



**Portage County Land
Reutilization Corporation**



**2021
Annual Report**



Brad Cromes

Community Partners, Supporters and Friends

On behalf of our Board of Directors, it is once again my privilege to share an update with you on the work that the Portage County Land Bank is doing to fulfill its mission of “facilitating the conversion of vacant, blighted, abandoned, and tax delinquent properties to productive use for the benefits of our communities.” We have accomplished much together – and there is much to be excited about as we look to the year ahead!

This is a special report for our Land Bank, as it marks our 10th year of working on behalf of Portage County communities to address blight and set the stage for future growth. Since its creation in 2012, the Land Bank has facilitated the sale or transfer of nearly 200 parcels and completed demolition and removal of abandoned buildings on 200 more,

in communities all over Portage County. In the process, our Land Bank has leveraged \$2 million in state and federal funding to maximize our capacity to deliver positive change. Put simply, our Land Bank has been a game-changer for our neighborhoods over its first decade of life – and it will continue to be a powerful partner for them going forward.

Under the leadership of our Executive Director **Dan Morganti**, this past year the Land Bank has continued to prove its value to Portage County by launching new initiatives, partnering with private sector and local elected community stakeholders to innovate and bring long wished for projects like new home construction, commercial real estate rehabilitation and environmental remediation to fruition. Dan has been aided in this work by newly hired Administrative and Program Assistant **Jeannette Jones**, and together they form a dynamic team that is moving us forward and helping us keep pace with rapid changes in the marketplace.

This report touches on a few of the highlights of the work they are leading – and I hope you find it enlightening and inspiring.

As we look to the future, our Land Bank is well positioned to take advantage of new opportunities for state and federal grant funding, and will continue to work with our community stakeholders to identify problem parcels that could be transformed by our work. In the process, we will remain committed to our vision of returning properties to productive use, and the more prosperous Portage County that vision promises.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BC', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Brad Cromes, Chair
Portage County Land Bank Board

Return on Investment

The Portage County Land Reutilization Corporation (Land Bank) is a 501c3 nonprofit community improvement corporation whose mission is to facilitate the conversation of vacant, blighted, abandoned and tax delinquent property to productive use for the benefit of Portage County. The Land Bank furthers this mission by strategically acquiring properties and utilizing rehabilitation, resale, demolition, and other economic development tools to increase the value of a property and those that surround them.



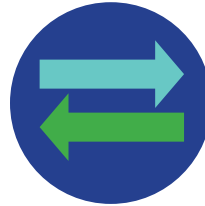
10-Year Anniversary

The completion of 2021 marked the 10th year of operations since the Land Bank was created by the Board of Commissioners in 2012. There has been much that has been accomplished over the last decade. Some of these highlights include the sale of more than ninety (90) tax parcels, at a total amount of \$1.3 million under our Open Market Real Estate Sales Program and the transfer of over one-hundred (100) parcels through the Side Lot and Vacant Lot Disposition Programs. We have competitively secured nearly \$2 million of outside grant funding to complete the demolition of more than two hundred (200) blighted and abandoned buildings and remediation of environmental issues. In recent years, the Land Bank has grown from its initial role as a demolition grant administrator into taking a more active part in the redevelopment of vacant and abandoned property. This work has resulted in facilitating the rehabilitation of ten (10) houses throughout the County and providing financing for the new construction of two (2) new homes. The Land Bank has also expanded outside of residential redevelopment market and is now involved in the reutilization of commercial properties. Beyond these figures, we may be most proud of the many partnerships that have been formed in the past 10-years to assist local political jurisdictions, non-profit agencies, community groups, safety services, and county residents. As we enter the next decade of our operations, further expansion and growth is expected, with a focus of making a continued positive impact on the communities of Portage County, along with the many important organizations and services that rely on property tax support as part of their operational income.

