

REDUCING THE NUMBER OF VACANT & ABANDONED PROPERTIES IN COLUMBUS

City Councilor Tyson Begly



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**LET'S MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT
THIS: THE AMERICAN DREAM
STARTS WITH THE
NEIGHBORHOODS. IF WE WISH
TO REBUILD OUR CITIES, WE
MUST FIRST REBUILD OUR
NEIGHBORHOODS.**

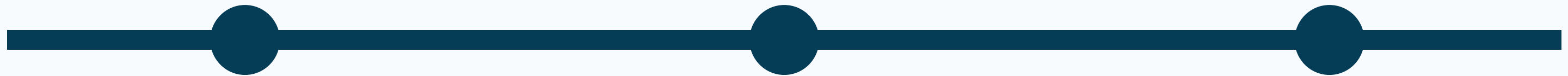
HARVEY MILK

Summary

We have a financial, public safety, and moral obligation to reduce the number of abandoned properties in Columbus.

Ensuring all abandoned properties are turned over to engaged owners in a timely manner increases revenue, increases the supply of housing, decreases maintenance expenses, decreases blight, and decreases crime.

3 types of unoccupied parcels to address



LIENS BUT CURRENT TAXES

City has already cleaned up, but the taxes are current.

UNRESPONSIVE OWNERS

City would like to engage owner before spending money to clean.

MAJOR CLEAN UP REQUIRED

City needs strong incentive for owner to engage before incurring major expenses to clean.

Scenario 1:

Parcels with liens but current taxes

PROBLEM

Blighted properties are not being auctioned, despite owed property fees/liens.

SOLUTION

Engage Tax Commissioner to collect fees/liens via all methods available, including tax sale.

