

Land Bank Expands Pilots of Neighborhood Revitalization Program

Montgomery County, OH --- Looking to repeat the positive results of a pilot program implemented in one neighborhood over the past two years, the Montgomery County Land Bank has recently begun two more projects under its Thriving Neighborhoods Initiative.

Although the new project in Harrison Township's Castlewood neighborhood is in a preliminary phase, residents of the Huffman Historic area and its neighborhood association have been active for several years around improving their neighborhood. Their readiness prompted the Land Bank to commit \$250,000 toward revitalization in Huffman, using strategies tested in the Initiative's first pilot area, Dayton's Pineview neighborhood.

"The past efforts of Huffman neighbors and the neighborhood association give the program a head start," said County Commissioner Carolyn Rice, chair of the Land Bank board of directors. "We know going in that creating a healthy neighborhood is a priority there, and the people are willing to work for it."

The Thriving Neighborhoods Initiative was created in 2018 to increase neighborhood property values by removing problem structures, refurbishing a small number of tax-delinquent homes, and then selling them at market rate or higher. One of the Land Bank's strategies has been to demonstrate a market for the homes and drive up comparable housing sales. The Land Bank successfully completed three such home sales in Pineview.

At the same time, area property owners are encouraged to invest in home improvements, while the local government commits to public projects that address neighborhood problems, including the demolition of rundown structures.

In the Huffman area, the Land Bank and its partners, the city of Dayton and the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission, will work with neighborhood leaders, property owners and businesses to identify opportunities and issues unique to the neighborhood and its residents. Together, they will create a plan to continue the area's revitalization.

Officials anticipate that, just as in Pineview, financial institutions will support the initiative by developing resources to help property owners make sustainable improvements.

"We're encouraged by the interest and enthusiasm of the neighborhood association," said Land Bank Executive Director Mike Grauwelman. "The level of public participation and momentum they've already generated are good signs for the success of our efforts."

"The Huffman Historic Area provides a unique set of challenges that are different from those of Pineview," said Montgomery County Treasurer Russ Joseph, a member of the Land Bank board. "I'm happy to see the Land Bank using these different neighborhood characteristics to tailor the Thriving Neighborhoods Initiative so it can eventually be implemented on a grander scale throughout Montgomery County."

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