



NEIGHBORHOOD
INITIATIVE
PROGRAM
AN OHIO HARDEST HIT FUND PROJECT

Special Achievement

Ending the Cycle of Blight and Foreclosure

Douglas Garver, Executive Director

Jim Durham, Director of Homeownership

Jeremy Myers, Director of Homeownership Preservation

Carlie Boos, Neighborhood Initiative/Compliance Manager

NCSHA 2015 Annual Awards Entry Form

(Complete one form for each entry)

Deadline: Wednesday, June 10, 2015

Visit ncsha.org/awards to view the Annual Awards Call for Entries.

Instructions: Type entry information into the form and save it as a PDF. Do not write on or scan the form. If you have any questions contact Matt Cunningham at mcunningham@ncsha.org or 202-624-5424.

Fill out the entry name *exactly* as you want it listed in the program.

Entry Name: _____

HFA: _____

Submission Contact: (Must be HFA Staff Member) _____ **Email:** _____

Please provide a 15-word (maximum) description of your nomination to appear on the NCSHA website.

Use this header on the upper right corner of each page:

HFA: _____

Entry Name: _____

Select the appropriate subcategory of your entry and indicate if you are providing visual aids.

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
Annual Report	Empowering New Buyers	Federal Advocacy	Financial
Creative Media	Encouraging New Production	State Advocacy	Human Resources
Promotional Materials and Newsletters	Home Improvement and Rehabilitation		Operations
			Technology
Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
Encouraging New Production	Combating Homelessness	Special Achievement	Yes
Multifamily Management	Housing for Persons with Special Needs		No
Preservation and Rehabilitation			

2015 NCSHA Award Nomination

HFA: Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA)
Category: Special Achievement
Entry Name: Ending the Cycle of Blight and Foreclosure

Douglas Garver, Executive Director
Jim Durham, Director of Homeownership
Jeremy Myers, Director of Homeownership Preservation
Carlie Boos, Neighborhood Initiative/Compliance Manager

While grisly, empty houses litter Ohio's neighborhoods and drag down property values, the Ohio Housing Finance Agency's (OHFA) Neighborhood Initiative Program (NIP) partners with 21 county land banks to clear the problem. The foreclosure crisis intensified the vacancy problem that began generations ago with younger residents' mass exodus from our legacy cities. Today, too many of Ohio's communities are left decimated by the combined effects of a shrinking tax base and the staggeringly expensive costs of securing a blighted stock of zombie houses. In some counties, over 5,000 dangerous, blighted structures require immediate demolition.

Unfortunately, neighbors suffer the most profound effects of blight. Along with increased crime, ugly landscapes and the reduced availability of city services, one study concluded that living within 150 feet of a vacant or abandoned property can immediately decrease one's home value [by over \\$7,500](#). When negative equity combines with other factors, such as loss of income, the [risk of foreclosure](#) is high because homeowners do not have the option to sell a home they can no longer afford. However, the equity drain and foreclosure risk can be reduced or even eliminated. Researchers at the [Thriving Communities Institute](#) recently concluded that systematic demolition activity decreases the [foreclosure](#) threat.

Supported by the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Hardest Hit Fund, NIP funds the targeted demolition of nuisance properties, stabilizing values, preventing foreclosure, preserving municipal resources and increasing the quality of life for Ohio residents. Taking a step beyond previous blight programs, NIP also facilitates the greening and repurposing of the lots to further intensify the community impact. By 2017, 5,500 blighted structures in more than 200 target areas will have been eliminated. OHFA accomplishes this by reimbursing land banks for up to \$25,000 per unit for property acquisition, demolition, greening, maintenance, and program administration, which halts the cycle of foreclosure, depressed values and blight.

Responding to an Important State Need

According to the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio's [Dimensions of Ohio's Foreclosure Crisis](#) report, the housing crisis struck Ohio earlier and harder than nearly every other state in the country. Our foreclosure filings increased 24 percent in 2006, and by 2010, 7.6 percent of Ohio mortgage loans were 90 days delinquent. Even as other states emerge from the recession, Ohio continues to struggle with persistent housing problems, remaining the state with the fourth highest overall number of foreclosures.

Troublingly, 12 percent of Ohio homeowners are underwater, due in part to the persistent blight that surrounds them and isolates them from the normal market forces that benefit stabilized communities. Negative equity disproportionately affects the lowest value, and therefore most affordable housing, with approximately 35 percent of the lowest tier homes reportedly underwater.

As such, two of the nation's top four "seriously underwater" markets are in Ohio—Cleveland (28.2 percent) and Akron (27.2 percent). Without access to home equity, a small hardship can be disastrous for a family trapped in this environment. Undercapitalized homeowners who experience an unexpected job loss or illness cannot refinance or right-size their housing situation through a private sale and are instead forced through the foreclosure process, further damaging their credit and financial stability while also prolonging a weakened housing market.

