


OAKLAND COUNTY TREASURER'S OFFICE
ROBERT WITTENBERG

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



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Greetings,

As July 1, 2022 marked my first year as Oakland County Treasurer, I wanted to highlight several of our initiatives, projects and activities to help our residents, business owners, communities and neighborhoods continue to thrive.

Although we have faced unprecedented challenges in the last few years, Oakland County remains a great community to live, learn, work and socialize because of our residents and business owners.

During the year, our team has diligently worked to improve transparency and operational efficiencies, update our investment policy, prevent property tax foreclosures, launch the county's first virtual land sale auction and much more to enhance our service delivery and support our communities. Please read on to learn about our efforts this year.

See you around the County,

Robert Wittenberg
Oakland County Treasurer

IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY AND EFFICIENCY

On April 4, 2022, the Oakland County Treasurer's Office—in collaboration with the county's IT department and external vendors—launched DevNet, an advanced delinquent tax collections and processing software to replace the previous 25-year old system.

DevNet integrates numerous separate systems into a single platform and provides essential information to help taxpayers when calling or visiting the Oakland County Treasurer's Office. Additionally, the combined data enables taxpayers to receive refunds faster and provides more information to local government units to help them balance and allocate funds.





INVESTMENT POLICY

Investment Policy Receives First Update in 20 Years

Following more than 20 years, Oakland County Treasurer Robert Wittenberg—in collaboration with the Oakland County Board of Commissioners, Oakland County Management and Budget, Oakland County's municipal advisor and professional associations—updated the county's investment policy.

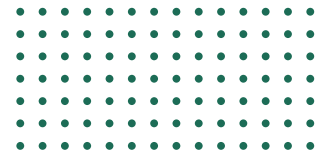
"Since beginning my tenure on July 1, 2021, we have been collaboratively working with our stakeholders, external advisors and professional associations to better respond and capitalize on changing investment market conditions. Our new investment policy is fiscally responsible, socially conscious and also enables us to diversify our investing strategy while protecting taxpayer dollars." - Robert Wittenberg, Oakland County Treasurer

The new investment policy safeguards the county's financial assets and liquidity, and enables greater flexibility, diversification and the opportunity for a higher return on investment, creates additional considerations for local lending and environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles, and implements a five-year policy review.

Investment Policy Receives Recognition

The Association of Public Treasurers of the United States and Canada awarded Oakland County's new investment policy with a Certificate of Excellence in recognition of conformance to the specified standards of investment policy.





Strengthening Our Neighborhoods and Revitalizing Our Communities

When foreclosed properties are reimagined and new developments are built for housing, public spaces, community gardens and other creative uses, our neighborhoods and communities thrive. That's why we are working to prevent property tax foreclosures, to find responsible property buyers, and created a land bank.



PROPERTY TAX FORECLOSURE PREVENTION

Knowing the devastating impact property tax foreclosure has on our families, employees, neighborhoods, communities and our local economy, the Oakland County Treasurer's Office works throughout the year to help our residents and business owners retain their property.

On March 1, 2021, there were 8,887 properties forfeited—a legal procedure to place a lien on the properties—in the tax foreclosure process. With the continued efforts of the Oakland County Treasurer's Office to prevent property tax foreclosures, there are now 374 properties going to sale.

Our foreclosure prevention efforts are highlighted below.

8,000	In-person personal service visits were conducted to provide notification for the pending foreclosures of 5,988 properties.
1,682	Taxpayer Assistance Meetings—one-on-one confidential calls to help taxpayers with unpaid 2019 or prior year taxes—were held between December 2021 and March 2022.
1,390	Delinquent Tax Repayment Plans were created that enabled residential and commercial property owners to retain their property rights and prevent tax foreclosure



The Oakland County Treasurer's Office partnered with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority's Michigan Homeowners Assistance Fund (MIHAF) program to help Oakland County residents prevent tax foreclosure. As of June 2022, the MIHAF program approved 33 applications and provided \$344,997 in financial assistance to Oakland County residents.

In March 2022, the Oakland County Treasurer's Office launched a multimedia campaign including broadcast, print, digital and social media channels to encourage these property owners to pay in full or contact the Treasurer's office by the Mar. 31, 2022 deadline. Additionally, numerous community presentations were conducted, and promotional materials were shared with community leaders and elected officials.



Oakland County Hosts First Virtual Land Sale

Oakland County Treasurer Robert Wittenberg hosted the first virtual tax foreclosure property auction through Title Check with approximately 375 properties that were available until Aug. 12, 2022 for bid. The virtual sales auction provided greater public access, increased transparency and operational efficiencies.

The Oakland County Treasurer's Office engaged Title Check—at no cost to taxpayers as bidders pay a buyer's premium on their purchase—to manage the virtual tax foreclosure auction. Properties were available on the Title Check website at tax-sale.info. Interested bidders were able to view the properties, register an account and set their preferred bid amounts before the auction closed on Aug. 12, 2022.

For bidders without internet access, the Oakland County Treasurer's Office provided in-person public access to computers during business hours Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. No appointment or proof of residency were required. Title Check also offers a phone bidding system by calling (800) 259-7470.



Oakland County Land Bank Authority: Newest Economic Development Tool

Oakland County Treasurer Robert Wittenberg—in partnership with the State Land Bank Authority (SLBA), the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and the Oakland County Executive Office—announced the creation of the Oakland County Land Bank Authority.

