



WV DEP Dilapidated Properties Program (DLAP):

Accomplishments, Operational Status, and Continued Investment Strategy

ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the accomplishments, operational status, and fiscal efficiency of the **Dilapidated Properties Program (DLAP)**. Tasked with addressing the overwhelming number of dilapidated structures across the state, the program has leveraged a "data-driven, locally led" approach to successfully complete **1,999 demolitions** across **96 communities**.

Data confirm that DLAP is remediating dilapidated structures at **45% below initial cost estimates**. This paper also estimates the statewide backlog of structures still in need of demolition and presents a scalable investment strategy to efficiently continue addressing dilapidated structures.

Prepared by: The Abandoned Properties Coalition

All data in this report was collected and analyzed by the Acting Program Director of DLAP and provided courtesy of WVDEP.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

West Virginia currently faces a projected \$ 281.3 million liability caused by an estimated 11,983 dilapidated structures. These properties discourage investment, destabilize property values, and pose direct safety risks to West Virginia communities.

The Dilapidated Properties Program (DLAP) was established to solve this crisis and the data prove it is working. To date, 96 DLAP funded communities have successfully completed 1,999 demolitions. Real-world operational data show that DLAP is remediating residential structures at a cost 45% lower than original statewide estimates, delivering maximum return on taxpayer investment.

This paper outlines the current scope of the challenge and liability, the proven efficiency of the DLAP demolition engine, and strategic options for future appropriation.

2. THE SCOPE OF THE CHALLENGE

West Virginia currently has approximately 11,983 dilapidated structures in need of immediate demolition, as estimated by the Abandoned Properties Coalition (APC). These properties present a host of challenges including inhibited economic investment, negative impacts on tourism, increased crime rates, destabilization of surrounding property values, as well as safety risks to firefighters, police officers, and West Virginia citizens.

The majority of these properties are residential and are clustered together in rural communities and in urban population centers. Vacant school buildings, dilapidated commercial structures, and former industrial sites also have significant negative impacts on communities and are included in the estimated total above.

Prior to the creation of the DLAP program, resources for addressing dilapidated structures in West Virginia were virtually non-existent. Demolitions were primarily conducted by local governments and regional development organizations on a small scale with funds allocated from local tax revenue or one-time grants.

Federal resources were, and still are available, but are most often limited to addressing specific types of sites or projects. Examples include the various types of US EPA Brownfield grant, which are highly effective at addressing sites where environmental contamination is a concern, but expressly restrict their funding from being used solely for demolition.

3. ORIGIN & READINESS: BUILDING THE FRAMEWORK

National best practices point to statewide investment and programs to address the challenges presented by dilapidated structures. While WVDEP (through its REAP program) had previously worked with communities to demolish unsafe structures on occasion, the fight against dilapidated structures statewide demanded a permanent, dedicated framework.

Passed in 2021, Senate Bill 368 established the DLAP program, although the mandate remained unfunded at that time. Following the passage of SB 368, WVDEP began formalizing the program structure necessary to address the dilapidated property challenge.

Operational Readiness: The DLAP Team did not wait for funding to be allocated, and immediately conducted a statewide survey of local governments to identify partners who were ready to work, looking for key readiness indicators.

- Response: Data was received from 45 Counties and 131 Municipalities (176 total).
- Readiness: The survey showed that 133 respondents have adopted the State Building Code or enacted ordinances to address unsafe structures. Additionally, 30 communities already maintain an active inventory of dilapidated structures, and 27 employ a dedicated code enforcement officer.

4. INVESTMENT: GRANT CYCLES & COMPLIANCE

In 2022 and 2023, the Legislature allocated federal resources from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) via the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) to DLAP. This allowed DLAP to successfully execute two distinct funding cycles, utilizing funds efficiently:

FY2023 PILOT PHASE (\$10M)

- Authority: Senate Bill 722
- Scope: Committed \$10 Million to 26 Awardees (5 Counties, 21 Municipalities). Implemented application process for participating communities and invoice payment request model.
- Goal: Proof of Concept.

FY2024 PHASE 2 (\$20M)

- Authority: House Bill 2883
- Scope: Scaled up to \$20 Million for 86 Awardees (20 Counties, 66 Municipalities).
- Goal: Maximize statewide impact.

