BAD Buildings Toolkit

An Overview of the WVU BAD Buildings Program

Updated September 2025

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BAD Buildings Toolkit

1. Introduction

1.1 The BAD Buildings Program

The WVU BAD (Brownfield, Abandoned, Dilapidated) Buildings Program is a statewide initiative of the Brownfields Assistance Center (BAC) at West Virginia University to provide communities with a step-by-step process, technical assistance, and site analysis tools to develop or enhance local revitalization efforts. The program helps communities address barriers to identifying, prioritizing, and redeveloping BAD Buildings.

Attachments for this section:
BAD Buildings FAQs
BAD Buildings Info Sheet

'BAD' is an acronym, meaning brownfield, abandoned, and dilapidated. Brownfields are properties whose redevelopment or reuse may be complicated by the potential presence of harmful environmental contaminants (lead-based paint, petroleum, heavy industry, commercial uses). The terms abandoned and dilapidated refer to vacant and/or neglected properties that are blighted or in disrepair. Blight refers to properties that are perceived as problematic in some way. This includes appearing unsafe or unpleasant or properties posing a threat to neighborhood property values.

In addition to being eyesores for community residents, BAD Buildings pose several threats and hazards to the community. Their presence can hinder economic development and investment; constrains municipal revenue and budgets; and can result in health and safety hazards via falling structures, lead-based paint, or other potential contaminants.

While this document is primarily aimed at addressing dilapidated structures, vacant lots can create some of the same issues and are often addressed in the same community efforts. Throughout the document, language will often refer to structures or properties; however, tools can be adapted to address vacant lots, and the survey is designed to allow for tracking of vacant lots and their specific nuances and conditions.

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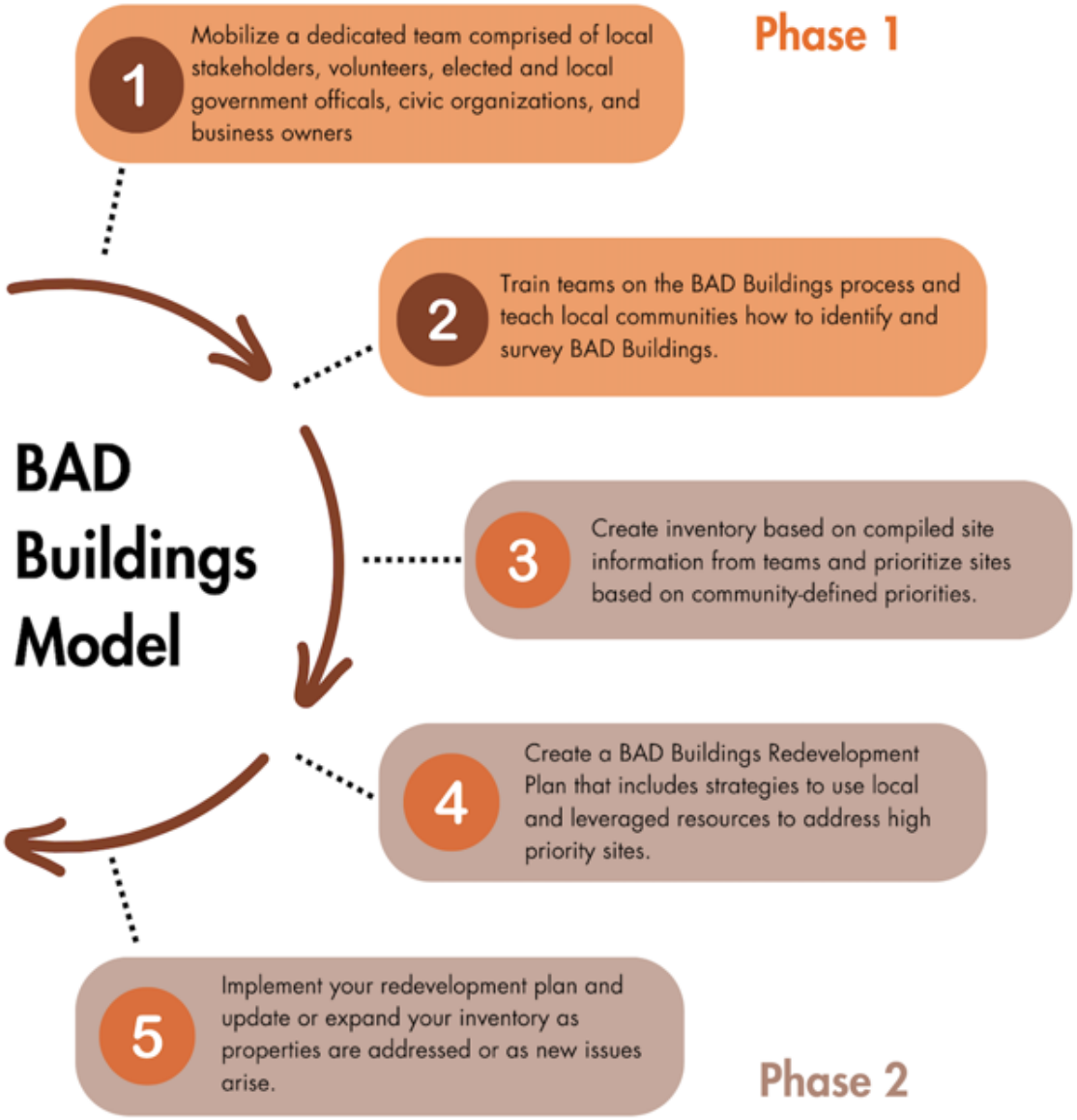
1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide an in-depth overview of the WVU BAD Buildings process. This toolkit serves as a guide for BAD Buildings-related activities and is provided to participating communities as well as communities that may be interested in learning more or participating. The BAD Buildings Toolkit includes an overview of the process, as well as additional resources and templates to guide stakeholders through the process.

