

Kalamazoo County Land Bank Authority 2010 Annual Report

Chair:
Mary Balkema



Executive Director:
Kelly Clarke



Board members:

Jill Bland,
Vice President
Southwest Michigan
First



Jerome Kisscorni,
Executive Director,
City of Kalamazoo
Economic Develop-
ment Corporation



James Marquardt,
Attorney, Lewis,
Reed & Allen P.C



Al Rowe,
Broker, RE/MAX
Advantage



Justin Vander Ark,
Director of Govern-
mental Affairs &
Community Relations,
Homebuilders Asso-
ciation of Greater
Kalamazoo



Staff:

Kristen Ramer,
Operations and Out-
reach Coordinator



Catie Boring,
Beautification and
Garden Coordinator,
LISC AmeriCorps



Officially formed in 2009, the Kalamazoo County Land Bank has made great strides in its first official year of operation.

The formation of the Land Bank in 2009 was fortuitous given the successful award of \$15 million dollars in early 2010 by MSHDA as a part of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program II Consortium. The Land Bank was awarded \$6 million and its partner, the city of Kalamazoo, was awarded \$9 million to revitalize Kalamazoo's central neighborhoods through the purchase and redevelopment of vacant, abandoned and foreclosed homes. These funds are also available to eliminate and remove blight that constitutes serious health and safety hazards. NSP2 funds will allow communities a better opportunity to recover from the housing market collapse and multiple challenges associated with the prolonged weak economy and recession in Michigan.

Accompanying this big news in 2010, Land Bank staff facilitated the creation of a neighborhood garden in the Edison Neighborhood. This garden has provided nutritious vegetables and has been a source of neighborhood gathering and fellowship. This report highlights the work of board, staff and partners of the Land Bank. The Land Bank team is grateful for the community support and involvement in the efforts of this fledgling organization and the generosity of time and talent by so many partners over the course of the year.



The transformation possibilities of a demolition project

1) Organization



Land Bank staff hard at work.

Board

In 2010, the Land Bank benefited from the talented and committed board appointed in 2009. The board's diverse experience including real-estate, law and economic development has been an asset as the organization has begun implementing a variety of programs and managing an inventory of property in 2010.

Mary Balkema has continued to spearhead the organization as chairperson and has provided invaluable expertise, time and talent creating a strong partnership between the Treasurer's Office and the Land Bank and continues to provide strategic direction to the Land Bank in its efforts.

Open Meetings have been held monthly throughout the year at the Kalamazoo County Administration building. Two board members relocated out of the County and therefore, two open seats were created. The Land Bank has been successful in generating significant interest in open board slots. In 2010, Jill Bland from South West Michigan First filled one of these positions. The Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners is currently interviewing two candidates for the remaining slot.

Staff

Also in 2010, the Land Bank began to fully staff its operations

in order to gear up to implement the NSP2 grant and manage the day to day operations of the organization.

Kelly Clarke was hired as Executive Director in July of 2010. Kristen Ramer, former LISC AmeriCorps volunteer for the Land Bank joined the staff as Operations and Outreach Coordinator in September of 2010. Catie Boring, LISC AmeriCorps member, joined Land Bank staff in September to manage the Land Bank's beautification and garden programs.

In October 2010, the Center for Community Progress conducted a Strategic Planning Session for the Board and partners as follow up to work they had done the year before which assisted the organization in the development of Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Code of Ethics, Investment Policy, and mission statement. The October 2010 strategic planning session focused on tools specific to Land Banks, long term strategies for redevelopment, and some case studies involving commercial and corridor redevelopment strategies.

Leadership and Training

Staff and Board have attended various NSPII and Land Bank conferences and trainings in

2010, including:-

- Smart Growth Conference
- Affordable Housing Conference
- Cleveland's Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference
- Land Bank Communications Training
- Genesee County Land Bank's Garden Tour

Also, Land Bank staff Kristen Ramer participated in leadership development through Rotary International's Group Study Exchange (GSE) in Chile.

Resources

In 2010, The Land Bank has been successful in leveraging additional resources complementing the 2010 \$100,000 allocation from the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners.

Leveraged Resources

NSP2 grant: \$6,100,000 (to be expended by March 2010 to December 2012)

LISC grant: \$25,000 (ED salary)

AmeriCorps Volunteer (LISC contribution): \$8,000

NSP1 for Marketplace: \$295,000

LISC /KNHS Recoverable grant for Marketplace Acquisition: \$75,000

LISC grant for Marketplace \$75,000

Posting Revenue: \$49,097

Kalamazoo Community Foundation \$35,000

Mission: to create vibrant communities through eliminating blighted properties, creating affordable housing opportunities, stabilizing properties and returning properties to the tax rolls



Board Members (left to right) James Marquardt, Jerome Kisscorni, Mary Balkema, and Al Rowe. Missing: Jill Bland, and Justin VanderArk

2. Programs

Neighborhood Stabilization Program 2

Property Acquisition

Throughout the course of 2010, the Land Bank has acquired 56 NSPII tax foreclosed properties which are slated for demo, rehab or hold for property assembly. In addition the Land Bank entered into purchase agreements on six targeted, strategic bank foreclosed properties near other targeted investments with a view to a block by block approach for targeted impact.

