigration. Wilkinsburg's urban nature and close social and physical ties to Pittsburgh means that the borough suffers many of the same social ills of its neighbor. Thus, this medium-sized borough is laden with a poor big-city image of high taxes, bad schools, poverty, and crime.

While decline has not been as precipitous as places like Braddock or Duquesne - places heavily reliant on steel mills for vitality - life is improving at a much slower rate than in peer communities such as Edgewood, Mount Lebanon, or Pittsburgh's East End. The resulting blight and decay has caused significant property stagnation and even devaluation.

This disinvestment consequently has saddled Wilkinsburg with the highest millage rate in Allegheny County—a sticker shock that many argue deters investment and holds the community back from real growth. And real growth is what Wilkinsburg is missing. Population loss, high vacancy rates, and other quality of life indicators point to Wilkinsburg continuing this downward spiral.

But Wilkinsburg has potential. Wilkinsburg's excellent stock of affordable homes represents the history and culture of the Pittsburgh region. Its diversity – ethnically and economically – is unique and its close proximity to Pittsburgh, the region's social and economic center, enhances this potential. Combined with its increasingly involved and engaged community, Wilkinsburg seems to be at the cusp of a renewal.

This potential drew Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation's (PHLF) development attention. Interested in preserving both the community's architecture and vibrancy, PHLF has positioned itself to be a leader in pushing for developmental reform.

With the goal of boosting community value while preserving the community's strengths, PHLF asked us to research the role of taxes in Wilkinsburg's decline, along with programs and policies that can bring meaningful change.

In this study we investigate the impact of Wilkinsburg's tax burden and neighborhood blight on community revitalization and reinvestment. This study aims to identify sustainable solutions to the property tax burden as well as research best practices and processes which may spur greater reinvestment in the Wilkinsburg community. The contents of this report are broken out into historical data analysis, obstacles to community investment, and sustainable development strategies.

III. Historical Data Analysis

Introduction

Although Wilkinsburg's high tax rate is one of the major concerns that initiated this project, solutions to the problem of disinvestment must go beyond the tax rate. How did Wilkinsburg's tax rate become so high in the first place? How does Wilkinsburg's tax rate affect its ability to attract growth and investment? These questions cannot be answered unless we look at factors other than the tax rate.

This section specifically will:

- Outline the research methodology for data analysis
- Investigate the elements of taxation in Wilkinsburg
- Define characteristics of desirable municipalities
- Analyze the "tax trap"

Research Methodology

The main objective of this section was to develop a historical statistical analysis which evaluates the relationship between tax rates and a diverse range of neighborhood indicators such as population loss, vacancy rates, housing values, and residential sales prices.

In order to analyze Wilkinsburg's current situation and how it arrived there, we took a closer look at a wide range of historical and current data. We also conducted a review of scholarly literature in order to understand how municipalities attract investment, and what role taxes play in that investment. Finally, we synthesized the historical and current data analysis and the literature review in order to determine how reinvestment might come to Wilkinsburg.

In examining current data, we compared Wilkinsburg to all 127 other municipalities located within Allegheny County. In examining historic data, we selected ten benchmarked municipalities in Allegheny County that share physical and geographic characteristics with Wilkinsburg. Also, the majority are "streetcar suburbs," located near the urban core and featuring single family homes on relatively small parcels, with houses that were predominantly constructed in the first half of the 20th century. The selected benchmarked municipalities are listed below:

- Aspinwall Borough
- Bellevue Borough
- Brentwood Borough
- Dormont Borough
- Edgewood Borough
- Homestead Borough
- McKeesport City
- Mount Lebanon Township
- Pittsburgh City
- Swissvale Borough

The benchmarked communities, except for the City of Pittsburgh, are similar to Wilkinsburg in their dependency on the City of Pittsburgh. Their shared dependency has created a wide range of similarities among the compared municipalities such as declining population. They are all economically, culturally and socially influenced by the City of Pittsburgh. This means that Wilkinsburg's problems may not be attributed to Wilkinsburg, if the same incidents are observed in the benchmarked municipalities.

On the other hand, by many measures, these benchmarked municipalities have diverged sharply from each other and Wilkinsburg. Those contrasts can provide insight into the factors that drive investment in municipalities.

Thus, comparisons between Wilkinsburg and the benchmarked municipalities explicitly show the distinct problems that Wilkinsburg faces while others do not.

We started by looking at taxes, tax rates, and tax bases to identify the causes of Wilkinsburg's tax concerns. These three variables are all different and influence the overall tax structure of Wilkinsburg in different ways.

Then we analyzed the historical changes in property-related statistics to illustrate the causes and consequences of the tax problems.

Finally, we created several models which depict the overall structure of Wilkinsburg's tax situation. Our models identify the key problems which hinder the overall revitalization of Wilkinsburg.

Investigate the Elements of Taxation

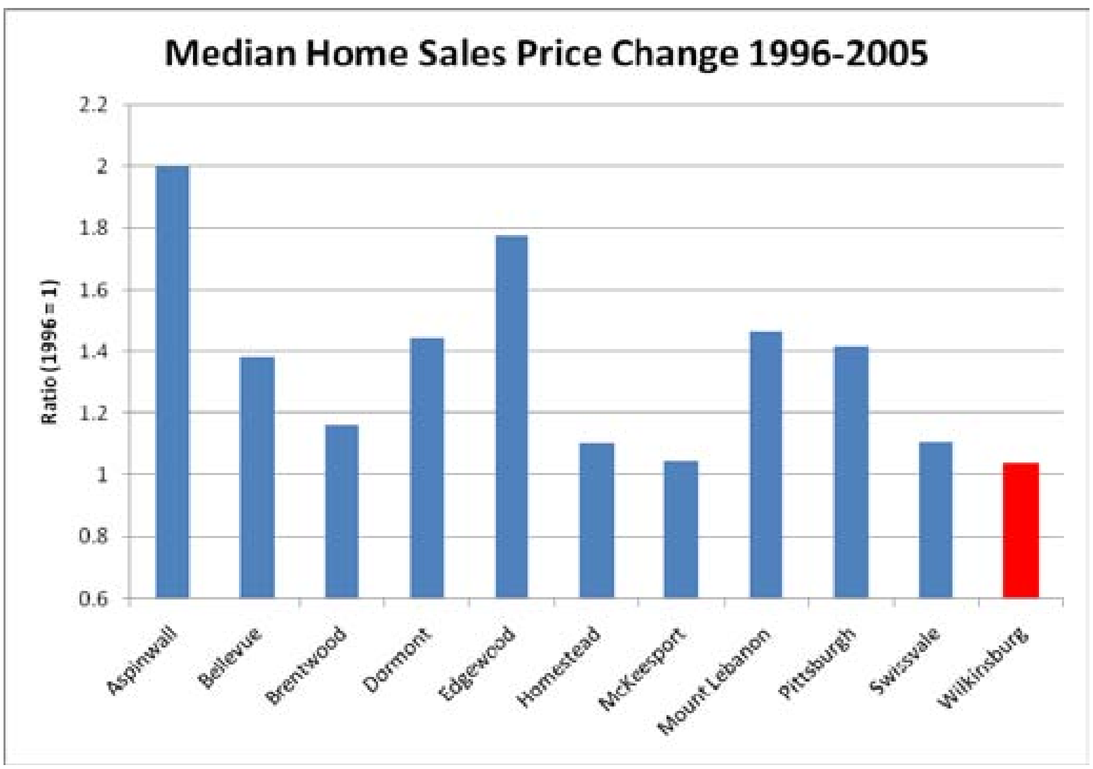
While there is a great deal of concern about Wilkinsburg's tax rate, the tax rate alone explains only a small part of Wilkinsburg's tax situation.

From a government standpoint, the goal of taxation is to collect sufficient revenues to finance expenditures. In order to determine the amount of tax revenues it will collect, the government multiplies the tax base by the tax rate, where the tax base is the total assessed value of taxable property in a municipality. Municipalities with higher housing values generally have a greater total assessed value and therefore a larger tax base. This allows them to bring in the same level of revenues from a lower tax rate.

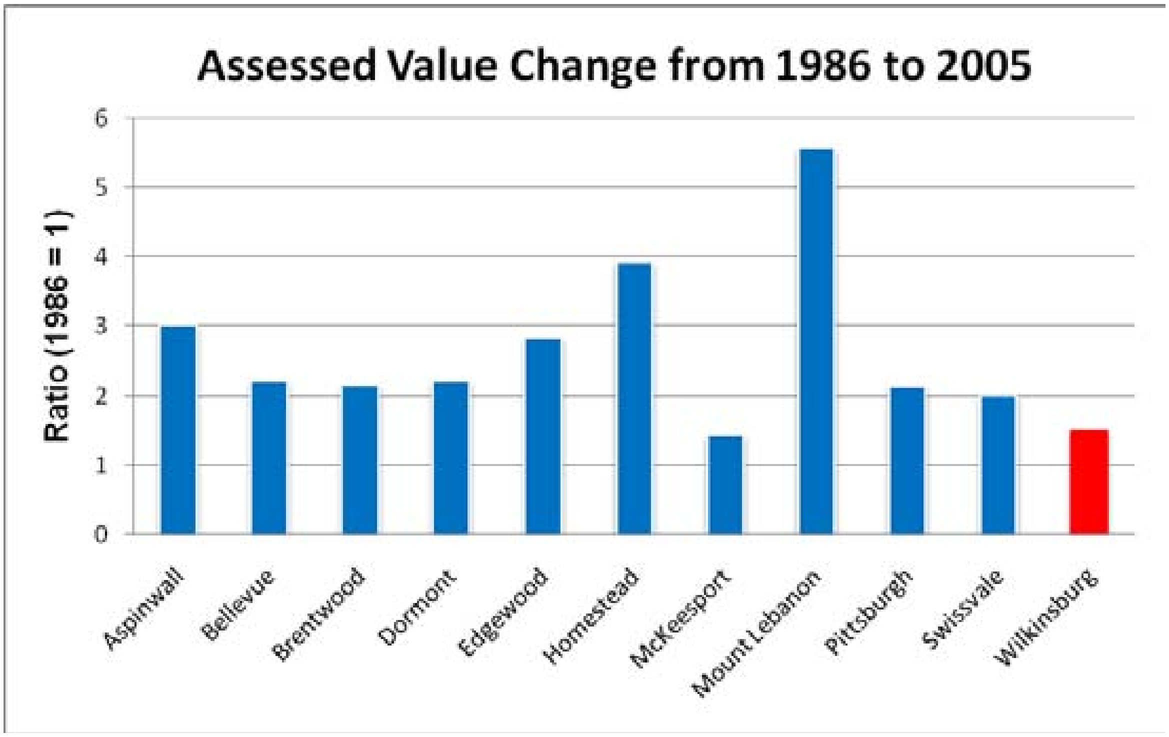
From the taxpayers' standpoint, the tax rate alone does not determine whether they are overtaxed. Instead, they look at the tax burden – the amount of tax owed. This amount is determined by both the tax rate and the individual assessed value of the property taxed. The assessed value, in turn, depends largely upon market value of that property.

The market value of individual properties determines the total assessed value in a municipality, and the size of its tax base. Median home sales price is one indicator of the market value of properties in a municipality. The graph below compares the change in the median sale price of property in Wilkinsburg to that of its benchmarked communities between 1996 and 2005.

Graph 1

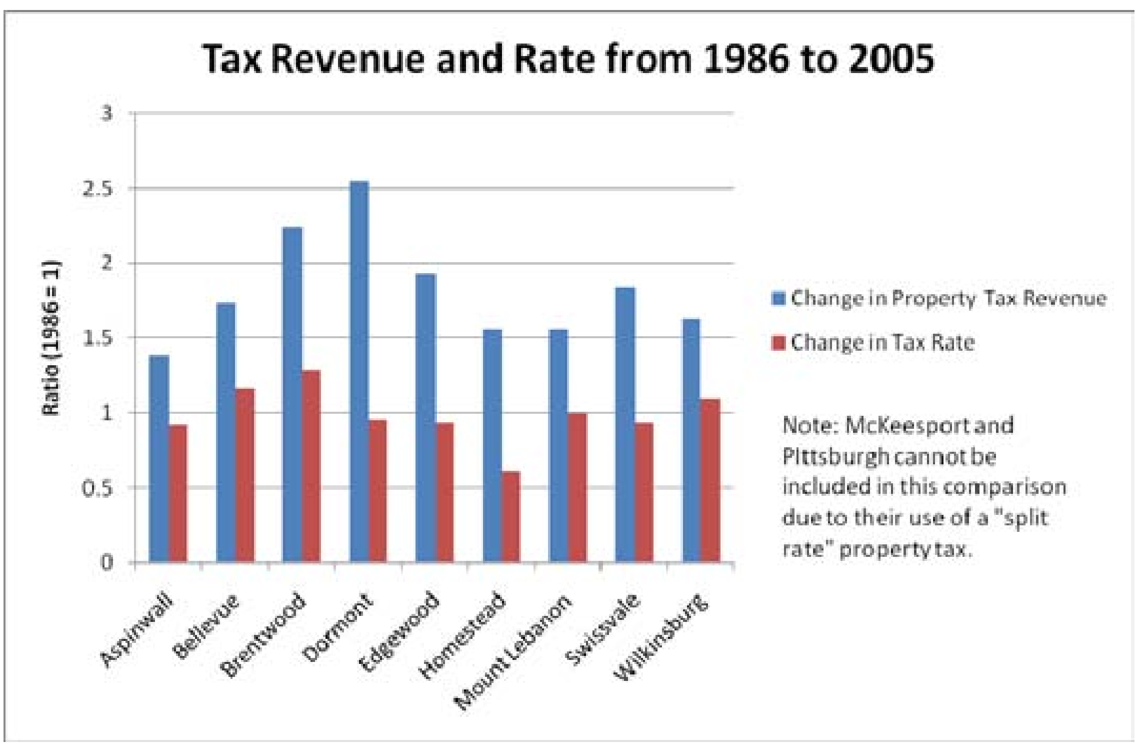


The graph below shows the change in total assessed value – the size of the property tax base – from 1986 to 2005.



Graph.2[1]

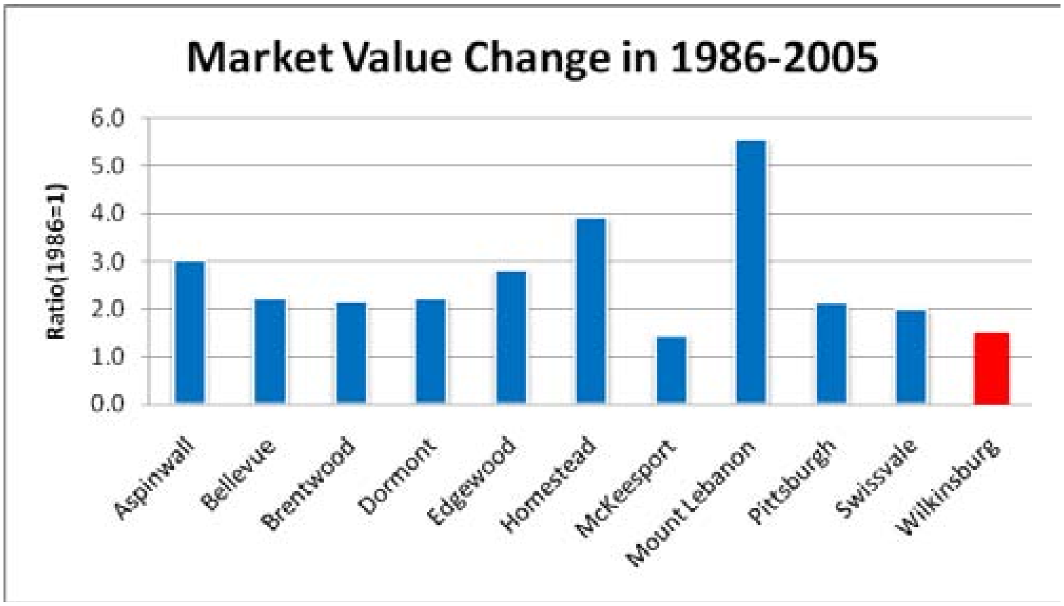
The sales prices of homes in Wilkinsburg have increased far more slowly than sale prices elsewhere in the benchmarked communities. As shown in graph.2, the increase in the total assessed value of Wilkinsburg's property lags behind the increases in other municipalities. Because Wilkinsburg has seen slower growth in its tax base, it must charge an increasingly high tax rate in order to maintain its revenue. The graph below indicates that between 1986 and 2005, Wilkinsburg's tax revenues have increased at a rate similar to those of our benchmarked communities. This occurred despite a relatively large increase in Wilkinsburg's tax rate.



Graph.3[2] [3]

Wilkinsburg's tax rate is the highest in the county, but by most other measures Wilkinsburg is not overtaxed. The property tax burden per capita, at $976, ranks 72nd among municipalities in Allegheny County. Wilkinsburg's tax burden accounts for 5% of median family income, which is roughly average for the county. Wilkinsburg's earned income tax is among the smallest in the county. In addition, thanks to funding sources other than taxes, Wilkinsburg's per capita expenditure, at $2,122, is significantly higher than its per capita tax burden.[4] [5]

It should be noted that assessed value is determined by estimated market value, which is estimated in part from the actual property price in standard property transactions. The graph of total market value change from 1986 to 2005 looks almost identical to the graph.2 (See graph.4 below). Because the market prices are determined by housing demand, the consequence is that Wilkinsburg needs to increase the demand for its properties in order to address the high property tax rate.



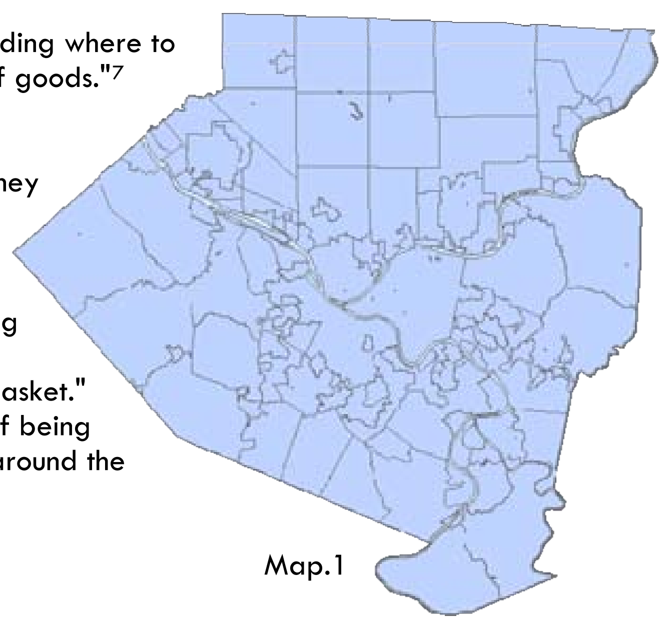
Graph.4[6]

Define Characteristics of Desirable Municipalities

Again, Wilkinsburg could reduce its tax rate if it increased the size of its tax base. To do this, however, Wilkinsburg must increase the value of its property. How does a municipality attract residents and increase its property values? More generally, why do some towns flourish while their neighbors stagnate?

