

**Robert Wittenberg**  
County Treasurer

# Annual Report

# 2023



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[www.oakgov.com/treasurer](http://www.oakgov.com/treasurer)



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# Message From The Treasurer



Dear Oakland County Residents and  
Business Owners,

As the second year of my term just concluded, I am pleased to share our annual report for July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023. It is my honor to serve as your County Treasurer and to highlight our ongoing efforts to improve transparency, efficiency, and customer service while safeguarding our financial resources and promoting financial empowerment.

We have also made significant strides in strengthening our neighborhoods and revitalizing our communities. Our team diligently works with our residents and business owners to help them retain their property rights while complying with Michigan law.

As we move forward, we remain committed to providing high-quality service and prioritizing responsible management of our financial resources while investing in the future of our county.

I encourage you to review this report and share your feedback with us. Thank you for your continued support and trust in our office.

See you around the county,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Wittenberg'.

Robert Wittenberg  
Oakland County Treasurer



# IMPROVING TRANSPARENCY, EFFICIENCY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

In our continuous commitment to improving our transparency, efficiency and customer service, the following initiatives were implemented in the last year.

## DevNet Efficiency Improvements



Our team launched DevNet, a software designed to facilitate delinquent tax collection and processing, in June 2022. This advanced software integrates multiple systems into one platform. Since its launch, we have been working hard to customize it further to accelerate taxpayer payments and provide more robust information to Oakland County property owners and local government units.

## Customer Service Training



At the Treasurer's Office, we are committed to providing exceptional customer service. Our team is dedicated to treating everyone with courtesy, dignity, and respect. To maintain our incredibly high standards, our cashiers and delinquent tax team members participated in customer service training as part of our ongoing efforts to enhance customer satisfaction, service delivery and productivity.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training



As part of our ongoing commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), our entire team participated in a comprehensive training led by Multi Learning Solutions. Our DEI training program was designed to promote a safe and welcoming environment for all, where diversity is celebrated and differences are respected.

# STRENGTHENING OUR NEIGHBORHOODS AND REVITALIZING OUR COMMUNITIES

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As a community, we have a shared responsibility to strengthen our neighborhoods. By uniting residents, business owners, and community leaders, we can work together to make strategic investments and collaborative efforts toward creating an environment that promotes growth and prosperity for everyone.

I am committed to minimizing property tax foreclosures, addressing blight, and redeveloping vacant buildings and land throughout the county. Several updates on our efforts this year are below.



# 2023 Property Tax Foreclosure Prevention



The Oakland County Treasurer's Office (OCTO) understands the heavy burden that property tax foreclosures can place on families, neighborhoods, and communities. That's why we work tirelessly throughout the year to assist property owners in retaining their property rights while complying with Michigan law. The OCTO team conducted nearly 2,000 Taxpayer Assistance Meetings with property owners to help prevent their properties from being foreclosed.

We are grateful to everyone who helped us spread the word and reached out to us for assistance. Thanks to our collective efforts, we significantly decreased the tax foreclosed properties this year to our lowest number ever.

