Better Together

Rebuilding Communities through Partnerships

Montgomery County Land Bank

2024 Progress Report

Board Members

Carolyn Rice
Montgomery County Commissioner
Chair, MCLRC Board of Directors

Judy Dodge
Montgomery County Commissioner

John McManus
Montgomery County Treasurer

Sheila Crane
Vice Chair, MCLRC Board

Steven Gondol
Deputy Director, Planning, Neighborhoods and Development, City of Dayton
Appointed April 2024

Brian Lunne
Washington Township Trustee
Appointed April 2024

Brian Sharp
Director, Market Development (Southern OH Region), Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Professional Realty

Past Board Members

Dale Berry
Washington Township Board of Trustees

Doug Harnish
Principal, Market Metrics

Nan Whaley
Mayor, City of Dayton

Mathias Heck
Montgomery County Prosecutor

Debbie Lieberman
Montgomery County Commissioner

Scott Paulson
Washington Township Board of Trustees

Aaron Sorrell
Director, Planning & Community Development, City of Dayton

Brian Inderrieden
Director, Planning & Community Development, City of Dayton

Lynn Cooper
Interim Montgomery County Treasurer

Russ Joseph
Montgomery County Treasurer

John Lumpkin, Jr.
Morgan Stanley

Todd Kinskey
Director, Planning & Community Development, City of Dayton
Retired March 2024

Sharon Lowry
President, Washington Township Board of Trustees
Resigned March 2024

Letter from the Board

We are proud to live in a community of collaborators. From the establishment of a world-class flood management program after the 1913 flood of the Great Miami River to the recovery from the 2019 Memorial Day tornadoes, our residents and institutions have always worked together to arrive at solutions to the community's challenges.

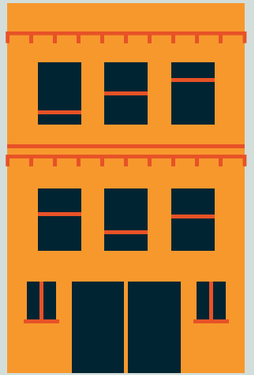
In this 2024 Progress Report, we highlight the impact for all involved when neighbors, local jurisdictions, community development agencies, nonprofits and the Land Bank partner to advance our mission. We thank all of them for their commitment and contributions.

Speaking of thanks, we want to thank the Land Bank's first executive director, Mike Grauwelman, who retired last year. He served in that role for 10 years with great vision, professionalism and integrity. He also had the foresight to mentor Paul Bradley as the new leader to ensure the Land Bank can continue, without interruption, as a positive force in the rebuilding of Montgomery County communities.

As you read this report, we hope you'll share our pride in the achievements of our collaborative community.

Mission

To reposition distressed real estate to support Montgomery County's communities in building quality of life and vibrant neighborhoods, one property at a time.



Better Together:
Rebuilding Communities through Partnerships

At the Land Bank, our impact is enhanced when we forge strategic partnerships that bring together trusted, like-minded organizations and individuals around the goals of rebuilding communities, revitalizing neighborhoods and enhancing quality of life. When we engage with state and local governments, neighborhood groups, nonprofits, community development organizations and committed contractors, perspectives broaden, ideas multiply and collective power grows.

In 2024, this collaborative approach was integrated into our work in these major areas of focus:

- Addressing the housing shortage
- Pursuing neighborhood revitalization through neighborhood engagement, housing renovation, blight removal and reforestation, and
- Facilitating brownfield remediation to encourage commercial redevelopment.

At the same time, the hiring of expert staff and reorganization of roles and responsibilities strengthened our capabilities in property acquisition and brownfield remediation. This allowed us more readily to address programmatic needs and pursue new opportunities.

Brownfield Remediation:
Setting the Stage for Commercial Redevelopment

Brownfields are known for their unsightly appearance and negative influence. But to community planners, these abandoned, underutilized spaces represent dormant opportunities waiting for a second chance.

The potential for commercial redevelopment sparked the Land Bank's involvement with brownfields remediation. In 2022, after acquiring a $500,000 USEPA grant for brownfield assessments countywide, the Land Bank began to help communities develop projects fundable under the grant. In 2024, nine assessments were completed.

In 2023, the state allocated $350 million over two years for communities to clean up Ohio's industrial, commercial and institutional brownfields and prepare them for future commercial use. Ohio's land banks were designated as the lead applicants for program funding in the counties they represent.

We welcomed the opportunity to coordinate the state's Brownfield Remediation Program within Montgomery County. In 2024, all seven grant applications we submitted on behalf of our member communities were funded for a total reward of $3.1 million.