Alarming, 25 percent of all foreclosures are now "zombies," meaning they were vacated prior to bank possession. The horror-inspired term stems from the devastating effect these homes have on the surrounding neighborhood: a quick death but long, destructive afterlife. These houses will ultimately join the throngs of existing vacant and abandoned homes that drag down recovery. Estimates indicate there are 100,000 demolition-eligible units throughout the state—Cleveland has 8,000 unsalvageable and unsafe homes in immediate need of demolition, Columbus reports 6,000 such properties and Toledo adds another 4,000. Living next door to one of these proverbial monsters immediately impacts one's own home values, inhibits free movement, and exposes families to countless social and economic ills.

But the problem isn't just economic or aesthetic. For those surrounded by blight, it permeates life. Studies found exposure to blight and urban deterioration [negatively impacts health](#) and also increases gun assaults, vandalism, and criminal mischief. In contrast, residents near greened lots report less stress, more exercise, increased social interaction, reduced ADHD, and increased consumer spending. Still other studies found greening efforts reduced urban heat island effect, improved access to healthy food, and resolved watershed management problems. Accordingly, targeted blight eradication is a core mission-driven objective for any housing finance agency that aims to [reduce foreclosures](#) and promote safe, affordable housing.

Achieving Intended Results

NIP will remove approximately 5,500 vacant and abandoned structures in three years and replace them with greenspace, expanded lawns, parks, gardens, community centers and more. This transformation is possible through awards ranging from \$400,000 to \$14 million made to 21 Ohio counties. Communities will experience a significant return on NIP's investment, projected by the Thriving Communities Institute to be a \$1.40 benefit for every dollar expended. Neighbors will gain greater fiscal security and independence as their home values stabilize and the threat of foreclosure is lifted. Tax-delinquent, nonperforming assets will be repurposed and returned to productive use. With the blight cleared, crime rates will drop and neighborhood livability will improve. OHFA will infuse more than \$66 million into local Ohio economies, driven by a world-class group of land banks that continue to grow with NIP's support.

Barely one year into the program, NIP already processed the removal of 925 housing units. At an average cost of \$11,700 per unit, OHFA distributed or approved more than \$10.8 million in funding. These funding requests are growing exponentially each month, with peak activity expected in early 2016. Local partners are reporting a wide range of positive outcomes, including greater community engagement and cohesiveness, improved safety conditions, the attraction of collateral investment and a rapidly developing land bank infrastructure to support ongoing initiatives.

Partnerships that Work

OHFA collaborates directly with 21 county land banks across the state. Selected in a rigorous qualification process, these partners have the freedom to choose individual properties for demolition based on their local redevelopment priorities, leveraged resources, and neighborhood support. To secure ownership, each land bank coordinates with county auditors, prosecutors,

boards of revision, lenders, servicers and nonprofit organizations to gain access to a cost efficient pipeline of neglected and unwanted properties. They also partner with private service providers to conduct surveys, asbestos abatement, demolition, and landscaping. NIP has already facilitated partnerships between land banks and at least 95 private businesses, creating or preserving an untold number of Ohio jobs.

OHFA also coordinates with the [Greater Ohio Policy Center](#) (GOPC), a nonprofit, non-partisan organization operating statewide, that develops and advances policies and practices that value our urban cores and metropolitan regions as economic drivers and preserve Ohio's open space and farmland. GOPC provides NIP and our land banks strategic and technical advice for successfully implementing the program, particularly in target area selection, acquisition management, awareness building and education and constituent relations.

Finally, OHFA entered into a formal cooperation agreement with the Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO) to ensure demolition and recovery objectives are fairly and appropriately balanced against the communities' preservation needs. Working together, OHPO and NIP hosted a live training session for land banks that helped them understand the legal and policy limitations regarding historic properties and how to successfully navigate these issues. To ensure land banks have access to the most reliable historic data, OHPO provides free access to GIS identification and mapping tools for all our land bank partners. This partnership also produced an expedited historical approval procedure that ensures land banks are able to address immediate demolition needs without bureaucratic constraints.

