

2017 Annual Report

Repurpose. Renew. Reconnect.



A Message from the Board

Greetings:

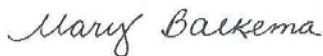
2017 has been a year of staying close to our motto, "Repurpose, Renew, and Reconnect". Under Repurpose, we are working diligently to identify appropriate new uses for depleted, underutilized and blighted properties in the community. Washington Square is a perfect example for 2017. Previously, this site was blighted and we were able to turn it into a thriving restaurant called "Pho on the Block" that is now a new town favorite!

Under Renew, we are supporting the restoration or adaption of a property's use through redevelopment and partnerships. Examples of this work can be seen on the Eastside where we are building a "small homes" project. The corner of Foresman and East Michigan has been a key redevelopment site where land has been assembled over the last 6 years. We are thankful the partnership with the Realtors of Greater Kalamazoo and many other community supporters who are making this dream a reality.

Under Reconnect, we seek to reconnect obsolete, damaged, depleted, and underutilized properties with the block, neighborhood and community. We were the recipient of a \$1.2 million dollar blight grant and eliminated 70 blighted structures within the county this year and will continue the work in 2018.

Throughout the State of Michigan we are known as a well respected Land Bank. We are proud of our work, our financial stability and the confidence that the entire community has in the Land Bank Authority. Thanks again for taking time to read through our annual report. We welcome your feedback and thank you for your partnership.

Humbly,



Mary Balkema, Board Chair



**KALAMAZOO COUNTY
LANDBANK**

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Cover Photo:

'We are Edison' -- Inside Out Project by Fran Dwight



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Special thanks to LISC
on behalf of the Land Bank



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Finance Manager

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LISC Americorps Project Coordinator

Michelle Tombro Tracy
Assistant Director

Anna Roeder
Administrative Assistant

Special thanks to Sarah Frame and
Karma Hassell for their service in 2017.

A Message from the Director

In 2017, Kalamazoo hosted international speaker Storm Cunningham for a talk on the value of restoring depleted and underutilized parcels. Storm visited several land bank sites to see first-hand our local efforts to Restore, Repurpose and Reconnect blighted and abandoned property. During his talk, Storm encouraged us to think creatively about our spaces, transforming some of the most challenged natural and urban properties into beautiful and replenishing places.

In Kalamazoo, we have no shortage of creative and talented individuals who have stepped up to the plate to contribute to this work. The opening of the new restaurant in a formerly abandoned space was the result of a dedicated group of residents and stakeholders that created and executed the Fare Games competition. The East Side Pocket Homes project has been gaining momentum and vision with the dedication, time and talent of a stakeholder group and wide community participation.

Last year, we were delighted to have over 100 community members step up to be part of the "We Are Edison" - Inside Out portrait installation in the Edison neighborhood. A vacant building in the heart of Washington Square served as a focal point for these portraits and what better way to involve the community in reinventing vacant buildings then by having community faces front and center on the transformed exterior.

In 2017, we partnered in new ways with KPEP providing workforce training for adult offenders while renovating blighted homes for homeownership and we continued our partnership with local contractors like Darnell Clay who has worked to contribute to our local community for the last decade.

We are pleased to be a part of a statewide network of 40 Land Banks all working to reposition neglected property to serve their communities and are looking forward to the publication of a statewide impact study later this year.

We are consistently humbled by the efforts undertaken both locally and across the state to work towards vibrant inclusive communities. Thank you to our partners for all you do!