Compliance & Timeline: Adhering to strict federal SLFRF Final Rules, DLAP met the requirement to fully commit all funding by December 31, 2024. Currently, 58 active subgrants are operating under an approved extension through July 31, 2026, ensuring complex projects are completed safely and on budget. We anticipate 100% project closure by this deadline.

5. STATEWIDE LIABILITY (SURVEY DATA)

Based on a statewide survey (176 responses), the scope of the challenge has been quantified.

- Residential Liability of Respondents: 7,290 structures (Est. Cost: \$99.6 Million)
- Commercial Liability of Respondents: 143 structures (Est. Cost: \$47.2 Million)
- Combined Liability of Respondents: \$146.8 Million

Survey respondents also estimated an average residential demolition cost of \$17,349 per structure.

These data can be extrapolated to include all municipalities and counties in West Virginia (approximately 285 localities), demonstrating the statewide scope of the challenge.

- Residential Liability Statewide: 11,804 structures (Est. Cost: \$204.7 Million)
- Commercial Liability Statewide: 232 structures (Est. Cost: \$76.6 Million)
- Combined Liability Statewide: \$281.3 Million

6. THE PERFORMANCE (REAL WORLD DATA)

While the survey set expectations for average cost per demolition, DLAP's actual performance demonstrates superior efficiency. WVDEP is stretching public funds further than anticipated.

Total Demolitions Complete to Date: 1,999

- A. Residential Demolition (The Bulk of the Work)
 - Quantity: 1,888 Structures
 - Actual Avg. Cost: \$9,596 (vs. Survey Estimate of \$17,349)
 - Result: DLAP is clearing residential blight for nearly half the expected cost.
- B. Complex Structure Demolition (Commercial & Schools)
 - Commercial: 91 Structures @ \$43,709 avg.
 - Schools: 5 Structures @ \$91,559 avg.
 - Other: 15 Structures @ \$15,965 avg.
- C. "Big Ticket" Special Projects: DLAP has successfully managed 7 high complexity projects (6 Commercial & 1 School) with an average value of \$271,511. These were not random selections; they were strategic investments selected for anticipated outcomes.
 - Rigorous Selection: In every special project case, the award was substantiated by supporting documentation detailing how the blight was negatively impacting the community.
 - Strategic Partnerships: These projects required the active involvement of other strategic partners, ensuring shared responsibility.
 - Defined Outcome: Funding was contingent on very clear future use plans, ensuring these sites would immediately transition from liabilities into community assets.

6. CONTINUED INVESTMENT STRATEGY (FY2027 PROJECTIONS)

Future investment will be used more efficiently, go farther, and have a higher impact than previously calculated for three key reasons:

1. DLAP has driven the average cost of residential demolition down to \$9,600, 45% lower than original estimates.
2. Should funds be appropriated from the WV Budget Surplus, the federal restrictions that were in place on SLFRF will no longer apply. WV State Code states that funding for the DLAP program may be used to rehabilitate dilapidated structures in addition to demolition. This means that these funds could be used to address the ongoing housing crisis faced by communities across the state.

- Sustainability measures are being created. The APC is working with the WV Legislature to institute measures that would allow participating local governments to stretch future investments even further. DLAP program requirements already require local governments to place liens for the cost of the demolition on properties for which DLAP funding has been utilized. Currently, less than 1% of those liens are ever collected. New measures proposed by the APC will improve the ability of local governments to collect on those liens, enabling them to recycle funding into local demolition programs, making DLAP dollars go even further.

Below is the projected demolition impact of various funding levels based on real-world residential averages:

Investment / Allocation	Est. Structures Demolished	Impact on Backlog (11,804)	Strategic Outcome
\$10M	1,040	8.81%	Maintains forward momentum.
\$20M	2,083	17.65%	Steady Progress. Clears over 2,000 hazards a year.
\$30M	3,125	26.48%	Aggressive Remediation. Clears a significant percentage of the estimated residential structures

7. QUALITATIVE DATA (TESTIMONIALS FROM PARTICIPANTS)

Bluefield:

“Our city was able to build up our communities through the reduction of crime, fire hazards, and through property value uplift. We encountered many properties throughout this grant that contained evidence of recent criminal activity such as theft, drug use, and/or squatting; by demolishing those structures, we removed havens for those activities much to the gratitude of property owners. Several of the structures we encountered showed evidence of fires being used inside the structure as main heating/cooking sources or fires having been set by vandals such as teenagers for fun. The removal of those structures guaranteed public safety by removing those threats and providing surrounding property owners with peace of mind. Finally, the removal of all those dilapidated structures improved not only the curb appeal of our communities but also raised property values by ensuring the safety and well-being of our citizens.”

