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AN OPEN SPACE ACTION PLAN FOR THE JUNCTION NEIGHBORHOOD IN TOLEDO, OHIO

Center for Community Progress Report to the City of Toledo and
the Lucas County Land Reutilization Corporation, a 2016 Technical
Assistance Scholarship Program (TASP) Recipient



This report was prepared for the City of Toledo, the Lucas County Land Reutilization Corporation and the Junction Coalition by the Center for Community Progress (June 2016). For additional information, please contact the authors below or Kim Graziani, Vice President and Director of National Technical Assistance.

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ABOUT CENTER FOR COMMUNITY PROGRESS

Founded in 2010, the Center for Community Progress is the only national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization solely dedicated to building a future in which entrenched, systemic blight no longer exists in American communities. The mission of Community Progress is to ensure that communities have the vision, knowledge, and systems to transform blighted, vacant, and other problem properties into assets supporting neighborhood vitality. As a national leader on solutions for blight and vacancy, Community Progress serves as the leading resource for local, state, and federal policies and best practices that address the full cycle of property revitalization. Major support for Community Progress is generously provided by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

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SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2015, the Center for Community Progress (Community Progress) announced that the Lucas County Land Reutilization Corporation (Land Bank), in partnership with the Junction Coalition (Coalition)¹ and the City of Toledo (City), was one of three applicants competitively selected to be a recipient of our Technical Assistance Scholarship Program (TASP). The Land Bank's successful application sought assistance developing a long-term ownership and cost-effective maintenance framework for the extensive inventory of vacant land in the Junction, an historically African-American neighborhood that has struggled through decades of disinvestment, population loss, and entrenched vacancy and blight.

During an initial two-day site visit in October 2015, Community Progress staff met with the Junction Coalition, toured the neighborhood, and interviewed nearly a dozen city officials and community stakeholders to learn more about the challenges, opportunities, and needs specific to the Junction neighborhood. Following additional research and more conversations with Coalition representatives, Community Progress and Land Bank leaders agreed to an ambitious scope of work that involved two complementary deliverables:

1. **Toledo Cost of Blight Study.**² The goal of the study is to help raise awareness of the true cost of blight for the City of Toledo, the sunk costs of vacant land, resources currently available, and the extent of the resource gap, as a means of building consensus for a more strategic and effective approach to vacancy and abandonment³ citywide, as well as a pilot model for public ownership, maintenance, and reuse of residential vacant land in the Junction.
2. **Junction Open Space Action Plan.** Building off recent efforts to engage residents about greening opportunities in the Junction, the goals of this action plan are to help prioritize and appropriately locate diverse reuse strategies for vacant land in the Junction; inform responsibilities, programs, and policies of the Land Bank, City, and Coalition partners; and assist with securing funding for focused implementation efforts.

¹ The Junction Coalition is a resident-led group of stakeholders, with strong support from the Lucas County Land Bank, committed to the long-term health, vitality and resiliency of the Junction neighborhood. For a list of all those who participated in interviews, roundtable discussions, or contributed in some way their insights to help with the development of this plan, please see Appendix A.

² The Toledo Cost of Blight Study was completed as a separate report, but we include a brief summary of the study's key findings and recommendations as Appendix B. Both this Junction Open Space Action Plan and the Toledo Cost of Blight Study are also available at Community Progress' website, www.communityprogress.net.

³ For the purpose of this report, vacant property refers to both real property which is not lawfully occupied and vacant, unimproved lots. Abandoned property is defined as vacant property which has multiple years of property tax delinquency, unresolved code violations, and/or delinquent water, sewer or utility charges. Vacant land is used specifically to describe property that has no structures. The term 'problem properties' is used generally to describe all properties that pose negative impacts to residents and neighborhoods, and consistently place a demand on city services, such as code enforcement, police, fire, or legal services.

Given the significant resources required to carry out the above scope of work, advancing the latter deliverable was contingent on identifying additional financial resources. Fortunately, with assistance from Toledo-LISC—a strong partner for community-driven revitalization work in Junction and throughout Toledo—the City was able to access and secure approval from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) technical assistance dollars to support the development of the Open Space Action Plan.

Community Progress sought the expertise of the Trust for Public Land⁴ to assist with developing the Junction Open Space Action Plan. The goal was to develop a resident-informed, practical vision for Junction that was grounded in an understanding of the key systems of vacancy and abandonment, and that would connect future reuse opportunities with actionable strategies that relate to code enforcement, tax enforcement, and land banking. As the two key preventative systems related to vacancy and abandonment, code enforcement and tax enforcement systems offer a range of leverage points that local governments and partners can utilize to address problem properties, including the transfer of such properties to responsible owners. Land banks are uniquely designed governmental entities with strong accountability to the public that, when linked to the tax foreclosure process, can play an instrumental role in returning problem properties to productive use in a deliberate, thoughtful manner that is consistent with neighborhood priorities and community goals.

This action plan is not meant to offer costly reuse concepts that have little chance for implementation. Instead, this plan is intended to practically re-imagine the possibilities for Junction's vast inventory of vacant land and open up a more detailed and meaningful discussion between the Land Bank, City, and Coalition partners about future policies, operations, and practices with a goal to move from vacancy to vibrancy. Taken together, the Toledo Cost of Blight Study and Junction Open Space Action Plan are meant to engage head-on some key questions about vacant land ownership, maintenance, and reuse, and lay bare the critical need for a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities, and expectations if partners, including residents, hope to successfully implement some of the practical concepts outlined in this plan.

This action plan narrows its focus to key areas of the Junction neighborhood. However, this report attempts to provide enough detail of both the framework for analysis and implementation actions so engaged stakeholders in Junction and other disinvested neighborhoods throughout Toledo can apply the same approach to help identify vacant land reuse opportunities, inform decisions, and attract investment to stabilize and strengthen their neighborhoods. The hope is that this Junction Open Space Action Plan and the Toledo Cost of Blight Study will also benefit stakeholders from across the country who are looking to create a coordinated, creative, and more impactful practice of managing and activating vacant land as part of a comprehensive approach to tackling vacancy, abandonment, and blight.

⁴ Trust for Public Land is a national organization dedicated to helping communities raise funds, conduct research and planning, acquire and protect land, and design and renovate parks, playgrounds, trails, and gardens. To learn more about the Trust for Public Land, visit www.tpl.org.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

The City of Toledo is the principal city in Lucas County, with a current population of 282,313.⁵ As with most urban cores in the rust belt, Toledo struggles with both systemic vacancy and concentrated poverty. A first-of-its-kind, citywide survey of all 121,798 parcels, completed in 2015 by the Lucas County Land Bank with community partners, identified 14,614 vacant lots and nearly 2,700 structures in need of demolition.⁶ And according to a November 2011 Brookings Institution's report, Toledo had the unenviable distinction of ranking #1 among 100 metropolitan areas for the greatest increase in concentrated poverty between 2000 and 2009.⁷

But as with many legacy cities, some neighborhoods struggle far more than others. In Toledo, no neighborhood faces steeper challenges than the Junction. As one of the City's historic African-American neighborhoods, the Junction may be rich with cultural traditions but it also bears the scars of unjust urban policies, such as redlining (see Figure 1) and urban renewal, as well as decades of disinvestment.⁸ The vacancy rate (including vacant lots and vacant structures) in this neighborhood of 4,700 parcels is a staggering 45%, and approximately 54% of residents live in poverty.

Despite these challenges, an emerging coalition of residents, city leaders, community groups, and the Lucas County Land Bank are pushing forward with grit, focus, and genuine respect for each other, determined that vacancy can once again become vibrancy in the Junction neighborhood and beyond.

There is reason for optimism. A number of promising steps have been taken locally in the last seven years to combat the high levels of vacancy and abandonment:

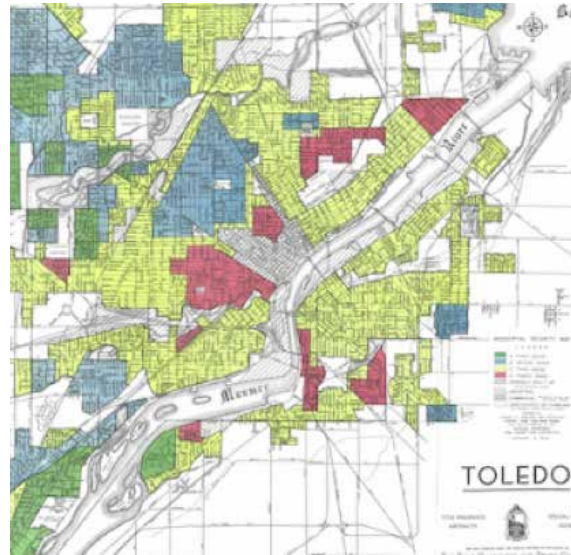


Figure 1:

A Federal Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) map, also known as a redlining map, for the City of Toledo. The Junction is the large redlined neighborhood in the center of the map. *Source: Ohio State University Libraries.*

⁵ United States Census Bureau, 2013. The most recent population estimate for Lucas County is 433, 689 (July 2015, US Census).

⁶ The Lucas County Land Bank manages and updates an online mapping platform that allows public users to access, manipulate and analyze the Toledo Parcel Survey results at <http://co.lucas.oh.us/index.aspx?NID=2783>.

⁷ Elizabeth Kneebone, C. Nadeau, and A. Berube, "The Re-emergence of Concentrated Poverty: Metropolitan Trends in the 2000s," Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings Institution, November 2011. http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2011/11/03-poverty-kneebone-nadeau-berube/1103_poverty_kneebone_nadeau_berube.pdf

⁸ In addition to redlining, urban renewal and other similar federal, state, and local programs in the latter half of the twentieth century separated the Junction from the downtown core and adjacent neighborhoods through strategically placed highway programs that decimated the once thriving African-American business district and the homesteads of many Junction families.

- From 2009 through 2012, the City of Toledo used multiple awards through NSP to demolish 458 hazardous and abandoned residential properties.
- In August 2010, the incorporation and launch of the Land Bank added a significant partner to the City's efforts to stabilize and strengthen neighborhoods, with an immediate focus on stemming the impacts of the mortgage foreclosure crisis and Great Recession.⁹
- From August 2012 to December 2014, the Land Bank demolished 862 structures, almost all in the City of Toledo, with the support of approximately \$3.8 million from the state's Moving Ohio Forward (MOF) Program (and another \$3.2 million in local matching dollars), which was created by the Ohio Attorney General's Office with a portion of the state's share of the national mortgage settlement. About a third of all resultant vacant lots were sold to responsible, adjacent neighbors.¹⁰
- From March 2014 to March 2015, the Land Bank organized, led and funded a community-supported, first-of-its-kind effort to survey every property in Toledo (121,798 parcels), capturing critical, timely information—such as occupancy status, property type and condition—that has helped set the stage for smart, data-driven decisions about neighborhood strategies and investments in a fiscally constrained environment. A chart of the survey results related to property condition is shown in Figure 2.
- Currently, the Land Bank is implementing a significant grant award of \$11.5 million from the Ohio Housing Finance Agency's Neighborhood Initiative Program, which is funded with Hardest Hit Funds (HHF) from the U.S. Treasury.¹¹ The Land Bank

The Toledo Survey – Condition Grade

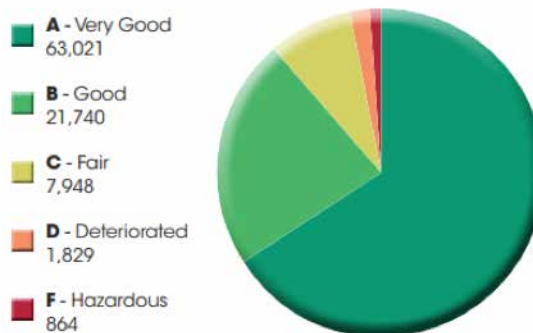


Figure 2:

Conditions of all residential structures in Toledo, 2015 Parcel Survey. *Source: Lucas County Land Bank.*

⁹ The Land Bank's first Five-Year Progress Report provides an excellent summary of the organization's impressive work eliminating blight, renovating properties, supporting homeownership, and repurposing vacant land throughout Lucas County: <http://co.lucas.oh.us/DocumentCenter/View/55765>.

¹⁰ All 88 counties in Ohio received MOF dollars for demolition. A program report by the Office of Attorney General Mike DeWine, which summarizes the outcomes of the MOF Demolition Grant Program, including demolition totals by County, can be found here: <http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Files/Publications-Files/Publications-for-Consumers/Foreclosure-Publications/Moving-Ohio-Forward-Program-Summary>.

¹¹ The U.S. Treasury created the Hardest Hit Fund in 2010 to provide assistance to those states (18 states and the District of Columbia) that were most severely impacted by the housing mortgage foreclosure crisis. The U. S. Treasury has made direct awards to the participating states, which are then charged with designing, administering and managing the program consistent with federal guidelines. To learn more about HHF, the participating states, and performance outcomes, visit <https://www.treasury.gov/initiatives/financial-stability/TARP-Programs/housing/hhf/Pages/default.aspx>.

anticipates demolishing 1,200 vacant, tax-delinquent properties during the grant period, which runs from April 2014 through June 2017. All of these residential demolitions will occur in the city of Toledo.¹²

- A fifth and final round of HHF allocations to participating states, including Ohio, was announced this February (with more details announced in April), and the Land Bank and its partners are currently investigating approximately another 2,000 properties as potential demolition candidates for this last round of HHF awards. According to the Treasury, Ohio received \$192 million in this fifth round, bringing its total HHF awards over five rounds of funding to \$762 million.¹³

The above are notable achievements few cities can match, however, the truth is that Toledo still faces significant vacancy and abandonment challenges, many of which are on full display in the Junction neighborhood and which will require more sensitive and coordinated solutions than just another round of demolitions.

- According to the Toledo Parcel Survey, the Junction consists of approximately 4,700 parcels. Of these, about 1,700 are vacant lots and 400 are vacant structures, giving a vacancy rate of about 45%.
- Nearly 1 out of every 3 parcels (1,450 parcels) in this neighborhood is certified tax-delinquent *at least three years or more*.¹⁴
- Considering potential demolition candidates for the fifth and final round of HHF funding, there are still 110 unoccupied properties graded either a D (Deteriorated) or F (Hazardous) that are negatively impacting the Junction residents.
- According to the Toledo Parcel Survey, 34% of occupied structures (781 of 2331) and 46% of vacant structures (130 of 280) were graded a C (in fair condition), which means that without proper investments in both the repairs and routine maintenance, these properties could deteriorate in the coming years and present sustained challenges and costs to the City, the Land Bank, and the Junction residents.

There is unanimous agreement among local stakeholders that these unprecedented demolition campaigns have generated multiple economic, fiscal, and social benefits. There is also a shared concern that the City, already cash-strapped, may be unable to shoulder the escalating maintenance costs of an ever expanding portfolio of vacant lots.

¹² HHF awards can also be used to fund greening interventions on the resultant vacant lot (up to \$6,000), as well as three years of general maintenance (up to \$400 a year per lot). Whereas very few resultant lots from the Land Bank's current HHF award are scheduled to be greened, the Land Bank would like to green many of the resultant vacant lots with the fifth and final round of funding, a goal that this open space action plan will hopefully help encourage and inform.

¹³ For the U.S. Treasury's official media release of the fifth and final round of HHF allocations (4/20/16), please see <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl0434.aspx>

¹⁴ Tax bills are certified delinquent by the County Auditor's Office, and usually by late November the year the property taxes, or a portion thereof, goes unpaid (for example, if the 2015 property tax bill goes unpaid, the property would be 'certified tax delinquent' in November 2015, approximately). Ohio has a relatively efficient tax foreclosure process, and allows County Land Banks to request an expedited foreclosure process for properties that are legally considered vacant or abandoned. The expedited foreclosure process can be completed in approximately 145 days, according to Land Bank leaders.

