

# Lake County Land Revitalization Corp. continues to address blight, vacancy



The property at 352 Clarmont Road in Willowick after the Lake County Land Revitalization Corporation's renovation. The current asking price is \$130,000. Chad Felton — The News-Herald

By [Chad Felton](#), *The News-Herald*

POSTED: 03/21/17, 5:42 PM EDT | 0



The property at 352 Clarmont Road in Willowick prior to the Lake County Land Revitalization Corporation's renovation. State Rep. John M. Rogers, D-Mentor-on-the-Lake, readily admits that the Moving Ohio Forward Demolition Program

sounds far more ominous than it intends, but that its “addition by subtraction” blueprint has vastly benefited civic enhancement throughout Lake County.

Rogers, who is also executive director of the [Lake County Land Revitalization Corporation](#), or Lake County Land Bank, said the program’s recent concerted efforts to tear down or renovate buildings and homes, remains the focus of the private not-for-profit community development agency.

“We are not a county (governmental) entity,” he said. “We’re still moving forward with a lot of [projects](#) through our Neighborhood Initiative Program. We would rather salvage any home or structure than tear one down. With vacancies and abandoned structures, principally residential, we understand people want them cleaned up and that’s what has made this program such a success on multiple levels.

“The [parking garage \(project\)](#), for example, in Painesville was recently completed. We’re now looking at a building across from the Lake County Jail. Our citizens have to know we take proper steps to keep taxpayers’ rights protected. The city or community sends resolution analysis and asbestos abatement regarding all NIP properties. We have over 200 properties throughout the county in delinquency but that doesn’t necessarily mean bankruptcy. We work with homeowners to avoid foreclosures, but delays happen.”

In recent months, Land Bank, [at 8 N. State St. in Painesville](#), has demolished one property with 12 reaching resolution, Rogers noted.

According to the agency’s website, the program is intended to help stabilize property values by removing and greening vacant and blighted properties in targeted areas to prevent future foreclosures for existing homeowners. Throughout the state, numerous homeowners owe more than the estimated values of their homes.

The negative equity, oftentimes combined with other factors such as a loss of income, increases the likelihood of foreclosure because homeowners in large measure do not have the option to sell a home they can no longer afford. Results can lead to distressed sales, further depressing property values and continuing the downward spiral, frequently resulting in vacant and blighted homes. The demolition of these severely neglected structures is a critical component of strategies to stabilize home values and strengthen neighborhoods, the site states.

The Land Bank is again the recent recipient of an NIP grant, amounting to \$750,000. These funds allow Lake County’s Land Bank to continue its participation, as its initial award of \$500,000 has been used to help fund the demolition of 27 structures to date.

The most recent award will be used strictly for the removal of blighted residential structures, in targeted areas, as they are acquired by the Land Bank.

These funds are available in the form of reimbursements through December 18, 2019.

“In large measure, we ask the county to let us acquire the homes,” Rogers said. “We’re currently dealing with over 100 properties. NIP has to be used for homes you own. Land Bank has to have acquired them, again, through all proper inspection because we would rather salvage.

“Painesville and Painesville Township we’ve both approached concerning various port authority commercial properties. An entire listing can be found on our website, including our policies and financials. The idea is not just clearing blighted homes, but, to an extent, returning them to as normal as they can be. I can try to renovate, but if something has to come down, I’ll do that.”

Rogers praised local Habitat for Humanity organizations, Auburn Career Center and Mentor Schools students groups for assisting in renovating properties in the West end of the county, and mentioned multiple opportunities for other school groups to do the same if they wish.

“It’s great because they are helping local communities,” he said. “Some properties take years, as I mentioned, because discretionary funds aren’t always there. Every year things change.”

Another notable recently completed Land Bank project is [Jack Crislip Memorial Park](#) at Sycamore Drive and Pontiac Ave. in Painesville Township. The park, dedicated in Oct. 2015, formerly stood as a two-parcel lot filled with trees. Painesville Township residents Robert and Margaret Esterle donated the land to the Land Bank three years ago.

“The donation of property by a family can have favorable tax treatment as we’re recognized by the IRS as a charity,” Rogers said. “This park has continued to be widely used by residents and non-residents alike. It also serves as a school bus stop. This is just one of the many nice things we’ve been able to do to improve area land at no cost to the community. Resources such as this attract a lot of people.”