Performance Highlights



Open Market Sales
(93)



Side Lots Transferred
(69)



Demolitions completed
(215)



Rehabilitated Houses Sold
(6)



Houses Ready for Rehab Sold
(4)



New Construction Loan Issued
(2)



Open Market Sales	\$1,387,015
Grants Obtained	\$1,992,476
New Construction Loans Issued	\$292,500

(As of December 31, 2021)

Adding Value to Communities and the Tax Rolls

In 2021, the Land Bank closed on thirty-three (33) residential real estate market transactions, which had a total value of \$563,450 under our **Open Market Real Estate Sales Program**. Both of these figures far surpass any prior yearly totals. These sales amounts included rehabilitated houses, improved properties and vacant land, including lots that were acquired and assembled for the purposes of creating a construction-ready redevelopment opportunity. The Land Bank aims to continue growth in the amount of market rate real estate sales and views the Open Market Real Estate Sales Program as an important category to measure the amount of property value it is putting back to productive use. It is also a great way to quantify the positive impact that the Land Bank has on real estate values in Portage County during the course of the year. The two properties below were rehabilitated “in-house” by the Land Bank as part of the **Acquisition/Rehab/Resale Program** during 2021.



New Construction Parmalee St., Kent

The **New Construction Revolving Loan Fund Program** is a collaboration between the Land Bank and the private sector that leverages the Land Bank’s current and future inventory of vacant land and currently available funding to promote investment and redevelopment of under-utilized property throughout Portage County. The program furthers the mission of the Land Bank by encouraging the redevelopment of formerly abandoned or tax delinquent property by providing the financing needed to construct and market new single-family housing. The intended result is increased real property investment on formerly vacant properties, elevated property values of existing properties in the surrounding area, and expanded opportunities for homeownership throughout the County. The new program continued in 2021 with the sale of the first home constructed under the program in July, which was located in the McElrath neighborhood of Ravenna Township, and a ground breaking of a second home on the west side of Kent this past fall.



Before/after pictures; Munroe Falls-Kent Road



Before/after pictures; Old Forge Road, Brimfield Township

Community Partnerships

Collaborating with political jurisdictions throughout the county is another of the primary functions of the Land Bank. Over the years, this collaboration has provided communities with frequent opportunities to address problem properties and eliminate blight. We have achieved this by successfully competing for federal and state funds to demolish abandoned, run-down residential structures. These empty and deserted properties hurt property values and are public hazards, and since its inception, the Land Bank has demolished over 200 of these such structures throughout Portage County. Demolition of existing houses that are not in salvageable condition continues to be part of the Land Bank's approach to making a positive impact in the local real estate market. We view eliminating these dilapidated structures as a key step toward putting a stop to any neighborhood disinvestment trends and improving safety, security and quality of life. In some cases, resulting vacant land is sold to facilitate potential infill residential redevelopment opportunities, and other times land is transferred to an adjacent owner under the **Side Lot Disposition Program**, allowing a yard expansion and a resulting bump in property market value. The work in this area is set to continue as the **Ohio Department of Development and Site Revitalization Program** and the Land bank was identified as the lead-entity for Portage County. We will be making an application for funding in early 2022.



Before/after pictures;
Belden Drive, Village of Windham

The new **Deed-in-Escrow Housing Rehabilitation Program**, which was first introduced in 2020, continued in 2021 as an approach to supplement the efforts of our Acquisition-Rehab-Resale program where rehabilitation work is completed "in-house" by the Land Bank. The Deed-in-Escrow program facilitates the renovation of property by qualified contractors, investors, or owner-occupants who have a plan for renovation that includes hiring experienced professionals. Each buyer is obligated to renovate the property according to the Land Bank's minimum Housing Quality Standards and site-specific specifications, and the deed for the property is held in escrow until the renovation is complete. Pictured is a house that was sold under the program during the year and completed in early 2022.