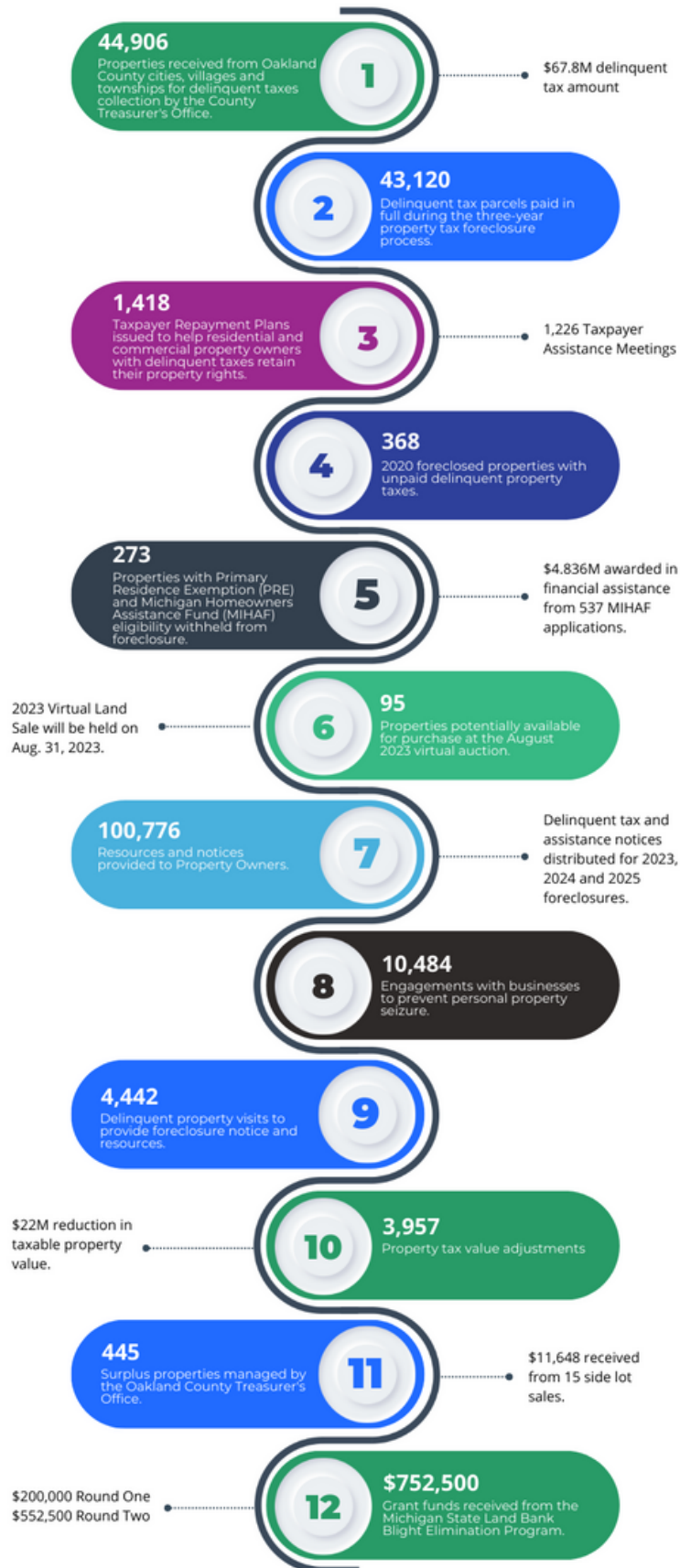
We engaged with cities, villages, and townships in Oakland County to discuss preventing property tax foreclosures at council and trustee meetings, with Treasurer Wittenberg attending meetings to share the information.

We also collaborated with Oakland County's Veterans Services and Department of Public Communications to distribute e-flyers and share information on a blog and social media. In March, we launched a robust multimedia advertising campaign encouraging property owners to pay their balances in full or contact us for assistance. The following graphic showcases our efforts for this year.



## Prevent Property Tax Foreclosure Recap

The following data summarizes the 2020 delinquent property tax cycle, our efforts to prevent property tax foreclosure, and the third and final year of the foreclosure process.





## Tax Foreclosed Property Surplus Sales Proceeds

On June 1, 2023, the Oakland County Treasurer's Office sent out notices to Oakland County residential or commercial property owners who had a title or equity interest at the time of foreclosure on April 1, 2023.

To be eligible to receive surplus claim proceeds, as required in MCL 211.78t, claimants had to follow the established process. They must have filed a notarized Form 5743 Notice of Intention to Claim Interest in Foreclosure Sales Proceeds with the Oakland County Treasurer's Office by July 1, 2023.