Best regards,

Kelly Clarke

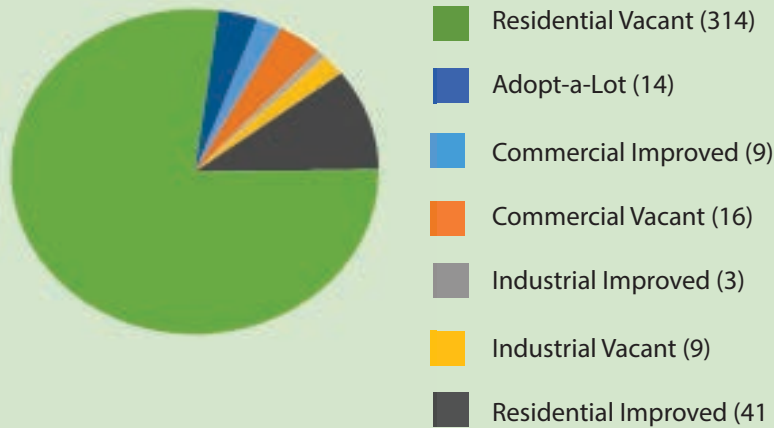


Progress by the Numbers

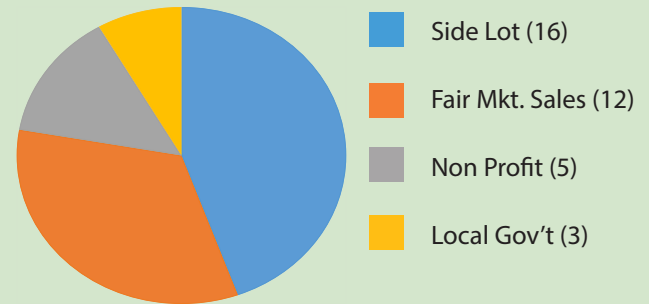
In 2017, the Land Bank worked to repurpose vacant, abandoned, foreclosed, and blighted properties. A total of 406 properties were managed in our inventory, and 36 properties were returned to the tax rolls in 2017.

The Land Bank acquired 83 parcels through the tax foreclosure process in 2017, handled 28 Fair Market sales, 16 Side Lot sales, 5 Non Profit sales, and 3 Local Government transfers.

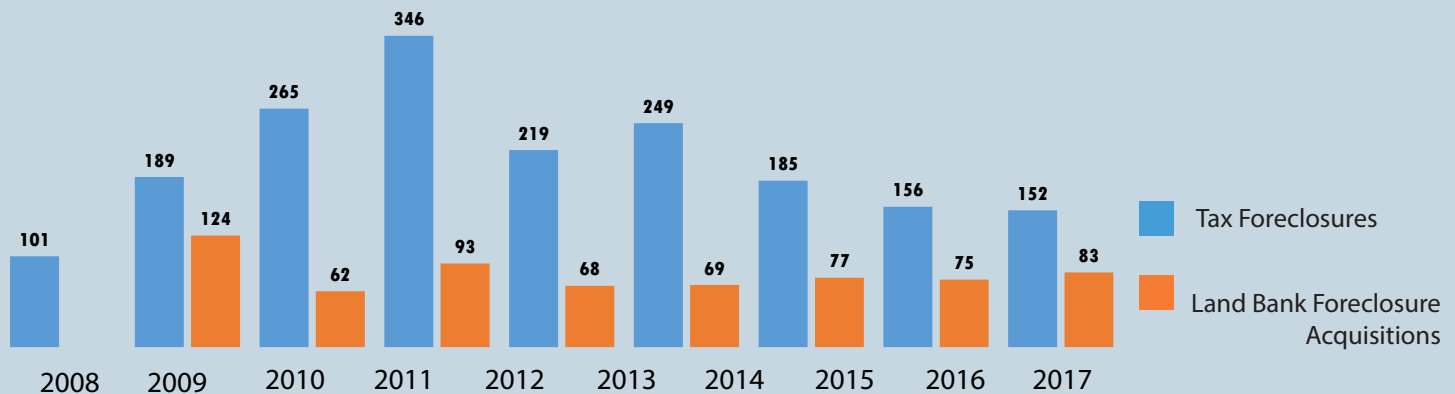
Year End Inventory



Disposition



Kalamazoo County Tax Foreclosures & Acquisitions



Building Skills, Rebuilding Lives

KPEP BUILDING TRADES PROGRAM

A successful pilot program between KPEP, the Kalamazoo County Treasurer and the Land Bank began in the summer of 2017. This collaboration started small with KPEP residents maintaining lawns on a dozen parcels owned by the Land Bank and giving residents experience in grounds keeping and landscaping services. KPEP also purchased two homes from the Land Bank so they would be able to offer affordable housing for participants.

By late summer, the partnership quickly expanded to give participants additional experience in acting as the general contractor and learn skills to oversee plumbing, electric, and roofing contractors. The Building Trades vocational training program gives KPEP residents the opportunity to build, develop and hone the essential skills needed to increase employability after the completion of their program. Currently, residents are working to rehab two vacant homes on East Main in Kalamazoo. Once the houses are completed, the Land Bank will be able to sell these newly remodeled homes to homeowners.