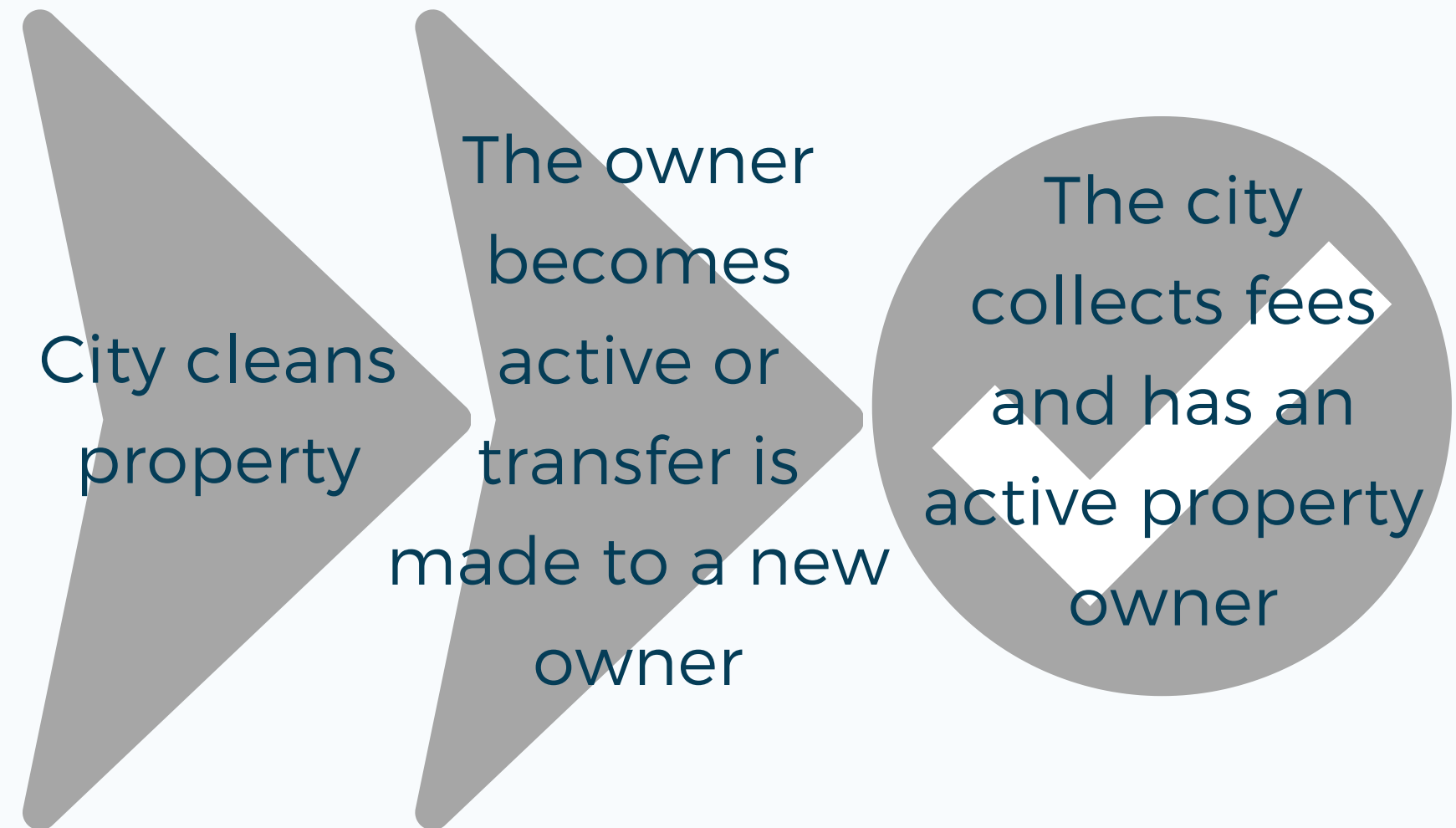
NEXT STEPS

Approve changes to Sec 13-117 and Sec. 8-85.

Current cycle



New process



Scenario 2:

Unresponsive owners

PROBLEM

Owners do not maintain blighted parcels, but city is unable to reach them.

SOLUTION

Option to use third-party service to serve them with a court date.

NEXT STEPS

Approve changes to Sec. 8-86 to give officials the option to use a third party service.

Scenario 3:

Major Clean-Up Required

PROBLEM

Some unoccupied properties are large and are expensive to clean up.

SOLUTION

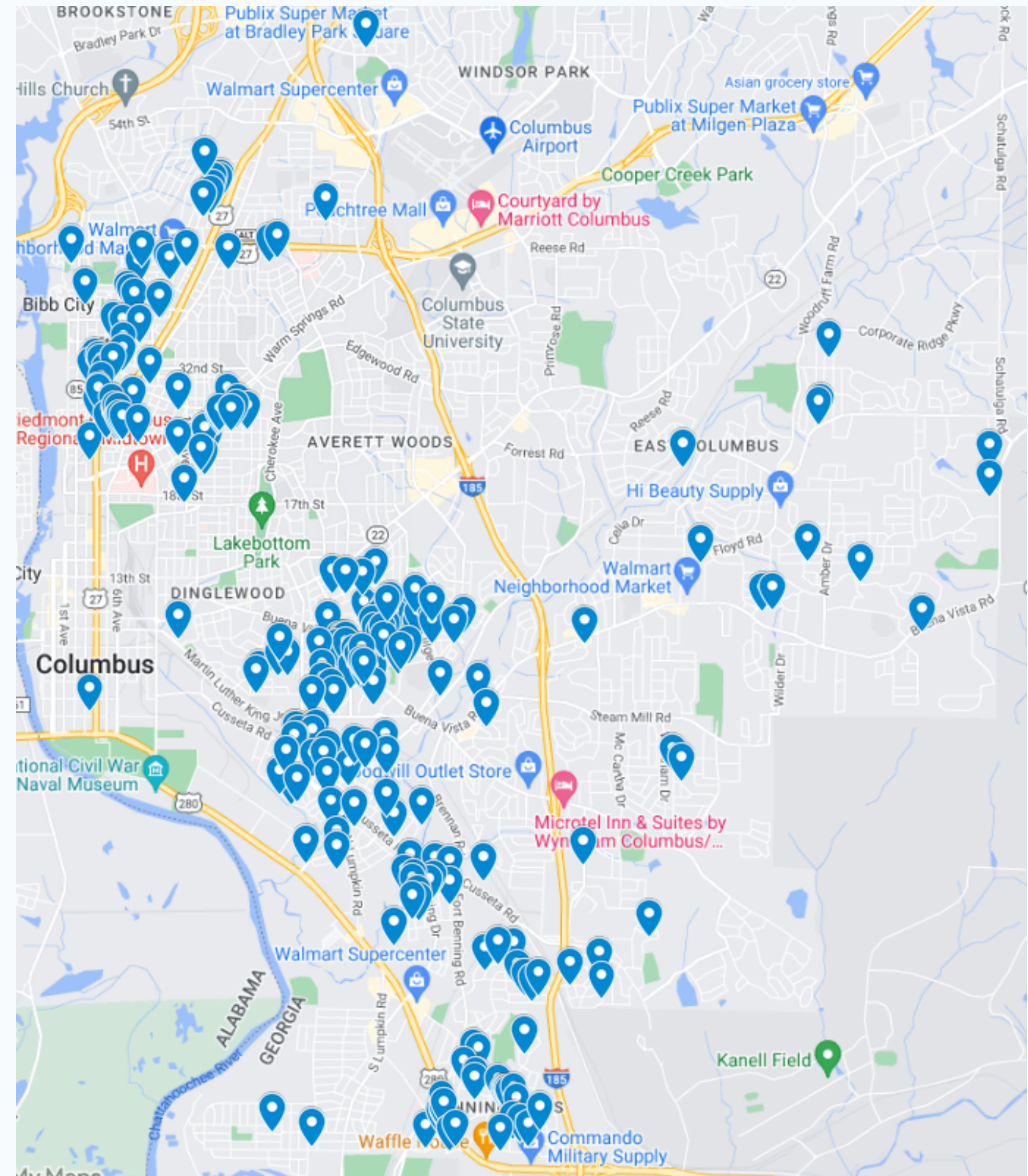
Enact a blight tax of 7x higher taxes in order to engage owner, or to make it eligible for tax sale, before incurring major expenses.

