



## ***Regional Blight Plan Aimed at Combatting Deteriorated Properties and Fostering Revitalization Unveiled for Alle-Kiski Communities***

*The plan outlines both regional and community-specific strategies to tackle the pressing issues of blight*

### **For Immediate Release**

**Westmoreland County, PA** – Westmoreland County Planning, in partnership with the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council, the Westmoreland County Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank, and the Local Government Academy, is proud to announce the completion of a 19-month-long regional blight inventory and plan project with the release of the [Alle-Kiski Blight Plan: A United Fight Against Blight](#). This landmark document provides a strategic path for preventing, remediating, eliminating, and repurposing blighted properties across the seven participating communities of Allegheny Township, City of Arnold, East Vandergrift Borough, City of Lower Burrell, City of New Kensington, Vandergrift Borough, and West Leechburg Borough.

“The completion of the Alle-Kiski Blight plan marks a significant milestone in our collective effort to revitalize our communities,” said Tom Guzzo, Chairman of the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council and Mayor of the City of New Kensington. “This plan is not just a document, it’s a testament to the power of collaboration and can serve as a guidebook to work together to leverage resources and partnerships to tackle the challenges of blight, creating a more vibrant and prosperous Alle-Kiski region.”

The Alle-Kiski Blight plan represents the culmination of a robust, data-driven process that began in October 2023. This unique project involved a two-phase process that included boots-on-the-ground data collection of parcel-level conditions; an analysis of property conditions and additional relevant datasets such as tax delinquency and code violations; and engagement with local officials and partners. The process was guided by the Alle-Kiski Regional Blight Task Force, a dedicated group of local officials, developers, non-profit stakeholders, and others committed to the region’s future.

Key achievements of the project include:

- A detailed assessment of over 20,000 parcels, providing point-in-time property conditions focused on identifying blight
- An analysis of residential market conditions and code enforcement expenditures for each community
- Development of online mapping tools that integrate property information with other relevant datasets, empowering local leaders with data-driven insights
- A strategic blight mitigation plan, outlining relevant strategies, tools, and resources to tackle blight including recommendations to strengthen code enforcement; improve rental registration and inspection programs; connect residents in need with available home repair and rental rehabilitation programs; and supportive recommendations such as prioritizing adaptive reuse and incorporating public art throughout communities to mitigate the effects of blight
- Strengthened relationships between municipalities, stakeholders, and regional partners to implement action items together

“On behalf of the Westmoreland County Commissioners, I want to commend the communities of the Alle-Kiski for their incredible foresight and willingness to work together,” said Sean Kertes, Chairman of the Westmoreland County Board of Commissioners. “Given that this effort was recognized with a Local Government Excellence Award from the Governors Center for Local Government Excellence, it’s clear that this project exemplifies the success that can be achieved through partnerships and a shared vision

for a stronger Westmoreland County. We're proud to have supported this project and are committed to helping our communities in addressing blight."

Crucial to the project's success, the Westmoreland County Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank and the Local Government Academy contributed funds and in-kind support, which helped off-set project costs for the participating communities.

"At the Local Government Academy, we believe in empowering local leaders with the knowledge and resources they need to succeed," said Joy M. Ruff, AICP, Executive Director of the Local Government Academy. "This project is an outstanding example of what can be accomplished when communities work together to overcome a shared challenge. We were pleased to provide technical assistance to support this important regional initiative, and we look forward to seeing the positive impact implementation will have on the region."

To ensure the success of the plan and its vision of a blight-free Alle-Kiski region, communities and local leaders will continue working together through an action team, supported by the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council, to implement recommendations outlined in the plan with the support of partner organizations.

"We recognize that addressing blight requires a coordinated effort, and the Alle-Kiski Blight Plan serves as a crucial guidebook to support this approach," said Brian Lawrence, AICP, Executive Director of the Westmoreland County Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank. "This collaboration ensures that we are not just reacting to blight, but proactively working with communities to return vacant, abandoned, and blighted property to productive use, which is essential for revitalizing neighborhoods and creating healthy and whole communities."

The Alle-Kiski Regional Blight Inventory and Plan Project serves a model for other communities seeking to address blight through collaborative, data-driven approach.

To view the blight plan and the regional blight inventory StoryMap, visit: <https://arcg.is/Pqm9i>.

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### **About the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council**

A voluntary organization comprised of eight member governments located in the northern part of Westmoreland County. The Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council serves as a forum for the identification of intergovernmental issues and projects and stems from the Planning District concept outlined in the County's comprehensive plan, *Reimagining Our Westmoreland*. Communities meet monthly to discuss and take on intergovernmental initiatives together.

### **About the Westmoreland County Department of Planning & Development**

The Westmoreland County Department of Planning & Development works to create better communities through the expectation and management of change. We work directly with communities to understand trends, changes, and conditions and offer recommendations on how best to respond to them. Through our Technical Resources and Municipal Services (TRAMS) Program, we can work directly with communities to provide critical technical expertise to help communities accomplish their goals.

### **About the Westmoreland County Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank**

The Westmoreland County Redevelopment Authority & Land Bank work hand in hand with local officials and like-minded organizations to carry out blight demolition, residential and commercial rehabilitation, acquisition and repurposing of vacant and tax-delinquent properties, accessible and affordable housing, training and education partnerships, historic preservation, and brownfield redevelopment. All of these activities make the communities of Westmoreland County more desirable places in which to live, work, raise a family and prosper.

### **About the Local Government Academy**

An independent, non-profit, non-partisan organization, promoting excellence in local government. Each year, Local Government Academy offers a wide array of educational programs, including day and evening classroom-style programs, round-table discussions and webinars. We support and promote a strong and responsive local government system, develop effective local leaders, educate public officials, public employees and citizens, and build collaborations and partnerships.

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