

Understanding community-led economic development in resource-poor communities

Friday, October 27, 2023 8:30 AM (1h 30m)

Neighborhoods in small and medium sized legacy cities often struggle to deal with a vast array of problems, including vacant land. Top-down approaches to managing vacant land, including aggressive enforcement campaigns against tax delinquent property owners, and more recently, the creation of land banks, have largely failed to help local communities. Vacant land management strategies implemented at the neighbourhood level offer more hope, specifically if local organizations and residents feel vested in implementing those strategies. For many communities, a first step in managing vacant land is answering a simple question, how much vacant land is there in a community? A lack of access to data, maps and software, combined with a lack of expertise often make answering basic questions like this problematic. These challenges can sometimes be overcome through partnerships with other communities, non-profit organisations and local academic institutions.

In summer 2022, students from Youngstown State University and the University of Pittsburgh began partnering with residents and community activists from the Borough of Swissvale, Pennsylvania to map and describe vacant lots using a citizen- and environmental- centered approach. Participants in this roundtable will discuss the success and challenges of project/ community-based learning in general, offer insights from the faculty, students and Swissvale community members involved in the vacant land mapping project, while seeking input from other students, faculty and community members involved in community-based learning.

Primary authors: SLOVENSKY, Aurora (University of Pittsburgh); CERNEY, Dawna (Youngstown State University); NARENDORF, Piper (University of Pittsburgh); KOZA, Sophie (University of Pittsburgh); LUCAS, Susan (University of Pittsburgh)

Presenters: SLOVENSKY, Aurora (University of Pittsburgh); CERNEY, Dawna (Youngstown State University); NARENDORF, Piper (University of Pittsburgh); KOZA, Sophie (University of Pittsburgh); LUCAS, Susan (University of Pittsburgh)

Session Classification: Roundtable

Track Classification: Planning