A current agreement between the City and the Land Bank regarding the HHF program presents some specific challenges. Because of unique HHF program guidelines, the Land Bank is required to own and maintain all resultant vacant lots for three years after demolition. The program does allow the transfer of a HHF-funded vacant lot within these three years to a few, eligible purchasers (such as side lot sales to qualified, adjacent homeowners), but based on numbers to date and conversations with Land Bank leaders, it is safe to assume that 80% of all HHF lots will be subject to this three-year holding period. Fortunately, the Land Bank can draw on HHF dollars to cover maintenance costs for these lots during this required holding period (\$400 per year per parcel). However, the City and Land Bank have an agreement that at the end of the three-year period, all HHF lots will be transferred from the Land Bank to the City. No additional grant dollars will be available to support ongoing maintenance. That means, starting in 2017 and every year thereafter for the next four years, hundreds of vacant lots will enter the City's inventory. To put this into perspective, the City currently owns 1,500 vacant lots. When the HHF program is completed, the total number of residential vacant lots transferred to the City could total another 1,500, *potentially doubling* their inventory, and impacting maintenance operations and responsibilities.¹⁵

How exactly will this impact operations? To tackle that question, it is important to first better understand current practices as well as some of the more creative steps the City has taken the last couple years to more effectively address maintenance of vacant lots, both publicly owned and privately owned.

CURRENT OWNERSHIP AND MAINTENANCE PRACTICES

The data provided by the Toledo Parcel Survey has proven extremely helpful in better understanding the problems in Toledo. A basic breakdown of the inventory is included in Figure 3, but the numbers somewhat mask the maintenance challenges.

Take for instance the numbers in Junction. As reported earlier, there are 1,700 vacant lots in the

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 121,798 | Parcels in Toledo |
| 107,184 | Residential and Commercial Structures |
| 14,614 | Vacant lots without structures |
| 12,293 | Privately owned vacant lots |
| 2,321 | Publicly owned vacant lots |
| 1,500 | City |
| 400 | Land Bank |
| 421 | State of Ohio (forfeited) |

Figure 3:

Breakdown of parcel survey results, showing the inventory of vacant lots and ownership status.

¹⁵ It is important to note that the City is already carrying out maintenance responsibilities on these abandoned, tax-delinquent privately owned properties, which is why they've been slated for demolition. However, moving this large inventory under City ownership will still present new challenges, like higher expectations of a more consistent, routine maintenance schedule and more restrictive policies and guidelines when it comes to disposition and reuse options.

neighborhood, with about 350 of these publicly owned (Land Bank and City). Of the remaining 1,350 privately owned lots, 643 (almost 50%) are certified tax-delinquent *of three years or more*. Tax delinquency, particularly chronic delinquency, is a strong indicator of abandonment. What this means, of course, is that the City has to not only carry out routine maintenance on its own inventory in Junction (300 lots), but also abate nuisances (cut high grass and remove trash/debris) that occur on these abandoned, tax-delinquent lots (643) in a timely and cost-effective manner.

While the number of abandoned, privately owned lots is probably higher in Junction than in other neighborhoods, a very conservative estimate is that the City is assuming maintenance responsibilities for 25% of all privately owned vacant lots throughout the City, which is about 3,000 lots. The City created a Beautification Action Team (BAT) a few years ago, whose sole purpose is to follow-up on nuisance orders received from the Code Enforcement Division. BAT, in essence, serves as a *de facto* property manager for too many owners that either purposefully neglect their responsibilities or have altogether abandoned their property years ago.

According to the Toledo Cost of Blight Study (see Appendix B for a brief summary of key findings and recommendations), the City's Code Enforcement Division and BAT spend about \$623,877 per year in direct service costs on vacant lots. City officials acknowledge that only 1 to 2% of the total amount billed to private owners for these service calls is ever collected. If a bill goes unpaid, the City takes no further action in an effort to recover costs.

Of course, a resident will generally not know which lots are city-owned and which are abandoned private lots. A nuisance is a nuisance, and every day the high grass or trash remains on *any* lot, it solidifies the common perception that the "city is doing nothing."

On the contrary, the City is undergoing some important operational reforms and creatively experimenting with more effective maintenance strategies. Some of the more notable efforts include:

- Re-purposed the Beautification Action Team to focus almost exclusively on handling the nuisance abatement service calls on lots where the private owner has failed to respond in a timely manner to a violation notice. For instance, in 2015 BAT completed 16,000 clean-ups and mowings on privately owned lots. From April through October in 2015, BAT cleaned-up 1,400 tons of junk and debris from neighborhood lots, and collected more than 140 tons of illegally dumped tires (see Figure 4). According to reports from the Code Division, these numbers are significant increases over prior years.
- Assigned almost the entire inventory of city-owned properties to private contractors in 2015, at an average cost of \$24 per mow (once a month) on any lot less than 5,000 square feet.
- In 2015, piloted a "T-Town Proud Community Maintenance Program," in which faith-based or community organizations assumed responsibility for mowing and litter clean-ups for 50 city-owned parcels in a geographic area for six months. In exchange, the organization received from the City a stipend of \$9,800 (paid in monthly installments). Seven organizations signed up during the pilot year, effectively maintaining 350 city-owned parcels. The goal for 2016 is to recruit 20 organizations, which would cover all city-owned lots under 5,000 square feet.

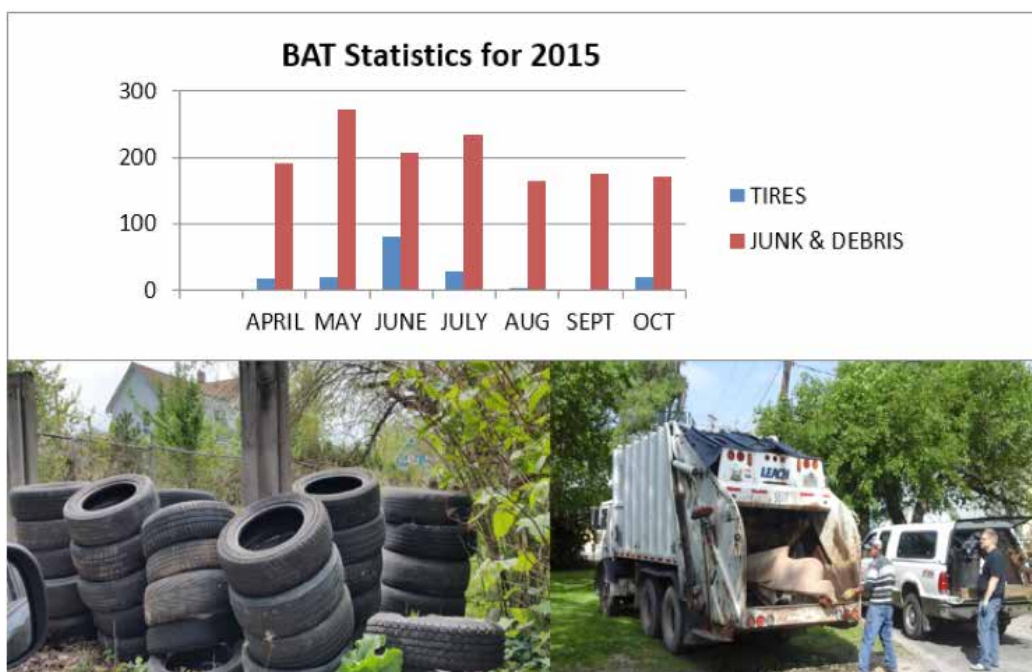


Figure 4:

Tons of tires and junk collected by BAT in 2015, as reported by Toledo Code Enforcement Division.

Photo credit: Toledo Code Enforcement Division.

- Under the theme, “Engaged Toledo for Cleaner, Safer Neighborhoods,” BAT also has a T-Town Trailer Loan Program, where resident groups can reserve BAT’s T-Town Trailer for no charge on select Saturdays between May and October to support organized neighborhood clean-ups. The trailer includes riding lawn mowers, push mowers, weed trimmers, and other basic tools. BAT members deliver the trailer the day of the clean-up, join and assist the neighbors, and then repack and return the trailer to its facility. BAT supported 12 T-Town Trailer Days in 2015.
- Coordinating across multiple departments and agencies, the City also organized eight “T-Town Action Weeks” in different neighborhoods in 2015 from May to September. During these ‘service blitzes’ on targeted blocks, tires and trash were collected from properties, alleys were cleaned, free smoke detectors were distributed to residents, potholes were repaired, fire hydrants were painted, and sewers were baited. The City’s brief performance report of the program is included as Appendix C.
- Finally, in 2015, the City also partnered with Lucas County’s Work Experience Program and Pathway’s Youth Employment Program, bringing additional litter-patrols and clean-up crews to the City’s multi-faceted effort to address vacancy and blight. Both programs are funded from outside sources, require minimal supervision and coordination from a BAT member, and hope to be repeated annually so long as the outside funding continues.

The above efforts are impressive, not only because of the performance outcomes, but because they indicate a strong understanding from City leadership that the “status quo” won’t do, and that creative risk-taking and experimentation must be embraced and pursued.

Still, there are only so many dollars to address the sunk costs of maintaining vacant land, and serving as de-facto property managers for negligent private owners of vacant lots that create neighborhood nuisances. Currently, nearly all of the costs of BAT and approximately half the costs of Code Enforcement are covered by the City’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), a federal grant received annually to support efforts to eliminate slum and blight and benefit low-income families and individuals.¹⁶ The total in CDBG funds allocated to support BAT and Code Enforcement is about \$1.85 million, but this federal entitlement grant continues to see small declines year over year. While the City may adjust the annual CDBG budget to continue this level of support, it’s fair to assume that this level won’t likely increase in the years to come. And given that the City’s general fund revenues have plummeted in recent years due to state budget decisions, resulting in a loss of \$83 million between 2008 and 2016, there is no chance of additional general fund support for BAT and Code Enforcement in the City’s annual budget.¹⁷

As for the Land Bank, it can rely on the maintenance dollars allowed under the HHF program (\$400 per year post-demolition) to offset the costs of its growing inventory of vacant lots. This year, the Land Bank is hiring six private contractors to cut the grass from April to October on its inventory of 900 properties, which includes both vacant lots and properties slated for demolition. The Land Bank established six zones, (corresponding mostly to zip codes) of nearly equal number of properties, and assigned a contractor to each zone. Under these seasonal maintenance contracts, the Land Bank is paying \$30 for one mowing a month, regardless of lot size.

But again, what happens when this large inventory of HHF vacant lots is transferred to the City in batches, starting with 2017? How will the City fill a seemingly impossible resource gap, at a time of financial pressures so severe that there are no funds to do even basic road maintenance?¹⁸ Or should the agreement on the transfer of all HHF lots from the Land Bank to the City be reconsidered?

¹⁶ The City’s Department of Neighborhoods maintains an online catalogue of all CDBG Annual Plans and performance reports for public review here: <http://toledo.oh.gov/services/neighborhoods/fiscal-monitoring/reports-information/>

¹⁷ According to City officials, Toledo is suffering from a recurring financial deficit largely because of dramatic cuts in state revenue sharing, which include local government funds, estate taxes and property tax reimbursements. The City reports that it received \$24.3 million in revenue sharing from the State of Ohio in 2008 but is projected to receive less than \$8 million in 2016. The decision by Ohio state leaders to slash revenue to local governments was a response to the Great Recession that was carried out by many state capitols across the country, the impacts of which have been significant, sustained, but often understated or missing from our national discourse about the consequences of the foreclosure crisis and the lack of resources among local governments to tackle effectively both vacancy and poverty.

¹⁸ Due to the recurring budget challenges stemming largely from cuts in revenue sharing from the state, Toledo has had to transfer about \$8 to 10 million a year (since 2010) from its Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Fund to fill the general fund budget gap. The City sought voters’ approval for a .25% increase in the local income tax, which would have closed the general fund gap, paid off CIP debt, and generated approximately \$16 million a year for dedicated road repairs (income taxes currently account for about 66% of all general fund revenues, according to the City Finance Department). The ballot proposal was defeated March 15, 2016, leaving the City’s structural budget deficit unresolved and ensuring another year of no street maintenance in Toledo.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

Toledo is not unique nor alone in trying to grapple with these questions. Many communities, particularly those that have benefited from significant HHF demolition grants, are currently struggling with the maintenance challenges and reuse decisions of large inventories of vacant land in weak neighborhood markets. The questions that consistently emerge can be grouped into three key themes:

1. **Ownership.** Who will own the land? Who is best positioned to access and assemble abandoned, unimproved land? Who is best positioned to efficiently dispose of vacant land pursuant to resident priorities and community goals?
2. **Maintenance.** Who will maintain the land, and who has the resources to do so effectively? Who can most effectively pilot, test, and improve maintenance practices and strategies? How practical is it to expect residents to maintain lots voluntarily, and to what degree?
3. **Funding Reuse Projects.** How will community-driven reuse projects be funded? How will ongoing maintenance of these interventions be funded to ensure the repurposed lots remain neighborhood assets, or in the case of green stormwater infrastructure, continue to perform?

The Toledo Cost of Blight Study and the Junction Open Space Action Plan were not intended to directly answer these questions. Instead, the study and the action plan were meant to help set the parameters for discussion, share insights, and provide enough inspiring possibilities so that the Land Bank, City, Coalition partners and residents might reach consensus on a coordinated but flexible path forward regarding the ownership, maintenance and reuse of a large and growing inventory of vacant land.

The Junction Open Space Action Plan was developed with a set of principles in mind, many of which trace back to the feedback and insights provided by stakeholders, including the Mayor and Councilmembers, Junction residents, Land Bank staff, county and regional officials, and nonprofit leaders. The following principles are offered as a starting point, but relevant partners carrying out this work are encouraged to review, discuss, and edit/improve as needed. Ultimately, local partners are in the best position to agree on their own set of Key Principles of Action.

1. We want to improve compliance with housing and building code. However, we want equitable systems. We do not want to criminalize poverty.
2. Every effort will be made by the City not only to abate nuisances on privately owned properties when owners fail to remedy violations that present health and safety concerns, but also to recover all costs of the provision of these municipal services on behalf of the city's taxpayers.
3. Vacant land must be seen as a strategic asset that can play a key role in the revitalization of this neighborhood. We believe a long-term revitalization plan should seek investment without displacement and be deeply respectful of culture, traditions, and 'legacy residents.'

4. We want to assemble abandoned vacant lots in the Junction under one accountable, public owner with a true land banking strategy, returning both the problems and potential to a local entity with a strong commitment to transparency, accountability, community engagement, equity and justice.
5. There are not sufficient resources to maintain effectively all the vacant land in the Junction neighborhood. We understand there will always be a resource gap, but we must narrow the resource gap with partnerships and cost-effective strategies.
6. We strongly believe that efforts to reimagine and maintain vacant land, as well as other stabilization efforts and policies, must also, whenever possible, help create opportunity, build wealth and offer greater security for Junction residents.
7. We recognize that supporting community-driven greening interventions (whether as intentional, long-term open space or temporary use) entails more than just implementation. Maintenance strategies must be in place and funded adequately to achieve success.
8. We understand that tackling this extremely disinvested neighborhood will require patience, persistence, and partnerships.

SECTION 2.

THE PLANNING AND ANALYSIS PROCESS

The development of the Junction Open Space Action Plan involved three core activities: (1) review of all existing plans and current initiatives, (2) community meetings and stakeholder interviews, and (3) parcel data gathering, mapping and analysis. The local knowledge and feedback provided by residents and stakeholders, as well as the relative ease in accessing key parcel datasets, were instrumental in defining and shaping the neighborhood plan. While the entire neighborhood was investigated and analyzed for impactful and cost-effective open-space reuse opportunities, four key action areas emerged. This section outlines the core activities undertaken as part of the planning and analysis process.