Willard Street—Transformation Block

The Land Bank has acquired three condemned and abandoned properties on Willard Street in the Stuart Area Historic District, walking distance from downtown. Working with its city Partner, the Land Bank will focus on historic rehabs of



Willard Street residents hard at work restoring their neighborhood.

these properties and is working with the local community and the Stuart Area Neighborhood Association to implement a complimentary beautification project along the parkway.

Market Place—New Construction

Working with its city Partner, the Land Bank has been active in pushing forward the redevelopment of Marketplace, a 7 acre plat located in the Edison neighborhood across the street from the Bank Street Farmers Market. This plat will be redeveloped over the course of the next two to three years with 24 high quality, solidly built new single family homes. Architecture will be sensitive to the surrounding homes offering front porches and landscaped front yards. Finishes will be sustainable and durable. All homes will meet visibility standards for handicapped guests and will have five star plus Energy Efficiency rankings. Partners include Bronson Hospital, the Edison Business Association, the Edison Neighborhood Association, the Home Builders Association of Kalamazoo, Local Initiative Support Corporation, and the Kalamazoo Community Foundation.

Garden and Beautification Program

In mid 2010, the Land Bank supported the development of Edible Edison in the Edison neighborhood. This community garden offers raised beds which provide vegetables of many varieties and was erected on a formally vacant and underutilized piece of land. Resourced by community volunteers, this garden has been a focal point for conversation, gathering, neighborhood improvement and most of all a source of fresh vegetables widely used by neighborhood residents.

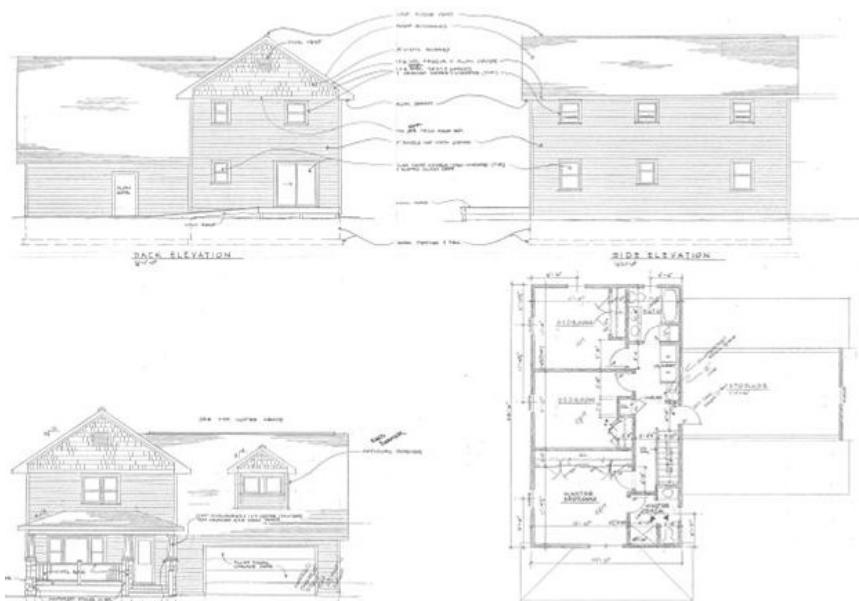


In the fall of 2010, the Land Bank hired an AmeriCorps volunteer to staff its Garden and Beautification Programs full time.

Having recently received a transfer of 77 vacant lots from the city, the Land Bank is actively managing a side-lot program to return vacant properties to the tax rolls by offering them to adjacent home owners. The Land Bank will be providing assistance in 2011 with plantings and other resources as needed and desired by side-lot purchasers. The Land Bank is also offering an Adopt-a-Lot, Clean and Green and Parkway Planting program.

One of the most delightful things about a garden is the anticipation it provides.

~ W. E. Johns



Latest design for the Marketplace Development homes.

2. Programs Continued

Blight Removal and Corridor Redevelopment

Like cities across the Midwest and elsewhere in the Country, Kalamazoo has its fair share of buildings that present challenges even to the most resourced developer or entrepreneur. Land Banks by nature are set up to take control of the worst of the worst and make best efforts to reposition properties to their highest and best use—in some cases best use for the property is demolition in order to remove blight and allow redevelopment to occur over time.

