

Lawrence County Land Bank

PPA/APA

October 16, 2018

James Gagliano, Jr., Executive Director

Pennsylvania's Land Bank Law authorized, ***for the first time***, the creation of a ***public*** entity to:

“Confront the problems caused by vacant, abandoned and tax-delinquent properties through the creation of new tools to enable municipalities to turn vacant, abandoned and tax-delinquent spaces into vibrant places.”

- Act of Oct. 24, 2012, P.L. 1239, No. 153
- Codified at 68 Pa.C.S. §§ 2101-2120
- Enables certain municipalities and groups of municipalities to create land banks:
 - ...a County, or municipality with a population of more than 10,000, or a group of two or more smaller municipalities.

Land Banks...

- Were created to *address “problem” properties where liabilities* (tax and municipal liens, deferred maintenance) *exceeded property values*
- Include the latest and best thinking about how to address blighted, abandoned, tax foreclosed properties, and return them to productive use

How did we get here?

The County Comprehensive Plan which was updated in 2016, recommended several “preservation” activities to maintain healthy communities.

These included:

1. Encourage local municipalities to adopt and/or update land use regulations and property maintenance codes;

How did we get here?⁽²⁾

Comp plan recommendations (cont'd):

2. Address needs and opportunities related to housing and combatting blight;
3. Attract development activities that provide healthy lifestyles;
4. Provision of a “toolbox” to local municipalities that includes model ordinances and technical resources to assist in plan implementation.

How did we get here?⁽³⁾

- Upon adoption of the Comp Plan update, the County's Planning and Community Development Department and the Redevelopment Authority of Lawrence County staff began researching funding programs to help in the implementation of the Plan's recommendations:
 - PHARE
 - RTT
 - Act 137/152
 - Act 13 (Marcellus Shale)
 - Demolition funding from banks/financial institutions

How did we get here?⁽⁴⁾

- County staff met with local elected officials to generate “stakeholders” for the program
- A “Blighted Properties” survey was created by the County and distributed to every municipality to gauge needs and local interest in the program
- Not all responded - of those that did, most had urban centers

How did we get here?⁽⁵⁾

Other planning considerations:

- Redevelopment Authority strategic plan
(Act of June 19, 2018, P.L. 221, No. 33, now gives Redevelopment Authorities the ability to act as a Land Bank...)
- Commissioner's program to "buy-out" foreclosed properties from financial institutions to clear and re-use the property

Lawrence County Land Bank



- ▶ Created in Oct. 2017
- ▶ 9-member board
- ▶ First purchases from County Repository in 2018
- ▶ Initiating Side Yard Disposition Program



Impacts

- To date, the Land Bank has acquired 14 parcels and donated/sold 13 for rehab/development
- Have created a “side-yard” program for interested residents to expand their properties
- Working with local CDC and non-profit agencies to create a neighborhood “improvement”

Lawrence County Land Bank



**204 South Mulberry
Street**

**Being rehabilitated by
DON Enterprises for
resale to First Time
Buyer**





720 Court St. - Before



After

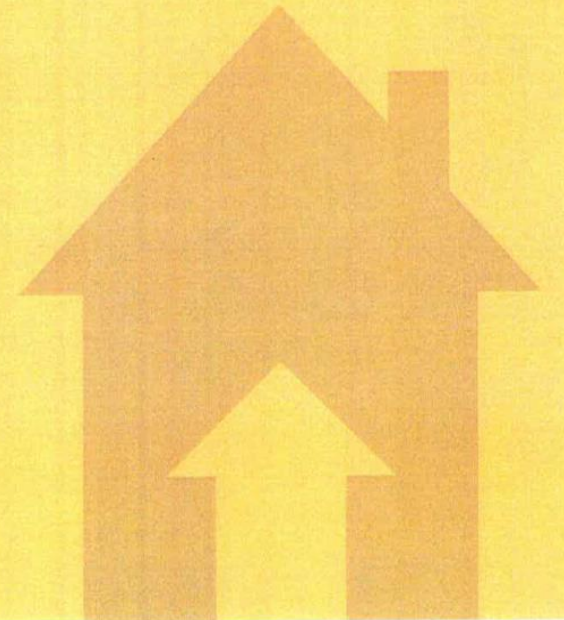


**THE PROCESS
CONTINUES...**

(anticipated
November, 2018
adoption)