Figure 1: BAD Buildings Model



The WVU BAD Buildings program uses a five-step process with two phases to prepare a team and train community members, collect and prioritize inventory data, and develop a final report that incorporates community-defined priorities to create recommendations for the team to work toward redevelopment goals. See **Figure 1** for more details on the process. Supplementing each step of the process described below are companion resources that help stakeholders complete inventory-related preparation and engagement activities to make the process go as smoothly as possible. Companion resources are referenced throughout in the respective section to which their material applies.

BAD Buildings staff recognize that each community possesses unique circumstances and conditions regarding blight. WVU BAD Buildings tailors data collection and prioritization to each community and its capacity to help overcome obstacles to redevelopment by building stakeholder capacity and raising awareness of redevelopment opportunities and resources. The core principle of the program is community engagement. BAD Buildings staff do not conduct inventories in a community without stakeholder engagement and local leadership and all BAD Buildings-related sessions held in the community are open to the public to promote engagement from community stakeholders. More details on identifying stakeholders for participation can be found in **Section 2.**

The objective of this process is to create actionable tasks a community can take to address brownfield, abandoned, and dilapidated sites as well as to create a framework for building capacity to return blighted properties to productive reuse and meet community revitalization goals. For redevelopment of blighted and brownfield properties, site identification (inventorying) is only the first step. **Figure 2** provides a visualization of the redevelopment process. One of the biggest pieces of the redevelopment puzzle is community engagement, which should occur at every step of the redevelopment process, and the BAD Buildings process calls for inclusion of a broad group of stakeholders throughout.

Figure 2: Redevelopment Process

1 Site Identification

To begin the process, you must first identify your site(s) with redevelopment potential! When considering sites, be sure to have a vision for its end use and weigh which options fit redevelopment goals.

2 Site Assessment

Before taking ownership of a site or starting redevelopment, you need to identify any existing contaminants on the property to avoid potential liability problems. Environmental site assessments are conducted in two phases to (1) identify potential contaminants and (2) identify specific contaminants and the extent of contamination.

3 Site Planning & Reuse

Planning activities help create a vision for site reuse and evaluate feasible uses based on existing conditions. The visioning process helps communities explore viable options for redevelopment when returning a property to productive reuse.

4 Project Financing

Redevelopment can be costly! There are *many* resources available to make cleanup of a contaminated property and its redevelopment a reality. Consider leveraging a variety of federal, state, and local grants, and loan funding.

5 Redevelopment

Redevelopment varies from site to site and is often based on community needs, stakeholder vision(s), and site characteristics. Tailor redevelopment to meet the needs of your community and the realities at the site.

2. Forming Your Team

2.1 Team Composition

The most critical component of the BAD Buildings program are the teams. Without volunteer-led teams, none of the work would be possible. Throughout the process and this toolkit you will see references to two key types of teams – Core Teams and BAD Buildings Teams:

> **Core Team**- The core team consists of 3-5 stakeholders in the community who are actively involved in planning and coordination efforts for in-person events and other activities of the BAD Buildings Team. Core team members are asked to actively participate in both in-person community sessions and virtual planning sessions with WVU staff. Essentially, the core team serves as the point of contact throughout the process, assisting WVU BAD Buildings staff with understanding the needs of the community, coordinating for event planning, and building stakeholder relationships.
>
> **BAD Buildings Team**- Broader term used for any stakeholder in the community who participates in the process or attends public inventory, prioritization, or engagement sessions. Sign-in sheets are used for every community visit or meeting. Individuals on the sign in sheet will be notified as Team Members via the email provided when future community engagement sessions are scheduled. All participants are given the option to opt-out of communications at any point.

2.2 Identifying Stakeholders

Once Core Team members are identified and an inventory day has been scheduled, it is time to recruit additional team members. The broader BAD Buildings team will consist of a variety of stakeholders. Stakeholders are simply individuals or groups with an interest, or stake, in the community. Identifying stakeholders involves considering which individuals and groups are impacted by abandoned and dilapidated structures. These considerations should include groups which may not traditionally be considered during economic and community development efforts, such as historical societies, hobby groups, gardening clubs, etc. In short, any groups within a community can be considered as stakeholders and provide valuable input from their various perspectives and backgrounds. The **Stakeholder Engagement Matrix** further details the process of identifying and recruiting community stakeholders.

For promotion of the meeting and recruitment of Team Members, the Core Team should allow for at least one month of lead time between scheduling the event and the day of the

inventory session. This allows plenty of time to advertise information to the community and for Team Members to make necessary arrangements to attend the meeting.

Attachments for this section:
Stakeholder Engagement Matrix
Community Notice Letter
Sample Meeting Graphics and Flyers
Community Survey Press Release

2.3 Recruiting Team Members

Once stakeholders are identified to round out the Core and BAD Buildings teams, a variety of means should be employed to officially recruit them. The Core Team should be recruited from stakeholders that are willing to regularly attend BAD Buildings meetings and communicate with WVU BAD Buildings staff. Core Team members are generally involved with local government or prominent local organizations. A "community champion" will serve as the Core Team coordinator and main point of contact throughout the BAD Buildings process. This individual is generally well-known in the community and has knowledge of current local initiatives and events.

Stakeholders being recruited for the broader BAD Buildings team will be expected to attend sessions that are open to the community, such as Survey and Inventory training, Prioritization Sessions, and the Final Report Presentation. These stakeholders generally consist of community members at large and members of community organizations.

Communities consist of individuals of a wide age range, varying technological proficiencies, and engagement with local occurrences. Newspaper advertisements, social media posts and stories, personalized letters, batch emails, and word of mouth will help to ensure that messaging reaches a wide demographic.