A predominant theory among economists states that when deciding where to live, people compare municipalities as if they were "baskets of goods."[7] Each municipality provides a combination of public services, neighborhood characteristics, and amenities, the "basket."[8] Prospective residents weigh those benefits, against the taxes they must pay to acquire them.

Allegheny County, with over 100 municipalities, gives residents plenty of "baskets" from which to choose. Wilkinsburg alone is surrounded by seven different municipalities. If Wilkinsburg is to be successful, it must provide an attractive "basket." In other words, Wilkinsburg needs to be competitive in terms of being selected by customers who are going to choose where to live around the region.

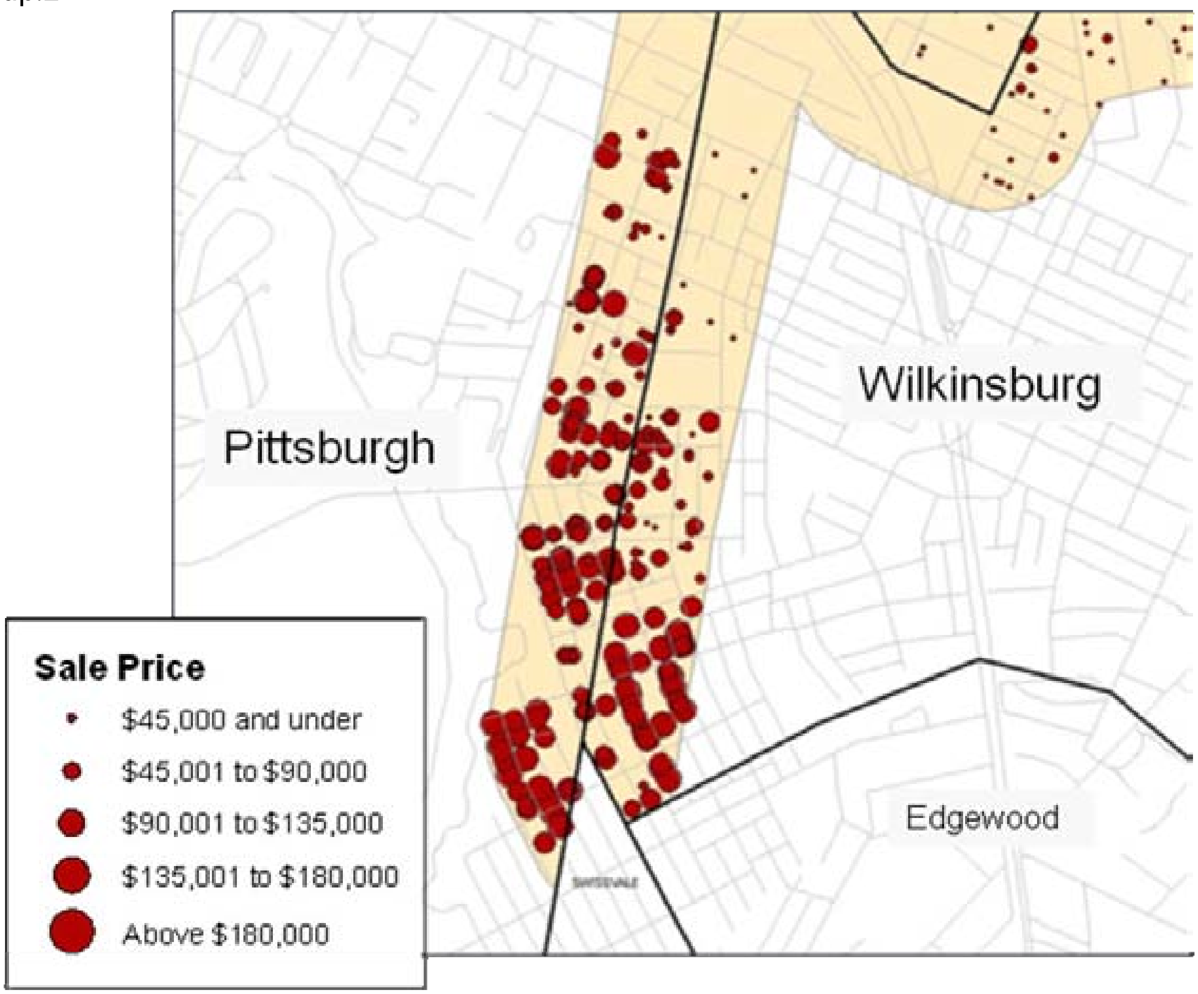


Map.1

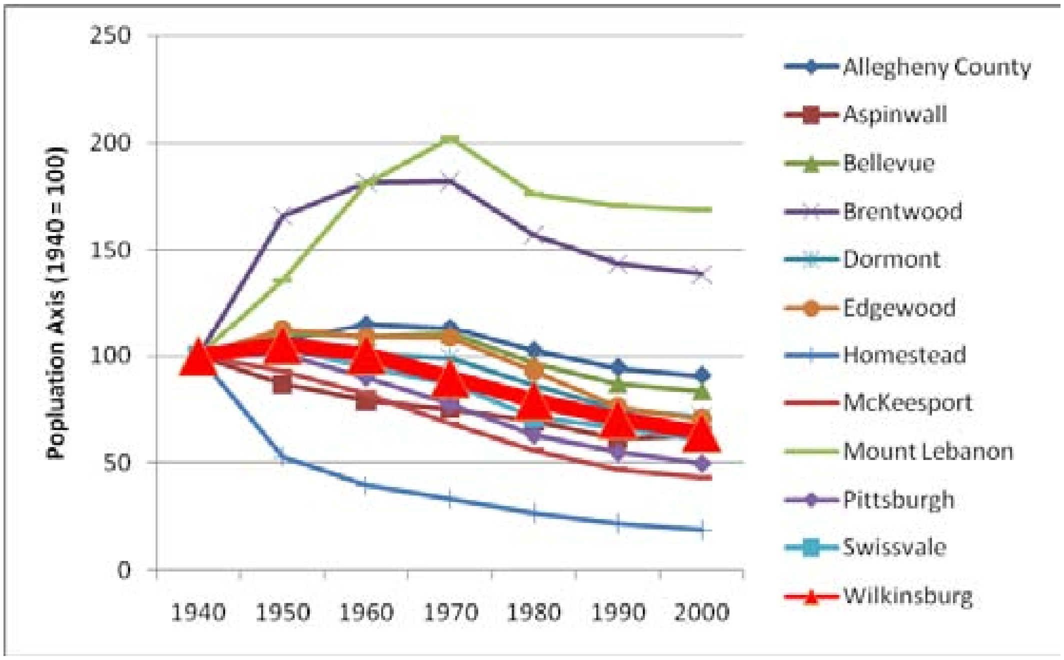
If Wilkinsburg is less attractive, residents with the means to move elsewhere will "vote with their feet" and do so. Therefore, as a place becomes less desirable to live, housing values will plummet, houses will be left vacant, and those who are left will be those with limited means.

Municipalities must compete for residents and investment, and Wilkinsburg has not fared well in this competition. One strong piece of evidence for this failure is the low market value of Wilkinsburg's homes compared to similar homes in neighboring municipalities. The shaded area in the map below shows the area within 1/8 of a mile of the Pittsburgh-Wilkinsburg border, primarily in the Regent Square neighborhood that is shared by both municipalities. The red circles indicate the values of houses sold between January 2000 and December 2007. Despite being located in the same neighborhood, houses on the Wilkinsburg side of the border sell for far less: the median sale price of a home in Pittsburgh near the Pittsburgh-Wilkinsburg border is $95,740. On the Wilkinsburg side of the border, the median price is $54,500.

Map.2[9]

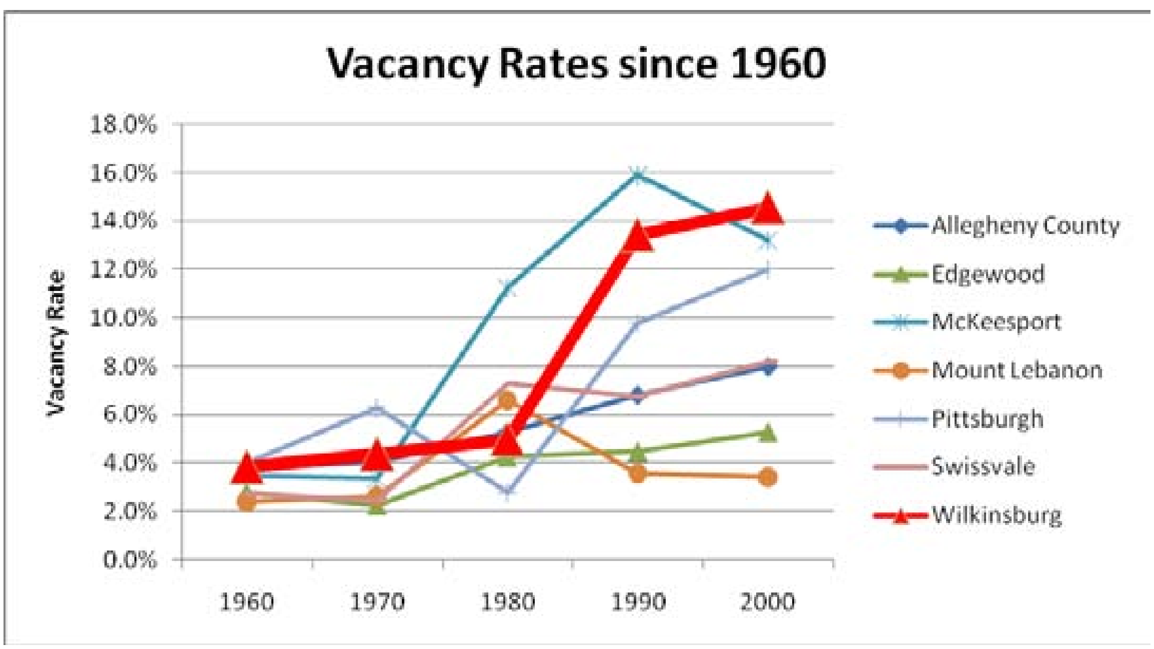


The graph below shows the change in population for the benchmarked municipalities, Wilkinsburg, and Allegheny County. Since 1940, seven of the ten cities, including Wilkinsburg, have lost population at a moderate rate; one has lost the majority of its population and two have seen significant population growth. Since 1970, however, all 11 municipalities have experienced moderate population loss, mirroring the overall trend in the County.



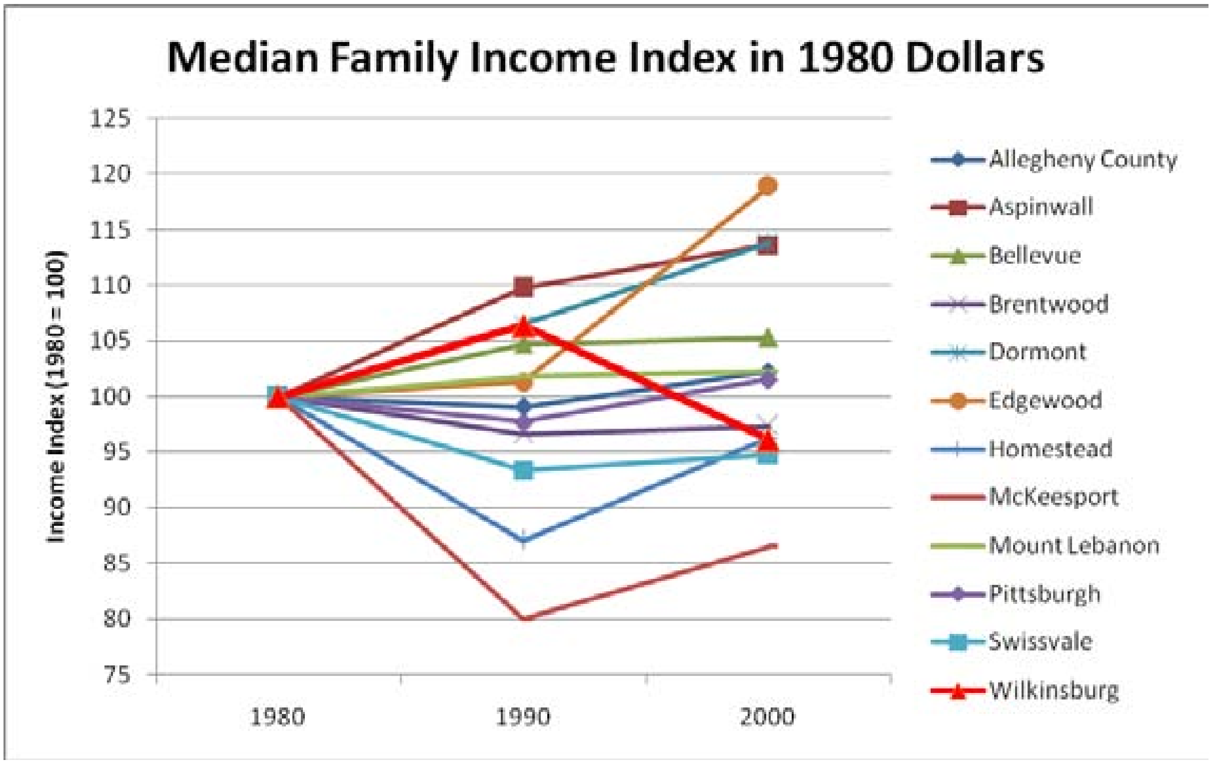
Graph.5[10]

As we saw in graph.5, Wilkinsburg has seen its population decline continuously since 1950, mirroring the overall declining trend in the County. As population has fallen, Wilkinsburg's vacancy rate has increased dramatically while most other benchmarked municipalities with declining population have not. High vacancy rates create a vicious cycle: as the number of vacant lots increases, an area becomes a less desirable place to live, causing further abandonment and even more vacancy.



Graph.6[11]

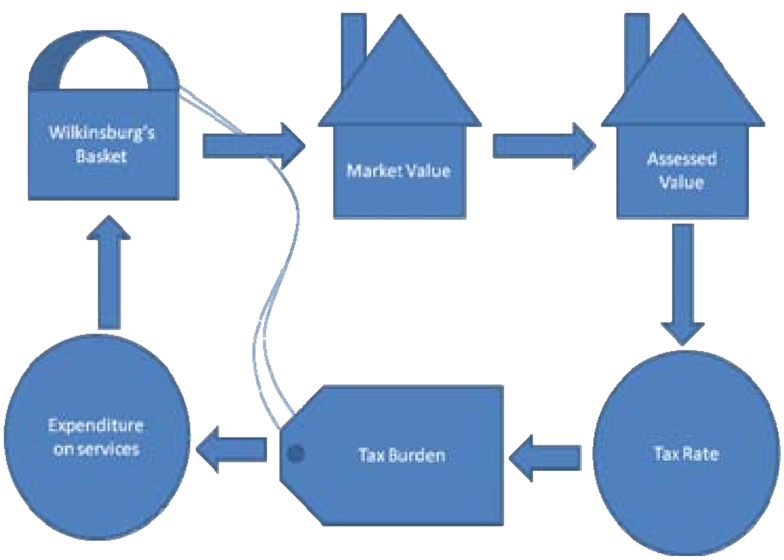
Based on income statistics, Wilkinsburg has grown even less competitive in recent years. It is the only Municipality we benchmarked in which median family income (adjusted for CPI inflation[12]) decreased between 1990 and 2000.



Graph.7[13]

Analyze the "Tax Trap"

The trends we explored indicate that Wilkinsburg's "basket" is not competitive with those of other municipalities. In order to stimulate reinvestment, Wilkinsburg must improve its "basket" and become a more desirable place to live. Unfortunately, this cannot be achieved by changing the tax rate.



Taxes have both positive and negative effects on the "basket" of goods, and therefore on property values. On the positive side, taxes pay for services like schools, public safety, transportation, and infrastructure. On the negative side, taxes discourage investment in neighborhoods. Studies have determined that the magnitudes of these effects are roughly equal. [14] When the tax rate is changed, the positive and negative effects of that change on the "basket of goods" cancel out leaving no change in property value.[15] [16]

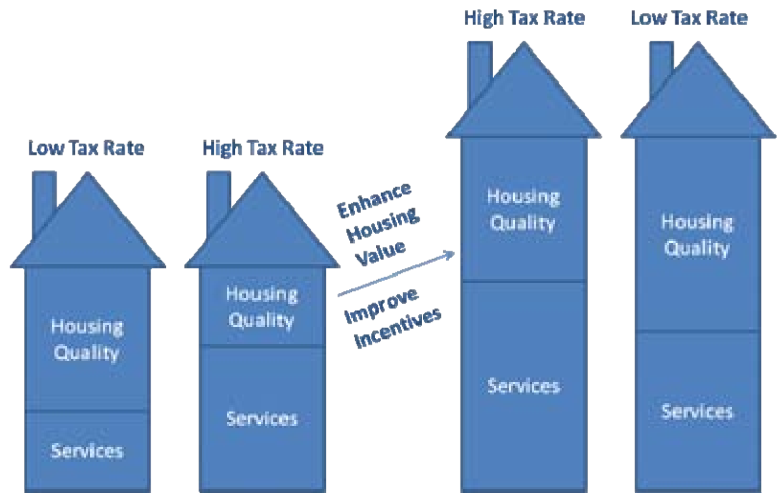
Flow Chart.1

The flowchart shows what happens when Wilkinsburg reduces the tax rate: the tax burden decreases, making Wilkinsburg's "basket" more valuable – but at the same time Wilkinsburg's tax revenue declines, and the reduction in expenditures offsets the beneficial effects of a lower tax burden. The "basket of goods" and the market value of properties do not change. When Wilkinsburg increases the tax rate, the opposite occurs, and the market value of properties still does not change.

What if Wilkinsburg were able to change its "basket of goods" without changing the tax rate? If Wilkinsburg's "basket" improves, the market value of its property will increase, expanding the tax base. Then, the tax rate necessary to maintain the current level of expenditure in Wilkinsburg will fall. If there is a sufficient increase in the value of Wilkinsburg's property and expansion of the tax base, Wilkinsburg will eventually be able to reduce its tax rate.

