

ATHENS COUNTY LAND BANK

ANNUAL REPORT

2023



MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY



**RIC
WASSERMAN**

Board Chair

2023 was a year of great growth for your county Land Bank. We continued to pursue our core mission of eliminating blight and dilapidation in Athens County communities while broadening our mission to begin to address the lack of affordable housing as well as the decay in the downtowns of our small villages.

As the year began, we finalized the sale of our first “in-house” renovation, a compact 3-bedroom house in the Village of Buchtel. We spent about six months renovating the house, replacing the roof, doubling the amount of insulation, modernizing the layout, fitting it with environmentally sound siding and providing for efficient heat and drainage. The house sold to a buyer moving back to Athens County from out of the area.

As a corollary to that project, we also collaborated with the Athens County Port Authority to administer the state Brownfield Remediation grant program. “Brownfield” is a term for land that has been compromised by some sort of environmental hazard, making it very hard and very expensive to redevelop. Through this program we were able to access funding to demolish the old “Jacksonville-Trimble” school building that had stood as a symbol of blight and neglect for more than 20 years. Located on State Route 13 at the entrance to the Village of Trimble, this building contained high concentrations of asbestos which created both a hazard for demolition and an obstacle for the redevelopment of the site. The grant funding covered the cost of asbestos remediation and demolition, totaling nearly \$200,000.00. A similar grant allowed us to remove an old gas station on Columbus Road in Athens.

In early 2024, we planned our second “in-house” renovation of a small residence in Glouster while long-term partners such as Habitat for Humanity of Southeast Ohio carried on building new quality homes on Land Bank lots. As additional grant opportunities through the Ohio Department of Development have been announced, we continue to develop exciting strategies to further the remediation of blight, revitalization of downtowns and the construction of affordable housing across Athens County.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Since its inception, the Athens County Land Bank has made it a goal to impact as many communities across the county as possible. Partnerships with local governments and organizations have been the key to a broader range of blight remediation.

In addition to structural demolitions, brownfield remediation is a key component of our work that allows us to extend our reach. Brownfields are properties that have been contaminated by hazardous substances or pollutants. In our county, this often looks like abandoned gas stations, mechanic shops, or buildings with high concentrations of asbestos. In partnership with Tetra Tech and the Athens Port Authority, we have been involved with the successful remediation of brownfield sites in Athens, Chauncey, Trimble, and Glouster with two upcoming projects in Lee Township and Hollister!



Parcels Acquired



2023

11

Since Inception

223

Renovations



2023

6

Since Inception

18

Demolitions



2023

17

Since Inception

86

Parcels Back on Tax Rolls



2023

23

Since Inception

132

BUILDING DEMOLITION AND SITE REVITALIZATION PROGRAM



By the end of 2023...



30

demolitions



16

parcels sold



2

renovations

The State of Ohio's 2019 biennial budget surprised land banks throughout the state when they announced \$350 Million would be set aside for the demolition of abandoned properties. Even more remarkable was the ability to use the funds to demolish privately owned properties! We immediately began talking to our partners in the villages and townships to uncover properties that might qualify. Projects from all 14 townships were submitted and we began assembling our application for the Building Demolition & Site Revitalization program.

In total, 30 demolitions occurred, a mix of properties owned by the Land Bank, properties condemned by cities and villages, and privately owned structures that had long been blights to their communities. By the end of 2023, 16 of the parcels had been sold and are back on the tax rolls, and two new homes were built by Habitat for Humanity of Southeast Ohio! We look forward to seeing what we can accomplish during the next iteration of Building Demolition & Site Revitalization funding.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS



637 HIGH STREET, NELSONVILLE



This house was one of two severely blighted properties along the same street in Nelsonville. The same buyer ended up acquiring both properties and renovation began shortly thereafter. The remodel for the other property was completed in 2021 and became a home for one of the buyer's adult children. The restoration of this house was recently finished, and we're thrilled with the outcome! The house is now a full-time residence for the buyer.



Many of our projects begin with a phone call from a neighbor. So it was with 30 Cross, a worn but sturdy little house that had been left-for-dead by a notorious area landlord. After a long foreclosure case the Land Bank acquired it and quickly found local interest in renovating the house. Mike Smith from "Smitty's Interior & Exterior" purchased the house from us and began a rehab to house the family of one of his employees. The "before and after" pictures are stark and a reminder that many houses that look pretty far-gone are often worthwhile renovation projects assuming that the "bones" are solid.

30 CROSS STREET, GLOUSTER

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS



Photo credit: Fannin Family Farms



615 W. Washington lies along a well-traveled route in Nelsonville. It sat empty for over a decade after a fire destroyed the restaurant that previously occupied the site. Once acquired by the Land Bank, our Property Manager removed 157 tires from the property.

After being sold to its current owner, local farm Fannin Family Farms began utilizing the space, providing a wide selection of hyperlocal garden starts, flowers, produce, and pumpkins. Local honey, salsas, and jams are sourced from farms in the area. High tunnels were installed, and eventually the licensed food service operation Sweets on Washington began serving ice cream and lunch specials on-site!

615 W. WASHINGTON STREET, NELSONVILLE



On the site of 61 Summit Street stood an old church that had fallen into disrepair with only a small apartment in the back still in use. The apartment later caught fire in 2019 and nothing further was done with the structure and no taxes paid. We foreclosed on the property at the behest of Habitat for Humanity who already owned the parcel next to it (57 Summit) from a previous Land Bank transaction. 57 Summit was too small to build on by itself, so the Land Bank donated 61 to them as well. The old church was torn down with state grant funding and a new house has now been built on the site with a grateful family now settled in.