WVU BAD Buildings staff can assist with event advertising in the form of creating social media graphics for communities to share online, run in the local newspaper, or print flyers to be posted throughout the community. The **Community Notice Letter**, **Sample Community Flyers**, and **Community Survey Press Release** can be edited to best fit targeted audiences.

3. Training the Team

3.1 Inventory Training

BAD Buildings inventory days mark the official start of the BAD Buildings process in participating communities. These sessions are open to the public, and participation from a variety of stakeholders is encouraged. During these sessions, WVU BAD Buildings staff conduct a training session with attendees that introduces the basics of the BAD Buildings program, its process and timeline, and teaches attendees how to conduct windshield

surveys in the field. The term *windshield survey* refers to surveys in which participants collect data without crossing property lines or trespassing on private property. Information is collected based on what is visible from the nearest public right-of-way.

Attachments for this section:
Meeting Sign-In Template
Regrid Community Toolkit
Conversations with Property Owners

3.2 Introduction to Regrid: A Property Mapping Tool

Regrid is a property inventory tool application. It has assembled parcel data throughout the United States and provides property data, including property size, property value, ownership information, and land use codes for properties organized by parcel designation. This tool allows BAD Buildings communities to access information on sites in quick and central locations, making the follow-up steps after the inventory process more streamlined and efficient. Regrid data is pulled from public databases, such as County Assessor information, and populated into a GIS-based platform that can be accessed via internet browser or through the Regrid Mobile App.

At the start of the BAD Buildings process, WVU BAD Buildings staff train community volunteers on the process and the app, demonstrating its use as inventory efforts begin in the community. For more information on Regrid, see the accompanying Regrid How-To Manual in the Train Your Team section of the BAD Buildings Toolkit.

4. Surveying & Inventory

Abandoned and dilapidated structures are more than just eyesores—they pose serious health, safety, and economic risks to communities. Unmanaged dilapidated and abandoned structures can attract crime, decrease property values, and hinder neighborhood revitalization efforts. A proactive approach to identifying and inventorying these structures is essential for municipalities and community stakeholders seeking to revitalize neighborhood and protect public welfare. Having an up-to-date, comprehensive inventory of abandoned and dilapidated properties is foundational for effective governance, revitalization efforts, potential grants, and improving the quality of life in communities. It turns hidden liabilities into visible opportunities for positive change.

4.1 Developing an Inventory Framework

An effective inventory framework provides a description of property type, structural conditions, and occupancy status. The inventory framework of WVU BAD Buildings program is based on the following aspects.

Attachments for this section:
BAD Buildings Survey Sheet

Property Type

Understanding the type of property is essential for accurately assessing land use, redevelopment potential, and zoning compatibility. Properties vary widely in their design, function, and occupancy. This classification helps inform decisions based on current or intended use.

- **Single-family (Residential):** A **single-family** house is a standalone residential structure designed to be occupied by one household. Unlike multi-unit buildings, it does not share walls with any other homes and typically sits on its own plot of land. These homes often include a private yard, driveway, garage, and multiple bedrooms and bathrooms, offering space and privacy for the residents.
- **Duplex:** A **duplex** is a residential building divided into two separate living units, typically side-by-side or stacked one above the other. Each unit usually has its own entrance, kitchen, bathrooms, and living spaces, making it ideal for extended families, rental income, or shared ownership.
- **Multi-family:** A **multi-family** home is a residential building designed to accommodate more than one household within separate living units. These units can be side-by-side or stacked on different floors and typically have their own entrances, kitchens, and bathrooms. Common types include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and larger apartment buildings. Multi-family homes are often used for rental purposes.
- **Commercial use only:** A **commercial use only** property is a building or space that is legally designated for business activities rather than residential living. These properties are typically used for offices, retail stores, restaurants, warehouses, or other business operations. Zoning laws strictly regulate their use, meaning they cannot be used for permanent housing.
- **Mixed-use:** A **mixed-use** property is a type of real estate that combines residential, commercial, and sometimes even light industrial spaces within a single building or development. Common examples include buildings with retail shops or restaurants on the ground floor and apartments or offices on the upper floors. Mixed-use developments are often found in urban areas and are designed to promote walkability, reduce the need for commuting, and create vibrant, multi-functional communities.
- **Vacant Lots: Vacant lots** are parcels of land that are undeveloped and have no existing buildings or structures on them. These lots can be found in residential, commercial, or industrial zones and may be used for future construction, investment, or agricultural purposes.

While most questions are designed for properties with structures, there are questions specifically for vacant lots.

- **Other: Other** is used when the use is unknown or difficult for surveyors to ascertain at the time of the survey.

Structural conditions

Structural conditions reflect a building's integrity and safety. Evaluating elements like the frame, roof, and windows helps identify deterioration and guide repair or redevelopment decisions.

1. **Building Frame/Structure:** this section focuses on the walls, exterior, and visible foundation of a structure. Properties which have noticeable damage to their frame or foundation may be in significant states of dilapidation.
2. **Roof/Chimney/Gutters:** this section includes description of the state of dilapidation of a property's roof and chimney; damage to either is often a sign of significant problems throughout the property. In addition, damaged gutters may quickly lead to more significant damage to a roof or wall.
3. **Windows/Doors:** this section addresses any visible dilapidation to the entrances to a property. Damaged or missing windows/doors is a sign of possible significant interior damage as well as a public safety hazard, allowing access of animals, criminal activity, and curious children who could be injured.
4. **Siding/Veneer/Paint:** this section covers the largely aesthetic issue of dilapidation, although significant damage to the siding/paint of property may be indicative of more serious structural issues.
5. **Porch/Entrance Overhang:** minor issues with a dilapidated porch, such as peeling paint, contribute to aesthetic dilapidation while major issues, such as a collapsing porch indicate more serious structural problems as well as contribute to hazardous conditions of the property.