Providing Benefits that Outweigh Costs

Instead of approaching blight elimination as a standalone objective, NIP is one of the first programs to effectively meld extensive demolition with development. All post-demolition lots must meet basic site restoration requirements, including grading and seeding. However, NIP incentivizes advanced greening techniques by providing \$6,000 to fund comprehensive repurposing. While the type of redevelopment is a local decision controlled by the land bank and based on community support and site suitability, NIP strongly advocates using these funds for high impact projects. Community gardens, urban agriculture, pocket parks, rain gardens, public art installations, renewable energy infrastructure and micro markets are all among the vanguard reuse projects NIP endorses. To date, OHFA has approved over 70 side lot transfers that grow neighbor's yards and the resale value of their existing home while simultaneously returning the land to the tax rolls. Because side lot applicants are often offered an NIP landscaping package, the property is conveyed in a usable and presentable condition.

Unlike past blight programs, NIP requires land banks to assume ownership of the property which imparts responsibility for continued site maintenance. To ensure a blighted house does not revert to a blighted lot after the demolition is complete, NIP provides \$1,200 in maintenance funds for each unit. Although site ownership is necessary to ensure responsible land stewardship, NIP is also conscious of the need to return this land to productive, private use. To support this mission, land banks are offered a wide variety of early disposition options that allow the property to be conveyed to a new owner with little or no repayment of the demolition assistance.

Attachments: Before and After Photos
Approved NIP Demolition Areas
NIP Fact Sheets
NIP Update: Successes Start Early (Spring 2015 Newsletter)
News Releases: February 28, 2014, August 21, 2014 and May 5, 2015