Germantown's Environmental Success Story

With a property sale and redevelopment in mind, Germantown City Manager Judy Gilleland in 2023 requested the Land Bank's assistance to address environmental issues at a long-vacant auto service station at a prominent downtown location.

The $500,000 USEPA grant allowed us to fund several environmental tests that revealed no contaminants above regulatory cleanup levels and no asbestos.

With environmental hurdles cleared, the city of Germantown last year sold the property to a developer, who improved the building exterior and added a patio where food-truck events are hosted. The goal is to find a commercial tenant once interior improvements are completed.

"The Land Bank assisted Germantown in turning an eyesore on a key downtown corner into an attractive property," said Gilleland. "The Land Bank's assistance enabled us to sell the property and return it to productive use."

Housing: Meeting the Moment, Together

Dramatic changes in the residential real estate environment in recent years have greatly reduced the Land Bank's inventory of residential properties with reuse potential. There are several reasons:

- Recent court rulings triggered tax foreclosure policy changes, reducing the number of viable structures.
- During the Covid pandemic, the existing inventory was depleted because new tax foreclosures were halted.
- Low supply and high demand for housing during Covid drove up prices when out-of-town investors bought up available properties but abandoned them without making repairs.

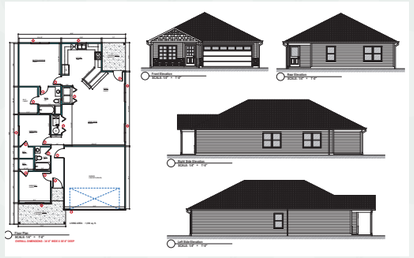
To overcome these challenges, our expert staff reimagined acquisition and developed a set of 10 robust and novel tools for acquiring distressed properties outside the tax-foreclosure process.

In 2024, these tools allowed us to work with partners on two funded programs that address the area's housing shortage.

City of Dayton's ARPA Housing Program Partnership

Utilizing $2.4 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding, the city of Dayton in late 2023 launched a two-year pilot program with the Land Bank as a partner. The goal is to create new housing for middle-income families and essential workers by renovating vacant and distressed properties in five target neighborhoods.

These areas were selected based on immediate availability of properties, neighborhood support and existing infrastructure. The renovated homes will be sold at market rate with the intent to enhance appraisal values and stabilize neighborhood real estate markets.



In 2024, we purchased 11 properties and completed architectural evaluations, scopes of work, final drawings, construction documentation and the issuing of bid packages.

Welcome Home Ohio Program

The city of Dayton's ARPA initiative has served as a model for our implementation of the state of Ohio's Welcome Home Ohio Program, a two-year effort funded at $25 million to address the state's housing shortage.

WHO will provide good-quality, owner-occupied, multi- and single-family homes for Ohioans who earn no more than 80% of the area median income and commit to occupying the home for five years. First-time homebuyers are required to complete homeownership training.

As Montgomery County's lead applicant for WHO, the Land Bank engaged with local government partners and neighborhood leaders, and secured $6.9 million for the county -- the state's largest award. It will be used to build 40 houses and rehab 24.

By the end of 2024, we had assembled a set of 40 properties for new construction and 19 properties to renovate, developed the request for proposal, solicited bids, evaluated proposals, and began negotiations with the successful contractors.

The Power of **Partnerships**

Experience shows that we do best for the community when we blend the contributions of all our partners to create one impactful result.

In working with neighborhoods, we listen to residents and plan with them, not for them. In the Madden Hill's neighborhood, for example, we built on a longstanding, collaborative relationship between the neighborhood association and CityWide Development, a local expert in grassroots community and economic development, to select Madden Hills for the first Welcome Home Ohio project. Unlike a neighborhood that would react to new homes with fear and hostility, Madden Hills is excited to welcome new neighbors.

Similar partnerships are forming in three other neighborhoods targeted for new housing under the WHO program.

Partner Spotlight:
J Scott, Contractor

Jermaine Scott is the invaluable jack-of-all-trades every organization would love to know.

Whether we ask "J" to work on landscaping a property, sprucing up a vacant lot, or making an indoor repair, he always accepts with a smile and a "yes."

J was proud to plant 300 trees at schools and homes for our urban reforestation program.

"I appreciate helping to take care of my city," said J. "It's a blessing."

Partner Spotlight:
Denny Zimmer, Contract Supervisor

A 2024 retiree, Denny Zimmer supervised 4,500 building demolitions during his 20-year career in Nuisance Abatement with the city of Dayton.

Denny became an indispensable partner to the Land Bank. With the city of Dayton as contractor, he expertly oversaw the removal of hundreds of structures for Land Bank programs.

"When I come back after a demo, I sometimes see a new fence or garden," he said. "It's a satisfying feeling."