NEXT STEPS

Support adoption of a blight tax similar to the recent one in Savannah for unoccupied properties.

Map of unsold parcels with liens

https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=12T7oJIIW5VVr1EmdlBocPu90o07W_IM&usp=sharing



The solution - recap



Send parcels with
property liens to Tax
Commissioner



Option to serve out
of state owners with
court date



Enact blight tax for
unoccupied
properties before we
spend a lot of money
to clean them up

The benefits



Fewer abandoned homes and less blight in the community. More housing is available.



Less crime and less effort to monitor abandoned properties.



Lower clean-up fees, quicker collection of fees, and more tax and service revenue.

IN CONCLUSION

We should prioritize transitioning abandoned properties to engaged owners to increase revenue, increase the supply of housing, decrease maintenance, decrease blight and decrease crime.

Request of City Council



Approve changes to Sec 13-117 and Sec. 8-85 to send properties to Tax Commissoiner



Approve change to Sec. 8-86 for option to serve court date to out-of-state owners.



Adopt blight tax to force owners of unoccupied parcels to take action.

Appendix

FAQS

Frequently asked questions.

GEORGIA STATUTES

Legal language to collect fees.

Frequently Asked Questions

HOW CAN WE LEGALLY REQUIRE A TAX SALE IF THE TAXES ARE CURRENT?

Per Georgia Law, the Tax Commissioner has the authority and duty to collect liens by all methods available.

WHAT ABOUT OCCUPIED HOMES?

Owners have opportunities and protections to avoid losing their homes. The blight tax would not be eligible for occupied homes.

Frequently Asked Questions

CAN THE CITY FORECLOSE ON THE LIENS?

Yes, but there is a legal cost to do so, and the City does not need to own more property.

COULD THIS CHANGE INCREASE THE BACKLOG?

Since the City saves on demolishing fees, the city can reallocate funds to support the possible additional auctions. The Tax Commissoiner is ok with the changes to Sec 8-85, 8-86 and 13-

Appendix: Georgia Legal References

GEORGIA CODE (NUISANCES) § 41-2-9 PARAGRAPH 7 (2)

“It shall be the duty of the appropriate county tax commissioner...who is responsible or whose duties include the collection of municipal taxes, to collect the amount of the lien using all methods available for collecting real property ad valorem taxes, including specifically Chapter 4 of Title 48;”

“A county tax commissioner shall collect and enforce municipal liens imposed pursuant to this chapter in accordance with Code Section 48-5-359.1. The county tax commissioner...shall remit the amount collected to the governing authority of the county or municipality whose lien is being collected.”