

My name is Amalia Patch, though most people know me as Maya. I have lived in the Eldora section of Carroll Township for 56 years. My husband and I moved here because we thought it was a wonderful place to live for us and our family. We liked everything about the Mon Valley. He was from Donora and I was from Monessen. After the mills closed and most people who had made a good living working in the mills, including ours had to make changes. Many had to move far away, but we were lucky. We could stay in the area because my husband found work in Pittsburgh.

The Valley began to deteriorate. After living in Carroll Township, 35 years ago, I began going to the Supervisors' meetings. I wanted to know more about our community. I began to go to meetings of the Sewage Authority and learned about sewage treatment. 20 years ago, I began to attend School Board meetings. I stopped going to some meetings because I found it very hard to get things done. One of the main things that I became involved in, was blighted properties, one in particular in my neighborhood. I got a copy of House Bill 2188 and took it to every mayor in this Valley, but nothing was done. In the last couple of years, municipalities are beginning to get involved as reported in the newspapers.

The house by me is literally disgusting, porches are collapsing, windows are boarded up or broken, orange fences are down. Bats, birds, animals of all kinds are the only residents. It has been empty for about 30 years. Children broke in, as children tend to do. It is a health hazard, but Washington County has no health department, so I hope that no one is ever injured there. The owners say that it is their homestead while they live elsewhere. I have told our Supervisors, and the Washington County Commissioners, and even other representatives in State Government

who represent the people in my neighborhood and elsewhere in the Valley.

Many seniors do everything they can do or afford to keep up their properties, and they have to look at these houses wherever they are. Some are owned or have been bought on the Internet. If you fix your home, your taxes are raised. If the owners of these blighted houses do nothing to bring them up to Code, then their taxes should be increased for not bringing the property up to Code and any other property owned by him should be liened, as the law says. When this is brought up at meetings, they all say that there is no money. Why pass laws that take forever to enforce? A home is the biggest investment made by most people. Why should anyone have to live like that? If you have nothing, there are ways to get help.

All politicians want growth, but why should anyone want to move in to Carroll Township or the Mon Valley with blighted houses and buildings? I'll guarantee you would not invest anywhere near these blighted properties. I have also been told that maybe it is different in other neighborhoods. My temper rose when I heard this/ You want ghettos, well you're getting them with that attitude!

Clean up the blighted houses and buildings in Carroll Township and the Valley! No more excuses, then you may see growth. Small, older neighborhoods should be just as good as new ones. Find these people and fine them and everything they own until the Valley is cleaned up and taken care of. As an afterthought, too many representatives forget who and why they are there. Do not think that this could not happen in your neighborhood!

*Amaleia Patch
(Maya)*