

Genesee County Land Bank FY 2022 Annual Review



Deborah Cherry

Message from our Board Chair & Executive Director Fighting Blight & Restoring Hope

Greetings City of Flint and Genesee County Residents! On behalf of Deborah Cherry, Board Chair of the GCLBA and County Treasurer, and Michael Freeman, GCLBA Executive Director, we are pleased to provide you with our 2022 Annual Report. This year, we chose a theme of 'Fighting Blight and Restoring Hope,' due to the historic partnership between the City of Flint, Genesee County, the CS Mott Foundation, and federal funding secured by Congressman Dan Kildee to assist us in our goal of demolishing 2,415 land bank properties in Genesee County. Over 2,200 of these blighted and dangerous properties are located in the City of Flint, with approximately 200 more located in the out-county. Our target was to raise \$45.3 million dollars and at the end of FY 22 we secured \$39.5 million – and we are hopeful that the State of Michigan will join us in our funding efforts to fight blight and improve our City and County.



Michael Freeman

Now, demolition alone is not going to solve all the issues facing residents. Therefore, in this report, you will read about many of the other activities where we engage our community to make Flint and Genesee County a wonderful place to live and work. We would like to thank our elected officials, funders, and most importantly our volunteers. Without all of you, we

would not be able to restore hope in our community.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the tragic passing of our Board Treasurer and 'Champion for Change' in our community, County Commissioner Bryant Nolden. He dedicated so much of his time to fighting blight and restoring hope. Our staff is heartbroken, to say the least. He was a dedicated and selfless leader who had an unforgettable presence. He skillfully balanced his many leadership roles with ease and an open heart. We are infinitely grateful for the years of service he dedicated to revitalizing vacant and abandoned properties. His legacy lives on.



- Deborah Cherry, Chairperson and Michael Freeman, Executive Director

Summary of Successes for Fiscal Year 2022



Project completed through a partnership between the Genesee County Land Bank & Uptown Redevelopment
(Photo credit: Calvin Photography)



535 Vacant Lots Sold



27 Commercial properties sold



264 Homes sold



5 Homes Renovated



40 local crew members hired and trained



64 community groups partnered with the Land Bank through Clean & Green



971 lots leased or adopted and maintained by volunteers



~1,000 vacant structures boarded and secured



155 tons of garbage and debris removed from vacant properties



\$39.5 million in grants secured for blight elimination



Fighting Blight & Restoring Hope:

When People Leave, they Don't Take Their Problem Properties with Them

The Land Bank receives blighted properties from the Genesee County Treasurer after people stop paying their taxes and the land goes through tax-foreclosure. GCLBA currently has about 15,000 properties in its inventory. Of those, over 4,000 have structures remaining, the majority of which have been left vacant for years before they end up in our inventory. Our priority is to sell viable structures to responsible owners who will invest in renovations and improvements. However, because houses are vacant for so long before we receive them, roughly 74% of the structures in our inventory are blighted beyond repair and in need of demolition.

Eliminating hazards in neighborhoods and commercial corridors is the first step to restoring value to neighboring homeowners, creating opportunities for homeowners to build wealth through homeownership, and creating new opportunities for investment and improvements in areas that have experienced significant hardship over the past few decades. Hazardous structures in neighborhoods attract dumping and other criminal activity, create health and safety risks to residents, and depress the value of surrounding homes and businesses. Fighting blight is one of the Land Bank's number one priorities and we are committed to clearing blight from the former tax-foreclosed properties in our inventory.

- By Christina Kelly





Fighting Blight & Restoring Hope: Grand Opening of the Children's Health Center in Flint

Several formerly blighted tax-foreclosed properties, including a former oil change, are now home to the Center for Children's Integrated Services on S. Saginaw St. in downtown Flint. Demolition and site cleanup were completed in 2014. In 2019, Greater Flint Mental Health Facilities, Inc. in partnership with Genesee Health System purchased the property to develop the facility co-locating Genesee Health System's core service while also providing physical health care services. This is just one example of how the Land Bank plays a crucial role in accepting properties left behind, addresses the issues on the properties, and positions them for re-use in a way that best supports the community.