Fairmont:

“The City of Fairmont will be building a \$4,000,000.00 outdoor recreation complex called Momentum Adventure Park on the site of the former Box Factory which was demolished in part utilizing DLAP/City funds. Funded primarily through the city’s TIF District, the park will feature a skate park, pump track, bouldering wall and “skill courses.” The project also will add about two miles of new trail to the West Fork River Trail. Plans include a public-private partnership to redevelop a former machine shop to complement the park with restrooms and future commercial space. The project will significantly improve the quality of life in Fairmont and across Marion and surrounding counties.”

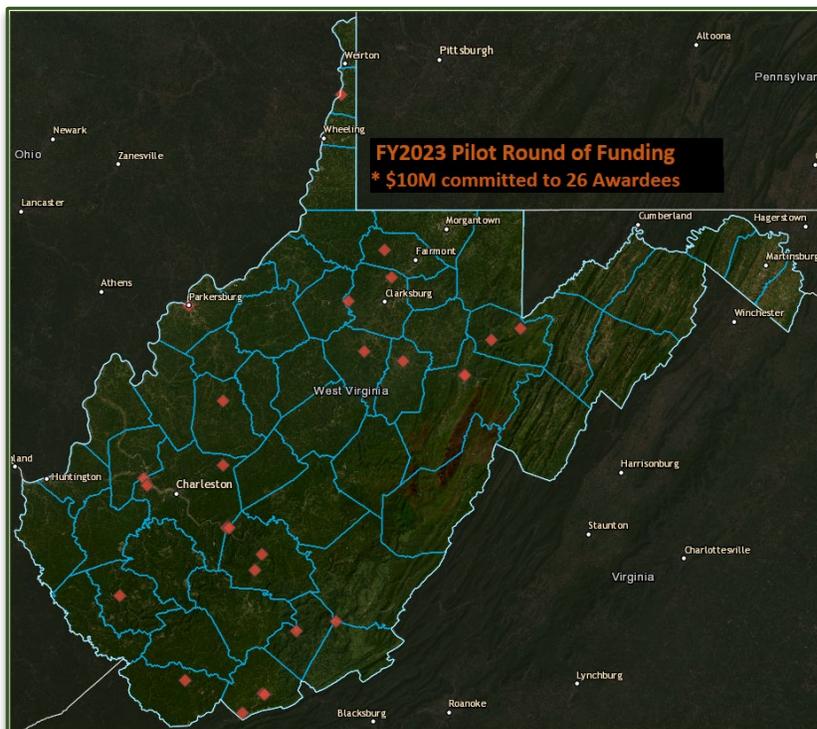
McDowell County

“The McDowell County Commission had the privilege, with help from the DLAP grant, to help demolish the old Coalwood School, located on Frog Level Road in Coalwood. The school had aged terrible and was in disrepair. Now, after the demolition, the land is leveled, and ready for the opportunity for tiny homes, camper spots, or storage units. The owner of the property has been working to achieve this since the school was demolished in 2024. The DLAP grant is helping McDowell County overcome the poverty it was left with after decades of population decrease and job decrease. The demolition of old homes and buildings are bringing life back to the great county of McDowell. Thank You for your support with these projects. The DLAP grant is truly making a difference for McDowell County!”

