

Dwight Merriam, Nationally Prominent Land Use Expert, Leads Panel at American Bar Association Annual Meeting

Dwight Merriam, Nationally Prominent Land Use Expert, Leads Panel on Dealing with Problem Properties at American Bar Association Annual Meeting

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At the American Bar Association's Annual Meeting in San Francisco on August 8th, land-use lawyer and planner [Dwight Merriam](#) of Simsbury, Connecticut moderated a panel "Taking a Bite out of Blight," that focused on the ABA's recently published book, VACANT AND PROBLEM PROPERTIES. The ABA has generously provided, free to the public, excerpts from the book and materials from the panel presentation, available at <https://tinyurl.com/ABA-Problem-Properties>.

[Mr. Dwight Merriam](#), past chair of the State and Local Government Law Section and the recipient of its Lifetime Achievement Award in 1997, authored the forward to the book. He led off the panel discussion by describing the many kinds of problem properties, from abandoned and blighted homes to the 5.5 million "seriously underwater" dwellings with debt of 25 percent more than their value.

Jessica Bacher, a co-editor of the book and chapter author who is the Executive Director of the Land Use Law Center and Professor at Pace Law School in White Plains, New York, presented an overview of the book and gave real-world examples of how the guidance in the book has been used to help turn around problem properties.

Lin Chin, Special Projects Manager at Hello Housing in Oakland, California, then detailed the highly-successful program in Oakland that acquires and rehabilitates problem properties burdened with tax and other liens that have kept conventional developers from purchasing them.

Finally, Amber Knee, one of the book's chapter authors and an Urban Planner with the Bicycle and Greenway Program in New York City's Department of Transportation, gave a captivating account of how a city can turn around problem properties in a way that is sustainable and furthers conservation objectives.



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