

painting a  
*better picture*  
for communities in  
allegheny county

2018 update



**TCLB**

Tri-COG Land Bank



# Land Banking

## what it is

### WHAT IS A LAND BANK?

The central goals of the Land Bank are to mitigate blight, improve neighborhoods, and stimulate economic growth by transferring properties that are vacant, abandoned, and tax delinquent back to productive uses that benefit communities. Strategic decisions can be made to pursue properties with the highest potential to achieve these goals.

The following are some benefits attributable to a land bank:

#### **“One-stop-shop”**

Properties are available to current residents, to-be homeowners, non-profits, investors, and development agencies with countless development opportunities, along with a clear title and a fresh start.

#### **Effective Scale**

Blight is not bound by geographic or political borders. A regional approach allows for a diverse real estate portfolio and increases opportunities for success.

#### **Funding**

Addressing blight takes money – acquisition and maintenance of properties can be extremely expensive. Land banks can accept financial resources from various sources – including membership contributions, grants, revenue from sales, and foundation support.



**Mercer Street**



BEFORE

Mercer Street

**Ability to be Nimble and Responsive**

Neighborhood revitalization can be tricky, and oftentimes creative approaches are needed. Land banks are flexible for communities' plans and responsive enough for new opportunities.

**Accountability**

As a quasi-public entity, land banks adhere to the same reporting standards and audits, making it a transparent and accountable organization.



AFTER



# About Us

who we are

## PURPOSE

Tri-COG Landbank, TCLB, is dedicated to eliminating blight in the community through responsive, community-centered action that aids in the development of our region. The TCLB is driven by a “Plan for the Place” and the data to support strategic decisions. Not all communities have the same priorities and so, TCLB is responsive to community priorities and development opportunities.

We focus on:

### **Neighborhood Preservation**

Addressing abandoned homes in stable neighborhoods.

### **Neighborhood Restoration**

“Greening” vacant lots through side lot sales and neighborhood green spaces.

### **Site Development**

Assemble and acquire multiple lots for larger redevelopment plans.

### **Economic Redevelopment**

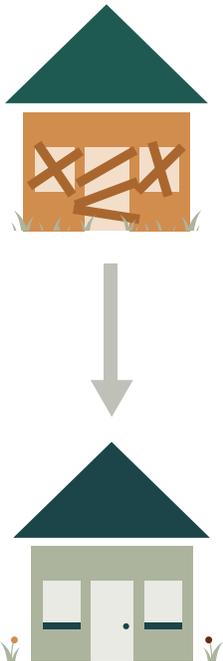
Acquire and repurpose commercial spaces to bring in new businesses and strengthen existing commercial districts.



North Avenue



Mortimer Avenue



### OUR MISSION:

Our mission is to strategically restore investment in blighted properties to enhance community safety, value, and vibrancy.

### OUR VISION:

Our vision is to achieve sustainable communities free of blight and attractive to residents and businesses.

### ACCREDITATION

TCLB is registered with the PA Department of State, Bureau of Corporations and Charitable Organizations. In 2018, TCLB submitted an application to the US Internal Revenue Service for a 501(c)(3) designation.



# Inclusive membership



Sunnyside Avenue

## ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

### **Involvement**

Members are directly involved in the process of property selection, acquisition, and disposition through participation in the Advisory Committees. Advisory Committees elect the Board of Directors and recommend properties for acquisition and disposition.

### **Member Roles**

Advisory Committee members' attendance to meetings allows member communities to fully participate in the TCLB process, ensure the voice of their community is represented, and allows partnerships to form between members. This fosters a community-based but regional approach to blight mitigation.

### **Structure**

Our model is a round table – comprised of membership municipalities, school districts, and Allegheny County.



