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**Banking on Vacant Land:
An Assessment of The Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program**

A Thesis

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Abstract

The City of Cincinnati is one of many older industrial cities seeking to reclaim vacant and abandoned properties left behind by deindustrialization, residential migration to the suburbs, and the recent foreclosure crisis. The properties left behind can spur a cycle of blight, crime, and decreased property values – all of which strain city resources and create unsafe, unwelcoming neighborhoods. Numerous programs have been developed to address these issues, one of which is the urban land bank.

This thesis takes a critical look at Cincinnati's land bank, the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program, and considers how effectively it is working to bring these vacant and abandoned properties back to productive use. This assessment is done through a review of the program's adherence to national best practices, and a neighborhood level analysis of the actual and potential impact of the program on Cincinnati neighborhoods.

It concludes that the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program does not adhere to best practices for two primary reasons. These are a lack of staffing and funding resources, and a low level of efficiency, which includes limited coordination with county and state offices involved in the transfer and tax remittance on tax foreclosed property. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the City of Cincinnati revisit and reclarify the goals and objectives of the program, and reprioritize it in the City budget and planning process according to those revised goals and objectives.

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I. Introduction

Neighborhoods in the City of Cincinnati, like many older industrial cities, are facing a growing problem of vacant and abandoned properties, coincident with disinvestment in the inner city. This is the result of many factors, including deindustrialization, increased growth in the suburbs, and escalating foreclosure rates. The properties that are left behind can spur a cycle of blight, crime, and decreased property values - draining city resources and threatening the safety and stability of surrounding neighborhoods. Because the issues leading to property vacancy are diverse, an equally diverse and comprehensive set of tools are needed in response. The urban land bank is quickly becoming one of these tools.

While the land bank is not a new concept, its definition and application in the United States have evolved to address the issue of vacant and abandoned urban land and buildings. Under this new definition, land banking is a means to acquire tax foreclosed and tax delinquent property in a strategic and cost effective manner, and to subsequently prepare it for productive reuse. Land banks enable cities and community groups to reclaim vacant properties in their neighborhoods, tackle blight, and redirect growth. Established land banks are currently operating in cities as diverse as Cleveland, Ohio; Houston, Texas; and Atlanta, Georgia. The City of Cincinnati has also developed a land banking program, and the purpose of this paper will be to assess the program based on its overall adherence to national best practices, as well as its ability to improve property conditions and quality at the neighborhood level.

II. Problem Statement

Necessity for Study

Vacant and abandoned properties are becoming a growing concern throughout the United States, particularly in older cities throughout the Northeast and Midwest, where the effects of economic decline, urban disinvestment, and migration to the suburbs have made a lasting impact. These trends have been further exacerbated by more recent trends of predatory lending and real-estate speculation – causing vacancies and abandonment to far exceed normal market fluctuations (Mallach 2006, 5). As one solution to this problem, old industrial cities and smaller communities are developing land banking programs, as a means to reclaim and redevelop these underutilized properties. The scale and procedures of each program is unique, based on local needs and regulations, but common themes and effective practices can still be identified for implementation in other cities.

The Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program (CLRP) is one such program that can benefit from a review of effective practices, and an assessment of how its procedures can be adjusted for greater efficacy. In operation since 1996, the program has faltered under a lack of municipal and regional support, and is not adequately addressing the growing issue of blight and abandonment in numerous Cincinnati neighborhoods¹. The number of parcels acquired and sold through the program is small compared to the number of vacant and abandoned parcels throughout Cincinnati, and the parcels that have been acquired are scattered throughout the city with little indication of an overall acquisition strategy. Furthermore, and more importantly, few people in the community are familiar with the program, including members of community development organizations and city staff that are not directly involved with its implementation.

This study will be valuable to those in the fields of community development and planning, as well as interested citizens, for several reasons. First, it will serve to further educate

¹ The remainder of this paper will address these concerns, and support the conclusion that the CLRP is not adequately addressing Cincinnati's growing issues with blight and abandonment

and familiarize individuals in these groups with the CLRP, and thus promote its use. Second, it will seek pragmatic changes that can be made in the program for more effective implementation. Third, the study will further public knowledge regarding effective land banking practices, and will provide further information about ways in which Cincinnati can address the issue of vacant and abandoned properties.

Theoretical Framework

In the past, vacancy and abandonment were viewed primarily as symptoms, and not as causes of disinvestment. Evidence of this perspective can be seen in well-intended programs, such as the Housing Act of 1949 and the resultant urban renewal efforts of the 1950's and 1960's, which focused on large-scale blight removal and replacement with low and moderate income housing. This attitude began to shift with the creation of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1968 by President Lyndon Johnson. As part of the President's War on Poverty, this new agency focused on addressing the issues of violence and poverty through the provision of more quality housing, job training programs, legal services, Head Start preschools and numerous other services (von Hoffman 2003, 11). This renewed approach also included a strong emphasis on citizen participation.

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 marked a further shift in perspective, formally ending funding for the controversial urban renewal programs and replacing them with community development block grants (CDBG), which are still used today. Today, the issues surrounding blight, and specifically the issues of vacancy and abandonment, are viewed more holistically. They are seen as part of a complex cycle of neighborhood decline and improvement, which requires a diverse set of solutions. The land bank is just one of these solutions. The cycle of vacancy and abandonment can begin with just one building that is vacant for a few months, or a piece of property that has been abandoned for the long term. The presence of such a property can immediately lower surrounding property values and prompt further

disinvestment. Targets for arson and criminal activity, vacant buildings pose a direct threat to neighboring residents, undermine neighborhood stability, and signal to the wider community that the neighborhood is in decline (Alexander 2005, 4). The cumulative effect of vacant properties also includes a loss on real estate investments, deterioration of the local environment, and a strain on local police, fire, and building departments, which will in turn lead to a decrease in maintenance and overall investment in the area.

To address the cycle of blight, a local government has three primary approaches available: preventative measures, property acquisition, and property reuse. Each of these approaches requires different tools and policies, and is most effective in some combination with the others. Preventative measures include property information and tracking systems, homeownership preservation efforts, training and technical assistance to landlords, receivership, code enforcement, and nuisance abatement. Methods of acquisition primarily include voluntary donation, eminent domain, and tax foreclosure. Property reuse tools can include redevelopment incentives, strategic and comprehensive planning, and a strong network of community development corporations (CDCs) and other stakeholders who can facilitate redevelopment efforts (Mallach 2006b). Land banking can effectively be used as a means of property acquisition as well as redevelopment.

Although land banking practices and procedures may vary, common themes and ‘best practices’ have emerged. Some of these are discussed by the Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center in their report *Best Practices in Land Bank Operation*, published in 2005. Providing the primary source for the best practices criteria established later in this research, list from this publication includes²:

1. Narrow goals and objectives
2. Coordination of city departments

² The general practices criteria are intended to be broad, in order to provide a general framework for comparing land banking strategies and programs. It is beyond the scope of this research to outline in detail every characteristic of an effective land bank, and to describe each of the best practices in specific detail.

3. A corporate structure for the land bank, giving it independence
4. An integrated management system
5. A city-wide approach that is integrated with a long-term strategic vision
6. Use of streamlined acquisition processes like eminent domain
7. Power to determine terms and conditions for sale of property
8. Flexible and diverse financing (O'Brien et al 2005, 21)

This list of 'best practices' was developed based on literature review research, and case studies of several prominent American land banks; the best practices therefore represent a full variety of approaches, not all of which are suitable in every situation. This list will be used to create a set of criteria to evaluate the adherence of the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program to national best practices. In combination with case studies of two Cincinnati neighborhoods, this paper will evaluate current operations of the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program, and will discuss the implications for its application at the neighborhood level.

Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis will be to evaluate the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program based on two primary research questions.

1. Does the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program adhere to national best practices?
2. What is the potential for the CLRP to improve property conditions and quality at the neighborhood level?

III. Review of Literature

Historical Development of Land Banking

The concept of land banking originated in Stockholm, Sweden in the early 1900's, as a tool to entice would-be American emigrants to remain in Sweden (Strong 1979, 47). Realizing that a desire for affordable land was pulling Swedish citizens to the United States, the Stockholm City Council instituted a land banking program that would protect open space from speculative purchasing, and ensure the availability of affordable land in the future. By 1939, Stockholm had purchased over 33,000 acres surrounding the city (Strong 1979, 48). Once the land became ripe for development, it was annexed, equipped with the appropriate infrastructure, and then leased or sold for whichever land use was deemed most appropriate (Strong 1979, 241). Oftentimes, the land was placed into sixty year leases for residential use. Additional land holdings were leased for farming, preserved as open space, or used for other purposes. Since that time, the land bank has become an integral tool for comprehensive planning and land use in Sweden, and numerous other European countries. France, for example, formed a national land bank in 1958 to enforce growth pole development outside of Paris and ameliorate the overcrowding that was occurring (Strong 1979, 243). This strategy allowed Paris to redirect its growth in a specific and planned manner, and to prompt residential development in those areas instead of the urban core. By 1974, 1% of France was held in the land bank (Strong 1979, 243).

Reflecting the European tradition of large public land holdings, early land banks in the U.S. were created to preserve large swaths of rural land for speculative developments decades into the future. During this time, land banking was viewed as a means to preserve open space, facilitate comprehensive planning, provide for public services, and control real estate prices (Flechner 1975, 10). In reviewing literature from as recent as 1975, assumptions were made that successful land banking operations “require[d] considerable accumulation of land over a long period to take advantage of advance acquisition ahead of urban trends, and a low enough initial

acquisition cost to allow long-term holding, as well as a large enough stockpile of land to serve as an equivalent to the accumulated reserves and operative deposits of a commercial bank, before withdrawals take place.” (Pearson 1975, 1)

This goal of ‘greenfields’ acquisition guided land banking practices through the 1970’s not only in Europe, but in the United States as well. One of the early proposals for land banking in the United States was included in the American Law Institute’s 1975 Model Land Development Code, which called for a ‘land reserve agency’. Text from this landmark code describes a land bank which would acquire land “for the purpose of facilitating future planning and to maintain a public land reserve” (Strong 1979, 294). While the Model Code did not exclude previously developed urban areas, the focus remained on preemptive strategizing to deal with continued urban growth. Until recent years, land banking programs generally maintained this focus on the preservation of greenfields for later affordable development. A different sort of land banking effort has also been used to permanently preserve greenbelts as open space; this is exemplified through the American greenbelt communities built as part of the New Deal in the late 1930’s.

One interpretation of land banking that did move away from this focus on greenfields was what Harvey Flechner described as a ‘project land bank’, which is affiliated with urban renewal efforts of the 1960’s. These ‘project land banks’ were created with specific development goals in mind, allowing for smaller areas of land acquisition, limited land holdings, shorter term acquisition and development, and a strong focus on urban redevelopment (Flechner 1975). With urban renewal being a key example of such a ‘project land bank’, however, there are inherent differences which differentiate it from land banking efforts as discussed in this paper. Urban renewal efforts were not concerned with holding land for future use, but more concerned with redevelopment in the present and near future, primarily in the form of slum removal and large scale housing developments for low or middle income tenants. Implemented from the top down, urban renewal neglected social problems and disrupted existing neighborhood fabric.

Another method of urban redevelopment, which grew in popularity in the late 1970's and 1980's was the urban homesteading program. Similar to a land bank, homesteading programs acquire clusters of tax-foreclosed or otherwise vacant properties for redevelopment; however, instead of holding the properties for future development, the homesteading programs transfer the properties directly to individuals for a nominal fee, providing that the recipient redevelops the property within in a set period of time and then reside on the property. While municipalities can determine the boundaries of homesteading zones, properties generally are developed on an individual basis by homeowners.

Today, land banking in the United States has retained an urban focus, but developed one approach that is different from those mentioned above. Unlike previous land banking efforts, current approaches to land banking in the U.S. strive to maintain a focus on long-term acquisition and development strategies that ideally fit into a community's comprehensive plan. They also support an increased level of community involvement in the urban revitalization process. And, unlike homesteading programs, the land bank allows the municipality greater discretion in how the properties are developed.

Modern American land banks strive to be comprehensive and accountable to the affected neighborhoods, clearly departing from the goals of earlier 'project land banks'. Land acquisitions often happen through the coordination of land banking staff and local community groups, and are intended to target problem properties in their neighborhoods. These parcels are typically vacant and abandoned, and can vary from industrial sites to single residential parcels or small unbuildable side lots that can be purchased by adjoining property owners. Unlike previous land banking efforts, land banks are increasingly accepting vacant structures as well as vacant lots. These properties are acquired through tax foreclosure, donation or purchase, the properties can be held by the land bank until a qualified developer is found. Thus, the understanding of an American land bank, and the one used throughout this paper, is "a governmental entity that focuses on the conversion of vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties into productive

use” (Alexander 2005, 5). While the standard of ‘productive’ use is ultimately determined by the community, land banks generally strive for increased tax revenues over the creation of public spaces and parks.

For this definition of a land bank, it is also important to understand the difference between the terms ‘vacant’ and ‘abandoned’, which can differ among municipalities. The interpretation of what is meant by either of these terms can differ greatly based on local context. For example, even within one city, the term ‘vacant’ could be understood by one person as meaning an undeveloped greenfields outside of town, while another person can use ‘vacant’ to identify an unsafe structure in an older part of town. Michael A. Pagano and Ann O’M. Bowman identified five possible types of vacant land: remnant land of small size and oftentimes irregular shapes, land with physical limitations such as unbuildable slopes or inappropriate size, reserve parcels held by public and private owners bordering on existing holdings, speculative parcels located in transitional areas in anticipation of future growth, and derelict land that may be contaminated or damaged (Pagano et al 2004, 17). All of these types of vacant land can be considered for incorporation into a land bank, with different liabilities associated with each. Knowledge of these liabilities will help the land banking authorities make strategic choices about with properties to acquire. For this paper, the type of vacant lot will not be specified. The definition used will consider ‘vacant’ as either a structure or lot that is identified by the absence of legal inhabitants.

The definition used for ‘abandoned’ will similarly focus on use characteristics, and existence of structures. An abandoned property is different from one that is simply vacant, and the two terms neither assume nor preclude the other. A structure can easily be abandoned and illegally occupied, or vacant for several weeks while waiting for new tenants to move in. Abandonment is typically defined based on two key aspects of property ownership: payment of taxes and charges and code adherence (Mallach 2006, 1). For the health and safety of a community, it is not only important for a property owner to pay his or her taxes and municipal

fees, but also maintain the property according to the local codes and ordinances and prevent it from becoming a nuisance. For this paper, ‘abandoned’ will be understood as “a property whose owner has stopped carrying out at least one of the significant responsibilities of property ownership, as a result of which the property is vacant or likely to become vacant in the immediate future” (Mallach 2006, 1). Exact interpretations of this, such as the length of time a property must be abandoned can differ by city, ranging from 60 to 120 days. The types of property that are abandoned can vary among cities as well, and can include multi-family rental properties, single family homes, commercial or industrial parcels. As evidenced by these definitions, the new conception of land banking is very focused on gaining control of problem properties that are vacant and abandoned, and putting them back into productive, tax-paying use, for the betterment of the surrounding neighborhood.

Land Banking Strategies

This approach to land banking is gaining hold in a diversity of American cities, including Omaha, Nebraska; Cleveland, Ohio; Flint Michigan; St. Louis, Missouri; and Atlanta, Georgia. The structure and function of each program varies, largely based on the legal basis for creating land bank entities in each of these states. Legal authority for land banking programs can come from three sources: the powers granted to a municipality or county under general local government law, state statutes permitting local governments to create public benefit corporations, or state statutes specifically authorizing the creation of land bank entities (Mallach 2006, 137). At the state level, these legal guidelines are oftentimes the result of significant reform of tax foreclosure procedures, and are enacted concurrently with land banking programs (Alexander 2005, 5). Depending on these legal guidelines, land bank entities may be established at a county-wide level, such as the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (home to Flint, Michigan), or at the municipal level, as is the case with the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program. The land bank

entity can ultimately be accountable to the mayor or to a separate authority, such as a redevelopment authority governed by a separate board of directors (Mallach 2006b, 6).

The legal authority given to each land bank entity, in addition to the particular goals of that community, can also determine the methods of property acquisition that are used. Generally, the primary methods through which a land bank can acquire property are through tax foreclosure, voluntary donations in lieu of foreclosure, and purchase on the open market. The first of these is the most common method, and can be implemented in several ways. Some land bank entities, such as those in St. Louis, Missouri and Louisville, Kentucky automatically receive title to all properties not sold at tax foreclosure sales for minimum bid. Cities in Ohio such as Cleveland and Cincinnati only receive the title to pre-selected properties which haven't sold for minimum bid. Still others, such as the Atlanta Land Bank, do not automatically receive title to any properties, but maintain the authority to tender a minimum bid at the tax foreclosure sale (Alexander 2005, 23). The second method of acquisition allows property owners facing foreclosure the option of donation, with outstanding liens forgiven. Usually the land bank will have specific guidelines and priorities for receiving properties through this method, and will not accept all donations. Thirdly, some land banks have the authority to purchase properties on the open market, usually with the intention of completing a property assemblage for redevelopment (Alexander 2005, 24). While earlier land banks espoused the use of eminent domain for large-scale property acquisition, it is no longer a widely used method of acquisition.

Once part of a land bank inventory, a property is oftentimes tax exempt, and can be marketed individually or as part of a larger property assembly. This tax exempt status can be a great benefit for the land bank authority taking ownership of the properties, but can cause a significant loss in back property taxes for the local taxing authority. Properties can be transferred or sold to community development organizations, community members, or developers. Some land banks, such as Cleveland's, are able to process and distribute 500 to 800 parcels a year, selling unbuildable side lots for as little as one dollar (O'Brien et al 2005, 13). Like all other

aspects of a land banking program, methods and prices for disposition are a reflection of the particular goals of that program. The Genesee County Land Bank Authority, for example, has complete authority to establish the terms and conditions for property transfers, and can profit from selling higher valued properties in the suburbs for fair market value, and reinvesting those profits into less profitable properties in Flint (Kildee 2007).

Depending on local capacity, and their own capacity, community development corporations (CDCs) and other community organizations can play an important role in the land banking process. CDCs can aid in identifying properties for acquisition, and enable their later redevelopment, while also helping to ensure the best interests of the neighborhood are met through CLRP actions. Furthermore, their status as independently funded and decentralized entities can help lend legitimacy to land banking efforts, and garner the trust of community members. Some cities, such as Philadelphia, Providence, Cleveland, and Boston, have explicitly identified CDCs as part of the redevelopment process. This approach recognizes that land banking efforts can be strengthened through collaboration with CDCs that have completed successful development projects in the past and which also benefit from access to non-public funding (Goldstein et al 2001, 22).

Even with strong community partnerships and well established procedures, the process of acquisition and disposition is not always smooth, however, and numerous obstacles can be identified. Often directly linked to the causes of abandonment, obstacles can be financial, regulatory or institutional, physical, or individual. Examples include: the real or perceived expense of developing infill lots, time consuming bureaucratic processes, difficult to develop sites which are scattered and irregular in size, and an overall negative perception that often exists regarding vacant and abandoned properties (Goldstein et al, 2001, 10).

The land banks currently operating throughout the United States are actively seeking ways to address the aforementioned issues, and it is the goal of this research to aid in that process – here in Cincinnati. As of March 2008, the City of Cincinnati had a count of 2,311 vacant and

abandoned properties, which only included structures identified by the Division of Buildings and Inspections as having keep-vacant orders and unsafe or unsanitary conditions (City of Cincinnati 2008b, 52). This list did not include empty lots and does not take into consideration the rate of foreclosures, which exceeded 6,500 in Hamilton County in 2007; thus, the number of vacant and abandoned properties is likely much higher (City of Cincinnati 2008c).

In combination with preventative tools, the CLRP can be used to acquire and redevelop such properties. Used strategically, and in conjunction with larger neighborhood level and city plans, the CLRP would ideally be used to intervene in Cincinnati's cycle of blight and disinvestment. This thesis will consider the actual role of the CLRP in Cincinnati, in comparison with this ideal. It will do so by assessing the current operations of the program according to the best practices described above, and in terms of its operations in two case study neighborhoods.

IV. Methods

The Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program (CLRP) is analyzed on two levels. First, the CLRP is assessed according to its adherence to national best practices, as established through literature review research. Secondly, the CLRP is assessed at a more local level, looking at how it is functioning in two individual neighborhoods. Together, this multi-level evaluation expands on previously available analysis by providing a comprehensive and practical picture of how the CLRP is currently functioning in Cincinnati, and how its current functioning can be improved.

The completion of these two levels of analysis involves a combination of several methodologies. The first level of analysis is both comparative and evaluative, using archival research, a review of documentation within the City of Cincinnati, and participant observation by the author in daily CLRP operations. A large component of the first level of analysis will be literature review research of best practices, which will determine a common set of criteria by which to evaluate the adherence of the CLRP to nationally recognized best practices. I seek to answer the following questions:

1. Does the CLRP have precise goals and functions?
2. What is the capacity of the city for land banking, in terms of human resources and funding?
3. What is the capacity of CDC's in Cincinnati for land banking, in terms of human resources, funding, and technological support?
4. How efficient are land banking procedures in Cincinnati?
5. To what extent do Cincinnati land banking practices adhere to a strategic vision?