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**For more information on the claims process, visit [oakgov.com/treasurer](https://oakgov.com/treasurer) or email Deputy Treasurer Zinnia Kallabat at [kallabatz@oakgov.com](mailto:kallabatz@oakgov.com).**

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# 2023 Tax Foreclosed Property Auction

Mark your calendars for the 2023 Oakland County Virtual Foreclosed Tax Property Auction on **Thursday, August 31, 2023**. The auction will run from **10 a.m.** to **7 p.m.** on [tax-sale.info](https://tax-sale.info).

**Please visit the website to learn more about the auction process, view the available properties or register.**

**Thursday, August 31, 2023**

**10 a.m. - 7 p.m.**

[tax-sale.info](https://tax-sale.info)



# Oakland County Land Bank Authority

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—created the Oakland County Land Bank Authority (OCLBA) to support economic development and help revitalize communities and neighborhoods in 2022.

The board member selection process included a public application and required individuals to have economic development, housing, planning or real estate experience. The five board members are volunteers representing a county township, a city and a resident, and a designated Oakland County Executive Office representative.



Treasurer Robert Wittenberg with Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter signing the paperwork that formalizes the creation of the Oakland County Land Bank Authority

# Oakland County Land Bank Authority

## Our Board Members



**Robert Wittenberg**

Board Chair and  
Oakland County  
Treasurer



**Dannis Mitchell**

Board Secretary and  
Director of Community  
Engagement,  
Barton Malow Builders



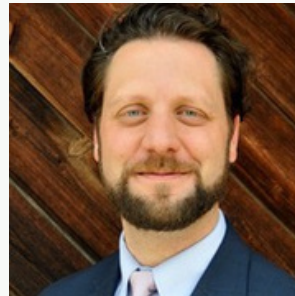
**Martin Manna**

Board Treasurer and  
President, Chaldean  
American Chamber of  
Commerce and  
Chaldean Community  
Foundation



**Khalfani Stephens**

Board Member and  
Deputy Mayor, City of  
Pontiac



**Jeffrey Campell**

Board Member and  
Village Manager,  
Beverly Hills

Beginning with its first board meeting on October 6, 2022, the OCLBA board members have diligently worked to establish board policies and create a strategic plan.

# OCLBA Tours Neighborhoods

The OCLBA went on a tour of several neighborhoods on March 9, 2023, to gain firsthand experience with various potential economic development projects in the GM Modern Historic District. They also visited 111 Oneida, a former apartment building and drove through other neighborhoods.



From left to right: Oakland County Treasurer's Office Financial Services Technician Robbie Billgren and Deputy Treasurer Zinnia Kallabat, OCLBA Executive Director Jill Robinson, OCLBA Board Members Martin Manna, Treasurer Robert Wittenberg, Dannis Mitchell, Khalfani Stephens and Jeffrey Campbell, and Deputy Chief Treasurer Jody DeFoe.

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OCLBA Executive Director Jill Robinson directing the tour of 111 Oneida.

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From left to right: Treasurer Robert Wittenberg, Board Member Khalfani, Executive Director Jill Robinson, Board Member Mann, Sara Toering and Janell O'Keefe are from the Center for Community Progress, and Board Members Campbell and Mitchell.

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## Grant ONE

### OCLBA RECEIVES \$752,500 IN BLIGHT ELIMINATION GRANTS

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On April 18, 2023, the Oakland County Land Bank Authority announced receiving a \$200,000 grant from the State of Michigan Land Bank Authority Blight Elimination Program in the first funding round. The grant will stabilize two single-family residential properties and demolish one single-family home beyond repair in the GM Modern Historic District in Pontiac, Mich.



The residential properties have been in the Oakland County Treasurer's Office Surplus Property inventory since 2015. The properties have been transferred to the Oakland County Land Bank Authority from the Oakland County Treasurer and require significant roofing and siding work, window and door replacements and other repairs to prepare them for future development.

## Grant TWO

### ROUND TWO GRANT FUNDING

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On June 30, 2023, OCLBA received a Blight Elimination Grant, up to \$552,500, from the State of Michigan Land Bank in the second funding round. This grant will support stabilizing the former WWJ Building in Oak Park, Michigan.