REVIEW OF EXISTING PLANS AND CURRENT INITIATIVES

The Junction Coalition has been quite active the last two years. The resident-led organization has received strong support from the Land Bank, but also from TMACOG, the region's metropolitan planning organization. In June 2014, TMACOG won a \$60,000 grant award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Urban Water Small Grants Program to work with the Junction residents in developing a green infrastructure plan that will help improve water quality, alleviate flooding pressure, and increase neighborhood greenspace.¹⁹ The planning process had a strong community engagement and education component, and a draft plan was available for review at the start of this project. Coalition partners emphasized that the Open Space Action Plan should build off the Greening Junction Plan, which made absolute sense. Even though the Greening Junction Plan focuses more on the Junction Avenue corridor and offers an exceptional and imaginative vision for a strong, healthy small business corridor—an essential element to the long-term revitalization of the Junction—the document still provided a number of insights and concepts that helped shape this plan.

¹⁹ For a summary of the Greening Junction project and to review the final Greening Junction Plan, see: http://www.tmacog.org/Environment/Green_Infrastructure/green_infrastructure_junctionproject.htm

In addition to the Greening Junction Plan, Community Progress and Trust for Public Land also reviewed the following local documents as part of background research for this project:

- Preliminary designs of seven green infrastructure installations that are scheduled for construction in the Junction neighborhood between 2017 and 2020. The stormwater management investments are being made under the Toledo Waterways Initiative (TWI), and managed by the City Engineering Department.²⁰ A map indicating the locations of the seven TWI sites in the Junction is included as Appendix D.
- Toledo's Annual Budgets, as well as the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Annual Action Plans and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports (CAPER), which document how the City uses its federal entitlement annual block grants.
- Resources developed by the TMACOG Green Infrastructure Task Force

COMMUNITY MEETINGS AND STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Community Progress and Trust for Public Land conducted a two-day site visit on March 9–10, 2016, to tour the neighborhood, interview key stakeholders individually, host a community meeting, and facilitate a two-hour roundtable with key Coalition members and partners. Approximately 25 stakeholders were interviewed during this site visit, including city, county, and regional officials. The evening community meeting, which was hosted on March 9 at the Frederick Douglass Community Center, was attended by about 50 residents and a couple dozen stakeholders and City officials. At the community meeting, after a 30-minute overview of the TASP engagement, residents were invited to participate in a number of interactive exercises that were stationed throughout the center. The exercises helped identify reuse and design preferences, neighborhood icons and anchors, and where residents felt the most safe and the least safe and why. The exercises also helped capture how residents move through the neighborhood, the neighborhood's rich cultural history, and plenty of personal anecdotes about breaches of trust by and ongoing mistrust of some political and private institutions. Finally, the closing roundtable with the Coalition partners was an intensive debriefing that helped crystallize key takeaways from the visit and next steps.

Following the site visit, the findings were aggregated and analyzed. While a number of ideas emerged, there seemed to be the strongest consensus on the following items: which sites are considered true anchors; flowering ground cover or flower patches as the preferred low-cost design element; and an overall theme of improving neighborhood connectivity through the creation and activation of beautiful spaces.²¹ As Figure 5 illustrates, **it became evident that the expressed**

²⁰ The Toledo Waterways Initiative is a stormwater management initiative, pursuant to a legal agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the City of Toledo, to reduce the discharge of untreated waste into local waterways. Many sewer districts or local jurisdictions across the country are currently under similar consent decrees with the US EPA to improve storm and sanitary systems in an effort to protect and restore the health of our waterways. TWI encompasses more than 45 unique projects at a cost of approximately half a billion dollars. Started in 2002, TWI is about 72% complete according to the project's website, and is expected to be finished in 2020. To learn more about TWI, see <http://www.toledowaterwaysinitiative.com/>.

²¹ The small business corridor along Junction Avenue was also identified as a critical key anchor and site for this neighborhood, but it was the only "consensus" site not in this part of the neighborhood where all other "consensus" anchor sites are located.

desire by many residents to improve neighborhood connectivity could be accommodated if the anchors were seen as nodes, with cost-effective reuse projects (consistent with resident preference) planned as connectors or links. These “connective” corridors also lined up nicely with some of the proposed TWI green infrastructure sites.

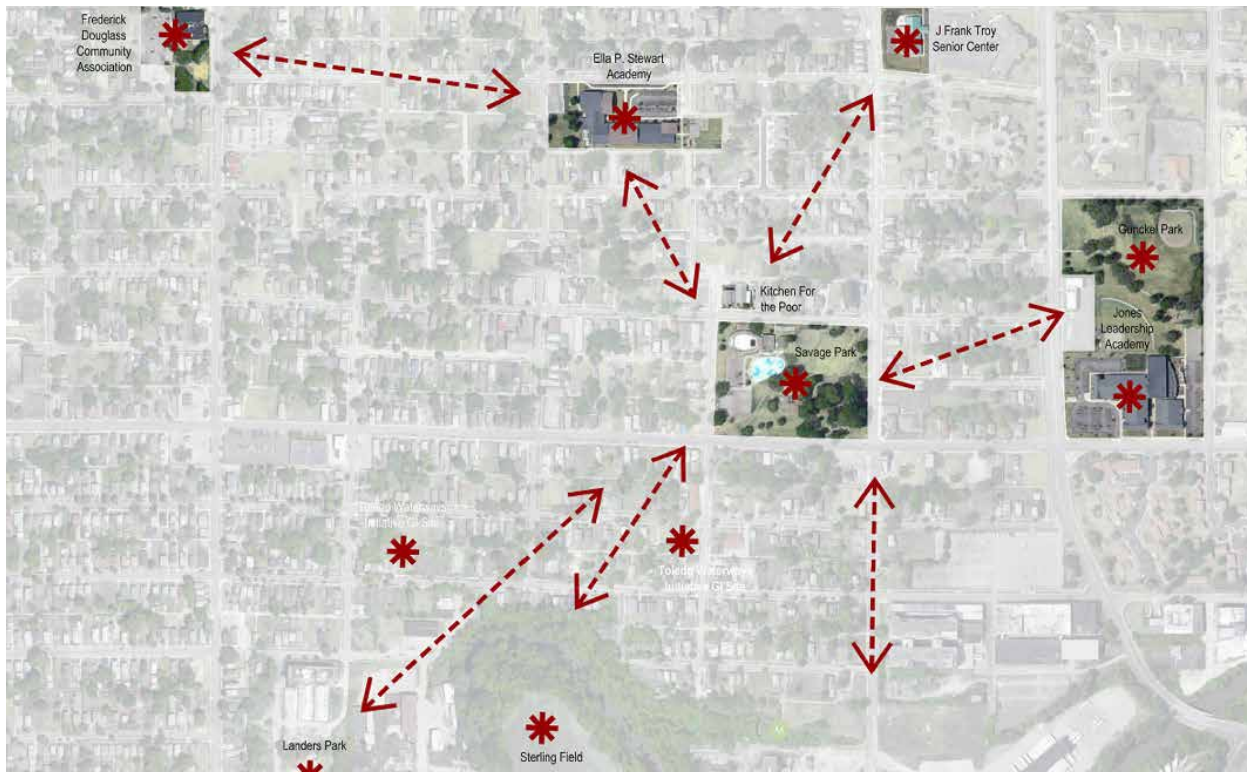


Figure 5:

The above map highlights a number of key, anchor sites identified by Junction residents, and the potential to improve connectivity between these sites. The community feedback was critical in pointing to areas where assembly and reuse of vacant land could be prioritized.

PARCEL DATA: MAPPING AND ANALYSIS

With the overall concept of green corridors connecting anchor sites in mind, the goal was to gather, map, and analyze parcel data to better understand if and how these community-based goals could be implemented by utilizing some of the key leverage points within code enforcement and tax enforcement systems and some of the unique legal powers and tools of the Land Bank.

Fortunately, this data gathering process was made relatively easy thanks to the Land Bank and the Office of the County Treasurer. The Land Bank, which continues to manage and update the Toledo Parcel Survey database, extracted all data fields for the 4,700 properties in the Junction and provided Community Progress this database. The County Treasurer provided key data related to tax payment status. Joining these two datasets enabled for a rich analysis that, when combined with resident feedback, local input, and the insights of existing local plans, provided the strong basis for all reuse concepts (and priority areas) within the Junction Open Space Action Plan. A listing of the data fields is included as Appendix E.

One of the goals of the parcel data collection and analysis phase was to identify not just the publicly owned vacant lots, but also which privately owned, abandoned structures might become vacant lots through the Land Bank's unprecedented demolition grant awards, as well as which privately owned abandoned lots could be moved through the expedited foreclosure process and acquired by the Land Bank. In other words, it was important to understand from the onset all parcels in the Junction—and particularly in these proposed connective corridors between anchor sites—that are current or pending vacant lots that could come under ownership of a single public entity. Assembling hundreds of parcels under one common, public owner will not only make implementation of community-driven reuse concepts more feasible, but could also result in operational efficiency when it comes to maintenance.

To this end, the following groups of properties were identified and mapped:

- City-owned vacant lots and parks (301)
- Land Bank-owned lots, non-HHF (31)
- Demolitions completed by City with NSP award (47)²²
- Properties that are slated for demolition with existing HHF award (171)
- Privately owned lots that are chronically tax delinquent, 3+ years, non-NSP (609)
- Three groups of potential candidates for the fifth round of HHF funding
 - Priority #1: Tax delinquent and vacant (194)
 - Priority #2: Tax delinquent, occupied, but rated as either D-Deteriorated or F-Hazardous (52)
 - Priority #3: Chronically tax delinquent (3 years or more), occupied, no homeownership exemption, and rated C-Fair (138)

The careful grouping ensured that no single property appeared in two groups, which means that of the 4,700 properties in the Junction, 1,543 were identified and mapped as current or pending vacant land that could potentially come under common ownership—nearly one of every three properties in the Junction (the resultant map is included as Appendix F, and a snippet of the parcel analysis map is included below as Figure 6). Mapping these property groups helped clarify where opportunities within these conceptual connective corridors currently exist for land banking, or where future demolitions planned by the Land Bank will open up the potential for land assemblage and reuse projects consistent with resident priorities and wishes.

²² The City used NSP funds to carry out emergency demolitions on buildings condemned pursuant to local laws, and did not assume title for most of these demolitions. In fact, 35 of these NSP demo lots remain privately owned and are chronically tax-delinquent, suggesting these owners have long ago walked away.

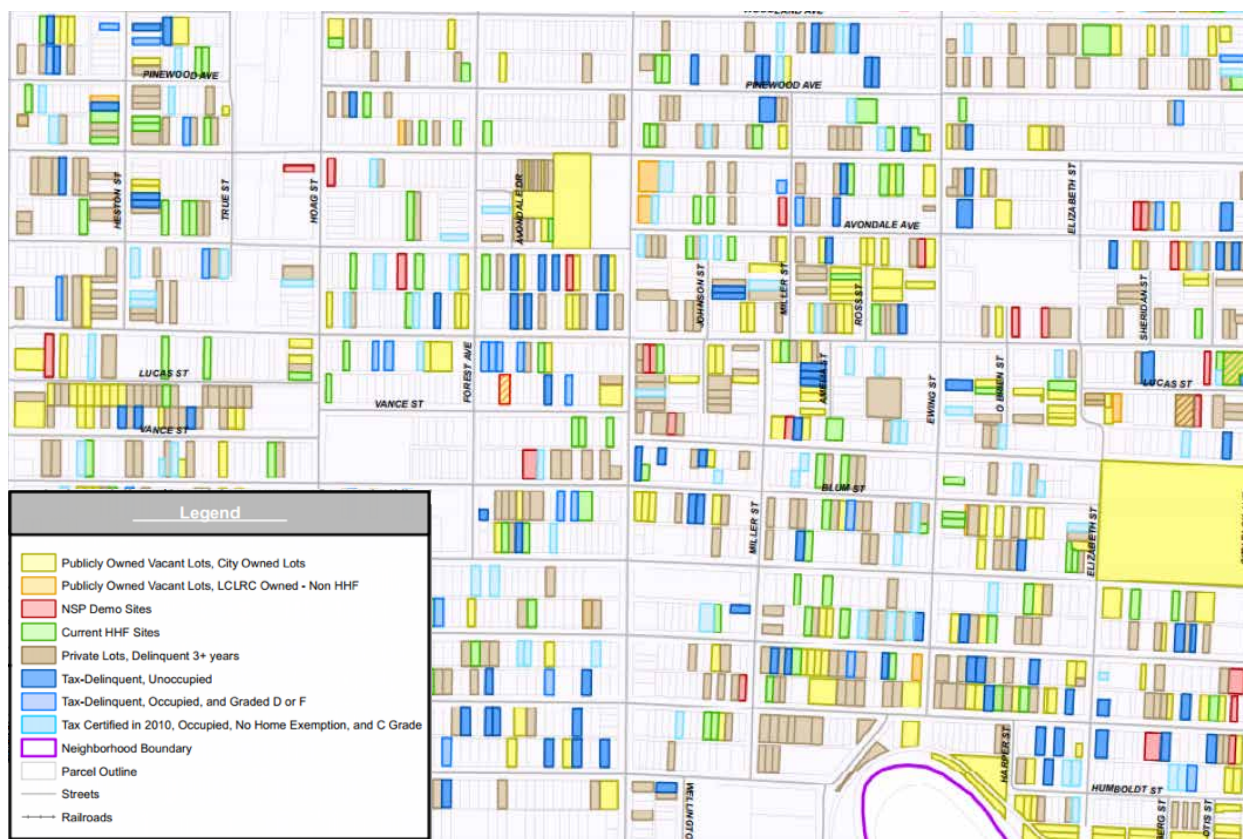


Figure 6

The above is a snapshot of the initial analysis of parcels in the Junction neighborhood to help identify the inventory of current and pending vacant lots that might come under common ownership of either the City of Toledo or the Lucas County Land Bank.

The project team conducted further investigations into parcel and neighborhood conditions, such as alleyway structures, sites of new housing construction, and locations of surface parking lots. This analysis was done either on-site, during the March visit, or through Google Earth. Homes that appeared newly constructed or recently renovated were identified on the parcel analysis map. Also noted were properties that currently use the alleyways, but if sold an available side lot, would no longer need the alleyway. These potential side lot sales were noted on the map *only when all alleyway users* could be accommodated by side lots, opening the door for the City to repurpose the alleyway as a tree planting strip or pathway for pedestrians and cyclists. A clip of this updated parcel analysis map is included as Figure 7.

Informed by the rich feedback provided by both local residents and stakeholders, a deeper understanding of parcel conditions, and data relevant to the systems of vacancy and abandonment, the project team developed and shared a draft Junction Open Space Action with the Land Bank in advance of a final site visit, held on June 1. During the final site visit, this draft was presented at a roundtable of Land Bank, City, and Coalition partners, and again at an evening community meeting at The Frederick Douglass Community Center (“The Doug”). Minor edits were made based on community and stakeholder feedback. In the next section, the final Junction Open Space Action Plan is broken up and presented as four Action Areas for convenience of the reader,

local stakeholders, and neighborhood advocates. The presentation of each Action Area includes corresponding illustrations of the final reuse concepts and the underlying parcel conditions, an overview of the community-based reuse concepts, and a detailed list of action steps the many partners may take to successfully implement the concepts.



Figure 7

Additional analysis of neighborhood conditions was conducted in the 'connective corridors' between the anchor sites, and the relevant attributes were overlaid on the initial parcel analysis map.

SECTION 3.

THE JUNCTION OPEN SPACE ACTION PLAN

The full illustration of the Junction Open Space Action Plan is included as Figure 8, but since the focus of this report has always been to make these ideas actionable, the plan is broken up and presented as four Action Areas. The Action Areas are defined by the connections between two of the identified neighborhood anchors, and are as follows:

Action Area 1: Savage Park and Swan Creek Connections

Action Area 2: Savage Park and Gunckel Park Connections

Action Area 3: Savage Park and Ella P. Stewart Academy Connections

Action Area 4: Ella P. Stewart Academy and The Doug Connections

For each area, we provide a basic overview of the featured reuse concepts, and a set of action steps the partners can take for implementation.