Property acquisition for the purposes of facilitating renovation, new construction activities, or clearing blight with demolition remains core to the mission of the Land Bank. However, the Land Bank does so much more, including working alongside local political jurisdictions, safety services, faith-based organizations and non-profit agencies to assist them in meeting their goals. Examples completed in 2021 include the transfer of a parcel of land to **Family & Community Services** to support expansion efforts at the King Kennedy Center in the McElrath neighborhood of Ravenna Township. The Land Bank also conveyed a shovel-ready parcel of land to **Habitat for Humanity of Portage County** who has a family lined up and construction of a new home planned for 2022 at the site. Lastly, the Land Bank transferred vacant land, after a formerly

vacant and blighted multi-family structure was demolished using grant funding, to the **Village of Windham**. The Village has chosen to take an active role in its redevelopment and their vision and work is producing positive results. Dozens of antiquated multi-family units have now been removed, and these units are being replaced with high-quality new construction of both multi-family and single-family housing. These projects are just a few examples of how the Land Bank can be a partner for community development to help further the objectives of local organizations.



Vacant Lot to Habitat for Humanity of Portage County

Facilitating Commercial Redevelopment

The Land Bank can be effective partner in facilitating commercial redevelopment. The acquisition of a former church property located near the center of Suffield Township, and its subsequent sale to Crafted Artisan Meadery, is an excellent example of how the land bank can play an important role in putting commercial property back to productive use. This property's past recently included a number of illegal uses that resulted in an FBI raid, jail time for the former owner, and a historic property that fell into disrepair, abandonment and tax delinquency. Crafted Artisan Meadery, an existing business in the community that produces and distributes mead, had myriad opportunities to establish a new location outside of Portage County and even outside the State. With this assistance from the Land Bank, they acquired this property and are now finalizing plans for making a significant investment in a unique and historic building that will allow them to expand both the distribution and retail aspects of their business in Suffield.

The cleanup of an abandoned gas station continued during the year at the corner of State Route 14 and Tallmadge Road near the center of Edinburg Township with the use of **Ohio Department of Development's Abandoned Gas Station Clean-up** grant program funding. This former "mom and pop" gas service station began operations in the 1950s and was open for business into the late 1990s. The Township demolished the deteriorating above ground structures in the early 2000s. Despite its location at the corner of a busy intersection, the property has remained idle because of the environmental implications of its previous use have proven to be an insurmountable hurdle to redevelopment efforts. With help from the Ohio Department of Development, the Land Bank is addressing these past environmental issues to remove this uncertainty and offer a clean site for sale on the open market. Ultimately, our work will get the property back on the tax rolls and create an opportunity for reutilization of the property. During 2021, local officials and State officials gathered to discuss these cleanup efforts and possible future re-use possibilities.



Crafted Artisan Meadery Commercial Redevelopment of abandoned church in Suffield.



Rendering of the planned Crafted Artisan Meadery



Abandoned Gas Station Cleanup, Edinburg Township; Pictured, L to R: Paul Kuonen, Brownfield Restoration Group; Jeffrey Bixler, Edinburg Township Trustee; Brad Cromes, Portage County Treasurer and Land Bank Chair; Gail Pavliga, State Representative; Sabrina Christian-Bennett, Portage County Commissioner and Land Bank Vice-Chair; Dan Morganti, Executive Director, Portage County Land Bank