Lawrence County
**Affordable
Housing**
— and —
Implementation
Plan

August 2018 Draft

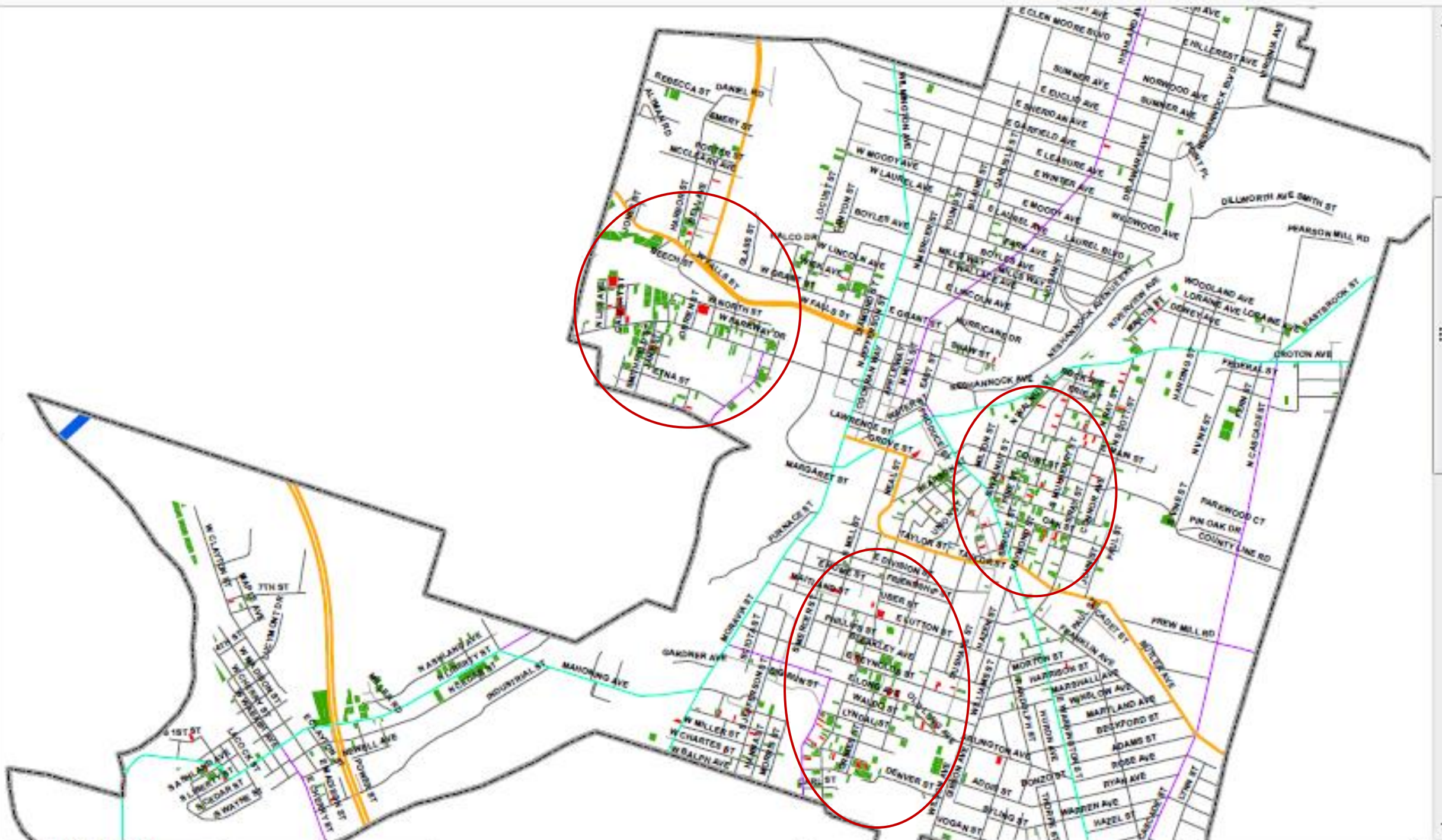


Use the land bank as a tool to build up whole neighborhoods, not just housing.

Lawrence County's new land bank represents a powerful tool to clear vacant, often blighted properties and return them to productive use. As policies begin to take shape to govern how the program will operate, the following considerations have to do with its potential to be layered with other investments to create lasting, transformative neighborhood improvement.

Strategies:

- Focus on a limited geographic area. Select and prioritize targeted areas, both to build momentum in the program's early phases and overall as a means of concentrating and intensifying impact. (There could be opportunities for exceptions to meet other program goals.)
- Incorporate a holistic approach. A neighborhood gains value not only from the improvement of individual properties, but more generally as it develops as a desirable place to live. Revitalization will need to involve public realm improvements, such as open space and streetscape improvements.
- Consider creating an open space management program, involving other agencies and volunteers in a plan for the maintenance and temporary use of vacant lots.
- Envision neighborhood transformation as a process that will span many years. Large projects should be phased and benchmarked to allow for the completion (and celebration) of milestones along the way.
- Create a community land trust (CLT) or other shared-equity homeownership program to permanently hold land and enter into long-term renewable leases with income-eligible homeowners. (When the owner sells, they earn a portion of the marginal equity, and the remainder is kept in the trust to preserve affordability for other buyers.)





Members of Disability Options Network break ground for a new house being built the agency for someone in need of a specially adapted home. The recipient will be Kathy Yeraci, second from right, who will pay for it with a mortgage. DEBBIE WACHTER | NEWS

Disability Options Network breaks ground for house

BY DEBBIE WACHTER
NEW CASTLE NEWS

Fate might have led Kathy Yeraci to her work at Disability Options Network after she lost her job at Jameson Hospital 12 years ago.

At least 51 percent of the people that the agency employs have disabilities, and Yeraci had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1988.

Now fate apparently is at work again for her, and through the goodwill of the agency, Yeraci soon will have a home of her own.

Disability Options Network, in concert with the county and other public and private

agencies and businesses, has been renovating a few dilapidated and blighted homes on the city's Lower East Side to afford people with disabilities a chance to own a home and live independently.

The mission is called the Court Street Project, and includes a number of partners in addition to Disability Options Network. They are the Lawrence County Land Bank, the county commissioners and county Department of Planning and Community Development, the city of New Castle, Blueprint Communities, New Visions, Bible Way Church, the Caroline Knox Memorial Trust Fund, Lowe's, Columbia

Gas Co., Penn Power, Butler Siding and Windows, First Commonwealth Bank, United Way of Lawrence County, the Lower East Side Neighborhood Watch and Eckles Architecture.

On Monday, members of those agencies assembled in front of an empty lot at 206 Mulberry St. to break ground for its first home to be built from the ground up with accessibility to someone with special needs. That someone is Yeraci, who will become the owner of that home. She will be purchasing it through a mortgage that is affordable to her income.

SEE DON, A2



DEBBIE WACHTER | NEWS

Kathy Yeraci, an employee of Disability Options Network, will be the purchaser of a newly built adapted house on Mulberry street.