

Dollar lots pay off

Land Bank sales turning abandoned parcels into a plus

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A resoundingly successful project that has taken firm root in this area is the Genesee County Land Bank, which helps to hold the line against blight while inspiring neighborhood improvements.

By taking control of tax-foreclosed properties, the Land Bank keeps them out of the hands of exploiters seeking to make a quick buck, no matter the consequences.

And one delightful benefit has been for the Land Bank to sell some of these abandoned lots it has acquired to their next-door neighbors for a dollar. Happy new owners have transformed the parcels mostly into well-cared-for lawns and gardens, according to a study by University of Michigan students.

This is just one instance of how the Land Bank has proved to be a brilliant invention, and why it's being copied in other parts of the state and around the country. If it has not gotten all the recognition due here at home, one reason could be that land banks don't produce instant results. It would take years, perhaps decades, to be able make a case for how a land bank has made a difference.

Suffice it to say that in Flint and increasingly in its suburbs, the Land Bank is a quiet but powerful guardian of the integrity of property, the primary public defense against decay. There are some people, however, who take no convincing, especially those who have been able live out the dream of enlarging and beautifying their homesteads for a symbolic dollar.
