



## **National Property Preservation Conference Panel Discusses Importance of Two-Way Communication in Fighting Blight**

The recent [National Property Preservation Conference](#) in Baltimore brought together representatives of all facets of the field services industry to talk about pressing issues and develop solutions. The two-day conference drew leaders from HUD, GSEs, mortgage servicers and field services companies from across the nation.

Robert Klein, founder and Chairman of Safeguard Properties, Community Blight Solutions and SecureView, participated on the panel **"What Is the Industry's Responsibility to Address Community Blight?"** Klein was joined by industry leaders including Eric Chader, Advisor, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); Allison Boggess, Vice President, Wells Fargo; and Jake Williamson, Vice President, Single Family Real Estate Fulfillment, Fannie Mae.

The diverse group, which represented stakeholders from across the mortgage industry, discussed the importance of a cohesive approach in addressing community blight, and the effects that pre- and post-foreclosure properties have on the area around them.

The panelists agreed that a key to solving community blight is two-way communication and understanding between the mortgage industry and communities.

"For years, the misunderstanding that exists between the industry and communities has prevented us from addressing the two primary contributors to community blight – the length of the foreclosure process and plywood boarding of vacant and abandoned properties," said Klein. "As an industry, we need to help communities improve their understanding of these issues and their impact."

Panelists pointed out that stakeholders from all levels of the industry need to take the lead in initiating conversation and educating the communities about blight and the foreclosure process.

Boggess offered insight into how Wells Fargo has gone about this process. "At Wells Fargo, we have been successful at engaging with communities through outreach consultants," she explained. "Educating and informing community leaders about the process can lead to better conversations and get us closer to solutions."

However, as Chader continued, all community conversations can't follow the same script. "Every community is different, so it is critical to identify the key stakeholders, establish relationships and create two-way communication that will get us track to identifying the important issues and solving the problems," he said

As Williamson noted, "Foreclosure prevention is key. Vacant properties create blight and we need to do everything possible to keep people in their homes. When we are faced with dealing with vacant properties, empowering vendors to provide information in real time so we can address problems immediately is key to managing the blight issue."