NEIGHBORHOOD
INITIATIVE
PROGRAM
AN OHIO HARDEST HIT FUND PROJECT

Before and After Demolitions

Before

After



14225 Ardenall Ave., East Cleveland



906 Stiles St., Northwest, Warren



1329 E. 141st St., East Cleveland



2952 E. 123rd St., Cleveland



Before



333 W. Delaware Ave., Toledo

After



356 E. Pearl St., Toledo



3813 Hazelhurst Ave., Toledo



943 Post St., Toledo



3052 E. 125th St., Cleveland



Before



5413 Magnet Ave., Cleveland

After



1725 Northfield Ave., East Cleveland

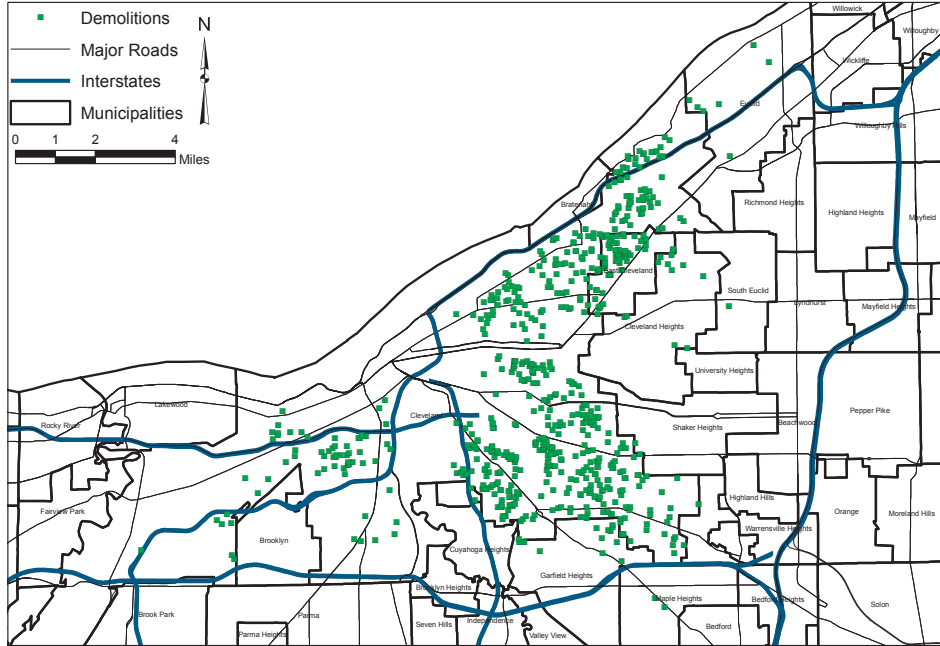




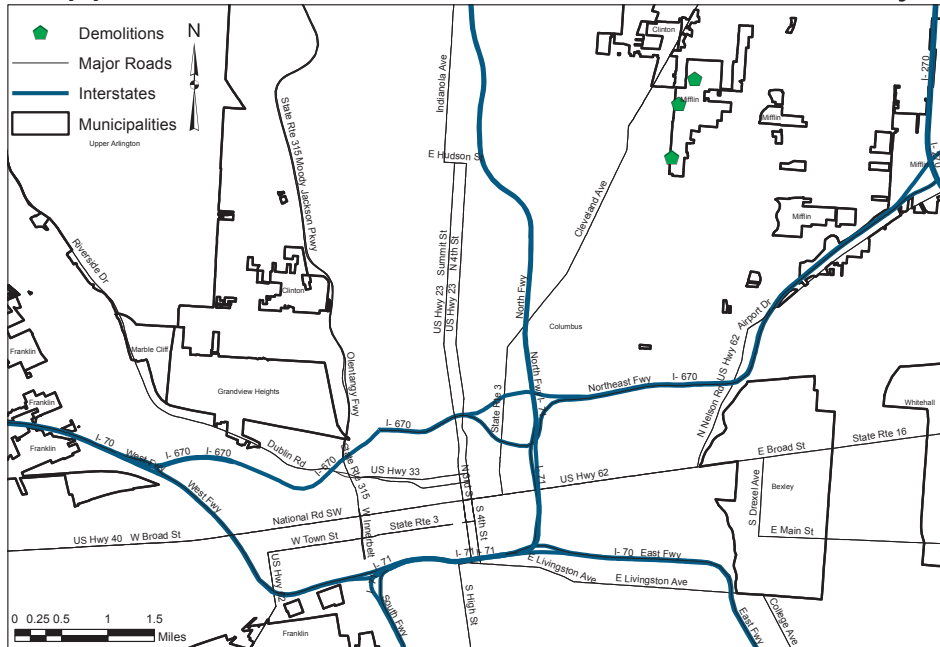
NEIGHBORHOOD
INITIATIVE
PROGRAM
AN OHIO HARDEST HIT FUND PROJECT

Approved NIP Demolition Areas

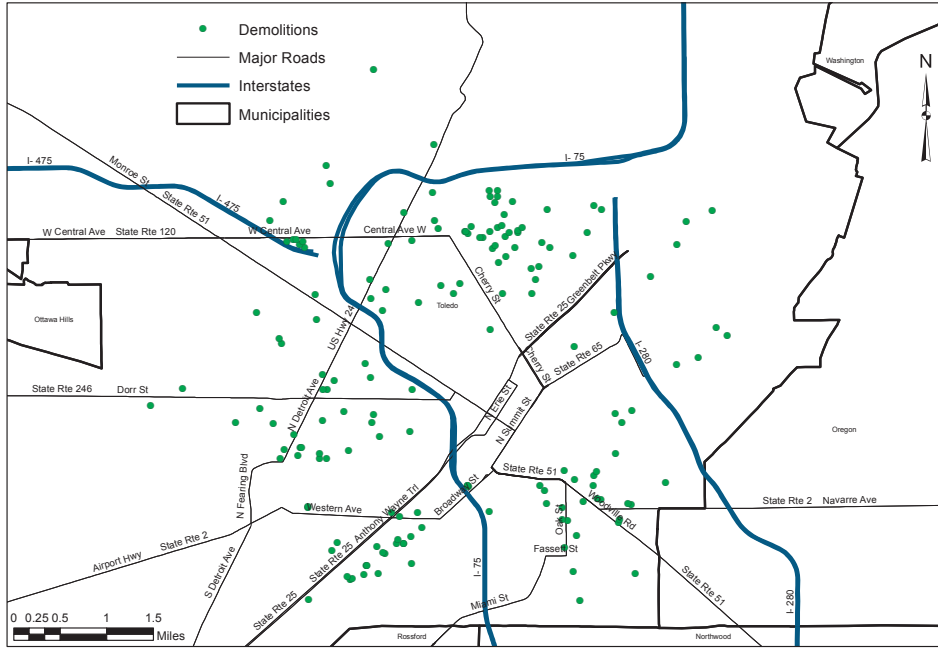
Approved NIP Demolitions in Cuyahoga County



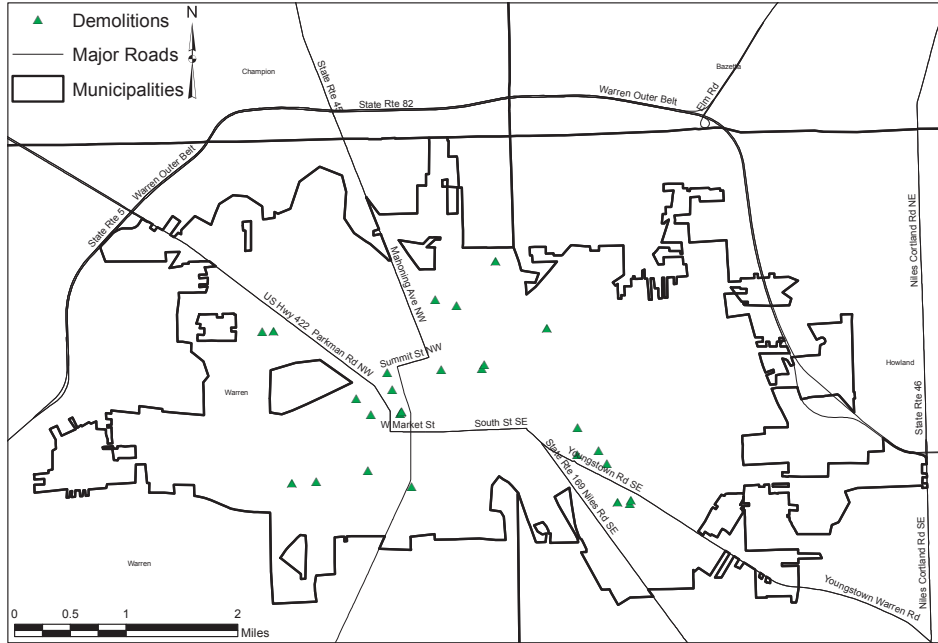
Approved NIP Demolitions in Franklin County