Summary: Escape the "Tax Trap"

Figure.1



The illustration shows such a scenario by focusing on the incentive effect of taxes. Taxes discourage investment in neighborhoods for two reasons: first, when taxes are high, there is less money in citizens' pockets to maintain, improve, and build new homes. Second, the high tax rate makes investment in the neighborhood relatively less attractive, even if they have sufficient money to make the investment.[17]

In a municipality with a low tax rate, a larger portion of the house's value will come from the physical quality of the house itself. The low tax rate makes improving a house more affordable and economically viable. In a municipality with a high tax rate, a larger portion of a house's value will come from the quality of services available to a resident of that house, as high tax rates help pay for expenditures on public services.

If Wilkinsburg increases the value of its property, expanding its tax base without changing the tax rate, it will have the flexibility to reduce its tax rate without cutting valuable services. This can be accomplished in two ways:

- Remove the disincentives to development that exist in Wilkinsburg without reducing the tax rate.
- Find creative ways to enhance the value of existing property and/or expand tax base

IV. Removing Barriers to Investment

Introduction

Wilkinsburg's high property taxes play an important role in determining the community's "basket of goods," but they also discourage investment in the borough's property. Thus, Wilkinsburg is caught in a "tax trap," where changing the tax rate, up or down, will not improve the borough. To escape this "trap," Wilkinsburg must reduce the impact of its high tax rate on investment, thereby increasing the value of its property without changing the tax rate. However, before Wilkinsburg can do this, it must also identify and remove the major barriers to investment.

The section specifically will:

- Outline the research methodology for removing investment barriers
- Identify investment obstacles
- Analyze methods to remove these obstacles
- Identify strategies to circumvent the high property tax rate
- Examine best practice organizations

Research Methodology

Our research focused on four areas: tax abatement programs, vacant properties, tax liens and other delinquencies, and best practice models applicable to Wilkinsburg.

We began by surveying tax abatement programs available through the state and other sources that could be applicable to Wilkinsburg. In particular, we researched programs which provide abatement schedules for both new residential construction and renovation.

We also explored how vacant property – with and without structures – impacts housing values and investment within a community. This began with a literature review of research maintained by the National Vacant Properties Campaign, a repository of resources and practices which deal with vacant land issues in the United States. We settled on studies done by the Wharton School of Business and the Temple University Center for Public Policy, both of which analyze the impact vacant properties have on sale values and renovation returns on investment.[18] [19] We then built a model to determine if their respective findings were applicable to Wilkinsburg using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software and the Allegheny County assessment database.

Tax delinquencies and other property liens are seen as a major hindrance to sales of Wilkinsburg properties, as this debt is transferred to new owners. To this end, we researched what types of liens exist and the problems with uncovering those liens. We built a database of current property tax liens, using the Prothonotary docket search to find delinquencies by lot and block number.[20] Combined with the county assessment database, we mapped delinquencies and property values in GIS to determine the amount owed versus property value – an indicator of extreme delinquency and hindrance to sale. This data allowed us to determine the location of rental owners, namely non-resident owners, and the assessed value of tax-exempt property in Wilkinsburg.

Community stakeholders were interviewed to better understand how best to clear tax liens and make vacant properties more attractive for purchase and reinvestment. In addition, we researched Pennsylvania's statute for property tax compromise (72 P.S. §§5551 through 5553) and the processes of sheriff's sale and eminent domain.

The combination of a realized need for development capacity and community connection led us to evaluate East Liberty Development, Inc. (ELDI) and Mon Valley Initiative (MVI) as best practice models for creating a redevelopment entity within Wilkinsburg. Both organizations work in communities that have economic hardships similar to Wilkinsburg. MVI's model of site control and redevelopment and ELDI's model of community involvement and outreach are each particularly relevant to Wilkinsburg. Further, we evaluated ELDI and MVI's use of funding sources to finance community reinvestment. We also researched how these organizations managed tax delinquency, tax liens, and cleared property titles.

Reinvestment Hurdles

Communities often face a variety of different obstacles which discourage reinvestment and perpetuate the "tax trap." Here, we focus on vacancies and delinquencies - primary hindrances to reinvestment and redevelopment within Wilkinsburg.

Vacancies

Wilkinsburg's high vacancy rate is a significant obstacle to redevelopment. We estimate that there are over 800 vacant properties and lots in Wilkinsburg.[21] Alarmingly, these vacant parcels represent 14% of Wilkinsburg's entire housing stock. In comparison, Allegheny County's vacancy rate falls around 8%.[22]

Vacant land negatively impacts housing values. Further, high vacancy rates drastically depress property values. The study conducted by the Wharton School of Business determined that per-block vacancy rates significantly influence property values.[23] For instance, housing values decrease by as much as 6.8% on blocks with a vacancy rate between 5-10%.[24] In addition, Temple's 2001 study demonstrates that proximity to vacant properties plays a strong role in property values. The study found that upwards of $7,600 of sales value could be lost due to proximity to abandoned properties.[25] Both results are summarized in Tables 1 and 2. Temple's study further outlines how this depression is also a disincentive to homeowner renovation. For example, $1,000 of investment could yield less than $100 of new property value because the value of a property is largely influenced by that of surrounding properties.[26]

Vacancy Per Block	Decrease in Housing Value
0%	0%
0-5%	-5%
5-10%	-6.8%
Greater than 10%	-10.3%

Table.1[27]

Impact of vacancy rates on property values in Philadelphia's New Kensington Neighborhood

Distance from an Abandoned House	Net Impact on Sales Price
Less than 150 ft	-$7,627
150-299 ft	-$6,819
300-449 ft	-$3,542
450-600 ft	Insignificant

Table.2[28]

Depression of home sales prices in proximity to vacant structures

Wilkinsburg's high vacancy rate represents one of the primary obstacles to reinvestment. Our GIS analysis mirrored these findings. Appendix 1 shows vacancies around three selected development areas, and those areas' assessed property values. We see the pattern of depression around these vacancies. The role vacancies play is perhaps best demonstrated in Wilkinsburg's core area, Appendix 2, where vacancies and property value depression are both widespread and concentrated.[29] This combination has contributed to the erosion of Wilkinsburg's tax base, resulting in higher tax rates to maintain service. This also discourages investment, as home owners realize very little return on renovations. Neighborhoods with low and either stagnant or falling property values lack economic incentive to reinvest.

Delinquencies

While depressed property values discourage investment, money owed by current and former property owners make title transfer near impossible. These debts, known as liens, carry through in an arms-length sale to new owners. Arms-length sales refer to those sales which are carried out between two strangers, each seeking the best outcome. Essentially an arms-length sale represents the true market value of an exchange. Liens discourage investors from buying property which otherwise might be desirable.

A large percentage of Wilkinsburg's properties have liens. Our collection of tax lien data reveals that 2,200 properties (approximately 30% of all borough properties) owe county, borough, and school district taxes.[30] Combined, these properties make up $65 million (or 18%) of Wilkinsburg's total assessed property value and they owe over $5 million in property taxes. In addition, 409 properties owe more than half of their assessed value, while 321 owe more than what they are worth. Vacancies represent a large proportion of these properties - 70% of all vacant properties owe taxes, accounting for $1.3 million of owed taxes.[31]

Since the debt must be settled in the transfer of the title, a prospective buyer could end up paying twice as much – or more – for a property. Appendices 3 and 4 show tax-delinquent and vacant properties in select development areas as well as the core of Wilkinsburg.

Tax liens, alone, are only part of the problem. Many other liens may be levied against property. These include, among others, utility, contractor, mechanic, child support, and federal taxes.[32] These liens are more difficult to find and carry through when the property is sold. The new owner is required to pay this debt, and possibly suffer a hit to their credit rating.

Liens represent a significant obstacle to reinvestment. Property titles must be cleared, prior to sale, to ensure that Wilkinsburg property is more buyer-friendly.

Removing Obstacles to Investment

There is a prominent relationship between vacant properties and tax delinquency in Wilkinsburg. Nearly 70% of all vacant properties owe taxes. Vacancies also make up 93% of the properties that owe at least half their value in taxes, and 97% of those that owe more than they are worth.[33] Vacant parcels significantly depress property values of surrounding homes and, likewise, reduce the incentive to invest. Moreover, unpaid tax liens on vacant properties prevent new investors from purchasing these properties. Wilkinsburg needs to identify methods to clear tax liens, known as title clearing, to encourage new investment in vacant properties.

Our research identified three methods to reduce these property tax liens:

- Tax compromise
- Sheriff's sale
- Eminent domain

Tax Compromise

Tax compromise is a legal process that attempts to remove or reduce the tax liens on properties for sale. The process involves three parties: the seller of the tax liened property, who is unable to pay the debt; the prospective buyer, who wants to purchase the property but not pay the tax liens; and, the taxing body that is owed the tax liens. These three parties must agree to reach a tax compromise through a lengthy process involving the Court of Common Pleas, which can rule in favor of the compromise, rule against it, or decree another form of forgiveness.[34] Unfortunately, the buyer and seller must go through this process with each taxing body who is owed money, which can mean multiple trips to the court with potentially different outcomes each time. Currently, Wilkinsburg's Borough Council is discussing an ordinance codifying the tax compromise.[35]

Moreover, the compromise, illustrated in Figure 1, is a method that relies on full-party agreement and only addresses property tax liens. Non-tax liens, which require research to uncover and address, are not addressed. Thus, a new homeowner can be unexpectedly saddled with more debt than what they were prepared to pay. Overall, this method is unfriendly to a purchaser because it is very cumbersome to administer, can take up to a year to complete, and does not clear the property title. [36]

Sheriff's Sale and Eminent Domain

Sheriff's sale and eminent domain are two alternative title-clearing methods. They are more effective and expedient solutions compared to tax compromise, and address all liens as opposed to just property debt. Both, however, have their advantages and drawbacks.

A sheriff's sale occurs when a property is seized by a taxing body and then sold in a public auction. Proceeds from this sale pay off any property debts, starting with taxing bodies and then other creditors. In a typical process, a redevelopment entity initiates the process by targeting parcels for redevelopment and sale. The entity then coordinates with a taxing body who performs research (due diligence) to determine what is owed on the property. All uncovered debt is bundled with the property and included in the sale. The taxing body carrying out the sale becomes the dominant lien holder – lien holder of the first position - and is the first to receive proceeds from the sale with other lien holders receiving what remains after its respective debts and fees are repaid. During the sale, parties bid on the parcels. Successful bidders pay the taxing body the sale price plus research fees.[37]

Eminent domain is another expedient method to clear titles and seize property. Allegheny County Economic Development (ACED) has used this in Wilkinsburg. Additionally, MVI has worked with ACED to use eminent domain in their redevelopment processes. Usually, a redevelopment entity targets parcels for redevelopment and sale, and then coordinates the eminent domain process with ACED. An announcement is sent out 90 days prior to ACED's seizure of the property. Current owners are required to settle their respective debts if they wish to halt the seizure and lien holders must forgive all past debt if they wish to gain anything from the seizure of the property. At the end of the 90 days, ACED pays the current owner the property's assessed value and seizes the property. ACED then sells the property to the redevelopment entity for the assessed value plus eminent domain administrative fees. MVI has developed sixty properties in the past two years using eminent domain. [38]

Both methods have advantages and disadvantages. Figure 2 compares the two options.

Sheriff's Sale	Eminent Domain
Pros	Pros
• **Acquire property for less than the assessed value**	• Complete control of acquisition and sale • Title cleared once property acquired • Tax collector agreement not impacted
Cons	Cons
• **Government research may miss liens, which carry through to a new buyer** • **Borough's contract with tax collector is a hindrance to this process** • **The property could be sold to an undesirable purchaser – highest bid wins**	• Buyer must pay assessed value, which could be higher than what it might have cost at sheriff's sale • Social stigma of eminent domain • Federal tax liens are not cleared

Figure.2
Characteristics of sheriff's sale vs. eminent domain
(Source: Mon Valley Initiative, Doug Van Haitsma. October 30, 2007)

Circumventing the High Property Tax Rate

Our data analysis concluded that although Wilkinsburg's tax burden is average, its millage rate is high. This rate influences individual reinvestment decisions. Homeowners do not believe that they benefit from the value of their homes increasing. Many believe that investment in their property will dramatically raise their taxes and they fear the risk of being priced-out of their home. Additionally, any prospective investor views the millage rate as a significant disadvantage as their individual property tax burden is far less in surrounding municipalities. Therefore, Wilkinsburg must find a way to reduce the impact of its high tax rate on investment.

Tax Abatement Programs

One viable method to reduce the impact of Wilkinsburg's high millage rate is to implement a residential tax abatement program. Tax abatement programs provide qualifying property owners with a partial exemption of the taxes associated with the increase in housing value resulting from property improvements.

Our research revealed that few tax abatement programs exist for residential-only development. At both the federal and state level, a relative dearth of residential development incentives exist compared to the commercial arena, which have KOZ, KOEZ, LERTA, and New Market Tax Credits, among others. Historical and low income tax credits are available through federal sources but can limit both the speed and diversity of reinvestment. Hence, we focused on Act 42 which is a true property tax abatement program made available through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.[39]

Act 42 provides tax exemptions for renovations and new construction and encourages residents to invest in their community. The Commonwealth provides taxing bodies with the authority to create Act 42 districts in which to offer tax abatement programs. Since a number of schedules and durations are available, we have included the entire statute in Appendix 7.

Through a tax abatement schedule, Act 42 enables homeowners to make needed improvements to their property without facing dramatic increases in taxes. It also encourages new investors to enter the district through these same exemptions. For example, a prospective buyer of an Act 42 home could realize the following:

- A renovated home assessed at $150,000 would have a taxable value of $83,887.00[40]
- S/he pays $1,174 of borough taxes - $926 less than without Act 42.
- The exempted property would have an effective tax rate of 7.8295 mills.

This is more competitive with neighboring Churchill, Edgewood, Swissvale, and Pittsburgh, whose millage rates are 4, 6.61, 9.1, and 10.8 respectively, than the borough's current rate of 14 mills.[41]

Although Act 42 will incentivize reinvestment in Wilkinsburg, an extraordinarily high level of reinvestment must occur to lower the tax rate. Our findings reveal the magnitude of reinvestment which must occur to lower Wilkinsburg taxes. In Wilkinsburg, one mill equates to $273,000 of tax revenue.[42] That is, $273,000 of new tax revenue must be generated to reduce the borough tax rate by one mill. Thus, based upon Wilkinsburg's current millage rate, taxable property value must increase by $19.5 million (or 5.3%) to reduce tax rate by one mill.

Analyzed differently, 135 housing starts, at $150,000 each, would raise property values enough to cut millage. There are other ways to reach the $19.5 million needed to lower millage. For example, if Wilkinsburg designated the entire borough as an Act 42 district, 50 housing starts at $150,000 each and 1,500 existing homeowner renovations at $10,000 each would generate the value. Taking the most aggressive approach to Act 42, Wilkinsburg could realize a millage decrease in 10 years (see Figure 2), and provide a strong investment incentive. While new housing starts alone cannot reduce the millage rate, tax abatement programs can encourage reinvestment and improve the overall housing quality throughout Wilkinsburg. New housing combined with current residential renovation can potentially reduce the millage rate. Combined with other development strategies for vacant lots, increased property value could be realized.

Capacity to Manage Reinvestment Strategies: A Best Practice Approach

Through our research we identified the obstacles to investment and analyzed methods to remove these barriers. Our findings revealed – and underscored – the need for a third-party non government entity to manage this process and bring resources to the initiative. While Wilkinsburg has begun the process of developing a non-profit entity to manage a Main Streets program, no real third-party capacity exists within the borough to manage reinvestment through redevelopment or other strategies. We determined that any model must draw heavily from the community and be able to operate without resources afforded in neighboring Pittsburgh. Hence, we examined two best practice models - East Liberty Development, Inc. (ELDI) and the Mon Valley Initiative (MVI) - which could be used for creating a redevelopment entity responsible for managing reinvestment strategies within the borough. Each group brings unique components from which to draw, and those specific components are outlined in this section.

The ELDI survey revealed organizational strengths which could serve as a model for the formation of a similar Wilkinsburg entity. ELDI has a proven track record of redevelopment of what was one of the most blighted and crime-ridden areas of Pittsburgh. A cornerstone of this redevelopment was an exhaustive and comprehensive community planning prior to beginning development. ELDI continually revisits this plan, and is contemplating a new one as they reach their ten-year anniversary.[43] Though challenging to implement, this process has helped East Liberty and ELDI gain national recognition for innovative and inclusive redevelopment strategies. Such a process would also be beneficial in Wilkinsburg, as the level of reinvestment proposed is quite significant and potentially community-altering.

MVI, for its part, has a proven track record of redevelopment in the mid Mon Valley in areas arguably in far worse economic condition and with much more severe disinvestment than in Wilkinsburg. Formed in the late 1980's, MVI is a coalition of mid Mon Valley CDCs in municipalities hardest hit by the collapse of steel and supporting industries nearly 30 years ago.[44] Unlike ELDI, MVI does not have the advantage of the resources of a large metropolitan center. In spite of that, MVI has created more than 252 units of affordable housing throughout the Mon Valley region.[45] Their experience in title clearing has been very successful, leading to 60 new development projects in the past two years.

These two CDCs demonstrate that there are effective methods of developing blighted areas in the Pittsburgh region, and both would be good models from which to draw best-practices.

Summary

Our research shows that Wilkinsburg can escape its "tax trap" by removing major barriers to investment and encouraging reinvestment. The major barriers are vacant parcels, tax delinquency and other property debts, and the impact of the property tax rate on individual investment. Vacant parcels significantly depress the property values of surrounding homes and, likewise, reduce the incentive to invest. Unpaid property debts – tax or otherwise - dissuade new owners from purchasing property in Wilkinsburg. Finally, the impact of the high property tax rate on individuals discourages investors and current residents from investing in their homes.

Wilkinsburg can reclaim vacant and tax delinquent properties through two suggested methods: sheriff's sale or eminent domain. Moreover, an existing tax abatement program, Act 42, can provide tax relief to investors and residents who want to improve their homes. This makes Wilkinsburg more competitive with its neighbors and the county in general.

However, while removing obstacles to investment, Wilkinsburg needs to support its actions with a complementary development strategy to encourage investment and expand the tax base. This requires both governmental and community involvement. It also requires a third-party, community-driven redevelopment entity which acts as the executor of a community based reinvestment plan.

V. Sustainable Development Strategies

"Green" Strategies for Success

Introduction

Wilkinsburg confronts a high property tax rate, high vacancy rate, a low demand for housing and is caught in a cyclical "tax trap" of disinvestment and blight. However, Wilkinsburg can escape the "tax trap" by improving the market value of its housing stock and attracting new residents. Removing barriers to investment such as reclaiming vacant lots, addressing tax liens, and tax abatement programs are essential strategies for laying the groundwork for revitalization, but implemented alone cannot attract the investment needed to escape the "tax trap." To catalyze revitalization, Wilkinsburg also needs to implement a development strategy that improves the quality of life for its residents and recreates its image in the region.

