

Harrison Twp. identifies 31 demolition projects - - Dayton Daily News (OH) - July 12, 2015 - page B1
July 12, 2015 | Dayton Daily News (OH) | Kelli Wynn Staff Writer | Page B1

HARRISON TWP., MONTGOMERY COUNTY — Thirty-one vacant and blighted residential properties in **Harrison Twp.** will be demolished within the next 12 months, according to city and county officials.

The demolitions are made possible by a \$5.4 million Ohio Housing Finance Agency grant that is distributed by the Montgomery County Land Reutilization Corp., also known as the county's Land Bank.

The Land Bank contracts and pays for the demolition work and is reimbursed by OHFA after the work is done, according to Michael Grauwelman, executive director of the Land Bank.

"By partnering with the Land Bank in their programs, we are able to strategically have a stronger impact on neighborhoods by pairing both demolition and rehab activity in these neighborhoods," said Jack Kuntz, the **township's** development director. "When residents see investment of public resources in their community, we believe that grows the public trust and private investment will follow as well."

Harrison Twp. is among four communities, along with Dayton, Trotwood and Jefferson Twp., to share the grant money. **Harrison Twp.** is receiving \$518,673, according to Kuntz.

"Our budget is for all demolition, environmental remediation, green space and/ or landscaping maintenance of the properties," Kuntz said. He added that the Land Bank's program has allowed the **township** to include properties that have been historical problems and to pay for an expense that the **township** could not afford.

"The total cost of acquiring, remediating and demolition can vary widely. The largest single variable is environmental. Specifically, asbestos removal, which can be very expensive," Grauwelman said. "We use \$18,000 per unit as an average for all expenses."

The properties are a part of the Land Bank's Neighborhood Initiative Program, which focuses on demolishing structures in targeted neighborhoods as a way to stabilize home values and curtail health and safety concerns associated with abandoned properties.

Properties in the program must be in neighborhoods that are considered by state census information as being "tipping point" or "revitalization" neighborhoods, according to Kuntz. The properties also have to be vacant, in tax delinquent status, but not going through foreclosure or have had their tax lien sold.

"The purpose of the project is to try to target neighborhoods where there are only one or a maybe a few more properties that are negatively impacting the neighborhoods," Kuntz said. "The theory is by removing targeted, specific blighted structures that are bringing the entire neighborhood down, we'll be having more of an overall positive impact on the entire neighborhood."

Most of the **township's** properties that are in the NIP are in Shiloh, North-ridge and Meadowdale neighborhoods, according to Kuntz.

"We are in the process of seeing if there are a few more properties in qualifying neighborhoods that we can submit to bring our total to 35 properties, which would still mean almost \$15,000 on average could be allocated to each lot," Kuntz said.

Some demolitions could begin as early as August.

In addition to the NIP properties, **township** officials have also submitted 13 properties to the Land Bank's Deed In Escrow program.

This program allows owner occupants, contractors, investors and others the opportunity to acquire a property through a bidding process.

The property is awarded to the highest qualified bidder, Grauwelman said. "The transaction is closed in escrow," he said, "meaning that the winning bidder provides payment for the property, but will not receive title until they have completed the renovation work."

Grauwelman added that the renovation work must be completed in six months.

"We are still determining if any or all of these will be admitted into the program," Grauwelman said of the **township's** submissions. "This decision is based upon our judgment as to the economic viability of the property."

Kuntz said being in the Land Bank's programs allows for some homes in the **township** to be sold and rehabbed by vetted contractors, thus allowing new families to move into the neighborhoods.

"Without the Land Bank, I don't believe we'd be able to do projects at this scale or have the desired impact that I believe we'll start to see in the next three to five years as these projects begin to build the foundation to a stronger future in our neighborhoods," Kuntz said.