



# 2012 Annual Report



# A Message from the Board Chair and Executive Director

## Building places not projects

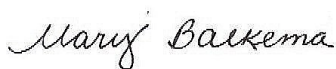
2012 was an eventful and positive year for our community. In keeping with national trends toward recovery, Kalamazoo County has seen increases in housing starts and decreases in unemployment. After the 2008 recession brought a near standstill in construction, major reinvestment projects were announced by our partners adjacent to the downtown including Arcadia Brewing Company's brewery and restaurant and the announcement of the WMU medical school. At the Land Bank, we have been honored to play a role in continued reinvestment.

Dan Burden, executive director of the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute talks about the importance of building places not projects. This means taking a broader approach to how our work fits in with wider community efforts and aspirations rather than working one project at a time. With an abundance of vacant land and abandoned property in our inner ring neighborhoods, here, like other Michigan communities we are working to develop strategies to recreate our urban places. This strategy requires thinking beyond a property by property approach and asks us to think creatively to enhance our economic prospects and quality of life.

At the Land Bank we have a unique tool box for this task allowing us to assemble and hold land, clear title and redevelop property. And, to really reinvent and recreate places—community partners and community residents are key to implementation—providing guidance, counsel and vision. Some of the more visible 2012 projects like the Marketplace, the Labyrinth in the Square in the Edison Neighborhood, and the East Side garden efforts resulted from enormous community involvement and are amazing to look at and enjoy. Other partnerships evolve more slowly, bear fruit over time and are less visible. Like our partnership with a local church in the Edison neighborhood and the young couple from the congregation who purchased a fully rehabilitated home and now regularly open the doors to community residents for house church. Or the family that recently purchased a rehabilitated land bank home and is looking forward to joining in on community garden efforts in the spring.

Despite positive trends and developments in 2012, our manufacturing legacy means we still have a long road ahead. It will take years of dedicated efforts to reverse longstanding cycles of decline, property neglect and abandonment. We will continue to ask for new ideas to reimagine our landscapes with a view to creating spaces to play, rest, work, learn and enjoy. We look forward to your continued involvement helping us to great places.

Sincerely,



**Mary Balkema**  
Chair



**Kelly Clarke**  
Executive Director





**Mary Balkema**  
Board Chair  
Kalamazoo County  
Treasurer



**Terry Dorgan**  
Community Bank  
President  
Huntington Bank



**Christopher Haenicke**  
Trust Officer  
Greenleaf Community  
Trust



**Jerome Kisscorni**  
Executive Director  
City of Kalamazoo Economic  
Development Corporation

## Board of Directors



**Dr. Addis Moore**  
Pastor  
Mt. Zion Baptist Church



**Michael Seelye**  
President & Owner  
Don Seelye Ford, Seelye-Wright  
KIA West Main



**Chuck Vliek**  
Program Vice President  
Local Initiative Support  
Corporation (LISC)

## Board

During 2012, the Kalamazoo County Land Bank Board of Directors welcomed four new members: Terry Dorgan, Community Bank President at Huntington Bank; Christopher Haenicke, Trust Officer at Greenleaf Trust; Dr. Addis Moore, Pastor at Mt. Zion Baptist Church; and Michael Seelye, President and Owner of Don Seelye Ford, Inc., Seelye Wright KIA West Main, and real estate developer.

Mary Balkema continued to provide leadership as Board Chair, and Jerome Kisscorni, Executive Director of the City of Kalamazoo Economic Development Corporation, remained in his role as Vice Chair. Chuck Vliek, Program Vice President of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, also continued to serve on the Land Bank Board of Directors. Terry Dorgan was elected as the Board's Treasurer and Secretary.

The Land Bank would like to thank former Board members Jill Bland, Cari DeLong, and James Marquardt for their service and contributions in 2012.

## Staff

Kelly Clarke, Executive Director, continued to provide organizational oversight and leadership to the staff team in 2012. Catie Boring, former LISC AmeriCorps member came on board as full time staff. Natalie Youakim joined the Land Bank as Operations and Communications Coordinator, and Michael DeDitius joined as an Intern. Amanda Woodin, Finance and Administration Manager, and Kenn Hartmann, Assets and Construction Manager, continued to serve the Land Bank.



**Kelly Clarke**  
Executive  
Director



**Kenn Hartmann**  
Assets and  
Construction  
Manager



**Amanda Woodin**  
Finance and  
Administration  
Manager



**Catie Boring**  
Acquisition and  
Disposition  
Coordinator



**Natalie Youakim**  
Operations and  
Communications  
Coordinator



**Michael  
DeDitius**  
Intern

## Staff

# 2012 in Review

During 2012, the Kalamazoo County Land Bank Authority worked actively toward its mission of creating vibrant communities through the elimination of blighted properties, creation of affordable housing opportunities, and the creative repurposing of abandoned and underutilized spaces.