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**For more information, visit [oakgov.com/treasurer](https://oakgov.com/treasurer).**

**Residential and commercial developers with projects in Oakland County can contact Jill Robinson, the land bank's executive director, by email at [robinsonj@oakgov.com](mailto:robinsonj@oakgov.com) for assistance.**

# INVESTMENTS

## INTRODUCING PAUL ZELENAK, OAKLAND COUNTY'S INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATOR

Paul Zelenak joined the Oakland County Treasurer's Office in October 2022, bringing over 30 years of public finance experience in Treasury Operations Administration with Michigan's largest county and city, Wayne County, and the City of Detroit.

As the Investment Administrator for Oakland County, Zelenak primarily focuses on safeguarding taxpayer funds and minimizing investment risks by prioritizing safety, liquidity, and yield in investment decisions. He is also responsible for ensuring the continued growth and success of the Oakland County Local Government Investment Pool, where nearly 90 percent of the county's 63 cities, villages, and townships participate.

With his expertise and innovative approach, Zelenak recognizes the vital role of treasury operations in the organization's success, financial health, and decision-making. He is committed to building strong relationships and driving innovation in his position.



## INVESTMENT SERVICE PROVIDER REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

The Oakland County Treasurer's Office is creating a list of approved investment service providers, brokers, and dealers to ensure that qualified professionals manage all eligible investment securities per Oakland County's Investment Policy. Michigan-authorized investment service providers, brokers, and dealers who meet the requirements may submit a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for consideration.

## MMTA Achievement

Oakland County Treasurer Robert Wittenberg completed the cornerstone of the Michigan Municipal Treasurers Association's educational offering, the Basic Institute, a three-year program providing 100 hours of instruction designed and approved by the Association of Public Treasurers of the United States and Canada (APT US&C).



# FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT ARTS CONTEST



The winners and honorable mentions for the 2023 Financial Empowerment Arts Contest were announced on May 11, 2023, during a private reception at the Flagstar Bank Regional Headquarters in Troy, Mich. Hosted by Oakland County Treasurer Robert Wittenberg in partnership with Oakland Schools, Flagstar Bank, and the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency, the event was attended by students, family members, teachers, and friends.

Oakland County public high school students were invited to submit their artwork. A total of 160 entries were received, and the judges evaluated them based on creativity, artistic execution, and the incorporation of the financial empowerment theme.

The winners and honorable mentions were awarded cash prizes from a \$10,000 contest fund from Flagstar Bank. The cash prizes ranged from \$100 to \$1,000, depending on the placement.

The artworks are currently on display in the Oakland County Treasurer's Office and on our website, where all student entries can be viewed. To see the winners, honorable mentions, and submissions, visit [oakgov.com/treasurer](https://oakgov.com/treasurer).

# TREASURER'S OFFICE AT-A-GLANCE

Authorized by the Michigan Constitution, the County Treasurer serves as the banker and chief investment officer for Oakland County and is responsible for the security of public funds, investment management and delinquent property tax collection.

Below is a brief summary of the Treasurer's Office's activities between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023.

Collaboration	36 City, Village and Township Meetings	51 County Department Leader Meetings	147 Community Events Attended	236 Business, Civic, Community, Education and Faith-Based Leader Meetings
	445 Surplus Properties	15 Side Lots Sold	\$11,648 Side Lot Sales	

## Public Funds Security, Investments and Management

\$1.3B County Funds Invested	\$20M Interest Earned	\$582M Funds Deposited	\$506M Debt Managed for Capital Projects	\$1.56B Funds Disbursed
948 Home Repair Mortgage Payments Received	\$185K Mortgage Payment Received	47,290 Vendor Payments	172K Employee and Retiree Payments	56 Government Units in the Local Government Investment Pool (LGIP)