Approved NIP Demolitions in Lucas County



Approved NIP Demolitions in Trumbull County





SIDE LOT PROGRAM FOR HOMEOWNERS



GROW YOUR LAND AND PROPERTY VALUE

THE PROCESS

STEP ONE

Local land bank acquires a vacant property, demolishes the blighted structure and obtains reimbursement from the Neighborhood Initiative Program (NIP)

STEP TWO

NIP reimburses the land bank for its demolition costs in exchange for a three-year mortgage on the green lot

STEP THREE

The land bank identifies a new owner and requests an early mortgage release from NIP

STEP FOUR

NIP assures that the new owner is eligible and releases the mortgage
The land bank is now able to transfer the land to a new owner

GENERAL INFO

Homeowners across Ohio are using new green spaces to plant gardens, expand children's play areas and create beautiful areas that improve the community and increase property values. Lots may take 90 days or more to transfer. Visit ohiohome.org or contact your local land bank to learn more about the NIP.

- Must be an owner-occupant of the neighboring property
- Must be in compliance with local building and zoning regulations
- Must be current on all real estate taxes and assessments for all properties in the county
- Cannot have had a tax foreclosure after January 1, 2010
- Additional local eligibility requirements may be set by your land bank





COORDINATED RECOVERY AND INVESTMENT

THE PROCESS

STEP ONE

County land bank acquires a vacant property, demolishes the blighted structure, and obtains reimbursement from the Neighborhood Initiative Program (NIP)

STEP TWO

NIP reimburses the land bank for its demolition costs in exchange for a three-year mortgage on the green lot

STEP THREE

The land bank identifies a political subdivision who will use the land for a public purpose and can begin construction or operations within one year

STEP FOUR

NIP assures that the public entity and purpose are eligible and releases the mortgage
The land bank is now able to transfer the land to the new owner

GENERAL INFO

The NIP coordinates with county land banks to remove vacant and blighted properties. After demolition, land banks may transfer properties to political subdivisions to create public facilities such as parks, recreation areas, infrastructure projects and community gardens. Visit ohiohome.org or contact your local land bank for more information.

- Must provide documentation that the project will be a public facility
- Must be able to begin operations or construction of the project within one year of the property's transfer
- No repayment of demolition funds is required for a public-use transfer





REBUILDING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

THE PROCESS

STEP ONE

County land bank acquires a vacant property, demolishes the blighted structure, and obtains reimbursement from the Neighborhood Initiative Program (NIP)

STEP TWO

NIP reimburses the land bank for its demolition costs in exchange for a three-year mortgage on the green lot

STEP THREE

The land bank identifies a nonprofit organization who will use the land for a community- oriented purpose

STEP FOUR

NIP makes sure the nonprofit organization and project purpose are eligible and releases the mortgage
The land bank may now transfer the land to the new owner

GENERAL INFO

The NIP coordinates with county land banks to remove vacant and blighted properties. After demolition, land banks may transfer properties to 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organizations to create or expand a community use. Visit ohiohome.org or contact your local land bank to learn more.

- Must provide documentation of tax-exempt status, a description of the nonprofit organization and proposed use of land
- No repayment of demolition funds is required for a public-use transfer
- Local building and zoning requirements must be satisfied
- Eligible entities include churches, CDCs and Habitat for Humanity





BUILDING THE FOUNDATION OF RECOVERY

THE PROCESS

STEP ONE

County land bank acquires a vacant property, demolishes the blighted structure, and obtains reimbursement from the Neighborhood Initiative Program (NIP)

STEP TWO

NIP reimburses the land bank for its demolition costs in exchange for a three-year mortgage on the green lot

STEP THREE

The land bank identifies an eligible residential or business developer who can begin construction or operations within one year

STEP FOUR

NIP assures that the owner/project are eligible and releases the mortgage, which then allows the land bank to transfer the land to the new owner

GENERAL INFO

The NIP coordinates with county land banks to eradicate vacant and blighted properties. After demolition, land banks may transfer properties to residential and business developers to stimulate growth. Visit ohiohome.org or contact your local land bank to learn more.