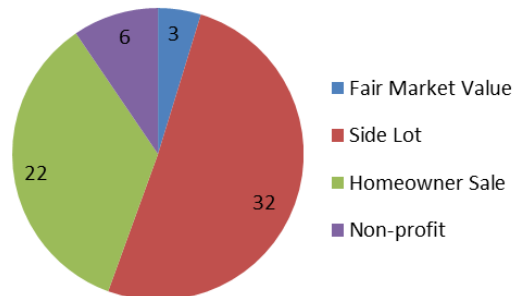
The Land Bank has worked with a range of funding sources to repurpose vacant, abandoned, foreclosed, and blighted properties and return them to productive use.

## Performance Measures

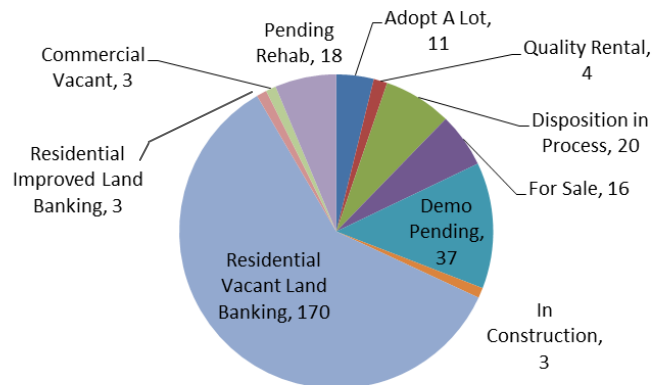
During 2012, the Land Bank successfully repurposed 63 parcels through side lot sales, homeowner sales, nonprofit sales, and fair market value transactions (see Disposition Summary chart). At the end of the year, the Land Bank had 285 parcels in its inventory. This inventory was composed largely of vacant residential parcels. An additional 37 structures were pending demolition, 18 were pending rehabilitation, and 20 were pending sale (see Inventory at Year End chart).

Cumulatively through 2012, the Land Bank has returned \$1,992,900 of taxable value back to the tax rolls of the City, County, and other local jurisdictions. This represents a market value of approximately \$3,985,800 worth of real estate. The addition of this taxable value will generate approximately \$47,802 in property tax revenue over the next five years, and \$95,605 annually thereafter for local jurisdictions.

## Disposition Summary



## Inventory at Year End





# Returning Properties to Ownership

The Kalamazoo County Land Bank Authority's primary goal in all of its work is to return vacant, abandoned, foreclosed, and blighted properties to active use. The Land Bank has several programs, including the Kalamazoo Homeownership Opportunity Program (KHOP) and Side Lot sales, which help it achieve this goal.

## Kalamazoo Homeownership Opportunity Program

The Kalamazoo Homeownership Opportunity Program is a partnership between the Land Bank and the City of Kalamazoo that provides down payment and closing cost assistance to income-qualified homebuyers who purchase newly-constructed and rehabilitated homes. The construction of these homes and the homebuyer subsidy funds come from the Neighborhood Stabilization Program 2, granted by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. The Land Bank and the City have been part of a statewide consortium to administer these funds since 2010.

During 2012, the Land Bank sold 22 KHOP homes throughout Kalamazoo's inner-ring neighborhoods. This includes new homes in the Marketplace at Washington Square, rehabilitated homes and new homes in the Edison, Northside, Eastside, and Stuart neighborhoods.



## Side Lots

The Land Bank returns vacant and recently demolished properties to active use through side lot sales. Side lots provide adjacent homeowners with the opportunity to purchase a vacant lot for a minimal fee. During 2012, the Land Bank sold 32 side lots. In addition to returning these properties to the tax rolls and providing the new owners with room for yard expansion, side lots help bring vibrancy back to blocks where blighted structures have been removed.



# Creative Site Restoration

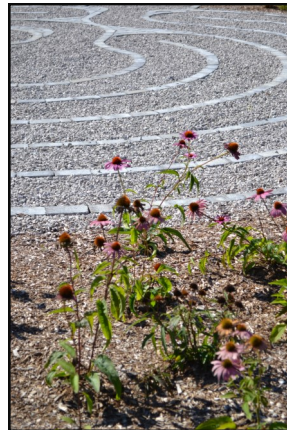
## The Former Kalamazoo Creamery

The demolition of this building was completed in early 2012 and left a 1.5 acre vacant lot on the corner of Lake and Portage Streets in Kalamazoo. During a community visioning session in 2011, neighbors imagined the future site as a mixed-use, multi-story building. They also encouraged the Land Bank to create a temporary green space to enhance the corridor.