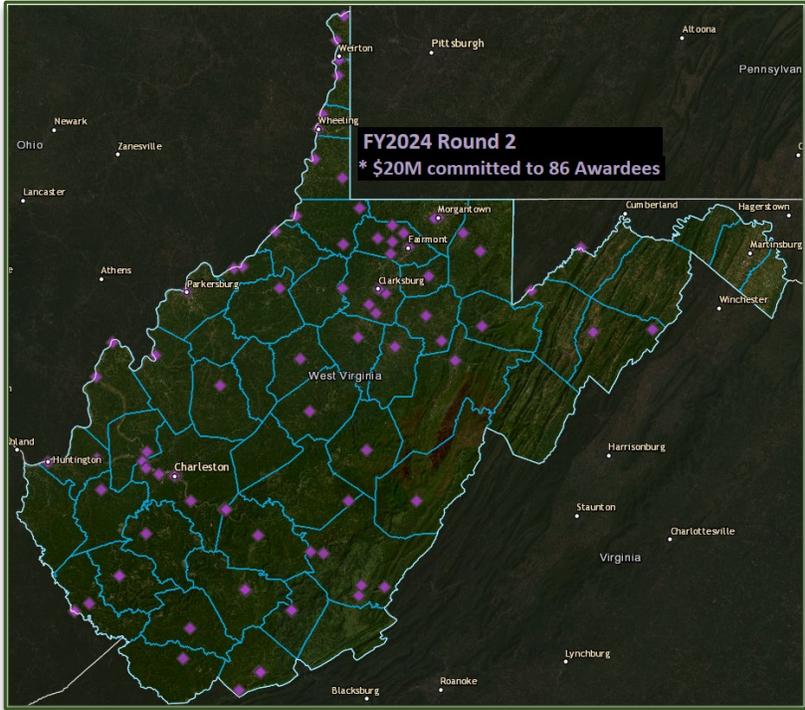
Parsons

“This program allowed our small community to remove a run down and hazardous apartment building located right in the middle of town at the only stoplight we have in our County. It was not only a danger to pedestrians but was very unattractive. City revenue did not allow our small town to do anything about the issue. Thanks to this program we have been able to remove the building. We also have Woodlands Development set to start new construction of a 3-story building at this location. It will consist of 2 store fronts downstairs, and apartments on the 2nd and 3rd floor. Two of the 4 apartments will be ADA compliant with separate entries and ADA parking. This is going to beautify or City, promote business growth, and offer affordable housing with ADA options. Other developers in our area are looking to duplicate this model since it has had such a huge impact in Parsons.”