"One of our students was hired by a contractor the day after he completed his KPEP program," said Facilities Manager Scott Dolfman.

KPEP residents who have the desire to work in construction, building and maintenance fields will be able to gain the skills to advance in today's market and fill a much needed gap in our community. With our current housing market growing and the percentage of builders still reporting labor shortages, this partnership is especially important to the housing market of Kalamazoo County. We're grateful for the partnership with KPEP and other organizations such as LISC, who have shown interest in expanding this program into 2018 to help continue to build skills and ultimately, rebuilds lives.



Neighborhood Enhancement

“WE ARE EDISON” - INSIDE OUT PROJECT

Edison is the largest and most diverse neighborhood in the city of Kalamazoo, Michigan. This installation represents the unique individuals that contribute to the dynamic collective whole that is Edison. This project has engaged and united individuals, families and organizations, living and working together in this neighborhood .

The portraits are installed in Washington Square, the central business corridor of the neighborhood. Portraits provide beautification of blighted spaces, and give residents and non-residents a reason to come out and activate the square. “We are Edison” positively represents the Edison neighborhood to the greater Kalamazoo community and the world!

The project was coordinated by LISC Americorps member Anna Roeder, who served with the Kalamazoo County Land Bank. Roeder was inspired by the artist JR’s TED talk. Photographer Fran Dwight has lived and worked in the Edison neighborhood for over 20 years. Anna Roeder and Fran Dwight worked together to bring an internationally renowned art project to the Edison neighborhood.



Anna Roeder - Project Coordinator



Fran Dwight - Photographer

SPECIAL THANKS:

Arts Council of Kalamazoo
Edison Neighborhood Association
Hispanic American Council LISC
Kal Blue
LISC
Washington Square Senior Co-op



Sustaining Vibrant Communities

WASHINGTON SQUARE

Washington Square continues to be a hub for culture, community and entertainment. Washington Square has hosted dozens of Art Hop events, Holidays in the Square, Harvest Festivals, and summer carnivals. These events bring hundreds of people to Washington Square to see local artwork, shop with local vendors and businesses, dance, see performances, live music, and eat from restaurants and food trucks.

Community events and intergenerational, creative projects like Pho on the Block and the Inside Out Project that were highlighted in Washington Square this year, have been a true benefit to all Kalamazoo County residents. Thank you to all the partners, volunteers, participants and staff members who have worked together to bring new life and sustainability to an important commercial corridor in the Edison neighborhood.

The Land Bank will work with the neighborhood association to transition management of these events to them in 2019.



Proud Partnerships



Riverview Launch is the home of Open Roads, Kalamazoo River Watershed Council and Common Ground Community Garden Network. The Land Bank is proud to partner with organizations who provide programs and services that promote healthy lifestyles, and use the Riverview Launch as a hub for residents from around Kalamazoo to meet, work, and play.

OPEN ROADS

Open Roads gets the chance to mentor students every day through the bike programs they offer. They coach students on job skills, basic social and life skills, and have teenagers that serve on a Youth Advisory Board to make sure curriculum and activities are youth-driven and approved. They host a variety of youth development bike programs throughout the Kalamazoo community all year long!

KALAMAZOO WATERSHED COUNCIL

The Kalamazoo River Watershed Council's mission and vision come from a desire to protect, preserve, and promote the Kalamazoo River and its tributaries for current area residents and future generations. Their commitment to understanding and implementing green infrastructure in Kalamazoo County was apparent throughout 2017. This initiative hosted a rain barrel workshop, installed three beautiful rain gardens, and showcased a water-themed short film competition at Riverview Launch. Their efforts bring dozens of Kalamazoo residents together in honor of conservation and wise stewardship of the natural resources of the Kalamazoo River.

COMMON GROUND

"Common Ground" is a community garden collaboration of Vibrant Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo County MSU Extension/ Master Gardeners and other supporting organizations. Common Ground continues to offer a "Resource Shed" that houses garden tools for loan, educational classes, spring plant giveaway, and a very popular summer community garden trolley and bike tour!

