



OAKLAND COUNTY
LAND BANK AUTHORITY



**Collaborative Impact: Transforming
Communities Through Partnership**

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 - 2024

Welcome Letter – Board Chair

Dear Community Members,

As Chair of the Oakland County Land Bank Authority (OCLBA) and Treasurer of Oakland County, I am honored to present the 2023-2024 Annual Report. This past year has been marked by significant progress and strategic initiatives that reflect our unwavering commitment to revitalizing communities, fostering economic growth, and promoting inclusive development throughout Oakland County.



Our efforts have been focused on facilitating the productive reuse of land across the county, ensuring that vacant and underutilized properties are transformed into assets that contribute to the vitality of our communities. Through strategic partnerships and forward-thinking initiatives, we have made remarkable strides in fostering economic growth, creating sustainable housing opportunities, and supporting neighborhood revitalization.

Key projects over the past year have demonstrated our commitment to these goals. From initiating new housing developments that address affordability and sustainability to collaborating with community developers and leaders to repurpose properties, our work is the foundation for a stronger, more resilient Oakland County.

I am incredibly proud of our progress, but there is still much work to be done. Thank you to our numerous partners, community developers, members and stakeholders for your continued collaboration and support.

Together, we are making a lasting impact on the future of Oakland County.

Sincerely,

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

Robert Wittenberg
Oakland County Land Bank Authority Chair
and Oakland County Treasurer

Welcome Letter – Executive Director



Dear Community Members,

I am excited to share our 2023-2024 Oakland County Land Bank Authority (OCLBA) Annual Report. This year has marked a significant chapter in our journey to revitalize communities, facilitate the productive reuse of land, and create lasting positive change across Oakland County.

Among our many achievements, the Casa del Rey project at 111 Oneida in the City of Pontiac, a decade in the making, is a testament to our long-term commitment to transforming underutilized properties into vibrant community assets. This historic building, which once stood as a symbol of the past, is now being reborn as 50 attainable apartments, offering new hope and opportunities for residents. This project also exemplifies our commitment to preserving the rich history of our communities.

Additionally, we made strides in other key community development projects. The current demolition of the Emerson School and McCarroll School in the City of Pontiac are significant milestones. These projects are removing blighted structures and paving the way for future developments, including a much-anticipated new recreation center to enhance the quality of life for residents and foster community engagement for years to come.

This progress would not have been possible without the tremendous collaboration between our dedicated partners, community developers, local governments, and countless stakeholders. The collective effort to bring these projects to life is evidence of what we can achieve when we work together toward a common goal. I extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed and for your dedication and cooperation in making these transformative projects a reality.

As we look ahead, the OCLBA remains committed to continuing this vital work, leveraging our collective strengths to create thriving, inclusive communities across Oakland County.

Together, we are shaping a future filled with opportunity and promise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jill Robinson".

Jill Robinson
Executive Director, Oakland County Land
Bank Authority

ABOUT THE OCLBA

MISSION

The Oakland County Land Bank Authority will enhance our county through innovative and inclusive economic and community development strategies while helping to facilitate the productive reuse of land.

OAKLAND COUNTY LAND BANK BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Robert Wittenberg

Board Chair and
Oakland County
Treasurer



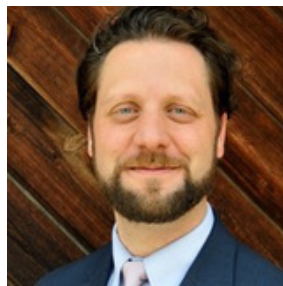
Dannis Mitchell

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



Jeffrey Campell

Board Member and
Village Manager, Beverly
Hills



Khalfani Stephens

Board Member and
Deputy Mayor, City of
Pontiac

Oakland County Land Bank Authority Secures \$1.316 Million in Blight Elimination Grants and Expands Property Portfolio in Pontiac

The Oakland County Land Bank Authority has received \$1.316 million in funding from the State Land Bank Authority's Blight Elimination Grant Program. This significant financial boost supports the revitalization of neighborhoods in Oakland County, particularly in the City of Pontiac. The grant funds are allocated across three crucial projects to transform abandoned and blighted structures while honoring their legacy.

OCLBA has received funding in multiple rounds of this program:

Blight Elimination Grant Program Overview

The Blight Elimination Grant Program, administered by the State Land Bank Authority, assists local land banks in removing blighted structures that pose safety hazards and hinder community development. This program is part of a broader initiative to stabilize neighborhoods, stimulate local economies, and create opportunities for redevelopment.

