

Editorial: Lake County Land Bank has proved itself as productive, successful organization

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



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When people see a dilapidated house or building in their hometown that has been standing abandoned and neglected for a long time, they might wonder what it will take to tear down or renovate the structure.

That's exactly the kind of problem the [Lake County Land Bank](#) specializes in solving.

Also, known as the Lake County Land Reutilization Corp., the Land Bank works to stabilize property values by dealing with abandoned and/or blighted residential or commercial structures, acquiring them for either rehabilitation or demolition.

Established in 2013, the Lake County Land Bank is private, not-for-profit community development corporation. The organization seeks to accomplish its goals through activities that include not only acquisition, but also the renovation, maintenance, demolition or disposition of blighted homes or commercial buildings.

Once a land bank in Ohio acquires a property, it can be held tax free until the land can be put back to productive use.

We believe the Lake County Land Bank is proving to be an effective organization that's bringing about positive changes in the community.

Anyone who visits the Land Bank's website — lakecountylanbank.org — can read about how the organization has worked productively and achieved admirable results over the course of nearly four years.

It's impressive to note the array of programs the Lake County Land Bank has used to carry out its mission.

Not long after the Lake County Land Bank began operating in 2013, it [knocked down its first blighted house](#), at 7395 Primrose Drive in Mentor-on-the-Lake, using funds from the [Moving Ohio Forward Demolition Program](#).

The Land Bank made excellent use of funds from this statewide program to demolish 64 condemned residential structures at no expense to Lake County communities.

“Total expenditures for this program amounted to \$1,183,291.68. The Land Bank’s share, or \$370,860.68, was leveraged to obtain \$812,431.00 from the Attorney General,” the Land Bank stated on its website.

Although the Moving Ohio Forward Demolition Program formally concluded at the end of 2014 the Lake County Land Bank has continued its work with the help of other statewide funding initiatives. One such example is the [Neighborhood Initiative Program](#) established by the Ohio Housing Finance Agency.

The Lake County Land Bank, based at 8 N. State St. in Painesville, [is again the recent recipient of an NIP grant](#), amounting to \$750,000. These funds allow the Lake County 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 Dec. 18, 2019.

“In large measure, we ask the county to let us acquire the homes,” said Lake County Land Bank Executive Director John M. Rogers. “We’re currently dealing with over 100 properties. NIP has to be used for homes you own. The 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.”

Other noteworthy local projects in which the Lake County Land Bank played a role include:

- The [demolition of the Painesville parking garage](#) at 66 S. Saint Clair St. Last year, the garage was demolished and converted to surface parking because of ongoing structural and safety concerns. The new lot created about 175 parking spaces.

The total cost of the project was \$572,508. Half of that cost came from the city, and the other half was covered by the Lake County Land Bank.

- The creation of [Jack Crislip Memorial Park](#) at Sycamore Drive and Pontiac Avenue in Painesville Township. The park, dedicated in October 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.

Clearly, the Lake County Land Bank has earned a reputation as a resourceful, creative, proactive and successful organization since launching operations in 2013. We believe the Land Bank has helped make Lake County a better place to live and will continue to do so for many years to come.