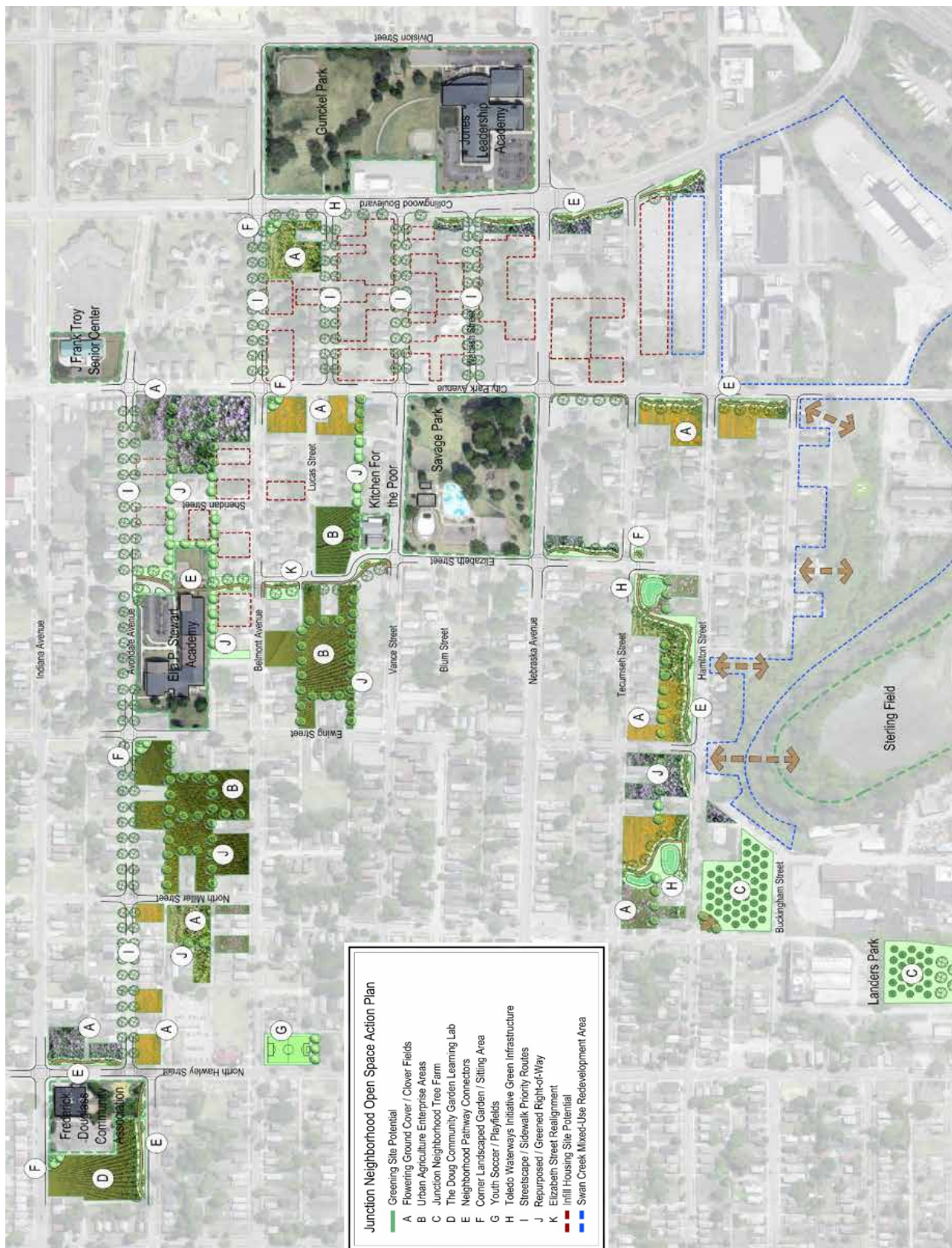


Figure 8:
Proposed Junction Open Space Action Plan.

ACTION AREA 1: SAVAGE PARK AND SWAN CREEK CONNECTIONS



Figure 9:

Action Area 1, including both the open space reuse concepts as well as the corresponding parcel analysis and legend.

OVERVIEW: SAVAGE PARK & SWAN CREEK AREA CONNECTIONS

South of Savage Park, there is evidence of widespread abandonment and distress, circumstances which favor the creation of permanent open space amenities. Projects to consider include: combining the two, distinct TWI green stormwater infrastructure sites (H) already under design into one multi-block TWI Learning Station; exploring the potential for a tree nursery or tree farm on the underutilized Landers Park or adjacent site (C); and building neighborhood pathways between these new amenities, Savage Park, and hopefully, the future redevelopment of Swan Creek.

While restoration and redevelopment concepts for Swan Creek are not included in this report, this natural asset represents an important opportunity for the neighborhood. Environmental contamination from past industrial uses will need to be addressed and remediated, but the properties along the north side of the creek are identified as priority environmental restoration sites in a 2015 study by the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG).²³ This broad footprint around Swan Creek can be redeveloped to include commercial, light industrial businesses, and recreation opportunities. These uses will make the Junction a regional destination, and if planned comprehensively, can enhance neighborhood connectivity by linking Sterling Field across the creek to the neighborhood park system.

A concentration of business and light industrial land uses already define this southern edge of the Junction Neighborhood. Property consolidation efforts in these blocks can provide further opportunities for open space related business growth, such as tree nurseries or, as a few residents suggested, even a Christmas Tree farm.

But what initial steps need to be taken by the City, Land Bank, and Coalition partners to implement some or all of these ideas? How can some of the key systems of vacancy and abandonment—code enforcement, tax enforcement, and land banking—be utilized to move from planning to action?

²³ TMACOG created a Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) Task Force in February 2014, and has taken a lead role in the region advancing the dialogue, analysis, and pilot projects related to reusing urban vacant land to install green infrastructure. TMACOG is an active partner in the Junction Coalition, and to date, has worked with the residents and Land Bank to plan and install the neighborhood's first two GSI sites. For more information on TMACOG's GSI Task Force, see http://www.tmacog.org/Environment/Green_Infrastructure/green_infrastructure.htm.

ACTION STEPS: SAVAGE PARK & SWAN CREEK AREA CONNECTIONS

The partners may want to start with the expanded green installation concept, which runs from North Miller Street to Elizabeth Street, between Hamilton and Tecumseh (as represented by Figure 10). All the parcels included in this footprint are either already owned by the City or Land Bank, scheduled for demolition with existing HHF funds, targeted as potential candidates for future HHF demolitions, or chronically tax delinquent privately owned lots.

The following are potential next steps for consideration:

1. The Land Bank could work with the County Treasurer to foreclose on all tax-delinquent, privately owned vacant lots on these two blocks (brown).
2. The Land Bank could include the “potential HHF candidates” (blue) in this footprint as top priorities for next round of demolition funding.
3. The Land Bank and Junction Coalition members could conduct outreach to the handful of homeowners who, if they all purchased an available side lot, could allow the City to shut the alleyway to vehicular traffic, and add tree canopy and beautification elements. Junction residents talking to their neighbors about the community benefits of these individual decisions will likely be better received than if the offer or request came from City officials.
4. The Parks Department and Engineering Department could expand the footprint of the TWI installation to the proposed area, and explore the costs of transforming the alleyway to a tree planting strip.
5. Consider having the Land Bank complete any side lot sales pursuant to eliminating the use of the alleyway. The Land Bank can complete these transactions with greater ease and flexibility. While homeowners should generally expect to pay a nominal cost for all side lot purchases, the partners may want to consider these side lot transactions cost-free, since the owners are also agreeing to relinquish rights to the public alleyway as part of a larger, publicly accessible reuse concept.
6. Once the footprint is assembled, all parcels could be merged and transferred back to the City for ownership. Since the TWI green infrastructure sites are the responsibility of City Engineering, and potential new tree planting strips in the right-of-way (ROW) will involve City Parks, it seems practical for this two-block, permanent green amenity to be owned by the City.

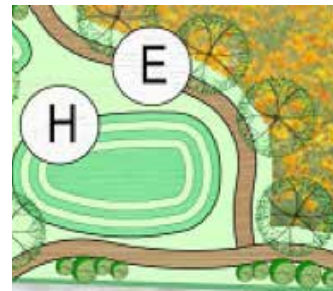


Figure 10:
Planned TWI Site in Action Area 1.

To implement the concepts on the eastern edge of the map, alongside City Park Avenue and referenced in Figure 11, the action plan is similar. Here, the idea is to add low-growth, flowering groundcover or clover fields, both of which were highly rated by residents as a top visual preference, and add a cost-effective, tree-lined walking path (for example, crushed stone). Partners may consider the following actions:

1. Before moving to foreclose on the NSP demo sites, the City should take steps to place a lien on the property for the full costs of demolition. One may rightly assume the owner has no interest in the property, but there is a remote chance that an owner, if provided notice of foreclosure, could choose to redeem if the amount of back taxes owed is minimal. Therefore, placing the lien on the parcel will ensure one of two outcomes: either the City will be fully reimbursed for all demolition costs or the lot will be transferred to the Land Bank.
2. After the demo liens are recorded, the County could pursue tax foreclosure on the heavily delinquent, privately owned vacant lots and NSP demo sites, and transfer all foreclosed properties to the Land Bank.
3. The Land Bank may want to merge all parcels, and transfer ownership to the City, since the reuse ideas in this section of Junction strongly lend themselves to permanent green spaces. However, before the Land Bank and City agree to consolidation and transfer, the Land Bank might explore how HHF funds could be used to carry out the clover installation or other greening interventions. In the northern portion of this pathway, there is one property slated for demolition with current HHF funds (green). In the southern portion, there is one potential candidate for future HHF funding. If all, or most, parcels are merged *before* the demolition, could the Land Bank use the \$6,000 available for greening to cover the entire footprint? Could the \$400 per year provided for maintenance be used across the entire footprint? If so, then the Land Bank may want to retain ownership through the required three-year holding period, and then transfer these parcels to the City. The HHF demolitions in this footprint might already be complete, which renders the above moot for this site. However, this proposed tactic, if feasible, might prove very effective throughout the Junction to “stretch” the HHF dollars for the installation and maintenance of larger greening projects.

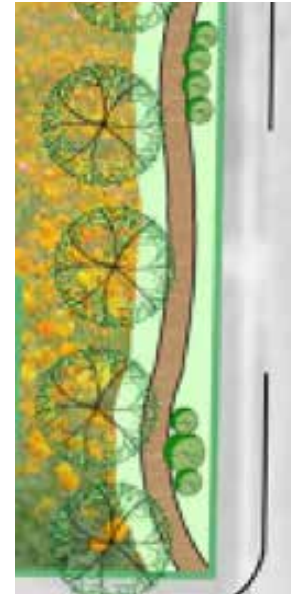


Figure 11:
Proposed neighborhood
pathway in Action Area 1.

ACTION AREA 2: SAVAGE PARK AND GUNCKEL PARK CONNECTIONS

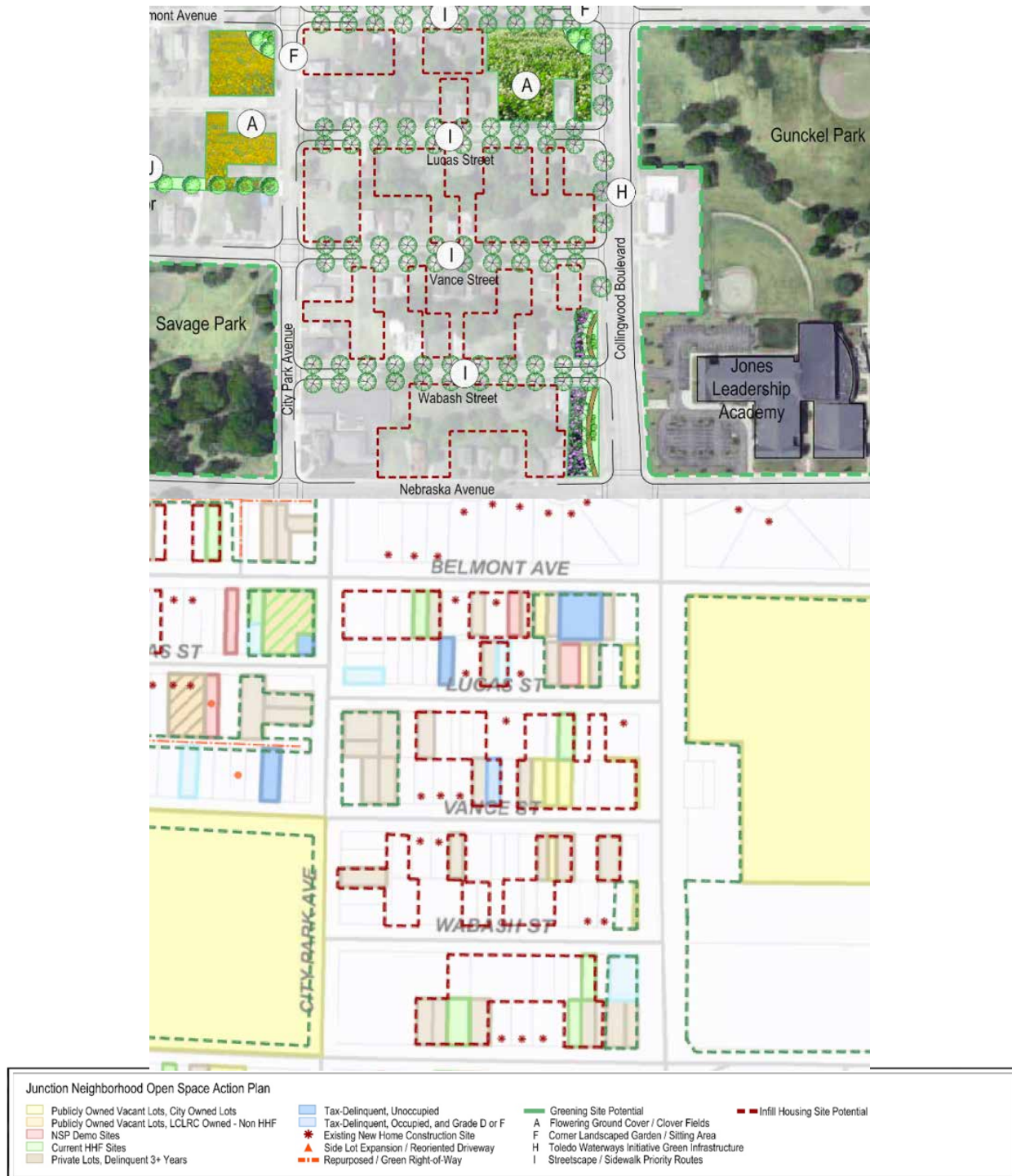


Figure 12:

Action Area 2, including both the open space reuse concepts as well as the corresponding parcel analysis and legend.

OVERVIEW: SAVAGE PARK AND GUNCKEL PARK CONNECTIONS

According to residents, both Savage Park and Gunckel Park are prized recreational destinations in the Junction Neighborhood. More residents use Savage Park, however, because both City Park Avenue and Collinwood Boulevard are busy, difficult roads to cross with very limited pedestrian and cyclist amenities. Focusing efforts to strengthen the connectivity between the two parks through infrastructure investments, and supporting ongoing redevelopment trends, will be the most impactful approach to catalyzing positive change in this portion of the Junction Neighborhood.