- **Round One: \$200,000 for GM Modern Historic District Stabilization**

In the first round, OCLBA was awarded \$200,000 to stabilize two properties in the GM Modern Historic District. These properties, which hold historical significance, were at risk of further deterioration. The grant allowed for critical repairs and stabilization efforts, ensuring that these historic homes could be preserved and eventually restored, contributing to the ongoing revitalization of the district.

- **Round Three: \$500,000 for McCarroll School Demolition**

The third round of funding brought in \$500,000, earmarked for the demolition of the McCarroll School. The school, a symbol of blight and decay, was a priority for demolition due to its hazardous condition. The removal of this structure paves the way for a new youth recreation center.

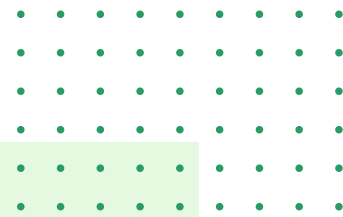
- **Round Four: \$616,000 for Emerson School Demolition**

In the most recent funding round, \$616,000 was awarded for the demolition of Emerson School. Like McCarroll, this building had long been abandoned, and its demolition will enable the construction of affordable housing and other community amenities.

In addition to the grant funding, the Oakland County Land Bank Authority will acquire 95 properties in the City of Pontiac from the State Land Bank Authority. This strategic acquisition is part of the OCLBA's broader plan to consolidate blighted properties and prepare them for redevelopment in alignment with community needs. These properties will be evaluated and prioritized based on their suitability for projects, including single-family and multi-family housing, green space initiatives, and large-scale economic development.

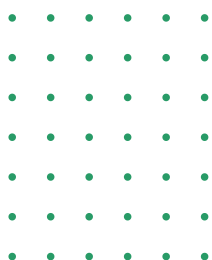
The partnership between the Oakland County Land Bank Authority and the State Land Bank Authority is vital to the success of these initiatives. The funding and property transfers enable OCLBA to address blight more effectively and support the revitalization and community development efforts.

Our collaboration exemplifies the power of state and local partnerships in driving meaningful change at the community level. As OCLBA continues to implement its strategic vision, collaboration and partnership remain a cornerstone of its efforts to build stronger, more vibrant communities throughout Oakland County.



“In the Oakland County Land Bank, the State Land Bank Authority has an extraordinary partner in fulfilling the mission of making underutilized property productive again. Treasurer Wittenberg, Director Robinson and the entire team have created a model organization for local land banks to follow. The comprehensive, inclusive and innovative approach they are taking to their work is taking advantage of all available resources and maximizes their effectiveness. We look forward to continuing our partnership and supporting their excellent work.”

— Joseph Rivet, Executive Director of Michigan State Land Bank Authority



Transformations in Action: 2023-2024 Project Highlights

Historic GM Modern Housing District Revitalization Update: Successful Stabilization and Sale of Properties



Photo Caption: Rehabilitation rendering prepared by Ron Campbell, AIA, principal planner/preservation architect, Oakland County Historic Preservation.

The Oakland County Land Bank Authority (OCLBA) is excited to share the successful stabilization of two properties in the historic GM Modern Housing District, thanks to a \$200,000 Blight Elimination Round One Grant from the State Land Bank Authority. This critical funding enabled OCLBA to address and stabilize these historic properties, preserving the area's architectural integrity and historical significance.

The stabilization process was a critical first step in safeguarding the architectural and historical integrity of these homes, preventing further deterioration and laying the groundwork for future rehabilitation efforts.

"Revitalizing our neighborhoods requires more than restoring properties—it's about rebuilding the fabric of our communities. The Oakland County Land Bank is committed to transforming vacant and abandoned properties into productive spaces that breathe new life and create opportunities for growth, stability, and a brighter future for all of Oakland County."

— Martin Manna, OCLBA Board Member

Following the stabilization, the properties were sold through a competitive bid process, ensuring they were placed in the hands of a reputable developer committed to completing the necessary rehabilitation work.

The selected developer is now completing the required rehabilitation, making the homes attractive and desirable for future homeowners. Once the rehabilitation is complete, these homes will be placed on the market, offering new opportunities for families to own a piece of history in the GM Modern Housing District.

This project demonstrates the positive impact that targeted funding and strategic partnerships can have on preserving our community's heritage while paving the way for future growth and development.