Survey Categories

Survey categories classify buildings based on visible structural condition and safety. Buildings/properties are labeled as follows which helps prioritize interventions and redevelopment efforts.

- **Major Problem** – Structure with severe foundation issues (tilting or leaning (with cracks), exposed interior (missing doors, windows) collapsing walls or roofs, burnt out and visible decay, appears inhabitable, posing serious safety, health and environmental concerns.
- **Minor Problem** – Structures showing deterioration and code violations, poorly maintained, broken windows, doors, peeling paint, signs of vacancy, garbage accumulation, overgrown yard, but not an immediate safety hazard and viable for adaptive reuse.

- **No Problem** – Structure is in good condition, well maintained, intact exteriors, appears habitable with no visible hazard.

4.2 Data Collection

Inventory Day

BAD Buildings inventory days mark the official start of the BAD Buildings process in participating communities. These sessions are open to the public, and participation from a variety of stakeholders is encouraged. During these sessions, WVU BAD Buildings staff conduct a training session with attendees that introduces the basics of the BAD Buildings program, its process and timeline, and teaches attendees how to conduct windshield surveys in the field. The term *windshield survey* refers to surveys in which participants collect data without crossing property lines or trespassing on private property. Information is collected based on what is visible from the nearest public right-of-way.

The purpose of using teams for this process is to make survey data collection as objective as possible. Since the BAD Buildings process involves the collection of qualitative data that documents the current conditions of certain blight indicators, teams help to build consensus on the conditions of specific aspects of the property. For more information on data collection and definitions of blight severity, see the accompanying BAD Buildings **Survey Questions** handout. As surveys are conducted, one member of each team, identified as the team lead, will document survey responses directly into the Regrid mobile application. All team members will be provided physical handouts of their assigned survey zone, as well as survey questions and definitions. WVU BAD Buildings staff will work with the core team in advance to identify priority areas for the inventory session. Identified focus areas are referred to as 'target zones.' These zones are drawn directly into Regrid to help the team keep track of location and survey metrics.

Inventory Day Agenda

When conducting community inventory sessions, WVU BAD Buildings staff plan within a timeframe of 4-6 hours for the entirety of the session, depending on the size of the community. Public inventory sessions should be scheduled at a time that will allow ample daylight to complete surveys in the field, while hopefully accommodating as many volunteer schedules as possible. This often means that meetings must be scheduled in the afternoon, which can have negative impacts to maximizing turnout. To compensate for scheduling conflicts with inventory sessions, we encourage communities to consider scheduling prioritization and final report sessions in the evening to allow for a broader audience and engagement from a more diverse array of stakeholders in the community, or to think of other ways community members might submit properties for inclusion in the inventory. This could also be addressed by hosting an Inventory Day on a weekend, when

fewer stakeholders are likely to be working. A **Sample Agenda** for an Inventory Day is provided in the toolkit.

Data Collection and Analysis Tools

Regrid

WVU BAD Buildings uses the Regrid App to share the windshield survey questions outlined above with local teams/volunteers (participants). The survey questions are created on the desktop and made accessible on mobile devices to community volunteers at no cost. The participants access and complete a survey with property information along with photos of the current state of the buildings. The buildings are evaluated based on the criteria discussed above in the section **Developing an Inventory Framework** including property type, structural condition and status of the structures/properties.

Regrid is a practical and user-friendly mobile and web-based mapping tool for parcel-based data collection. It provides access to nationwide parcel data in the United States. Data includes parcel boundaries, ownership information, land use data and other information. It allows users to collect custom field data directly linked to specific parcels, making it a valuable resource for conducting property inventory.

At the start of the BAD Buildings process, staff train community volunteers on the process and the app, demonstrating its use as inventory efforts begin.

ArcGIS Pro

ArcGIS Pro, developed by Esri, is a powerful geographic information system used for advanced spatial analysis, mapping, and data visualization. Parcel maps are created from the data captured in Regrid during BAD building inventory. These maps are shared with the stakeholders to provide an overview of the inventoried properties and their location within the community boundaries.

Surveying Without Adequate Cell Service

In areas with poor or no cell service, Regrid will be unable to upload survey results in real time. Users can now upload a queue of survey results to Regrid without service, and they will be added once the device is reconnected to service.

An alternative to using Regrid in areas of poor service is to print out paper surveys and distribute them to the survey team. In addition to the paper surveys, surveyors should continue to take pictures of surveyed properties. Surveys can be entered into Regrid, along with images taken on surveyors' personal devices.

1. Make sure that there is internet service at the survey site before conducting inventory. If there is a problem, the BAD Buildings team should be notified so that paper survey will be provided on survey day.
2. After the paper survey is conducted, the BAD Buildings team will enter the survey data into Regrid. The surveyors still need to take pictures and send them later via email or other photo sharing methods.

Common Pitfalls with Data Collection

There may be issues with the surveyed properties. This could be because one parcel might contain multiple buildings, one structure may have crossed multiple parcel lines, or parcel lines may not align properly. The team should flag anomalies for manual review by overlaying imagery and surveys.

If there are multiple structures in one parcel, two entries should be recorded in Regrid for the same. The note field could be used to explain why there are two surveys for one parcel.

When a structure spans more than one parcel, a larger portion of the structure will be used to assign a parcel, surveyors should complete the survey for the parcel on which the majority of the structure sits, including a note about adjacent parcel(s).

4.3 Categorizing Properties Based on Survey

Classification by conditions

To support effective property assessment and prioritize redevelopment or intervention strategies, buildings are classified into four condition-based categories: **Good**, **Fair**, **Poor**, and **Should Be Demolished**. Each type is categorized based on observable physical deterioration, structural integrity, maintenance level, habitability and safety. A total number of entries of 'major problem', minor problem', and 'no problem' for each associated building/property are counted to assign appropriate category. Each category is explained below.