The streets between the two parks are characterized by large tree lawns and a significant amount of new home development. Substantial residential projects, such as Collingwood Green—the multi-phase, \$46 million development project of modern affordable apartments by the Lucas Metropolitan Housing Authority—and market-rate subdivision housing on both sides of Collingwood Avenue—are within a couple blocks of this northeastern corner of the Junction neighborhood. Due to proximity of both large city parks and a cluster of new residential construction at various points along the price spectrum, this seems like an ideal area to focus on assembling parcels, resetting parcel boundaries where necessary, and working with nonprofit and private developers to support residential infill: both affordable and market-rate, single-family and two-family (investor-owner).²⁴ As part of this strategy to attract residential infill, the City should also focus on creating safer, more comfortable pedestrian connections within this focus area. The City should invest in streetscape improvements and tree plantings on the short cross streets (Vance, Lucas, Wabash, etc.), and explore partnering with TMACOG and Ohio's Department of Transportation to add enhanced crosswalks on Collingwood as part of the green infrastructure basins currently under design along key stretches of this important boulevard (see H on the top map in Figure 12).

Along both City Park Avenue and Collingwood Boulevard a number of contiguous properties can be consolidated in order to install temporary low-maintenance beautification treatments. These groups of parcels can become targeted properties for institutional redevelopment in the future. Cost-effective neighborhood pathways to link existing and future neighborhood anchors can be created along the street edge to complement the TWI green infrastructure basins planned for this stretch of Collingwood Avenue.

²⁴ Recommendations on housing are entirely based on Community Progress' experience in other similarly distressed communities and our limited analysis of the Junction neighborhood, and not a rigorous analysis of the local and regional housing market, including trends, supply and demand. Both a citywide and even regional housing market analysis would help identify the most appropriate policies, programs, and sites for offering more housing choices in the greater Toledo area.

ACTION STEPS: SAVAGE PARK AND GUNCKEL PARK CONNECTIONS

The steps for assembling parcels for future residential development are similar to those outlined previously. The City would need to first record the NSP demolition liens, then the Land Bank and the County Treasurer's Office could work together to foreclose on all delinquent lots (brown) and NSP lots (red), as illustrated in Figure 13. The Land Bank may consider retaining ownership of all "footprints" in this area, as it may be better positioned to support infill or work more flexibly with potential investors. If that is the case, the City would also want to consider transferring to the Land Bank the parcels they own (yellow) within these footprints. Other potential actions include:

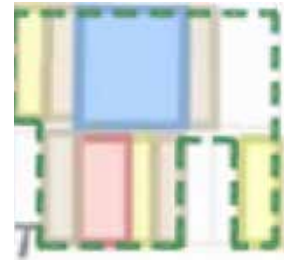


Figure 13:
Land assemblage opportunity
in Action Area 2.

1. The City and/or Land Bank may want to explore the purchase of privately owned lots as part of creating larger footprints, an action that is unique to this area.
2. City Parks and BAT may want to remove all dead trees and overgrowth from these targeted infill lots, and consider planting new tree lines (street trees) where appropriate in this area to help set the stage for private investment.
3. City Engineering and TMACOG may want to engage Ohio DOT reps and discuss both enhanced crosswalks to improve pedestrian safety, and how such investments might be coordinated with the TWI green infrastructure basins planned and under final design by City Engineering for this stretch along Collingwood, which is shown below in Figure 14.

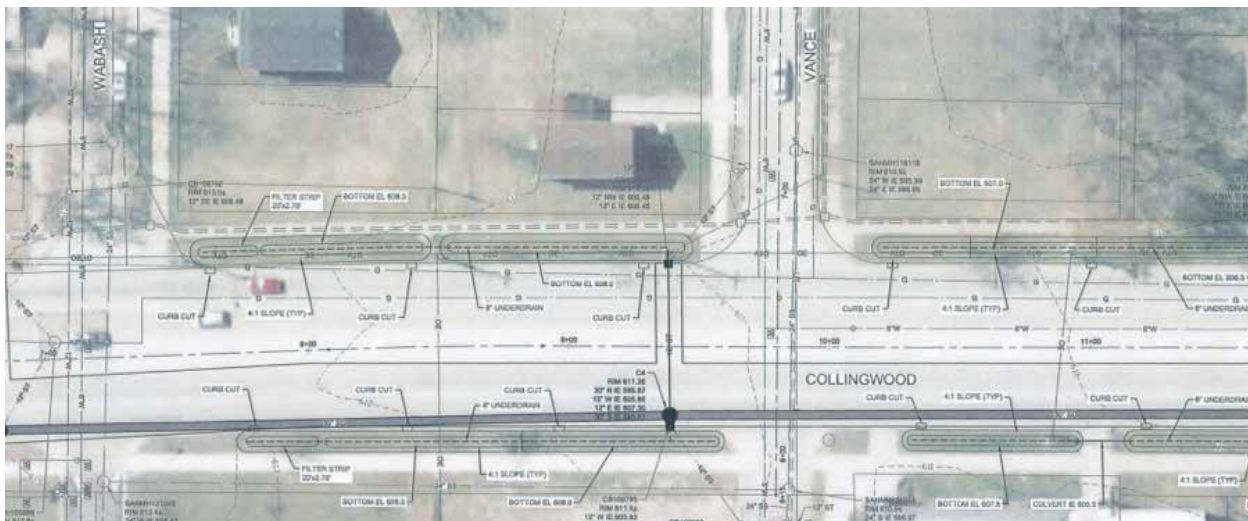


Figure 14

Depiction of a portion of the TWI installation, which consists of tree basins and bioswales, along both sides of Collingwood Avenue. The full installation will stretch from Wabash Street up to Belmont Avenue, which is entirely in **Action Area 2: Savage Park and Gunckel Park Connections**. As recommended above, City Engineering and TMACOG should consider engaging Ohio DOT reps to discuss and coordinate a multi-faceted investment of streetscape enhancements and pedestrian amenities to improve the safety of non-motorists traveling between these two important municipal parks. *Source: City of Toledo Engineering Department, March 2016.*

ACTION AREA 3: SAVAGE PARK AND ELLA P. STEWART ACADEMY CONNECTIONS

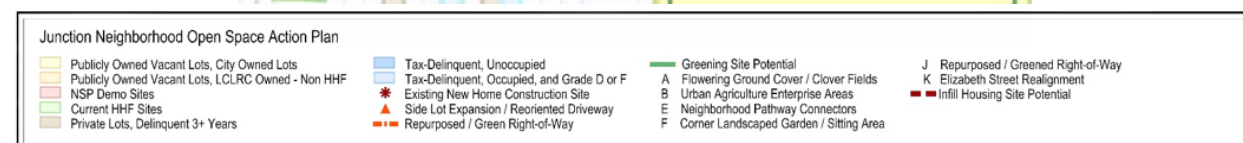


Figure 15:
Action Area 3, including both the open space reuse concepts as well as the corresponding parcel analysis and legend.

OVERVIEW: SAVAGE PARK AND ELLA P. STEWART ACADEMY CONNECTIONS

The broad corridor linking Savage Park to Ella P. Stewart Academy is one of the most chaotic sections in the neighborhood's block structure. The awkward intersections and street layout is peppered with vacant land and scattered structures—new homes, abandoned homes, and boarded-up homes. This area is also home to the MLK Kitchen for the Poor, one of the most revered institutions in the neighborhood. Started in 1969 by the late Reverend Harvey Savage Sr. (the namesake for Junction's iconic park), the kitchen currently feeds more than 200 people a day, and remains a force of compassion and place of fellowship for many of the Junction's residents.

The reuse concept for this area features three key elements:

1. Realignment of Elizabeth Street between Vance and Belmont, and creating neighborhood pathways in the existing rights-of-way. This might be the most substantial investment proposed in this action plan, but it figures centrally in re-imagining and re-activating an area in Junction that already has exceptional assets and evokes strong emotional connections from the residents.
2. Conversion of underutilized alleyways, given the high level of vacancy, to tree planting and greening strips to address the tree canopy deficit in the Junction, which the Acting Park's Director described as the worst in the City and acknowledged is a priority to address. Some alleyways are currently serving only a couple of remaining residents, so successful side lot sales to these existing residents would eliminate the need for vehicular access along rear alleyways. Repurposing the alleyways also allows for more contiguous land assembly, supporting the kind of attractive and creative redevelopment projects that could transform the area that seems to be the heart and soul of the Junction neighborhood.
3. Large-scale land assembly. And one of those transformative projects might be partnering with the MLK Kitchen for the Poor to plan, manage, and incubate a Junction Enterprise Farm. With support from potential partners such as Toledo GROWS, the Toledo Botanical Council, and ProMedica and Mercy Health Systems, the Junction Enterprise Farm could serve as a youth summer jobs program and urban agriculture training program, while growing healthy food for the MLK Kitchen for the Poor. Combined with the proposed "The Doug Community Garden Learning Lab," Junction could become the city's urban agricultural enterprise zone, which in time could support recreational tourism. A summary of four case studies of successful efforts of urban farms and agricultural enterprises is included as Appendix G.

Finally, this is the only other area in the Junction where recently constructed homes are clustered, and the highly regarded all-girls school is another institutional strength to build around. Assembling vacant lots to support either side lot sales to existing homeowners or future residential infill is another tactic that ought to be done in tandem with the reuse elements above.

ACTION STEPS: SAVAGE PARK AND ELLA P. STEWART ACADEMY CONNECTIONS

1. Junction Coalition and partners may want to convene a meeting with Kitchen for the Poor leaders and volunteers, and discuss interest in creating the Junction Urban Farm as part of the Kitchen's mission. If interested, the next step may be to ask the leaders at Toledo-LISC and Toledo GROWS for help and guidance in launching this project (soil would need to be tested, grants secured, residents trained, etc.). ProMedica and Mercy Health Systems may also be asked to be key institutional sponsors, as the project strongly aligns with identified community health needs.²⁵
2. As for assembling land pursuant to the footprints and concepts indicated, the steps would be similar to those described in the previous areas:
 - a. The City would need to first record any NSP demolition liens, then the Land Bank and the County Treasurer's Office could work together to foreclose on all delinquent lots (brown) and NSP lots (red).
 - b. If the Land Bank plans to retain ownership of all "footprints" in this area, the City would also want to consider transferring to the Land Bank the parcels they own (yellow) within these footprints.
3. The Land Bank may want to prioritize acquiring the chronically tax delinquent, privately owned lots (brown) that are recommended as either side lot sales to adjacent owners of recently constructed homes or infill sites for new single-family or two-family homes. Improving these neglected, abandoned lots immediately around the school would improve children's perceived sense of safety and overall appearance around this important neighborhood anchor.
4. Junction Coalition members are encouraged to present the concepts and action plan to school leaders and engage them in discussion about reuse projects that might align with the school's educational mission and curriculum.
5. The most dramatic and costly idea in this area is realigning Elizabeth Street, and expectations of residents need to be realistic, tempered by the City's current inability to even fund road repairs due to structural budget challenges. While it may be five years or more before this work could be completed, the City could still conduct preliminary investigations into the feasibility and costs of realigning Elizabeth Street, and share these findings with the Junction Coalition no later than September 2017.

²⁵ In Toledo, ProMedica is already laudably engaged in this work. The hospital built and opened in 2015 a full-service grocery store in Uptown, a food desert. It seems reasonable to assume ProMedica might find interest in continuing to support the local foods and healthy lifestyles movement, particularly in underserved neighborhoods with higher rates of childhood obesity, hunger, and malnutrition. Another great example of an anchor hospital supporting this work is ProMedica Bixby Hospital in Lenawee County, Michigan. ProMedica is a strong partner of the Lenawee Health Network and in 2012 secured a grant award to support the launch of the Veggie Mobile in an effort to bring fresh, affordable produce to underserved residents of the County (for more information, see <http://lenaweevereggiemobile.com/#home>).

ACTION AREA 4: ELLA P. STEWART ACADEMY AND THE DOUG CONNECTIONS

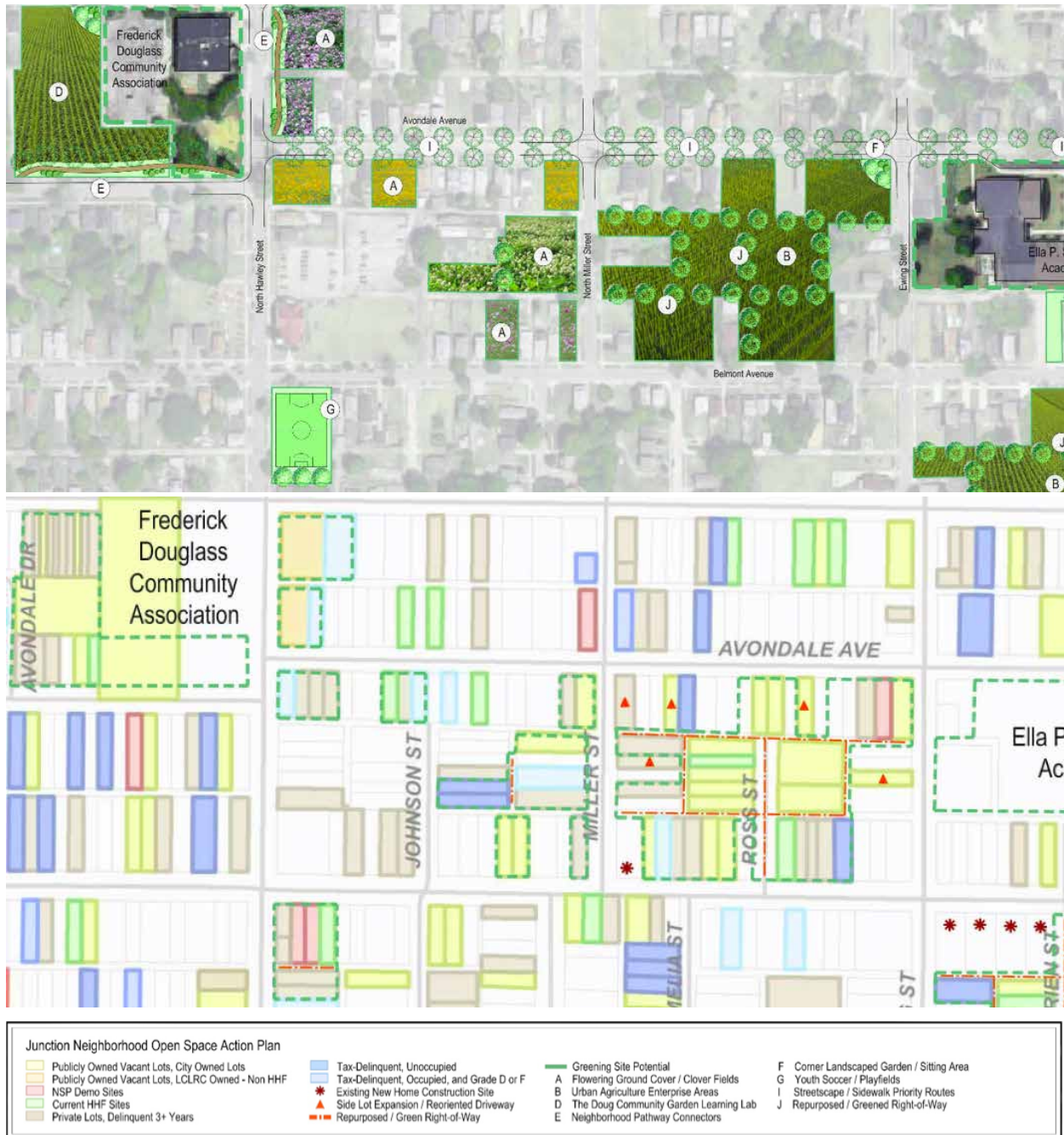


Figure 16:

Action Area 4, including both the open space reuse concepts as well as the corresponding parcel analysis and legend.

OVERVIEW: ELLA P. STEWART ACADEMY AND THE DOUG CONNECTIONS

The blocks connecting Ella P. Stewart Academy and The Doug are characterized by significant vacancy rates, which again present large-scale, land reutilization opportunities. The alley network between Belmont, Ewing, Miller, and Indiana can be almost entirely repurposed to unite vast expanses of property. With nearly two thirds of the block able to be consolidated, the opportunity exists for a larger venture (for example, a solar farm, vineyard, or tree farm), whereas fields of wildflowers might be more appropriate for the scattered sites on the blocks heading west.