- Property must be transferred for the fair market value of the post-demolition lot
- Development must follow local zoning and building regulations
- Construction or operations must begin within one year of property transfer
- Must be current on real estate taxes without a tax foreclosure after January 1, 2010



NIP UPDATE: SUCSESSES START EARLY

CARLIE BOOS — NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE PROGRAM
COMPLIANCE MANAGER

The Neighborhood Initiative Program (NIP), which launched just one year ago, is OHFA's latest venture in foreclosure prevention and community development. This \$60 million investment in Ohio neighborhoods stabilizes home prices and improves local landscapes by demolishing and greening vacant and blighted structures. In coordination with 21 county land banks, and with support of the Greater Ohio Policy Center and Thriving Communities Institute, OHFA anticipates eliminating 5,000 dilapidated structures in just three years. Land banks may receive up to \$25,000 per unit in exchange for a three-year, forgivable mortgage.

NIP goes far beyond previous demolition programs by fostering a strong foundation for reinvestment and recovery. After teardown, land banks must green the site. To support greening efforts, OHFA provides up to \$6,000 for innovative projects that range from community gardens and parks to renewable energy projects and public art installations. OHFA ensures that these projects do not fall into disrepair by providing maintenance funds and sound oversight. The Agency further incentivizes productive land reuse by releasing liens with little or no repayment as long as land is transferred to a neighbor to expand their yard, to a nonprofit, to a developer or to a municipal entity.

Because land banks must acquire ownership of these properties, and because the average acquisition process takes 12 months, few outcomes could be projected at this early stage. Underscoring the intense need for this program, however, our partners truly excelled and have already posted remarkable achievements:

- Acquiring 2,705 units for demolition, which is 223 percent higher than the required minimum of 1,208 at this period
- Removing and greening 805 vacant and abandoned houses
- Drawing down over \$9 million in funding (approximately 15 percent of our total award)
- Processing over 40 side lot transfers to neighboring owner occupants

While the numbers show success, local stories reveal the true value of NIP:

- Carol McFarland, the owner of a small landscaping company, was forced to watch the neighboring house decay for years, jeopardizing her own property value. With funding from NIP, the Cuyahoga County Land Bank took control of the vacant property, eliminated the eyesore and ultimately transferred the newly seeded and fenced land to Ms. McFarland. Carol said, "it was the "best Christmas present I've ever received."
- In Warren, the land bank removed 169 Washington Street, a property in such disrepair that it became a deterrent for local customers of nearby businesses.
- In Euclid, the city expanded a public golf course after demolishing the abandoned home that abutted it.
- In Columbiana County, residents are making long-delayed improvements to their own properties knowing that NIP will add security and cohesiveness to their neighborhood.

OHFA is proud to work with an excellent group of land banks who are leading the recovery effort in their communities. We eagerly welcome spring and all the new opportunities it will bring. For more information on the Neighborhood Initiative Program, visit us [online](#).



Above are two examples of homes in Cleveland that have been demolished and turned into green spaces with help from NIP.



Media Contact: Arlyne Alston
Email: aalston@ohiohome.org
Phone: 614.387.2863
Mobile: 614.557.3924

John R. Kasich Governor of Ohio | Douglas A. Garver Executive Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 28, 2014

OHFA Awards 11 Counties a Portion of \$49.5 Million to Tackle Blighted Communities

The Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) today announced the recipients of a program designed to help prevent foreclosures and stabilize local property values through the demolition of vacant and blighted homes across the state. Eleven counties with established land banks were awarded a portion of more than \$49.5 million available through the first funding round of the Neighborhood Initiative Program (NIP).

The 11 land banks, or entities acting on behalf of land banks, receiving funding through NIP include:

- Cuyahoga County Land Reutilization Corporation – \$10,118,750
- Lucas County Land Reutilization Corporation – \$6,000,000
- Central Ohio Community Improvement Corporation – \$5,825,000
- The Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority – \$5,065,000
- Montgomery County Land Reutilization Corporation – \$5,055,000
- Mahoning County Land Reutilization Corporation – \$4,266,250
- City of Canton – \$4,235,000
- Trumbull County Land Reutilization Corporation – \$3,221,250
- Lorain County Port Authority – \$3,005,000
- Summit County Land Reutilization Corporation – \$2,000,000
- Richland County Land Reutilization Corporation – \$773,750

OHFA received approval in August from the U.S. Department of the Treasury to utilize up to \$60 million of the state's remaining Hardest Hit Funds to prevent future foreclosures by stemming the decline in home values in communities affected negatively by vacant and blighted properties. Treasury allocated \$570.4 million of Hardest Hit Funds to OHFA in 2010 to administer the state's foreclosure prevention program, Save the Dream Ohio.