# AROUND THE COUNTY

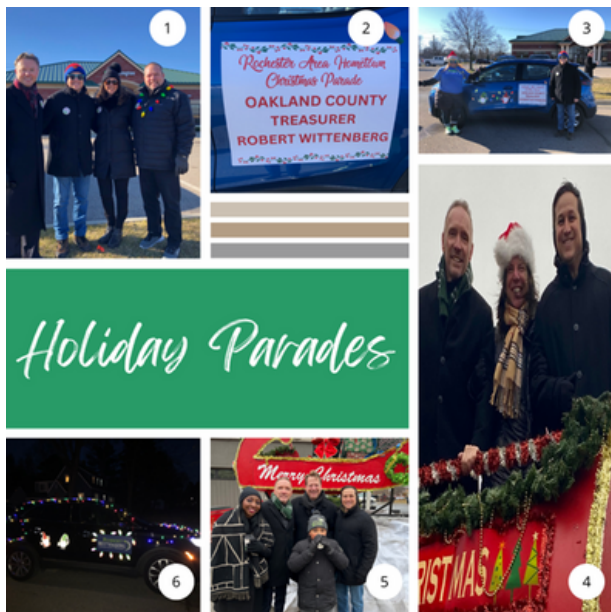


It is an honor, as Oakland County's Treasurer, to attend and participate in community, business, and outreach events. Through engaging with residents and organizations who share a commitment to enhancing our county's quality of life, valuable insights and ideas that can guide financial policies and initiatives in the future are gained.

It also presents opportunities to raise awareness about the available services and resources and to receive feedback from the community for a more transparent and collaborative approach to local governance. Here are a few highlights from the last year.



At the Milford Fourth of July Parade, Treasurer Wittenberg was accompanied by Chief Deputy Jody Weissler DeFoe, her family and team members Zinnia Kallabat and Ashley Golden.



Rochester Parade: 1) Commissioner Adam Kochenderfer, Treasurer Robert Wittenberg, Judge Julie Nicholson and Rochester Hills Mayor Bryan Barnett · 2) Car Signage · 3) Treasurer Robert Wittenberg and Chief Deputy Treasurer Jody Weissler DeFoe · Holiday Extravaganza 4) County Executive Dave Coulter, Assistant to the County Exec Carolynn Krause, Treasurer Wittenberg · 5) Imani Kimball and her son, County Exec Coulter, Pontiac Mayor Tim Greimel and Treasurer Wittenberg · Holly Dickens 6) Car Signage.



Photo Caption: Top left: Oakland County Treasurer Robert Wittenberg with his children, team and community members at the Novi Memorial Day Parade · Top right: Treasurer Wittenberg with his children, Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter, team and community members at the Madison Heights Memorial Day Parade · Lower left: Treasurer Wittenberg with team members, Zinnia Kallabat, Paul Zelenak and Nga Huynh at Oakland County's Juneteenth Celebration · Lower right: Treasurer Wittenberg presenting to the North Oakland County Board of Realtors General Membership Meeting

# SUPPORTING COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Each year, the Oakland County Treasurer's office team members give personal donations to support nonprofit organizations making a difference in our community. In January, Treasurer Wittenberg presented the 2022 donations to the following seven incredible organizations.



From top left to right, 1) Michigan Animal Rescue League, 2) Oakland County Animal Control & Pet Adoption Center, 3) Lighthouse, 4) Grace Centers of Hope, 5) Oakland County Sheriff PAL, 6) Wounded Warrior Project and 7) debra of America

I just want to take a moment to say THANK YOU to you and your staff for the very generous donation to the shelter. We help over 4,000 animals per calendar year and every penny ... is spent to help the animals.

Bob Gatt, Manager



*thank you*

*Oakland County Treasury Team,  
Thank you so much for your generous donation to the Sheriff PAL program. Every dollar goes into ensuring all children have access to high quality sports & enrichment & all of the intangible benefits it brings → relationships, character building, healthy habits & connection! We are so grateful to have wonderful partners like you to join in on achieving our mission;*

*it truly speaks volumes of your team!  
Kindly,  
Lauren*

*thank you*

January 24, 2023

Dear Mr. Wittenberg:

Your contribution of \$250 to debra of America will make a difference in the lives of those who suffer from, or care for those who have, Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB). Thank you for your thoughtful generosity.