Approximately sixteen nuisance residential lots immediately adjacent to the parking lot of The Doug can be consolidated and merged into the community center's footprint to further strengthen the mission and presence of this important neighborhood asset. One concept might be to establish The Doug Community Garden Learning Lab to support the ongoing healthy living programming the center provides. As mentioned previously, the Learning Lab could be programmatically linked to the Junction Enterprise Farm to build a node of urban agriculture that helps rebrand the neighborhood and draw in investments, ultimately generating economic, social, and environmental benefits for the Junction residents.

Another land consolidation and reuse opportunity exists at the southeast corner of Belmont and North Hawley Street, just one full block south of The Doug. The footprint includes two NSP demo sites, one Land Bank site slated for demolition with current HHF funds, and five chronically tax-delinquent privately owned lots. Residents expressed interest in a turf field or a simple grass field to provide children a safe place to run around, and this might be the ideal site to experiment with one passive rec field. Another option is to consider an additional green infrastructure basin, since it is just one block east of the Belmont-Forest green infrastructure site planned by TMACOG and the City, in partnership with the Junction Coalition. According to TMACOG officials, the Belmont-Forest site will be completed by the end of this summer.

Finally, neighborhood pathways can be created to further strengthen the physical connectivity between The Doug and the neighborhood, with streetscape enhancements prioritized along Avondale Avenue to create a safe, pleasing corridor for pedestrians and cyclists to travel between these neighborhood anchors.

ACTION STEPS: ELLA P. STEWART ACADEMY AND THE DOUG CONNECTIONS

The action steps required to advance any of the above concepts have been discussed in prior sections, and can be easily replicated in this area. For instance, there was great interest expressed by stakeholders and officials during the final site visit about acquiring the chronically tax-delinquent lots immediately adjacent to The Doug. Perhaps this ought to be prioritized, which would entail the following steps:

1. The Land Bank could work with the County Treasurer to foreclose on all tax-delinquent, privately owned vacant lots on these two blocks (brown).
2. The City could transfer the parcels it owns in this footprint to the Land Bank.
3. The Land Bank can work with the Junction Coalition and partners to secure funding, and any applications developed for grant programs may include the proposed agricultural enterprise sites at both The Doug and adjacent to the MLK Kitchen for the Poor to demonstrate a long-term vision of the Junction as Toledo's agricultural hub and enterprise zone.

SECTION 4.

FROM PLANNING TO ACTION: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The ideas and concepts in the Junction Open Space Action Plan were generated with an understanding of and respect for resident preferences, ongoing or planned investments, neighborhood housing market dynamics, and the lack of resources for large, transformative projects. Underpinning all of these concepts is an assumption that the City, Land Bank, and Coalition partners will reach a common understanding of roles and responsibilities when it comes to ownership, maintenance, and disposition and reuse. In other words, the success in moving from a plan to action is contingent on strong and ongoing coordination, communication, and agreement between the City, Land Bank, and Junction stakeholders on these key issues.

This section outlines five key recommendations that the City, Land Bank, and Coalition partners will want to keep in mind as next steps are considered:

1. As much as possible, bring privately owned, abandoned vacant lots and publicly owned lots under common ownership of the Land Bank to streamline maintenance operations and allow for more flexible, nimble disposition and reuse strategies.
2. Earmark substantial amounts of dollars under the fifth and final HHF award to carry out greening treatments post-demolition—even if this means fewer demolitions—and think creatively about stretching these greening dollars for greatest impact.
3. Capitalize on the proposed TWI green infrastructure sites, and rethink these investments to be more than just engineered, fixed assets to help manage stormwater.
4. Develop a more systemic approach to recovering the costs of abating nuisances on privately owned properties.
5. Consider a two-year pilot ownership and maintenance framework in the Junction.

RECOMMENDATION #1: THE BENEFITS OF COMMON OWNERSHIP

Right now, there are multiple different owners and maintenance strategies running side-by-side throughout the city. With a focus just on the Junction, it looks something like this:

- 643 privately owned, chronically tax-delinquent lots are being cared for by the City's Beautification Action Team year-round, as time and resources permit
- 300 City-owned lots are being mowed once a month by either a local private landscaping firm or a faith-based community group pursuant to a seasonal contract with the City
- 200 Land Bank-owned lots (including all current HHF sites), are being mowed once a month by a local private landscaping firm pursuant to a seasonal contract with the Land Bank

Consider this half-block stretch of properties between Blum Street and Nebraska Avenue, shown in Figure 17, which has a number of contiguous properties that will all be maintained in a different way this summer. BAT will likely handle clean-ups and mows on the brown parcels, a City-hired contractor will mow the grass on the yellow parcels, and a Land Bank-hired contractor will mow the grass on the green parcels.

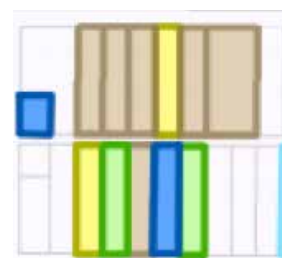


Figure 17:
A bundle of contiguous properties in the Junction being maintained differently.

All of these parcels could be brought under one owner, allowing for a more streamlined approach to maintenance. Streamlined doesn't mean free, of course, and the sunk costs of vacant land maintenance will always present a resource challenge to the partners in Toledo. But moving all parcels under a common ownership will not only streamline the maintenance plan each summer, but also allow residents and partners to experiment with temporary, cost-effective treatments. Could the entire footprint in this example be cleaned and beautified using a "signature" treatment, such as the split-rail fence and clover treatment used by Philadelphia Horticultural Society under its LandCare Program (which is shown in Figure 20)?

Throughout Junction, there are many examples like the one above, where contiguous problem properties and vacant lots present an opportunity for common ownership by the Land Bank that could result in improved maintenance practices and ensure disposition and reuse policies remain flexible, nimble, and driven by neighborhood goals. Another well-known example is between Lucas and Vance Streets, as shown in Figure 18, just west of Pickett Academy Elementary School and the recently completed green infrastructure installation at 718 Hoag

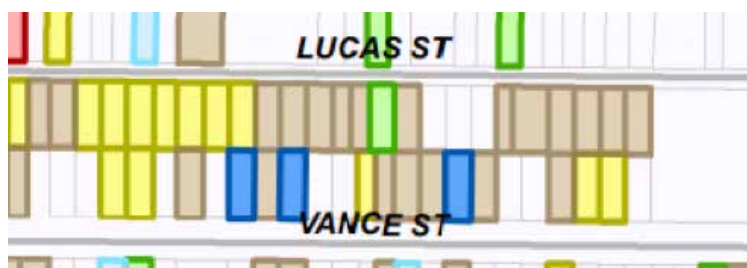


Figure 18:
This block has one of the highest concentrations of vacant lots in the Junction, is strategically located between Pickett Academy and Junction Avenue, and is creatively re-imagined in the Greening Junction Plan.

The Land Bank may want to coordinate with the County Treasurer's Office to move all chronically tax-delinquent lots (brown) in this footprint through foreclosure, and consider again a cost-effective, signature treatment on the length of this street. While temporary, the treatment will dramatically improve both the look and perceived sense of safety, and allow for a streamlined, more routine maintenance schedule. As this footprint was the location of one of the featured concepts in the Greening Junction Plan, the move to acquire this footprint at least opens the door to consider grant opportunities to advance the more costly, elaborate redevelopment concept outlined in that plan.

RECOMMENDATION #2: BE CREATIVE WITH HHF BECAUSE GREENING MATTERS

As mentioned previously, another opportunity worth exploring is whether the Land Bank can strategically stretch the dollars that HHF expressly allows to green the vacant lots post-demolition. Take for instance the parcel footprint shown in Figure 19, which is near the Tecumseh/Junction intersection. Green parcels indicate structures slated for demolition by the Land Bank with its existing HHF award. Suppose the County foreclosed on all the tax-delinquent lots (brown), and transferred title to the Land Bank. If the Land Bank first merged the side lots to the targeted property, and *then* demolished the structure, it seems it could apply the \$6,000 allowed for greening treatments to these larger lots, making a greater impact.



Figure 19:
HHF sites immediately adjacent to abandoned, privately owned lots.

More than just *stretching* HHF greening dollars, the Land Bank is encouraged to *earmark* substantial dollars for greening under the fifth and final round of HHF grant awards, even if this means demolishing fewer properties. A large-scale demolition campaign without an effective maintenance plan or any near-term reuse/redevelopment strategy for the resultant lots is little more than exchanging vertical blight for horizontal blight. A neglected and abandoned lot will still negatively impact immediate neighbors and dissuade potential investors—and the research bears this out. Studies show that greening lots can positively influence a range of neighborhood variables, resulting in such outcomes as higher property values, increased homeownership rates, decreased crime, and enhanced sense of safety among neighbors (a summary of this research is included as Appendix H). Therefore, a strong case can be made to carve out a small amount of *any* demolition program or grant—not just the HHF grants—for greening and ongoing maintenance of vacant lots.²⁶

²⁶ The City of Baltimore, for example, allocates 5% of its annual demolition program to its Growing Green Initiative, which helps to deal with the sunk maintenance costs of vacant land and explore cost-effective, community-based stewardship programs.

RECOMMENDATION #3: SEIZE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE MULTIPLE GOALS

Repurposing residential vacant lots for green stormwater infrastructure is becoming more prevalent in many communities across the country, and the Junction has already seen some success with pilot installations thanks to partnerships with TMACOG, the Land Bank, the City and other community partners. But perhaps most importantly, the Open Space Action Plan points to tremendous opportunities to expand a few of the planned TWI green infrastructure sites in the Junction to achieve greater impact and as part of a long-term strategic vision for this neighborhood.

To this end, the City Engineering Department and TMACOG may want to revisit a few of the TWI green infrastructure basins, particularly those called out in Action Areas 1 and 2, and explore expanding the footprints and integrating into the final design multiple amenities and treatments discussed in this action plan. The seven sites are currently under final design, with a construction start date of September 2017 and completion date of May 2020, so this recommendation is made with some urgency.

Additionally, the City may want to consider allocating stormwater utility fees, a recurring and reliable annual funding source, to support expansion of the planned green infrastructure sites in the Junction, as well as community-based maintenance training programs (with Junction residents prioritized). The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS) funds a Good Neighbor Ambassador Program that hires residents from the neighborhood most impacted by the construction of large gray and green stormwater infrastructure projects to lead community education and outreach efforts, and generally serve as liaisons between the district and the residents.²⁷ Onondaga County (NY), through its award-winning Save the Rain initiative, has consistently partnered with Onondaga Earth Corps (OEC), a youth empowerment organization, to assist with program implementation (i.e., tree planting and rain garden installation) and site maintenance (rain garden maintenance).²⁸ Whereas Onondaga County's sewer district had contracted with OEC for about \$35,000 every summer, the district issued a carefully drafted RFP earlier this year with the goal to contract with OEC for about \$130,000-150,000 per year, a dramatic expansion of the partnership.

RECOMMENDATION #4: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COST RECOVERY AND CODE LIENS

At the start of this TASP engagement, the city's Neighborhood, Housing, and Code leaders estimated they incur about \$1.6 to \$1.8 million in costs abating nuisances at vacant properties (structures and lots), and the Toledo Cost of Blight Study affirmed that estimate, concluding that Code Enforcement and BAT incur \$1,788,370 in costs on vacant properties.

²⁷ A brief summary of the goals and accomplishments of NEORS's Good Neighbor Ambassador Program is available here: <https://www.gcpartnership.com/~media/Files%202015/Inclusion%202015/Good%20Neighbor%20Ambassador%20Program%20Overview%20and%20Report%20Q3.ashx>

²⁸ A brief summary and evaluation of the partnership is available here: http://savetherain.us/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/OEI-OEC_DemoProjectsReport.pdf

Currently, the City does not fully seek to recover all costs incurred by BAT. To be clear, invoices to cover BAT's time and costs are mailed to owners, but if the bill goes unpaid, the City makes no additional follow-up or other effort to collect. City officials report that only 1-2% of the amount billed is ever collected.

Fortunately, based on feedback from City and County officials, it appears one of the most effective approaches used elsewhere to recover abatement costs—or compel a change in ownership to a responsible party—can be implemented locally. City staff reported that demolition liens and most housing and building code violation liens may be enforced by the City of Toledo through the City's Law Department and an authorized code lien foreclosure process. ***Going forward, the City should strongly consider recording unpaid bills for BAT services as a lien on the property and developing a more systematic approach to cost recovery.***

The City may understandably be hesitant to incur the administrative costs of lien recording on properties that are already saddled with tax liens and likely abandoned. However, a more critical review of the circumstances suggests at least three reasons in favor of recording the liens. First, the difference between the amounts invoiced each year and the very low collection rate represents a possibility of generating revenue to at least cover the additional administrative expenditures of lien enforcement. Presumably *some* portion of the 98-99% not currently collected is collectible. As has been seen elsewhere, particularly in New Orleans, increased enforcement will also likely increase voluntary compliance and likely decrease the amount of remediation the City needs to undertake in the first place.²⁹

Second, the Toledo Cost of Blight Study completed as part of this TASP engagement provides a number of insights. Most importantly, although the costs of vacancy and abandonment in Toledo are staggering, the greatest costs come from doing nothing. The City has options: it can focus only on how to be better de facto property managers for thousands of irresponsible owners of nuisance properties, or in partnership with the Land Bank, County, and neighborhood groups, it can show a more sustained commitment to either recovering costs for such services or enforcing the code lien to compel a transfer of ownership to help advance more creative and hopeful reuses of vacant land.



Figure 20:

The above are before/after pictures of a vacant lot in Philadelphia that received the signature treatment under Philadelphia Horticultural Society's LandCare Program.

²⁹ The successful efforts taken by the City of New Orleans to combat vacancy and abandonment, including code lien enforcement, are outlined in the City's 2014 Blight Reduction Report, which is available online here: http://www.nola.gov/getattachment/Performance-and-Accountability/Initiatives-and-Reports/BlightSTAT/Blight-Report_web.pdf/.

Third, there is a possibility that as the County initiates tax foreclosures on tax delinquent vacant lots pursuant to these open space concepts, some owners that have saddled the City for years with maintenance responsibilities may redeem and retain ownership of their lots. While this is unlikely, it is a possibility, and yet another reason why the City ought to consider immediately enforcing all housing and building code violation liens on vacant properties.³⁰

In sum, if partners agree to a framework going forward that includes moving more abandoned properties through the tax foreclosure process, there should only be two acceptable outcomes: either the owner redeems the property and fully repays the City for all the costs it incurred to maintain the neglected property, or all the liens are extinguished via a completed foreclosure and the property is transferred to the Land Bank as a responsible, trusted steward to advance a neighborhood's priorities and goals.

RECOMMENDATION #5: ONE POSSIBLE FRAMEWORK

As the partners meet to discuss an ownership and maintenance framework that acknowledges the limitations of the status quo, one possible scenario is provided below to help guide the discussion:

- The Land Bank might consider acquiring all chronically tax delinquent, privately owned vacant lots pursuant to an agreement with City and stakeholders on a two-year pilot ownership and maintenance framework in the Junction neighborhood. The County could move lots through the tax foreclosure process in batches, as prioritized by the Action Areas above.
- The City and the Land Bank might consider an intergovernmental agreement in which the City's Beautification Action Team would provide maintenance (mowing and trash clean-up) on vacant lots acquired by the Land Bank through the tax foreclosure process and pursuant to this pilot free of charge or at a steeply discounted rate (for example, \$10 a mowing). The agreement might also provide the Land Bank with general fund or CDBG dollars to administer, oversee, and expand the promising T-Town Proud Community Maintenance Program in the Junction neighborhood. To be clear, the City's Director of the Department of Neighborhoods and the Commissioner of Code Enforcement deserve applause and recognition for launching this creative community-based maintenance program. However, the reason for this recommendation is because Land Banks are uniquely positioned to tap philanthropic, private, and even nonprofit grants to support community-based maintenance programs—additional funding sources that are typically unavailable to local governments. For starters, the Land Bank might be able to leverage its \$400 per year maintenance stipend for HHF lots over the next few years to help fund, incubate, and expand these community-based maintenance programs.

