

Montgomery County officials are waiting to hear how much of the \$97.6 million in Ohio being allotted to fight blight will be available to area neighborhoods.

The amount may be finalized next week, but they expect it to be near the \$5.9 million distributed locally in 2013, when the state was awarded about \$60 million for a similar program, said Mike Grauwelman, executive director of the Montgomery County Land Reutilization Corp.

"I think it's a fair indicator to look at that and have our expectations at that level — around that \$6 million mark," he said Friday after \$2 billion in federal aid was announced.

The Ohio Housing Finance Agency hasn't been given directions on how to divide the funds and is in a "holding pattern," likely until the coming week, said Molly Moses, agency spokeswoman.

The OHFA is also eligible to apply for an additional \$250 million for the program.

Since 2010, the Hardest Hit Fund has awarded more than \$570 million to Ohio and helped more than 24,500 Ohioans, according to Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio).

Brown, who serves as ranking member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, said getting rid of abandoned properties "helps to strengthen neighborhoods and reduce crime." Both he and Sen. Rob Portman argued in support of securing \$2 billion for the Hardest Hit Fund last year as part of a government funding bill.

"Abandoned and blighted properties hurt neighborhood home values and tend to be magnets for crime," said Portman (R-Ohio) who added the resources will allow cities to "restore the integrity of their communities."

The funds will pay for foreclosure mitigation and blight **demolition** programs. That will allow the county to expand how to spend them, as the 2013 allotment could be used only on **demolition** issues, Grauwelman said.

"We would expect that the lion's share of the \$97.6 million probably will be devoted to **demolition** because obviously it's a much more capital costs intensive type of activity," he said. "The foreclosure mitigation is more in the sort of counseling space."

At the same time, overall foreclosure activity in Ohio last year was down 12 percent from 2014 and slashed more than half (52 percent) from its peak in 2010, when there were 51,840 homes — or about one in 99 — with at least one foreclosure filing, RealtyTrac, a national housing data tracker, indicated last month.

The Dayton area — including Greene, Miami and Montgomery counties — mirrored the statewide trend, with 3,722 housing units in some stage of foreclosure, also representing about one in 99

housing units. That's down 57 percent from 2010 and about 6 percent from a year ago, according to RealtyTrac's figures.

Grauwelman said he expects the number of participants for this round of funding to be larger. In 2013, communities had a "very, very narrow" window to complete applications and many were not filed by deadline, he said. As a result, only four communities — Dayton, Trotwood, Harrison Twp. and Jefferson Twp. — took part.

Grauwelman said he also expects more competition from around the state this year. In 2013, land banks were a less established concept and about 20 agencies were awarded funds. Now, he said, there are about twice as many.

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#### TOP 10 OHIO ALLOCATIONS IN 2013

‡ Cuyahoga County Land Reutilization Corporation: \$20,114,346.83 ‡ Lucas County Land Reutilization Corporation: \$11,521,525 ‡ Central Ohio Community Improvement Corporation: \$6,379,900 ‡ Montgomery County Land Reutilization Corporation: \$5,905,933.78 ‡ Hamilton County Land Reutilization Corporation: \$5,565,000 ‡ Trumbull County Land Reutilization Corporation: \$4,896,016.08 ‡ Mahoning County Land Reutilization Corporation: \$4,766,250 ‡ City of Canton/Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation: \$4,735,000 ‡ Lorain County Port Authority: \$3,301,033.78 ‡ Butler County Land Reutilization Corporation: \$2,000,000 ‡ Summit County Land Reutilization Corporation: \$2,000,000

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