Revitalization Continues



The original intent of the Riverview Launch site flourished in 2017. The unique redevelopment project set out to create a sustainable and unique space with community support and engagement. Riverview Launch offers opportunities to bring neighbors together, and drives momentum toward the creation of greener, safer, and smarter use of public spaces. It improves the quality of life by providing recreational and educational opportunities for our community members. This is

made possible by the support of local partners, leaders and stakeholders, funders, volunteers, and community members. From the beginning, with the vision of renewed usage, it was imperative to create a well loved and well used space. Riverview Launch serves as a community space, designed to highlight the impact of transforming blighted spaces, the beauty of sustainable design, and the power of community engagement.

Riverview Launch hosted 24 events and approximately 800 people in 2017!



Find out more about event rentals at www.RiverviewLaunch.com



Whether it's native gardening, riverbank restoration or engaging community members at events, our volunteers continue to make a difference in creating a vibrant community.

Volunteers, thank you all for your support!

Community Matters

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Habitat for Humanity continues to raise the bar for affordable housing and sustainable building in Kalamazoo. Habitat's mission has always been to provide affordable housing for those in need. More recently, Habitat has made a commitment to provide energy star appliances and build a net-zero ready home for Habitat homeowners. Green construction is yet another way for Habitat to offer long-term solutions to buyers as they optimize energy consumption and save on future bills.

In 2017, Habitat bought four parcels from the Land Bank and built energy-efficient, or Net Zero, homes for families in Kalamazoo County. It has taken hundreds of dedicated volunteers and thousands of hours of hard work to make this happen but the end result is the same: More Kalamazoo families living in safe, decent, affordable housing that reduce waste and save money. The Land Bank is honored to partner with organizations like Habitat who are dedicated to repurpose, renew and reconnect properties with families who need them most.



"The Kalamazoo County Land Bank Authority is a key partner with Kalamazoo Valley Habitat for Humanity in accomplishing its mission of building homes, communities, and hope. By providing Habitat with affordable properties to rehabilitate or build upon, the Land Bank is helping to put families into high quality, affordable housing. Habitat's Zero Energy Ready Homes are safe, durable, healthy, accessible, adaptable and energy efficient, lowering the overall cost of ownership and ensuring the home will be there contributing to the sustainability of the neighborhood for many generations to come."

- Charlie Robertson, Executive Director for Kalamazoo Valley Habitat for Humanity



KALAMAZOO NATIVE

Kalamazoo native, Darnell Clay, is a positive and productive force who wakes up every single day with a mission to “preserve a sense of community and growth,” he says. Darnell has been working with the Land Bank for the past 8 years through his business, Cutting Edge. He is a key player in the Land Bank’s efforts to revitalize the community through home rehab and property maintenance. Over the years, Darnell has upkeep grounds of vacant properties, rehabilitated blighted properties for resale, personally purchased Land Bank properties and volunteered at Land Bank sponsored community events and programs.

Darnell considers himself the “eyes and ears of our community” ensuring that Kalamazoo continues to be a great place to live and do business. This torch of pride is an example of the community partnerships the Land Bank wants to foster: meaningful, intentional and complimentary.

Darnell, the Kalamazoo County Land Bank can not thank you enough for being a positive change agent in Kalamazoo. Thank you for your hard work and dedication you bring to the forefront every single day.



Investing in the Future

HARDEST HIT GRANT

The Land Bank was awarded \$1.26 million from the Hardest Hit program to demolish foreclosed homes in Kalamazoo to help raise property values and address safety concerns caused by blighted properties. Kalamazoo was given the third-largest award, after Calhoun County and the City of Saginaw. The Land Bank has completed 85% of the entire project with 58 out of 69 demolitions finished. The rest will be completed early spring of 2018.

Since the inception of this state-wide program, Hardest Hit funds have demolished about 8,500 structures in response to the housing crisis that led to unprecedented home price declines and high unemployment.



“An investment in blight elimination is an investment in the future of our great state,” MSHDA Executive Director Earl Poleski said in a statement.

“These blight grants will trigger economic growth and improve public safety in towns and neighborhoods from the U.P. to southeastern Michigan.”

BLIGHT ELIMINATION GRANT

Kalamazoo Land Bank was one of the agencies across the state to receive funding from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) to combat blight. The Kalamazoo County Land Bank Authority received \$132,000 to demolish six blighted residential properties in Kalamazoo’s Northside, Vine and Edison neighborhoods, ensuring neighborhoods within the city are able to stabilize and revitalize. We hope that our on-going efforts in these areas contribute to the beautification of neighborhoods, return properties to the tax rolls and maintain health and safety for residents.