## MEMBERS

### County

Allegheny County

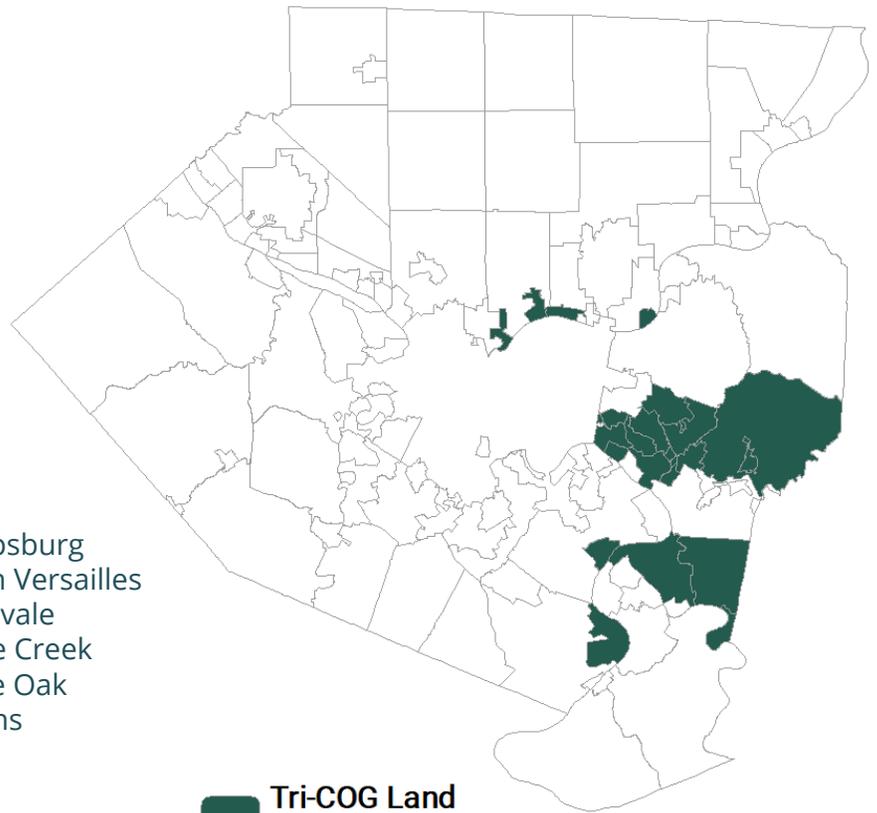
### School Districts

Clairton City School District  
 Fox Chapel Area School District  
 Gateway School District  
 McKeesport Area School District  
 Shaler Area School District  
 Woodland Hills School District

### Municipalities

Blawnox*	Etna	Sharpsburg
Braddock Hills	Forest Hills	South Versailles
Chalfant	McKeesport	Swissvale
Churchill	Millvale	Turtle Creek
Clairton	Monroeville	White Oak
Dravosburg	North Braddock	Wilkins
East Pittsburgh	Pitcairn	
Edgewood	Rankin	

\*Joined in January 2019



**Tri-COG Land Bank Footprint**



# Inventive

building the system

## LOCAL IMPACT

TCLB began acquiring properties in May of 2018. Throughout the year, TCLB acquired a total of 11 residential properties including: two side lots, one vacant lot, and eight structures.

### Partnerships

TCLB applied and was accepted to participate in the National Community Stabilization Trust Program. Being a part of this program provides TCLB the opportunity to view and potentially purchase Real Estate Owned properties from participating financial institutions.

TCLB is working with Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh (RTP) on a multi-pronged stabilization effort focused in a neighborhood in Braddock Hills. RTP, corporate volunteers, and volunteer-supported Hosanna Industries, Inc. performed interior clean up and brush removal on two TCLB properties. The groups made improvements to several homes owned by seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities. Also, through this partnership, two TCLB homes will be sold to income-qualified families as affordable housing units. One will be renovated and one will be new, built on a demolition site.



Park Avenue



### **Internal Growth**

In 2018, there were several changes to the TCLB team. TCLB Assistant Director, Liz Kozub, moved out of state and joined the Center for Community Progress. Several positions were also created. Natalie Boydston joined the team as Program Director, and Anna Meehan and Emily Moldovan were hired as program coordinators. Emily left at the end of the year to return to her previous field of planning.

At the end of 2018, TCLB issued Requests for Qualifications to find an architect and an engineer to support our work. Several firms were interviewed and two firms joined the team in early 2019.

### **New Member**

In 2018, Blawnox was approved by the Land Bank Board to become TCLB's first new member. Blawnox's membership began January 1, 2019.





# Progressive

carving the path



**Morris Street  
(Future Home Site)**

## **A LOCAL TRAILBLAZER**

The art and science of landbanking is new in the United States. The TCLB was the 17th land bank to form in Pennsylvania since the passage of the PA Land Bank Act in 2012. The TCLB is the first land bank to own property in Allegheny County. TCLB is working to establish best practices in our region.

### **Brownfield Remediation**

Abandoned brownfields, like gas stations and dry cleaners, pose unique challenges because of the potential environmental liability for future owners. There is a process defined in PA Act 2 where a remediation and encapsulation plan is created and approved by PA Department of Environmental Protection. This clearance protects future property owners. TCLB is working through a PADEP Act 2 Clearance process with Steel Rivers Council of Governments (SRCOG), Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments (TCVCOG), and the Borough of Swissvale on an abandoned dry cleaners.