³⁰ In time, enforcement of housing and building code liens should extend to all properties, including occupied properties, but that inevitably raises questions about equity. Given the high poverty rates in Toledo, there are likely many homeowners and mom-and-pop landlords that may want to do the right thing, but lack the resources to bring their home or investment property up to code. Community Progress encourages the Land Bank, City and community partners take time to think through and develop appropriate financial hardship programs or other alternative solutions that are equitable and protect the safety and health of all residents.

- The City and Land Bank might also discuss co-funding a new urban land use planner position at the Land Bank, with 50% of the salary and benefits provided by the City through its annual CDBG budget. Such an expense would qualify under the Planning and Administration category.³¹ As an alternative to CDBG funds, a capacity-building grant from local foundations or LISC-Toledo may also support this dedicated position. The fifth and final round of HHF funding, as well as the open space concepts outlined in this action plan, offer a promising but limited window of opportunity to think creatively and strategically about vacant land maintenance and reuse. A dedicated staff member could prove the difference between effectively running a demolition campaign, and managing and re-imagining demolition sites as constituent pieces of a transformative, hopeful neighborhood action plan that the Junction residents deserve.

³¹ For example, though not a land bank, the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation has assumed responsibility for most neighborhood planning efforts in the City of Youngstown, and receives an annual allocation from the City's CDBG budget to deliver these services.

SECTION 5.

CONCLUSION

Toledo, like so many other former manufacturing centers in the Rust Belt, faces a long climb back to full vitality and shared prosperity. However, Toledo can speak of recent accomplishments and boast of key assets that few struggling municipalities can echo. Four years ago, Toledo had nearly 3,000 abandoned, blighted properties in need of demolition, at a time when the Great Recession was starting to wreak havoc on the budgets of local governments. The prospects looked dim. Yet thanks to more than \$25 million in unexpected state and federal grants in recent years, the City could very well have all of these unsafe, blighted structures removed by 2019—a remarkable outcome nobody would have predicted back in 2012, and one that deserves applause and celebration. Additionally, Toledo has the benefit of a coalition of smart, dedicated public leaders at key institutions, such as the Land Bank, the County Treasury, the City, and the regional planning agency. Finally, the City benefits from state laws that have enabled effective code enforcement systems, efficient tax enforcement and foreclosure systems, and well-funded land banks—offering up interventions and strategies that not all communities can pursue in the face of systemic blight.

So while Toledo's challenges may be steep and systemic, it has all the right resources, leaders, and tools to achieve significant and speedy gains—especially when compassionate and determined residents, like those at the heart of the Junction Coalition, refuse to accept the status quo, and advocate and work for a future they know is possible. It is our hope that this Junction Open Space Action Plan, and the accompanying Toledo Cost of Blight Study, offer clarity and focus to the many dedicated stakeholders working to achieve a vibrant, healthy, and resilient city for all.

APPENDIX A. KEY LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS WHO SHARED INSIGHTS AND TIME

David Mann, President, Lucas County Land Bank

Josh Murnen, Vice President and General Counsel, Lucas County Land Bank

Shantae Brownlee, Vice President and Director of Community Engagement, Lucas County Land Bank

Anne Wistow, Secretary and Projects Manager, Lucas County Land Bank

Wade Kapszukiewicz, Chairman of Lucas County Land Bank Board and Lucas County Treasurer

Karen Poore, Chief Deputy Treasurer, Lucas County

Alicia Smith, Junction Coalition Organizer and All-Around Advocate for All Things Good

Kimberly Cutcher, Executive Director, Toledo LISC

Kari Gerwin, Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments

Rob Krain, Executive Director, Black Swamp Conservancy

Jerry Kellman, Senior Advisor, National Community Reinvestment Coalition

Melissa Greene, Director, Toledo-Lucas County Sustainability Commission

Paula Hicks-Hudson, Mayor, City of Toledo

Alan Bannister, Executive Assistant, Office of the Mayor, City of Toledo

Carrie Hartman, Administrative Assistant, Office of the Mayor, City of Toledo

Tom Kroma, Director, Department of Neighborhoods, City of Toledo

Cindy Geronimo, Commissioner, Division of Code Enforcement, City of Toledo

John Madigan, General Counsel, Law Department, City of Toledo

Abby Arnold, Commissioner, Utilities Administration, City of Toledo

Scott Sibley, Administrator of Utility Engineering, City of Toledo

Lisa Ward, Acting Commissioner, Division of Parks, Recreation and Forestry, City of Toledo

George Sarantou, Director, Department of Finance, City of Toledo

Bryan Benner, Commissioner, Division of Debt Management, City of Toledo

Jessica Daniels, Crime Analyst II, Police Department, City of Toledo

APPENDIX B. SUMMARY OF TOLEDO COST OF BLIGHT STUDY KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

TOLEDO COST OF BLIGHT STUDY

A. KEY FINDINGS

ANNUAL DIRECT COSTS AND LOST TAX REVENUE FROM VACANCY AND
ABANDONMENT IN TOLEDO

\$9,200,000

CUMULATIVE LOST RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY VALUES IMPOSED BY VACANCY AND
ABANDONMENT IN TOLEDO

\$98,700,000

A breakdown of the annual direct costs and lost tax revenue from vacant properties:³²

| ANNUAL COST ESTIMATES | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| | Vacant Land | Vacant Buildings | Total Vacant Properties |
| SERVICE COSTS | \$1,842,564 | \$1,977,925 | \$3,820,488 |
| Code Enforcement (Inspections/Enforcement) | \$134,224 | \$858,460 | \$992,683 |
| Beautification Action Team (BAT) | \$489,653 | \$306,033 | \$795,686 |
| Police Department Dispatch Costs | \$293,185 | \$319,335 | \$612,520 |
| Fire Department Dispatch Costs | \$925,502 | \$494,097 | \$1,419,599 |
| | | | |
| TAX DELINQUENCY COSTS | | | |
| Annualized, Estimated Tax Delinquency | \$1,542,259 | \$1,167,642 | \$2,709,901 |
| | | | |
| SPILLOVER COSTS | | | |
| Annual Decline in Property Tax Revenues | N/A | \$2,678,295 | \$2,678,295 |
| TOTAL ESTIMATED COSTS | \$3,384,823 | \$5,823,862 | \$9,208,684 |

³² These costs are not comprehensive. They do not include some service costs to the City of Toledo, including “cleaning and cutting” costs incurred by the Department of Public Works for yard maintenance or court costs (solicitor’s office, public defender’s office, and municipal court), or costs incurred by the Economic Development Department or the Toledo City Land Bank. Costs (other than loss of tax revenue) associated with tax delinquency and enforcement on vacant/abandoned properties are also not included. To review the full Toledo Cost of Blight Study, visit www.communityprogress.net.

B. KEY OBSERVATIONS

1. Intergovernmental collaboration and data-tracking is critical to establish baseline costs; ensure comprehensive and coordinated tracking of data points related to vacancy, abandonment, and blight; and track improvements and cost savings over time.
2. The online, GIS-enabled Toledo Parcel Survey managed by the Lucas County Land Bank provides a critical baseline of data and an excellent foundation upon which to build.
3. Positive data-management and operational reforms are underway in the Department of Neighborhoods.
4. The police and fire data were helpful, but currently not stored in a uniform, easily accessible, or mappable format.

C. TOP RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Lucas County Land Bank and City ought to consider the following:
 - a. Land Bank, County Treasurer, and City institute monthly meetings of a more formal “Vacant and Abandoned Property Task Force” (Task Force).
 - b. In addition to Neighborhoods + Code, Fire, and Police Departments, City involvement should also include Parks, Public Works, Economic Development, and IT Departments in order to share timely updates on all data points and to coordinate uniformity of data tracking efforts.
 - c. Integrating layers of City department data into Toledo Parcel Survey map, and utilize Toledo Parcel Survey data as a central forum to brainstorm strategies and troubleshoot in monthly meetings.
2. Code, police, and fire datasets should include:
 - a. Parcel Identification Numbers (PINs) as “universal identifiers” that will allow for easing joining, integration and analysis of all datasets (*at least* capture lat/long of every incident).
 - b. Occupancy/vacancy status of each property.
 - c. Complete and accurate information on the physical condition of the property (using the A – F scale, Toledo Parcel Survey).
3. Code Department should work to:
 - a. Track all hours spent inspecting properties.
 - b. Track all abatement costs (whether by BAT or contractors or other city employees).
 - c. **Develop and implement a cost recovery program, and then track and annually review collection efforts.**

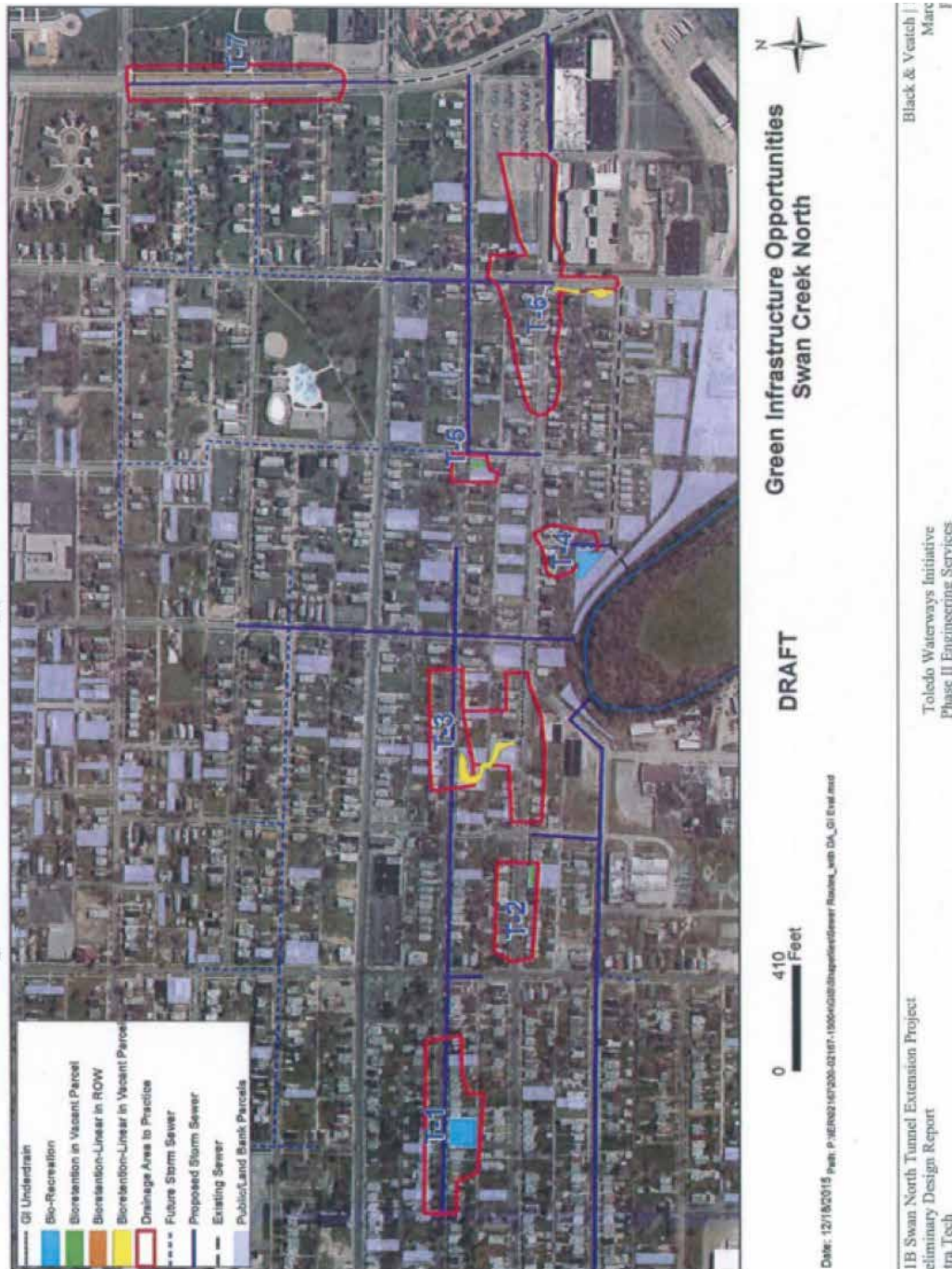
APPENDIX C. RESULTS OF T-TOWN ACTION WEEKS

Data source: Commissioner Cindy Geronimo, City Division of Code Enforcement

| DATES | LOCATION | BAT - DEBRIS COLLECTED (TONS) | BAT - TIRES COLLECTED | SB&H ALLEY CLEANING DEBRIS COLLECTED (LBS) | SB&H STREET CLEANING DEBRIS COLLECTED (LBS) | SB&H TIRES COLLECTED | SB&H POTHOLES REPAIRED | WATER DISTRIBUTION HYDRANTS PAINTED | HEALTH DEPT. SEWERS BAIED | TOLEDO POLICE DEPARTMENT | TOLEDO FIRE DEPARTMENT | NON-CITY VOLUNTEER GROUPS |
|----------------------|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--|---|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|---|
| May 18-23, 2015 | First T-Town Action Week Monroe / S.Cove / Ayers | 42.00 | 65 | 4,500 | 2,500 | | | 34 | | 6 vehicles tagged for illegal parking, community outreach | distributed smoke detectors & community outreach | Hickory Farms/ Macedonia Baptist Church/Auburn-Delaware Residents Association, WEP |
| June 1-6, 2015 | Second T-Town Action Week Airport Corridor / Fearing / Byrne | 30.22 | 350 | 41,080 | 9,260 | 100 | 400 | 100 | | community outreach, helping with towing and illegal dumping issues | distributed smoke detectors & community outreach | Burroughs Neighborhood Association (BNO), WEP |
| June 15-20, 2015 | Third T-Town Action Week Hawley / City Park / Woodland / Hamilton | 21.99 | 987 | 122,700 | 22,260 | 75 | 473 | 47 | | community outreach, helping with towing and illegal dumping issues | distributed smoke detectors & community outreach | Hickory Farms/ Junction Community, WEP |
| July 6-11, 2015 | Fourth T-Town Action Week Champion / Hawley / Western / South | 41.93 | 32 | 37,650 | 26,195 | 44 | 450 | | 8 | community outreach, helping with towing and illegal dumping issues | distributed smoke detectors & community outreach | Hickory Farms, Canaan Missionary Baptist Church, Pathways, WEP |
| July 20-25, 2015 | Fifth T-Town Action Week Eleanor / Sylkiana / Bennett / Lewis | 31.01 | 28 | 14,080 | 16,280 | 10 | 118 | | | | distributed smoke detectors & community outreach | Willys Overland Place Group, Asbury Neighborhood Block Watch, Pathway, WEP |
| August 3-8, 2015 | Sixth T-Town Action Week Slarr / Navarre / Oak / White | 30.72 | 25 | 50,090 | 6,000 | 174 | 90 | | 5 | Set up Mobile office, community outreach, helping with towing and illegal dumping issues | distributed smoke detectors & community outreach | One Voice for East Toledo, Hickory Farms, Pathways, WEP |
| August 17-22, 2015 | Seventh T-Town Action Week Detroit Corridor / Delaware / Bennett | 15.78 | 18 | 23,100 | 5,400 | 23 | 65 | 19 | 8 | community outreach, helping with towing and illegal dumping issues | distributed smoke detectors & community outreach | Old West End Neighborhood Initiative (OWENI), Pathways, WEP |
| September 8-12, 2015 | Eighth T-Town Action Week Metzler / Streicher / Warsaw / Mulberry | 20.80 | 22 | 91,300 | 15,700 | 105 | 64 | 46 | 6 | community outreach, helping with towing and illegal dumping issues | distributed smoke detectors & community outreach | One Village, The Abilities Center, Pathways, WEP |
| TOTALS | | 234.45 | 1,527 | 384,500 | 101,095 | 531 | 1,660 | 65 | 19 | | 258 | |

APPENDIX D. MAP OF TOLEDO WATERWAYS INITIATIVES' GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN JUNCTION

Source: City of Toledo Engineering Department, March 2016.