Sustainable community development represents one strategy to attract new residents, encourage reinvestment, expand the tax base, improve the quality of life and livability, and create a new community image. Sustainable community development refers to a "green" approach that uses economic development strategies to promote the strategic revitalization of an area while improving the quality of life and local environment.[46] A "green" approach coordinates market-oriented investments with existing assets to foster innovative solutions to revitalization efforts.[47] Through applying sustainable community development strategies, Wilkinsburg can escape the "tax trap" by transforming itself into a thriving community where people choose to live, work, and invest.

Specifically, this section will:

- Outline the research methodology for promoting sustainable community development
- Define the necessary components for successful revitalization efforts
- Examine a variety of successful sustainable development strategies
- Analyze the net impact of green strategies as a tool for revitalization

Research Methodology

Our methodology is based on a two-pronged approach to evaluate the viability of applying sustainable development strategies in Wilkinsburg. We started by identifying international and domestic communities that use green principals and practices as revitalization strategies. Then we narrowed our list to three benchmarked communities for a more comprehensive analysis.

International and Domestic Best Practices

We choose communities that were able to increase community population, utilize vacant buildings, increase the tax base and raise property values through the implementation of green practices.

We identified over one dozen communities worldwide which use principals of sustainable development to stimulate reinvestment and revitalization.[48] These include:

- Bamberton, Canada
- Cleveland, OH, USA
- Crickhowell Televillage, UK
- Crystal Waters, Australia
- Davis City, CA, USA
- Ecolonia, The Netherlands
- Greenwich Millennium Village, UK
- Halifax, Australia
- Ithaca, NY, USA
- Kolding, Denmark
- New Kensington, Philadelphia, PA, USA
- Wilhelmina Gasthuis-Terrein, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Wilshire Center/Koreatown, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Benchmarking Relevant Communities

After researching these communities, we narrowed the list of best practices communities to those that successfully implemented green revitalization programs and most closely resembled Wilkinsburg. These communities had at least three of the following characteristics:

- Urban area with similar demographic characteristics
- Economic decline and/or job loss
- Population loss
- Diverse community
- High vacancy rate
- Affordable community
- Diverse housing stock
- Mass transit station

Based on these criteria we identified three communities that utilized sustainable development strategies and resembled Wilkinsburg:

- Detroit-Shoreway, Cleveland, OH
- New Kensington, Philadelphia, PA
- Wilshire Center/Koreatown, Los Angeles, CA

We analyzed these communities to identify sustainable development strategies that could feasibly be implemented in Wilkinsburg.

Detroit-Shoreway, Cleveland, Ohio

The Detroit-Shoreway community, located in Cleveland, is approximately 2 square miles in size with roughly 17,000 residents.[49] It is known for its rich cultural and religious history, exhibited by its many churches and cultural groups.[50] The community shares similar characteristics to Wilkinsburg such as demographic diversity, affordable housing, a mass transit station and mixed income. Its rustbelt location means that it also experienced similar economic and population decline as the Pittsburgh region. Further, owner occupancy is approximately 30%, which is less than in Wilkinsburg.[51] Detroit-Shoreway's sustainable development project, known as the eco-village project, originated from two Cleveland-based environmental non-profit organizations in 1995. Detroit-

Shoreway was selected for the pilot project because of its neighborhood characteristics and the existence of a well-established local community development corporation - Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization (DSCDO).[52]

New Kensington, Philadelphia, PA

This community is comprised of several distinct neighborhoods and is located in Philadelphia. This diverse community shares many characteristics with Wilkinsburg such as high crime rate, high vacancy rate, low median income, demographic diversity, affordable and unique housing stock, and access to mass transit. Similar to Wilkinsburg, the majority of this area lost population between 1990 and 2000. Despite New Kensington's reputation as one of Philadelphia's poorest and most crime-ridden neighborhoods, the area has become a national model for using sustainable development strategies to promote revitalization. These strategies have been implemented through a partnership between New Kensington Community Development Corporation (NKCDC) and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS).

Wilshire Center/Koreatown, Los Angeles, CA

This Los Angeles community of 500 people is a two-block mixed-use working class neighborhood, consisting of 13 historically significant apartment buildings. Community members promote a healthy neighborhood – ecologically, socially, and economically. They aspire to reduce the burden of government and increase neighborhood self-reliance in a variety of areas such as food production, energy and water use, affordable housing, transit, recreation, waste reduction and education. They plan to convert neighborhood housing from rental to permanently affordable ownership and to raise the quality of neighborhood life while reducing environmental impact. They serve as a public demonstration project of sustainable community development. The community shares their processes, strategies and techniques with others through tours, talks, workshops, conferences, public advocacy and the media.[53]

Identify Components for Success

The benchmarked communities implemented a variety of different green programs to promote strategic community revitalization. Despite different approaches to sustainable development, all displayed three common components which we believe are critical for any successful green program.

Organizational Leadership

One of the most striking attributes of each benchmarked community's green strategy was the presence of strong organizational leadership to drive and manage change. In every case, a well-established community development corporation (CDC) implemented green programs as one component of their overall revitalization efforts.

In the 1980's, many socially conscious and ecologically minded Wilshire Center/Koreatown residents searched for alternative solutions to the problems of congestion, smog, concrete, freeways, runaway development, crime, alienation, and homelessness. Within this context, Cooperative Resources Service Project (CRSP) was established as a resource center for small ecological and cooperative communities. CRSP's leadership and financial support led to Wilshire Center/Koreatown's national recognition as a secure, healthy and high quality neighborhood.[54]

Similarly Detroit-Shoreway's Eco-Village project, which originated in 1995 from two Cleveland-based environmental non-profit organizations, looks to counter suburban sprawl and out migration. EcoCity Cleveland - one of the environmental non-profits - and DSCDO, the local CDC, collaborate on fundraising and project activities. DSCDO's involvement was integral to the project's adoption by residents because of their ability to access existing networks of community groups influential in the neighborhood. [55]

Community Participation

Every successful community we analyzed emphasized the importance of community participation. Working collaboratively with the community ensures that the needs of the community are recognized and helps build community ownership. Moreover, community residents are great resources for innovative ideas. The participation process increases interaction among community members, which consequently improves information dissemination.

For example, all the projects and activities in the Wilshire Center/Koreatown community are decided upon through open and participatory consensus decision-making and conflict resolution processes. They use several mechanisms to increase community engagement, including: informal dinner gatherings, meetings, work parties, workshops, conferences, forums, special events and electronic communication.[56]

Further, the first step in the Detroit-Shoreway project process was a large community forum, which resulted in the first comprehensive conceptual plan of the pilot project. All major project activities involved extensive input and feedback from community members through community design and planning workshops.

Creative Funding Strategies

The final critical component for success is the use of creative funding strategies. The benchmarked communities' CDCs identified a variety of funding sources to support their activities.

NKCDC forged strategic partnerships with public, private, and nonprofit agencies to identify green resources. For example, NKCDC collaborated with the Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development (a government agency) and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (a nonprofit urban greening organization) to promote sustainable development strategies.

In Wilshire Center/Koreatown, CRSP circumvented the institutional banking system, by developing its own investment fund. The Ecological Revolving Loan Fund (ELF) accepts loans from lenders interested in socially and environmentally responsible investments. The fund started accruing capital by saving money and setting up a group account collected from some of CRSP members. CRSP collected money and short-term loans from investors for basic rehabilitation of the buildings. Initially, CRSP had only $20,000 in savings, but within seven years they purchased and acquired their first building. CRSP currently owns nearly a million dollars worth of historically significant properties.[57]

Essentially, there is no set formula for funding green development activities. In each of the benchmarked communities, it was the responsibility of the CDC to research, identify and access funding streams to finance project activities. Generally, the funding sources consisted of a combination of federal, state and local grants, foundation grants, private-public partnerships, and private bank loans.

That said, funding sources shift and are typically unique to the region. Thus, it is imperative organizations promoting development consistently stays abreast of the funding environment. Potential funding sources for green development in Wilkinsburg can be found in Appendix 6.

Implement Sustainable Development Strategies

The benchmarked communities implemented four major sustainable development strategies to revitalize their neighborhoods. These strategies are vacant lot management, new parks and pathways, energy efficiency, and green building.

Vacant Lot Management

Vacant lot management represents one of the most feasible and cost effective strategies to promote the revitalization of Wilkinsburg. This tool strives to improve the overall appearance of the community which helps to encourage reinvestment, improve housing quality, attract new residents, and improve the quality of life for existing residents.[58]

Wilkinsburg has approximately 800 parcels of unmaintained vacant land that negatively impact the community.[59] These vacant lots cause a myriad of problems including tax revenue loss and disinvestment.

NKCDC has one of the nations' most effective vacant lot management programs, which has reclaimed over 65% of the 1,500 vacant land parcels.[60] There are several vacant lot management strategies, which Wilkinsburg can employ to help revitalize the community.

Clean and Green Lots

The goal of cleaning and greening lots is to transform abandoned vacant lots into clean and green open spaces. NKCDC partnered with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) to employ a land stabilization process, which involves removing trash and debris, leveling the ground, adding topsoil, and planting grass seed. Innovative landscape design discouraged dumping and other illicit activities.[61] In New Kensington, it cost approximately $0.85 per square foot to stabilize a lot.[62] NKCDC and PHS initiated a monthly maintenance plan that includes cutting the grass, removing trash and debris, tree trimming, and mulching. Maintenance of lots cost approximately $0.09 per square feet.[63]

Side Yard Program

Similar to Wilkinsburg, NKCDC implemented a highly successful side yard program that assists area residents in the title transfer of adjacent vacant lots. This program brings land back onto the tax roll which increases total tax revenue. In addition, side yard programs improve the "curb appeal" of the block, encourage reinvestment, and enable neighborhood residents to access additional property for gardens and other needs.[64]

Urban Garden Program & Garden Center

The popularity of urban gardens is rapidly increasing throughout the United States. Residents reclaim vacant land through developing individual and community urban gardens. New Kensington, Detroit-Shoreway, and Wilshire/Koreatown each have community and individual gardens. Often the community gardens were established and maintained by neighborhood groups. NKCDC created a garden center, which offers high quality, low-cost plants, compost, and mulch. The proceeds are reinvested into the vacant land management program.[65]

Wilkinsburg's abundant vacant lots can be transformed into productive parcels that provide social and economic returns.

Return on Investment

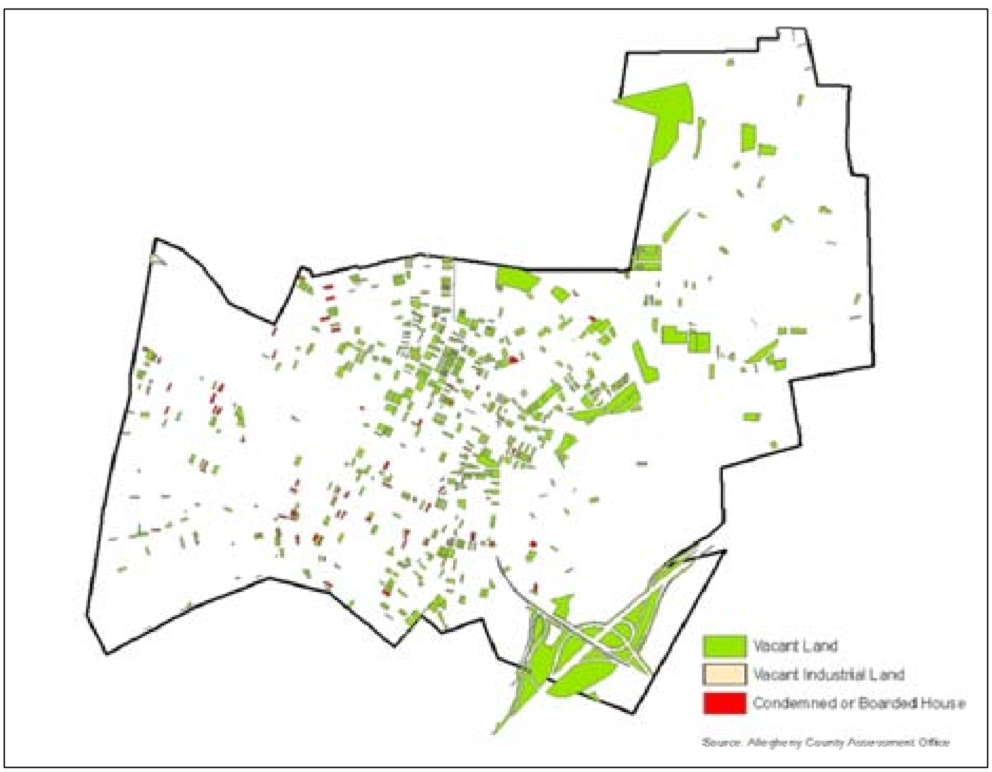
Vacant lot management provides a significant return on investment resulting in increased housing values. In 2004, the Wharton School of Business analyzed the impacts of place-based investment greening strategies in New Kensington. Specifically, the study focused on measuring the impact of NKCDC's greening program on neighborhood revitalization.[66]

The study determined that vacant lot improvements result in surrounding housing values increasing by as much as 30%.[67] In addition, new tree plantings were found to increase the housing values in surrounding properties by approximately 10%.[68] This study indicates that vacant lot management is an investment with a high payoff; the investment in New Kensington "translates to a $4 million gain in property value through tree plantings and a $12 million gain through lot improvements."[69] The Wharton Greening Study provides solid evidence that greening investments can result in significant economic returns.

Wilkinsburg residents potentially can experience real returns. The following example illustrates the approximate financial return, which a homeowner might experience through a vacant lot management program. We assume that the current market value of a home adjacent to a vacant lot in Wilkinsburg is $25,000. If the adjacent vacant lot was cleaned and greened the homeowner might experience as much as a 30% increase (or $7,500 increase) in housing value.

Parks and Pathways

The creation of community parks and walking pathways is another successful green development strategy. Increasing green space through the creation of new parks or revitalization of existing parks improves neighborhood livability and helps create a residential friendly image. For example, the Detroit-Shoreway community plans to convert 22 acres of green space into a recreational center that incorporates ecological design, environmental education, and public art. Wilkinsburg can capitalize on its vacant lots to create parks that provide much needed communal area for recreation. This is particularly true in the core of Wilkinsburg, given its large amount of vacant lots. The map below illustrates the parcels of vacant land, vacant industrial land, and condemned houses throughout Wilkinsburg.



Map.3

Pedestrian friendly pathways connect community components through walking paths, bike paths and nature trails. Pathways get people out of their cars and walking in the community, which improves livability, attracts visitors, and can stimulate economic growth.

Wilkinsburg can connect its community components through a pathway that winds throughout the neighborhood. For example, a potential pathway (see Map.4, below) links busway stations, the linear park, PHLF's new developments, Garden Dreams, and the recently vacated Jane Holmes Residence, which is an excellent opportunity for a new social or economic anchor. The pathway winds through vacant lots and areas that potentially could be converted to new green space. Thus, residents and visitors can walk on a unique, natural route to access the community's components. Moreover, there is tremendous opportunity to create walking pathways that connect the architectural assets of the community's historical homes and churches.

Map.4

Energy Efficiency and Green Building

The other successful strategies found in our benchmarked communities are energy efficiency programs and green building. A burgeoning environmental ethic, increasing fiscal pressure, and the changing nature of community development has propelled energy efficiency and green building into mainstream development strategies.

Our benchmarked communities share three major energy efficiency programs: weatherization programs, residential retrofits, and solar energy. For example, residents in the Detroit-Shoreway community utilized Cleveland's weatherization program and energy efficient retrofits to implement a range of improvements to their homes, including: improved insulation, high-efficiency furnaces, and super-efficient windows. As a result, residents in these homes experienced real savings in energy and utility bills.

Wilkinsburg residents can access the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's weatherization program, which enables low-income families to, on average, reduce heating bills by 31% and overall energy bills by $358 per year.[70] Moreover, Governor Rendell's Energy Independence Strategy provides rebates to residents who purchase new efficient air conditioners and refrigerators, which could save about $600 a year. Finally, under the new PA Sunshine grant initiative, residents are eligible for rebates of up to 50% of the cost of installing solar panels.[71]

In addition to efficiency gains, our benchmarked communities constructed green homes. Green buildings create healthy living environments for community members through more resource-efficient models of construction, renovation, operation, maintenance, and demolition. Current research demonstrates the excellent environmental, economic, and social benefits of green buildings.[72] For example, "green buildings, when compared to conventional buildings, are on average 25-30% more energy efficient, characterized by low electricity peak consumption, and more likely to generate renewable energy on-site."[73]

The Detroit-Shoreway community utilized green building techniques on three new housing developments, including a $4.1 million 20-town home development. The buildings in this development pay roughly half the heating costs of an average sized Midwestern household.[74]

Energy efficiency and green building strategies result in residential financial savings in the long run, creating a healthier community and promoting a new neighborhood image.

Impact of Sustainable Development Strategies

Community revitalization is the net impact of sustainable development strategies in our benchmarked communities. Through implementing sustainable strategies, these communities were able to recreate their image and improve community livability. In turn, this attracted new residents and investment. As a result of these activities, most of these communities experienced an increase in property values and tax base, an increase in population or stabilization of population, and transformation of vacant lots over a 10-year period. For example, the Detroit Shoreway community went from being the "back 40" with no investment before the project to the Cleveland "eco-village," which is nationally known for its sustainable development activities.[75]

Wilkinsburg can move towards escaping its "tax trap" by catalyzing revitalization through sustainable development strategies. Wilkinsburg can creatively transform its negative assets, such as vacant lots, to positive assets. However, before it can implement sustainable development strategies in a comprehensive manner, it must first establish the necessary components for success.

VI. Conclusion

Taxes play a significant role in the level of investment in a borough. While there is a great deal of concern over Wilkinsburg's property tax rate, the rate alone explains only a small part of Wilkinsburg's tax situation. Although the property tax rate is high, our research shows that the tax burden is average. Thus, the borough is not overtaxed compared to other boroughs in Allegheny County, despite its high property tax rate.

Property taxes have a critical role in providing public services such as schools, public safety, transportation, and infrastructure, which impact Wilkinsburg's "basket of goods." Alternatively, high property taxes discourage investment in the borough. Consequently, Wilkinsburg is caught in a "tax trap" where changing the existing rate, up or down, will not impact property values and the borough's "basket of goods." To escape the "trap," Wilkinsburg must increase its total assessed property value and expand its tax base; consequently, allowing the borough to reduce the property tax rate.