- **Good:** Buildings/properties in **Good** condition are structurally sound and well maintained. They exhibit no signs of major damage and require no more than two minor repairs, such as fixing a gutter or replacing a damaged windowpane. Foundations are stable, and the structure is neither leaning nor tilted. General upkeep—like painting or minor exterior maintenance—may be necessary, but these buildings are fully habitable and represent minimal risk.

- **Fair:** Buildings/properties rated as **Fair** remain structurally sound but show signs of gradual wear and neglect. They may need three or more minor repairs and

possibly one major repair, such as a partial roof replacement or foundational patching. These buildings can typically be restored to good condition with a moderate investment, making them suitable candidates for rehabilitation programs.

- **Poor:** Buildings/properties in **Poor** condition may no longer be structurally sound and present visible signs of severe deterioration. Issues can include sagging porches, broken or boarded windows, damaged siding, or a failing roof. Two or more major repairs are required to restore these structures to safe, livable standards. These buildings often pose health and safety concerns and require significant resources for rehabilitation.

- **Should Be Demolished:** Structures classified under **Should Be Demolished** are considered unsafe for occupancy due to serious structural failures, such as leaning walls, fire damage, or compromised foundations. These buildings cannot be cost-effectively or safely rehabilitated and often represent a hazard to the surrounding community. In such cases, demolition is the most viable option to eliminate risk and make space for new development.

5. Prioritizing the Inventory

Following each round of surveying brownfield, abandoned, and dilapidated properties, the inventory list grows, additional conversations about the community and its needs take place, and ideas for next steps begin to take shape. Oftentimes, the inventory can feel overwhelming, and it may be difficult to ascertain where to start working towards placing properties back into productive reuse.

A structured yet welcoming prioritization session with community members, property owners, and members of local and regional government helps to break the inventory down and identify best candidates to pursue for initial revitalization efforts. Prioritization can also serve as a time where short and long-term plans for the community and priority properties are discussed, and aspects of the inventory reviewed.

While a comprehensive inventory is the first step to addressing community blight, it is unfeasible to work from the full list of properties. Determining which properties have the most detrimental impact or pose risks that require urgent action makes the list easier to manage. For the sake of time and feasibility, all inventoried properties cannot be discussed during the same prioritization session.

To initially narrow down the list, Staff will meet with the Core Team to establish which types of properties and property conditions to focus on. For example, properties ranked as *Poor* or *Should be Demolished* are often the properties that contain the most severe blight indicators and pose a risk to health and safety in the community.

Attachments for this section:
Defining Community Priorities
Sample Priority Definitions
Prioritizing Properties Instructions
Sample Prioritization Grid

If there are several properties (more than 30) ranked in the *Should be Demolished* category, define a list of 20-25 sites or addresses where known or documented issues may necessitate further action. The identified sites *must* be in the existing inventory.

Once a subset of properties is defined, the community is asked to define 3-5 priorities for redevelopment. Staff should have a general idea of community wants and structures that may be good candidates for revitalization as they have engaged with community members over the course of several months, which can help guide the conversation, using the **Defining Community Priorities** worksheet. Diverse input is crucial, so several local stakeholders should be included in this discussion. This internal meeting will help to further flesh out these wants into more detailed priorities. Ample time should be provided to promote the event via social media, local message boards, etc. to reach as many community members as possible. Guidance on determining community-defined priorities is broad, but some common examples include:

- **Visibility:** Is the property located on a main street or in a high traffic area?
- **Health and Safety Concerns:** Is the property structurally sound? Is there ease of access via broken windows, busted down doors, etc.? Are there pests?
- **Blight Concentration:** Is the property located in close proximity to other blighted structures?
- **Cooperative Property Owners:** Is the owner, if known, likely to cooperate? Are there any city-owned properties that can be addressed first?
- **Brownfields:** Is there a likelihood that the site may have environmental contaminants?
- There are many more options for community priorities! If your community is unsure where to start, BAD Buildings staff can help guide the conversation toward potential options.

Additional information on these and other common priorities are included in the **Defining Community Priorities** worksheet.

Following the meeting with the Core Team, staff members will develop a **Prioritization Grid** and slides, which include property profiles. The Grid lists each priority at the top of

the columns, under which a score is assigned (see example below). Property profiles include the address, structure condition (Good, Fair, Poor, or Should be demolished), property type (single family, commercial, mixed use, etc.), and images of the structure from initial windshield surveys.

The Core Team will then set a date for a public meeting where community members are invited to attend and provide their input. While this meeting occurs in person, it is suggested to provide a Zoom/Teams link so those who are unable to attend can still participate. Staff members will provide each community member with a scoring matrix and a handout describing the identified priorities.

Once the community has identified a set of problem properties and 3-5 priorities to inform the discussion, you are ready to hold a prioritization session. The prioritization session uses the **Prioritization Grid** where properties are listed on the left-hand column and community-defined priorities across the top of the grid. The grid uses a one to three scale with three being the worst condition/highest priority. See the **Prioritizing Properties Instructions** for additional guidance. For each listed property, we'll engage in a discussion and provide a ranking of one to three for each community priority. Properties that receive the highest cumulative score once rankings are tallied are considered top priority sites for the community. These are the sites that should be targeted for remediation/redevelopment first.

Note: Ranking properties in prioritization does not tie the team or community to addressing in this order. Circumstances can change and unexpected opportunities can arise, but having a prioritized list allows you to proactively pursue opportunities in a more purposeful way.

