

# Non-Profit Spotlight

## Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments

The Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments (TCVCOG) is a voluntary coalition of 20 municipalities located in the Eastern suburbs of Allegheny County. We facilitate multi-municipal efforts and implement efficient, cost-effective programs on behalf of our members.

Our staff includes 4 full time public works employees, 4 full time code enforcement officers, a seasonal vector operator, one full time and one part time utility billing employees, 1 part time office manager, and 2 full time administrative staff. We offer a wide range of municipal services, described below.

**Utility billing.** Our experienced employees, in conjunction with investment in modern technology, ensure towns receive a high value service. Electronic payment options maximize convenience for constituents. We monitor data to ensure accurate billing.

**Sewer and Catch Basin Cleaning.** Sewer and catch basin cleaning is a federally mandated municipal task. The TCVCOG owns a Vactor truck and has an experienced operator on staff. We offer a very competitive daily rate, in addition to 15 day and 7 day “opt-in” options which maximize municipal savings.

**Code Enforcement.** Code Enforcement is a town’s first line of defense against blight and other health and safety issues that arise. Our program’s focus is on working with constituents to achieve compliance. We provide quality service with certified staff using a custom designed database to achieve efficiency in the field. Our technology allows for efficient collection/analysis of data, and the ability to build solid legal cases. We strive to maximize effectiveness with limited resources. We provide property maintenance and occupancy inspection in six towns, and are working toward fire inspection certification. The TCVCOG invests in ongoing training of our officers, and we regularly engaged in sharing best practices with partner organizations like the PA Housing Alliance (state), and the Center for Community Progress (national). We are currently exploring opportunities to partner with social service organizations in order to bridge the gap with local government.

**Fight Blight Initiatives.** The TCVCOG and the Steel Rivers COG have found success in collaboration on larger regional issues related to blight mitigation. Starting with a collaborative EPA Brownfield grant, this partnership has produced a financial impact of blight analysis that has been cited in places across the country. The Tri-COG Land Bank is a major outcome of this analysis, and is currently in its first round of property acquisitions – a first in Allegheny County! A Land Bank is a relatively new tool in Pennsylvania that allows for acquisition of vacant and tax delinquent properties, in order to get them back into productive use. Land Banks can provide marketable title to properties, removing the obstacles for their redevelopment.

**Grant Administration.** The TCVCOG administers CDBG, CITF and GEDF grants from proposal evaluation through audit. We ensure compliance of a myriad of federal and county regulations, and the timely completion of important municipal infrastructure projects. The TCVCOG also applies for and administers other grant funds for a variety of multi-municipal projects.

**Appeals Boards.** A Property Maintenance Appeals Board and a Uniform Construction Code Appeals Board were created through the TCVCOG. A regional approach has enabled the creation of full Boards that are compliant with the law.

**Joint Purchasing.** The TCVCOG participates in the InterCOG Purchasing Alliance that pools purchasing power to achieve savings in commodities like rock salt. Contracts through the alliance afford members with protections not found in other group bidding efforts.

Other projects and programs include our joint public works department, salt brine road treatment program, joint police testing and training, regular meetings with town managers, and regular meetings with police chiefs, education & disbursement of information, real estate tax bill printing, networking opportunities – and whatever new, self-sustainable program idea our communities bring to the table. By coming together through shared services, we are able to supply our towns with high value programs that they may not be able to achieve on their own.