57/61 SUMMIT STREET, GLOUSTER



HIGH STREET PROJECT

* Glouster, OH

In 2022, the Land Bank acquired four commercial buildings along High Street in downtown Glouster. On acquisition, we began the long process of cleaning out each of the buildings. We eventually partnered with structural engineers from Barber & Hoffman who have previously worked on projects in Glouster with other area organizations. We now have detailed reports on what it would take to make the buildings structurally sound and ready for new ventures! We're looking for interested partners that would like to revitalize these crucial spaces along Route 13 and contribute to the growing momentum of revitalization of Glouster. The reports are available on our property website or you can contact us directly for more information!



WASHINGTON ROAD PROJECT

* Albany, OH

It's not often that we acquire a property like the one at 4070 Washington Road. On first entrance, we were surprised to find the farmhouse in good condition with much of the original woodwork still in place. A unique project isn't without its hurdles, however: an old service station also occupies this 11-acre property. Our excellent environmental consultants at Tetra Tech completed the necessary environmental site assessments and the service station will be demolished through the Ohio Department of Development's Brownfield Remediation Program. Following any required subsurface soil remediation, we expect to receive several diverse proposals from applicants for the redevelopment of this property. Contact us at landbank.athens@gmail.com or (740) 592-3231 for more information!





THE ATHENS
COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS



TRIMBLE
TOWNSHIP
BRIDGEBUILDERS



PARTNERS & DONORS

The Athens County Land Bank frequently partners with several local and community organizations. Several of these organizations are featured above with two partner highlights below. Community support and engagement is crucial to the work being done by land banks across the state!

ZERO WASTE

* Rural Action's Zero Waste program is an invaluable partner for many reasons, one of which is their expertise in diverting hard-to-recycle materials from landfills.

We engage their know-how when we find medical supplies, appliances with refrigerant, electronics, and more. We're especially grateful for their on-site help and transportation capacity, highlighted in the photos below where the Zero Waste team and HAPCAP participants helped to remove 236 tires from a Land Bank property!



HAPCAP

* Hocking Athens Perry Community Action Program (HAPCAP) is a vital partner. Our Property Manager has worked with several participants in HAPCAP's Subsidized Employment Program, which takes a holistic approach to stabilizing folks by addressing the factors that may be contributing to poverty and unemployment. Participants have aided our Property Manager with several projects including maintaining all Land Bank properties by providing general upkeep, waste diversion, and materials management.



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

* OVERVIEW

2023

Operating Grants and Contributions	\$140,153.00
General Revenues	\$416,081.00

Audited financial report from J.L. Uhrig & Associates, Inc.

* EXPENSES BREAKDOWN

Demolition-related expenses	\$236,486.04
Environmental Remediation	\$30,024.37
Maintenance and Waste Removal	\$20,668.34
Legal Expenses	\$17,985.00
Payroll and Staffing	\$91,462.12
Administration and General Expense	\$6,592.63

BOARD MEMBERS



Ric
Wasserman,
Athens County
Treasurer



Nathan
Simons,
Mayor of the
Village of Glouster



Lenny
Eliason,
Athens County
Commissioner



Chris
Chmiel,
Athens County
Commissioner



Steve
Patterson,
Mayor of the
City of Athens

Aaron Dye
Manager

Staff:

Jody Barnes
Property Manager

STAY IN TOUCH

The Athens County Land Bank is consistently looking for new projects! If there is a blighted property in your neighborhood, reach out and we'll look into ways we might be able to assist.

If you're a contractor interested in placing a bid for our group demolitions, sign up for our bid specifications email list! The form can be found on our website.

Stay up to date with our ongoing progress by following our Facebook page!



CONTACT US



(740) 592-3231



www.athenscountylandbank.com



landbank.athens@gmail.com



15 S. Court Street, Room 334
Athens, OH 45701

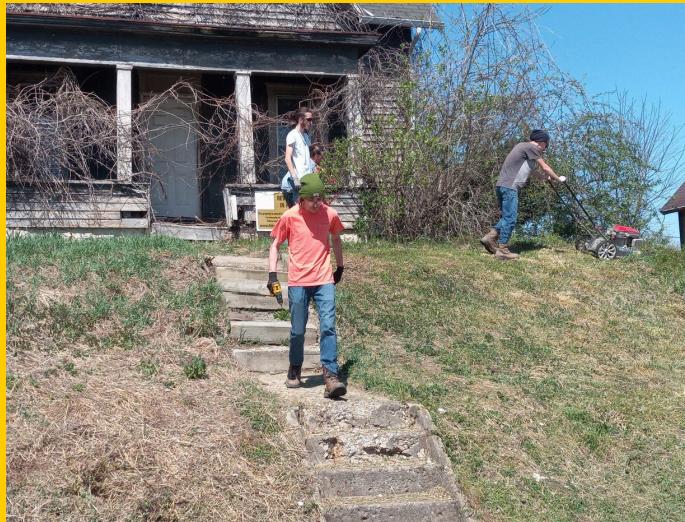


[@AthensCountyLandBank](https://www.facebook.com/AthensCountyLandBank)

Cover photo credit: Sedalia Park,
Glouster Revitalization Organization

Mailer photo: Coolville Elementary School playground







REVITALIZATION IN PROGRESS!



THE PLAINS, OH 45780
9030 HOCKING HILLS DRIVE
RURAL ACTION
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
LAND BANK
ATHENS COUNTY