In response to these suggestions and ideas from students at the Edison Environmental Academy, the Land Bank installed a stone labyrinth and native plantings on the site. The entrance to the labyrinth was made complete with the installation of an arbor donated by the Edison Neighborhood Association and funded by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation.

The Land Bank hosted a celebration at the Labyrinth on the Square in October 2012 (see photo below right). Folks of all ages came out to enjoy the labyrinth walk and help plant fall flowers at property.

The Land Bank will continue to hold the parcel and plan for redevelopment consistent with community visioning in 2011 (see concept image below at left).



## Willard Street Rain Garden



The Land Bank acquired three blighted homes on Willard Street in 2011 that had sat vacant for years, attracting illegal activity and problems on an otherwise stable block. The three homes were demolished and two new homes were built in their place.

To complement this reconstruction, in 2012, two bioretention systems were installed, creating a sustainable storm water management system. These bioretention areas are shallow surface depressions planted with vegetation which can capture and remove a majority of pollutants that would have otherwise ended up in storm sewers and eventually into the Kalamazoo River ecosystem. In addition to the ecological benefits of such a system, each basin is filled with flowering plants that will enhance the year-round beauty of the neighborhood.

The Land Bank collaborated with the Stuart Neighborhood Association, neighborhood residents, the City of Kalamazoo, the Kalamazoo County Drain Commissioner, O'Boyle, Cowell, Blalock & Associates, and Naylor Landscape Management to complete this project.

Partial funding was provided by a generous grant from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation Spirit of Community Environment Fund/Sustainable Watershed Endowment, along with donations from Water Street Coffee Joint and Metro Title.





# Gardens & Beautification

Throughout 2012, the Land Bank was successful in repurposing vacant lots through garden and beautification projects and programs.

## Community Garden Resource Shed

On April 21, 2012, the Land Bank hosted a “Very Open House” event for the opening of the Community Garden Resource Shed.



The shed was built with the help of more than 50 volunteers in the fall of 2011 and was open for the first time in the spring of 2012. It serves as a garden tool lending library for community gardeners and residents. Lowe's Home Improvement on West Main donated a great variety of tools including tillers, lawn mowers, shovels, rakes, and much more. The Shed was open Wednesdays and Saturdays throughout the spring and by appointment during the summer and fall. More than 30 garden projects borrowed tools throughout the garden season.

In July and August, the Land Bank, in partnership with Trybal Revival Community Gardens, hosted Miracle Camp volunteers through Volunteer Kalamazoo. These volunteers installed retaining walls at the front of the Community Garden Resource Shed and along the sidewalk to help retain rainwater runoff at the site (see photo at right). The weather was hot, but the hardworking teenagers finished the attractive and beneficial walls in less than two weeks!



## Common Ground Partnership



The Kalamazoo County Land Bank has collaborated with the Kalamazoo Nature Center, Kalamazoo County MSU Extension Master Gardeners, and Fair Food Matters on the Common Ground initiative. This group has collaborated to support community garden projects throughout Kalamazoo County, with a special emphasis on those that serve low-income and food-insecure residents. Thanks to Lam & Associates, Common Ground now has a website connecting gardeners and residents to garden resources and education in their neighborhoods. Through the volunteer efforts of community resident Dale Abbott, the website is updated and well maintained.

The partnership was awarded funds through the Kalamazoo Community Foundation to redistribute to community garden projects through mini-grants. Fifteen garden projects received grants in April.

In May, the partnership distributed hundreds of donated plant starts and seeds to more than 30 community gardens. Each garden project picked up a variety of more than 30 plants to take back to their respective neighborhoods to grow for their communities. Thank you to Kalamazoo College “A Seat In the Garden” volunteers for helping with this project!

In August Common Ground hosted “Garden Hop”, a scavenger hunt through more than 20 gardens. Five of the featured sites in the “Hop” were Land Bank projects– Campus Beet Garden, Cameron Street Garden, Recovery Garden, Trybal Revival Eastside Eco-Garden, and the Community Garden Resource Shed. Visit [www.commongroundkalamazoo.com](http://www.commongroundkalamazoo.com) for more information on past and upcoming events, classes, and resources!



## Gardens & Beautification (continued)

### Northside Planting Projects

The Land Bank was gifted a great variety of perennial flowers and shrubs from a local gardener during fall of 2012. Staff and volunteers helped residents of the 700-1000 blocks of North Rose and Burdick Streets plant these donated flowers.



### Adopt-A-Lot

In 2012, two new gardens were started through the Land Bank's Adopt-A-Lot program. Cameron Street Garden was started as a youth garden in Edison Neighborhood at 1812 Cameron Street.

GFM Enrichment Center started the Recovery Garden, a garden on Bush Street behind their recovery program office. This garden grew an abundance of tomatoes and peppers this year in raised beds built with volunteers assistance!