To aid in answering these questions, and to create stronger neighborhood level analyses, a series of interviews were conducted with both City staff members who currently or formerly managed the CLRP, and individuals active in community development throughout Cincinnati and

in the case study neighborhoods. Those interviewed include: Margaret Wuerstle, current Chief City Planner and manager of the CLRP; Larry Harris, current staff person of the City's Buildings and Inspections Division; and Fred Orth, retired City staff person who initially developed the CLRP and managed the program until 2003; Patricia Gary, Executive Director of the Community Development Corporations Association of Greater Cincinnati; Paul Rudemiller, President and Executive Director of Camp Washington Community Board; Matt Strauss, Price Hill Housing Resource Director with Price Hill Will; and Sharon Muyaya, former President of the Evanston Community Council. A joint interview was also conducted with staff from the Community Building Institute (CBI) at Xavier University in Evanston: Picket Slater Harrington (CBI Associate) and Liz Blume (Executive Director of CBI and former Director of the City of Cincinnati Department of Planning). Conducted as 'depth interviews', all of the interviews were guided only by a list of topics; thus, the interviews varied in length and in terms of topics covered. Topics of discussion were largely directed by the interest and expertise of the interviewee. The comprehensive list of interview topics can be found in Appendices A-C; these lists are very detailed, and were intended to cover the full scope of possible discussion questions. They served as a starting point for very open-ended interviews.

With the goal of taking a close look at how the CLRP is currently functioning at the neighborhood level, the second level of analysis utilizes both the interviews described above, along with GIS mapping and a qualitative assessments of individual CLRP properties in the case study neighborhoods. The first step in this process was the completion of a GIS map of vacant properties and CLRP acquisitions in the City of Cincinnati. This map illustrates the extent of CLRP activity throughout Cincinnati, demonstrates areas where redevelopment needs are not being met, and contextualizes the case study neighborhoods of Evanston and Price Hill.

Following this city-wide mapping, the second step was to look closely at the two individual neighborhoods: Evanston and Price Hill. These communities are in different parts of the City, but each has an organization that is concerned about vacant and abandoned properties.

Further, each community contains several CLRP properties, which will also be assessed in a qualitative manner. For the assessment, I photographed the current use and condition of CLRP properties, documented the property value from the Hamilton County Auditor, and charted any relevant development on the property since it was obtained by the CLRP. The goal of this assessment was to assess the extent to which CLRP properties were impacting the neighborhood. Following the qualitative assessments, public documents, neighborhood development plans, and interview results were used to discuss the current and potential use for the CLRP in the two neighborhoods of Evanston and Price Hill.

V. Establishing Best Practices in Land Banking

To gain a stronger grasp on how a land bank actually functions within a community, it is important to look more closely at the practices and policies of well established land banks. This paper will review case study materials for three primary land banks currently operating in the United States: Genesee County (Flint), Michigan; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Cleveland, Ohio. Each of these land banks has specific characteristics or unique strategies for which it can serve as a model for other land bank authorities. In Genesee County, an inter-local agreement allowed the formation of what is one of the most comprehensive land banks currently operating; it functions at the County level, and uses profits from the sale of more marketable homes to fund property maintenance and acquisition in the city of Flint. Philadelphia, on the other hand, is recognized for its GIS-based information system used to strategize and publicize available properties through an internet interface. Thirdly, the City of Cleveland is recognized as one of the first to address the issue of vacant land, and has found numerous ways to streamline the land banking process for the state of Ohio. The following review of best practices will describe how these characteristics and others can make the land banking process more efficient and effective, and will provide a foundation for the assessment of the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program that follows.

Genesee County, Michigan

Looking at the first of the three primary case study land banks, the creation of the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (LBA) is one of the newest and most comprehensive land banks currently operating in the United States. Created in 2002, it was a response to economic decline throughout Michigan, and related population decline in many urban areas. The City of Flint, located in Genesee County, saw a population decline from 193,000 to 120,000 between 1970 and 2000. It also saw over 12% of its homes sit vacant in 2000 (PolicyLink 2005, 101).

At the statewide level, tax foreclosure laws were reformed in 1999 to address this growing concern. The new, streamlined foreclosure law allowed County Treasurers to receive foreclosed properties after only one to two years (as opposed to what could previously reach seven years) and allowed large numbers of tax delinquent properties to be foreclosed in a single judicial procedure (following standard notification procedures)(Alexander 2005, 7). The properties are acquired with clear title and with no tax liens.

Capitalizing on these reforms, Genesee County and the Charter Township of Flint established the Land Reutilization Council (LRC) in 2002. The LRC functioned as an interlocal agreement, before land banks were actually authorized by state statute. Although no state legislation existed at the time to authorize the creation of a land bank, the Michigan Urban Cooperation Act provided the LRC with a means to acquire, manage, and convey tax delinquent properties (Alexander 2005, 7).

In 2004, the State of Michigan passed the most extensive land bank legislation in the country, and the LRC officially became the Genesee County Land Bank Authority. This new legislation allowed for the creation of land banks at the county level, and the Genesee County Land Bank Authority became the first of ten county-wide land banks now established around the state. This legislation authorized local governments to enter into intergovernmental agreements with the State to ‘fast track’ foreclosed properties not into their own inventory, as had happened previously, but into local land banks. Under the new land banking legislation, property can be held in the land bank tax free, and the property can be later sold for less than fair market value to approved applicants.

The mission of the Genesee County Land Bank is “To manage land obtained through foreclosure, gift, or purchase in such a way as to return those properties to the tax roll, when appropriate, to a higher and better condition than when received” (Genesee County Land Bank 2008). As an independent public legal entity, the LBA is governed by a Board of Directors composed of representatives from the Genesee County Board of Commissioners, the City of

Flint, and Flint Township. The LBA also works closely with the Genesee County Treasurer's Office and collaborates with a variety of public, private and non-profit partners, which expands reinvestment possibilities. As a result of recent tax reforms, the land bank is able to directly acquire tax foreclosed properties, and prevent competition from speculators at public auctions. By placing the land directly under County ownership after two years, the County is able to determine the best use for it (Genesee County Land Bank 2008). Currently, the LBA considers the residential development to provide the best opportunities for improved tax revenue and community growth; the LBA has determined parks and open space to be a secondary best use of land bank properties (O'Brien et al 2005, 10).

In redeveloping parcels, the LBA has set criteria for who can purchase land banked property. Applicants seeking to purchase property must not own real property in Genesee County that is tax delinquent, or that is subject to a violation of state or local codes, and they also must not be a prior owner of any real property in Genesee County that was transferred to the Treasurer or to a local government as a result of tax delinquency. If an applicant meets these qualifications, they must also submit a detailed description outlining development plans for the property, which are reviewed and considered for their potential effect on the surrounding neighborhood as well as their adherence to existing comprehensive plans. When determining a price for the land, the LBA uses a multi-tiered structure based on property type and intended usage. With the exception of side lots, the land bank properties must sell for either fair market value or to-date cost of acquisition and upkeep of the property – whichever is less (Alexander 2005, 47). Through 2005, the Genesee County Land Bank Authority had acquired over 4,400 tax-delinquent properties in Flint, transferred over 220 vacant lots to neighboring property owners, and started the renovation of 60 residential properties (O'Brien et al 2005, 10).

While the turn-over rate of land bank properties may not be high, it is commendable in a weak market area. Apart from its record of property sales, the Genesee County Land Bank Authority can be considered a model land bank for several reasons. First, it maintains ten distinct

programs, making the program more efficient and accessible to the public. These programs include: Planning and Outreach, Brownfield Redevelopment, Development, Adopt-a-Lot, Clean and Green, Demolition, Housing Renovation, Sales, Side Lot Transfer and Foreclosure Prevention. Second, the LBA maintains good communication with the public, both through strong cooperative relationships and a quality information system, including a searchable online database and mapping system for potential developers (PolicyLink 2005, 101). Adding to this transparency of operations are full descriptions of acquisition, disposition and programmatic strategies, which are all readily accessible online. Third, properties are classified based on site characteristics to enable more strategic planning for their redevelopment. Lastly, the Genesee County Land Bank Authority is supported by strong legislation, giving it broad powers and the ability to return a portion of land bank profits into operating costs (PolicyLink 2005, 101).

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The City of Philadelphia's Land Bank was recently incorporated into the 2001 Neighborhood Transformation Initiative – a vision and strategy to “preserve and rebuild Philadelphia’s neighborhoods as thriving communities with clean and secure streets, vibrant retail, recreational and cultural outlets, and quality housing” (City of Philadelphia 2008). This plan, known as NTI, was backed by City Council with \$300 million in municipal bonds and over \$50 million in city operating dollars, and was built on the idea that deliberate, data-driven public investments and planning would be a key for neighborhood development (City of Philadelphia 2008). Intended to extend for five years, it provides a good case study as a focused and ambitious land banking effort. According to the City of Philadelphia’s website, NTI, and thus, the Land Bank, was guided by five key principles:

1. Use planning as an investment tool
2. Balance affordable and market-rate housing
3. Invest public funds to stimulate private market activity

4. Foster competition to get the best product
5. Maximize private capital and minimize public dollars
6. Link housing with other public and private investments

Because it was integrated into a larger initiative for city-wide revitalization, and because there is no statewide legislation specifically enabling land banking in Pennsylvania, intergovernmental communication and cooperation were important to the operation of the land bank. To enable this necessary collaboration, improved cooperation and streamlining of processes among these offices has been named a key goal of the NTI program, along with improved technology (City of Philadelphia 2008). Despite this goal, however, the departments and agencies involved still maintained separate land inventories, with different goals and purposes. This ultimately hindered efforts at strategic reuse and land assembly (Mallach 2006, 118). Offices involved include the Mayor's Office, City Council, and departmental directors. The initial NTI plans also included the involvement of community development corporations, and the creation of the Philadelphia Empowerment Zone to facilitate their involvement, although final reports and criticisms often highlight neighborhood level protests to demolition and rebuke the City's top-down approach (McGovern 2006). Early on, NTI also enlisted The Reinvestment Fund, a community development finance institution, to assess market conditions in the city's neighborhoods and review plans for land acquisition and redevelopment.

The City of Philadelphia identified six zones to be targeted for acquisition. These areas were characterized by high vacancy rates and the opportunity for large scale demolition and land assembly, in order to provide development opportunities for commercial, industrial, and residential developers (PolicyLink 2005, 105). This approach represented an overhaul of the program, which was previously developer driven, and afterwards became "proactive and driven by neighborhood development considerations" (City of Philadelphia 2008). According to the City of Philadelphia's website, the target zones adhered to existing neighborhood plans, were

within existing urban renewal or redevelopment boundaries, supported large scale demolition activity, were located near public spaces and employment opportunities, were adjacent to areas with favorable real estate markets, and were close to previous development investments (City of Philadelphia 2008). The City of Philadelphia's NTI webpage further described how the land bank focused on acquiring land for specific projects, based on three criteria: conformance with strategic neighborhood plans; facilitation of economic growth by building on market strengths; and the extent to which the development would leverage City resources by maximizing private investment and minimizing public subsidies and by making investments that are linked to other public and private investments in an area (City of Philadelphia 2008).

As with the acquisition process, the disposition process was driven by stated objectives, which were meant to be predictable and transparent. Properties were to be sold at appraised value, as assessed at the time of disposition, or sold for less than fair market value if the sale would support the development of affordable housing (at least 51% low to moderate income beneficiaries) or allow the creation of job opportunities for low and moderate income individuals (City of Philadelphia 2008).

Before reviewing the highlights of the Philadelphia Land Bank, which make it valuable as a model, it is important to note some downsides and inefficiencies of the program, which became apparent at the completion of its five-year funding cycle. The aggressive stance that Philadelphia chose to take on vacant properties did not come without a cost; ultimately, \$295 million in bonds were required to fund the aggressive and optimistic plan for demolition, acquisition, and large-scale property assemblage for residential redevelopment (McGovern 2006, 529). Furthermore, once the initiative was underway, unexpected increases in property values, a bottleneck of property acquisitions due to takings proceedings, and neighborhood fears of the negative impacts from the demolitions all worked to slow achievement of NTI's aspirations. (McGovern 2006, 544). The land banking program was also slowed by outdated comprehensive plans and incomplete neighborhood plans. At the larger scale, the City of Philadelphia also

struggled to streamline processes among the agencies involved, and to bring all land assembly programs under one roof.

Despite these issues, the City of Philadelphia's Land Bank under the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative can serve as a model land bank in three primary ways. First, it provides a 'test case' for supporting intergovernmental cooperation, and demonstrates the need for streamlining what can be highly bureaucratic procedures. Second, it used technology to make the entire NTI program more efficient and publicly accessible. The overall strategy for the acquisition and disposition of land bank parcels in Philadelphia was guided by an advanced Geographic Information System that mapped priority properties, as well as a Decision Support Model, which identified causal relationships among parcels based on weighted characteristics such as structure condition, number of vacant structures, and ownership characteristics (O'Brien et al 2005, 13). This model ultimately produced demolition schedules, compiled properties, and displayed potential development opportunities. This information is all available online to community members and potential developers. Third, the inclusion of the Land Bank into the NTI program demonstrates an effort to integrate land banking into larger strategic plans for revitalization across the City. It was recognized by experts as being innovative and provocative in the way that it placed revitalization on the top of the Mayor's policy agenda, benefited from sophisticated market analysis, and received continued commitment from the Mayor (McGovern 2006, 530).

Cleveland, Ohio

A case study review of the Cleveland Land Bank is important to this study, as Cleveland was one of the first cities in the U.S. to address vacant and abandoned properties with long term solutions, and because the land bank falls under the same state statutes as the focus of this paper, the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program. The Cleveland Land Bank is based on the 1976 state statute enabling the creation of municipal land banks throughout Ohio, for the purpose of

acquiring, managing and disposing of delinquent land and bringing it back into productive tax revenue status (Blackwell 2003). In 1988, Ohio House Bill 603 strengthened this state statute to allow reinvestment of income from delinquent taxes into improving the foreclosure process, allowing the abatement of delinquent property taxes when property is placed into the a land bank, and requiring interested parties to be notified by certified mail of foreclosure proceedings (Blackwell 2003). The passage of these bills allowed Cleveland to address a situation where, by the early 1970's, \$40 million was owed on back taxes across 16,000 parcels (Bright 2000, 144). Although the program initially struggled with lawsuits and a reluctance by the City to acquire large amounts of inner city land, a strong commitment from both the City and the County, and continued involvement in local and statewide initiatives to make land banking more efficient have given the Cleveland Land Bank a reputation as one of the most aggressive in the nation.

The Cleveland Land Bank is run by the City of Cleveland, with the land bank manager reporting to the director of the Division of Neighborhood Development, who in turn reports to the director of the Department of Community Development, and ultimately the mayor (Mallach 2006, 140). This program benefits from a high level of collaboration with the Cuyahoga County Treasurer's Office and area community development corporations (CDCs). Collaboration with the Treasurer allows the land bank to easily acquire tax foreclosed properties, to erase back taxes, and to sell properties for less than the assessed value (Rosan 2001, 4). It has also allowed the Land Bank to more readily utilize the newly passed Ohio House Bill 294, which created an expedited foreclosure process in Ohio. The level of collaboration with CDCs is also notable, as 90% of properties developed by local CDCs are acquired from the land bank. As of 2003, an average of 500 land bank properties had been sold to CDCs each year (Blackwell 2003). Recently, this collaboration with CDCs was reinforced with Cleveland's Zero Blight Initiative, which aggressively fights blight through the creation of an online information system, greater flexibility in property acquisition, the appointment of additional staff resources to the land bank, and allowing the ability to sell non-residential properties for a greater profit, while buildable

residential properties continue to be sold for \$100 (PolicyLink 2005, 100). These disposition methods will be explained in more detail below.

Property in the Cleveland Land Bank is acquired through the Cuyahoga County tax foreclosure process (Sheriff's sale) or as a gift in lieu of foreclosure. Before a foreclosure sale, the City identifies properties it hopes to acquire, and if the parcels are not sold, the land bank will acquire the parcels with a clear title and all tax liens extinguished. The land bank can hold the parcels for up to 15 years tax free. Recently, Ohio House Bill 294 was passed, which expedites the foreclosure process by allowing foreclosures on tax delinquent, abandoned properties to be heard more quickly by county Boards of Revision, instead of going through the typical court procedure. The bill also allows a land bank to acquire tax foreclosed property following one unsuccessful Sheriff's sale (as opposed to the previous two), and to decrease the initial amount of time required to declare a property delinquent and vacant.

Following this expedited acquisition process, CDCs play a large role in disposition and redevelopment of land bank parcels. Cleveland boasts a large network of over 30 CDCs and several support organizations, such as the Cleveland Housing Trust Fund, the Neighborhood Development Activity Fund, and the Cleveland Neighborhood Partnership Program (which consists of LISC, The Enterprise Foundation, and Neighborhood Progress, Inc) (Blackwell 2001). In addition to these funding sources, the City is using a favorable interpretation of the land banking legislation to distribute unbuildable side lots to adjacent land owners for \$1 and buildable lots to developers (or CDCs) for \$100. In addition to this work with CDCs, the land bank works with developers to assemble contiguous lots for larger projects. Potential developers must submit a development proposal, which is reviewed by staff and prioritized if the project includes new construction (PolicyLink 2005, 99).

Although the Cleveland Land Bank is noted for its high level of City-County collaboration, this partnership does not have a perfect history. Mistakes have occurred, from which other land bank authorities can learn. In 2001, it was reported that the County had begun

selling tax liens to a private company in an effort to recoup lost property taxes (Rosan 2001, 4). Outcry from the CDC community, and involvement by Neighborhood Progress Inc. and the National Vacant Properties Campaign (a coalition of national organizations spearheaded by Smart Growth America), directly brought about the Zero Blight Initiative mentioned above, and refocused the City's revitalization efforts.

The Cleveland Land Bank is widely recognized as a success in scholarly research. Having overcome internal conflict to become one of the most cooperative and collaborative land banks in the nation, the Cleveland Land Bank can serve as a national model in several ways. First, Cleveland has an extremely active network of CDCs, and a high level of collaboration between the city and the county, as alluded to above. This collaboration allows the land bank to distribute between 500 to 800 parcels a year to local CDCs (O'Brien et al 2005, 13). Additionally, the land bank exemplifies efficiency in its ability to sell properties at below market value, its expedited foreclosure process, and its ability to waive property taxes (O'Brien et al 2005, 13). In the state of Ohio, Cleveland has been at the forefront of innovative land banking practices, and has been a driver of new legislation to make land banking more efficient. Cities such as Cincinnati have yet to use this legislation to their benefit, in part due to poor cooperation between city and county governments. By making their land banking process more efficient, Cleveland has made the program more attractive and accessible to potential buyers, thus encouraging the desired redevelopment.

Best Practices Criteria

Integrating the land banking case studies of Flint, Philadelphia and Cleveland with information provided through the literature review, several criteria for best practices in land banking can be identified. Although specific land banking goals and practices may differ at the local level, patterns emerge that point towards efficiency in property acquisition, successful

redevelopment, and greater capacity to accomplish successful revitalization. The best practices criteria are as follows:

1. Policies should have precise goals and objectives.
2. The land banking authority should have adequate capacity; this includes human resources, technological support, and funding.
3. Community organizations should have adequate capacity to support land banking efforts; this includes human resources, funding, and prior experience with development
4. Policies should be efficient; this includes centralized control, and processes for property acquisition and disposition.
5. Policies should adhere to a strategic vision.

1. Policies should have precise goals and objectives.

The definition of precise goals and objectives will clarify the function of the land bank across the numerous departments and community organizations that are usually involved, and will prevent conflicting land use goals (O'Brien et al 2005, 21). These goals will define the land bank's operating functions and policies: stopping the cycle of blight, eliminating barriers to returning properties to productive use, bringing under utilized properties back to productive use, and holding properties for future use (Mallach 2005, 30). Because these goals can conflict, it is important that the community has clearly established priorities to help define goals. For example, the Genesee County Land Bank Authority is prioritizing acquisition of land for future use, instead of immediate development, which is clear in their low rate of disposition. These goals and objectives should have a geographic component, such as particular neighborhoods that should be the focus of land banking efforts, and they should also include provisions that recognize the financial needs of the individual community, such as maximization of property tax revenues, creation of public open space, and new development.

It is important that all departments and organizations involved in the land banking effort agree on these goals, as some can be controversial. For example, the goal of 'bringing underutilized properties back into productive use' can cause the land bank authorities to push for waivers on delinquent taxes, while taxing districts (such as school districts) will oppose this in order to ensure immediate tax revenues (Mallach 2005, 30). Similarly, land bank authorities may desire to sell properties for less than fair market value in order to place them under new ownership, while other departments or entities may favor maximizing profit over quick disposition. It is also important to limit goals and objectives to a small number that are clearly stated and locally relevant. While a greater number of goals and objectives will increase expectations of the land bank, it can also lead to a greater likelihood of failure; thus, the goal statement should answer two basic questions: 'What are we?' and 'Whom are we attempting to serve?' (Mallach 2005, 29)

2. *The land banking authority should have adequate capacity; this includes human resources, technological support, and funding.*

Land banking can be a time consuming and highly bureaucratic process, and quality of service depends on the availability of dedicated staff and resources. Because a land bank must support and facilitate development in the private sector, while also considering the needs of the municipality and the county, the land banking staff acts as a bridge between the public and private sectors. The legal authority, number of staff, and resources dedicated to a land bank can greatly determine its efficacy.