-Christina Kelly



1402 S. Saginaw Street—Before



1402 S. Saginaw Street—After

Clearing Blight Through Partnerships

With limited funding for demolition in FY 2022, the Land Bank demolished 56 blighted structures (5 of which were commercial) at a cost of roughly \$1.1 million in grant funding secured by the GCLBA.

We were pleased to leverage additional resources through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Michigan Department of Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) to clean and clear abandoned and hazardous structures in its inventory. This year, EPA conducted an emergency response on a Land Bank property at 1815 Davison Rd. The Land Bank reached out to the EPA to request assistance after the commercial structure on the property was burned and left in a dangerous state. Work began in FY 22 and continued into FY 23 to complete demolition and site clearing. EPA also removed asbestos containing material on 3219 N. Saginaw.

EGLE has continued to work with us to investigate contaminated properties in the Land Bank's inventory.

This year, they also completed the demolition, tank removal, and clean up of a former gas station on 1523 Beach St. across from the **Edible Flint Farm**. The Land Bank is grateful for the partnership and support of the EPA and EGLE in helping to remove hazardous structures from our community.

- Christina Kelly





\$39.5 Million Secured at the end of FY 22 to Demolish up to 1,910 Blighted Structures in Flint and Genesee County

The Genesee County Land Bank (Land Bank), working in partnership with the City of Flint and Genesee County, secured \$39.5 million in FY 22 to demolish up to 1,910 blighted structures. The funding sources for blight elimination include: \$16 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) from the City of Flint, \$8 million in ARPA from the County, \$10 million in grant funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, \$4.5 million from the Land Bank and the Genesee County Treasurer, and \$1 million in Community Project Funding through Congressman Kildee's office.

Over the next four years, the Genesee County Land Bank hopes to secure an additional \$5.8 million to demolish 505 additional blighted structures to reach our goal of clearing 2,415 blighted structures from Flint and Genesee County. Michael Freeman, Executive Director of the Land Bank, is pleased that partners are coming together to continue the process of clearing blighted structures impacting residents and neighborhoods throughout Flint and Genesee County. "Clearing blight will help restore value to communities and create healthier and safer neighborhoods."

The Land Bank used the property selection process described below to prioritize 1,910 structures out of the 2,900 unfunded demolitions to complete with the funding secured so far. The list, available on the Land Bank's website (<https://www.thelandbank.org/demofunding.asp>), includes 1,690 residential and 35 commercial demolitions in the City of Flint and 183 residential and 2 commercial demolitions outside the city in Genesee County. As additional funds are secured, we will prioritize more vacant and blighted Land Bank structures to demolish. Pre-demolition work is underway starting with utility disconnects and environmental surveys to identify hazardous materials and asbestos to remove before demolition. As utility disconnects and surveys are completed, we will use a competitive procurement process following all state, local and federal requirements, and regulations for qualified contractors to demolish batches of structures. The funding will also support maintenance on lots after demolition for up to five years.

- By Christina Kelly

Selecting Demolition Priorities with Community Input

The Land Bank began the process of selecting blighted structures for demolition by collecting property condition information and resident recommendations for demolition through the Flint Property Portal. We collected resident input on criteria that ought to be used to prioritize demolitions through a community survey. Based on more than 400 survey responses, residents asked us to prioritize the blighted houses that are: 1) directly next door to occupied properties; 2) in areas where more people live and where homes are occupied; 3) near open schools; and 4) fire damaged. We used this direction to develop a scoring framework for all demolition candidates in Land Bank's inventory and the highest scoring properties were selected for demolition with the funding secured so far. Local elected officials helped gather public input and shared their feedback with us before the list was finalized.

- By Christina Kelly

Fighting Blight Through Vacant Property Maintenance

It would cost more than \$7 million annually to mow tall grass and remove trash from the more than 20,000 vacant properties in Flint, once a month from spring to summer. This year, the Land Bank spent roughly \$2 million on vacant property maintenance. Part of this funding was used to hire local, seasonal crews to inspect, board and clean out vacant structures and mow and clear vacant lots that we are not able to sell or lease. Instead of just mowing Land Bank properties, crews mow all vacant lots in the City of Flint.