Through your support of debra of America, we will be able to continue to develop and manage the programs and services necessary to ease the burden of living with EB.

Sincerely,

Brett Kopelan  
Executive Director





## MEDIA COVERAGE

### Spotlight on the News

Inside Oakland County's 1st land bank



### DBusiness

Oakland County Land Bank Launches to Support Economic Development

OAKLAND COUNTY LAND BANK LAUNCHES TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

"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 the tax rolls," says Robert Wittenberg, treasurer of Oakland County. "It gives us the ability to strengthen our communities and neighborhoods by creating housing, public spaces, or other creative community uses."

July 8, 2022

[Read More in DBusiness >](#)

### Royal Oak Tribune

Gov. Whitmer signs red flag gun law in Royal Oak

GOV. WHITMER SIGNS RED FLAG GUN LAW IN ROYAL OAK

"State Sen. Mallory McMorrow, a Royal Oak Democrat, thanked Oakland County Treasurer Robert Wittenberg for initiating red flag laws a decade ago when he was a state representative, and Republicans controlled both legislative houses in Lansing. Democrats are now in control in Lansing for the first time in four decades."

May 22, 2023

[Read More in the Royal Oak Tribune >](#)



# MEDIA COVERAGE

## Oakland Press

[Oakland County's online property tax-foreclosed auction underway](#)

### OAKLAND COUNTY'S ONLINE PROPERTY TAX-FORECLOSED AUCTION UNDERWAY

"We are trying to ensure bad actors aren't there," Wittenberg said. "We prohibit anyone with delinquent taxes from bidding on a property. The whole point is to get these parcels back on the tax roll. In the past we've had people buy properties in the land sale but they never pay taxes and it gets foreclosed again."

July 30, 2022

[Read More in The Oakland Press >](#)

[Oakland County's online land sales a success](#)

### OAKLAND COUNTY'S ONLINE LAND SALE A SUCCESS

"We don't want to foreclose on a property," he said. "It has an impact on the business or family, and also a devastating impact on neighbors and the community."

While the March 31 deadline seems a long way off, Wittenberg said distressed property owners can find relief by calling his office as soon as possible.

"We're doing extensive outreach, sending letters and making personal service visits to properties," he said.

January 22, 2023

[Read More in The Oakland Press >](#)

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## Crain's Detroit Business

[Michigan's new foreclosure claims law is pricing out housing programs](#)

### MICHIGAN'S NEW FORECLOSURE CLAIMS LAW IS PRICING OUT HOUSING PROGRAMS

"If a parcel has an expected claim on it, Oakland County Treasurer Robert Wittenberg said, the government is required to pay twice the state equalized value on the property — essentially, its fair market value — to take it from the auction. Without the intent to claim forms, the government can take the property for the cost of back taxes."

August 25, 2022

[Read More in Crain's Detroit Business >](#)

[Oakland, Macomb county property auctions to take place online for the first time](#)

### OAKLAND MACOMB COUNTY PROPERTY AUCTIONS TO TAKE PLACE ONLINE FOR THE FIRST TIME

Wittenberg, in Oakland County, said the online auction process should be familiar to anyone who's ever used eBay. There's a pre-bidding period where property is listed and people can put in their bids before the auction opens. They can also participate live, bidding up property against others until the end of the auction. Phone bidding is also an option, and it's available in several languages.

The Oakland County auction will include more than 300 parcels, most of them vacant land. Wittenberg said that without the pressure of an in-person auctioneer, he thinks bidders can be more deliberate — they can research property online for a month before the auction begins, looking at pictures and other information that would have been harder to parse on-site.

"More people can be more strategic," he said. "More people will have the ability to bid than in years prior. It'll be a more diverse group."

August 10, 2022

[Read More in Crain's Detroit Business >](#)



## Centro Multicultural La Familia



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### MEA TV

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPMC8-y!OkI>