Increasingly, computerized tracking systems and internet-based public interfaces are becoming vital components of land banking programs, as they streamline title, acquisition, and disposition issues and provide transparency. A database of land bank properties linked to geographic information system (GIS) software can enable quick identification of property information such as ownership, size, purchase date, purchase price, tax delinquency status, utility

status, code violation status, and land bank status, among other data. Information can be produced at the block, census tract, neighborhood, or city-wide level. It can also be produced in a variety of formats, such as maps, tables or charts (Mallach 2006). This information can be filtered for availability to land banking staff, municipal or county staff, and the public.

Funding for a land bank depends on its location and its structure. While most land banks rely solely on municipal operating funds and any income from property sales, others have more flexible and creative financing methods. The Genesee County Land Bank Authority, for example, is able to access federal brownfields incentives from the U.S. EPA, HUD CDBG funds, HUD Section 108 loans, and HUD Brownfield Economic Development Incentive (BEDI) grants, in addition to numerous state-level funding sources (Genesee County LBA 2008b). Access to these funds for residential and commercial brownfield cleanup has been made possible through the creation of the Genesee County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. In locations with large foundations, grants can make up a large portion of funding. Likewise, Philadelphia's Land Bank utilized CDBG and state funds for land acquisition (City of Philadelphia 2008b). Still other funding methods can include brownfield redevelopment funds, rental income from land bank properties, and profits from the sale of land bank properties. The amount of funding available can determine the scope of the land bank, the availability of affiliated programs such as rehab grants, and the extent of property maintenance and redevelopment completed by the land bank.

- 3. Community organizations should have adequate capacity to support land banking efforts; this includes human resources, funding, and prior experience with development.*

An active network of CDCs enables the land banking process to be more effective and responsive to community needs. Elsie Bright, a researcher from Texas A&M, stated it well when she said "residents know what they need far better than anyone else, and they also have extensive knowledge of the local web of people, policies, and physical elements upon which revitalization plans, projects, and programs must be based" (Bright 2000, 161). This holds true for CDCs that

play an active and integral role in their neighborhoods. A collaboration between such CDCs and a land bank authority can provide a successful synthesis of practical, neighborhood-level knowledge with long range planning and technical skills, to bring about successful revitalization. This partnership could further enhance neighborhood level capacity, and boost revitalization efforts.

4. Policies should be efficient; this includes centralized control, and processes for property acquisition and disposition.

An efficient land banking program enables redevelopment and revitalization, and also sends a clear message to the affected neighborhoods and wider community that it is a priority. This is illustrated in research produced by the Lincoln Institute: “The most reliable indication a city can send that it means business, is the speed and consistency with which it carries out these policies, particularly with enforcement, foreclosure, and property disposition” (Goldstein et al 2001, 21).

Efficiency in land banking calls for centralization of land banking efforts or a high level of coordination among any departments involved. Oftentimes, vacant parcels can be scattered among numerous departments, under a variety of programs. This does not facilitate parcel assemblage for large developments or even strategic development of individual parcels at a neighborhood level. In addition to centralized control, the property acquisition and disposition procedures must be clearly laid out, and expedited to the greatest extent possible. Increasingly, states are passing statutes to expedite foreclosure processes to decrease proceedings. Without expedited processes, foreclosures can take up to seven years. Using expedited processes provided through House Bill 294, properties in Cleveland have been completely processed in 6 months, when it normally took 2-3 years. These expedited procedures still follow the legal guidelines for notifying interested parties and insures that the rights of property owners to redeem their

properties is upheld. These procedures simply target those properties that have become vacant and abandoned.

To streamline acquisition and disposition, guidelines should be set that dictate types and locations of parcels for acquisition, a timeline for acquisition and redevelopment, and the required qualifications for those seeking to purchase property. These components of the land bank procedures should be tied to a strategic plan.

5. Adherence to a strategic vision

A successful and sustainable land bank should not only have its own specific goals and objectives, but should also align these with a larger vision for the community, oftentimes in the form of a comprehensive or strategic plan. The reuse of vacant and abandoned properties should be part of a comprehensive strategy for the neighborhood and the larger community.

An example of successful adherence to a larger strategy can be seen in Philadelphia's Neighborhood Transformation Initiative. The initiative in Philadelphia began with a full market analysis and the classification of neighborhoods based on market strength. NTI policy recommendations were then made for each specific area, and from those recommendations acquisition strategies were developed. Two areas identified for redevelopment early on, Strawberry Mansion and Mantua, saw property values rapidly increase, which ultimately inhibited NTI acquisitions, but prove the power of targeted redevelopment. Anticipating this, Mayor Street had said "This is one of those areas that the moment we do a large development, the market is going to go to work. This borders the zoo, it borders the park. It's precisely the kind of area that could really turn into a great, positive community for our city" (McGovern 2006, 548). Ultimately, because of the rise in property values, NTI had to geographically spread its efforts in a total of six areas. (McGovern 2006, 550).

Table 1: Adherence of Case Study Land Banks to Best Practices

	Flint (Genesee County)¹	Philadelphia	Cleveland	Cincinnati
Year established	2002	2001	1976	1996
Population in land bank jurisdiction ²	120,000/441,966	1,448,394	444,313	332,252
Total number of vacant lots & structures	5,000 (residential)	60,000+ ³	10-25,000 ⁴	22,687 ⁵
Percent Vacant Housing Units ⁶	19.2% / 10%	16%	21%	21%
Average number of properties in land bank	4,000	Not available	5,000	75
Average number of properties acquired per year	700-1,000 ⁷	1,500 ⁸	1,000 ⁹	10 ¹⁰
Average number of properties sold per year	55 ¹¹	140 ¹²	500 ¹³	Less than 10
Total number of parcels processed	4,400 ¹⁴	5,500	Not available	69
Authority of land bank	County	Municipal	Municipal	Municipal
Goals and Objectives				
Clearly established goals and objectives	Yes	Yes	No	No
Goals and objectives reflect local plans	Yes (district and neighborhood plans)	Yes (NTI)	Yes (through close coordination with CDCs)	Occasionally, when DOT team input
Utilizes property acquisition guidelines	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Utilizes property disposition guidelines	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Types of property in land bank	Residential, industrial, commercial	Residential, industrial, commercial	Residential, industrial, commercial	Residential
Capacity of Land Banking Authority				
Dedicated staff	Yes	Yes (NTI)	Yes	No
Computerized tracking program	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Specialized online property search tool	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Funding mechanism	Foundations/Grants, land bank operations (sale and rental), future tax revenues, Brownfield TIF financing, municipal budget	Municipal operating dollars, future tax revenue, CDBG, state funding	Foundations/Grants, Municipal budget	Municipal budget, CDBG
Methods of property acquisition	Foreclosure, gift in lieu of foreclosure	Foreclosure, purchase, urban renewal, spot condemnation	Foreclosure, gift in lieu of foreclosure	Foreclosure

	Flint (Genesee County)*	Philadelphia	Cleveland	Cincinnati
Capacity of local CDC's				
Number of active CDCs	2 ¹⁵	36 ¹⁶	48	35 ¹⁷
Number of CDCs actively working with land bank	2	Not available	Not available	0 ¹⁸
Number of CDCs actively doing property development	2	15 ¹⁹	48 ²⁰	15 ²¹
Efficiency of procedures				
Uses expedited foreclosure process	Yes	No	Yes	No
Level of regional Intergovernmental cooperation	High	High	High	Low
Ability to waive property taxes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Set timeline for disposition	No	No	15 years	15 years
Clear timeline for redevelopment of disposed properties	No	Yes	Not available	Yes
Other tools used to address vacancies	Foreclosure Prevention, Adopt-a-Lot, Demolition, Housing Renovation/Rental, Revitalization Plans	Maintenance and renovation grants, Revitalization Programs, Demolition	Foreclosure Prevention, Demolition, Revitalization Programs,	Foreclosure Prevention, Code Enforcement, Vacant Building Maintenance License
Adherence to a strategic vision				
Land bank activity corresponds to local Neighborhood Plans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Occasionally
Land bank activity corresponds to current Comprehensive Plan	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

¹ City of Flint/Genesee County

² 2006 US Census

³ Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project et al 2001

⁴ Janz, 2007

⁵ According to most recent CAGIS data

⁶ 2006 US Census. These numbers see a drastic change in recent years; the 2000 Census recorded 11.7% vacancy rate in Cleveland, which doubled by 2006.

⁷ Griswold et al, 2007

⁸ City of Philadelphia, NTI website 2008

⁹ Blackwell, 2003

¹⁰ Based on review of CLRP Program Property Report

¹¹ Based on data showing 220 transferred lots between 2002 and 2005

¹² Based on data reported by Mark Allan Hughes, stating at total of 700 properties transferred over 5 years

¹³ Blackwell, 2003

¹⁴ O'Brien et al 2005

¹⁵ Genesee County Land Bank Authority website, 2008

¹⁶ City of Philadelphia, NTI website

¹⁷ Patricia Gary, 2008

¹⁸ Based on participation observation of the author

¹⁹ Based off of website reviews of all of NTI's CDC Community Partners, as listed on the NTI webpage

²⁰ Phone conversation with staff of Cleveland Neighborhood Development Coalition, May 16, 2008

²¹ Joe Gorman, 2008

VI. The Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program

Historical Development

In 1976, the State of Ohio enacted legislation authorizing municipal corporations, counties, and townships to create and operate independent land reutilization programs. Described in Chapter 5722 of the Ohio Revised Code, the purpose of this legislation was to facilitate the effective reutilization of nonproductive land situated within electing subdivisions, and to ameliorate the negative effects of lost tax revenue on vacant and abandoned properties (State of Ohio).

On September 5, 1996, the City of Cincinnati City Planning Commission and City Council acted on this legislation by unanimously approving an emergency ordinance to establish the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program (CLRP). City of Cincinnati Ordinance #265 thus adopted and implemented the procedures as outlined in Chapter 5722 of the Ohio Revised Code. Ordinance #265 additionally established a set of rules delineated by the City Manager, which are shown with Ordinance #265 in Appendix E., and are included in the detailed description of procedures and functions below. The CLRP was approved because “the existence of nonproductive land within the City of Cincinnati necessitates the implementation of a land reutilization program to foster either the return of such nonproductive land to tax revenue generating status or the devotion of such land to public use” (City of Cincinnati 1996). The ordinance creating this program was declared an emergency in order “to begin returning vacant, unused land to productive status as soon as possible” (City of Cincinnati 1996).

A staff report from the City Planning Department, presented to the Cincinnati Planning Commission in 1996 states that the CLRP was seen as a means for “the City to assemble and bank land over a reasonable length of time at a minimal cost for subsequent redevelopment”, at a time when “the supply of developable City-owned property [was] virtually exhausted” (City of Cincinnati, 1996). The staff report also pointed out that the City’s ability to acquire land was

“limited to a lengthy and expensive spot blight or urban renewal plan implementation process, a City mortgage foreclosure, or a rare friendly sale”. It was hoped that the CLRP would provide an alternative means for the creation of housing and business development opportunities in the City (City of Cincinnati 1996). This said, the City Planning Department stated the original purpose of the program to be:

...to acquire tax delinquent properties from Hamilton County’s tax suspension list to develop sites for housing, commercial and public use (City of Cincinnati 1996).

The current draft procedures of the CLRP has since been expanded to read:

The purpose of the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program (CLRP) is to return non-productive property back to productive use as new homeownership and business sites within the City of Cincinnati. The program is focused on, but not limited to, developing residential opportunities for Cincinnati residents. The return of non-productive parcels to productive use is facilitated through the sale of property to established housing developers interested in redeveloping the site, or to adjacent property owners who wish to use the site to improve upon their productive property. CLRP property can be dedicated for public use if a compelling proposal for the betterment of the community is brought forth. The CLRP may determine that a site may be best used to aid in a revitalization project of the City of Cincinnati. The property then can be transferred as directed by the City Administration. The program operates in cooperation with the Hamilton County Auditor Office [pursuant to Chapter 5277 of the Ohio Revised Code.] (City of Cincinnati 2007)

Management

The CLRP was originally managed by the Department of Neighborhood Services, with input from a “Property Selection Team” consisting of department directors from Neighborhood Services, Economic Development, Planning, Buildings and Inspections, and the Real Estate Manager of the Law Department, or their assignees. As a result of several structural changes, the program was operated out of the Department of Community Development and Planning until 2008, and is now operating out of the Department of City Planning, with funding coming from the Department of Community Development. These structural changes simply separated the two departments, and provided the planning staff with an independent budget and department; it has not, however, received funding for the CLRP because the CLRP is operated via the same funding source as several programs operated out of the Department of Community Development.

The department managing the program is responsible for receiving notification from prosecuting attorneys and the Hamilton County Auditor regarding all foreclosed properties, identifying and acquiring those properties it wishes to acquire in accordance with set acquisition criteria, creating and maintaining files for each parcel, conducting a review of the properties at least once a year, performing needed maintenance, and selling the properties within the designated time frame (City of Cincinnati 1996b). Detailed explanations of the CLRP procedures are described in the following paragraphs.

Acquisition

The City Cincinnati Planning Commission outlined five criteria for property acquisition when the CLRP was first created. These are:

1. City, Department, or neighborhood strategies or goals
2. The potential for sale within five years of acquisition
3. The potential for development within five years of acquisition
4. The opportunity for consolidation with abutting parcel(s)
5. The unique opportunities presented

According to instructions laid out in ORC 5722.09, properties can be acquired for the CLRP through three methods: 1) tax foreclosure sale by the Hamilton County Sheriff, 2) forfeited land sale by the Hamilton County Auditor, or 3) deed in lieu of foreclosure, which allows a tax-delinquent property owner to convey their property to the CLRP, with consent of the County Auditor, and the understanding that the City will pay all expenses incurred by the County taxing authority (State of Ohio). The CLRP is prohibited from acquiring properties through direct purchase or donation.

The primary method of acquisition has been through tax foreclosure sale, whereby the managers of the CLRP work in cooperation with the Hamilton County Auditor to acquire tax delinquent properties. The Auditor's office is instructed to provide a list of all available and non-

productive vacant properties two months in advance of the Hamilton County Sheriff's Delinquent Tax Foreclosure Sale, which is held once a year, in June (Orth 2008). The Property Selection Team makes a list of all properties it wishes to acquire for the CLRP, and notifies the Auditor's office of its selections. The advertisement for sale then indicates the City's interest in acquiring the properties, and if the properties are not sold for minimum bid, the title is transferred to the City, with all delinquent taxes forgiven. The cost of the properties is simply the cost of transferring and recording the deed. Properties acquired through this process are typically vacant lots, but there is no prohibition against the acquisition of structures.

Regardless of acquisition method, the procedures state that properties will not be purchased if: 1) there is no proposed use; 2) there is no estimated timeline to bring the property back into use; 3) if necessary environmental or other assessment can not be completed; or 4) if it does not have a clear title. The properties that are acquired by the CLRP should be automatically tax-exempt for 15 years, or until they are transferred or sold from the CLRP inventory.

Property Maintenance

In order to keep proper maintenance of the inventory, all CLRP properties should be added to the official inventory within five days of receipt of title, and once the property value is determined. Property values are usually determined by the Hamilton County Auditor's appraisal, unless the City Real Estate office considers the appraisal unreasonable, and conducts an independent assessment.

In order to allow the most productive and appropriate redevelopment of CLRP properties, the CLRP is required by the procedures to establish and maintain committees of interested taxing districts to aid in redevelopment efforts. This committee should include representatives from throughout Hamilton County as well as the Cincinnati School Board. Members of this committee are appointed by the taxing district they represent and serve on a

voluntary unpaid basis, meeting at least quarterly to review operations of the CLRP and make recommendations.

Additionally, the CLRP procedures require that the City of Cincinnati establish separate neighborhood advisory committees of persons living in or owning property within each neighborhood affected by the program. These neighborhood committees are consulted on a quarterly basis to review land banking operations, and to receive advice from residents in the affected neighborhoods regarding pertinent issues, including interim land uses (City of Cincinnati 2007).

Maintenance of CLRP properties is contracted out through a competitive bidding process on an annual basis. Maintenance performed on each property is tracked, and upon the sale of the property, a 10% maintenance fee is charged to help recoup expenses. When considering disposition of CLRP properties, the primary consideration is the size of the property. Large properties that could be subdivided for the construction of three or more single family homes are offered through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, and smaller properties that can support less than three single family houses are offered first to neighboring property owners, and secondly to the general public for purchase and redevelopment for residential use, or to developers of ongoing projects under contract with the City. These smaller properties may or may not be actively marketed through an RFP, as they are less attractive to large-scale developers (City of Cincinnati 1996b).

Property Disposition

CLRP properties can be sold at fair market value any time after receiving the deed. In order to complete the sale of a CLRP property, the prospective buyer must have demonstrated development capacity, and must submit a request for purchase detailing the proposed future use of the property, which will be judged by CLRP and City staff for its appropriateness. According

to the Supplemental Guidelines for the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program, in order to be approved for sale, the proposal must satisfy one or more of the following CLRP objectives:

1. Reduce the number of nonproductive parcels within the City of Cincinnati by redeveloping the property within the limits of the community plan, if one exists and as allowed by the zoning district for the site
2. Facilitate on-going development projects and programs and create new development projects that support housing and/or business markets in Cincinnati neighborhoods
3. Reduce blight and deterioration in Cincinnati neighborhoods
4. Actively market the properties for housing and business development
5. Maintain the properties until such time as the parcels are offered for sale
6. Return nonproductive parcels back into use as housing, business or public space opportunities (City of Cincinnati 1996b).

Following a successful sale, the CLRP procedures require that development be complete and a certificate of occupancy be issued within two years of the date of purchase. If this does not occur, the City maintains legal right to re-enter and take possession of the property, via a Reverter Clause in all CLRP deeds. It is possible for the developer to petition for an extension of one year to acquire a certificate of occupancy.

The CLRP is also able to dedicate land for public use if there is a compelling argument for positive community impact, such as the advancement of a designated revitalization project. Historically, the CLRP has acquired properties for a variety of City programs, including SPUR (Strategic Program for Urban Redevelopment) and occasional initiatives of the Department of Community Development (Wuerstle 2008).

If the property is not sold within fifteen years, it is ordered up for sale in the sixteenth year at an amount equal to but not less than either 2/3 of fair market value, or the total sum of all taxes, assessments, penalties, interest, charges, and costs incurred by the City for the acquisition,

maintenance and disposal of the property (City of Cincinnati 2007). The property will be put up for sale every third year, until it is sold.

Changes to the Program

Since 1996, several changes have been made to the CLRP. The first major change was made in 1997, when former Mayor Roxanne Qualls presented the Zero Tolerance initiative, which proposed to expand the CLRP in order “to get problem littered lots that may not be suitable for development, into the hands of adjacent or closely proximate neighbors who will properly care for them” (City of Cincinnati 1997). Receiving full support from the City Council, this program expanded the objectives of the CLRP and enabled the sale of many more properties.

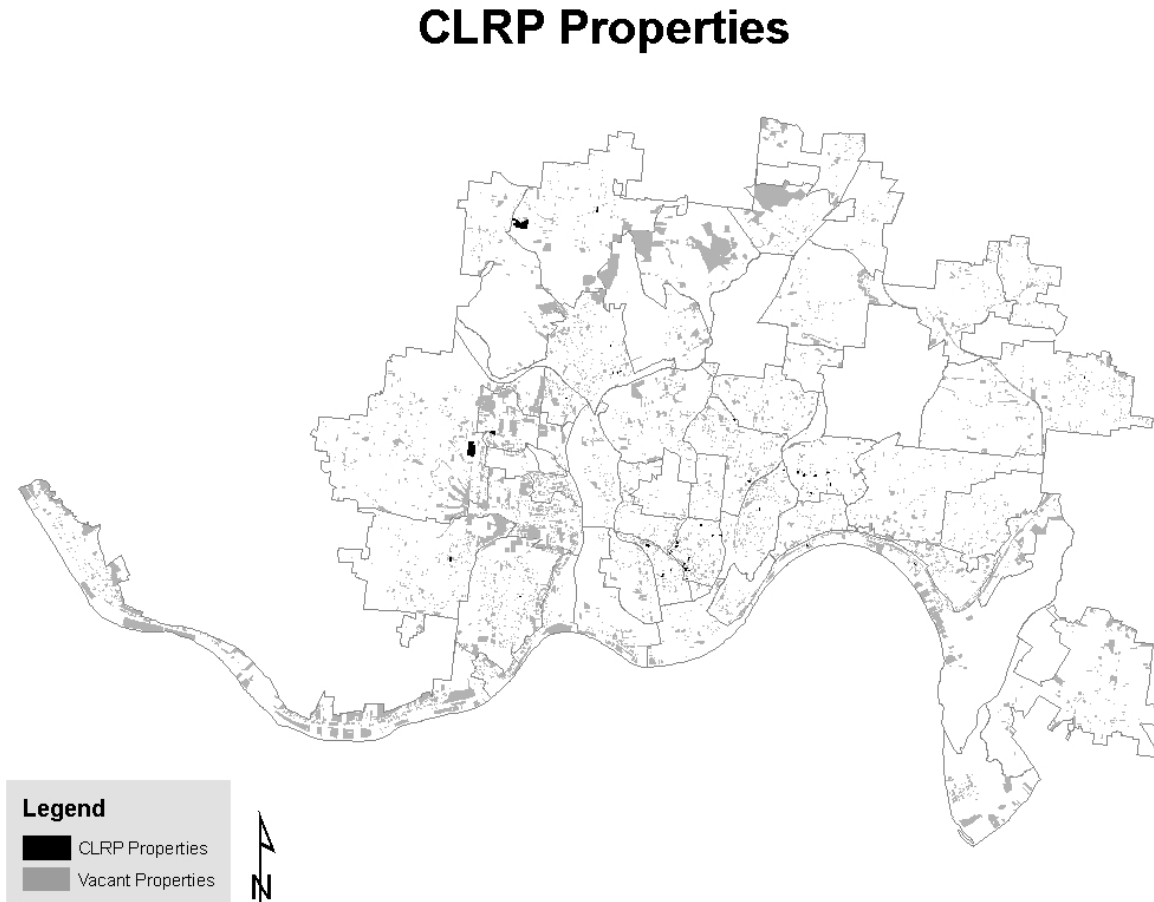
The most drastic change occurred when control of the program shifted from Fred Orth to Larry Harris, in 2003. The change was significant because the scope of the program was widened to include all Cincinnati neighborhoods, whereas before the CLRP was focused on acquiring properties only in Mt. Auburn, Evanston, and the East End. Additionally, under the management of Larry Harris, the CLRP also began to use Cincinnati Neighborhood Action Strategies (CNAS) to identify and acquire properties³. This new strategy involved DOT teams of staff members from the Department of Community Development and Planning who worked closely with community members for development; the DOT team members would evaluate the yearly Auditor’s list of properties with community input, and give reasons to purchase each of the chosen properties. The new scope of the CLRP also enabled the use of the funding from the HUD National Neighborhood Revitalization Strategic Areas (NRSA) program, which identifies target areas to receive HUD funding. This expansion in the scope of the program also spurred

³ CNAS were adopted by former Cincinnati City Manager John Shirley to apply the concept of community oriented policing to all city services. A CNAS team is composed of representatives from a variety of City departments, who keep in close contact with a beat police officer and help to coordinate targeted enforcement. The efficacy of the CNAS is highly dependent on the relationship among the CNAS team members and the police officer.

coordination with the new Community Problem Oriented Policing efforts (CPOP), which helps to identify problem properties (Harris 2008).

