

Lake County Land Bank looks ahead to marketing contiguous lots in North Perry Village

Four parcels totaling about 4 acres offer potential for business development



John Rogers

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A stretch along North Ridge Road in North Perry Village that had been occupied by four dilapidated properties is now looking clean and green, thanks to the Lake County Land Bank.

A project which involved demolishing two houses and two former businesses situated contiguously in the 4500 block of North Ridge was completed earlier this year, said Land Bank Executive Director John Rogers.

However, the Land Bank isn't quite ready to market the parcels to potential developers.

"Procedurally, there's a number of steps that have to be taken and have to be met before the properties can be made available for sale," Rogers said.

The properties, which comprise a total of about 4 acres, had consisted of a restaurant, automotive shop and two houses. Those structures were based on the north side of North Ridge, just east of Call Road.

[Lake County Land Bank](#) purchased the deteriorated buildings at different points in 2019 and 2020.

Officially known as the Lake County Land Reutilization Corp., the land bank's mission is "to help stabilize and/or increase property values, strengthen communities and help to enhance the overall quality of life for Lake County residents," according to the organization's website.

The land bank strives to fulfill those duties by "revitalizing abandoned and/or blighted residential or commercial structures, either by acquisition for rehabilitation and/or demolition."

To demolish the two houses which were part of the North Perry Village project, the land bank used [Neighborhood Initiative Program](#) funds awarded by the Ohio Housing Finance Agency.

The program funding is allocated "to stabilize property values by removing and greening vacant and blighted residential properties in targeted areas in an effort to prevent future foreclosures for existing homeowners," the Ohio Housing Finance Agency stated.

One of the requirements to use NIP funds for a specific project is that the recipient must maintain the site of the demolished building for three years before attempting to sell the land.

Since Neighborhood Initiative Program money only can be earmarked for tearing down residential buildings, the land bank was responsible for funding demolition of the old restaurant and automotive shop.

While the land bank must wait three years before it can market the land where the two houses sat, Rogers said it would make sense to put all four lots up for sale at the same time.

The sites of the former restaurant and auto shop are both zoned commercial, while the land where the houses sat could be rezoned for business use by [North Perry Village Council](#). That way, a prospective developer could have one entire 4-acre lot on which to build a business.

“If somebody in the future wants to buy all of those properties that are available for sale ... I just think that they’re more attractive as a body,” Rogers said. “I’m not the person that’s going to be buying them and making the investment, but it would seem to me that whoever intends to buy this property would want to buy all four parcels. Because of where it’s located, in terms of the traffic (on North Ridge Road, or Route 20).”

When it comes to a potential buyer acquiring all four lots as a unit, one issue that will need to be addressed is a 0.54-acre “sliver” of property in the middle of the land bank’s holdings that is owned by an area resident.

“He may be waiting until (a buyer expresses interest in the other four parcels),” Rogers said. “It would have to be a multi-party deal, I suppose, if somebody’s going to come in and buy everything.”

North Perry Mayor Ed Klco had proposed that his community’s government purchase the thin section of land in 2020.

“I originally wanted to buy that sliver so we’d have first option on the rest of the property,” Klco said. “But Village Council did not want to do that. They didn’t think it was a good investment and decided not to.”

One step that council did take in 2020 was to approve the creation of a [community improvement corporation](#).

A major advantage of setting up a community improvement corporation is that the nonprofit entity can sell properties not for public purpose that are owned by political subdivisions without advertising and competitive bidding.

Some council members have expressed hopes that the CIC can play a pivotal role in efforts to sell the village’s annex building at 4485 North Ridge Road. It used to be the location of South Shore Controls before the manufacturer built a new plant in Mentor.

Separately, Klco said the land bank’s project in the 4500 block of North Ridge has cleaned up a section of North Perry which had become an eyesore in a high-traffic area.

“If they can hold it for three years, then they can sell it and that’s fine,” Klco said. “Right now, they’re getting the grass cut on it. It looks a lot better than it did.”