

Lake County Land Bank to clean up old gas-station property in Madison Township

The long-abandoned gas station at 1991 Hubbard Road, located at the northeast corner of the high-traffic intersection of Chapel and Hubbard roads in Madison Township, appears in this Aug. 31 photo. Jonathan Tressler — The News-Herald



By [Jonathan Tressler](#), *The News-Herald*

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State Rep. John Rogers, D-Mentor-on-the-Lake, at left, points to some underground tanks at the abandoned gas station at 1991 Hubbard Road in Madison Township, which were photographed using ground-penetrating radar, as Township Trustee Kenneth R. Gauntner, Jr. looks on. Jonathan Tressler — The News-Herald

The [Lake County Land Reutilization Corporation](#), more commonly known as the Lake County Land Bank, is about to help Madison Township soothe one of its ugliest eyesores.

In a recent news release, the land bank announced it has secured a \$250,000 grant to clean up an abandoned gas station at the northeast corner of Chapel and Hubbard Roads.



The junk property in question, located at [1991 Hubbard Road](#), has been unoccupied since the early- to mid-2000s and, thanks to some legal hurdles, has remained unoccupied for the duration, area officials explained.

“This property had been involved in litigation going back to 2008, when a case was filed by an individual who had loaned money to the property owner, who actually had passed away by then,” said State Rep. John Rogers, D-Mentor-

on-the-Lake, during a look inside the building on Aug. 31.

Rogers, who is the land bank’s executive director, further explained that the property went to the late owner’s estate and, when a relative was finally located, that relative

argued the property wasn't her responsibility and, eventually, the court dismissed the case for failure to prosecute.

With a significant accrual of delinquent property taxes, a foreclosure complaint was filed that ultimately led to the property's forfeiture to the state, according to an Aug. 20 news release. This allowed the Land Bank to intervene and acquire title to clean up the property by mitigating any contamination, removing the structures and restoring the parcel to a viable use.

Rogers said the property's value has been estimated at \$39,860 by the [Lake County Auditor's Office](#). But, he added, the tax liability passed on by the last owner amounts to about \$55,000.

Add that to what it will likely cost to clean up the remnants of the property's gas-station days, like several underground tanks containing gasoline, kerosene, diesel fuel, oil and other potential contaminants, and purchasing it quickly becomes cost prohibitive for would-be developers.

"Nobody is going to buy this and invest the amount of money that's needed..." Rogers said. "So that brought the land bank into the question because it's a non-profit whose job is basically to clean up junk properties."

According to its release, the land bank, which is a [501 \(c\) \(3\)](#) nonprofit organization, has contracted with Akron-based [Brownfield Restoration Group](#) on the project, including preparation for the grant application and conducting some initial on-site testing.

There is liquid in the underground tanks, which are fiberglass units installed in 1983, according to Madison Township Trustee Kenneth Gauntner, Jr.

Gauntner confirmed the levels have remained constant over two separate measurements, one in 2011 and another in 2014, so any soil contamination at the site is likely due to runoff, spillage and other incidental releases, not because any underground tanks are failing.

Rogers said he expects to approve a cleanup proposal in the next week and passersby will likely begin seeing some activity within the next 60 to 90 days.

For Gauntner, who has been driving past the dilapidated property for years now, that's likely music to his ears.

"I think it's an eyesore," he said, adding that, without the help of Rogers, the Lake County Land Bank and numerous Lake County officials, it could have remained that way indefinitely.

"I truly appreciate and thank John Rogers and the Lake County Land Bank for working with the township and acquiring this property," Gauntner said.

Rogers said the abandoned gas station is a good example of the land bank's mission.

"The ultimate goal of the Land Bank, as with all of its property acquisitions and projects, is to return blighted and abandoned parcels to productive use," Rogers said. "This specific property is located at a very visible and well-traveled intersection in Madison

Township. Once our work is completed and the parcel restored, it will be immediately attractive for economic development leading to additional jobs and an increased tax base while improving adjacent property values.”