Current Status

Illustration 1.
Distribution of CLRP Properties



The Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program (CLRP) now holds approximately 50 properties, primarily zoned for residential use. The properties are concentrated in Mount Auburn and Over the Rhine, but are also located in East and West Price Hill, Northside, Avondale, South Cummingville, College Hill, Evanston, East End, Westwood, Madisonville, and Walnut Hills. This distribution of these properties is shown in the map below, and listed in Appendix D.

Despite these property holdings, the program is not actively being marketed or utilized. The current CLRP manager states that this is an intentional decision, until numerous issues with the program are resolved. These issues are discussed in the following chapters, along with case studies of how the CLRP is currently or potentially could be utilized in Cincinnati neighborhoods.

The development of several independent local and county-wide land banking efforts reflect on the dormant nature of the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program, and reiterates the need for such a program in the Cincinnati area. During the past year, there has been increased interest among local officials and the community groups regarding vacant land management. There are two primary examples of this growing interest. First, the Cincinnati City Council approved \$1,250,000 in funding for the Neighborhood Homes Initiative, which seeks to “aggressively work with communities and lending institutions to strategically purchase foreclosed properties for redevelopment” (City of Cincinnati 2008c). Second, Hamilton County Commissioner Todd Portune made a motion to transform the “...Port Authority into a Port Development Authority, capable of generating Port Authority bond funding and to permit aggressive Brownfield redevelopment and to sit as a Land bank entity to transform vacant, abandoned or tax delinquent foreclosure property into productive lands throughout Hamilton County” (Board of County Commissioners 2008).

The Neighborhood Homes Initiative (NHI) grew out of the efforts of the Hamilton County Homeownership Preservation Initiative, which has worked to prevent foreclosures and deal with the problem of already foreclosed homes throughout Cincinnati. Within the Homeownership Preservation Initiative, the ‘Systemic Change Committee’ spurred a group of seven individuals to develop the idea of NHI, which would buy foreclosed homes in bulk from lending institutions like Fannie Mae and HUD, and pass on to community development corporations (CDCs), community urban redevelopment corporations (CURCs, which differ slightly in their tax status) and for-profit developers to be prepared for sale to homebuyers (City of Cincinnati 2008c). In this way, NHI would act as a wholesaler for foreclosed properties. NHI

remains in the germination stage, and is being researched and further developed by the Greater Cincinnati Redevelopment Partnership, Inc., which is a new organization, legally established to administer the NHI program, and is composed of individuals involved in the original NHI proposal. In the future, it is possible that the Homesteading and Urban Redevelopment Corporation (HURC) will act as the umbrella organization for NHI (Orth 2008).

The motion by County Commissioner Todd Portune to transform the Port Authority into a County-wide land banking entity also seeks an aggressive and large scale strategy for tackling the foreclosure crisis, which is expected to continue through upcoming years. The primary advantage that the proposed Port Development Authority would have over both the CLRP and NHI is bonding authority and scope of operations. Bonding authority would provide them with an additional, potentially large, funding source, in addition to required contributions from the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County (Board of County Commissioners 2008). Additionally, the Port Development Authority would be operating at a county-wide level, which would allow them to strategize on a larger scale and acquire newer, foreclosed properties in suburban areas. The Genesee County Land Bank is able to leverage profits from the acquisition and sale of new, foreclosed homes in the suburbs and reinvest the earnings in Flint, where it is more difficult to profit. Ultimately, Portune's proposal can be seen as a way to address the Port Authority's current lack of power and authority, and to provide a structure upon which to build a conversation with City and County officials regarding stronger land banking efforts to address the foreclosure crisis.

VII. Illustrations of Local Capacity for Land Banking

The Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program currently holds approximately 50 parcels, scattered across thirteen of Cincinnati's 52 neighborhoods. The case studies will present a more tangible picture of the role that the CLRP is playing in two Cincinnati neighborhoods – Evanston and Price Hill. The case studies are qualitative in nature, and will consider the socioeconomic trends and general character of each neighborhood, introduce primary community organizations, describe current development occurring in each community, and discuss the current and future potential role of the CLRP in each neighborhood.

Evanston

The Community

Illustration 2. Evanston Homes



Evanston is located in the central-eastern part of Cincinnati, one exit from downtown on Interstate 71. It was named for the Chicago suburb from which its early residents hailed, and is bordered by the neighborhoods of East Walnut Hills, Hyde Park, and Oakley (Muyaya 2008).

Although Evanston has numerous parks, business districts, and community institutions, the neighborhood is characterized by its industrial background and as a place where African American families moved after the crackdown on redlining allowed them more homeownership options (Muyaya 2008). According to the 2000 Census, Evanston's population was 88% African

American, and had a 53% homeownership rate, which is relatively high for Cincinnati (Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission 2001). Residents like to exaggerate that Evanston is perhaps the only neighborhood in Cincinnati where a resident can get a great education, from preschool through graduate school, without ever leaving the neighborhood. It is home to three elementary schools, two high schools, including the new Academy of World Languages, and Xavier University - one of few Jesuit universities in the nation (Muyaya 2008).

According to the 2000 Census, Evanston is home to approximately 8,000 residents living in 3,000 households. The median income was reported to range from \$17,000 on the west side to \$40,000 in the eastern part of the neighborhood. Within Evanston, there are about 3,500 housing units - many of which are historic single family homes or large multi-family apartments. Approximately 12% of Evanston's housing units were listed as vacant in the 2000 US Census. The neighborhoods directly surrounding Evanston often have significantly higher property values, which has led to zip code disputes along Evanston's borders, according to Sharon Muyaya, former President of the Evanston Community Council (Muyaya 2008). The pictures below illustrate the difference in housing within a matter of blocks.

Illustration 3.
Range of Housing Types in Evanston Area



This stratification within and around Evanston can in part be attributed to a decline in industry over the past 40 years, and the construction of I-71 through the middle of the neighborhood. Additionally, the population of homeowners is aging, and many families have transitioned out of the neighborhood (Evanston Housing Committee 2006, 4). The construction

of the I-71 remains a divisive factor in the community - physically, economically and emotionally.

Community Organizations

There are several key organizations in Evanston working to address these issues of neighborhood separation and decline. The Evanston Community Council has been active in the community since the 1950's, and is recognized by the City of Cincinnati as an official community council. EvanstonNOW is a spin-off organization of the community council, and serves as a recruitment arm. EvanstonNOW recently received funding from the Greater Cincinnati Foundation for a part-time coordinator. A second key organization is Xavier University's Community Building Institute (CBI), which was established in 1995. Serving as the Executive Director of CBI is Liz Blume, former Director of the Department of Planning for the City of Cincinnati. While CBI is active throughout the greater Cincinnati area, its base in Evanston allows it to play a special role in the area. According to CBI's website, the organization's goal is to facilitate collaborative action among residents, leading to comprehensive, asset-based community development (CBI 2008). Additionally, the Evanston, Norwood, Xavier Partnership (ENX) has developed with the support of federal grants to focus on sustainable and asset-based growth among the communities (Evanston Housing Committee 2006, 22). The goal of the partnership is increased homeownership levels, stronger capacity of existing residents, and redevelopment that will last due to local support. For this research, interviews were conducted with Sharon Muyaya, former President of the Evanston Community Council, and Liz Blume and Picket Slater Harrington of the Community Building Institute – all of whom have played significant roles in recent development efforts.

Current Development

Citing the recent development of the Keystone office park, and the growth of institutional uses in Evanston, the staff at CBI claim that the community has seen growth over the past 15 years (Blume et al 2008). Influenced by recent developments in Norwood, and the push to reuse old industrial facilities, Evanston can be seen as a strategic redevelopment area, close to downtown. Current development projects include the construction of the Keystone office park at the I-71 exit, and the reconfiguration of Xavier University's campus.

The Keystone office park is being developed by Neyer Properties, and will consist of two 200,000 square foot buildings, a 60,000 square foot building, and an outlot for retail space; this will all be located above an underground parking structure (Baverman 2006). This development received local support through TIF funding, and is seen as a boon to the community. In response, Neyer worked to give back to the community through the inclusion of a 6.5 acre park. There is also discussion about including a space for community meetings within the office park itself. From the perspective of Liz Blume, Executive Director of Xavier University's Community Building Institute, Neyer has and will continue to be a positive influence on the neighborhood. She pointed out that Neyer was careful to provide fair-market value for the 40 or so properties it acquired for the development, thus avoiding community concerns over unfair eminent domain. Furthermore, the simple presence of the large office park will bring in at least 1,000 employees a day, who will spend money in the community. This will have a strong impact on local businesses (Blume et al 2008).

Turning to the developments around Xavier University, the University is proposing a mixed use development at the intersection of Dana and Montgomery Roads on a 20 acre former industrial site, shown in Illustration 4. The area surrounding the site currently hosts a UDF gas and convenience store and a new shop for motor scooters, as shown in Illustration 5. There is little development currently linking the area to Xavier University or promoting pedestrian access, however. Development is planned through a partnership between Xavier and Corporex

Companies, which is responsible for much of the redevelopment along the Northern Kentucky riverfront (Xavier 2008). It is hoped that this development will facilitate an off-campus university/community zone that will serve as an entryway to the campus and improve vitality (Evanston Housing Committee 2006, 20). The University is also planning to complete streetscape improvements and the expansion of some classroom buildings along Dana. The staff at CBI see these developments as a means to reintegrate the University into the community, and spur additional development (Blume et al 2008).

Illustration 4.
BASF Former Industrial Site



Illustration 5.
Intersection at Dana and Montgomery Roads



Supporting these redevelopment efforts are the Evanston Community Council and Community Building Institute, which are both very active and growing in capacity. The two organizations recently partnered up to develop the Evanston Housing Strategy, which is an asset-based assessment of and plan for the housing stock in the community. The plan is asset based because it focuses on the capacity held within individuals, institutions, and associations, and creates a strategy based on those (Blume et al 2008). The plan identifies five neighborhood housing districts, and has devised distinct redevelopment strategies for each, depending on the current assets and needs of the district. These districts and the accompanying strategies are briefly outlined below, based on plans within the Evanston Housing Strategy.

1. Jonathan Avenue District

The Jonathan Avenue District is in the western part of the neighborhood, and contains Hoffman Elementary School and Walnut Hills High School. This area contains single family homes valued between \$40,000 and \$80,000, and has seen recent investment by the City of Cincinnati, through the Jonathan Meadows project, which will create 22 new single family units directly behind Walnut Hills High School. Two photos of a duplex from the first phase of this development are depicted in Illustration 6, demonstrating the effort made to fit the development with the character of the neighborhood. Additionally, Evanston residents participated in a visual survey of housing in the district, and have worked to promote code enforcement and façade improvement in the area. This area is also targeted for the Evanston Home Exterior Improvement Program (EHEIP), which will be operated by the Evanston Community Council Housing Committee, and will provide homeowners with financial assistance for exterior improvements.

Illustration 6.
Jonathon Meadows Development



2. East Evanston

East Evanston is one of the most stable parts of Evanston, and contains many well-cared for owner-occupied homes. Home values can range from \$75,000 to \$150,000. Every street has several “problem houses”, however, which are the focus of the strategy for this district. A comparison of East Evanston homes is shown in Illustration 7.

**Illustration 7.
Range of Housing Types in East Evanston District**



3. Five Points District

The Five Points District is characterized by a high level of rental units, and has become a crime hotspot for the neighborhood. The Evanston Housing Strategy recommends demolition of two crime-ridden multi-family structures and the construction of a senior living facility, streetscaping, and a push for new owner-occupants. The focal point of the district is the intersection of Woodburn Montgomery, Hewitt, and Gilbert, which is depicted in the two photos below.

**Illustration 8.
Five Points District**



4. Idelwild-Xavier District

The Idelwild-Xavier District is the closest to Xavier University, but despite the high number of rental units, very few students reside here. A key recommendation by the Evanston Housing Strategy for this district is the creation of a community development corporation to buy, renovate, and manage 25 rental housing units for students. This area struggles with congestion and overflow parking during Xavier events, and, like many Evanston neighborhoods, is constantly reminded by the invasion of I-71 through the neighborhood, as seen in Illustration 10.

Illustration 9.
Idelwild District University Parking



Illustration 10.
Idelwild Street Truncated by I-71



5. Owl's Nest District

The Owl's Nest District borders on Owl's Nest Park, which is shared by Evanston and East Walnut Hills, and is highly visible from the O'Bryonville business district. Homes in this area have recently been marketed for up to \$400,000; it is oftentimes in this area that zip code disputes occur, in order to further enhance property values. Homes typical of the area are shown in Illustration 11.

Illustration 11.
Owl's Nest District Homes



6. O'Bryonville District

Adjacent to the Owl's Nest District, the O'Bryonville District is a well-recognized business district in Cincinnati, noted for its boutique stores and unique restaurants. The housing stock in this area is a diverse mix of shotgun houses and stately mansions, all of which should benefit by the construction of the Academy of World Languages. O'Bryonville works to create a distinct and independent image for itself, apart from the Evanston Community

Illustration 12.
O'Bryonville Business District



In addition to the targeted strategies for each of the six districts, overall development strategies for Evanston include the Home Improvement Program grant and loan program, and designation as a 2008 City of Cincinnati Neighborhood Enhancement Program focus neighborhood. As part of the Neighborhood Enhancement Program, the City will engage Evanston residents to complete 90 days of intensive efforts to target crime hot spots, conduct code enforcement, and fund clean-up and beautification efforts. The 90 day period will run from September 1 – November 30, 2008 (City of Cincinnati 2008).

CLRP in Evanston

The Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program (CLRP) has acquired eight properties in Evanston, and has sold three, all of which are mapped in Illustration 14 and presented in Table 2. The majority of these properties were acquired in 2000 and 2001, when Evanston was a neighborhood targeted for acquisition. As described in by Fred Orth, who was managing the CLRP at the time, two lots were sold to Potterhill homes, for the construction of two single family homes. Orth speculates that the small scale of development made it more difficult to sell the homes, which were attractive but nonetheless went unsold for a year (Orth 2008). Since the construction of those two homes, the CLRP has declined in activity in Evanston. In 2007, two additional properties were acquired in the area of the Five Points District.

Reviewing the impact that the eight CLRP properties have had on Evanston, the only clear benefit to the community occurred with the sale of two properties to Potterhill Homes. The remaining properties are simply vacant lots, which are in some cases poorly maintained. The property at 3251 Gaff (as shown in Table 2) is an example of the liability that come with owning vacant properties, and illustrates the major drawback to land banking programs. The CLRP managers currently contract with an outside company for maintenance, with expenses totaling \$70,000 per year for 136 vacant properties owned by the Departments of Planning and Community Development (City of Cincinnati 2007b). Returning to the successful redevelopment

of the two properties in Evanston, and recalling the current development by the City of Cincinnati at Jonathon Meadows, there appears to be potential for a greater level of CLRP activity within Evanston.

Capacity for Future CLRP Development

Although Evanston does not currently have its own community development corporation (CDC), it has a strong community council with an active housing subcommittee, and is home to the Community Building Institute, which is a regional force in community development. Together, these organizations have put together the Evanston Housing Strategy, and are discussing the potential for creating a local CDC to aid them in implementing this plan. Based on this high level of activity and the enthusiasm and dedication demonstrated by CBI staff and Sharon Muyaya, former president of the Evanston Community Council, there appears to be potential for increased land bank activity in Evanston. As further evidence for the capacity of the current community council, one can look to their budget, which has increased from \$10,000 in the past (which included \$7,000 from the City, and \$3,000 raised) to over \$500,000 in resources, which includes grants for beautification, façade improvement program for the business district, funding for the Evanston-Norwood-Xavier Community Partnership, and a grant to fund an EvanstonNow staff person (Blume et al 2008).

While none of the individuals interviewed in Evanston were familiar with the CLRP, this is less a reflection of their capacity than of the lack of marketing on the part of CLRP managers. Reiterating this was the familiarity that the interviewees had with former City redevelopment programs, such as the now inactive Urban Homesteading Program, which operates in a similar manner to the CLRP. The Evanston Housing Strategy discusses the potential future use of this program, and points out that “with over 400 vacant units in the neighborhood, this program, if reinvigorated in Evanston, could have a very positive impact” (Evanston Housing Committee 2006, 13). With Evanston’s development leaders at CBI and the Evanston Community Council

understanding the importance of ownership and property control in strategic development, they are working to further build their capacity in order to take advantage of programs such as Homesteading, or the CLRP.

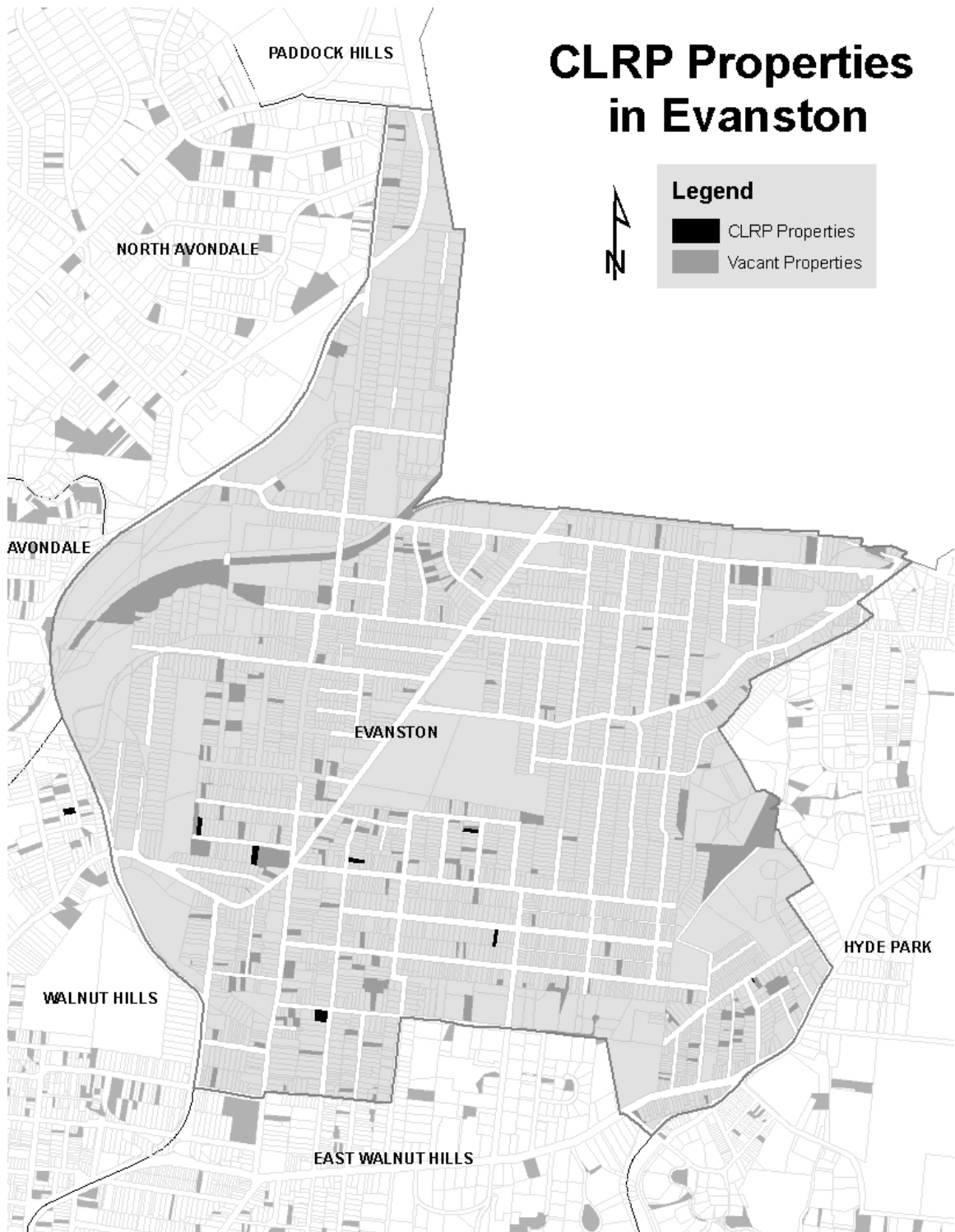
The Evanston Community Council is currently discussing its various options in creating a CDC, in order to serve in build its capacity for property redevelopment, and expects to come to a decision soon. The options currently being discussed are the creation of a new CDC, or formalization of its relationship with the Community Development Group LLC. The Community Development Group is currently providing some planning services to the Evanston Community Council, and is formally serving as the planning and development arm for the Avondale Redevelopment Corporation and Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation (Community Redevelopment Group 2008). Benefits of creating a separate CDC would be the ability to aggressively pursue independent development projects, however, with that independence would also come a decrease in support from surrounding neighborhoods and an overall lack of resources. On the other hand, formalizing a relationship with the Community Development Group would allow Evanston to pool resources with other partner communities, and allow all of them access to a greater variety of grants and funding sources.