### **Demolition Practices to Mitigate Lead Exposure**

The problem of lead exposure to children is a current public policy priority. There is much to be learned about the potential for altered demolition practices to minimize exposure to lead. TCLB is working with the Allegheny County Conservation District and Conservation Consultants, Inc. to use a TCLB property, which must be demolished, as a test case. TCLB measured lead levels inside and in the soil



**Delaware Avenue  
(Test Case)**

surrounding the property. In 2019, follow-up testing of the soil will be done after demolition. This data will support regional policy discussions on current demolition techniques.

**Insured Property Title**

Title insurance protects property owners against the financial liability for unpaid debts of previous owners. This is a potential risk for all property owners, but it is much higher for abandoned properties. TCLB will obtain insurable title prior to the sale of the property to protect future property owners. To obtain insurable title, for most properties, TCLB will be required to go through an additional legal process called Quiet Title Action. TCLB started this process with five of its properties in 2018.





# Motivated

more than the bank



Poplar Street

## BEYOND LAND BANKING

### **elevate412**

TCLB joined the first nonprofit marketing collaborative in Pittsburgh, elevate412. The organizational model consists of six nonprofit partners dedicated to improving or “elevating” the Pittsburgh region. The partners are: Economic Development South, NeighborWorks Western Pennsylvania, Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh, Steel Rivers Council of Governments, Tri-COG Land Bank, and Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments. elevate412 partners have collaborated on shared marketing and communications support under the direction of TrailBlaze Creative. As part of this effort, TCLB was able to develop a cohesive mission and vision statement, and more.

### **Continued Collaboration**

We are working on increasing interactions with other organizational partners to increase development opportunities and address community priorities.

TCLB has an already growing relationship with elevate412 and would like to continue that growth and share our story to increase the organization’s outreach in 2019.

# Acquisitions



**MAY**  
430 Morris St.  
519 Sunnyside Ave.

**JUNE**  
842 Delaware Ave.  
1114 Wilkins Ave.  
283 Park Ave.



**SEPTEMBER**  
1121 North Ave.

**OCTOBER**  
650 Mortimer Ave.  
750 Mercer St.  
Dome St.  
Quay St.



**NOVEMBER**  
220 Poplar St.



**11**  
**PROPERTIES**



# Driven

transforming goals into action



## MOVING INTO 2019

### Property Expansion

TCLB has budgeted to acquire approximately 25-30 additional properties in 2019, and plans to start selling properties in 2019 as requirements for title insurance are completed.

### Property Maintenance

When a property is first acquired by TCLB, a full property inspection is conducted. In many cases, this is the first time that TCLB is able to inspect the interior of the property. At this time, the property is secured and an assessment of immediate needs is done. It is added to the landscaping/snow removal contracts. A yard sign is installed, so that neighbors and others can contact TCLB. The signs have generated several calls from potential buyers and people interested in learning more about the TCLB.

### Responsible Reuse

TCLB is building relationships with other organizations, both nonprofit and private, during the property cleanout/rehabilitation process. One goal is to work with other organizations who can take items and building materials that are not needed by TCLB and reuse them. This reduces the material that would otherwise end up in the landfill.

BEFORE

Wilkins Avenue  
(Before clean-up)



**AFTER**

**Wilkins Avenue  
(Before clean-up)**

**Procedure Development**

Repair and renovation plans for TCLB properties are based on a number of factors, the property repair needs, the likely end use of the property, community priorities, the real estate market, and the TCLB budget. This is called the disposition plan. TCLB is actively working on disposition policies to create procedures for the disposition plans and to develop criteria for screening potential TCLB buyers. TCLB has engaged national and local experts to assist with the development of these policies.



**Fighting blight: Tri-COG land bank buys properties; plans to return them to productive use**

**KATE GIAMMARISE** ✓  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette  
k.giammarise@post-gazette.com

MAY 8, 2018



In a half-empty room in the Allegheny County Courthouse at the conclusion of a monthly sheriff's sale Monday, the Tri-COG Land Bank purchased two properties.

The moment might have seemed anticli-

ALLEGHENY

**Tri-COG land bank buys first properties to battle blight in Pittsburgh suburbs**

**TRIB** THERESA CLIFT | Tuesday, May 8, 2018 10:48 a.m.

Above:  
Pittsburgh Post Gazette, May 8, 2018  
<https://www.post-gazette.com/local/east/2018/05/08/Land-bank-Allegheny-County-Tri-COG-first-land-purchased/stories/201805070130>

Left:  
TribLive, May 8, 2018  
<https://archive.triblive.com/local/alleghe-ny/13615945-74/tri-cog-land-bank-buys-first-properties-to-battle-blight-in-pittsburgh-suburbs>

“

**The Business Plan for the Tri-COG Land Bank reflects more than just a determined and inclusive approach to a pioneering model; it represents a thoughtful adaptation of some of the most successful practices in the field.**

- Center for Community Progress

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