BIGGER FAMILY = BIGGER YARD

Patricia Ladd and Opea Campbell have a growing family. Like most proud grandparents, it was important to the couple to spend time with their family and enjoy all the grandkids. The Side Lot Program gave Patricia and Opea a safe, fenced in yard for the grandkids to play. This Side Lot also gave the couple extra space to invite family and friends over for barbeques, birthday parties and other important celebrations.

BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT UNDERWAY

Katherine Rockafeld has big plans for her Side Lot. Katherine purchased the Side Lot with the intention to grow a bigger vegetable garden and landscape with native plants and trees. Katherine is excited to create a beautiful and diverse green space to restore and sustain biodiversity. She is especially interested in conserving monarch butterflies and plans to provide the essential habitat of milkweed plants for these important pollinators.



DEMOLITION SITE TO ADOPT-A-LOT



This Adopt-A-Lot became available after a structure was demolished with the use of Hardest Hit funding. This newly vacant lot is adjacent to a rental property owned by Bhaskar Pisipati, a Kalamazoo landlord. Once it became available, Mr. Pisipati decided to lease this property to provide a bigger yard for his tenants. These beautification projects may be small acts but send a powerful message to the community: We love where we live and want to keep it beautiful.

We appreciate Kalamazoo residents like Mr. Pisipati who do such a good job at keeping the green space clean and free of litter. We also look forward to the flower gardens and ornamental grasses to be installed this upcoming year!

Revitalizing Michigan

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF LAND BANKS

Land banking has been a very successful tool in Michigan to help revitalize distressed communities. Michigan has been paving the way for Land Banking across the country from the beginning. This year, our very own Kelly Clarke, served her first of a two year term as President of the Michigan Association of Land Banks (MALB). The mission of MALB is to ensure that Michigan Land Banks have the statewide policies, support, and capacity to effectively operate local Land Bank programs. Currently, there are 39 Michigan Land Banks that have demolished approximately 7,000 blighted properties. Michigan Land Banks have initiated countless efforts in 2017 and have over 20 projects spotlighted on the website. You can read more about MALB and it's impact by visiting www.milandbank.org.



LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

The 4th Annual Michigan Land Bank Leadership Summit was held this past October in Battle Creek, Michigan. The Summit was a forum for learning and exchange amongst land bank leaders across the state of Michigan. We were able to bring



Storm Cunningham, a national speaker, to present on the importance of reusing underutilized, contaminated, and vacant parcels in our community in a manner that fosters inclusive economic stability and growth. The Leadership Summit's innovative format offered participants the opportunity to become better connected, dive deep into the common challenges they face and discuss what the next decade of Land Banking in Michigan might look like. A special thanks to all MALB members and supporters. We look forward to seeing how the advancement of this work will offer new opportunities to revitalize Michigan communities.

GO PLACES KALAMAZOO

Go Places initiative, founded by Becky Fulgoni, brought in Storm Cunningham to talk about the Power and Potential of Place: Global and National Trends to Support Revitalization. During Storm Cunningham's time in the area, he spoke to a group of dedicated civic minded individuals to discuss local challenges and opportunities as a part of the multi-year Go Places initiative. This year's talk was sponsored by the Kalamazoo County Land Bank, Kalamazoo Nature Center and Michigan Municipal League.



Thank You Partners!

COMMUNITY/ EVENT VOLUNTEERS & OTHER PARTNERS

Dale Abbott & Tomme Maile
Bell's Brewery volunteers
Bellydance Kalamazoo
BenJammin Educational Music
Big Trouble Band
Bierlein Companies
Bolle Contracting
Angela Brown
Tom Brown
Byce & Associates
Ursula Chapman
Chunky Dunk Food Truck
City of Kalamazoo Parks & Recreation
City of Kalamazoo Community Planning & Development
Community Promise
Federal Credit Union
Cosmic Ethics
Crepes by the Lakes
Cutting Edge
Dan Denov
Diva of DomesticaShon
Edison Business Association
Eastside Neighborhood Association
Envirologic Technologies
Greater Kalamazoo Association of Realtors
Fran Dwight
Hoekstra Roofing
Holly Eakes
Mark Gates
Ilse Gebhard
Glas Associates
Howard's Party Store
Improv Effects