In 2010, the Land Bank acquired the Creamery building at the intersection of Portage and Lake Street in the Edison neighborhood. After several inspections by a variety of experts, it has become clear this building presents a health and safety hazard and is not a viable candidate for rehabilitation.

The property is located near larger redevelopment plans including the marketplace development and single family demolitions and rehabilitation projects happening in the surrounding area. It also sits on the main corridor near other plans for corridor redevelopment planning.

The Land Bank has obligated NSP2 funds for demolition of this building and has secured pro-bono assistance for a planning charrette to be held in early 2011. It is likely immediate uses will include light landscaping to beautify the corridor with a view to business attraction as the economy improves. Furthermore, the Land Bank has partnered with Edison Environmental Academy, a Kalamazoo public magnet school just a few blocks from the Creamery. The academy hosts a summer garden camp, where members will have the opportunity to tend to the green-space created after demolition.

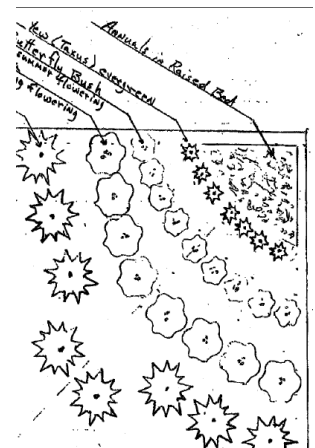
As the Land Bank evolves, it is likely other blighted corridor properties will be acquired. The Land Bank is grateful for the availability of a variety of experts in the Land Banking field for commercial/retail redevelopment including the Center for Community Progress located in Flint Michigan, and the Land Bank's own Board member, Jerome Kisscorni, Executive Director of the city of Kalamazoo's Economic Development Corporation.

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

~Anne Frank



Aerial view of the creamery adjacent to viable businesses, a library and near the planned marketplace development



Draft drawing of a beautification garden planned by the Deacon's Conference

3. In the Community

Community input is vital to the Land Bank's ability to effectively deliver programs that will have impact in the Community. The Land Bank is grateful for the many meetings neighborhood associations hosted over the last year to hear news about NSP2, Land Bank efforts and community garden programs. Input and advice gathered from these meetings and regular dialogue is invaluable as the Land Bank works to assemble and reposition property. Funders, business representatives and faith leaders have been active and valued supporters providing advice and support of the Land Bank's efforts over the course of the year.

And importantly, local residents have provided countless hours making the Edible Edison garden a reality.

The Land Bank has just recently begun to actively implement its side-lot and garden program and has already received significant interest and enthusiasm from local residents and community partners. The Land Bank looks forward to another successful year of partnership building in 2011 and to the first rehabilitated properties and new homes that will be showcased later in the year.

The Kalamazoo County Land Bank thanks its Board and all the dedicated partners, and volunteers that have assisted its efforts over the last year.

Community Volunteers:

Esteven Juarez
Ellen Maxwell
Gail Shannon
Rhonda Catt
Sherry Tomlinson

Non-Profit Partners:

Capital Access
Center for Community Progress
Edison Business Association
Edison Environmental Academy
Kalamazoo Community Foundation
Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services
LISC— Chuck Vlieg, Sonja Dean
Michigan State Land Bank
Open Door, Next Door— Pastor Wells

Kalamazoo Neighborhood Associations:

East Side— Pat Taylor
Edison— Tammy Taylor
Fairmont— Melissa Linkfield
North Side— Mattie Jordan-Woods
Stuart— Matthew Baldwin-Wilson
Vine— Steve Walsh

City of Kalamazoo

Jeff Chamberlain
Laura Lam
Dorla Bonner
Anna Crofoot
Sharron Ferraro
Kenn Hartmann
Lee Larson
Gracia Mason
Robert McNutt

Kalamazoo County

Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners
Register of Deeds Department
Thom Canny
Lotta Jarnefelt
Cheri McCaffery

Kalamazoo County Treasurer Staff:

Greg Vlietstra
Peggy Bresnahan
Starr Adams
Diane Burlew
Sherry Coffey-Ezell
Julie Harrison
Billie Longenecker
Mary Wyatt

Other Partners:

Balkema Excavating
Byce & Associates— Mike Flynn
Envirologic— Jeff Hawkins
Farm N Garden
Goggin Rental
Hoekstras
Home Depot
Milan Salon
Millennium Restaurant Group
OCBA Landscape Architects- Ken Perregon
Southwest Michigan Appraisal, Inc.
Water Street Coffee Joint
Wenke Greenhouses



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"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success" ~Henry Ford