From Blight to Bright: McCarroll School's Transformation into a Youth Hub Begins

The Oakland County Land Bank Authority (OCLBA), in partnership with the City of Pontiac, was proud to recently announce the demolition of Pontiac's McCarroll School, which is currently underway. This transformative project, supported by a \$500,000 Blight Elimination Round Three Grant from the State Land Bank Authority, will pave the way for a long-awaited Youth Recreation Center.

McCarroll School, located at 191 North Glenwood, has been a prominent fixture in the community since its construction in 1924, with an addition in 1957. Once a beacon of education, the school has stood vacant and deteriorating since its closure in 2005, becoming a significant blight on the neighborhood and posing safety risks. The 33,609-square-foot building on 6.51 acres reached a state of disrepair that necessitated its demolition.

This project is also part of a broader initiative supported by a \$38 million bond recently approved by the City of Pontiac to fund the development of the new Youth Recreation Center. It is poised to become a vital resource for the community, providing a safe and welcoming environment where young people can grow, learn, and thrive.

As the demolition concludes and the plans for the new Youth Recreation Center take shape, the community can look forward to a future where this site once again serves as a place of growth, learning, and inspiration for Pontiac's youth.



1) McCarroll School, 2) Pontiac Mayor Tim Greimel, State Land Bank Authority Director Joseph Rivet and Oakland County Treasurer and OCLBA Chairman Robert Wittenberg, 3) Youth Recreation and Enrichment Manager Tanesha Taylor, 4) Pontiac City Council members, State Rep. Brenda Carter, OCLBA Executive Director Jill Robinson, Pontiac Parks and Recreation Director Tarrance Price, and 5) Robert Wittenberg.

"The Oakland County Land Bank has been instrumental in redeveloping properties throughout the county, especially in cities like Pontiac that have suffered from historic disinvestment and high rates of poverty. We are very grateful for our partnership with the land bank, and for the amazing work it does to eliminate blight and improve the lives of residents."

— Tim Greimel, City of Pontiac Mayor

Clearing Blight, Creating Opportunity: The Emerson School Demolition



As part of our ongoing efforts to enhance community development and eliminate blight, we're excited to provide an update on the demolition of the former Emerson School at 859 Emerson, Pontiac. The demolition, significantly funded by a \$616,000 Blight Elimination Grant from the State Land Bank Authority, marks the beginning of another transformative project for new development opportunities.

The Emerson School, initially constructed in the 1920s with expansions in the mid-20th century, is owned by Micah 6 Community, which has a strong history of community development and inspirational projects in the City of Pontiac. Vacant since 2009, the building has fallen into disrepair, becoming a source of concern for residents due to its deteriorating condition and frequent trespassing and vandalism.

Demolition activities are well underway, with the removal of hazardous materials completed and the building now being methodically dismantled, which includes the removal of the building's foundation, basement, and surrounding hardscape. This project is being executed with strict adherence to safety and environmental standards, ensuring that the site is properly cleared and prepared for future use.

"I don't know where the Emerson project would be without the partnership of the Oakland County Land Bank. When we first thought of the idea--repurposing the site of a vacant school into independent senior housing--the land bank has been an encourager, thought partner and active member of the team bringing this from dream to reality."

— Coleman Yoakum, Executive Director of Micah 6 Community

The cleared site will become a blank slate for new development. The current vision, carefully planned to meet the needs of the community, includes the construction of attainable housing, with plans to build 55 small-footprint homes alongside community amenities such as a community building, laundromat, garden, and dog park. The homes will be designed to meet the needs of both seniors and young professionals, offering a mix of for-sale and rental units that are affordably priced.

This project represents a significant investment in Pontiac's future, aligning with OCLBA's mission to facilitate the productive reuse of land and promote economic and community development.

Transforming History: The Casa del Rey Redevelopment Project

The redevelopment of the historic Casa del Rey building is a testament to the power of collaboration and strategic investment in our community. Located at 111 Oneida in Pontiac, the Casa del Rey building has long symbolized the city's rich history. For well over a decade, this century-old structure sat vacant, its future uncertain.

The OCLBA, a staunch advocate for revitalizing blighted properties and fostering sustainable community development, saw a glimmer of hope where others saw decay. After years of ownership by the Oakland County Treasurer's Office as surplus property, the OCLBA made the pivotal decision to entrust the Casa del Rey building to Coleman Allen LLC, a developer with the vision and expertise to bring this landmark back to life.