One of the biggest assets of the Evanston community is its level of institutional wealth, which includes Xavier University. With CBI serving as an outreach arm of Xavier, Evanston benefits from the skills of individuals like Liz Blume, former Director of Planning for the City of Cincinnati. Blume, and other staff at CBI are key resources for redevelopment projects, as they have a practical understanding of how development works. For example, Blume realizes the potential liabilities involved in ownership of vacant properties, and understands how collaboration between CDCs and the City can alleviate the liabilities. As described by Blume, a land bank can effectively work in areas like Evanston if a larger entity (such as the City) takes care of the difficult front-end legal work of property acquisition, and holding properties until CDCs were ready to take them, and the CDCs serving as the final exit strategy or developer

(Blume et al 2008). This will benefit both parties, and allow the CDC to work at its best capacity. This sort of practical understanding is key in capacity building, and demonstrates Evanston's capacity in terms of human resources.

In summary, Evanston's strategic location on I-71, its proximity to several stable neighborhoods, and its high level of growth and leadership in community organizations reflect positively on Evanston's ability for future development of CLRP properties. With the implementation of the Neighborhood Enhancement Program in the fall, now seems an opportune time to pool resources and build collaborative relationship between the City and Evanston community organizations. The Neighborhood Enhancement Program will bring intensive code enforcement and community clean-up programs, which can easily dovetail with larger development initiatives (City of Cincinnati 2008b). For example, current CLRP properties, such as those near the Five Point District, can be targeted for redevelopment in accordance with the Evanston Housing Strategy. Additionally, other programs such as the Home Improvement Program and Evanston Home Exterior Improvement program may see renewed interest. While doing any community development work, it is important to keep it in perspective, however. The Evanston Housing Strategy noted that there were over 400 vacant properties in the neighborhood in 2006, and considering the foreclosure crises, this number has most likely increased. While Evanston may not have the capacity to aggressively 'bank' all of these vacant or abandoned properties, if they do form a CDC, they will be able to do some. As Liz Blume stated, "when you look at the sort of avalanche of foreclosures... you have to be doing hundreds of units a year, and most CDCs are hard-pressed to do ten"; the key, she adds, will be new partnerships between communities, private developers, and entities such as the land bank, which can leverage affordable properties for cooperative development arrangements (Blume et al 2008).

Illustration 13.
Map of CLRP Properties in Evanston



**Table 2.
Evanston CLRP Properties**

<p>3251 Gaff Year of Acquisition: May 2001 Land Use: Vacant Residential Purchase Value: \$16,000 Current Value: \$17,400 Development Done: demolition</p>  <p>Value History: 1996: \$27,700 1998: \$2,200 (demolition) 1999: \$15,00 (reappraisal) 2002: \$16,600 2005: \$17,400</p>	<p>3059 Hackberry Year of Acquisition: 2000 Land Use: Residential Purchase Value: \$9,200 Current Value: \$129,200 Development Done: Sold to Potterhill for new construction of single family home</p>  <p>Value History: 1996: \$5,800 1998: \$8,300 1999: \$9,200 2002: \$129,200 (new construction) 2005: \$115,000 (tax abatement)</p>	<p>1871 Kinney Year of Acquisition: 1997 Land Use: Vacant Residential Purchase Value: \$4,200 Current Value: \$4,200 Development Done: Sold presumably as a sidelot, to neighboring owner</p>  <p>Value History: 1996: \$2,700 1999: \$40,600 (unexplained property value change may be explained by purchase by neighboring home owner) 2005: \$4,200</p>	<p>2115 Pouge Date of Acquisition: 2007 Land Use: Vacant Residential Purchase Value: \$15,700 Current Value: \$15,700 Development Done: demolition</p>  <p>Value History: 1996: \$36,00 19998: \$47,700 2002: \$45,200 2005: \$15,700 (demolition)</p>
<p>3339 Graydon Year of Acquisition: 2001 Land Use: Vacant Residential Purchase Value: \$11,600 Current Value: \$12,500 Development Done: demolition</p>  <p>Value History: 1996: \$6,400 1998: \$2,800 (demolition) 1999: \$10,500 (reappraisal) 2002: \$11,600 2005: \$12,500</p>	<p>3308 Hackberry Year of Acquisition: 2000 Land Use: Residential Purchase Value: \$55,900 Current Value: \$122,500 Development Done: Sold to Potterhill homes for new single family construction</p>  <p>Value History: 1996: \$3,100 1998: \$6,500 1999: \$7,500 2002: \$55,900 2004: \$122,500 (new construction) 2005: \$108,000 (tax abatement)</p>	<p>1512 St. Leeger Place Date of Acquisition: 2001 Land Use: Vacant Residential Purchase Value: \$11,100 Current Value: \$12,500 Development Done: none</p>  <p>Value History: 1996: \$4,900 1999: \$11,100 2002: \$12,300 2005: \$12,500</p>	<p>1551 St. Leeger Place Date of Acquisition: 2007 Land Use: Vacant Residential Purchase Value: \$10,000 Current Value: \$10,000 Development Done: none</p>  <p>Value History: 1996: \$11,800 1998: \$7,100 (demolition) 1999: \$11,300 2002: \$12,500 2005: \$10,000</p>

Price Hill

The Community

Illustration 14.
Lower Price Hill



Illustration 15.
East Price Hill Neighborhood



The community of Price Hill is located just west of Cincinnati's downtown district, and is composed of the three separate neighborhoods of East, West, and Lower Price Hill. Making up one of the city's original hillside communities, the area is characterized by historic homes as well as abandoned industries along the Mill Creek corridor. Lower Price Hill, which borders Mill Creek, was "the city's most important transportation and industrial corridor during the 19th century" (City of Cincinnati 2008). East and West Price Hill sit up on the hill above Lower Price Hill, and were at one time connected by an incline.

Moving forward in time, Price Hill has seen a decline in its industrial base and population, especially in recent decades. From 1980-2000, Lower Price Hill saw a 39% decrease in population and a 44% decline in owner occupied units. It saw a decline in the number of vacant housing units and the number of persons below poverty level; however, this may be attributed to an overall decline in population and the demolition of vacant units (Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission 2008). There were no new development permits. Lower Price Hill households had a median income of \$13,984 in 2007, which was a slight increase over 2000 (City of Cincinnati 2007c).

East and West Price Hill have not been hit as hard by industrial decline, but did see notable population decreases. East and West Price Hill saw population declines of 11% and 12%, respectively, between 1980 and 2000; West Price Hill had a 104% increase in vacant housing units, while East Price Hill saw a 38% increase (Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission 2008). Both communities had fewer than 10 new development permits. East Price Hill saw a 17% decrease in owner occupancy, while West Price Hill saw an 11% decrease. Also in contrast to Lower Price Hill, the median household income in East and West Price Hill were \$24,992 and \$35,480 respectively, which were similar to income levels in 2000 (City of Cincinnati 2007c).

Factors that have spurred this shift in socioeconomic characteristics include the loss of industries, out-migration of residents, and the in-migration of low income residents that were displaced by the demolition of subsidized housing units in the West End neighborhood. Currently, the Price Hill has a large minority community, including Appalachian, African American, and Hispanic residents.

Community Organizations

Currently, Price Hill Will (PHW) is the primary driving force behind redevelopment efforts in Price Hill. Like the Community Building Institute, PHW works under an asset-based revitalization strategy, seeking to build upon and utilize assets and resources already existing in the community. PHW holds three primary functions: community organizing, real estate development, and economic development (Price Hill Will 2008). PHW originally formed in 2001 as a subcommittee of Imago, an active ecovillage within Price Hill. It became an independent community development corporation (CDC) in 2004. In addition to Price Hill Will, organizations such as the East Price Hill Improvement Association and Santa Maria Community Services play an important role in community development, however, property management and development are not within their scope of work.

Current Development

Immediately upon incorporation, PHW applied for, and was awarded funding from the City of Cincinnati for a Buy, Improve, Sell housing rehabilitation program (Price Hill Will 2008). This grant of \$300,000 was provided under the stipulation that PHW rehabilitate four houses, with a maximum subsidy of \$75,000 per house; if less than that is spent, the money can be rolled over and applied towards another house (Rudemiller 2008). This balances out to be a major capacity-builder, as Price Hill Will essentially receives \$75,000 in grant money per house, in addition to profits gained through the final sale of the property. Since receiving the grant, Price Hill Will has acquired 17 properties, completed renovation on 9, and sold 7. Additionally, PHW is in the process of purchasing two additional properties, is finishing renovations on 6 properties, and in the process of selling another to a new homeowner (Strauss 2008). Examples of Price Hill Will properties currently on the market are shown in Illustration 16.

Illustration 16.
Housing Developments by Price Hill Will



In addition to this grant from the City of Cincinnati, Price Hill Will also utilizes several other methods of property acquisition and redevelopment. Funding from the HUD Good Neighbors Program allows PHW to purchase tax foreclosed lots through the City of Cincinnati for \$1 if there is no buyer for six months (Strauss 2008). The City's little-used Receivership

program has also allowed Price Hill Will and local residents to become ‘receivers’ of properties that had become a public nuisance. This program allows the ‘receiver’ to invest in and care for the property with the understanding that the receiver will receive title to the property after a specified period of time, or be refunded the value of investment in the property if the current owner reclaims the property. A third source of acquisition and development funding that PHW has identified but not been able to use yet is through the Ohio Housing Finance Agency, which will provide up to \$50,000 in gap financing or homebuyer subsidy if the homes are sold to those earning 80% or less of area median income. Price Hill Will is currently seeking a contract for a project funded through this agency (Strauss 2008).

More recently, the three neighborhoods of Price Hill were invited to participate in the Place Matters Initiative, founded by LISC, United Way, the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, and SC Ministry in 2005 in order to initiate comprehensive redevelopment efforts in three targeted Cincinnati neighborhoods. According to Place Matters staff, Price Hill Will’s involvement with Place Matters has greatly expanded the capacity of the organization for housing development, through the provision of additional funding and by prompting PHW to create stronger connections with private developers and all three neighborhoods of Price Hill (Blume et al 2008). Prior to the Place Matters initiative, Lower Price Hill had chosen to work independently from PHW. In terms of housing development, Place Matters will increase Price Hill Will’s capacity to identify, purchase and redevelop single family homes, and has allocated funding for a new Housing Resource Center and a full time Price Hill Housing Resource Director.

The larger community of Price Hill is seeing several notable developments, which have been supported but not managed by Price Hill Will. These are the redevelopment of the Kroger store in West Price Hill and the formal creation of the Incline District in East Price Hill. The Incline District is a unique area where fantastic views of downtown have maintained high property values and prompted new development, as shown in Illustration 18. Part of the Incline

District development is the proposal for Incline Square, at the intersection of Eighth and Maston Streets, from which one can see the view seen in Illustration 17.

Illustration 17.
View From Eighth and Matson



Illustration 18.
Incline District Homes



CLRP in Price Hill

The Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program (CLRP) currently holds four properties in Price Hill; three of these are located on one street in West Price Hill, and the fourth is a single lot in East Price Hill, surrounded by vacant parcels. The first three were acquired with the goal of property assembly by the City's DOT team staff; the fourth property was acquired to be transferred as a sidelot to a neighboring property owner. Although they were purchased in June, 2007, taxes on these properties were not cleared until September, 2008 due to misunderstandings on the part of the County. With taxes now cleared, and the deed recorded, these properties are ready to be sold for development. Each of the Price Hill CLRP properties are mapped in Illustration 19, and are described in Table 3.

Capacity for Future CLRP Development

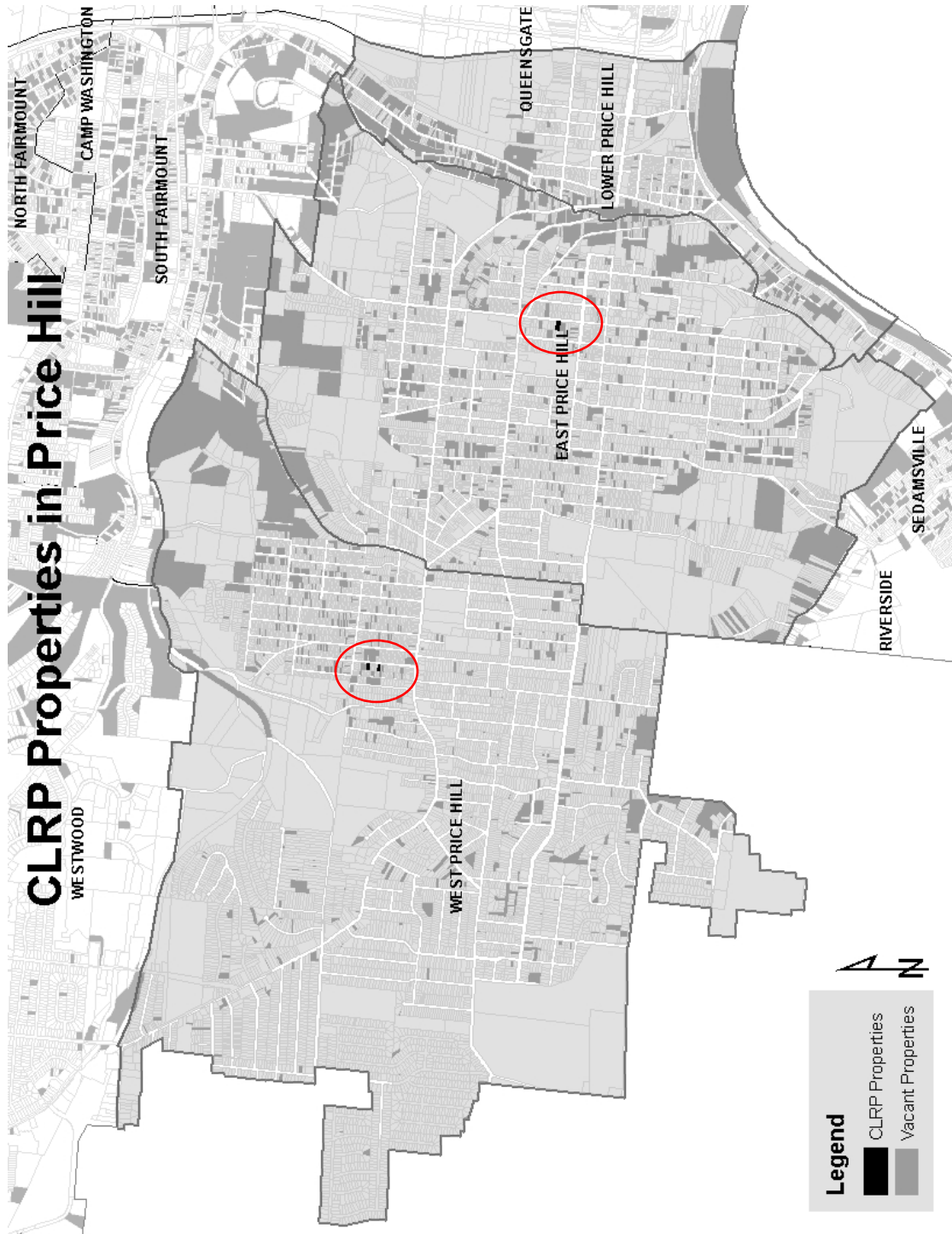
Despite the work that Price Hill Will has done since its establishment in 2004, the staff and community do not utilize, and are not very familiar with the CLRP. Like the staff at the Community Building Institute, PHW staff stated that they did not currently have the capacity to hold properties, and that whomever is holding the property is holding a target for vandalism and

liability (Strauss 2008). Strauss explained that putting a property in a land bank is like putting a bulls eye on it for vandals, and admitted that it is hard to trust anyone with such properties, whether it be the City or his own organization (Strauss 2008). This approach is apparent in the management of the properties that they do hold – each house that they rehab can be purchased by a new homeowner the minute PHW acquires it. If the buyer purchases the home early-on, they will be able to have greater input into the details of the rehabilitation (Strauss 2008).





This approach of moving properties quickly and limiting their holding time would not preclude use of the CLRP, but would actually be aided by it. The CLRP would hold properties until PHW is ready to develop them, which would limit PHW's liability as well as the cost to maintain the property in the interim. If actively used, the CLRP would also provide another avenue through which to acquire strategic properties. As Matt Strauss explained, PHW is not currently able to take advantage of all methods of property acquisition, including tax foreclosure. Use of the CLRP would not only enable Price Hill Will (PHW) to use this method of acquisition, and would take the front-end real estate work off of their hands, as would allow them to wait until they are ready to take on the property and its related liability and maintenance issues. PHW currently contracts with a real estate agent to do the initial work (Strauss 2008).

In conclusion, based on a review of the work currently being completed by Price Hill Will, it seems that the organization has the capacity to effectively use CLRP properties, but not to hold and manage them for long periods of time. They have been successful in acquiring funding for development projects, and have a staff person dedicated to housing development. Considering their persistence in seeking out new methods of acquisition, and the community's apparent collaboration with the DOT teams on several property acquisitions, a stronger partnership with the City seems both logical and possible. Price Hill Will is a young organization, however, and it will be important to watch their progress in upcoming years.

Illustration 19.
Map of Price Hill CLRP Properties



**Table 3.
Price Hill Will CLRP Properties**

<p>1265 Dewey Year of Acquisition: 2007 Land Use: Vacant Residential Purchase Value: \$3,100 Current Value: \$3,100 Development Done: None</p>		<p>1263 Dewey Year of Acquisition: 2007 Land Use: Vacant Residential Purchase Value: \$3,100 Current Value: \$3,100 Development Done: None</p>	
<p>1247 Dewey Year of Acquisition: 2007 Land Use: Vacant Residential Purchase Value: \$12,300 Current Value: \$12,300 Development Done: None</p>		<p>929 Grand Year of Acquisition: 2007 Land Use: Vacant Residential Purchase Value: \$7,500 Current Value: \$7,500 Development Done: None</p>	
<p>Value History 1996: \$700 1999: \$3,200 2002: \$3,500 2005: \$3,100</p>	<p>Value History 1996: \$29,200 1999: \$56,200 2002: \$61,000 2003: \$13,900 (demolition) 2005: \$12,300</p>	<p>Value History 1996: \$25,900 1999: \$77,400 2002: \$72,700 2005: \$75,000 2007: \$7,500 (demolition)</p>	<p>Value History 1996: \$700 1999: \$3,200 2002: \$3,500 2005: \$3,100</p>

VIII. CLRP Adherence to Land Banking Best Practices

The preceding chapters presented national best practices in land banking, discussed current operations of the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program (CLRP), and provided two case study examples of how the CLRP is currently functioning in two Cincinnati neighborhoods. Pulling this data together, a comprehensive assessment can be made of the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program's adherence to land banking best practices. The following pages will review and assess the CLRP's adherence to land banking best practices. The criteria are:

1. Policies should have precise goals and objectives.
2. The land banking authority should have adequate capacity; this includes human resources, technological support, and funding.
3. Community organizations should have adequate capacity to support land banking efforts; this includes human resources, funding, and prior experience with development.
4. Policies should be efficient; this includes centralized control, and processes for property acquisition and disposition.
5. Policies should adhere to a strategic vision.

1. Policies should have precise goals and objectives.

Clear and concise goals and objectives are considered by some experts to be the single most important factor in governing a land bank (Alexander 2005, 39). Goals should address the primary questions of what the land bank is and who it is seeking to serve, without overextending expectations. The greater the number of goals and functions a land bank is expected to perform, the more likely it is to fail (Alexander 2005, 29). As described earlier, the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program was initially created with a set of six program objectives, which is an average number for land banks. In reality, however, CLRP practices do not refer or adhere to these objectives.

The first, and primary objective is to ‘reduce the number of nonproductive parcels within the City of Cincinnati’, however, the case studies in Evanston and Price Hill indicate that the majority of CLRP properties have neither been developed nor had any positive impact on the surrounding area. In some cases, the vacant parcels are very poorly maintained. When the CLRP was first established, there appeared to be a stronger adherence to these goals. Properties were acquired for more strategic development and quick turn-around back to productive use; this is evidenced in the two single family units constructed in Evanston under Fred Orth. Additional objectives of the program are to: “facilitate ongoing development projects and programs and create new development projects” and to “actively market the properties for housing and business development” (City of Cincinnati 1996b). With the dissolution of the DOT teams, and the statement by the current CLRP manager that the program is not being actively marketed, it is clear that these objectives are not being pursued either. When describing CLRP procedures for the public, the City does not even mention these original objectives, but simply states that the goal is to “return abandoned property to use”, and that “owner occupied housing and job producing commercial developments are the goal” (City of Cincinnati 2008). Until the CLRP begins actively acquiring and marketing its properties, none of these objectives will be effectively met.