Before Wilkinsburg can escape the "tax trap," major investment barriers must be removed. These, in particular, are vacant parcels, tax and other delinquencies, and the property tax rate's impact on individual investment. Vacant parcels and tax delinquency can be resolved either through sheriff's sale or eminent domain. The property tax rate impact can be reduced through a borough-wide application of the Act 42 tax abatement program at the school district and borough levels. However, removing the barriers to investment without a complementary development strategy will not propel Wilkinsburg out of its "tax trap."

To catalyze revitalization, Wilkinsburg must implement a development strategy that improves the quality of life of its residents and recreates its image in the region. Sustainable development strategies represent a proven method that attracts new residents and investment, encourages reinvestment, expands the tax base, improves the quality of life and livability, and creates a new community image. Paired with redevelopment incentives, Wilkinsburg can move towards escaping its "tax trap" by catalyzing revitalization through sustainable development strategies. The borough has the opportunity to creatively transform its liabilities, such as vacant lots, to positive assets such as parks and green space.

However, before Wilkinsburg can implement these strategies in a comprehensive manner, it must first establish organizational leadership and community support.

By removing barriers to investment and implementing sustainable development strategies, Wilkinsburg can begin moving towards an economically, socially and environmentally healthier future.

VII. Recommendations

General Action Steps:

- Develop inclusive community plan with community residents and stakeholders that outlines the community's strategic objectives
- Form a 501(c) 3 nonprofit community development corporation (CDC) to execute the neighborhood plan (or expand existing organization or partner with established CDC).

Sustainable Development Action Steps:

- Form an green development technical advisory board comprised of environmental and green building experts
- Form a strategic partnership with CDCs that have successfully implemented green activities, such as DSCDO in Cleveland or NKCDC in New Kensington, PA.
- Complete a comprehensive survey of vacant lots and condemned buildings in Wilkinsburg (municipal data is outdated)
- Inform residents of green funding options, particularly for energy efficiency programs
- Coordinate vacant lot management and cleaning programs with residents and municipality
- Create new parks and pathways that connect community social and economic cores

Reinvestment Action Steps:

Community Action Steps

- Establish dialog with ELDI and MVI to better understand their respective core competencies as they relate to reinvestment strategies in Wilkinsburg
- Charge the CDC to identify the best methods by which to gain control over targeted properties, and work closely with the necessary government agencies in this acquisition and title clearing
- Pursue a pilot project, possibly located in the Wilkinsburg's core, to demonstrate viability of reinvestment via redevelopment and greening strategies within an urban borough

Government Action Steps

- Declare the entirety of Wilkinsburg an Act 42 tax abatement district
- Provide an Act 42 exemption schedule which is as aggressive as allowed under current statute
- Evaluate the Portnoff & Associates collection contract and renegotiate terms more amenable to a borough or school district run sheriff's sale (a copy is available in Appendix 8)
- Research tax liens on properties the CDC desires to gain control over via sheriff's sale
- Enhance side lot program through title clearing practices and Act 42
- When necessary, assist the CDC in obtaining funding

For further discussion of certain recommendations, please refer to Appendix 9.

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Appendix 1
Vacancies and Property Values Around Select Development Sites with 150-foot Buffer
(Source: Allegheny County Assessment Database)

Crescent Apartments & Hamnett Place

Peebles Square

Penn Avenue Corridor

Legend

Note: $8.75 is approx. $35,000 for the average Wilkinsburg house. $12.50 is approx. $50,000

Appendix 2
Vacancies and Property Values in Wilkinsburg's Core with 150-foot Buffer
(Source: Allegheny County Assessment Database)

Legend

Note: $8.75 is approx. $35,000 for the average Wilkinsburg house. $12.50 is approx. $50,000

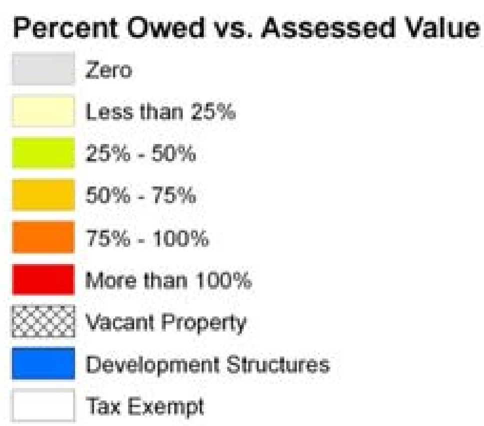
Appendix 3
Amount Owed vs. Assessed Value Around Select Development Sites
(Source: Allegheny County Assessment Database, Allegheny County Office of Prothonotary Civil Docket Search)

Crescent Apartments & Hamnett Place

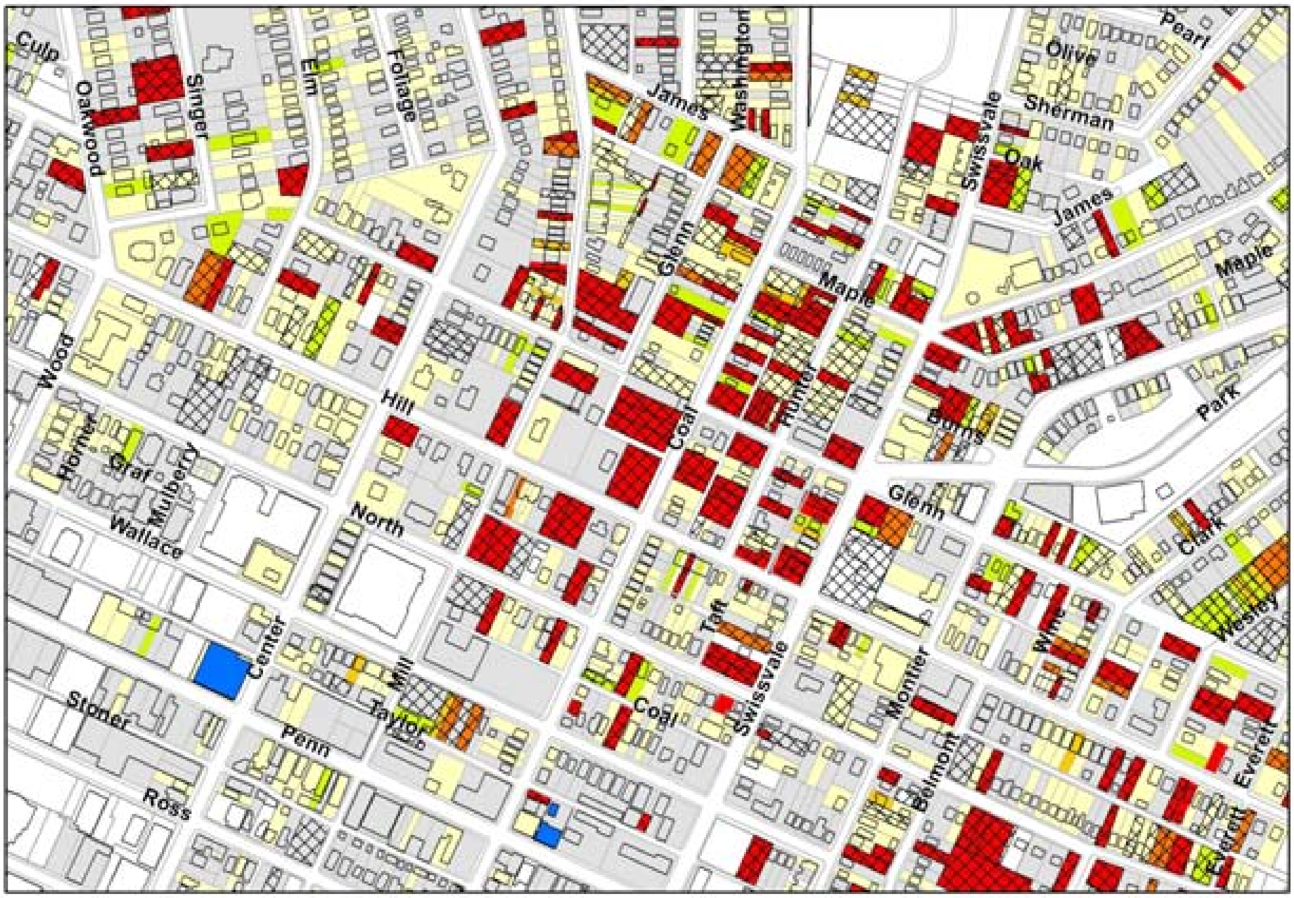
Peebles Square

Penn Avenue Corridor

Legend



Appendix 4
Amount Owed vs. Assessed Value in Wilkinsburg's Core
(Source: Allegheny County Assessment Database, Allegheny County Office of Prothonotary Civil Docket Search)



Legend

Appendix 5
Calculating Renovation Exemption Amount Available Under Act 42
(Sources: Pennsylvania Statute 72 P.S. §§4711, US Census)

Year	Census Price Index	Act 42 Index Ratio	Act 42 Eligible Amount
1971	24.1	NA	$ 10,000.00
1972	25.6	1.065	$10,651.80
1973	27.9	1.087	$11,578.04
1974	30.5	1.093	$12,658.66
1975	33.7	1.107	$14,013.72
1976	36.6	1.086	$15,214.41
1977	41.3	1.127	$17,152.66
1978	47.3	1.145	$19,639.79
1979	54.0	1.142	$22,425.12
1980	59.5	1.102	$24,709.16
1981	64.2	1.079	$26,660.98
1982	65.7	1.023	$27,283.90
1983	67.1	1.021	$27,865.29
1984	69.8	1.040	$28,986.54
1985	70.7	1.013	$29,360.30
1986	73.4	1.038	$30,481.55
1987	77.4	1.054	$32,142.67
1988	80.3	1.037	$33,346.98
1989	83.5	1.040	$34,675.88
1990	85.1	1.019	$35,340.33
1991	86.2	1.013	$35,797.14
1992	87.3	1.013	$36,253.94
1993	91.1	1.044	$37,832.01
1994	95.5	1.048	$39,659.24
1995	98.2	1.028	$40,780.50
1996	100.0	1.018	$41,528.00
1997	102.9	1.029	$42,732.31
1998	105.5	1.025	$43,812.04
1999	110.7	1.049	$45,971.50
2000	115.4	1.042	$47,923.31
2001	119.5	1.036	$49,625.96
2002	124.8	1.044	$51,826.94
2003	131.9	1.057	$54,775.43
2004	141.9	1.076	$58,928.23
2005	153.1	1.079	$63,579.37
2006	159.2	1.040	$66,112.58

Appendix 6
Funding Sources

Public Sector and Private Sector Funding

Public Sector Funding

General Funding

1. Community Development Block Grants

Introduction

The program provides annual grants on a formula basis to entitled cities and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons.

Eligible Activities

CDBG funds may be used for activities which include, but are not limited to:

- acquisition of real property;
- relocation and demolition;
- rehabilitation of residential and non-residential structures;
- construction of public facilities and improvements, such as water and sewer facilities, streets, neighborhood centers, and the conversion of school buildings for eligible purposes;
- public services, within certain limits;
- activities relating to energy conservation and renewable energy resources; and
- provision of assistance to profit-motivated businesses to carry out economic development and job creation/retention activities.

Source: **http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/entitlement/**

2. Urban Development Program

Provides grants for urban development and improvement projects

Eligibility: Municipalities; Non-Profit Entities

Uses: Construction or rehab of infrastructure, building rehabilitation, acquisition and demolition of structures/land, revitalization or construction of community facilities, purchase or upgrade of machinery and equipment, planning of community assets, public safety, crime prevention, recreation, and training

Amounts: No minimum or Maximum; Grants range between $5,000 and $25,000

Type of Funding: Grant

Source: **http://www.newpa.com/programDetail.aspx?id=81**

3. Local Municipal Resources and Development Program (LMRDP)

Grants to municipalities for improving quality of life within the community

Eligibility: Municipalities; Non-profit entities

Uses: Construction or rehabilitation of infrastructure, building rehabilitation, acquisition and demolition of structures/land, revitalization or construction of community facilities, purchase or upgrade of machinery and equipment, planning of community assets, public safety, crime prevention, recreation, and training

Amounts: No minimum or maximum; Typical grants are between $5,000 and $25,000

Source: **http://www.newpa.com/programDetail.aspx?id=78**

4. Community Revitalization Program (CRP)

Provides grant funds to support local initiatives that promote community stability and quality of life.

Eligibility: Local Government, municipal and redevelopment authorities and agencies, industrial development authorities and agencies, non-profit organizations incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth, community organizations engaged in activities consistent with the program guidelines.

Uses: Construction or rehabilitation of infrastructure, building rehabilitation, acquisition and demolition of structures/land, revitalization or construction of community facilities, purchase or upgrade of machinery and equipment, planning of community assets, public safety, crime prevention, recreation, and training

Type of Funding: Grant

Source: http://www.newpa.com/programDetail.aspx?id=72

Vacant Lot Management, Gardens & Parks

1. PA Department of Conservation and Resources

Community Conservation Partnership Program: Growing Greener Grants
Community Grants: Awarded for local recreation, park and conservation projects. These include the rehabilitation and development of parks and recreation facilities; acquisition of land for park and conservation purposes; and technical assistance for feasibility studies, trails studies, and site development planning. Grants require a 50 percent match except for some technical assistance grants and projects eligible as small community projects.
Source: **http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/grants/gg-grants.aspx**
Planning and Technical Assistance Grants
Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plans: Grants to develop a comprehensive long-range planning document that provides strategies to address a municipality's recreation, park and open space needs.
Conservation/Sound Land Use: Grants to encourage conservation planning and sound land use. Either as a stand alone product or as part of comprehensive recreation, park and open space or a municipal plan,

the Department will fund studies that advance conservation or sound land use strategies or practices identified in existing plans.

Greenways: Grants to explore establishing, developing and managing linear corridors of open space along streams, shorelines, wetlands, canals, ridge tops, etc. These corridors are studied to create recreational trails and bikeways, park connectors, and for environmental protection. DCNR has separate grant programs for river conservation and rail-trail planning.

Source: **http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/grants/itagrant.aspx**

Energy and Sustainable/Green Housing

1. Governor Rendell's Energy Independence Strategy

Energy Independence Grants and Loans

Objective: To provide grants and low-interest loans to for-profit, non-profit and local government entities to undertake clean energy projects that will help lower electricity costs, reduce Pennsylvania's use of imported fuels, stimulate investment in the Commonwealth and create jobs. This program will be administered by the Pennsylvania Energy Development Authority.

Goals: To stimulate the development of innovative clean energy projects by offering grant and low interest financing on favorable terms to projects with technical and economic merit. Priority areas for financing are energy-related economic development projects for Pennsylvania industrial customers, waste coal projects, biofuels projects, solar manufacturing projects and energy conservation/demand management projects.

Funding: $300 million to be managed by the Pennsylvania Energy Development Authority.

Source: **http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/energindependent/lib/energindependent/documents/fs-grantsloans.pdf**

2. Metropolitan Edison Company SEF Grants and Loans (FirstEnergy Territory)

The fund is designed to promote:

- The development and use of renewable energy and clean-energy technologies;
- Energy conservation and efficiency;
- Sustainable-energy businesses; and
- Projects that improve the environment in the companies' service territories, as defined by their relationship to the companies' transmission and distribution facilities.

Incentive Type: Local Program

Eligible Efficiency Technologies: Yes; specific technologies not identified

Eligible Renewable/Other Technologies: Passive Solar Space Heat, Solar Water Heat, Solar Space Heat, Solar Thermal Electric, Solar Thermal Process Heat, Photovoltaics, Landfill Gas, Wind, Biomass, Hydroelectric, Fuel Cells, Municipal Solid Waste, CHP/Cogeneration

Applicable Sectors: Commercial, Industrial, Residential, Nonprofit, Schools, Local Government, Metropolitan Edison Territory of FirstEnergy

Amount: Varies according to project

Max. Limit (Grant): $25,000

Max. Limit (Loan): $500,000

Terms: Vary according to project

Website: http://www.bccf.org/pages/gr.energy.html

3. Penelec SEF of the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies Grant and Loan Program (FirstEnergy Territory)

The purpose of the fund is to promote:

- the development and use of renewable energy and clean energy technologies,
- energy conservation and efficiency,
- sustainable energy businesses, and
- projects which improve the environment in the Penelec region.

Incentive Type: Local Program

Eligible Efficiency Technologies: Yes; specific technologies not identified

Eligible Renewable/Other Technologies: Passive Solar Space Heat, Solar Water Heat, Solar Space Heat, Solar Thermal Electric, Solar Thermal Process Heat, Photovoltaics, Landfill Gas, Wind, Biomass, Hydroelectric, Fuel Cells, CHP/Cogeneration

Applicable Sectors: Commercial, Industrial, Residential, Nonprofit, Schools, Penelec Service Territory of FirstEnergy

Amount: Varies according to project

Max. Limit (Grant): typically do not exceed $25,000

Max. Limit (Loan): typically do not exceed $500,000

Terms: Vary according to project

Website: http://www.cfalleghenies.org/penelec.htm

4. West Penn Power SEF Grant and Loan Program

Some of the potential uses of the fund may include:

- Demonstration projects and technologies incorporating renewable or energy efficiency products and services,
- Engaging national programs. WPPSEF grants should be highly leveraged whenever possible,
- Consumer education on renewable energy and energy conservation and efficiency.
- Policy development. Specific policy research and initiatives that open markets for companies that become WPPSEF financing prospects could be supported.