Available to the 17 Ohio counties that have an established land bank, applicants were required to focus efforts on target areas in which the demolition and greening of abandoned homes will assist in preventing a further reduction in property values

and possible foreclosure of neighboring occupied residential homes. Awardees are responsible for all aspects of the property acquisition and removal as well as plans for greening and ongoing maintenance of the property.

Funding amounts were awarded based on a number of factors including county population and the magnitude of vacant and blighted properties owned or identified for acquisition within the area. The maximum amount of assistance per property is \$25,000 with an estimated average amount of assistance of \$12,000.

“The Neighborhood Initiative Program will provide much-needed relief to Ohio counties with a large number of vacant and dilapidated homes,” said OHFA Executive Director Doug Garver. “This program will not only alleviate the burden of blighted neighborhoods on families, communities and Ohio’s economy, it will also help to keep individuals in their homes.”

OHFA will award the remaining NIP funds during a second funding round later this year. For additional information regarding NIP, please contact OHFA at 888-362-6432.

Save the Dream Ohio offers programs for homeowners struggling to pay their mortgages. Homeowners may apply for assistance online at www.savethedream.ohio.gov or by calling 888-404-4674.

###

About the Ohio Housing Finance Agency

OHFA is a self-supporting quasi-public agency governed by an 11 member board. The Agency uses federal and state resources to provide housing opportunities for families and individuals through programs designed to develop, preserve and sustain affordable housing throughout the state of Ohio. OHFA is also the administrator of the state's foreclosure prevention program, Save the Dream Ohio.



Media Contact: Arlyne Alston
Email: aalston@ohiohome.org
Phone: 614.387.2863
Mobile: 614.557.3924

John R. Kasich Governor of Ohio | Douglas A. Garver Executive Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 21, 2014

OHFA Continues Efforts to Tackle Blighted Communities, Awards \$10.4 Million to 15 Counties

COLUMBUS - The Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) today announced the recipients of a program designed to help prevent foreclosures and stabilize local property values through the demolition of vacant and blighted homes across the state. Fifteen counties with established land banks were awarded a portion of more than \$10 million available through the second funding round of the Neighborhood Initiative Program (NIP).

The 15 land banks, or entities acting on behalf of land banks, receiving funding through NIP include:

- Ashtabula County Land Reutilization Corporation, Ashtabula County, \$500,000
- Belmont County Land Reutilization Corporation, Belmont County, \$500,000
- Butler County Land Reutilization Corporation, Butler County, \$2,000,000
- Clark County Land Reutilization Corporation, Clark County, \$680,000
- Columbiana County Land Reutilization Corporation, Columbiana County, \$1,118,750
- Erie County Land Reutilization Corporation, Erie County, \$500,000
- Fairfield County Land Reutilization Corporation Land Bank, Fairfield County, \$642,500
- Jefferson County Regional Planning Commission, Jefferson County, \$715,000
- Lake County Land Reutilization Corporation, Lake County, \$500,000
- Portage County Land Reutilization Corporation, Portage County, \$533,750
- Cuyahoga County Land Reutilization Corporation, Cuyahoga County, \$1,221,525
- Central Ohio Community Improvement Corporation, Franklin County, \$54,900
- Lucas County Land Reutilization Corporation, Lucas County, \$1,221,525
- Montgomery County Land Reutilization Corporation, Montgomery County, \$54,900
- Trumbull County Land Reutilization Corporation, Trumbull County, \$192,150

Available to the 22 Ohio counties that have an established land bank, applicants were required to focus efforts on target areas in which the demolition and greening of abandoned homes will assist in preventing a further reduction in property values and possible foreclosure of neighboring occupied residential homes. Awardees are responsible for all aspects of the property acquisition and removal as well as plans for greening and ongoing maintenance of the property.

Five recipients were also awarded a portion of \$49.5 million in the first funding round announced earlier this year including: Cuyahoga County Land Reutilization Corporation, Central Ohio Community Improvement Corporation, Lucas County Land Reutilization Corporation, Montgomery County Land Reutilization Corporation and Trumbull County Land Reutilization Corporation. By the end of June, NIP enabled the demolition of 14 vacant and blighted homes.