The Genesee County Land Bank Authority, on the other hand, is a prime example of transparent goals and objectives. Every one of its goals, objectives, and priorities is clearly listed online, ranging from acquisition priorities to side lot disposition guidelines. This not only helps to hold the land bank staff accountable, but clarifies the program and its processes for the public. Taking similar steps of restating CLRP goals and objectives and publicly promoting them can make a big difference in the CLRP. Previous examples of success with the two houses built in Evanston and four additional townhouses built in Mt Auburn are proof of this. The CLRP needs to clearly state and strive to achieve a specific and concise set of goals and objectives, whether they are the original four, or a newly revised set.

2. The land banking authority should have adequate capacity; this includes human resources, technological support, and funding.

The lack of dedicated staff and funding for the CLRP was an issue identified by both current and former CLRP managers, and the need for increased technological resources was identified through participant observation by the author. While dedicated staff is not necessarily required for an effective land bank, it definitely builds capacity and is vital if there is a lack of strong leadership from other areas in the municipal and regional government. Without strong leadership in municipal government, “there is a serious risk that using city personnel rather than assembling a dedicated staff will compromise the land bank’s mission” (Mallach 2006, 141). In the case of Cincinnati, there has been neither leadership nor dedicated resources, and interest on the part of City and County officials has been lacking until the recent Neighborhood Housing Initiative (NHI) and the motion by Hamilton County Commissioner Todd Portune.

The development of independent initiatives like NHI signal the need for more resources to be dedicated to land banking efforts, such as Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program. With the current foreclosure crisis hitting communities across the United States, and some Cincinnati neighborhoods particularly hard, the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program (CLRP) can become a critical tool for rebuilding homeownership levels and troubled neighborhoods. As described by Liz Blume, the CLRP can bridge a gap in resources for many CDCs by providing the front end real estate expertise and property management that many CDCs simply do not have the capacity for. In exchange, the CDCs can serve as an ‘exit strategy’ for the CLRP, and bring the property back into productive use once they are ready (Blume et al 2008). This can ensure CDCs like Price Hill Will a steady flow of properties to develop and sell, without straining their resources. In order to fill this role, the CLRP needs increased levels of human resources and funding.

Looking first at the CLRP in terms of human resources, it has very low capacity. This is not a reflection on those involved, but on the small amount of work time they can feasibly dedicate to the program, in addition to their other duties. Currently, all managerial duties have

been assigned to the Chief Planner, Margaret Wuerstle. Prior to their dissolution, DOT teams within the former Department of Community Development and Planning aided Margaret in community collaboration and property acquisition. Now, without the DOT teams, the ability of CLRP staff to conduct community outreach, build local support, and to plan for strategic property acquisition and disposition is further compromised.

This lack of dedicated resources has had obvious negative impacts on the operations of the CLRP. Foremost, it has hindered full implementation of the full CLRP procedures by limiting the number of work-hours that can be put into the program. Without a full or part-time staff member dedicated to CLRP operations, it is difficult to provide the persistent and thorough attention that such a bureaucratic program requires. Effective implementation requires coordination with County staff, the City Council, City Planning staff members, community groups, and potential buyers, each of whom have an independent agenda and timeline that must be considered.

An example of the inability to fulfill these collaborative requirements can be seen in the lack of a committee of taxing districts and neighborhood advisory committees in each of the affected neighborhoods, which is required by state statute. The CLRP managers have always been open with Community Development Corporations (CDCs) regarding the acquisition and disposition of CLRP properties, however, no formal committees have ever been formed. This works against the state statute which enabled the program, impedes effective and strategic reutilization of properties, and inhibits potentially valuable input from community members who are very aware of needs at the neighborhood level.

Secondly, looking at funding resources available to the CLRP, they are equally limited. Funding for CLRP operations currently comes from a fund shared with other revitalization programs, and is operated out of the Department of Community Development (while the CLRP is housed in the Department of City Planning). Furthermore, any profits from property sales are obligated first to cover maintenance expenses incurred by the CLRP program, and then to the

Hamilton County Treasurer to recover lost taxes. This leaves little to recover general CLRP expenses. This lack of an accessible, flexible, and dedicated funding source severely limits the flexibility needed in funding for quick and strategic property acquisition. This is a critical point, as the number of foreclosed properties in Hamilton County is expected to continue at 125 per week for the next several years (Garry 2008).

A last component of CLRP capacity that should be considered is access to effective technology, both to the manage properties and to advertise them to the public. Integrated management systems streamline title, acquisition, and disposition processes (O'Brien et al 2005, 22). The City of Cincinnati does not currently have, but could greatly benefit from a City-wide property management system, with the CLRP being one of the beneficiaries. Currently, property acquisitions and sales are tracked on a single Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which greatly limits access and true-time updates. Furthermore, activities such as maintenance are not recorded in this spreadsheet, which inhibits proper property management. A more complex database that is integrated into a GIS system would alleviate all of these issues, and build upon the excellent GIS capacity already existing in the Hamilton County's CAGIS organization.

A model to which the City of Cincinnati can turn to address these capacity issues is the Genesee County Land bank Authority, which has developed numerous creative sources of funding, secured a strong and dedicated staff, and created an excellent internet site, on which the public can learn about every aspect of the program, and search for properties by a variety of methods. In terms of funding, Genesee County has considered almost every option. Like many land banks, Genesee County utilizes municipal funding, grants, and bonds; however, they have discovered a variety of other funding sources. Because they work at a county level, the land bank is able to bring in a wide range of properties - some of these they can turn around for a profit, and others they are able to rent for additional income. Genesee County has also established a Brownfield Redevelopment Program, through which they receive additional funding. This

creativity in funding options is largely due to the strong and ambitious personnel, which reiterates the need for dedicated staff.

3. Community organizations should have adequate capacity to support land banking efforts; this includes human resources, funding, and prior experience with development.

The Greater Cincinnati Area currently has 35 active CDCs, 15 of which are currently developing and managing properties. Investments range from rental unit management in Camp Washington to the rehabilitation of single family homes in Price Hill. While some organizations, like Price Hill Will, use City programs for property acquisition, none actively use the CLRP program. This does not necessarily reflect the capacity of CDCs in Cincinnati, but is more a reflection of the low level of promotion and advertisement of the program. During interviews, none of the individuals associated with community groups in Evanston or Price Hill, or even within the Greater Cincinnati Area were familiar with the CLRP. This includes Liz Blume, the former Director of Planning for the City of Cincinnati. This lack of public knowledge regarding a potentially beneficial program is unfortunate, especially in the case of neighborhoods like Evanston and Price Hill, which have demonstrated a growing capacity for property development.

Looking more closely at the two case study neighborhoods, both communities demonstrated a need for, and a growing capacity to address, redevelopment. In scholarly research, three organizational characteristics have been identified that consistently relate to a CDC's expected potential to expand its programming in upcoming years; these are: the importance the CDC places on the program, existence of a program strategy, and leadership stability (Vidal 1992, 141). Organizational size and length of experience were not found to have a consistent relationship with CDC capacity for growth. The organizations discussed in the case studies each place great importance on housing development, have strategic plans for redevelopment, and benefit from dedicated leadership. The growing capacity of the Evanston Community Council and Price Hill Will for property redevelopment is demonstrated in several

ways. In Price Hill, this is shown through Price Hill Will's continued growth since establishment in 2004. The CDC has already completed the renovation of 9 houses, and sold 7 to new homeowners (Strauss 2008). In total, the organization has acquired 17 houses and continues to purchase more, based on their capacity. Furthermore, Price Hill Will has successfully received numerous grants, the most recent of which is funding a new Housing Resource Director position. In Evanston, growth in capacity is demonstrated through the notable increase in the financial resources of the Evanston Community Council (from \$10,000 to over \$500,000), the creation of EvanstonNOW as an outreach arm, and their current discussion on creating a neighborhood CDC. The dedication of the community to redevelopment projects is also evidenced through the Evanston Housing Strategy, which could easily provide a template for CLRP activity in the area.

Taking an honest look at the level of development either of these organizations will be able to achieve, the number of properties will not come close to what is needed. Vacancy and abandonment are a big concern in both neighborhoods, and it will take years of work by these organizations, or large scale investment, to make a big impact across the neighborhood. If the organizations target their efforts in strategic areas, however, they can maximize the capacity they do have. While Evanston may not be currently have the capacity for community-based property redevelopment, the community should be ready for small scale development with the establishment of a CDC. The creation of the Evanston Housing Strategy was a critical first step. Price Hill Will, on the other hand, is ready to utilize CLRP properties, if effectively marketed to them. It is a young organization, however, and it will be important to see how Price Hill Will grows in upcoming years, and if their current rate of property redevelopment is maintained into the future. Although it is outside the scope of this research, the CLRP might also consider partnerships with larger private developers, to achieve faster results. To do this, the CLRP would need to focus on strategic acquisition of larger and well-positioned sites.

In order to capitalize on the CDC capacity that already exists in Cincinnati, and to help build that level of capacity in the future, the Cleveland Land Bank can be turned to as an

exemplar. The City of Cleveland is well known for its strong CDC network, has 48 CDCs actively developing or managing property, according to the Cleveland Neighborhood Development Coalition (CNDC 2008). In the past 20 years, Cleveland CDCs have produced 2,700 single family homes, one third of which have been sold, and two thirds of which have become part of lease-to-own programs in which renters are given title to the home after 15 years (Rosan 2001). Overall, 90% of all new CDC and private residential construction involves land bank lots, according to Rob Curry, Executive Director of the Cleveland Housing Network (Rosan 2001).

4. Policies should be efficient; this includes centralized control, and processes for property acquisition and disposition.

Perhaps one of the areas that the CLRP can use the most improvement is in efficiency of procedures. Currently, the process of acquiring property and receiving tax exemption can take years, frustrating potential buyers and contradicting the goals of land banking. While the CLRP is primarily controlled through the Department of City Planning, it is highly reliant on other City departments and County offices for funding, property acquisition, and property disposition. This said, the primary way that efficiency can be improved within CLRP operations is through the development of a stronger collaborative relationship between the City and the County. This can possibly be aided through the establishment of a working group of all County and City staff involved in the CLRP processes. Secondly, the CLRP can improve efficiency by marketing its properties at attractive prices, lower than fair market value. Other cities, including Cleveland, currently do this, and Cincinnati needs to as well. Thirdly, the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County can help improve efficiency by taking advantage of several pieces of legislation that were recently passed to expedite the process of acquiring foreclosed property. Because of the numerous aspects of efficiency that must be addressed, they are outlined below.

Build a stronger City-County Collaboration

First, in order for the CLRP to function effectively and efficiently, a high level of cooperation between the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County is required. Close collaboration is needed to identify strategic property acquisitions in a timely manner, to provide a clear understanding of purchase costs to allow for strategic acquisitions, to allow the transfer of deeds in a timely manner, and to facilitate the tax exemption process for all properties purchased by the CLRP. These key points are outlined below.

1. Collaboration for Strategic Acquisitions: A higher level of regional cooperation will allow CLRP managers and the Property Selection Team to identify properties more effectively. Currently, the City is given two weeks to review the annual list of foreclosed properties and make their selections (Wuerstle 2008). This limited time frame does not allow for adequate input from the numerous departments involved in the Property Selection Team, nor does it allow adequate time to gather input from the affected communities and CDCs who may be interested in developing the properties.

2. Collaboration for Clarity in Purchase Costs: Increased cooperation will also alleviate confusion regarding the cost and process of acquiring properties at the annual Sheriff's Sale. Previously, the CLRP managers were told that properties, if not sold for want of minimum bid, would be transferred to the CLRP for no consideration other than the fee charged for transferring and recording the deed, as per ORC 5722.03 (State of Ohio). Thus, the CLRP managers understood that the cost would be \$33.75 per property to cover the recording fees. Later, they were told that there would be an additional \$500.00 fee per property for court costs that should have been paid at the time of purchase (Wuerstle 2008b). This unclear communication regarding the cost of properties prevents the CLRP managers from arriving at the Sheriff's sale with the correct amount of money to purchase the properties, and creates unnecessary confusion. The need for the CLRP managers to bring cash or check to the Sheriff's sale is an additional example of

poor cooperation, as a direct transfer of funds or deduction from funds received by the City from the County would be more efficient.

3. Collaboration for the Timely Transfer of Deeds: Regional cooperation is crucial for expediting the transfer of deeds, and allowing the City to market and sell CLRP properties to interested buyers. Currently, it takes up to six months for a deed to be transferred from the County to the City, following a CLRP acquisition at the Sheriff's sale. This process should take two weeks (Wuerstle 2008). Extending the time from two weeks to six months has several detrimental effects for the program. First, this inhibits the City from being able to file a tax exemption on the property, and the City unnecessarily begins to owe taxes on the property. All CLRP properties should be tax exempt from the time of purchase until the sooner of 15 years from that date, or the sale of the property, as per ORC 5722.13 (State of Ohio). Secondly, interested buyers are made to wait unnecessarily while the deed is transferred. This not only discourages further involvement with the program, but sends a message of inefficiency to the public and the communities involved. The CLRP managers need to either be given a precise timeframe for the process, in order to communicate this with interested buyers, or the process should be sped up to its intended two weeks.

4. Collaboration for Faster Tax Remittance: The fourth, and most immediate reason why cooperation must exist between the City and the County is to expedite the tax exemption process for CLRP properties. The County is responsible for remitting prior delinquent taxes on the property when acquired by the CLRP, and for submitting the City's request for tax exemption to the State. While there are lengthy delays at the state level, which are explained below, the County has failed to move the tax exemptions in a timely manner, to remit back taxes, and to properly categorize CLRP properties as tax exempt in future tax rolls.

Section 5722.11 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) states that "all lands acquired and held by an electing subdivision pursuant to this chapter shall be deemed real property used for a public purpose and, notwithstanding section 5709.08 of the Revised Code, shall be exempt from taxation

until sold. The City is responsible for any taxes accrued while it files the necessary DTE-23 tax-exempt form and submits it; those taxes will be fully reimbursed if paid faithfully until tax exemption is granted, if the form is completed within three years, and if the application clearly establishes that the property is being used exclusively for a public purpose (Nufrio 2008). If tax exemption is not filed within three years of acquisition, the City faces permanent denial of tax exemption on the applicable parcels. This burdensome process can take between 2-5 years to complete, and is further hampered by delays of two years at the state level.

At the County level, there have also been several tax-related failures. First, CLRP properties are not always categorized as tax-exempt, causing the City to mistakenly pay the taxes on CLRP properties, along with all of their annual taxes on other properties. Second, the County Auditor has failed on at least twelve properties to remit prior delinquent taxes, which should be automatically erased upon purchase by the CLRP (Wuerstle 2008).

A tax exemption process that takes up to five years to complete is unnecessary, and greatly inhibits the functionality of the CLRP. It makes operation of the program much more expensive, as managers are required to pay taxes on properties until exemptions are granted, and sometimes causes the County to mistakenly start applying taxes. As of late 2007, the City appears to have been tax delinquent on approximately 30 CLRP properties, totaling \$74,525.72 in taxes owed (Nufrio 2008). Of these tax-delinquent properties, several were acquired before 2005. This places them outside of the three year window for tax exemption, thus raising concern that the CLRP is becoming an increased liability for the City. This burdensome and lengthy tax-exemption process also turns away buyers who become frustrated while waiting for clear titles and removal of back taxes before they can purchase the properties.

Selling Properties for Less than Fair-Market Value

According to ORC 5722.07, CLRP properties must be sold for fair market value, meaning “the appraised value of the nonproductive land made with reference to such

redevelopment and reutilization restrictions as may be imposed by the electing subdivision as a condition of sale or as may be otherwise applicable to such land” (State of Ohio). If CLRP properties are sold at the Auditor’s appraised value, this would entail asking \$7,000 – \$12,000 for vacant properties that are oftentimes in undesirable locations. At this price, investment by a developer is unlikely, and investment from resource-poor nonprofits or CDCs is even less likely.

Several interpretations of this statute have been used to effectively charge prices less than fair market value. Soon after the CLRP was created, the City was able to sell two properties in Evanston and Mt. Auburn at a price less than fair market value, however this has not happened since (Orth 2008). The City of Cleveland, on the other hand, has interpreted the Code to allow the Cleveland Land Bank to sell properties for less than fair market value on a regular basis. Unbuildable parcels can be sold for as little as \$1.00, while buildable parcels regularly sell for \$100.00. In Cleveland, the Mayor and City Council impose the price and conditions of sale on land bank parcels, and essentially create their own definition of ‘fair market’ (Sternard 2007). In recent years, the City of Cincinnati Law Department has turned down the possibility of selling parcels for as little as \$1-\$100, but are considering a property reappraisal process to lower the required sale price of CLRP properties. In the spring of 2008, the CLRP managers asked for property reappraisals through the Law Department, which may be able to lower the sale price to a more reasonable level (Wuerstle 2008). The Law Department is currently reviewing the request, so it is undetermined how effective this method will be.

Utilizing New Legislation

Third, the CLRP can benefit if the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County take advantage of several pieces of legislation were recently passed to help expedite the acquisition process. These include House Bill 127, House Bill 138, and House Bill 294. Substitute House Bill 127 was passed in 2003, amending Ohio Revised Code Section 5722, which initially enabled land banking. The revision now allows the County and other taxing jurisdictions to consent in

writing to the release of claims for delinquent taxes on properties either on a parcel-by-parcel basis or on a 'blanket' basis (Nufrio 2008). If the City and County come to an agreement on this, the CLRP could potentially take all of its properties free and clear of liens, and the County could see savings by speeding up the foreclosure process. House Bill 138 allows greater control and ability to access or obtain problem properties by expanding the power of the county prosecuting attorney to enforce tax liens and conduct foreclosures, and allowing the Board of Revision to also complete foreclosure actions. House Bill 138 also states that, if the liens and penalties against a foreclosed nonproductive, abandoned or vacant property are greater than its fair-market value, it can be transferred directly to a municipality without appraisal or sale. House Bill 294 has a similar outcome, of expedited foreclosure, by allowing the County Board of Revision to hear foreclosures, while still maintaining due process. Cuyahoga County is currently using this bill to great benefit for the Cleveland Land Bank. Cuyahoga County is able to file over 100 cases a month, and have seen the adjudication period drop from 2-3 years to 3 months (Frangos 2007).

5. Policies should adhere to a strategic vision.

The Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program was created with a clearly stated, albeit vague, purpose and set of strategies for property acquisition and disposition, as outlined in Chapter 4. Considering the generality of these original statements, it is not surprising that current CLRP operations show little conformance to an overall strategic vision. Looking at property disposition policies, for example, the 1996 Supplemental Guidelines simply ask that the proposed developer meet at least one of the six objectives of the program, which are as general as to "maintain properties until such time as the parcels are offered to sale" (City of Cincinnati 1996). There was no mention of target areas or overall goals for redevelopment. While the CLRP did have three target neighborhoods early on, the program soon expanded to include all 52 neighborhoods. Currently, the only guiding principle for disposition policies is the submission of a development proposal and proof of competence (Wuerstle 2008). As an example of the larger

program, these disposition policies provide very little direction for the CLRP. At this point, in order for the CLRP to develop and adhere to a strong strategic vision, two things are needed: a city-wide comprehensive plan to guide strategies, and strong leadership and staff capacity to drive its implementation.

First, a city-wide comprehensive plan can provide a broader framework within which to work. A comprehensive plan will help CLRP managers determine areas that are ready for, or seeking, development opportunities, and will allow them to coordinate efforts with programs already in existence. This is true at the neighborhood level, as well, where organizations like the Evanston Community Council are actively promoting their Housing Strategy, and CDCs like Price Hill Will are actively pursuing development opportunities. Unfortunately, the City of Cincinnati's last Comprehensive Plan was drafted in 1948, and provides little guidance on current conditions and development activities. A Coordinated Plan was completed in 1980, which is far less thorough, and still over 25 years old. Because of this lack of comprehensive planning, individual neighborhood plans and redevelopment initiatives may provide better guidance for CLRP acquisition strategies. A prime opportunity for collaboration would also be through the Neighborhood Enhancement Program, which will target Evanston in the fall of 2008.

Secondly, stronger CLRP leadership on the part of the City Council and the Mayor, as well as an increase in staff capacity, will allow increased outreach, practical strategizing, and collaboration with other redevelopment initiatives. Strong leadership and community outreach will allow CLRP managers to support efforts like the Evanston Housing Strategy. It will also allow managers to integrate the CLRP with current initiatives such as GO Cincinnati - a plan developed through the Mayor's office to spur economic activity. One of the key components of GO Cincinnati is place-based development, with particular emphases in three major, and three minor "existing economic opportunity areas" (May 2008). The proposed developments for these areas primarily consist of redevelopment of underutilized parcels, and could directly benefit from the involvement of programs like the CLRP.

The City of Philadelphia is an example of what can happen with a comprehensive vision and strong leadership. The Mayor of Philadelphia set an ambitious agenda for an urban transformation, and created deliberate guiding principles. As a result of the City's dedication to these principles, the program enabled the acquisition of 6,000 properties and the demolition of 5,600 dangerous or unsafe buildings, provided assistance to 26,300 homeowners for basic systems repairs, and fostered partnerships with diverse community organizations, among many other achievements (City of Philadelphia 2008b). While the NTI program did not achieve all of its optimistic goals, it is a good example of shooting for the stars and adhering to a comprehensive yet specific set of objectives.