The prioritization process is intended to be reiterative, which means as the first wave of prioritized properties are addressed, either through remediation or demolition, the community can move to the next set of properties by completing another prioritization session. This breaks the list of properties into several smaller, more manageable sets that can be worked from until known issues are addressed. The idea is to hold prioritization sessions as properties are addressed and to continue doing so until there are no remaining properties in the inventory. It is important to note that this may take time- and that's okay! Change does not happen overnight; this step is intended to help the community find an objective way to define its long-term goals for remediating blight.

Following the prioritization community session, Staff will update the inventory list to rank properties from high to low priority. Once the inventory list is finalized and prioritized, it will be shared as part of the Final Report. Prioritization will inform the development of the

Final Report by helping to identify short and long-term “next steps,” as well as identifying potential funding sources that best align with the needs of priority structures. Priority structures also receive additional analysis as outlined in the next section.

6. Analysis

The analysis of brownfield, abandoned, and dilapidated structures is a critical process aimed at understanding the physical, legal, and social conditions surrounding neglected buildings. This analysis involves evaluating the structural integrity, environmental hazards, and potential risks these properties pose to public safety and community wellbeing. It also considers the historical significance, ownership status, and zoning constraints that may affect future use. By systematically assessing these factors, authorities and stakeholders can determine whether a structure should be rehabilitated, repurposed, or demolished. This process supports informed decision-making, resource allocation, and strategic redevelopment efforts aimed at revitalizing affected neighborhoods.

The inventory data retrieved from Regrid will be analyzed by checking for duplications errors or missing values and then categorized into standardized classifications. The results will be presented in the form of tables, charts, and maps with a basic summary of datasets such as total inventoried properties, percentages of types and status of properties.

6.1 Analyzing Inventory Results

- **Identifying Priority Properties:** Once the preliminary dataset of all inventory properties is completed, WVU BAD Buildings team analyzes the data based on the extent of damage to the properties. The damage is rated based on risk description (major problem’, minor problem’, and ‘no problem’) to the associated structural conditions such as building frame, roof/chimney/gutter, windows/doors, siding/paint, porch/entrance of the respective building.
- **Risk Assessment Matrix:** The BAD Buildings team creates a risk assessment matrix based on the number of entries of ‘major problem’, minor problem’, and ‘no problem’ to the associated building. The higher the number of major problems, the higher the likelihood of risk occurring and its impact. The team categorizes the inventoried properties into Good, Fair, Poor and Should be demolished categories, according to the classification conditions found in the Surveying & Inventorying section. This matrix helps determine which buildings need urgent attention, what kind of mitigation is necessary, and how to allocate resources effectively.

- **Potential for Rehabilitation or Redevelopment:** Potential for rehabilitation or redevelopment will be assessed based on the structural integrity, health and safety, historical and cultural value, market demand, zoning compatibility, ownership status, and resources.

6.2 Reporting and Public Sharing

WVU BAD Buildings team prepares a preliminary report based on the preliminary data. This includes a total number of buildings/properties assessed including type, condition, physical address, parcel number, location, ownership, key findings and summary statistics. WVU BAD Buildings team creates maps of the inventoried buildings/properties to provide visualization and spatial context such as how many properties are in floodplain.

WVU BAD Buildings team discusses the preliminary findings with the stakeholders, including the core team and community. Usually, this is a virtual meeting with the core team. Once the team gets feedback on the preliminary results from the meeting, the results will be updated. Some of the properties that need immediate attention such as those rated *poor and should be demolished* will be used in combination with the photos taken during the inventory to produce an inventory profile for the associated building/property.

7. Implementing Next Steps

Next Steps directly relate to short-term actions and objectives that the community can undertake to address blighted structures that were identified during the inventory process. These steps seek to capitalize on engagement from an array of stakeholders and includes (but is not limited to) local government officials, community-members, BAD Buildings Team members (that's anyone who has attended and participated in public inventory and prioritization sessions), and property owners.

Attachments for this section:
Friendly Letter Template
Creating a Neighborhood Association
Partnership Development
Rapid Assessment Tool for Deconstruction

7.1 Engaging Property Owners

One of the primary tools available to BAD Buildings Teams is engaging property owners in the process. Though the process itself is linear, new stakeholders can and should be introduced throughout the BAD Buildings Program. As new stakeholders are brought on board, the BAD Buildings Team can bring them up to speed on what has happened during the community inventory session and what priorities the community has chosen to focus on for prioritization of the inventory.

Setting a Positive Tone

During the BAD Buildings process, it is always encouraged that BAD Buildings Teams have support from the local municipal government by maintaining open lines of communication and remaining transparent with one another throughout the process. However, it is important to emphasize that when the community works toward engaging property owners whose properties may be included in the inventory that they set a positive and up-lifting tone. The intention of bringing property owners into the conversation is to build a basis for cooperation. We cannot do this without first setting a positive tone for the conversation. The first steps to engage property owners should always be to welcome them to attend BAD Buildings Team meetings, ask questions, and/or share their intentions for the property or their challenges in realizing those intentions. Blight remediation can be costly, so the first step should always be understanding the issues and resource gaps that property owners may face in upkeeping properties.

More information on code enforcement is included below, but legal reprimand for property conditions is usually considered the last alternative for addressing BAD Buildings. This is where relationship-building with local government officials comes in. Local governments carry the capacity for enforcement and can be brought into the conversation when individuals are otherwise uncooperative, combative, or uninterested in addressing blight.

Friendly Letter Templates

Given the information above, how do BAD Buildings Teams work toward engaging property owners and opening lines of communication? For this, the **Friendly Letter Template** serves as a tool for communities to begin conversations. The friendly letter template (see accompanying handout in the Implementing Next Steps Section of the BAD Buildings Toolkit) is a resource that was developed to help BAD Buildings Teams address properties/property issues with the owner whose property was surveyed. Friendly letters are sent by BAD Buildings Teams, meaning the local stakeholders that have regularly attended BAD Buildings-related events/activities and have played a role in inventory development. It is important to stress that these letters are sent *without* local government officially signing on. This strategy is a low-hanging fruit for stakeholders to reach out to property owners on behalf of the BAD Buildings Team. Setting a positive and welcoming tone is crucial so that property owners know that this is *not* a letter from code enforcement and that the team is encouraging cooperation and collaboration to potentially help them locate resources to address blight.