APPENDIX E. DATA POINTS FOR THE PLANNING, MAPPING AND ANALYSIS PROCESS

The Land Bank and County Treasurer's Office provided the following data fields for all 4,737 parcels in the Junction neighborhood:

- Parcel ID Number
- Owner
- Address (Number, Street, Zip)
- Assessed Value
- Year Delinquent Taxes were Certified
- Amount of Taxes Due and Owing
- Homestead Exemption (Y / N)
- Structure Present (Y / N)
- Occupancy (Parcel Survey result)
- Condition (Parcel Survey result)
- HHF Demo (current funding)
- HHF Greening (current funding)
- NSP Demo (Y / N)

We joined the datasets and created a PivotTable in an Excel spreadsheet to allow for easy sorting and analysis. The Land Bank could assist other resident organizations to gather this data, and carry out the same grouping and mapping analysis we did for this project. Each neighborhood could then identify top priorities for strategic land assembly and creative reuse projects, relying on the similar action steps outlined in this plan.

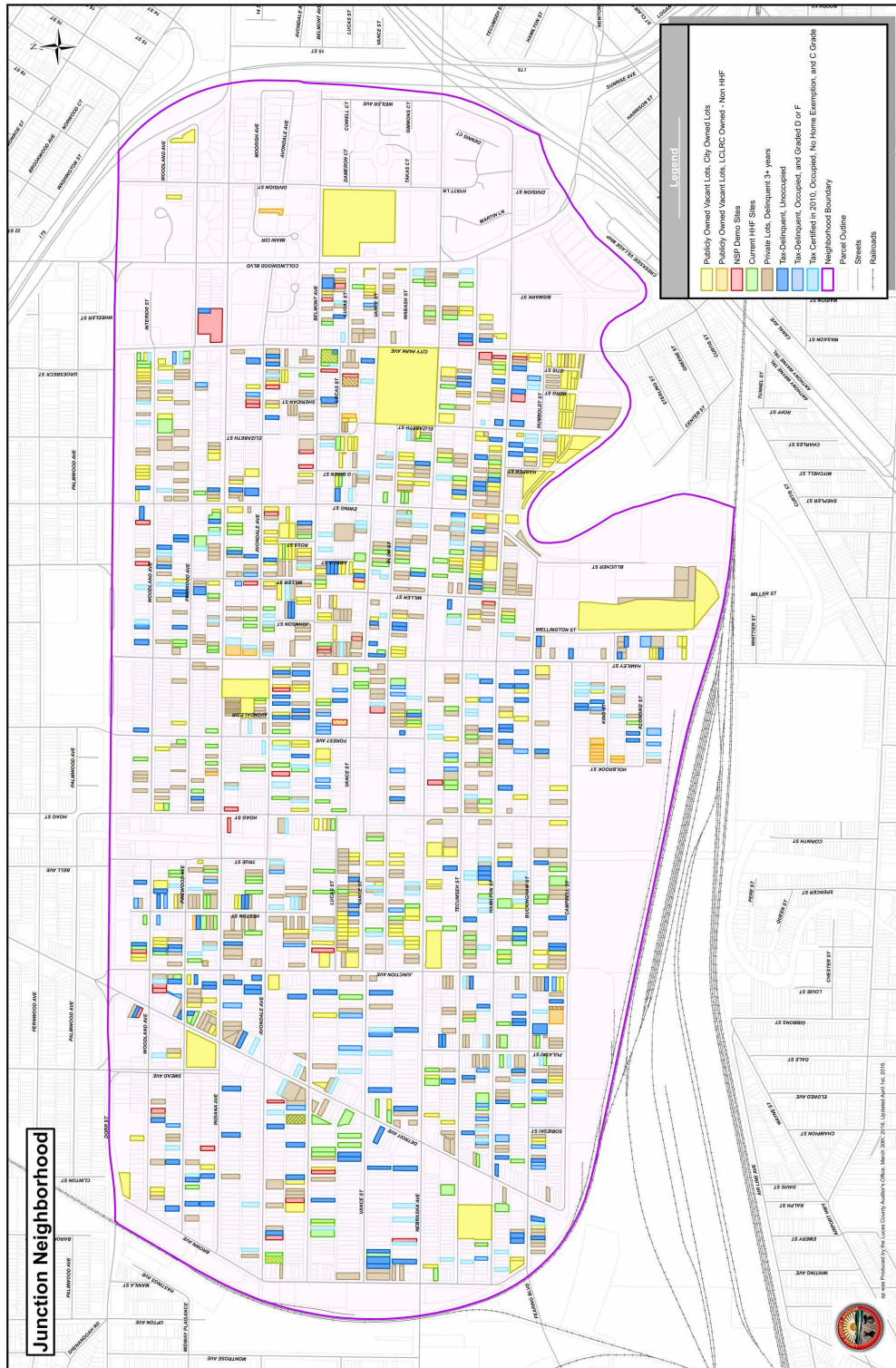
Once created, this database can be queried in an almost unlimited manner, and has application beyond open space planning. Here are two notable examples that came up during our project:

1. We noticed there were many properties that were identified as owner-occupant, tax-delinquent, rated C or better and without a homestead exemption. We wondered if many of these homeowners were actually eligible for the exemption but just weren't aware. The Land Bank leadership had a brilliant and simple idea to cross reference the addresses of these owner-occupied homes under question with the voter database, which includes the year a voter was born. We identified 82 properties where it seems likely that the owner-occupant is eligible for an exemption but is without one. This list was shared with the residents of the Junction Coalition,

who expressed an interest to conduct some direct door-to-door outreach and educate those eligible homeowners about how to apply for the exemption and thus dramatically lower their annual property tax bill.

2. We found that 513 properties are privately owned, occupied and tax delinquent of 3 years or more. Of these, 141 appear to be rentals that were rated A (Very Good) or B (Good) when it comes to structural condition. These are quality rentals that need to be protected against deterioration, but the owners are neglecting to pay property taxes. Partners may want to target these quality rentals for tax foreclosure. Either the owner will pay all back taxes, or the Land Bank will have a chance to market these quality rental properties to a responsible owner and protect both the tenants and the equity in these properties.

APPENDIX F. PARCEL ANALYSIS MAP FOR JUNCTION NEIGHBORHOOD



APPENDIX G. CASE STUDIES OF URBAN FARMS AND AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES

GARRISON-TROTTER FARM – BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

There are 2,600 vacant lots scattered throughout Boston, with plans to begin converting some into urban farms under the City's new "Article 89" farming rules. These transformations will help to create new job opportunities and provide residents with locally grown, nutritious produce. The Boston Redevelopment Authority worked with urban farming advocates and neighborhoods to come up with Boston's first "right-to-farm" by-law, known as Article 89. City council approved Article 89 in December 2012, after nearly two years of work by the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

The first farm created was the Garrison-Trotter Farm on two vacant, city-owned lots in the Dorchester Neighborhood. This is the first of a dozen planned through a partnership between The Trust for Public Land (TPL), the City of Boston, the Urban Farming Institute of Boston, and Dudley Neighbors Inc. This partnership will invest \$1 million in Boston neighborhood farms over the next several years, greening the city and providing healthy, local produce to low-income neighborhoods.

With the help of farmers trained by the Urban Farming Institute, Garrison Trotter now produces kale, beets, onions, garlic, watermelons, and tomatoes for local farmers markets. The farm also provides volunteer opportunities, educating people of all ages on the process of growing healthy food.

Relevant Links:

- Project overview by TPL: <https://www.tpl.org/our-work/parks-for-people/creative-placemaking/new-freedom-park>
- Boston Redevelopment Authority's dedicated page to the rezoning initiative (Article 89): <http://www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org/planning/planning-initiatives/urban-agriculture-rezoning>
- Urban Farming Institute Training Program: <https://urbanfarminginstitute.org/our-training/>
- Dudley Neighborhoods Inc.: <http://www.dudleyneighbors.org/>

NEW FREEDOM PARK – DENVER, COLORADO

For years, a dusty lot in a multinational refugee community was the site of a small community garden and informal neighborhood gathering place on a 1.6 acre lot, watered with a garden hose from adjacent buildings. The redevelopment of this property created a new community park, and tripled the size of the garden to become a true urban farm. Thanks to community partnerships with the city and local foundations, this new park is now a cherished common ground where garden plots, a soccer field, shaded seating, and play spaces bring far-flung cultures together, as immigrant families put down roots in their new country.

The immediate neighborhood is home to over 1,000 low income residents within three blocks of the site, with approximately half of them children. Consisting largely of a refugee population, typically including residents from Somalia, Afghanistan, Burma, and Nepal, intensive community engagement was a hallmark of creating the park and farm to ensure that new residents truly felt it was a part of their culture and community. The design meetings with the community were standing-room-only, with at least five different languages spoken, none of which were Spanish or English.

Working closely with Denver Parks and Recreation, the Colorado Health Foundation, TPL, local nonprofit and business partners, and, most importantly, residents, the land was transformed from a vacant lot into the New Freedom Park, which opened in 2012. No public tax dollars were used to build the park; it was funded by private foundations, individual donors, and the Colorado Lottery through the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund.

Relevant Link:

- <https://www.tpl.org/our-work/parks-for-people/creative-placemaking/new-freedom-park>

RIO GRANDE HEALTHY-LIVING PARK – ALAMOSA, COLORADO

In the town of Alamosa, in Colorado's San Luis Valley, a 38-acre site along the Rio Grande has become a place for local Guatemalan and Mayan immigrants to farm corn, beans, and squash for affordable, healthy food. When developers proposed converting the property to an RV park, TPL worked with local partners to protect the land for the community instead. After purchasing the land in 2014, a series of design workshops were held for neighbors to choose and plan new amenities. These resulted in a vision for a healthy living hub, including both food access as well as recreation.

Local foundation grants and a private fundraising campaign provided the means to purchase the property, and to host the community engagement design seminars. This funding brought diverse partners together to convey a trail easement to the City of Alamosa, linking it to a six-mile trail system along the Rio Grande River, and convey a conservation easement to Colorado Open Lands, a statewide land trust, ensuring permanent preservation of both the land and the water. The City of Alamosa then conveyed the property free and clear of any debt to the San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition.

The San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition is now managing the creation of the Rio Grande Healthy-Living Park to include a six-mile trail system and 16 acres for community farming, as well as a garden, fruit tree orchard, children's nature play area, and gathering spaces for the kind of cultural events that celebrate the unique and eclectic heritage of the San Luis Valley.

Relevant Link:

- <https://healthylivingpark.org/>

URBAN AGRICULTURE INNOVATION ZONE – CLEVELAND, OHIO

In Cleveland's Kinsman Neighborhood, 28 acres of vacant land are being transformed into one of the largest urban agriculture districts in the United States. An initiative spearheaded by the local community development corporation – Burten, Bell, Carr Development, Inc. (BBC) – and the City of Cleveland, this former brownfield site is now a series of active and green urban farms. Following a Phase I and Phase II environmental assessment funded by the City, the most appropriate farming techniques for some properties were outlined, and a clean-up plan developed for others.

As the facilitator of the Urban Agriculture Innovation Zone, BBC's role is to promote the district, attract resources, plan and prepare for future development, assemble privately owned properties, and act as a unified voice for the entities operating within the zone. BBC also supports market gardeners from the Urban Agriculture Innovation by providing an area in a local healthy eating cafe/market/cooking demonstration space they manage, CornUcopia Place, in which the farmers can clean, store, and prepare the produce they grow for sale.

A variety of enterprise farming entities now manage the land, with Rid-All Green Partnership originally operating 1.5 acres. In 2012, a group of three entrepreneurs with roots in the Kinsman neighborhood harvested more than 14,000 pounds of produce, including corn, tomatoes, lettuce, peppers, celery, collard greens, kale, broccoli, and herbs; raised 350 pounds of tilapia; and cultivated 1,200 cubic yards of compost. Rid-All Green Partnership provides healthy, high-quality, safe, and affordable food through hands-on training and technical assistance to empower neighborhood residents to grow, process, market, and distribute food in a sustainable manner. They partner with collaborators to educate youth and adults on environmental stewardship and to train others to transform fallow urban fields into productive plots of land that offer healthy local food through their "Green 'n tha Ghetto" initiative and "Old Brink City" comic book series.

On an adjacent block, Ohio State University Extension received a \$1.1 million grant from the USDA's Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program in 2010 to create a six-acre urban farming incubator. Twelve market gardeners each have a quarter-acre plot of land to grow produce

that they can sell at farmers markets, to restaurants, or to incorporate into value-added products. An urban orchard, district signage, and green infrastructure basins developed by the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer Districts are all currently under development.

Relevant links:

- BBC's page dedicated to the initiative and the associated CornUcopia Place: <http://www.bbcdevelopment.org/development/social-enterprise/urban-agricultural-innovation-zone/>
- Rid-All Green Partnership: <http://www.greennghetto.org/>
- Rid-All Green Partnership also serves as a Regional Training Center for Growing Power, the nationally-recognized organization and trailblazer in urban agriculture. To learn more about Growing Power: <http://www.growingpower.org/>
- Kinsman Farm, Cleveland's Incubator Farm: <http://cuyahoga.osu.edu/program-areas/agriculture-and-natural-resources/market-gardening-and-urban-farming/kinsman-farm>

APPENDIX H. STUDIES OF GREENING AND NEIGHBORHOOD VARIABLES

| AUTHORS | YEAR | GEOGRAPHIC AREA | INTERVENTION(S) STUDIED | PRINCIPAL FINDINGS |
|--|------|-----------------|---|---|
| Tranel and Handlin | 2006 | St. Louis | Community gardens | Areas with community gardens showed significantly greater stability than control tracts as measured by 1990 and 2000 census data, including greater increase in homeownership, greater income increase, and greater population stability. |
| Wachter, Gillen and Brown | 2006 | Philadelphia | Stabilized and green lots ³³ | Neglected vacant lots reduced adjacent property values by 20%, while stabilized and greened lots increased adjacent property values by 17% |
| Voicu and Been | 2008 | New York | Community gardens | Community gardens led to greater increases in property values than in control areas, and increases were sustained over time. Effect was significant in lower-income and not in higher-income areas. |
| Branas, Cheney, MacDonald, Tam, Jackson, and Ten Havey | 2011 | Philadelphia | LandCare program | Reductions in gun assaults in areas near LandCare properties were seen in all parts of the city. Reductions in vandalism and level of resident stress were seen in some areas, but not others. |
| Heckert and Mennis | 2012 | Philadelphia | LandCare program | Increases in property values in areas near LandCare properties, but increases were significant only in areas classified as moderately distressed in the city's Market Value Analysis. |
| Garvin, Cannuscio and Branas | 2013 | Philadelphia | LandCare program | Change in crime incidence was not significant, but residents living near LandCare properties reported significant increases in perception of safety. |
| Kondo, Hohl, Hon and Branas | 2015 | Youngstown | Lot stabilization, Lot reuse | Significant decrease in wide variety of crimes in vicinity of greening treatments, but decrease was greater for areas which had reuse treatment (generally community gardens) than for areas which had stabilization treatment (similar to LandCare program). |

³³ This is defined in this paper as “the removal of discarded trash; grading and amending the soil; planting grass, trees, and shrubbery; and even adding such amenities as benches, sidewalks, and fences (p17).”

Credit: The above table was prepared by Alan Mallach, Senior Fellow, Center for Community Progress (March 2016).



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