## Quality Rentals

One of the Land Bank's tools for repurposing properties is through quality rental. In 2012, the Land Bank rehabilitated 722 Eleanor, a blighted historic two flat building. The home had sat vacant and condemned for several years. The Land Bank made immediate roof repairs in 2011, and then completely rehabilitated the interior and painted the exterior in 2012. Both units were rented for year-long leases in the summer. This home and the Land Bank's two additional scattered residential homes are temporarily being used as rentals until sale is appropriate or possible.

In December 2012, the Land Bank worked towards completion of the Prairie Gardens redevelopment project at 1501 Blakeslee. This resulted from a partnership between Western Michigan University and the City of Kalamazoo, who successfully demolished the blighted and abandoned Blakeslee Hospital in 2011. In 2012, the Land Bank acted as developer and worked with a qualified team of contractors to complete the first 14 units of this senior housing complex. In addition to these units, a centrally located community pavilion and patio, walking trails, and community garden space were also created. The first units were leased in December, and the response from the new residents has been overwhelmingly positive.





# Thank you!

## Community Volunteers and Partners

Martha Aills  
Dale Abbott & Tomme Maile  
Crescendo Fiddlers  
Karma Hassell  
Heather Isch  
Kalamazoo College Student Volunteers  
Hannah McKinney  
Michigan Statewide LISC AmeriCorps  
Kalamazoo County MSU Extension Master Gardeners  
Andrew Mays  
Paul McNellis  
Peace House  
Residents of the 700 Block of Willard  
David Hyde  
Marjorie Olmstead  
Zach Waas-Smith  
Linda Whitlock  
Andy Wilkerson

## Non-Profit Partners

Capital Access  
CEDAM  
Center for Community Progress  
Edison Environmental Academy  
Fair Food Matters  
Freddie Mac  
Galilee Baptist Church  
Kalamazoo Community Foundation  
Kalamazoo Nature Center  
Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services  
Kalamazoo Valley Habitat for Humanity  
KPEP  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)  
Michigan Association of Land Banks  
Michigan Land Bank Fast Track Authority  
Michigan Municipal League  
Mt. Zion Baptist Church  
National Community Stabilization Trust  
Northside Ministerial Alliance  
Open Roads  
Volunteer Kalamazoo

## Kalamazoo Neighborhood Associations

Douglas  
Eastside  
Edison  
Northside  
Stuart

## Municipal Partners

Charter Township of Kalamazoo  
Charter Township of Comstock  
City of Kalamazoo  
City of Kalamazoo Community Planning & Development  
City of Kalamazoo Assessor's Office  
City of Kalamazoo Treasurer's Office  
City of Portage  
Cooper Charter Township  
Kalamazoo County  
Kalamazoo County Drain Commissioner  
Kalamazoo County Treasurer's Office  
Kalamazoo County Register of Deeds Office  
Texas Township  
Village of Schoolcraft

## Past and Present Board Members

Mary Balkema, Chair  
Jill Bland  
Cari DeLong  
Terry Dorgan  
Christopher Haenicke  
Jerome Kissscorni  
James Marquardt  
Dr. Addis Moore  
Al Rowe  
Michael Seelye  
Justin VanderArk  
Chuck Vliek

## Other Partners

5/3 Bank  
A-1 Printing  
Adams Outdoor Advertising  
American Village Builders  
Bank of America  
Becky Ligman Interiors  
Byce & Associates  
Chemical Bank

Cooper, Martin, Kennedy, P.C.  
Cutting Edge  
David Jones  
David R. Roberts Builders, Inc.  
DLZ  
Durwood Custom Homes  
Envirologic  
Farm N Garden  
First Source Bank  
Flagstar Bank  
Fleis & VandenBrink  
Glas Associates  
Home Builders Association of Greater Kalamazoo  
Homrich  
Huntington Bank  
Jaqua Realtors  
Jeffrey Michael, LLC  
Jim Roberts Construction  
Kalamazoo College  
Kalamazoo Family Health Center  
Kalamazoo Fence  
Lam & Associates  
Lamont Title Corporation  
Lowe's  
Martz Home Builders, LLC  
Main Street East  
Metro Title  
Michigan State Housing Development Authority  
Millennium Restaurant Group  
Miller Davis  
Naylor Landscape Management  
E. Niewoonder & Sons, Inc.  
OCBA Landscape Architects  
Pitsch Companies  
PNC Bank  
Professional Building & Environmental  
Prudential Preferred Realtors  
Roberts Development Group, Inc.  
Southwest Michigan Appraisal STR  
Things of Steel  
Water Street Coffee Joint  
Wells Fargo  
Wenke Greenhouses  
Western Michigan University