Inform Architects
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Jaqua Realtors
Jersey Giant SUBS!
JMB Demolition
Kalamazoo County Drain Commissioner
Kalamazoo County Parks & Recreation
Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety
Conrad Kaufman
Kellogg Community FCU volunteers
KPEP
Rebekah Kik
Kinetic Affect
Ryan Koziatek
Kzoo Nutrition
La Guatemalteca Tacos
Landscaping Plus
Layla's Cool Pops
Lucy in the Sky Quilts
Karlina Lewis
Michigan State Housing Development Authority
Michigan Statewide LISC
AmeriCorps
Miller Davis Company
Kalamazoo Metal Recyclers
Kama Mitchell
MSUE Master Gardeners
Naylor Landscape Management
Ian Nielson
Robin Nott
OCBA Landscape Architects
Olivia's Fashionista Designs
PalletPalooza
Paramount Charter Academy
Pho on the Block

Pfizer Volunteers
Sabrina Pritchett
Josh Ritzma
River Street Flowerland
Rootead African Drum & Dance
Chuck & Kathy Ryzenga
Lauren Schildberg
Realtors Who Care
Roger & Ryan Schmidt
Dana Scott
OCBA Architects
Patty Smetana
Sarah JBara
Soil Friends Farm
Stumbling Grace Farms
Kristie & Daniel Tellier
Pine Lunch Bluegrass Band
Michael Tracy
Tree of Life School
Tremolo Guitar Shop
Triterra Environmental
Trybal Revival Gardens
Scarlet & Olivia Vasquez
Chuck Vliek
Wahmhoff Farms
Jean Walker
Luchara & Layla Wallace
Washington Square Co-op
Senior Apartments
Greg Wells
Wenke Greenhouses
Linda Whitlock
Wild Ones - Kalamazoo
William Parfet
Young Living Essential Oils
Zion Lion Reggae Band

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City of Portage
Comstock Township
Cooper Township

Kalamazoo County
Kalamazoo Township
Oshtemo Township
Schoolcraft Township
Texas Township
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Center for Community Progress
Community Homeworks
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Edison Neighborhood Association
Fire Historical & Cultural Arts Collaborative
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Hispanic American Council
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Michigan Municipal League
Northside Neighborhood Association
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Kalamazoo County Parks Foundation
Kalamazoo Farmers Market
Kalamazoo Public Library
Kalamazoo River Watershed Council
Kalamazoo Valley Community College
Mt. Zion Baptist Church
National Community Stabilization Trust
Northside Ministerial Alliance
Open Roads
People's Food Co-op
Pretty Lake Camp
Stuart Area Restoration Association
Urban Alliance
Vine Neighborhood Association
Volunteer Kalamazoo

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Kalamazoo County Government • Pitsch Companies • PNC Bank

We appreciate your special contribution to make our work possible.

What's Next?

Eastside Gateway Project

The Eastside Gateway project is expected to produce six to eight small homes, of 600 up to 1,000 square feet each, impacting the larger Eastside neighborhood. This project will help to further community development and revitalization on the Eastside of Kalamazoo, and build on Eastside community pride.

Community ideas and dedication have been the most critical tool in bringing transformative revitalization projects to Kalamazoo. Eastside residents dreamed up a plan that will include outdoor space, native plantings and art elements. The Land Bank is raising funds for the project and will continue to work closely with the Eastside neighborhood to begin to realize the project in 2018.



"We look forward to working closely with the Land Bank and with our residents to make this project one that is a true reflection of everything we love about the Eastside, and welcoming to people who may be considering this area for the first time as a great place to live. We're excited to see new development in this area, and hope this will create new opportunities for both residential and commercial revitalization on the Eastside."

- Pat Taylor, Executive Director of the Eastside Neighborhood Association

Everything we do at the Kalamazoo Land Bank focuses on REPURPOSE, RENEW, and RECONNECT. Your support can help improve neighborhoods, increase the quality of life for our residents and support affordable housing in Kalamazoo. We are always looking for people like YOU to join our efforts by participating in our events, sharing your skills as a volunteer or donating to our revitalization projects like the Small Homes Community. Find out more by visiting our website at www.kalamazoolandbank.org.