- The friendly letter template contains a signature block that requires the input of contact information for transparency purposes. It is entirely up to the team to decide how they feel comfortable signing off. Team members do not have to include any personally identifiable information, and the BAD Buildings Team name

can be supplemented anywhere that 'name' appears in the prompt. If team members are not comfortable including their phone number or email address for contact, they can use a local government contact, if the local government agrees to do so. *It is important to reiterate that this is not a letter of reprimand from code enforcement.* In the case of local government contact information being used on the sign-off of the letter, this would simply serve as a point-of-contact for the BAD Buildings Team to welcome property owners into the conversation.

- The response rate for friendly letters is typically higher than what is initially perceived. This is why setting a positive tone is such a crucial part of the communication process. Property owners are much more willing to collaborate with stakeholders when they are allowed a space in the conversation.
- Often, a property owner's reaction to a friendly letter can be impacted by who sends the letter. For example, if there is a team member who knows the property owner personally, consider having them sign off on the letter (if they are comfortable doing so) and initiating conversation.

Local Government Involvement

In the event that local property owners are uncooperative or unresponsive, or persistent absenteeism presents an issue, BAD Buildings Teams must rely on building partnerships with local government to help address blighted properties. More information is provided on code enforcement below, but it is important to note here again that local governments are the entities that hold enforcement power. This is why BAD Buildings Teams are encouraged to include local government officials from the start of the BAD Buildings process to build partnerships, introduce them to volunteers and stakeholders, and keep officials informed of BAD Buildings-related efforts in the community.

Community leaders should remain proactive in learning best practices and establishing partnerships with county agencies or other municipalities. It is important to emphasize here that community volunteers cannot do this part of the process alone- The crux of this effort must rely on cooperation with local city government and/or county agencies that have the authority to create and administer such a department.

Code enforcement is the number one tool available for municipalities to address blighted and dilapidated structures. Without this mechanism, there is little to no capability for legal enforcement to address blight.

Because of the legal nature of such codes, WVU BAD Buildings staff are unable to provide specific actions or recommendations related to updating codes and ordinances. In order to address needed updates, community leaders are strongly encouraged to consult with an attorney prior to adopting new ordinances. Despite limitations, WVU BAD Buildings

staff can assist community leaders with building partnerships and capacity with local and county officials that may be interested in learning more about the efforts undertaken as part of the BAD Buildings process, including the inventory process, what information is collected, and how the community defined its priorities to rank properties. Additionally, WVU BAD Buildings staff can assist with coordinating calls and providing networking opportunities with relevant agencies and officials that may be able to provide insight into best strategies and approaches for community leaders.

7.2 Preventing Blight

While observation of community blight and the documentation of conditions is relatively straightforward, prevention of future blight in the community can be a bit trickier to manage. Most of the tips and tricks provided below rely on continued engagement and support from a broad array of stakeholders and embrace a proactive, rather than reactive stance on eliminating the chance of future blight.

Manage BAD Buildings Inventory

The inventory created through the BAD Buildings Program is referred to as a 'living' inventory, which means that even after the formal BAD Buildings process is completed, the community retains access to its related materials in Regrid. At any time, BAD Buildings Teams can update existing inventories, remove properties from the existing list of inventories, or add properties to the inventory as conditions warrant.

Managing the BAD Buildings inventory in your community is the best way for BAD Buildings Teams to remain proactive in addressing blight in the community. In addition to managing properties as they are addressed or as blight conditions change on other properties with time, it is good practice for BAD Buildings Teams to engage in regular spot-checking of the existing inventoried properties, where possible, to gauge whether more widespread and coordinated updates to the data may be needed. Spot-checking is especially recommended in areas of high blight concentration. Doing this will allow the BAD Buildings Team to effectively manage the inventory over the long-term and address changing conditions as they arise.

Embrace Cooperation

As noted previously, blight remediation can be costly, so BAD Buildings Teams are encouraged to embrace cooperation among a diverse array of stakeholders and partner agencies that may include but is not limited to local volunteers, community activists, local non-profit leaders, local government officials, religious organizations, and civic organizations. A neighborhood association is a stakeholder group with a focus on improvements and representation within delineated boundaries of a community. Information about establishing associates can be found in the attachment, **Create a**

Neighborhood Association. Long-term strategizing is crucial to maintaining momentum while increasing community engagement and support. In particular, low population/low-income, rural, and limited capacity communities may neither have the resources to apply nor manage large-scale funding applications. Often, partner organizations and agencies can assist with identifying mechanisms that allow these communities to tap into funding streams available via local or regional agencies for planning and redevelopment efforts.

Document and Track Progress

As a capacity-building program, maintaining the momentum gathered in the community by bringing together the BAD Buildings Team is of utmost importance. BAD Buildings Teams should continue to meet regularly, collaborate with one another, and share successes. As a way to measure this success and keep the community engaged, it may be helpful for the BAD Buildings Team to collaborate with stakeholders and local government officials to document and track progress related to blight remediation.

In addition to boosting morale, having a documented and proven track record for addressing blight may help the community build capacity to access more resources as goals shift from remediation to redevelopment and prevention.