This season, Land Bank crews:

- completed 20,000+ mows and boarded and secured 1,000+ vacant structures
- cleared 155 tons of garbage from vacant lots and loaded them away in Land Bank dumpsters
- created 500+ cubic yards of woodchips from downed trees and limbs cleared from Land Bank properties
- cleaned out more than 100 houses to prepare them to be sold as Featured Homes
- fully renovated 5 houses and positioned them for sale
- completed over 3,600 housing inspections to assess property conditions, inform Land Bank decision making, and prepare properties for sale.

We are grateful for the small but dedicated team of crew members, led by Duane Bickford, the Land Bank's Property Manager, for all they do to prepare properties for re-use and make neighborhoods cleaner, safer and more attractive.

- Christina Kelly & Duane Bickford



Mowing Lots and Restoring Hope; Residents and Community Based Groups Organize to Transform Vacant Lots

Clean & Green supports community-based groups in maintaining and re-using vacant land. Through the program, volunteers from block clubs, neighborhood associations, churches, schools and local non-profits, seasonally maintain clusters of vacant properties with each participating group receiving a stipend for its maintenance work. In 2022, 64 community-based groups participated including 61 returning groups and 3 new groups. 3,600 lots were awarded for maintenance every three weeks with over 30,000 mowings completed by groups. The majority of groups use a variety of mow types and stagger mowing rounds to cover more ground. As a result of their innovations, groups now can maintain over 5,000 individual parcels. Additional program stats from the 2022 season are provided below:



ENGAGEMENT & PARTICIPATION: 801 individual participants completed 3,419 acts of engagement for an average of 488 participants each round (an average increase of nearly 100 participants each round since last season)

- 66% of groups involved youth
- 92% of groups interacted with neighbors while completing maintenance

REPORTING ON THE FLINT PROPERTY PORTAL: Over 98% of groups are now consistently reporting maintenance using the portal with nearly 32,000 digital surveys submitted collectively.

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENTS: Groups reported that because of their Clean & Green work....

- Neighbors spend more time outside = 73%
- The neighborhood feels safer = 78%
- The neighborhood looks better = 98%
- Nearby neighbors are taking better care of their properties = 94%

CLEAN-UP ACTIVITIES:

- 27% of all groups conducted a large scale clean up
- 12 dumpsters were filled by groups (roughly 180,000 lbs. of debris)
- Fallen trees/limbs were reported as the biggest challenge with 81% of groups encountering fallen trees/limbs this season
- Illegal dumping was reported as the 2nd biggest challenge facing groups

FOSTERING COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING:

- 54% of groups connected to new/other resources because of Clean & Green
- 19% of groups collaborated with other C&G groups

- By Melissa Hertlein

Spotlight on Neighborhood Clean & Green Groups

Sharp Manor Association: Engaging Young People in Neighborhood Maintenance



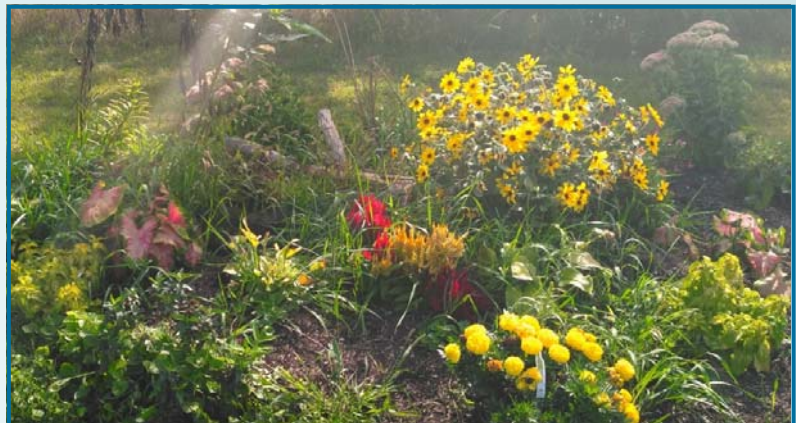
Residents in the Sharp Manor Neighborhood wanted to resolve some of the issues they were having in their neighborhood. Like many areas, lots in their neighborhood were overgrown. Residents wanted to be the change they wanted to see so they applied and have participated in the program for the past four years.