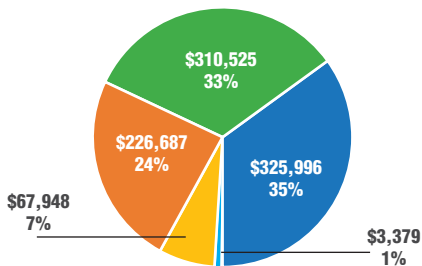


Financial Information

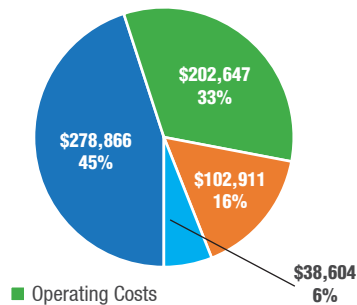
The Land Bank receives funding from a variety of sources. Our two primary sources of funding during 2021 came from sale of acquired property and through the county's Delinquent Tax Assessment and Collection (DTAC) fund, which is a set aside of penalty and interest revenue from delinquent real estate taxes. Property sales were buoyed in 2021 due to the strong real estate market seen in Portage County and the timing of a lien release schedule on Land Bank- owned properties stipulated by a previously administered grant program. Other funding sources included obtained outside grant funding, loan interest, and donations. Providing a positive return on the investment of DTAC funding in the form of taxable property is a primary focus of the Land Bank. The tables and charts on this page summarize the Land Bank's financial activities during the year.

The Land Bank is audited each year by the State of Ohio. At the time of this writing, the 2021 audit was still underway, but the Land Bank is pleased to report that we once again received an **Ohio Auditor of State Award** for having a clean audit report in 2020. The award is issued to organizations for submitting timely financial reports, having no findings for recovery, material citations, material weaknesses, significant deficiencies, audit findings or questioned costs. Further, the Land Bank earned three stars under the Auditor of State's Stars Rating System, which is a system where each star measures a "best practice" that goes above and beyond State of Ohio Sunshine Law requirements. Financial integrity and transparency are two very important aspects in measuring the success of the Land Bank's overall operations, and the results of these third-party assessments show we have a demonstrated positive track record in these areas.

2021 Revenue



2021 Expenses



- Grants
- Delinquent Tax and Assessment Collection (DTAC)
- Property Sales-Vacant Land
- Property Sales-Improved Property
- Other Income

- Operating Costs
- Professional Services
- Demolition and Property Cleanup
- Housing Rehabilitation

Revenue	
Grants	\$ 67,948
Delinquent Tax and Assessment Collection (DTAC)	\$ 325,996
Property Sales-Vacant Land	\$ 310,525
Property Sales-Improved Property	\$ 226,687
Other Income	\$ 3,379
	\$ 934,535
Expenses	
Operating Costs	\$ 202,647
Professional Services	\$ 38,604
Demolition and Property Cleanup	\$ 102,911
Housing Rehabilitation	\$ 278,866
	\$ 623,028

Board of Directors



Brad Cromes
Portage County Treasurer,
Board Chair



Sabrina Christian-Bennett
Portage County Commissioner,
Board Vice-Chair



Bridget Susel
City of Kent,
Treasurer/Secretary



Anthony Badalamenti
Portage County Commissioner



Sue Fields
Brimfield Township Trustee

Staff



Dan Morganti
Executive Director



Jeannette Jones
Administrative and Program
Assistant

Partners

Family & Community Services

Fannie Mae

Habitat for Humanity

Hometown Bank

National Community Stabilization Trust

Ohio Department of Development

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

Ohio Housing Finance Agency

Ohio Land Bank Association

Portage Community Bank

Portage County Auditor's Office

Portage County Board of Commissioners

Portage County Common Pleas Court

Portage County Prosecutor's Office

Portage County Recorder's Office

Portage County Regional Planning

Portage County Tax Map

Portage County Treasurer's Office

Thriving Communities Institute

Western Reserve Land Conservancy

Cities

Aurora

Ravenna

Kent

Streetsboro

Villages

Garrettsville

Mogadore

Hiram

Sugar Bush Knolls

Mantua

Windham

Townships

Atwater

Nelson

Brimfield

Palmyra

Charlestown

Paris

Deerfield

Randolph

Edinburg

Ravenna

Franklin

Rootstown

Freedom

Shalersville

Hiram

Suffield

Mantua

Windham

Let's Connect



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MISSION STATEMENT

The Portage County Land Bank facilitates the conversion of vacant, blighted, abandoned, and tax delinquent properties to productive use for the benefit of our community.