This redevelopment project is a collaborative effort involving multiple stakeholders, including the Michigan Strategic Fund, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, the Oakland County Housing Trust Fund, the City of Pontiac, and Coleman Allen LLC. Together, these partners have navigated the complex financing and approval processes to ensure the successful transformation of the Casa del Rey building into 50 affordable apartments.

The new apartments will provide much-needed missing-middle housing, contributing to the city's growth and the well-being of its residents. The Casa del Rey project exemplifies how state, county, and local governments, in partnership with private developers, can transform a once-blighted building into a vibrant residential community.

We're excited to see the transformative impact this project will have on the community. We will continue supporting sustainable development and economic growth throughout Oakland County.

Stay tuned for more updates on the Casa del Rey project and other initiatives shaping our county's future.



"Jill Robinson and the Oakland County Land Bank Authority (OCLBA) have played a crucial role in the redevelopment of the historic Casa del Rey building and have provided us with essential expertise and guidance in navigating the complexities of the project's financing and approval process.

"As developers who live, play, and work in Oakland County, it is crucial to continue fostering our partnership with the Oakland County Land Bank Authority (OCLBA). This collaboration and others are vital for revitalizing our communities and addressing social determinants of health by meeting the county's housing needs through thoughtful and impactful redevelopment projects." — Ronita and Gregory Coleman

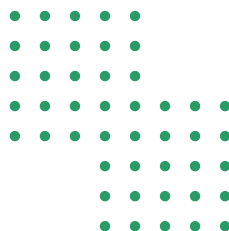
Partners in Progress: Community Revitalization Through Collective Action

Partnerships and collaborations are critical in driving community development, revitalizing neighborhoods, and creating economic opportunities. By working together, organizations can leverage their expertise and resources to achieve a greater impact than they could alone.

At the Oakland County Land Bank Authority (OCLBA), we are proud to partner with a diverse range of organizations that share our vision for a stronger, more vibrant Oakland County. Their support has been instrumental in revitalizing neighborhoods and ensuring access to attainable housing and sustainable development. Below are just a few of our valued partners:

- **Oakland County Brownfield Authority** specializes in redeveloping and repurposing environmentally contaminated properties to promote sustainable development and attract new community investments.
- **Oakland County Housing Trust Fund** provides funding and support for attainable housing projects, ensuring that low and moderate-income residents can access safe and secure housing.
- **Habitat for Humanity Oakland County** builds and renovates homes in partnership with families in need, helping to strengthen communities through affordable homeownership and volunteer engagement.
- **Community Housing Network** focuses on providing housing solutions and services for people facing homelessness, individuals with disabilities, and those with low income, fostering long-term stability and independence.
- **Venture, Inc.** is the housing subsidiary of Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency (OLHSA). They empower individuals and families by providing housing assistance, energy services, and community support to help them achieve self-sufficiency.

We are deeply grateful for the continued collaboration with our partners and their dedication to improving the quality of life for Oakland County residents. Our partnership is a testament to what we can achieve when we work together.



OCLBA Milestones

The Oakland County Land Bank Authority has achieved significant milestones since its inception due to the dedication and commitment of our Board Members, and the impactful collaboration with our partners, community members, and stakeholders.

2022-2024 OCLBA Milestones



- Created OCLBA and appointed the Board.
- Held first Board meeting with State Land Bank Training and Michigan Land Bank Association presentation.



- Developed and adopted the mission statement, code of ethics, services agreement and guiding principles.
- Participated in a community tour and Oakland County Brownfield Redevelopment presentation.
- Awarded \$200,000 Blight Elimination Round One Grant from the State of Michigan Land Bank Authority.
- Stabilized two properties in the GM Modern Historic District, selected developer and sold the properties for rehabilitation and homeownership.



- Awarded \$500,000 Blight Elimination Round Three Grant.
- Awarded \$616,000 Blight Elimination Round Four Grant.
- Began demolition of McCarroll and Emerson schools in Pontiac.
- Sold five properties.
- Acquired 95 properties in Pontiac from the State Land Bank Authority.
- Historic Casa del Ray housing development begins.

CONTACT US



Residential and commercial developers with projects in Oakland County can contact Jill Robinson, OCLBA Executive Director, by email at robinsonj@oakgov.com for assistance.

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- (248) 858-0611
- www.oakgov.com/OCLBA