Incentive Type: Local Program

Eligible Efficiency Technologies: Yes; specific technologies not identified

Eligible Renewable/Other Technologies: Solar Water Heat, Solar Space Heat, Solar Thermal Electric, Solar Thermal Process Heat, Photovoltaics, Wind, Biomass, Hydroelectric, Fuel Cells, CHP/Cogeneration, Other Distributed Generation Technologies

Applicable Sectors (Grant): Nonprofit, Schools, West Penn Power Service Territory

Applicable Sectors (Loan): Commercial, Industrial, Transportation, Construction, Retail Supplier, West Penn Power Service Territory

Max. Limit: Varies according to project

Terms: Varies according to project

Website: http://www.wppsef.org/grants.html

5. Sustainable Development Fund Grant and Loan Program (PECO Territory)

The Sustainable Development Fund provides financial assistance for the following types of ventures:

- Manufacturers, wholesalers/distributors, retailers and service companies who want to finance equipment upgrades or electricity energy savings improvements to their plant/office facilities;
- Manufacturers, distributors and installers of renewable energy, advanced clean energy and energy-conserving products and technologies; and,
- Companies and organizations that are end-users of renewable energy, advanced clean energy and energy-conserving products and technologies.
- Companies and ventures that generate electricity using renewable energy sources;

Incentive Type: Local Program

Eligible Efficiency Technologies (Grant): Yes; specific technologies not identified

Eligible Efficiency Technologies (Loan): Lighting, Chillers, Boilers, Heat pumps, Air conditioners, Custom/Others pending approval, Yes; specific technologies not identified

Eligible Renewable/Other Technologies: Passive Solar Space Heat, Solar Water Heat, Solar Space Heat, Solar Thermal Electric, Solar Thermal Process Heat, Photovoltaics, Landfill Gas, Wind, Biomass, Hydroelectric, Fuel Cells, Geothermal Heat Pumps, CHP/Cogeneration

Applicable Sectors (Grant): Commercial, Industrial, Nonprofit, Schools, Construction, PECO Service Territory

Applicable Sectors (Loan): Commercial, Industrial, Nonprofit, Schools, PECO Service Territory

Amount (Grant): $25,000 average

Max. Limit (Grant): Up to 75% of the costs, with 25% being covered by the applicant

Amount (Loan): $25,000 to $250,000

Terms (Loan): 5% to 6.5%; Up to 10 year terms

Website: http://www.trfund.com/sdf/grants.html

6. SEF of Central Eastern Pennsylvania Loan Program (PP&L Territory)

The purpose of the fund:

- to promote research and invest in clean and renewable energy technologies, energy conservation, energy efficiency and sustainable energy enterprises that provide opportunities and benefits for PP&L ratepayers.
- Research projects are not eligible for grant financing.

Incentive Type: Local Loan Program

Eligible Efficiency Technologies: Yes; specific technologies not identified, LED Retrofit

Eligible Renewable/Other Technologies: Solar Water Heat, Solar Space Heat, Solar Thermal Electric, Photovoltaics, Landfill Gas, Wind, Biomass, Hydroelectric, Fuel Cells, CHP/Cogeneration, Other Distributed Generation Technologies

Applicable Sectors: Commercial, Industrial, Nonprofit, Local Government, State Government, (PP&L Service Territory)

Amount: Varies by project
Terms: Vary by project
Website: http://www.TheSEF.org

7. Pennsylvania Energy Harvest Grant Program

The purpose of the fund is

- to improve air quality, preserve land, protect local watersheds and provide economic opportunities for the state's agricultural community.
- to finances the implementation of clean and renewable-energy technologies that have measurable benefits in terms of pollution reduction, environmental quality and reduced energy use.

Incentive Type: State Grant Program

Eligible Efficiency Technologies: Yes; specific technologies not identified

Eligible Renewable/Other Technologies: Solar Water Heat, Solar Space Heat, Solar Thermal Electric, Photovoltaics, Landfill Gas, Wind, Biomass, Renewable Transportation Fuels, Fuel Cells, Anaerobic Digestion, Small Hydroelectric, Other Distributed Generation Technologies

Applicable Sectors: Commercial, Nonprofit, Schools, Local Government, Agricultural

Amount: Varies by project (April 2007 solicitation; deadline has passed)

Maximum Amount: No maximum stated (April 2007 solicitation; deadline has passed)

Website: http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/energy/cwp/view.asp?a=1374&q=483024

8. Keystone Home Energy Loan Program

The purpose of the fund is

- To provide low-interest loan program for homeowners to make their homes more energy efficient. Many efficiency improvements are covered by the program, including improvements to heating and cooling systems, upgrades to windows, doors, insulation and siding and upgrades of lighting and ceiling fans.
- this loan covers the purchase and installation of solar, wind and geothermal systems.

Incentive Type: State Loan Program

Eligible Efficiency Technologies: Clothes Washers/Dryers, Dishwasher, Refrigerators/Freezers, Dehumidifiers, Ceiling Fan, Water Heaters, Lighting, Furnaces, Boilers, Heat pumps, Air conditioners, Programmable Thermostats, Building Insulation, Windows, Doors, Siding

Eligible Renewable/Other Technologies: Solar Water Heat, Photovoltaics, Wind, Geothermal Heat Pumps

Applicable Sectors: Residential, Low-Income Residential

Amount: $1,000-$10,000

Maximum Amount: $10,000, with possibility of higher amounts

Terms: 10 year term at 8.99% interest rate (6.99% for qualifying income levels)

Installation Requirements: Approved contractors only

Program Budget: $20 million

Website: http://www.keystonehelp.com

9. Small Business Pollution Prevention Assistance Account Loan Program

Incentive Type: State Loan Program

Eligible Efficiency Technologies: Processing and Manufacturing Equipment, Custom/Others pending approval

Applicable Sectors: Commercial, (no more than 100 full-time employees)

Amount: Up to 75% of total eligible project cost

Maximum Amount: $100,000

Terms: 2% interest; Maximum loan term of 10 years

Website: http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/enintech/cwp/view.asp?a=1413&q=503114

10. Adams Electric Cooperative - Energy Resource Conservation (ERC) and Supplemental Loan Program

Supplemental loan money is available for:

- Ground source heat pump installations
- Heat Pump Plus installations
- Dual Fuel installations
- Electric Thermal Storage units
- Other demand side management installations

Incentive Type: Utility Loan Program

Eligible Efficiency Technologies: Equipment Insulation, Heat pumps, Air conditioners, Caulking/Weather-stripping, Building Insulation, Windows, Doors, Attic Fans

Eligible Renewable/Other Technologies: Geothermal Heat Pumps

Applicable Sectors: Residential

Terms: Property owners can borrow up to $25,000 with terms of 1-7 years. Interest rates range from 5% to 5.5%

Website: http://www.adamsec.com/Products/LowCostLoans/tabid/82/Default.aspx

11. Alternative Fuel and Idle Reduction Grants

Purpose: to adopt or acquire energy efficient or pollution prevention equipment or processes.

Incentive Type: Local Grant Program

Applicable Sectors: Small businesses

Amount: 50% matching grants

Website: http://www.eere.energy.gov/afdc/progs/view_ind.php/PA/5998

12. Alternative Fuel Vehicle (AFV), Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV), and Refueling Infrastructure Funding

The Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant (AFIG) Fund provides grant funding to school and vocational school districts, municipal authorities, counties, cities, boroughs, incorporated towns, county institution districts, nonprofit entities, corporations, limited liability companies, or partnerships incorporated or registered in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Website: http://www.eere.energy.gov/afdc/progs/view_ind.php/PA/5812

13. Idle Reduction Incentives

Purpose: to reduce waste, pollution or energy use.

Incentive Type: Local Loan Program

Applicable Sectors: Small businesses

Amount: 75% of total eligible project cost, up to a maximum of $100,000

Term: maximum term of 10 years, loan interest rate of 2%

Website: http://www.eere.energy.gov/afdc/progs/view_ind.php/PA/5998

Private Funding

Foundations:

1. **Heinz Endowments**

   The Heinz Endowments supports projects designed to improve the quality of life in the Pittsburgh region and to address challenges it shares with communities across the United States. They focus on five disciplines represented by our grant-making program areas: Arts & Culture; Children, Youth & Families; Education; Environment; and Innovation Economy.

   Eligibility: Organizations classified as tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and as public charities under section 509(a) of that code

   Uses: Projects that promote environmentally responsible land use, site development and building practices, environmental protection and health, along with preventing and remediating ecosystem damage.

   Type of Funding: Grants
   Amounts: $500 to $750,000
   Source: **http://www.heinz.org/grants.aspx**

2. **Roy Hunt Foundation**

   A major objective of their Environment Program is to encourage compatibility between economic development and environmental protection. Thus, they promote strategic activities that create incentives for environmentally responsible decisions in the private sector.

   Eligibility: Organizations classified as tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

   Uses: sustainable land use and land management; reclamation of brownfields; education programs designed to raise public awareness, promote environmental sustainability and nurture leadership; programs that restore and protect freshwater quality and quantity; programs to prevent and mitigate the effects of hazardous industrial, agricultural, or household wastes;

   Type of Funding: Grants
   Amounts: $25,000 and $50,000
   Source: **http://www.heinz.org/grants.aspx**

3. **McCune Foundation**

   A broad mission dedicated to improving the community and enhancing the quality of life of citizens. Priority is given to proposals that demonstrate the greatest likelihood of achieving results through initiatives that create economic opportunities, prepare young people for the workforce, and build healthy and economically viable communities to attract people to the city and region.

Eligibility: Organizations classified as tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Uses: community and economic development

Type of Funding: Grants
Amounts: Varies from several thousand to over a million
Source: **http://www.mccune.org:81/foundation:Website,mccune,index**

4. **Richard King Foundation**
   Funding priorities include regional economic development, the quality of life in southwestern Pennsylvania, land preservation, and watershed restoration and protection with an emphasis on western Pennsylvania.

   Eligibility: Organizations classified as tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
   Uses: Conservation (land preservation, watershed protection/restoration and sustainable environments); economic development (quality of life and business stimulus initiatives).
   Type of Funding: Grants
   Amounts: Varies from several thousand to over a million
   Source: **http://foundationcenter.org/grantmaker/rkmellon/index.html**
5. **Scaife Foundations (Allegheny Foundation)**
   The Allegheny Foundation concentrates its giving in the Western Pennsylvania area and confines most of its grant awards to programs for historic preservation, civic development and education.

   Eligibility: Organizations classified as tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

   Uses: civic development
   Type of Funding: Grants
   Amounts: 2006 disbursements ranged from $5,000 to $300,000.
   Source: http://www.scaife.com/alleghen.html
6. **Alcoa Foundation**
   The Alcoa Foundation's focus for funding is around four distinct Areas of Excellence: Conservation and Sustainability, Safe and Healthy Children and Families, Global Education and Workplace Skills, and Business and Community Partnerships. They give priority consideration to programs and organizations in or near communities where Alcoa plants or offices are located. Organizations interested in applying for a grant, should contact the Alcoa facility nearest them. Local Foundation contacts in those communities will then make recommendations to Alcoa Foundation for grant awards.

   Eligibility: Only organizations classified as public charities and tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (or the non-U.S. equivalent) are considered.

   Uses:

   - **Conservation & Sustainability-** Alcoa Foundation is looking for exemplary programs/projects that will present new models with effective metrics, outcomes and impacts that will address urgent issues of global concern.

- ***Developing Strong, Healthy, and Enduring Community-based Non-profits*** – supporting strategic planning exercises, training in employee management, board strengthening programs or other grants targeted at improving the overall well-being of non-governmental organizations.
- ***Encouraging Partnerships Among Community Organizations and Business*** – supporting, to name a few, non-profits recruit corporate volunteers, regional working groups that brings government, private sector and community groups together to discuss economic development, matching grants to encourage other funders to participate.

Type of Funding: Grants
Amounts: $10,000 to $50,000.
Source: **http://www.alcoa.com/global/en/community/info_page/Foundation.asp**

7. **Ben and Jerry's Foundation**

Eligibility: Grants are made to not-for-profit, grassroots organizations throughout the United States which facilitate progressive social change by addressing the underlying conditions of societal and environmental problems.

Uses: The foundation entertains projects that address the following:

- lead to societal, institutional and/or environmental change;
- address the root causes of social or environmental problems; and
- lead to new ways of thinking and acting.

Type of Funding: Grants

Amounts: Awards are granted ranging from $1,001 - $15,000.

Source: **http://www.benjerry.com/foundation/guidelines.html#areas-interest**

8. **Dominion Foundation**

Dominion invests in organizations and programs that improve the quality of life in those communities in which the company provides electricity or natural gas service, or has significant facilities and business interests.

Eligibility: contributions are primarily awarded to qualified 501(c)(3) organizations.

Uses: environmental stewardship and education; civic and community development to improve the amenities that make a place livable while helping to create an environment for new business development.

Type of Funding: Grants

Amounts: $1,000 to $15,000.

Source: **http://www.dom.com/about/community/foundation/index.jsp**

9. **Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation**

Dominion invests in organizations and programs that improve the quality of life in those communities in which the company provides electricity or natural gas service, or has significant facilities and business interests.

Eligibility: contributions are primarily awarded to qualified 501(c)(3) organizations.

Uses: environmental stewardship and education; civic and community development to improve the amenities that make a place livable while helping to create an environment for new business development.

Type of Funding: Grants

Amounts: $1,000 to $15,000.

Source: http://www.dom.com/about/community/foundation/index.jsp

Corporations:

10. **Constellation Energy Corporate Giving**

They contribute funds to organizations whose missions are to serve the neediest through energy-related financial assistance and conservation programs.

Eligibility: Constellation Energy will only consider one contribution request per year from organizations classified as IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit, located in areas where the company has significant business interests.

Uses: Energy conservation and weatherization initiatives

Type of Funding: Grants; In-kind donations consisting of material design and printing, video production services, and hanging banners to advertise nonprofit organizations' fundraising events; Event sponsorships.

Amounts: $5,000 to $15,000.

Source:
http://www.constellation.com/portal/site/constellation/menuitem.531e0af410e791875fb60610025166a0/

11. **Edison International Corporate Contributions**

Edison supports nonprofit and/or non-governmental organizations along with accredited public and private college/universities. To qualify for consideration, such organizations must strive to maintain or improve the quality of life in the community and address specific community needs.

Eligibility: nonprofit and/or non-governmental organization

Uses: They support the work of organizations that educate and engage their communities in achieving a healthy and sustainable environment.

Their environmental strategy focuses on three primary areas:

- Programs that protect and restore the habitats of endangered and threatened plants and animals.
- Provide environmental education to various communities especially to youth and families.
- Address water quality and storm water management in ways that use electricity wisely.

Type of Funding: Cash grants; sponsorship; computer donation.

Amounts: There is not a published range, however, the website mentions that requests over $25,000 will take three months to review.

Source: http://www.edison.com/community/contribution_guidelines.asp

Appendix 7

Pennsylvania Statute 72 P.S. §§4711: Improvement of Deteriorating Real Property or Areas Act (Act 42)

ration or other business enterprise), primarily used for professional and amateur sports entertainment, musical concerts and other cultural and entertainment events, including accessory uses incident thereto which shall include, but not be limited to, dining, drinking and parking facilities, whether or not such facility is owned and operated by a public authority or is leased to or operated by a private individual, partnership, corporation or other business enterprise.

1989, Dec. 21, P.L. 680, No. 88, § 2, imd. effective.

§ 4706.3. Exemptions from taxation; payments in lieu of taxes

(a) **Exemption.**—All public property used for public purposes, with the ground thereto annexed and necessary for the occupancy and enjoyment of the same, shall be exempt from all county, city and school tax, but shall not include property otherwise taxable which is owned or held by an agency of the United States Government, nor shall this act be construed to exempt from taxation any privilege, act or transaction conducted upon public property by persons or entities which would be taxable if conducted upon nonpublic property regardless of the purpose or purposes for which such activity occurs, even if conducted as agent for or lessee of any public authority.

(b) **Payments in lieu of taxes.**—For public property used for public purposes constructed after the effective date of this section, the city shall impose in lieu of all city, county and school district real property taxes an amount annually equal to 2% of the costs of the project as are agreed to by the city and the facility developer prior to the commencement of construction of the facility, plus such other amount as agreed upon by the city and the facility developer. Such payment shall be made to the city treasury. The in lieu of payment shall commence at the expiration of five years from the effective date of the agreement between the public authority and the facility developer.

1989, Dec. 21, P.L. 680, No. 88, § 3, imd. effective.

§ 4711. Renumbered as § 4711–102

§ 4712. Renumbered as §§ 4711–103 and 4711–201

§§ 4713 to 4716. Renumbered as §§ 4711–202 to 4711–205, respectively

IMPROVEMENT OF DETERIORATING REAL PROPERTY OR AREAS TAX EXEMPTION ACT

Article I. General Provisions

§ 4711–101. Short Title

This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Improvement of Deteriorating Real Property or Areas Tax Exemption Act."

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 101, added 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days.

Historical and Statutory Notes

Title of Act:

An Act authorizing local taxing authorities to provide for certain improvements to deteriorated dwellings and for improvement of deteriorating areas by the construction of new dwelling units; and providing for exemption schedules and other limitations. 1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 1, imd. effective. As reenacted and amended 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1.

§ 4711–102. Construction

(a) This act shall be construed to authorize local taxing authorities to exempt improvements to certain deteriorated residential property and areas thereby implementing clause (iii) of subsection (b) of section 2 of Article VIII of the Constitution of Pennsylvania.

(b) The exemptions granted under this act shall not be so considered by the State Tax Equalization Board in arriving at the market value of school district real property as to reduce the subsidy of any school district.

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 1, effective Jan. 1, 1971. Renumbered as § 102 and amended 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days.

Historical and Statutory Notes

This section was renumbered from § 4711.

The 1977 amendment in subsec. (a) inserted "and areas", and added subsec. (b).

Library References

Taxation ⇐220.
WESTLAW Topic No. 371.
C.J.S. Taxation § 249.
P.L.E. Taxation § 94.

Notes of Decisions

Construction with other laws 1

1. **Construction with other laws**

Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act and Improvement of Deteriorating Real Property or Areas Tax Exemption Act did not relate to same persons and things and, therefore, were not in pari materia, although they relate to similar persons and things; one statute applies to commercial construction or improvement within deteriorated area, but other applies to residential construction or improvement. MacDonald, Illig, Jones & Britton v. Erie County Bd. of Assessment Appeals, 604 A.2d 306, 145 Pa.Cmwlth. 521, 1992, appeal denied 617 A.2d 1276, 533 Pa. 603.

§ 4711–103. Definitions

As used in this act:

"Local taxing authority" means a county, city, borough, incorporated town, township or school district having authority to levy real property taxes.

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 2, effective Jan. 1, 1971. Renumbered as § 103, 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days.

Historical and Statutory Notes

This section was renumbered from § 4712.

Article II. Deteriorating Dwellings Improvement

§ 4711–201. Definitions

As used in this article:

(1) **"Deteriorated property"** means a dwelling unit located in a deteriorated neighborhood, as hereinafter provided, or a dwelling unit which has been or upon request is certified by a health, housing or building inspection agency as unfit for human habitation for rent withholding, or other health or welfare purposes, or has been the subject of an order by such an agency requiring the unit to be vacated, condemned or demolished by reason of noncompliance with laws, ordinances or regulations.

(2) **"Dwelling unit"** means, unless otherwise defined in the ordinance or resolution providing for tax exemption, a house, apartment, or group of rooms intended for occupancy as separate living quarters by family or other groups or a person living alone, containing a kitchen or cooking equipment for the exclusive use of the occupants.

(3) **"Improvement"** means repair, construction or reconstruction, including alterations and additions, having the effect of rehabilitating a structure so that it becomes habitable or attains higher standards of housing safety, health or amenity, or is brought into compliance with laws, ordinances or regulations governing housing standards; ordinary upkeep and maintenance shall not be deemed an improvement.