The Sharp Manor Association believes the program has been extremely beneficial for their neighborhood. Especially for the youth that participated. Many of the young people that were recruited to participate early on were unemployed. But after joining Clean & Green they found full-time jobs and have become productive citizens in our community. By participating in the program, they were able to learn the value of having a strong work ethic and the importance of giving back to the community.

WC's Beautification Project: Creating Safety and Comfort through Greening and Gardening Vacant Land

Wanda Coleman, the team leader of WC's Beautification Project has been a participant in the Clean & Green program for 8 years. Wanda became involved in the program because she felt the children and the seniors in her neighborhood deserved a better environment and because she wanted everyone to feel safe and comfortable. Many of the residents are grateful for her efforts in keeping the neighborhood safe and blight free. By seeing the positive change in the neighborhood Wanda hopes to have more residents join her in her crusade to keep their neighborhood safe and clean in 2023.

- Raynetta Speed





FLINT

LEADS THE WAY IN HOMEOWNERSHIP in comparison to other urban cities

55.1%

*Owner Occupied
Housing Unit Rate

♦ 43% ♦ 48% ♦ 49%
Pontiac Detroit Southfield

*Owner Occupied Housing Unit Rates

* According to
U.S. Census Data

WWW.CENSUS.GOV

www.TheLandBank.org

Fighting Blight & Restoring Hope to the Community through Sales

Fighting blight isn't just about tearing down dilapidated properties – it's about building the community up! It's about creating opportunities for homeownership, developing quality housing, repurposing vacant spaces, supporting small business, and giving back in ways that aim to make an impact for future generations to come. It's about *Restoring Hope to the Community!*

Almost 55 years after the City of Flint made history – the first community within the U.S. to pass an opening housing referendum, today, homeownership opportunities throughout Genesee County, offered through the Land Bank's programs, are available to anyone.

Today, our *Featured Homes* program is fostering homeownership and housing affordability. We are setting records and increasing equity. According to recent U.S. Census data – among other urban communities throughout the region, Flint holds the distinction as a majority homeowner-occupied city. In sharp contrast to most urban municipalities' decline of homeownership and statistics leaning towards majority renter-occupied housing, Flint is now leading the way as a growing community of homeowners creating value and equity.

Through direct *Land Bank Financing* offered to *Featured Homes* buyers, the dream of homeownership is being expanded with as little as 10 percent down and affordable monthly payments. Additionally, our dynamic partnership with Metro Community Development provides land contract buyers who participate in financial literacy and homeownership classes grants of \$500 to be applied towards closing costs.

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Today, our *Ready for Rehab* program – launched in 2022 – continues to make properties available to buyers quickly and return them back into the community, rehabbed, on-the-tax-rolls, and into productive use. Outcomes in the program show a vibrant increase in surrounding property value and a positive alternative to demolition.

After a long backlog of applications and unprecedented interest, today our *Side-Lot* program processing is caught up for the first-time in four years where buyers can apply today and close within 45 days. Also, buyers that live-in and own the home next door, may be eligible to purchase the side-lot for just \$25.



Very soon, our recently announced *V.I.P. Spotlight* program will make these “*Very Interesting Properties*” – the ones with historical significance or great public interest and the ones that require a little more attention but would make for all the much greater impact – available for sale and redevelopment. Execution of enhanced development agreements will be required prior to purchase and will spur the restoration of these community treasures.

