

For Immediate Release

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First Land Bank Property Sold in Allegheny County

On August 12, Tri-COG Land Bank (TCLB) sold its first property, a vacant lot in the borough of White Oak. This sale marks the first time a property has been sold to a new owner by a land bank in Allegheny County. The lot was successfully transferred through the land bank's Side Lot Development Program.

"We are so excited to reach this milestone and put this property back in the hands of a local community member," said James Fisher, Tri-COG Land Bank Board Chair. "When houses and lots are abandoned, they drain resources from everybody in the community. This property was abandoned and tax delinquent for decades and will now be back on the tax rolls."

Founded in 2017, Tri-COG Land Bank acquires abandoned properties and stewards them back to productive community use. TCLB operates in member communities which are in Allegheny County, but outside of the City of Pittsburgh. Currently 22 municipalities and six school districts are members of TCLB. TCLB owns 37 properties, including 31 houses and six vacant lots. Currently, four of those properties are listed for sale. TCLB expects to list an additional ten properties in the next month or two. Those properties are awaiting a final court hearing which will provide insurable title and make them safely marketable. TCLB plans to acquire 25 more residential properties this year.

As COVID-19 threatens to cause more housing instability, land banking can help communities rebuild and reshape their neighborhoods in a more equitable way. Instead of simply selling properties to the highest bidder, when reviewing purchase offers, TCLB considers important factors like intended use, redevelopment plan and the buyer's capacity to complete the project. TCLB works closely with each community to establish disposition strategies for each property that support other neighborhood goals.

For example, TCLB is currently working with City of Bridges Community Land Trust to increase affordable housing opportunities in the boroughs of Millvale, Etna, and Sharpsburg. TCLB has targeted three previously abandoned properties to transfer to City of Bridges. City of Bridges will fully renovate them and then sell them as permanently affordable houses to low and moderate income families.

"Land banking gives us the opportunity to address multiple problems at once," said Brittany Reno, TCLB Board Member and Sharpsburg Council President. "Recovering abandoned properties helps to improve public health and safety and pave the way for responsible reuse that benefits neighboring residents and the community as a whole. Transforming abandoned properties into quality housing that's affordable, especially through the land trust model, ensures that people in our communities will have accessible homeownership and rental opportunities for generations to come."

About the Tri-COG Land Bank

Founded in 2017, the Tri-COG Land Bank (TCLB) revitalizes neighborhoods by transitioning vacant, blighted properties to beneficial reuse. TCLB partners with local municipalities, community development corporations, nonprofits, and individuals to strategically align purchases with each community's priorities and plans.

TCLB currently owns 35 properties and operates in Blawnox, Braddock Hills, Chalfant, Churchill, Clairton, Dravosburg, East Pittsburgh, Edgewood, Etna, Forest Hills, McKeesport, Millvale, Monroeville, North Braddock, Pitcairn, Rankin, Sharpsburg, South Versailles, Swissvale, Turtle Creek, White Oak, and Wilkins.

For more information, please visit <https://tricoglandbank.org/>.