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 2, effective Jan. 1, 1971. Renumbered as § 201 and amended 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days.

Historical and Statutory Notes

This section was renumbered from § 4712.

The 1977 amendment deleted the definition of "local taxing authority".

§ 4711–202. Deteriorated Neighborhoods; Procedures

(a) Each local taxing authority may by ordinance or resolution exempt from real property taxation the assessed valuation of improvements to deteriorated properties in the amounts and in accordance with the schedules and limitations hereinafter provided. Prior to the adoption of the ordinance or resolution authorizing the granting of tax exemptions, the local taxing authority shall affix the boundaries of a deteriorated neighborhood or neighborhoods, wholly or partially located within its jurisdiction, if any. At least one public hearing shall be held by the local taxing authority for the purpose of determining said boundaries. At the public hearing the planning commission or redevelopment authority and other public and private agencies and individuals, knowledgeable and interested in the improvement of deteriorated neighborhoods, shall present their recommendations concerning the location of boundaries of a deteriorated neighborhood or neighborhoods for the guidance of the local taxing authorities, such recommendations taking into account the criteria set forth in the act of May 24, 1945 (P.L. 991, No. 385), known as the "Urban Redevelopment Law,"[1] for the determination of "blighted areas," and the criteria set forth in the act of November 29, 1967 (P.L. 636, No. 292), known as the "Neighborhood Assistance Act,"[2] for the determination of "impoverished areas," and the following criteria: unsafe, unsanitary and overcrowded buildings; vacant, overgrown and unsightly lots of ground; a disproportionate number of tax delinquent properties; excessive land coverage, defective design or arrangement of buildings, street or lot layouts; economically and socially undesirable land uses. The ordinance shall specify a description of each such neighborhood as determined by the local taxing authority, as well as the cost of improvements per dwelling unit to be exempted, and the schedule of taxes exempted as hereinafter provided.

(b) Two or more local taxing authorities may join together for the purpose of determining the boundaries of a deteriorated neighborhood, and such local taxing authorities shall cooperate fully with each other for the purposes of implementing this act. The local taxing authorities may by implementing ordinance or resolution agree to adopt tax exemptions contingent upon the similar adoption by an adjacent or coterminous local taxing authority, within the limitations provided herein.

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 3, effective Jan. 1, 1971. Renumbered as § 202, 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days.

[1] 35 P.S. § 1701 et seq.

[2] 62 P.S. § 2081 et seq.

Historical and Statutory Notes

This section was renumbered from § 4713.

Library References

Taxation ⇐251.
WESTLAW Topic No. 371.
C.J.S. Taxation §§ 304, 305.

§ 4711–203. Exemption Schedules; Maximum Exemption

(a) A local taxing authority granting a tax exemption pursuant to the provisions of this article may provide for tax exemption on the assessment attributable to the actual cost of improvements up to the maximum cost per dwelling unit herein specified or up to any lesser multiple of one thousand dollars ($1,000). If a local taxing authority by ordinance or resolution specifies a lesser cost than the maximum provided by this act, such amount shall not be increased by any subsequent ordinance or resolution for a period of two years, nor shall the schedule of taxes exempted be changed for such period. Whether or not the assessment eligible for exemption is based upon a maximum cost or a lesser cost, the actual amount of taxes exempted shall be in accordance with one of the following schedules:

(1) For the first year for which improvements would otherwise be taxable, one hundred per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; for the second year, ninety per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; for the third through tenth years, eighty, seventy, sixty, fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, and ten per cent, respectively, of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; after the tenth year, the exemption shall terminate;

(2) For the first year for which improvements would otherwise be taxable, one hundred per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; for the second year, eighty per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; for the third through fifth years, sixty, forty and twenty per cent, respectively, of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; after the fifth year, the exemption shall terminate; or

(3) For the first, second and third year for which improvements would otherwise be taxable, one hundred per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; after the third year the exemption shall terminate.

(b) The exemption from taxes shall be limited to the additional assessment valuation attributable to the actual costs of improvements to deteriorated property not in excess of the maximum cost per dwelling unit specified herein. The maximum cost shall be ten thousand dollars ($10,000) per dwelling unit for improvements constructed during 1971. Maximum cost for improvements constructed during each year thereafter shall be the maximum cost for the preceding year multiplied by the ratio of the United States Bureau of the Census New One-Family Houses Price Index for the current year to such index for the preceding year. The date of the construction shall be the date of issuance of the building permit, improvement record or other required notification of construction. No tax exemption shall be granted under the provisions of this article for any improvements to any dwelling unit in excess of the maximum cost specified above.

(c) The exemption from taxes authorized by this article shall be upon the property exempted and shall not terminate upon the sale or exchange of the property, unless otherwise provided in this article.

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 4, effective Jan. 1, 1971. Renumbered as § 203 and amended 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days.

Historical and Statutory Notes

This section was renumbered from § 4714.

The 1977 amendment added subsec. (a)(3).

§ 4711–204. Nonrecognition for Other Purposes of Increased Assessed Valuation

If a deteriorated property is granted tax exemption pursuant to this article, the improvement shall not during the exemption period be considered as a factor in assessing other properties.

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 5, effective Jan. 1, 1971. Renumbered as § 204 and amended 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days.

Historical and Statutory Notes

The 1977 amendment substituted "article" for "act".

This section was renumbered from § 4715.

§ 4711–205. Procedure for Obtaining Exemption

Any person desiring tax exemption pursuant to ordinances or resolutions adopted pursuant to this article, shall notify each local taxing authority granting such exemption in writing on a form provided by it submitted at the time he secures the building permit, or if no building permit or other notification of improvement is required, at the time he commences construction. A copy of the exemption request shall be forwarded to the board of assessment and revision of taxes or other appropriate assessment agency. The assessment agency shall, after completion of the improvement, assess separately the improvement and calculate the amounts of the assessment eligible for tax exemption in accordance with the limits established by the local taxing authorities and notify the taxpayer and the taxing authorities of the reassessment and amounts of the assessment eligible for exemption. Appeals from the reassessment and the amounts eligible for the exemption may be taken by the taxpayer or the local taxing authorities as provided by law.

The cost of improvements per dwelling unit to be exempted and the schedule of taxes exempted existing at the time of the initial request for tax exemption shall be applicable to that exemption request, and subsequent amendments to the ordinance, if any, shall not apply to requests initiated prior to their adoption.

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 6, effective Jan. 1, 1971. Renumbered as § 205 and amended 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days.

Historical and Statutory Notes

This section was renumbered from § 4716.

The 1977 amendment substituted "article" for "act".

Library References

Taxation ⇐251.
WESTLAW Topic No. 371.
C.J.S. Taxation §§ 304, 305.

Notes of Decisions

Notice 1

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1. Notice

Under this act assessing agency was required to notify a taxpayer of reassessment and amounts of assessment eligible for exemption under tax abatement program; it was insufficient that taxpayer knew that he was enrolled in tax abatement program and received notice of yearly increase in program; this act requires notice of amount of assessment eligible for exemption in addition to reassessment. Banzhoff v. Dauphin County Bd. of Assessment Appeals, 575 A.2d 164, 133 Pa.Cmwlth. 165, 1990, appeal after remand 606 A.2d 974, 146 Pa.Cmwlth. 687.

Although assessing authority did not provide for notice to taxpayer of amount of assessment eligible for exemption under city tax abatement program, defect in notice of assessment was not sufficient grounds for setting assessment aside, but merely preserved right to appeal assessment and right to hearing; since taxpayer was given opportunity to challenge reassessment before trial court, no other relief was more appropriate and proper notice became moot. Banzhoff v. Dauphin County Bd. of Assessment Appeals, 575 A.2d 164, 133 Pa.Cmwlth. 165, 1990, appeal after remand 606 A.2d 974, 146 Pa. Cmwlth. 687.

Article III. Deteriorating Area Improvement

§ 4711–301. Definitions

As used in this article:

"Deteriorating area" means that portion of the municipality which the municipal governing body determines to be physically blighted on the basis of one or more of the following standards:

(1) The residential buildings, by reason of age, obsolescence, inadequate or outmoded design or physical deterioration have become economic and/or social liabilities.

(2) The residential buildings are substandard or unsanitary for healthful and safe living purposes.

(3) The residential buildings are overcrowded, poorly spaced, or are so lacking in light, space and air as to be conducive to unwholesome living.

(4) The residential buildings are faultily arranged, cover the land to an excessive extent or show a deleterious use of land, or exhibit any combination of the above which is detrimental to health, safety or welfare.

(5) A significant percentage of buildings used for residential purposes is more than 20 years of age.

(6) A substantial amount of unimproved, overgrown and unsightly vacant land exists which has remained so for a period of five years or more indicating a growing or total lack of utilization of land for residential purposes.

(7) A disproportionate number of tax exempt or delinquent properties exists in the area.

"Dwelling unit" means, unless otherwise defined in the ordinance or resolution providing for tax exemption, a house, double house or duplex, townhouse or row house, apartment, or any building intended for occupancy as living quarters by an individual, a family or families or other groups of persons, which living quarters contain a kitchen or cooking equipment for the exclusive use of the occupant or occupants.

"Municipal governing body" means a city, borough, incorporated town or township.

"Residential construction" means the building or erection of dwelling units, as defined above, upon vacant land or land specifically prepared to receive such structures.

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 301, added 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days.

§ 4711–302. Deteriorating Areas; Procedures

(a) Each local taxing authority may, by ordinance or resolution, exempt from all real property taxation the assessed valuation of any residential construction built in a deteriorating area from and after the effective date of this article in the amounts and in accordance with the schedule and limitations hereinafter provided. Prior to the adoption of the ordinance or resolution authorizing the granting of such exemptions from taxation, an interested municipal governing body shall determine the boundaries of deteriorating areas, wholly or partially located within its jurisdiction. At least one public hearing shall be held by the municipal governing body for the purposes of delineating said boundaries. At the public hearings any local taxing authority, planning commission or redevelopment authority and other public and private agencies and individuals, knowledgeable and interested in the improvement of deteriorating areas, shall present their recommendations concerning the location of boundaries of a deteriorating area or areas for the guidance of the municipal governing bodies, such recommendations to take into account not only the standards set forth in section 301, but also those set forth in the act of May 24, 1945 (P.L. 991, No. 385), known as the "Urban Redevelopment Law,"[1] for the determination of "blighted areas," and the act of November 29, 1967 (P.L. 636, No. 292), known as the "Neighborhood Assistance Act,"[2] for the determination of "impoverished areas." The ordinance or resolution shall specify a description of each such areas as determined by the municipal governing body, the maximum assessment per dwelling unit which may be exempted, and the schedule of taxes exempted as hereinafter provided.

(b) Two or more municipal governing bodies may join for the purpose of determining the boundaries of a deteriorating area and to establish the maximum cost per dwelling unit, and such municipal governing bodies shall cooperate fully with each other for the purpose of implementing this article. The local taxing authorities may, by implementing ordinance or resolution, agree to adopt tax exemptions contingent upon the similar adoption by an adjacent or coterminous local taxing authority, within the limitations provided herein.

(c) An area can be established as being deteriorating and decayed even though the area so designated is not a slum consisting exclusively of tangible physical blight. Any such deteriorating area may include buildings or improvements not in themselves blighted or dilapidated.

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 302, added 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days.

[1] 35 P.S. § 1701 et seq.
[2] 62 P.S. § 2081 et seq.

§ 4711–303. Exemption Schedule; Maximum Exemption

(a) A local taxing authority granting a tax exemption pursuant to the provisions of this article may provide for tax exemption on the assessment attributable to the actual cost of construction of the new dwelling unit in accordance with the following schedule:

For the first, second and third year for which said newly-constructed dwelling unit or units would otherwise be taxable, 100% of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; after the third year the exemption shall terminate.

(b) The exemption from taxes shall be limited to the assessment valuation attributable to the cost of construction of the new dwelling unit not in excess of the uniform maximum cost per dwelling unit specified by the municipal governing body. The exemption shall commence in the tax year immediately following the year in which the building permit is issued. No tax exemption shall be granted under the provisions of this article for the construction of any dwelling unit in excess of the uniform maximum cost specified by the municipal governing body.

(c) The exemption from taxes authorized by this article shall be upon the newly-constructed dwelling unit or units exempted, and shall not terminate upon the sale or exchange of the property, unless otherwise provided in this article.

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 303, added 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days.

§ 4711–304. Nonrecognition for Other Purposes of Increased Valuation

If a property containing new residential construction is granted tax exemption pursuant to this article, the property shall not during the exemption period be considered as a factor in assessing the value of other properties in the same area.

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 304, added 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days.

§ 4711–305. Procedure for Obtaining Exemption

(a) Any taxpayer desiring tax exemption pursuant to ordinances or resolutions adopted under authority of this article shall apply in writing to each local taxing authority granting such exemption on a form provided by said local taxing authority at the time he secures the building permit, or, if no building permit or other notification is required, at the time he commences construction. A copy of the exemption request shall be forwarded to the board of assessment and revision of taxes or other local assessment agency. The assessment agency shall, after completion of the construction, assess separately the dwelling unit and the land upon which the new residential construction stands; calculate the amounts of the assessment eligible for tax exemption in accordance with the limits established by the local taxing authorities; and notify the taxpayer and the local taxing authorities of the amounts of the assessment eligible for exemption. Appeals from the assessment and/or the amounts eligible for exemption may be taken by the taxpayer as heretofore provided by law.

(b) The cost of construction per dwelling unit to be exempted and the schedules of taxes exempted existing at the time of the initial request for tax exemption shall be applicable to that exemption request, and subsequent amendments to the ordinance, if any, shall not apply to requests initiated prior to their adoption.

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 305, added 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days.

BUILDINGS IN COURSE OF ERECTION [REPEALED]

§ 4721. Repealed. 1933, May 22, P.L. 853, art. VI, § 601

Historical and Statutory Notes

Section was derived from act 1879, June 4, P.L. 90, § 1.

This section related to exemption from taxation of buildings in course of construction which would be exempt when completed. Exemption from taxation is now covered by 72 P.S. § 5020–204.

LOCAL ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION TAX ASSISTANCE ACT

Cross References

Tax Increment Financing Act, see 53 P.S. § 6930.1 et seq.

§ 4722. Short title

This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act."

1977, Dec. 1, P.L. 237, No. 76, § 1, imd. effective.

Historical and Statutory Notes

Title of Act:

An Act Authorizing local taxing authorities to provide for tax exemption for certain deteriorated industrial, commercial and other business property and for new construction in deteriorated areas of economically depressed communities; providing for an exemption schedule and establishing standards and qualifications. 1977, Dec. 1, P.L.237, No. 76. Title as amended 1988, July 13, P.L. 518, No. 90.

Section 7 of Act 1977, Dec. 1, P.L. 237, No. 76 is a severability provision.

Law Review Commentaries

Cooperative conversion: Is it only for the wealthy? Proposals that promote affordable cooperative housing in Philadelphia. Judith Bernstein–Baker, 61 Temple L.Rev. 393 (1988).

Notes of Decisions

Construction with other laws 1

1. Construction with other laws

Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act and Improvement of Deteriorating Real Property or Areas Tax Exemption Act did not relate to same persons and things and, therefore, were not in pari materia, although they relate to similar persons and things; one statute applies to commercial construction or improvement within deteriorated area, but other applies to residential construction or improvement. MacDonald, Illig, Jones & Britton v. Erie County Bd. of Assessment Appeals, 604 A.2d 306, 145 Pa.Cmwlth. 521, 1992, appeal denied 617 A.2d 1276, 533 Pa. 603.

§ 4723. Construction

This act shall be construed to authorize local taxing authorities to exempt new construction in deteriorated areas of economically depressed communities and improvements to certain deteriorated industrial, commercial and other business property thereby implementing Article VIII, section 2(b)(iii) of the Constitution of Pennsylvania.

1977, Dec. 1, P.L. 237, No. 76, § 2, imd. effective. Amended 1988, July 13, P.L. 518, No. 90, § 1, effective in 60 days.

Historical and Statutory Notes

The 1988 amendment inserted "new construction in deteriorated areas of economically depressed communities and".

Notes of Decisions

In general 1

1. In general

Under this section, decision whether tax exemption will be available and how the exemption is to be obtained is left to determination of local taxing authorities. Northwood Nursing Care and Convalescent Home, Inc. v. City of Philadelphia, Bd. of Revision of Taxes, 511 A.2d 281, 98 Pa.Cmwlth. 401, 1986, appeal denied 531 A.2d 433, 515 Pa. 626, appeal dismissed 108 S.Ct. 767, 484 U.S. 1037, 98 L.Ed.2d 854.

The real estate tax exemption under the Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act, 72 P.S. § 4722 et [illegible], begins

EXEMPTIONS

PARTICULAR INSTITUTIONS AND PUBLIC PROPERTY

§ 4706.1. Legislative findings; declaration of policy

Research References

Encyclopedias

Summary Pa. Jur. 2d Tax § 15:34, Public Property—Leased Property.

§ 4706.3. Exemptions from taxation; payments in lieu of taxes

Research References

Encyclopedias

Summary Pa. Jur. 2d Tax § 15:34, Public Property—Leased Property.

IMPROVEMENT OF DETERIORATING REAL PROPERTY OR AREAS TAX EXEMPTION ACT

Law Review and Journal Commentaries

Taxation effects on land development and conservation. James M. McElfish, Jr., 22 Temp. Envtl. L. & Tech. J. 139 (2004).

Article I. General Provisions

§ 4711-101. Short Title

Research References

Encyclopedias

Summary Pa. Jur. 2d Tax § 15:40, Improvements to Properties.

Article II. Deteriorating Dwellings Improvement

§ 4711-203. Exemption Schedules; Maximum Exemption

(a) A local taxing authority granting a tax exemption pursuant to the provisions of this article may provide for tax exemption on the assessment attributable to the actual cost of improvements up to the maximum cost per dwelling unit herein specified or up to lesser multiple of one thousand dollars ($1,000). If a local taxing authority ordinance or resolution specifies a lesser cost than the maximum provided by this such amount shall not be increased by any subsequent ordinance or resolution for a

period of two years, nor shall the schedule of taxes exempted be changed for such period. Whether or not the assessment eligible for exemption is based upon a maximum cost or a lesser cost, the actual amount of taxes exempted shall be in accordance with one of the following schedules:

(1) For the first year for which improvements would otherwise be taxable, one hundred per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; for the second year, ninety per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; for the third through tenth years, eighty, seventy, sixty, fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, and ten per cent, respectively, of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; after the tenth year, the exemption shall terminate;

(2) For the first year for which improvements would otherwise be taxable, one hundred per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; for the second year, eighty per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; for the third through fifth years, sixty, forty, and twenty per cent, respectively, of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; after the fifth year, the exemption shall terminate;

(3) For the first, second and third year for which improvements would otherwise be taxable, one hundred per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; after the third year the exemption shall terminate; or

(4) For the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth year for which improvements would otherwise be taxable, one hundred per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; after the tenth year the exemption shall terminate.