Collectively, our work and programs make us so hopeful about our future! Homeownership in Genesee County is on the rise, our economy is growing and creating jobs, small businesses are expanding, and more local people are a part of these important developments – *fighting blight and restoring hope to the community!*

- By Alexandria Riley

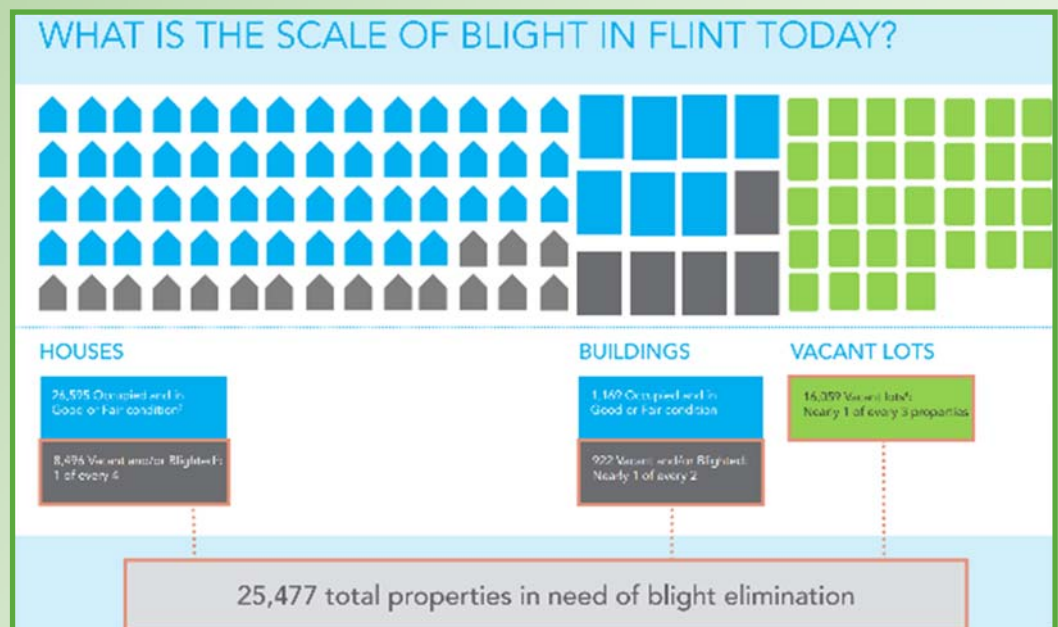
Beyond Blight



Charting a Course to Eliminate Blight in Flint

In May of 2022, City of Flint, the Genesee County Land Bank and the Flint Police Foundation partnered to release Beyond Blight 2022, which provides an update on progress in eliminating blight and direction for eliminating blight in Flint over the next five years. The goal set forth in the plan is to stabilize Flint's population by eliminating blight in neighborhoods and improving the quality of life for residents. The Land Bank used this plan to help guide blight elimination planning for the coming years. The report estimated that more than 25,477 properties need blight elimination, including demolition, debris removal, clean-up and mowing at a cost of more than \$154 million. Demolition accounts for 70% of the total cost and the remaining costs are associated with mowing, dumping removal and boarding. Most of these costs are associated with privately owned properties.

The report shows how recent demolitions completed under the \$67.5 million Hardest Hit Fund grant helped to improve property conditions and reduce vacancy. Demolishing blighted properties also prevents future property abandonment and deterioration. In addition, for houses next door to vacant and blighted structures, demolition decreases abandonment by 2.5% and improves house condition. Go to www.thelandbank.org to review the report in full.



- By Christina Kelly

Increasing Access to Data and Opportunities for Input

The Flint Property Portal was created through a partnership between the Land Bank and the City of Flint to increase public access to property information in order to strengthen engagement, transparency, and trust between residents and local government in Flint. The Portal continues to be a key tool and resource for residents interested in revitalizing their neighborhoods and it has become integral to Land Bank operations. To date, the public and groups organized by the City of Flint through the Neighborhood Inventory and the Land Bank through Clean & Green have logged more than 300,000 posts. Land Bank staff has completed more than 19,000 property surveys from demolition inspections, property condition updates to pre-sales inspections.



FLINT PROPERTY PORTAL

Lots of Green

Homeowners living adjacent to blighted structures demolished in recent years have purchased lots to expand their yards. More than 1,100 post demolition lots have been sold during the past 7 years. As we gear up for another aggressive blight elimination campaign, we are hopeful that the lots remaining, the majority of which are adjacent to occupied structures, will be purchased as side yards and transformed into neighborhood assets.

- Christina Kelly



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(Vacant) – Treasurer
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<http://www.thelandbank.org/newsroom>