IX. Conclusion and Next Steps

After a discussion of such specificity, it is important to return to the larger picture. Foreclosures, vacancy, and abandonment are all concerns for many former industrial cities throughout the United States, including Cincinnati. Vacant and abandoned properties bring with them a cycle of blight that not only affects the surrounding neighborhood, but the community as a whole. Within that cycle comes higher crime, a decline in property values and tax revenues, increased demand on municipal services, and the creation of unsafe and unwelcoming environments. The Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program (CLRP) was established as one tool to help address these concerns in Cincinnati.

In these final reflections on the current implementation and potential future use of the CLRP, it is important to consider this bigger picture, and ultimately, what role the program can play as one of numerous tools created to tackle blight and property abandonment. The program will work most effectively in coordination with other City programs, like the Vacant Building Maintenance License program, Receivership, and the homeownership preservation programs sponsored by numerous local nonprofits. Achievement of the best practices criteria discussed throughout this paper can help the CLRP arrive at a position where it can effectively work with these other programs. This conclusion will review what the CLRP can do to reach this point, and will be guided by the two initial questions that drove this research: “Does the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program adhere to national best practices?” And “What is the potential for the CLRP to improve property conditions and quality at the neighborhood level?”

Adherence to Best Practices

The Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program is currently not fulfilling national best practices for land banking, as evidenced in the preceding chapters and the recent development of several independent land banking initiatives in Cincinnati. As a result of these initiatives, and the

current foreclosure crisis, City and County leadership are beginning to recognize the need such a land banking entity. Thus, now is an opportune time to consider what steps can be taken to bring the CLRP in line with national best practices, and allow it to function at a greater capacity.

Two areas in which the CLRP needs the most attention are the capacity of the land bank in terms of human resources, funding, and technological support, and overall efficiency of procedures. Addressing concerns in these areas will be a strong first step in building overall CLRP capacity, rethinking effective goals and functions for the program, establishing a clear and strategic vision, and promoting the land bank as a development tool in the community.

First, by making the CLRP a higher priority for funding and resources, it will be much easier to address all of the other areas where the CLRP is not currently in line with national best practices. Capacity of the CLRP management staff is currently below the level needed for successful and attentive operation, and also below the level originally recommended in the 1996 Supplemental Guidelines. The Guidelines “recommend that an aide/coordinator position be created and assigned to assist in the review of parcels and respond to the Hamilton County Auditor” (City of Cincinnati 1996, 6). Establishing and funding this position, whether it be at a full or part-time level, would greatly aid in bringing the CLRP to a higher capacity level. Along with funding for a dedicated staff person, the CLRP needs a dedicated and flexible municipal funding source that will allow it to maximize development opportunities; a greater diversity of funding through grants, brownfields funds, and property sales will also increase the scope of the program.

The need for the CLRP to enhance its technological capacity is not unique to the program, but is a common issue among the City departments involved in the operation of the program, including the Departments of City Planning, Community Development, and the Division of Buildings and Inspections. There is no common database where information can be shared regarding the properties, and no updated and shared GIS files specific to the land bank. As a partner in one of the top local GIS consortiums in the nation, the City should be able to

improve this situation, and in the meantime greatly improve efficiency at the interdepartmental level.

Efficiency of procedures is a much larger and more complex issue that must be tackled to bring the CLRP in adherence with national best practices. Increased efficiency, first and foremost, necessitates a much stronger collaborative relationship between the City and the County. Conflicts and counter objectives between the two entities must be addressed and mutual goals must be determined. For example, while the County may lose immediate property tax revenue on the CLRP properties, a more long-term vision would show the mutual benefit of revitalized communities and increased property values over time. This benefits both the City and the County. Further, the number of properties receiving tax exemption and removal of back taxes is small in comparison to the larger pool of taxable properties. In the long term, both the City and County seek to bring and keep properties in productive, tax-paying use, and effective implementation of the CLRP would aid in reaching this goal.

With an alignment of goals and increased cooperation among all entities involved in land banking operations, as well as increased capacity of the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program itself, the CLRP would be better able to reach the remainder of the best practices criteria. These include the establishment and adherence to precise goals and objectives, adherence to a strategic vision, and adequate capacity of community organizations. While the CLRP managers and the City can not directly build the capacity of community organizations, they can provide additional resources to aid in capacity building, and can better market programs like the CLRP. The following section discusses the potential for community organizations to utilize the CLRP to improve property conditions and quality at the neighborhood level.

Potential to Improve Property Conditions at the Local Level

Taking a closer look at the capacity of community organizations for redevelopment and property management, and the potential for the CLRP to improve property conditions at the local

level, we can look to the Evanston and Price Hill case studies. Based on their current level of property redevelopment work, Price Hill Will demonstrates the capacity to effectively use CLRP properties. While there is no comparable CDC in Evanston currently, the community has several very active organizations, has developed a Housing Strategy, and is pursuing the idea of forming a CDC. Based on this dedication of the community to redevelopment efforts, and the strong individuals involved in Evanston, it seems that the community would be able to support a low level of CLRP property development in the near future.

The two neighborhoods can be used as examples of the current capacity of Cincinnati CDCs for development, as well as the potential for future CLRP use throughout Cincinnati. Evanston contains two prior examples of successful redevelopment, which occurred soon after the establishment of the CLRP and in accordance with a three-neighborhood strategic approach. The construction of single family homes on these properties has greatly increased their value and the amount of tax revenue gained from the properties. One obstacle in their development, however, was difficulty in selling the properties, which can be addressed if the CLRP assembles larger parcels. This turns again to the need for a strategic vision and high capacity of community organizations, and the possibility of partnering with private developers. In 2001, it was estimated that 90% of all private and CDC development in the City of Cleveland was done on land bank property (Rosan 2001). While the CLRP operates on a smaller scale than the Cleveland land bank, the achievements in Cleveland still indicate much greater potential for CLRP property use, if the properties are strategically acquired and effectively marketed.

Reinvesting in Land Banking

In addition to serving as a land banking success story, the Cleveland Land Bank can serve as a model for the Cincinnati Land Reutilizations Program. Both operate under the same statutes, but to very different effects. The Cleveland Land Bank acquires approximately 1,000 properties a year, sells a yearly average of 500 properties, and has recently provided land for an 80 unit

development; Cincinnati, on the other hand, acquires an average of 10 properties a year, sells even fewer, and is still holding parcels that might be suitable for large scale development. While Cleveland is a bigger city, and has a larger overall number of vacant properties, these are not the only reasons for the differences in output. The major reasons for the difference in output are exactly the areas where the CLRP is most lacking – regional and intergovernmental cooperation and management capacity. Additionally, Cleveland has an exceptionally strong CDC network, from which CDCs in Cincinnati can surely learn.

Looking specifically at what changes can be made at the administrative level, the first is investment in dedicated and motivated staff. Cleveland benefits from a full time land bank manager, as well as several local champions who have pushed much of the statewide legislation to improve land banking. With a dedicated staff person, the CLRP would benefit from increased community input, strategizing, and stronger lines of communication with the County and CDCs. Cleveland also draws from a variety of funding sources, which include allocations of Neighborhood Development Activity Funds by council members, and support from the Cleveland Neighborhood Partnership Program, in addition to dedicated municipal funds.

Moving to a larger scale, the CLRP can also learn from Cleveland's previous conflicts with the County. Cleveland and Cuyahoga County were able to move beyond city-county conflicts on tax revenue losses, and now the County has chosen to utilize several new pieces of legislation to further expedite the foreclosure and landbanking process. Hamilton County has the same option to use this legislation, and it is more likely that it will do so based on a collaborative relationship, and not an adversarial relationship.

With the reformation of the City Planning Department in Cincinnati, and renewed interest in land banking initiatives on the part of the County and Cincinnati community groups, now is a good time to make a decision regarding the future of the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program. Taking into consideration national best practices, current uses of the program at the neighborhood level, and potential future uses of the program, City staff needs to clarify the goals and objectives

of the CLRP and reprioritize it in the City budget according to those goals and objectives. Redevelopment is not an immediate process, and takes considerable investment in physical improvements as well as local community capacity to sustain those improvements. A reprioritization of the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program will allow for investment at both of these levels, and will promote the locally-based and community driven development that not only rebuilds houses, but rebuilds communities.

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Appendix A.

City Staff Interview Topics

Margaret Wuerstle, Chief Planner

CLRP General Functions & Structure

- 1) Can you explain the initial motivation behind the passage of City Ordinance 265, which created the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program (CLRP)? Why was it created so long after the state statute enabling such land reutilization programs was enacted?
- 2) The CLRP was created over ten years ago. Have the need and motivations for the program changed? In what way?
- 3) What are the primary purposes of the CLRP? (Such as: successful reuse of land, growth of tax base, job creation, business expansion, increased stability of property and property values, improved perception of site, to reverse urban blight)
- 4) What are the goals of the CLRP, as it is currently functioning?
- 5) Is the staff of the Department of Community Development and Planning familiar with how the program works?
- 6) Do any staff participate in the CLRP property acquisition or disposition process? In what manner?
- 7) Do Cincinnati Community Development Corporations (CDCs) participate in the operation of the CLRP? In what manner? Do other organizations or agencies participate, and if so, how?
- 8) For the ideal implementation of the program, how many staff hours per week would be required? How many staff hours per week are currently being directed towards this program?
- 9) What improvements can be made to the program? What impact will these changes have on CLRP operations?

Property Acquisition

- 10) What are the primary characteristics considered in the acquisition of new CLRP parcels?(Such as: vacant, underutilized, adjacent to growing commercial activity, tax delinquent, tax foreclosed, low price, free of environmental contamination)
- 11) Can the City purchase land for the land bank? (For example, in the case that a particular parcel is vital to the completion of a property assembly.)
- 12) What types of properties does the CLRP accept, in terms of land use?

- 13) How do you prioritize acceptance of properties into the land bank?
- 14) Are properties acquired with an end use in mind?
- 15) Are properties acquired in accordance with a broader strategy or comprehensive plan? Please explain.
- 16) Which of the following sources are used to identify properties for the land bank: CDCs, Community Based Organizations, Realtors, GIS, internal city records, tax records. Are any other sources used?
- 17) What do you feel are the highest and best uses for properties in the land bank?
- 18) What have been the key barriers/challenges you have experienced in acquiring property for the CLRP? (Such as: lack of funds, lack of political support, lack of demand/buyers, reluctance of property owners to sell, environmental problems.) How are these barriers overcome?
- 19) On average, how many properties are acquired each year for the CLRP?
- 20) On average, how many properties are distributed from the land bank each year?

Property Management

- 21) How do you monitor the properties in the land bank? (Such as through a central database, GIS, realtors, CDCs or other means).
- 22) Do you have a classification systems for properties in the land bank? If yes, how are the properties classified? (Such as by zoning, by site characteristics, or planned development?)
- 23) How do you finance the acquisition and management of CLRP properties?

Property Distribution

- 24) What conditions/requirements must applicants meet to purchase land?
- 25) What conditions/requirements must applicants meet after purchasing land?
- 26) Is the property purchaser required to commit to a development plan?
- 27) Who assumes environmental liability for the property upon its distribution?

Appendix B.

CDC Interview Topics

Price Hill Will

Evanston Housing Committee

Camp Washington Community Board

CDC Structure and Functions

- 1) Please describe the mission and major activities of your organization within your neighborhood.
- 2) When was your organization established?
- 3) Please describe the structure of your organization.
 - a) How many staff members does your organization have, and what are their titles?
 - b) Does your organization have a board of directors? If so, what is their role within the organization?
- 4) Are community members active in your organization? In what capacity?
- 5) What is the funding structure for your organization?

Property Development

- 6) What is the perception of vacant and abandoned properties in your neighborhood? Is it seen as an important issue? Explain.
- 7) Is the redevelopment of vacant or abandoned property a priority for your organization? Why or why not? What do you consider the 'highest and best use' for redeveloped properties within your community?
- 8) Does your organization currently participate in any property development? If so, what type? If not, does your organization desire or plan to develop land in the future?
- 9) Please describe any property redevelopment projects implemented by your organization.
 - a) Type of development
 - b) Site conditions, property acquisition, funding
 - c) Final outcome of development
 - d) Where the developments part of a larger neighborhood or citywide strategy?
 - e) Collaboration with any local or regional governmental agencies? Was it under a particular program?
- 10) What are the major obstacles to property redevelopment in your neighborhood, if any? Do these obstacles differ in other areas of the city?

CLRP

- 11) Are you familiar with the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program? If so, please explain your understanding of the program.
- 12) Has your organization utilized the CLRP to acquire properties? Is it involved in identifying properties for acquisition by the CLRP? If your organization is not involved – why?
- 13) What do you see as strengths and weaknesses of CLRP, based on your experience?
- 14) Can you make any recommendations for the improvement of the CLRP as it is currently functioning?
- 15) Has your organization utilized other city programs to address the issue of vacant and abandoned properties in your neighborhood? If so, which ones? Was your organization satisfied with the outcomes of those programs in your neighborhood?

Appendix C.

CDCGA Interview Topics

Community Development Corporations Association of Greater Cincinnati

Patricia Gary, Director

Organizational Structure & Function

- 16) Please describe the mission and major activities of your organization within the City of Cincinnati. Does your organization participate in any property development projects?
- 17) When was your organization established?
- 18) Please describe the structure of your organization.
 - a) How many staff members does your organization have, and what are their titles?
 - b) Please describe the role of the board of directors, and how the board members are chosen.
- 19) In terms of community development throughout Cincinnati, what are the top priorities for your organization?

Cincinnati CDCs

- 20) How many CDCs are active in Cincinnati? What is their typical structure and function?
- 21) What role do CDCs play in their respective neighborhoods? In the City of Cincinnati as a whole? Do the roles change among the CDCs, and if so, how?
- 22) Do you feel that Cincinnati CDCs collaborate effectively with the City of Cincinnati? Please give examples.
- 23) Do you feel that Cincinnati CDCs collaborate effectively with regional governmental agencies? Please give examples.
- 24) What do you think can be done to improve collaborative efforts between CDCs and local and regional government?

CLRP

- 25) What Cincinnati area CDCs have the capacity for property redevelopment projects? What makes those CDCs more capable than others?
- 26) Have any local CDCs implemented successful property development projects? Have any CDCs attempted but not been successful? What obstacles did they face?
- 27) Across the city, what are the major barriers to property redevelopment? (Such as: lack of funds, lack of political support, lack of demand/buyers, reluctance of property owners to sell, environmental problems.) How are these barriers overcome?

- 28) What effective programs does the City of Cincinnati currently offer to address the issue of vacant and abandoned property? Which of these do local CDCs utilize?
- 29) Are you familiar with the CLRP? If so, please describe your understanding of the program.
- 30) Do you feel that a land bank is needed in Cincinnati? Why or why not?
- 31) Have any local CDCs utilized the CLRP, to your knowledge? In what manner?
- 32) Based on your knowledge of the city real estate market and CDC capacity, can you recommend a property acquisition strategy for the CLRP?
- 33) Should the CLRP have geographic target areas? If so, where would you recommend they be, and why? Is there any type of development that you think would most benefit Cincinnati – and can land banking aid this development in happening?
- 34) What do you feel should be the goals of a land banking program in Cincinnati? Do you feel that the CLRP is in line with those goals? Why or why not?
- 35) What recommendations would you give for the improvement of the CLRP?
- 36) Are you familiar with the homesteading program that was previously active in Cincinnati? Was the homesteading program efficiently utilized by local CDCs and community members, in your opinion? How?

Appendix D.

CLRP Property List, September 2007

Address	Date Acquired	Value at Purchase	Current Value	Neighborhood	Availability
Alaska 3657	06/14/04	\$8,300		Avondale	SOLD
Auburn 1924	08/22/01	\$4,000	\$5,000	Mt. Auburn	
Borden St 3733	06/04/07	\$12,400	\$12,400	S. Cumming	SALE PENDING
Boyd 1318	06/22/06	\$13,300	\$13,300	Northside	
Boyd St. 1416	06/04/07	\$26,500	\$26,500	Northside	
Burnet 3446	02/10/98	\$8,300	\$8,500	Avondale	AVAILABLE
Cedar Ave. 1208	06/04/07	\$9,500	\$9,500	College Hill	
Dane Ave. 4143	06/04/07	\$11,800	\$11,800	Northside	
Dewey Ave 1265	06/04/07	\$45,500 \$3,100	\$3,100	W. Price Hill	HELD FOR SITE ASSEMBLY
Dewey Ave 1263	06/04/07	\$3,100	\$3,100	W. Price Hill	HELD FOR SITE ASSEMBLY
Dewey Ave. 1247	06/04/07	\$12,300	\$12,000	W. Price Hill	HELD FOR SITE ASSEMBLY
Dorchester 109	08/22/02	\$1,400		Mt. Auburn	SOLD
Eastern 2050	07/21/98	\$2,700	\$2,700	East End	AVAILABLE
Excelsior 228	08/22/02	\$2,400		Mt. Auburn	SOLD
Gaff 3251	05/10/01	\$16,600	\$17,400	Evanston	AVAILABLE
Goethe 145	02/19/99	\$1,800	\$2,000	Mt. Auburn	
Goethe 170	07/06/01	\$2,500	\$2,700	Mt. Auburn	
Grand Ave. 929	06/04/07	\$7,500	\$67,500	E. Price Hill	SALE PENDING
Graydon 3339	08/22/01	\$11,600	\$12,500	Evanston	AVAILABLE
Hackberry 3059	11/14/00	\$9,200		Evanston	SOLD
Hackberry 3308	11/15/00	\$55,900		Evanston	SOLD
Hughes 1606	08/22/02	\$2,200	\$2,300	Mt. Auburn	
Kinney 1871	08/12/97	\$4,200		Evanston	SOLD
Kinsey 117	08/12/97	\$8,900		Mt. Auburn	SOLD
Ledger Pl	06/04/07	\$10,000	\$10,000	Evanston	AVAILABLE
Loth 2110	08/22/01	\$2,200	\$2,500	Mt. Auburn	AVAILABLE
Loth 2200	08/24/04	\$1,000	\$1,000	Mt. Auburn	AVAILABLE
Loth 2208	08/24/04	\$9,700	\$9,800	Mt. Auburn	AVAILABLE
Loth 2225	08/24/04	\$1,100	\$1,200	Mt. Auburn	AVAILABLE

Mad Anthony 4210	06/22/06	\$16,600	\$16,600	Northside	
Main 1738	08/18/00	\$4,000	\$5,300	Mt. Auburn	SALE PENDING
McHenry	06/28/01	\$40,400	\$61,000	Westwood	AVAILABLE
McHenry 3154	06/28/01	\$1,600	\$2,800	Westwood	AVAILABLE
McHenry 3158	10/23/03	\$32,600	\$37,500	Westwood	AVAILABLE
Mohawk 254	08/22/02	\$20,100	\$22,800	Over-The-Rhine	Preferred Developer Agreement
Mohawk 258	08/22/02	\$6,900	\$7,700	Over-The-Rhine	Preferred Developer Agreement
Mohawk 260	08/22/02	\$6,900	\$7,700	Over-The-Rhine	Preferred Developer Agreement
Mohawk 262	08/22/02	\$6,900	\$7,700	Over-The-Rhine	Preferred Developer Agreement
Mohawk 264	08/22/02	\$6,900	\$7,700	Over-The-Rhine	Preferred Developer Agreement
Mohawk 266	08/22/02	\$6,900	\$7,700	Over-The-Rhine	Preferred Developer Agreement
Mohawk 270	08/22/02	\$6,900	\$7,700	Over-The-Rhine	Preferred Developer Agreement
Mohawk 272	08/22/02	\$6,900	\$7,700	Over-The-Rhine	Preferred Developer Agreement
Mohawk 278	08/22/02	\$6,200	\$7,700	Over-The-Rhine	Preferred Developer Agreement
Mulberry 218	07/21/98	\$5,100	\$5,400	Mt. Auburn	
Mulberry 23	08/24/04	\$3,600	\$4,300	Mt. Auburn	
Mullberry 200	07/22/98	\$1,300	\$1,400	Mt. Auburn	
Mullberry 312	07/23/98	\$3,000	\$3,100	Mt. Auburn	
North Bend 2371	11/15/00	\$8,000		College Hill	N/A
Oak 837	12/31/2001	\$12,500	\$2,500	Walnut Hills	
Oak 839	12/31/2001	\$14,700	\$2,500	Walnut Hills	
Oak 841	12/31/2001	\$24,000	\$2,200	Walnut Hills	
Pleasant 1611	03/15/02	\$5,700	\$6,300	OTR	Preferred Developer Agreement
Pleasant 1613	03/15/02	\$6,000	\$7,500	OTR	Preferred Developer Agreement
Pleasant 1626	03/15/02	\$6,000	\$7,500	OTR	Preferred Developer Agreement
Pleasant 1628	03/15/02	\$5,700	\$6,300	OTR	Preferred Developer Agreement

Pogue 2115	06/04/07	\$15,700	\$15,700	Evanston	HELD FOR SITE ASSEMBLY
Reading 2319	08/24/04	\$12,300	\$15,300	Mt. Auburn	AVAILABLE
Setchell 260	08/12/97	\$8,800		East End	N/A
Sierra St 5805	06/04/07	\$3,000	\$3,000	Madisonville	HELD FOR SITE ASSEMBLY
St. Leger 1512	08/22/01	\$11,100	\$12,500	Evanston	AVAILABLE
Sycamore 1743	11/21/97	\$6,000	\$7,800	Mt. Auburn	SALE PENDING
Thornhill	11/14/00	\$69,700 (\$60,910 after subdivision)	\$61,400	College Hill	
Thornhill	07/17/03	\$16,900	\$22,300	College Hill	AVAILABLE
Van Buren 3150	08/24/04	\$51,300	\$53,800	Avondale	
Vine 1712	08/22/02	\$6,000	\$5,600	Over-The-Rhine	Preferred Developer Agreement
Vine 1716	08/22/02	\$7,000	\$7,900	Over-The-Rhine	Preferred Developer Agreement
Westwood Northern 2295	08/08/03	\$38,880	\$12,400	Westwood	AVAILABLE

EMERGENCY


D.N.C.