Partner Spotlight:
John Scott, Contractor

John Scott likes to say he's good at breaking things. As a demolition contractor, he gets a lot of practice.

John's company, Bladecutters, has been tearing down structures for the Land Bank since 2012. Yet he also does a lot of building up – of people's lives.

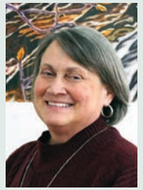
John has hired hundreds of people from Dayton's underserved areas and taught them job skills and good work habits.

"I'm trying to help people who've made mistakes to get on the right track," he said.

Expert Resources to Meet Challenges

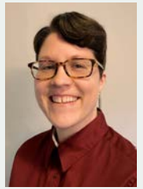
Increasingly, the Land Bank has been tapped to implement housing and environmental programs, especially those that cross jurisdictional lines. To perform this specialized work, we have been fortunate to hire outstanding professional staff:

Executive Director Paul Bradley served as operations manager before being named to the Land Bank's top leadership position last year. He has held government positions including Montgomery County treasurer.



Operations Manager Susie Crabill, one of the original Land Bank program managers, has held several management positions and now oversees all programs.

Planning and Acquisitions Manager Susan Vincent, AICP, formerly a city of Dayton planner, has more than 15 years of experience creating and implementing community development strategies.



Housing Development Program Manager Emmy Fabich brings 12 years of project coordination experience from nonprofits and local public agencies.

Manager for Environmental Services and Commercial Redevelopment Heather Wendel has worked in the environmental consulting field for three decades.

Data, Reforestation, and Demolition Manager Julie Harris has more than 25 years' experience promoting sustainable homeownership and is currently working on a Master's degree in translational data analytics.

2024 Recap

Brownfield Program

- Completed 9 Phase I and II assessments, and 3 additional are proposed
- Obtained 7 ODOD brownfield grants totaling $3.2 million for 3 communities.

Demolitions

- Awarded $6.9 million by the state for 151 demolition projects in 9 partner communities.
- Completing last 88 projects of Round I, for a total project list of 288 properties.

Commercial Redevelopment

- Began acquisition process for 4 commercial properties, 1 through donation and 3 through foreclosure.
- Began work on 2 properties using Ohio Demolition Program funds: The foundation is being removed at 3636 N. Dixie Dr., and asbestos abatement is ongoing at 34 N. Main St., which will be transferred back to the city of Dayton.

Housing

- Transferred 20 properties, 14 of which were in process in the legacy program, Tax-Foreclosure Acquisition.
- Renovated and sold to owner-occupants 2 renovated properties under the Do-It-Yourself Program. The reduced activity in this once-popular program is an outcome of the lack of obtainable housing inventory.

Thriving Neighborhoods

- Owners renovated 6 properties in the Huffman Historical District.
- Acquired 4 properties in the Huffman Historical District, to align with the development goals of our community and municipal partners.

Reforestation

Improved on our goal of planting 50 trees in Montgomery County neighborhoods by planting 139.

Recognition

Land Bank Board of Directors chair, Montgomery County Commissioner Carolyn Rice, received the 2024 Ohio Land Bank Association's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Supported by officials locally and statewide, Commissioner Rice's nomination cited her tireless efforts during the formative years of the land bank movement.

2025 in Focus

Many difficult challenges and exciting opportunities lie ahead in 2025. The Land Bank will prioritize these projects:

Five-Year Strategic Plan

The last strategic plan was adopted in 2020 and laid out a framework for the organization's growth and development for over three years. Since then, the Land Bank has increased in staff, program capacity, acquisition strategies and program types. An updated plan is needed to guide and support the organization in becoming more strategic, effective and impactful during this time of transition and growth. We will work with a professional consultant during 2025 and hope that recommendations will be ready in time to guide 2026 budgeting and goals.

Riverfront Master Plan

We provide ongoing support for the Riverfront Master Plan as an active member of the Working Committee, the team tasked with implementing the roadmap for making our rivers exciting assets and destinations. It was created from a partnership-driven revitalization effort that brought together Five Rivers MetroParks, Miami Conservancy District, the city of Dayton, Montgomery County, Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission, the Downtown Dayton Partnership and the Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority. The Dayton City Commission adopted the plan in 2019, and we continue to support it by acquiring the properties needed for implementation.

Property Acquisition

Montgomery County has no shortage of distressed properties that could be rehabbed and returned to productive use. At the same time, our housing programs require a steady supply of properties to maximize their impact. To ensure sufficient inventory, we will continue to evaluate alternatives to the traditional tax-foreclosure method of property acquisition.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

LAND BANK

Montgomery County Land Reutilization Corporation (MCLRC)

130 W. Second St.
Suite 1425
Dayton, OH 45402

(937) 531-6921

info@mclandbank.com