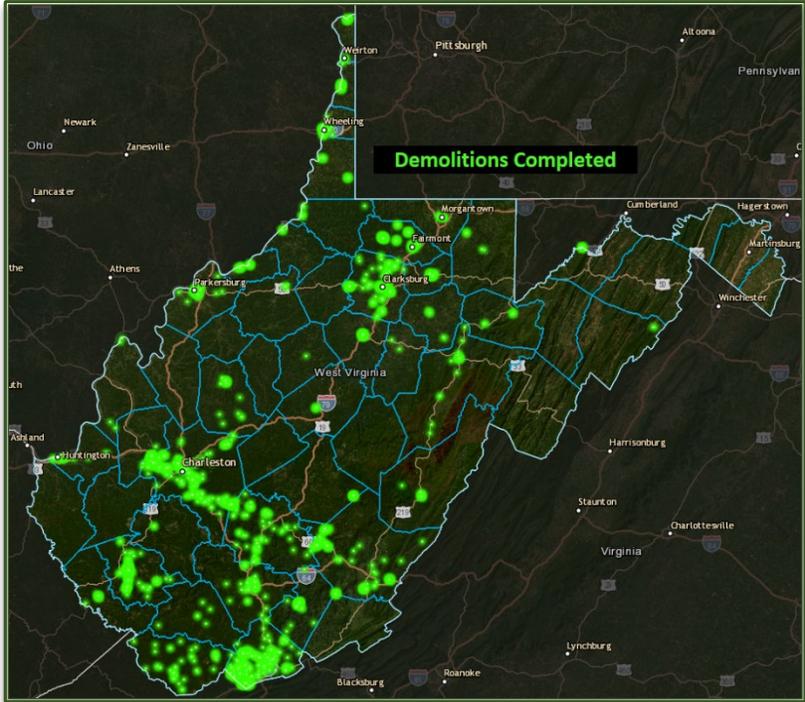
8. DATA MAPS



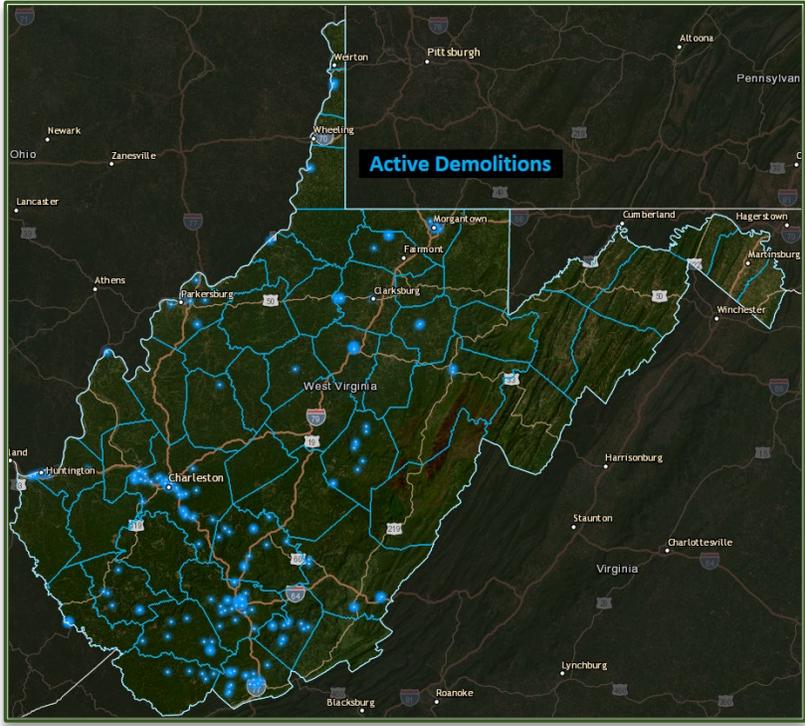
Pilot Round of DLAP Funding = \$10M to 26 Communities



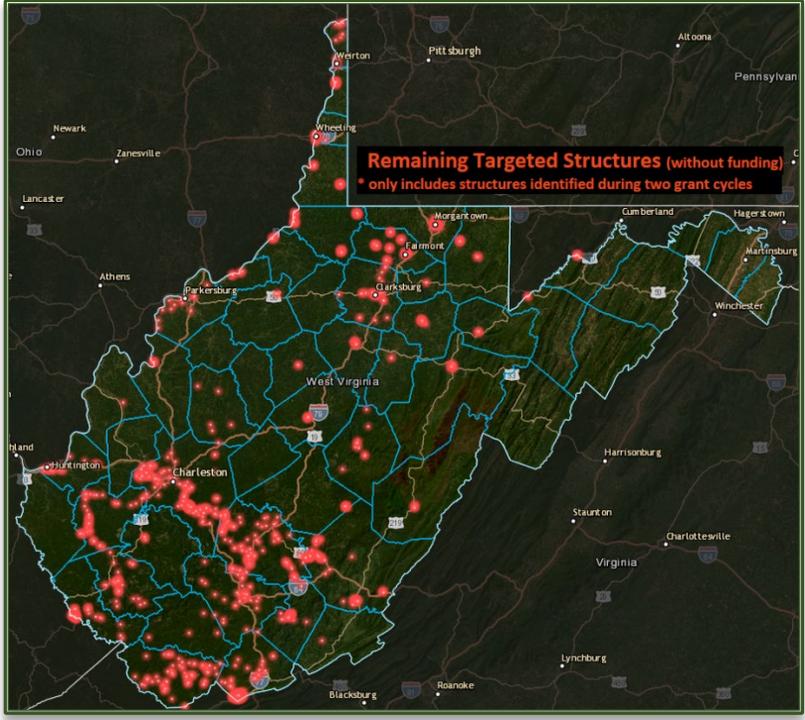
Phase 2 = \$20M to 86 Communities



Total Demolitions Complete as of February 4, 2026 = **1,999**



Active Demolitions Statewide as of February 4, 2026 = 243



Targeted structures that will remain a hazard unless more funding is allocated = 1,391

*This number only includes structures identified during two grant cycles.