City of Cincinnati

An Ordinance No. 265 - 1996

ADOPTING and IMPLEMENTING the procedures under Chapter 5722 of the Ohio Revised Code to facilitate the effective reutilization of nonproductive land situated within the City of Cincinnati, which program shall be known as the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program.

WHEREAS, the existence of nonproductive land within the City of Cincinnati necessitates the implementation of a land reutilization program to foster either the return of such nonproductive land to tax revenue generating status or the devotion of such land to public use; and

WHEREAS, at its meeting on JUL 26 1996, the City Planning Commission, approved the adoption and implementation of the procedures under Chapter 5722; now, therefore,

BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the City of Cincinnati, State of Ohio:

Section 1. That the City of Cincinnati hereby adopts the procedures set forth in Chapter 5722 of the Ohio Revised Code.

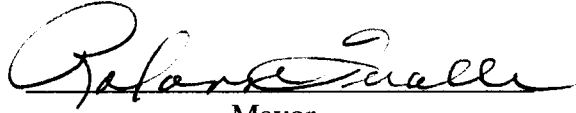
Section 2. That the proper city officers are hereby authorized to take all necessary and proper actions to adopt and implement the procedures set forth in Chapter 5722 and the City Manager is directed to promulgate rules to set up a selection review committee, to delineate property selection and documentation criteria, to establish maintenance and reporting requirements, and to determine the length of time the City of Cincinnati may own property for the program.

Section 3. That the Clerk of Council is hereby directed to transmit certified copies of this ordinance to the County Auditor, the County Treasurer and the County Prosecutor, as provided in Section 5722.02 of the Ohio Revised Code.

Section 4. That this ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure necessary for the preservation of the peace, health and welfare and it shall go into effect forthwith. The reason for

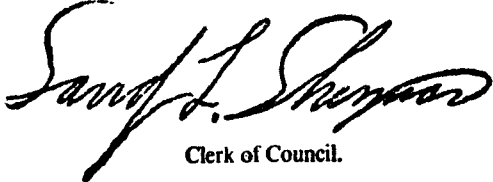
said emergency is the need to immediately implement the provisions of Chapter 5722 in order to begin returning vacant, unused land to productive status as soon as possible.

Passed: September 5, 1996


Mayor

Attest: 
Clerk

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT ORDINANCE NO. 265
1994 WAS PUBLISHED IN THE CITY BULLETIN
IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CHARTER ON 9-17-96.


Clerk of Council.

COUNCIL MEETING VOTING SHEET

NUMBER: #

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER

DATE: 5/1996

2:P.M.

174

	FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION		SUSPENSION OF THREE READINGS		ADMENDMENT		PASSAGE		EMERGENCY		INDEFINITELY POSTPONED	
	(5)		(7)		(5)		(5, 6 OR 7)		(6)		(5)	
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
B. Sterne			/				/		/			
D. Tillery			/				/		/			
T. Yates			/				/		/			
R. Qualls			/				/		/			
T. Portane			/				/		/			
C. Winburn			/				/		/			
P. Heimlich			/				/		/			
M. Cooper	EXCUSED			AT	TIME		OF		VOTE			
J. Cissell			/				/		/			
Total			8				8		8			

City of Cincinnati



Interdepartment
Correspondence Sheet

Date: June 26, 1996

To: Mayor and Members of City Council
From: Cheryl P. Meadows, Director, Neighborhood Services
Copies to:
Subject: **LAND REUTILIZATION PROGRAM ORDINANCE**

199601488

Attached is an emergency ordinance captioned:

ADOPTING and IMPLEMENTING the procedures under Chapter 5722 of the Ohio Revised Code to facilitate the effective reutilization of nonproductive land situated within the City of Cincinnati, which program shall be known as the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program.

On May 30, 1996, City Council approved and filed a report to establish a Land Reutilization Program under 5722 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC).

ORC 5722 allows any municipal corporation to establish a Land Reutilization Program (LRP) to selectively obtain forfeited property with clear title after five years of tax delinquency and placement on a tax suspension list by the County Auditor. The previous tax delinquent owner is banned from repurchasing the same property unless there is full payment of all back taxes and assessments. Property can be obtained for a municipality's LRP for the cost of the deed recording and held by the municipality for up to 15 years with no ongoing accumulation of property taxes and assessments. Only upon disposition of the property by the LRP is payment due to the County and it is based on the lesser of the market value of the property at the time of disposition or the amount of taxes and assessments outstanding at time of conveyance to the LRP. Such payment is deducted from property tax distributions administered by the County, so there is no direct cash outlay. Also, at any time during the holding period, the LRP can opt to return the property to the County with no financial obligation to the municipality.

The CLRP would follow ORC 5722 except as delineated in the attached Exhibit A. Exhibit A describes the City Manager's initial rules concerning the selection of available parcels. The rules:

1. Establish a selection review committee composed of certain department directors who would approve or disapprove the parcels for acquisition.
2. Establish property selection criteria.
3. Establish a maximum holding period for parcels of no more than five years without a development commitment.
4. Provide for an annual report to City Council on the status of each parcel in the CRLP portfolio.

The Administration recommends passage of this emergency ordinance.

APPROVED:

John F. Shirey
City Manager

EXHIBIT A

CINCINNATI LAND REUTILIZATION PROGRAM PROCEDURES

I. PURPOSE - The Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program [CLRP] is established to acquire tax delinquent properties from Hamilton County's tax suspension list for the purpose of developing sites for housing, commercial or public use.

II. SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

A. SELECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE - A committee shall be established consisting of the department directors from Neighborhood Services, Economic Development, Planning, Buildings and Inspections and the Real Estate Manager of the Law Department, or their assignees, to review the selection criteria for the properties available for acquisition and approve or disapprove the various parcels for acquisition for the CLRP.

B. PROPERTY SELECTION CRITERIA - Parcels available for acquisition for the CLRP will be selected for acquisition based upon a review of the following criteria:

1. City, Department or neighborhood strategies or goals;
2. The potential for sale within five (5) years of acquisition;
3. The potential for development within five (5) years of acquisition;
4. The opportunity for consolidation with abutting parcel(s);
5. The unique opportunities presented.

III. CLRP PROCEDURES

A. PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION - The Neighborhood Services Department shall create and maintain a file for each parcel of land acquired which includes the following information:

1. Auditor's book, page and parcel number;
2. Location;
3. Size;
4. Topography;
5. Use and zoning;
6. Phase I environmental review;
7. Assessment of marketability;
8. Development potential of parcel;
9. Opportunity for consolidation with abutting parcel(s);
10. Maintenance assessment history;
11. Projected annual maintenance costs;
12. Neighborhood plan relevance;
13. How site fits with City, Department or neighborhood goals and strategies;
14. Date acquired for CLRP;
15. Unique opportunities presented;
16. Maintenance activities during CLRP ownership;
17. Assemblage value.

16. Maintenance activities during CLRP ownership;
17. Assemblage value.

B. MAINTENANCE - Parcels acquired under the CLRP will be reviewed at least once a year for maintenance. Maintenance will be performed to keep the parcels free of debris, litter and weeds. The Department which has requested the inclusion of a parcel under the CLRP shall be responsible for its maintenance and any other associated holding cost.

C. REPORTING - Neighborhood Services shall report annually to City Council on the status of the CLRP property portfolio.

D. OWNERSHIP - Any CLRP parcel which has not been sold or is not under contract for sale, or has not been determined to be held for assemblage within five years of its acquisition by the City, shall be returned to Hamilton County for disposition.

City of Cincinnati



Interdepartment
Correspondence Sheet

Date July 26, 1996

To City Council
From *SAL LAM*
Leon A. Meyer, Director, City Planning Department
Copies to
Subject Document #199601488 on 6/26/96 Council Calendar

Transmitted herewith is an Emergency Ordinance captioned as follows:

ADOPTING and IMPLEMENTING the procedures under Chapter 5722 of the Ohio Revised Code to facilitate the effective reutilization of nonproductive land situated within the City of Cincinnati, which program shall be known as the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program.

At its meeting on July 26, 1996, the City Planning Commission approved the above Emergency Ordinance.

Copies of staff report enclosed.

LAM:jf

**Honorable City Planning Commission
Cincinnati, Ohio**

JULY 26, 1996

SUBJECT: A report and recommendation authorizing the adoption and implementation of the procedures under Chapter 5722 of the Ohio Revised Code to facilitate the effective reutilization of nonproductive land within the City of Cincinnati, which program shall be known as the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program.

City Council at its session Wednesday, June 26, 1996, referred for review and report the subject ordinance.

PURPOSE

The Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program (CLRP) is established to acquire tax delinquent properties from Hamilton County's tax suspension list to develop sites for housing, commercial and public use.

BACKGROUND

A program such as CLRP would present an opportunity for the City to assemble and bank land over a reasonable length of time at minimal cost for subsequent redevelopment. Most properties available for this type of program are vacant lots; however, there may be an occasional building offered. The City's ability to acquire property is currently limited to a lengthy and expensive spot blight or urban renewal plan implementation process, a City mortgage foreclosure, or a rare friendly sale. Although properties have been acquired through these measures in the past, the supply of developable City-owned property is virtually exhausted. The City could use a program such as CLRP to acquire properties for housing and business development.

DESCRIPTION

A committee shall be established consisting of the department directors from Neighborhood Services, Economic Development, Planning, Buildings and Inspections and the Real Estate Manager of the Law Department, or their assignees, to review the selection criteria for the properties available for acquisition and approve or disapprove the various parcels for acquisition for the CLRP.

Parcels available for acquisition for the CLRP will be selected for acquisition based upon a review of the following criteria:

1. City, Department or neighborhood strategies or goals;
2. The potential for sale within five (5) years of acquisition;
3. The potential for development within five (5) years of acquisition;
4. The opportunity for consolidation with abutting parcel(s);
5. The unique opportunities presented.

The Department of Neighborhood Services shall create and maintain files for each parcel of land acquired and report annually to City Council on the status of the CLRP property portfolio.

Parcels acquired under the CLRP will be reviewed at least once a year for maintenance. Maintenance will be performed to keep the parcels free of debris, litter and weeds. The Department that has requested the inclusion of a parcel under the CLRP shall be responsible for its maintenance and any other associated holding cost.

Any CLRP parcel that has not been sold or is not under contract for sale, or has not been determined to be held for assemblage within five years of its acquisition by the City, shall be returned to Hamilton County for disposition.

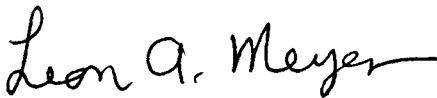
RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Planning Commission take the following action:

Approve an ordinance authorizing the "adopting and implementing procedures under Chapter 5722 of the Ohio Revised Code to facilitate the effective reutilization of nonproductive land situated within the City of Cincinnati, which program shall be known as the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program."

APPROVED:


Steven A. Kurtz, Administrator
Land Use Environment and Planning


Leon A. Meyer, Director
City Planning Department

Respectfully Submitted,


Molly C. McDermott
City Planner

LAM:SAK:MCM:mcm

City of Cincinnati



Interdepartment
Correspondence Sheet

Date July 26, 1996

To City Council
From *SAX LAM*
Leon A. Meyer, Director, City Planning Department
Copies to
Subject Document #199601488 on 6/26/96 Council Calendar

Transmitted herewith is an Emergency Ordinance captioned as follows:

ADOPTING and IMPLEMENTING the procedures under Chapter 5722 of the Ohio Revised Code to facilitate the effective reutilization of nonproductive land situated within the City of Cincinnati, which program shall be known as the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program.

At its meeting on July 26, 1996, the City Planning Commission approved the above Emergency Ordinance.

Copies of staff report enclosed.

LAM:jf

City of Cincinnati



Interdepartment
Correspondence Sheet

Date: June 27, 1996

To Leon Meyer, Director of City Planning Department
From Sandy L. Sherman, CMC, Clerk of Council
Copies to
Subject Document #199601488 on 06/26/96 Council Calendar

Council at its session on Wednesday, June 26 1996,
referred for review and report:

ORDINANCE (emergency) submitted on
06/26/96 by Cheryl Meadows, Director of
Neighborhood Services, adopting and
implementing the procedures under
Chapter 5722 of the Ohio Revised Code
to facilitate the effective
reutilization of nonproductive land
situated within the City of Cincinnati,
which program shall be known as the
Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program.

/js

Att:

RECEIVED

JUN 27 1996

CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
BY _____

REFERRED TO LUE/P
STAFF REPORT TO DIRECTOR 7/16/96
FOR C. P. C. 7/26/96



JOSEPH T. DETERS
HAMILTON COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

CIVIL DIVISION
136 EAST COURT STREET
SUITE 300
CINCINNATI, OH 45202-1211
PHONE: 513 632-8240
FAX: 513 632-8215
WRITER'S DIRECT DIAL NUMBER
832-8788

October 22, 1996

Fred Orth
Community Development Analyst
Department of Neighborhood Services
Two Centennial Plaza
Suite 700
805 Central Avenue
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Ord 265-1996

Re: **Land Reutilization Program**

Dear Mr. Orth:

I am writing concerning the City of Cincinnati's participation in the Land Reutilization Program (LRP) under Ohio Revised Code Chapter 5722.

Since, I will be in charge of this matter for the Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office, I would like to meet with you to discuss the various procedural aspects required by the LRP. For example, the Prosecutor, Auditor, and Treasurer must be served with a certified copy of the municipality's ordinance before this program may be implemented.



Please feel free to contact me so that we may schedule a mutually convenient time to meet.

Sincerely,

Lawrence C. Baron
Assistant Prosecuting Attorney

Post-it* Fax Note	7671	Date	10/25	# of pages	1
To	SANDY SHERMAN	From	FRED ORTH		
Co./Dept.	CLERK	Co.	DNS		
Phone #	X3248	Phone #	X1957		
Fax #	X2478	Fax #	X6113		

LCB/bef



City of Cincinnati

Council

SANDY SHERMAN, CLERK OF COUNCIL
JEANETTE STEWART, DEPUTY CLERK
JOHNNIE LILLARD, DEPUTY CLERK

September 10, 1996

Hon. Robert A. Goering Jr.
Treasurer of Hamilton County
County Administration Building
138 E. Court St.
Cincinnati OH, 45202

Dear Mr. Goering:

Council of the City of Cincinnati State of Ohio, as its sess
following Ordinance:

As Clerk of Council, I hereby certify the following (1) or
of Cincinnati State of Ohio at its session on September 5

ORDINANCE NO. 265/1996

ADOPTING and IMPLEMENTING the procedures under Chapter 5722 of the Ohio Revised Code to facilitate the effective reutilization of nonproductive land situated within the City of Cincinnati, which program shall be known as the Cincinnati Land Reutilization Program.

Sincerely,

Sandy L. Sherman, CMC
Clerk of Council

Is your RETURN ADDRESS completed on the reverse side?

<p>SENDER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete items 1 and/or 2 for additional services. Complete items 3, 4a, and 4b. Print your name and address on the reverse of this form so that we can return this card to you. Attach this form to the front of the mailpiece, or on the back if space does not permit. Write "Return Receipt Requested" on the mailpiece below the article number. The Return Receipt will show to whom the article was delivered and the date delivered. 		<p>3. Article Addressed to:</p> <p>Robert A. Goering Jr. Treasurer Of Hamilton County 138 E. Court St. Cincinnati OH, 45202</p>	
<p>5. Received By: (Print Name)</p> <p>X <i>[Signature]</i></p>		<p>4a. Article Number</p> <p>2750 457216</p>	
<p>6. Signature: (Addressee or Agent)</p> <p>X <i>[Signature]</i></p>		<p>4b. Service Type</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Registered</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Express Mail</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Return Receipt for Merchandise</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Insured</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> COD</p>	
<p>PS Form 3811, December 1994</p>		<p>7. Date of Delivery</p> <p>SEP 16 1996</p>	
<p>8. Addressee's Address (Only if requested and fee is paid)</p>		<p>4. Article Number</p> <p>2750 457216</p>	
<p>Domestic Return Receipt</p>		<p>1. <input type="checkbox"/> Addressee's Address</p> <p>2. <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Delivery</p> <p>Consult postmaster for fee.</p>	
		<p>I also wish to receive the following services (for an extra fee):</p>	
<p>Thank you for using Return Receipt Service.</p>			



City of Cincinnati

Council

SANDY SHERMAN, CLERK OF COUNCIL
JEANETTE STEWART, DEPUTY CLERK
JOHNNIE LILLARD, DEPUTY CLERK

MA
BE
ME

Z 790 457 217



Receipt for Certified Mail

No Insurance Coverage Provided
Do not use for International Mail
(See Reverse)

Sent to	J.T. DETERS	
Street and No.	PROSECUTOR	
P.O., State, and ZIP Code	914 MAIN ST	
Postage	\$	
Certified Fee		
Special Delivery Fee		
Restricted Delivery Fee		

September 10, 1996

Hon. Joseph T. Deters
Hamilton County Prosecutor
914 Main Street
Cincinnati OH, 45202

Dear Mr. Deters:

Council of the City of Cincinnati State of Ohio, as its sess following Ordinance:

As Clerk of Council, I hereby certify the following (1) ord of Cincinnati State of Ohio at its session on September 5

ORDINANCE NO. 265

ADOPTING and IMPLEMENTING the procedures under Code to facilitate the effective reutilization of nonproduct Cincinnati, which program shall be known as the Cincinn

Sincerely,

Sandy L. Sherman, CMC
Clerk of Council

Is your RETURN ADDRESS completed on the reverse side?

SENDER:

- Complete items 1 and/or 2 for additional services.
- Complete items 3, 4a, and 4b.
- Print your name and address on the reverse of this form so that we can return this card to you.
- Attach this form to the front of the mailpiece, or on the back if space does not permit.
- Write "Return Receipt Requested" on the mailpiece below the article number.
- The Return Receipt will show to whom the article was delivered and the date delivered.

3. Article Addressed to:
Joseph T. Deters
Hamilton County Prosecutor
914 Main Street
Cincinnati OH, 45202

5. Received By: (Print Name)
J.T. Deters

6. Signature: (Addressed to Person)

PS Form 3811, December 1994

4a. Article Number
Z 790 457 217

4b. Service Type
 Registered
 Express Mail
 Return Receipt for Merchandise
 Certified
 Insured
 COD

7. Date of Delivery
9-12-96

8. Addressee's Address (Only if requested and fee is paid)

1. Addressee's Address
2. Restricted Delivery
Consult postmaster for fee.

I also wish to receive the following services (for an extra fee):

Domestic Return Receipt

Thank you for using Return Receipt Service.



City of Cincinnati

Council

SANDY SHERMAN, CLERK OF COUNCIL
JEANETTE STEWART, DEPUTY CLERK
JOHNNIE LILLARD, DEPUTY CLERK

MARILYN KAISER, CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK
BELINDA RUNYON, DEPUTY CLERK
MELISSA AUTRY, DEPUTY CLERK

September 10, 1996

**Mr. William Emerson "Dusty Rhodes"
Hamilton County Auditor**

c/o Ms. Beverly Pierce
Deputy Clerk for Assessments
Room 304 County Administration Bldg
138 E. Court Street
Cincinnati Ohio, 45202

Z 790 457 218



Receipt for Certified Mail

No Insurance Coverage Provided
Do not use for International Mail
(See Reverse)

Sent to	W. E. Rhodes
Street and No.	138 E COURT
P.O., State and ZIP Code	

Is your RETURN ADDRESS completed on the reverse side?

Dear Ms. Pierce:

Council of the City of Cincinnati State of Ohio, as its ses:
following Ordinance:

As Clerk of Council, I hereby certify the following (1) or
of Cincinnati State of Ohio at its session on September 5

ORDINANCE NO. 265

ADOPTING and IMPLEMENTING the procedures under
Code to facilitate the effective reutilization of nonproducti
Cincinnati, which program shall be known as the Cincinna

Sincerely,

Sandy L. Sherman, CMC
Clerk of Council

PS Form 3811, December 1994	6. Signature (Addressee or Agent) X	5. Received By: (Print Name) Mr. William Emerson Rhodes Hamilton County Auditor 138 E. Court St. Cincinnati OH, 45202	4a. Article Number 750-457218	I also wish to receive the following services (for an extra fee): 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Addressee's Address 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Delivery Consult postmaster for fee.
	7. Date of Delivery 9-13-96	8. Addressee's Address (Only if requested and fee is paid)	4b. Service Type <input type="checkbox"/> Registered <input type="checkbox"/> Express Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Certified <input type="checkbox"/> Insured <input type="checkbox"/> Return Receipt for Merchandise <input type="checkbox"/> COD	

Domestic Return Receipt

Thank you for using Return Receipt Service.