As Oakland County's newest economic development tool, the land bank authority will support economic growth and community revitalization through the strategic acquisition of properties.

"The Oakland County Land Bank Authority enables us to expand our economic development toolkit so that we can directly address property vacancies, support new developments and return foreclosed properties to productive use. It gives us the ability to strengthen our communities and neighborhoods by creating housing, public spaces or other creative community uses." – Robert Wittenberg, Oakland County Treasurer

Land banks acquire title to properties—most commonly through the tax foreclosure process—and eliminate the legal and financial barriers through expedited quiet title, and transfer the properties to new, responsible owners in a manner consistent with community-based plans that also return the properties to productive use. For land bank properties, additional resources and funds may be available to help with infrastructure, roads and utility costs.

"The State Land Bank Authority has been supporting the creation of county land banks since 2004 and we see the application of land bank tools in Michigan communities in 2022 as important as ever," said SLBA Executive Director Emily Doerr. "The creation of the Oakland County Land Bank by Treasurer Wittenberg's office shows an ongoing commitment to utilizing public assets to maximize development / redevelopment opportunities with community benefit."

"This is a big deal - the new Oakland County Land Bank will improve housing, increase home values, and help build an economy that works for everyone," said Oakland County Board of Commissioners Chairman David T. Woodward. "This has long been a priority, and we got it done!"

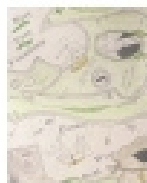
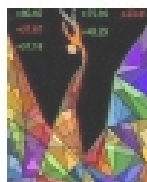
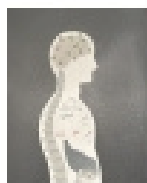
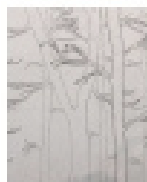
"A land bank is such a useful tool to help strengthen our neighborhoods and communities," said Oakland County Executive David Coulter. "In these times of soaring housing prices, efforts to put property back into productive use will also help build the inventory of affordable housing in Oakland County, which is a key priority for our communities and our residents."

FORECLOSURE SALES PROCEEDS CLAIMS



Beginning with the 2022 tax foreclosure sale, Oakland County residential or commercial property owners who held a title or equity interest at the time of foreclosure were given the opportunity to receive excess sales proceeds associated with the property.

A person that intended to make a claim for excess sale proceeds was required to complete and return a notarized Form 5743 Notice of Intention to Claim Interest in Foreclosure Sales Proceeds to the Oakland County Treasurer's Office by July 1. On June 1, 2022, the Oakland County Treasurer's Office proactively mailed notices to the 2022 foreclosed property owners with the required form and submission instructions.



ART CONTEST

Oakland County Treasurer Robert Wittenberg—in partnership with Oakland Schools, Flagstar Bank and the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency—announced the 22 winners and honorable mentions for the 2022 Financial Literacy Arts Contest during a private virtual reception attended by students, family members, teachers and friends.

"This year's art submissions were extremely creative and underscored the importance of financial education and empowerment. Congratulations to the students for their extraordinary talent and incredible art entries. We again thank Flagstar Bank, Oakland Schools and the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency (OLSHA) for their tremendous support and partnership." - Oakland County Treasurer Robert Wittenberg

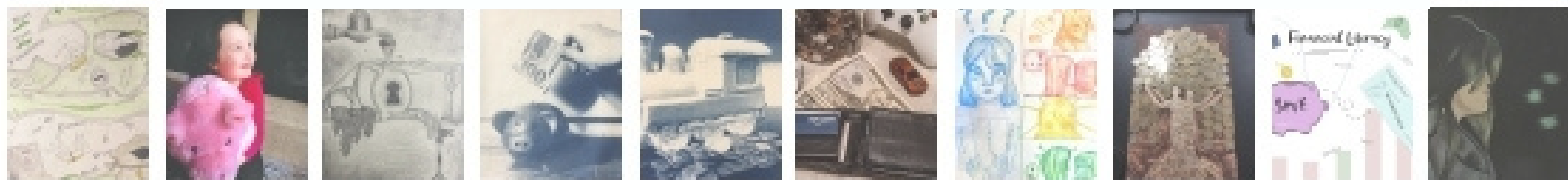
This year, 91 art entries—including drawing, painting, photography, mixed media and illustration—were received and judged on creativity, artistic execution and the incorporation of the financial literacy theme.

The winners and honorable mentions received cash prizes from a \$10,000 contest fund provided by Flagstar Bank. The cash prizes were \$1,000 (first place), \$750 (second place), \$500 (third place) and \$100 (honorable mention).

"For 11 years, Flagstar Bank has been proud to sponsor this contest. This investment in Oakland County students provides them an invaluable learning experience. Their impressive pieces of artwork prove how interesting, interactive and informative financial literacy can be." - Director of Government Banking Kim Goethe

For more information on the arts contest and to view the winners and submissions, visit the Oakland County Treasurer's Office website at oakgov.com/treasurer.

[View the Gallery Walk](#)





Treasurer Wittenberg Certified as a Public Funds Investment Manager

On January 10, 2022, the Association of Public Treasurers of the United States certified Oakland County Treasurer Robert Wittenberg as a Public Funds Investment Manager. The nationally recognized certification program requires completion of rigorous standards in investments, internal controls, portfolio risk mitigation and liquidity to protect public funds.





TIMELINE

