

# ATHENS COUNTY LAND BANK

## ANNUAL REPORT

2020

2020

Since Inception (2018)

Parcels Acquired  
Demos  
Rehabs  
Parcels Back on Tax Rolls



## MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY

2020 was an exciting year of growth for your Athens County Land Bank with many projects coming to fruition and many more begun. We acquired over 60 tax-delinquent, abandoned parcels during the year, many in our target areas of Trimble Township, Nelsonville and Chauncey. We also commenced projects in other areas around the county including Coolville, Guysville, Athens Township, Stewart and Waterloo Township.

Many of these projects were focused on blight eradication. The scourge of blight drives down property values for surrounding homeowners and creates opportunities for illegal activity in residential neighborhoods. Sadly, demolition was the only solution in many of these cases. The Land Bank has torn down over 42 structures during its 3-year existence. When we do have to go the demolition route, we employ our Waste Diversion program to make sure that recyclables, scrap metal, windows, and usable items are removed and either sold or donated prior to demolition.

Increasingly in 2020 we were able to turn our attention toward repurposing these properties with many excellent rehabilitations or new-builds having started in 2020 and some already completed. Many of these properties have returned to the tax rolls and are now producing property tax revenue for the county for the first time in many years. Part of this success is due to our great building partners, Habitat for Humanity of Southeast Ohio and Integrated Services for Behavioral Health, each of whom has acquired and built on at least one Land Bank parcel with additional builds planned for 2021 and beyond. This kind of partnership is a win-win-win for the Land Bank, the organization and the community at large.

We have also seen great interest in our Rural Acquisition program which allows citizens in outlying areas to acquire long-abandoned properties by paying in advance for the foreclosure necessary to acquire the property.

Sometimes our projects have unexpected outcomes. When we began a foreclosure to acquire some parcels in Rome Township that were delinquent for over 10 years, we were contacted by relatives of the owner who were able to prevail on that owner to pay the taxes and keep the property. We ended up with a delinquent tax collection of over \$35,000! That resulted in a windfall of over \$15,000 for the local school district.

2020 also saw a new partnership with Rural Action which has provided us with an AmeriCorps volunteer to do our field work and help with some of the administration of the program. This allows us to avoid employing staff directly and keeps the money in our budget available to be used only to further our core missions.

We are excited to carry this success in 2021 when we expect to do our first in-house renovation, funded in part with a grant from the Athens Foundation. If you or someone you know is interested in acquiring property from the Land Bank please visit our website: [www.AthensCountyLandBank.com](http://www.AthensCountyLandBank.com) and browse our available properties.

Revitalization is our game and we're just getting started.

**- Ric Wasserman, Athens County Land Bank Chair**

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: 29 MAIN, GLOUSTER



When we acquired 29 Main Street, we knew we had one of the “grand dame” houses in Gloucester and demolition was not an option. After a few months on the market, a young couple who had recently renovated a cabin in Hollister came to us expressing interest in rehabilitating 29 Main to live in with their kids. The rehab they did is amazing: a new kitchen and bathroom while preserving the stunning oak floors, fireplace and other original features. A video that shows much of this renovation can be seen on our website: [www.AthensCountyLandBank.com](http://www.AthensCountyLandBank.com)

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: 459 PATTON, NELSONVILLE

This little house on a corner lot sat vacant and abandoned for several years before the Land Bank acquired it. The Franks came to us with a plan to renovate the house for a college-aged granddaughter to live in. The renovation is still in process but is coming along nicely and is scheduled to be completed later this year.



## PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: TRIMBLE FEMA PROJECT



Anyone driving along Route 13 in Trimble Village has seen the flood-ravaged homes along that stretch, many of them abandoned for 10-15 years. This complex project, which will involve the demo and deed restriction of 8 homes on 17 parcels, required coordination between the Land Bank, the Village of Trimble, FEMA and HAPCAP. By removing the single biggest stretch of blight in Trimble Township, this project will help the Village of Trimble finally move forward from the devastating floods of decades past.

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: COOLVILLE PLAYGROUND

Coolville Elementary has never quite had a proper playground for the kids in their community. The current playground is small and sits on a severe slope. This project involved the purchase and demolition of several horribly dilapidated garages from a neighboring homeowner and, along with partners such as Holzer Health Systems, the Federal Hocking School District will soon begin work building a nicer space for kids to play.



## PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: 36 MAIN, GLOUSTER



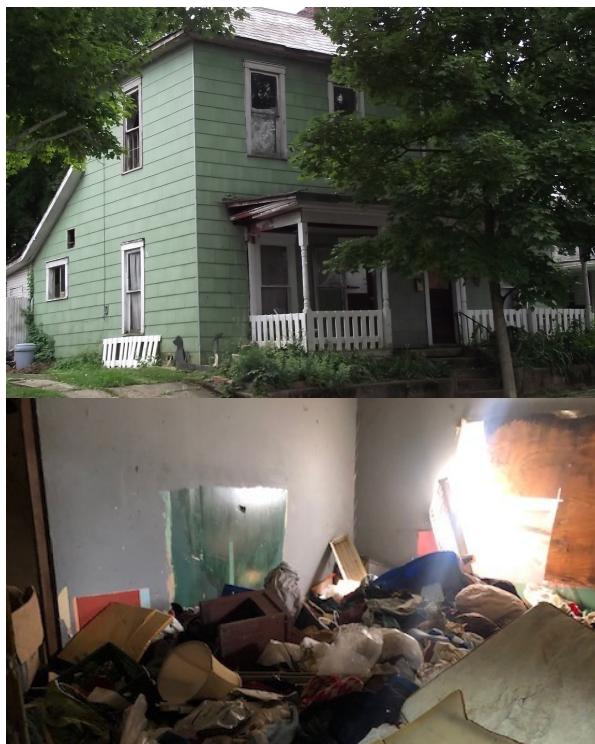
One of our most rewarding projects, 36 Main, was acquired by the Land Bank as part of a larger project featuring the house next door. The tenants at 36 Main had been paying rent in cash to one of Athens County's most notorious tax-delinquent landlords for over 11 years. Once the Land Bank had control of the project, we moved quickly so this family of renters could buy the house and become first time homeowners. Thanks to Habitat for Humanity which provided buyer financing for the family, allowing them to purchase the home.

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: 10 BARBOUR, GLOUSTER

Easily one of the most dilapidated houses we have seen, it was clear that the structure standing at 10 Barbour would have to be torn down. Working with our partners, Habitat for Humanity, we removed the old house and made room for a home to be built for a local family. In November 2020, the brand new two-bedroom house was finished and signed over to the family who are now first time homeowners!



**PROJECT HIGHLIGHT:  
770/784 POPLAR, NELSONVILLE**



After a year-long foreclosure, the Land Bank acquired these two properties that sit side-by-side in a very nice residential section of Nelsonville. After the death of the owner, these houses were used for illicit activity and became a danger and an eyesore to the community. Both structures were unsafe to enter, one being completely filled with trash bags from floor-to-ceiling. The Land Bank was able to make a deal with a local buyer who was willing to demolish both houses and then commit to building a brand new house on these parcels for his son.

**PROJECT HIGHLIGHT:  
7211 SR-329, GUYSVILLE**

A neighboring property owner alerted us to this house in Guysville, which is believed to have been used to manufacture illicit substances. Every time it rained, the trash that carpeted the parcel would wash onto the neighbor's property. After a long foreclosure process there were several interested parties, but the last end-user standing was Lisa Proffitt. During the restoration, she and her partner re-graded the land around it to resolve the many drainage issues that existed. They completed an amazing renovation, turning this blighted structure into a charming little rental.



## WASTE NOT, WANT NOT



Many of the houses we acquire are either too far gone to be saved or not economically viable rehabs. Sadly, demolition is the only option in these cases. However, before we take down a house, we do our best to make use of whatever is salvageable inside.

Land Bank Board Member and County Commissioner Chris Chmiel coordinates our Waste Diversion program, using labor from the county's Workforce Development program to strip the structures of any scrap metal, useable windows or other building materials like bricks while properly disposing of any waste such as used tires and trash.

Proceeds from this operation are either donated to organizations like Habitat for Humanity's ReStore and Rural Action's UpCycle Ohio, or sold for cash which goes back to the Land Bank to fund operations. Waste diversion is an important part of our overall strategy to combat blight and dilapidation while taking care of our environment.

## 2020 FINANCIALS

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
<b><u>Revenues:</u></b>		
Program Revenues:		
Operating Income and Contributions	\$145,744	\$140,687
General Revenues:		
Grants and Entitlements Not Restricted to Specific Programs	30,459	47,566
Contributions and Donations	394,600	249,450
Sale of Property	10,000	43,825
Miscellaneous	8,924	12,225
 Total Revenues	 589,727	 493,753
<b><u>Expenses:</u></b>		
Professional Contracts and Services	136,985	515,421
Administration	32,283	46,489
 Total Expenses:	 169,268	 561,910
Change in Net Position	420,459	(68,157)
Net Position at Beginning of Year	313,179	733,638
Net Position at End of Year	\$733,638	\$665,481

## BOARD MEMBERS



Ric  
Wasserman,  
Athens County  
Treasurer



Gregg  
Andrews,  
Waterloo Township  
Trustee



Lenny  
Eliason,  
Athens County  
Commissioner



Chris  
Chmiel,  
Athens County  
Commissioner



Steve  
Patterson,  
Mayor, City of  
Athens

## PARTNERS AND DONORS



The Athens  
County  
Commissioners



Trimble  
Township  
Bridgebuilders



## HOW TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE LAND BANK

To view properties that are currently available, go to [www.AthensCountyLandBank.com](http://www.AthensCountyLandBank.com). From there you can visit our property site where you will find listings as well as the necessary Purchaser Qualification and Property Request forms to be filled out and returned to the Land Bank. Questions should be directed to Ric Wasserman at [RWasserman@AthensOH.org](mailto:RWasserman@AthensOH.org).

If interested in volunteering with our Waste Diversion program and helping keep Southeast Ohio beautiful, contact Chris Chmiel at [CChmiel@AthensOH.org](mailto:CChmiel@AthensOH.org).



@AthensCountyLandBank

[www.AthensCountyLandBank.com](http://www.AthensCountyLandBank.com)



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