Consider Other Methods

When efforts brought forth by the BAD Buildings Team to increase cooperation and encourage property owner engagement fall short, teams should rely on continued involvement with local government officials to take steps to address blight in the community. Local governments have a variety of tools and mechanisms at their disposal to help address blight. However, if the community's local government has limited capacity, WVU BAD Buildings staff can assist in connecting officials to broader external stakeholders that have access to information and resources that can be tailored to fit the needs of specific communities.

7.3 Visioning

Once the community has gone through the BAD Buildings process to inventory and prioritize sites, the community should develop a vision that will include a strategy for vacant and dilapidated properties. Vacant buildings and lots reduce a community's marketability and can create health and safety issues. By establishing a vision, your community knows what priorities are important, and this will enable you to pursue resources and funding to achieve redevelopment goals.

Prioritization of inventoried sites will help guide the community vision by establishing focus areas and potential redevelopment uses for each site. It is important to have a vision beyond demolition since identification of a site reuse significantly increases

competitiveness for funding by creating more opportunities for funding sources, illustrating that the community has a viable plan, and differentiating it from other communities.

Remember to invite key stakeholders to the discussion. For suggestions on who to include, reference the **Stakeholder Engagement Matrix**. Questions to guide a visioning process might include:

- What do we like most about our community?
- What do we most want visitors to notice?
- Do we have enough of the right-sized housing to meet demand?
- Is there enough affordable housing?
- How can we make our community more attractive to business development?
- What can we do to keep our current residents?
- What do I want my community to look like once we eliminate dilapidated buildings and/or vacant lots?
- How can community groups, local government, non-profits and housing agencies work
- together to improve the condition of our community?

7.4 Demolition, Cleanup, and Rehab

After sites have been identified and prioritized according to their criteria, communities will take steps to address them. This includes due diligence before acquiring property, identification of potential contaminants, planning to cleanup and remediate known contaminants, and identification of funding sources.

Due Diligence

Do not purchase or take ownership of a property without first conducting All Appropriate Inquiry (AAI)/Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA). Conducting AAI/Phase 1 ESA provides liability protection to the new owner when completed prior to purchasing a property. Without this, new owners could be considered the potentially responsible party (PRP), making them liable for contaminants on site. The results of AAI/Phase I ESA findings identify the presence of potential contaminants based on research of past uses, allowing purchasers the opportunity to better understand what they may be facing. Additionally, not conducting due diligence before taking ownership may negatively impact eligibility for funding opportunities, such as EPA Brownfields Cleanup grants.

How to Fund Demo, Cleanup, and Rehabilitation

Demolition, cleanup, and remediation can be paid for by a combination of public and private financing, including grants and loans. Sources of funding include grants, loans,

and technical assistance, tax credits, and foundations. WVU BAD Buildings staff are available to assist with funding and assistance identification.

EPA Brownfields Redevelopment Funding

There are two types of EPA funding available for brownfield redevelopment: grants and technical assistance.

EPA Brownfield Grants	EPA Technical Assistance
• have hard application deadlines – must prepare in advance • are nationally competitive • applicant is responsible for grant oversight • assessment grants are usually for multiple sites	• sites are selected locally, on a rolling basis • regionally focused • funding process facilitated by EPA • helps establish familiarity with EPA process • generally targeted at one site or some contiguous sites

Additional Funding Sources

EPA Brownfield Grants and TA alone will not bring a brownfield redevelopment project to fruition. Any development project (brownfield or otherwise) requires multiple funding sources to cleanup, remediate, and redevelop sites. Examples to consider are listed below.

<u>Tax Credits</u>

- Historic Rehabilitation: promote rehabilitation and reuse of historic structures
- Low Income Housing (LIHT): private equity use for development of affordable housing
- New Markets: provides incentives for economic growth and community development in distressed communities with private investment
- State-Specific: vary by each state and respective agencies

<u>Loans</u>

- Traditional Lending: borrowing money to be repaid over set period which includes interest
- Socially-minded lenders (those who have social impact component): committed to environmental or social good, not solely profit
- Private Investments: known as alternative investment; often use investment funds instead of bonds, cash, or stocks

- Equity Investors: known as stocks; purchase of pieces of companies
- Community Reinvestment Act (CRA): est. in 1977 to reduce discriminatory credit practices; encourages banks to meet credit needs of their chartered communities

Other Sources

- Other Federal Programs: DOT, EDA
- State-Specific Programs: Partner Community Capital, Preservation Alliance of WV
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) (Blight Removal): provides funding for economic and community development projects to encourage more state, federal, and private resource investment
- USDA: provides variety of grants and loans, including housing assistance and rural development assistance

8. Additional Resources

Identifying, prioritizing, and addressing abandoned and dilapidated properties is a long and complex process that requires input from local stakeholders, subject matter experts, and often elected officials. The WVU BAD Buildings program brings together these stakeholders to tackle this work collaboratively and efficiently. This toolkit is designed as a companion to participation in the WVU BAD Buildings program. However, communities could also use the resources to implement the model independently.

In the following pages, you will find companion tools for each step of the process to help your local BAD Buildings team implement this model. The Toolkit can be referenced throughout your BAD Buildings experience and revisited as needed, as you update your inventory in an ongoing effort to reduce and prevent blight in your community.

Tools for BAD Buildings Overview

BAD Buildings FAQ

BAD Buildings One-Pager

Tools for Forming Your Team

Stakeholder Engagement Matrix

Community Notice Letter

Sample Meeting Graphics and Flyers

Community Survey Press Release

Tools for Training the Team

Meeting Sign-In Template

Regrid Community Toolkit

Conversations with Property Owners

Tools for Survey & Inventory

BAD Buildings Survey Sheet

Tools for Prioritization

Defining Community Priorities

Sample Priority Definitions

Prioritizing Properties Instructions

Sample Prioritization Grid

Tools for Next Steps

Friendly Letter Template

Creating a Neighborhood Association

Partnership Development

Rapid Assessment Tool for Deconstruction