“When negative equity combines with other factors such as loss of income, the risk of foreclosure is high because homeowners do not have the option to sell a home they can no longer afford,” said OHFA Executive Director Doug Garver. “Foreclosures result in distressed sales that further depress property values and continue the downward spiral, too often resulting in vacant and blighted homes. The Neighborhood Initiative Program is a critical component to stabilizing home values and preventing foreclosure.”

Funding amounts were awarded based on a number of factors including county population and the magnitude of vacant and blighted properties owned or identified for acquisition within the area. The maximum amount of assistance per property is \$25,000 with an estimated average amount of assistance of \$12,000.

In 2013, OHFA received approval from the U.S. Department of the Treasury to utilize up to \$60 million of the state’s remaining Hardest Hit Funds to prevent future foreclosures by stemming the decline in home values in communities affected negatively by vacant and blighted properties. Treasury allocated \$570.4 million of Hardest Hit Funds to OHFA in 2010 to administer the state’s foreclosure prevention program, Save the Dream Ohio.

#

About the Ohio Housing Finance Agency

OHFA is a self-supporting quasi-public agency governed by an 11 member board. The Agency uses federal and state resources to provide housing opportunities for families and individuals through programs designed to develop, preserve and sustain affordable housing throughout the state of Ohio. OHFA is also the administrator of the state's foreclosure prevention program, Save the Dream Ohio.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 5, 2015

**OHFA Expands Efforts to Tackle Blight and Fight Foreclosure,
Awards \$6.8 Million to 7 Counties**
Neighborhood Initiative Program to Eliminate 5,500 Units by October 2016

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) today announced the recipients of additional funding under a program designed to help prevent foreclosures and stabilize local property values through the demolition of vacant and blighted homes across the state. Seven participating counties with established land banks, or entities acting on behalf of land banks, were awarded a portion of more than \$6.8 million available through the third funding round of the Neighborhood Initiative Program (NIP).

The seven land banks to receive an increase in funding through NIP include:

• Ashtabula County Land Reutilization Corporation	\$ 296,033.78
• Cuyahoga County Land Reutilization Corporation	\$ 2,699,071.83
• Lorain County Land Reutilization Corporation	\$ 296,033.78
• Lucas County Land Reutilization Corporation	\$ 2,000,000.00
• Montgomery County Land Reutilization Corporation	\$ 296,033.78
• Richland County Land Reutilization Corporation	\$ 296,033.78
• Trumbull County Land Reutilization Corporation	\$ 982,616.08

The U.S. Department of the Treasury allocated \$570.4 million of Hardest Hit Funds to OHFA in 2010 to administer the state's foreclosure prevention program, Save the Dream Ohio, and has since approved the use of \$66.5 million for NIP. Last year, five land banks were allocated \$49.5 million in the first round and 15 land banks were allocated \$10 million in the second round. Funding for this round of NIP will utilize recycled Hardest Hit Funds and awards from land banks that have not met minimum property acquisition requirements.

“Through blight elimination we have increased our impact to not only stem the tide of foreclosures in critical neighborhoods, but to proactively preserve homeowner equity and enable our communities to wholly recover from the effects of the foreclosure crisis,” said Doug Garver, executive director of OHFA. “NIP is not a deviation from, but rather an expansion of, our foreclosure prevention investment.”

- Continued -



Media Contact: Arlyne Alston
Email: aalston@ohiohome.org
Phone: 614.387.2863
Mobile: 614.557.3924

John R. Kasich Governor of Ohio | Douglas A. Garver Executive Director

Recipients of the third round of funding qualified for additional awards after demonstrating exceptional progress toward acquiring vacant and blighted properties to be eliminated under the program. The amount of funding each county received was calculated based on the amount of assistance spent of the initial award.

The maximum amount of assistance per property is \$25,000 with an estimated average amount of assistance of \$12,000. Nearly 800 blighted structures have been removed with more than 100 units pending approval as a result of the first and second rounds of funding; and more than 60 lots have been transferred and greened. Thus far, NIP has disbursed and reserved \$10 million. At the current funding levels, OHFA expects to eliminate 5,500 vacant and blighted units by October 2016.

OHFA is partnering with 21 land banks across the state to focus blight elimination efforts in targeted areas where the demolition and greening of vacant homes will assist in preventing a further reduction in property values and the foreclosure of neighboring, occupied residential homes. Awardees are responsible for all aspects of the property acquisition and removal as well as plans for greening and ongoing maintenance of the property.

###

About the Ohio Housing Finance Agency

OHFA is a self-supporting quasi-public agency governed by an 11 member board. The Agency uses federal and state resources to provide housing opportunities for families and individuals through programs designed to develop, preserve and sustain affordable housing throughout the state of Ohio. OHFA is also the administrator of the state's foreclosure prevention program, Save the Dream Ohio.