(5) A local taxing authority may provide for tax exemption on the assessment attributable to the actual cost of construction of the dwelling unit in accordance with a schedule established by the taxing authority, provided that the exemption schedule does not exceed a period of ten years.

(b) The exemption from taxes shall be limited to the additional assessment valuation attributable to the actual costs of improvements to deteriorated property. The date of the construction shall be the date of issuance of the building permit, improvement record or other required notification of construction. No tax exemption shall be granted under the provisions of this article for any improvements to any dwelling unit in excess of limitation set forth in this subsection.

(c) The exemption from taxes authorized by this article shall be upon the property exempted and shall not terminate upon the sale or exchange of the property, unless otherwise provided in this article.

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 4, effective Jan. 1, 1971. Renumbered as § 203 and amended 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days. Amended 2000, Oct. 18, P.L. 613, No. 83, § 1, effective in 60 days; 2002, Dec. 30, P.L. 2085, No. 235, § 1, effective in 60 days.

Historical and Statutory Notes

2000 Legislation

Act 2000-83 added subsec. (a)(4).

Act 2002-235 legislation

Act 2002-235, § 1, added subsec. (a)(5) and rewrote subsec. (b), which prior thereto read:

"(b) The exemption from taxes shall be limited to the additional assessment valuation attributable to the actual costs of improvements to deteriorated property not in excess of the maximum cost per dwelling unit specified herein. The maximum cost shall be ten thousand dollars ($10,000) per dwelling unit for improvements constructed during 1971. Maximum cost for improvements constructed during each year thereafter shall be the maximum cost for the preceding year multiplied by the ratio of the United States Bureau of the Census New One-Family Houses Price Index for the current year to such index for the preceding year. The date of the construction shall be the date of issuance of the building permit, improvement record or other required notification of construction. No tax exemption shall be granted under the provisions of this article for any improvements to any dwelling unit in excess of the maximum cost specified above."

Research References

Encyclopedias

Summary Pa. Jur. 2d Tax § 15:40, Improvements to Properties.

Article III. Deteriorating Area Improvement

§ 4711–303. Exemption Schedule; Maximum Exemption

(a) A local taxing authority granting a tax exemption pursuant to the provisions of this article may provide for tax exemption on the assessment attributable to the actual cost of construction of the new dwelling unit in accordance with one of the following schedules:

(1) For the first, second and third year for which said newly-constructed dwelling unit or units would otherwise be taxable, one hundred per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; after the third year the exemption shall terminate;

(2) For the first year for which said newly-constructed dwelling unit or units would otherwise be taxable, one hundred per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; for the second year, ninety per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; for the third through tenth years, eighty, seventy, sixty, fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, and ten per cent, respectively, of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; after the tenth year, the exemption shall terminate; or

(3) For the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth year for which said newly-constructed dwelling unit or units would otherwise be taxable, one hundred per cent of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; after the tenth year the exemption shall terminate.

(4) A local taxing authority may provide for tax exemption on the assessment attributable to the actual cost of construction of the new dwelling unit in accordance with a schedule established by the taxing authority, provided that the exemption schedule does not exceed a period of ten years.

(b) The exemption from taxes shall be limited to the assessment valuation attributable to the cost of construction of the new dwelling unit not in excess of the uniform maximum cost per dwelling unit specified by the municipal governing body. The exemption shall commence in the tax year immediately following the year in which the building permit is issued. No tax exemption shall be granted under the provisions of this article for the construction of any dwelling unit in excess of the uniform maximum cost specified by the municipal governing body.

(c) The exemption from taxes authorized by this article shall be upon the newly-constructed dwelling unit or units exempted and shall not terminate upon the sale or exchange of the property, unless otherwise provided in this article.

1971, July 9, P.L. 206, No. 34, § 303, added 1977, Aug. 5, P.L. 167, No. 42, § 1, effective in 60 days. Amended 2000, Oct. 18, P.L. 613, No. 83, § 1, effective in 60 days; 2002, Dec. 30, P.L. 2085, No. 235, § 1, effective in 60 days.

Historical and Statutory Notes

2000 Legislation

Act 2000–83 rewrote subsec. (a), which formerly read:

"(a) A local taxing authority granting a tax exemption pursuant to the provisions of this article may provide for tax exemption on the assessment attributable to the actual cost of construction of the new dwelling unit in accordance with the following schedule:

"For the first, second and third year for which said newly-constructed dwelling unit or units would otherwise be taxable, 100% of the eligible assessment shall be exempted; after the third year the exemption shall terminate."

Act 2002–235 legislation

Act 2002–235, § 1, added subsec. (a)(4).

Research References

Encyclopedias

Summary Pa. Jur. 2d Tax § 15:40, Improvements to Properties.

Notes of Decisions

Construction and application 1

1. Construction and application

Improvement of Deteriorating Real Property or Areas Tax Exemption Act (IDRPA) and implementing ordinance exempt the assessment attributable to costs up to the stated ceiling, but the stated ceiling is not the maximum exemption; ordinance states that the maximum cost per dwelling unit eligible for exemption is $50,000 per dwelling unit on the assessment attributable to the actual cost of new construction, and it does not say the maximum exemption is $50,000. Citadel Development Co. v. Board of Assessment Appeals of Erie County, 828 A.2d 1057, 574 Pa. 84, Sup.2003. Taxation ⇐ 2318

§ 4711–305. Procedure for Obtaining Exemption

Research References

Encyclopedias

Summary Pa. Jur. 2d Tax § 15:40, Improvements to Properties.

LOCAL ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION TAX ASSISTANCE ACT

Cross References

Transit Revitalization Investment District Act, applicability of other statutes, see 73 P.S. § 850.703.

Law Review and Journal Commentaries

Taxation effects on land development and conservation. James M. McElfish, Jr., 22 Temp. Envtl. L. & Tech. J. 139 (2004).

§ 4722. Short title

Cross References

Economic development districts, local ordinances and resolutions, see 53 P.S. § 18200.302.

Research References

Encyclopedias

Summary Pa. Jur. 2d Tax § 15:40, Improvements to Properties.

§ 4723. Construction

Notes of Decisions

1. In general

MacDonald, Illig, Jones and Britton v. Erie County Bd. of Assessment Appeals, 8 Pa. D. & C.4th 411 (1990), [main volume] affirmed 604 A.2d 306, 145 Pa.Cmwlth. 521, appeal denied 617 A.2d 1276, 533 Pa. 603.

§ 4725. Deteriorated areas

Notes of Decisions

Discretionary authority 2

Validity ½

½. Validity

Failure of school district, ...ocal taxing authority, to authorize tax exemption under Local

Appendix 8

Wilkinsburg Borough Contract with Portnoff and Associates

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AGREEMENT FOR COLLECTION OF DELINQUENT SEWER AND MUNICIPAL SERVICE FEES ON BEHALF OF BOROUGH OF WILKINSBURG

Borough of Wilkinsburg, hereby agrees to retain Portnoff Law Associates, Ltd. to collect delinquent sewer and municipal service fees owed to the Borough of Wilkinsburg. Portnoff Law Associates, Ltd. (hereinafter "Portnoff") agrees to undertake the collection of delinquent sewer and municipal service fees for Borough of Wilkinsburg (hereinafter "Borough") pursuant to the following terms and conditions.

Borough agrees to retain Portnoff as its exclusive agent for the collection of delinquent sewer and municipal service fees during the term of this contract. Borough agrees to enact any and all ordinances required by state law to impose the legal fees set forth herein upon the delinquent property owner. Borough further agrees to provide all delinquent property owners with notice as required by Act § 1 of 1996 prior to the imposition of any additional charges for collection.

Borough shall transmit to Portnoff, within 60 days of the date the agreement becomes binding the following: name of property owner, property address, mailing address (if available), tax parcel number, amount of delinquency (including a breakdown by year and type).

Portnoff shall undertake to collect Borough 's delinquent sewer and municipal service fees pursuant to the steps set forth as follows and shall be compensated according to fee schedule set forth as follows.

ACTION	LEGAL FEES	PROTHONOTARY FEES	SHERIFF FEES
Verify data, set up and open file, prepare and send demand letter, account for monies received.	$150.00		
File lien and send second letter and account for monies received. Prepare and file praecipe to satisfy lien.	$150.00	$14.50	
Prepare and file Writ of Scire Facies, account for monies received.	$150.00	$ 10.00	Varied
Prepare and mail correspondence per Pa. R.C.P. §237.1	$ 25.00		
Prepare and file Default Judgment, account for monies received.	$150.00	$ 9.00	
Prepare and file Writ of Execution for Sheriff Sale.	$750.00	$ 10.00	Varied[1]

[1] A deposit of $1,200 is required.

Borough acknowledges that the fees set forth herein are fair and reasonable fees for the services to be provided.

There may be instances where additional legal action is necessary, and additional charges will be assessed. If the sheriff is unable to serve the property owner, it may be necessary to re-issue the writ of scire facias. Our charge for the re-issuance is $25.00. If it is necessary to move the court for alternate service, our minimum charge for preparation of the pleadings and effectuating service is $175.00. There will be advertising costs above and beyond the legal fee. If a Sheriff Sale is continued for any reason, there will be an additional legal fee of $25.00 charged. If we must attend a Sheriff Sale, there is an additional charge of $400.00 for our preparation for the sale, our attendance at the sale and the implementation of the paperwork thereafter. If we receive a check that is returned to us from the bank, there will be a handling charge of $25.00. If the property owner files for bankruptcy protection and Borough wishes us to file a claim on behalf of the Borough, there will be a charge of $25.00.

If extraordinary litigation arises, Borough will be billed at an hourly rate. The rates for our personnel range from $60.00 - $225.00 per hour. Portnoff will have the work delegated cost-effectively.

In the event Borough authorizes Portnoff to accept a payment schedule involving more than three payments, Portnoff shall be entitled to one time fee of $25.00 for bookkeeping services. Under no circumstances will Portnoff handle a payment schedule which lasts longer than one year.

Portnoff shall provide Borough with a distribution of all monies received no less frequently than once a month. Portnoff shall also provide Borough with a monthly status of all pending files. In the event Borough requires additional reports, Portnoff will provide them at an additional fee.

The charges for out-of-pocket costs such as title searches, filing fees and sheriff fees are passed directly on to Borough and may vary from those set forth above. All of the above charges are passed on by the Borough to the delinquent taxpayer and become a part of its lien.

Portnoff agrees to indemnify, hold free and save harmless Borough from any and all acts or omissions of Portnoff in the collection of the above-mentioned delinquencies. Borough shall save harmless and indemnify Portnoff from and against any and all loss, damage or claim for actual or attempted tax collection arising from the withholding of correct, legal or proper information by Borough from Portnoff. Portnoff is insured by the Commercial Bar for the sum of $1,000,000.00 against employee dishonesty and embezzlement. If the Borough desires, it may forward all claims to Portnoff through the Commercial Bar and receive such indemnity protection without additional cost.

It is understood and agreed that the success of this process is predicated upon Borough's willingness to proceed to Sheriff Sale in the absence of payment. In the event Borough desires to suspend litigation prior to payment in full, or the listing of the real estate for sheriff sale, Borough becomes immediately obligated to reimburse Portnoff for all costs and to pay Portnoff all fees generated in connection with the suspended claims.

Borough agrees at all times to provide Portnoff with cooperation and candor, and to respond in a timely manner to all requests and inquiries Portnoff may have with regard to any assessment or other matter germane to Portnoff's representation. Borough agrees to refer to us for collection all delinquent sewer and municipal service fees which become delinquent during the terms of Portnoff's representation. Borough agrees to remit to Portnoff any funds received by it for any delinquent sewer and municipal service fees referred to Portnoff for collection and to refer all inquiries regarding any such delinquencies to Portnoff. Borough agrees to adopt a policy whereby requests for hardship exemptions can be properly evaluated. Portnoff will assist, upon request, in the establishment and administration of such a policy without additional charge.

This agreement shall be in effect from December 15, 1998 to December 14, 2001. The agreement shall be renewed under the same terms and conditions bi-annually for two year terms thereafter unless either party provides written notice of termination to the other no sooner than 120 days and no later than 60 days prior to the expiration of the contract. Upon termination of the contract, Borough shall promptly execute and deliver whatever documents are necessary to allow Portnoff to formally withdraw its appearance in any and all pending litigation. Termination of the contract does not relieve any obligations of Borough to pay any sums due Portnoff hereunder.

This agreement becomes binding upon Borough upon adoption by Borough of an appropriate ordinance as to the same. No terms and/or conditions of this agreement may be changed without first receiving approval from Borough by means of further ordinance adopted.

Borough of Wilkinsburg

By: John Marquart

Attest: Cynthia A. Wellhart

Date: December 19, 1998

Portnoff Law Associates, Ltd.

By: Michelle Portnoff

Attest: [illegible]

Date: 12/17/98

Appendix 9
Further Discussion on Recommendations

Further Discussion

CDC Mission

For the execution of any reinvestment activity, an independent 501(c) 3 community development corporation (CDC) should be formed for the purpose of clearing titles, acquiring property, and re-developing for sale and ultimately its return to Wilkinsburg's tax rolls. The CDC should be cognizant of the needs and concerns of the community, Borough Council, and School District. To this end, it is imperative that a community planning process be undertaken before the CDC commences any large-scale redevelopment.

CDC Governance Structure

Ideally, the CDC's board should be comprised of Wilkinsburg community members and the larger investment community. Other members can include individuals from resource agencies such as the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development and the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh. Board members should represent the diversity of the neighborhood and provide different community perspectives. The Wilkinsburg CDC should have staff dedicated to both the strategic selection of properties for reinvestment as well as any vacant property greening/cleaning activities throughout the Borough. Funding for the CDC can come from, among other areas, the sources outlined in Appendix 1.

Strategic Partnerships

We recommend that the CDC follow East Liberty Development's (ELDI) successful model of community involvement and outreach. In addition, the CDC could consider coordination with ELDI on larger issues surrounding the Penn Avenue corridor. Mon Valley Initiative's model of site control and redevelopment, and funding stream mix, should be emulated for the CDC's redevelopment operations. Governance should follow a hybrid of MVI and ELDI, as the social fabric of Wilkinsburg and the reinvestment challenges it faces are both similar, but not identical.

Tax Compromise

A tax compromise is too unfriendly to a purchaser, very cumbersome to administer, and does not clear the title. We feel that no more energy should be used pursuing tax compromise as a reinvestment tool.

Sheriffs Sale vs. Eminent Domain

As outlined in the findings, both forms of title clearing have unique advantages and disadvantages. We stress that our recommendations are based on the most legally feasible solutions, and those most attractive to expedient control, redevelopment and sale. These may not necessarily be the most politically palatable to the taxing bodies – borough or school district – or the community. Our research shows that eminent domain is the most effective way to gain control over vacant properties. Though potentially more expensive than sheriff's sale, it catches all liens, except federal, and it eliminates the risk of undesirable purchasers keeping the CDC from procuring the property. However, there is a social stigma surrounding this issue. We also note that federal liens carry through even in eminent domain. In cases where such liens exist, it may be more feasible to clear the title via sheriff's sale so that the federal debt is satisfied. However, both tools should be at the borough's disposal.

Subsequent to regaining control over liens within the Borough, either the District or the Borough should follow practices similar to the Woodland Hills School District in the case of sheriff's sale – that is, perform due diligence on liened properties deemed reinvestment targets by the CDC, take them to sheriff's sale, and work closely with the CDC to ensure control does not go to a predator party in the process.

Portnoff and Associates
We recommend that Wilkinsburg revisit its contract with Portnoff and Associates (Appendix 7), and the borough ordinance passed making the contract part of local regulation. Of particular concern are the fees associated with a decision to take properties to sheriff's sale.[1] Fees can be large, with the total cost ranging from \$2035 to \$2200 per title-clearing transaction. The borough should re-examine the contract to determine if it needs to be renegotiated, and act accordingly. Team discussions with community members have revealed Portnoff has been very successful for the borough and the school district.[2] We advocate open dialogue with Portnoff regarding the lien-clearing contract.

Act 42 Tax Abatement
Our findings show that \$19.2 million of property value must be generated to reduce taxes throughout the borough. The magnitude of housing starts needed is very large – nearly the size of the first phase of Pittsburgh's Summerset at Frick Park. Such large development, if it were feasible, would overwhelm a municipality 1/10th Pittsburgh's size.[3] Therefore, it is both necessary and good practice to incentivize current residents to invest in Wilkinsburg as well.

Passing Act 42 district ordinances at the borough and school district level should encourage Wilkinsburg residents to invest in their community. These ordinances should provide the most aggressive exemption schedule possible with the longest exemption reduction schedule possible. Therefore, per the ordinance, we recommend:

- 10-year exemption period
- Maximum exemption amounts
    - Full exemption on new construction, the state maximum on renovation
- Exemption reductions of 10% per year for the next 10 years, until the exemption amount reaches zero in year 10

Community Development Block Grants
It is worth calling special attention to Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money that the County administers for Wilkinsburg, primarily since this funding stream is already being utilized within the Borough. Wilkinsburg, like many municipalities within the County, utilizes its CDBG money for demolition. It is clear that a need exists for such programming – many structures are unsafe, some to the point that the Wilkinsburg Fire Department has marked structures it no longer will enter in the case of fire (Marla Marcenko, November 13, 2007). However, CDBG can be used for more than demolition.[4] We suggest that Wilkinsburg ask to re-program some CDBG money in accordance with focused redevelopment efforts undertaken by the CDC. Structural demolition may still occur, but there are a number of infrastructure and redevelopment initiatives which will yield higher community benefits than the removal of structures. Additionally, the CDC should work closely with Council and the County in determining which structures should be demolished. A criteria list should be developed, based upon input from public safety officials, the community, Council, and other stakeholders impacted by vacant structures.

References

1) Agreement for Collection of Delinquent Sewer and Municipal Service Fees on Behalf of the Borough of Wilkinsburg. Portnoff and Associates collection contract. Signed December 17, 1998. Pages 2 and 3.
2) Conversation with Jean Dexheimer, Wilkinsburg School Board President. November 20 and December 10, 2007.
3) *Summerset at Frick Park (Nine Mile Run)*. Case Study by the Western Pennsylvania Brownfields Center. Summer, 2007. Page 3.
4) Community Development Block Grant Program. US Department of Housing and Urban Development. http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/.