

# 2018 Annual Report

# Berrien County Land Bank Authority

## *A message from the Chair*

Berrien County  
LBA Members

*Stephen Mitchell*

*Ezra Scott*

*Stephen Smith*

*Dave Vollrath*

*Bret Witkowski,  
Chair*

*Mamie Yarbrought,  
Secretary*



Reflecting on the events and activities by the Berrien County Land Bank Authority over the past year and in our 10th year of being created, there has been a lot of work improving the neighborhoods and returning property to productive reuse. Through thoughtful acquisitions, demolitions, maintenance, and disposition, we have returned 290 properties (61 in 2018) back to tax paying, productive re-use. This past year, we were able to see a property that was disposed to a local partner complete a 3 year re-

habilitation project. Efforts continued to market neighboring property owners to purchase side lots. Additionally, the Land Bank worked on creative disposition and beautification of wildflowers on two vacant lots. It is exciting to see where we have been and what is next in the coming years.

As we move into next year, we look forward to working with the local governmental units, residents and partners to continue to create opportunities for change that supports the mission and vision of the Land Bank.

### Special points of interest:

- Total Sales: 290
- 2018 Sales: 61
- Available for purchase: 89
- 2018 State Equalized value captured: \$1,661,275
- Funding received from 5/50 tax capture— \$15,472.26

Experimenting with a wildflower display on vacant lots in Benton Harbor.



## Year in Review

No longer are the days of large grant awards to complete blight elimination and neighborhood stabilization, but the work is still occurring. Some highlights of 2018 consisted of the following:

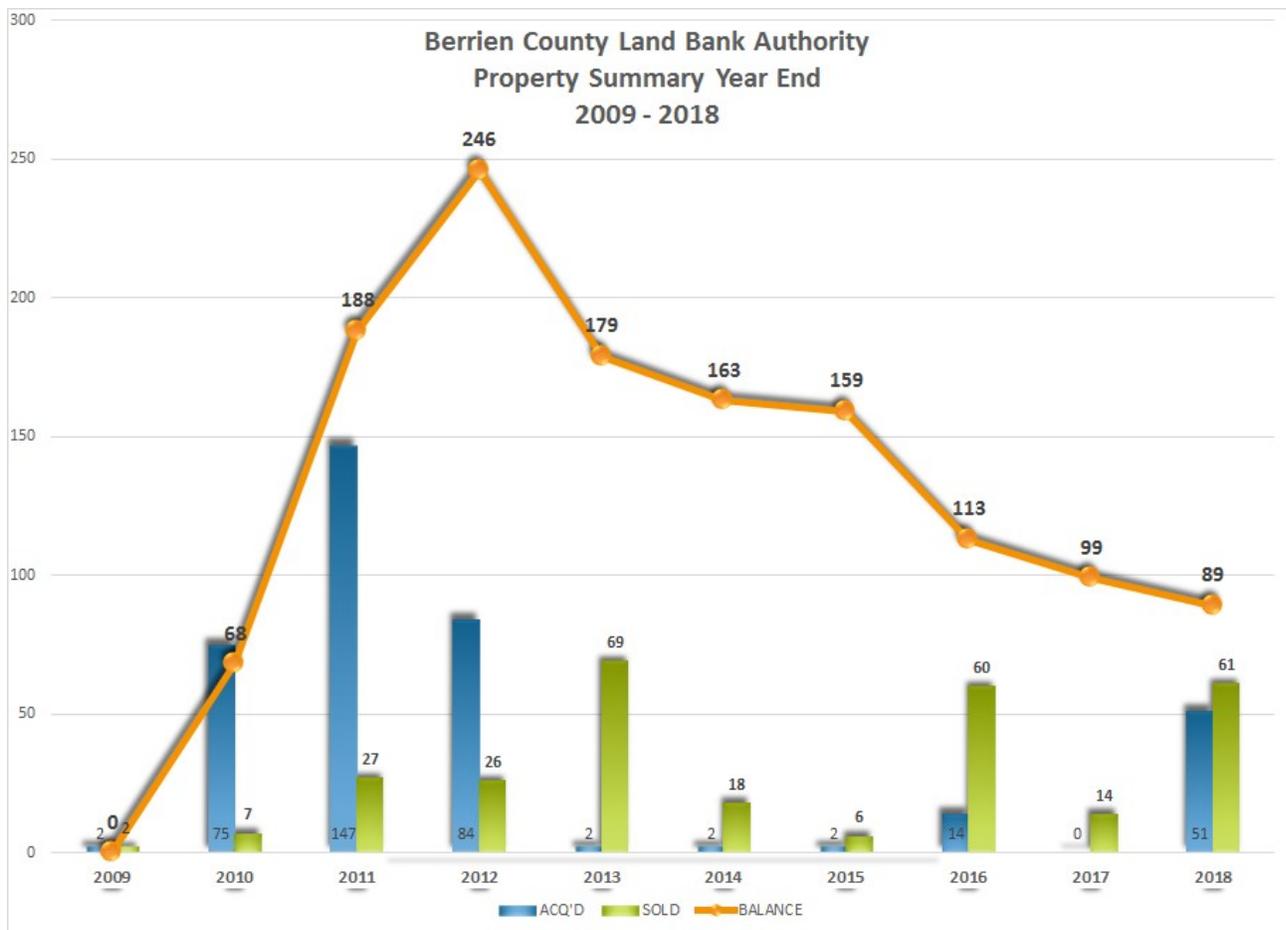
- The NSP2 Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP2) long term land banking portfolio decreased from 79 properties to 11 remaining in the NSP2 portfolio.
- Contracted with local maintenance companies to maintain LBA properties.

- Worked with the Treasurer’s office on a historical title issue that allowed a homeowner to keep their property.
- Completed quiet title and entered into a Purchase Agreement on industrial property proposed for redevelopment.
- In partnership with the Treasurer’s office, accepted 37 tax foreclosed properties that didn’t sell at auction
- Offered land bank properties to buyers at the Treas-

urer’s second auction for the first time. Successfully sold 37 properties.

The Land Bank continues to offer the following programs:

- Long-Term Tenant to Homeowner program—allows qualified renters to purchase foreclosed property and become a homeowner.
- Side Lot Program—allows adjacent properties to purchase lot to expand yard or build gardens for \$250 or fair market value.



# 2018 Budget Summary

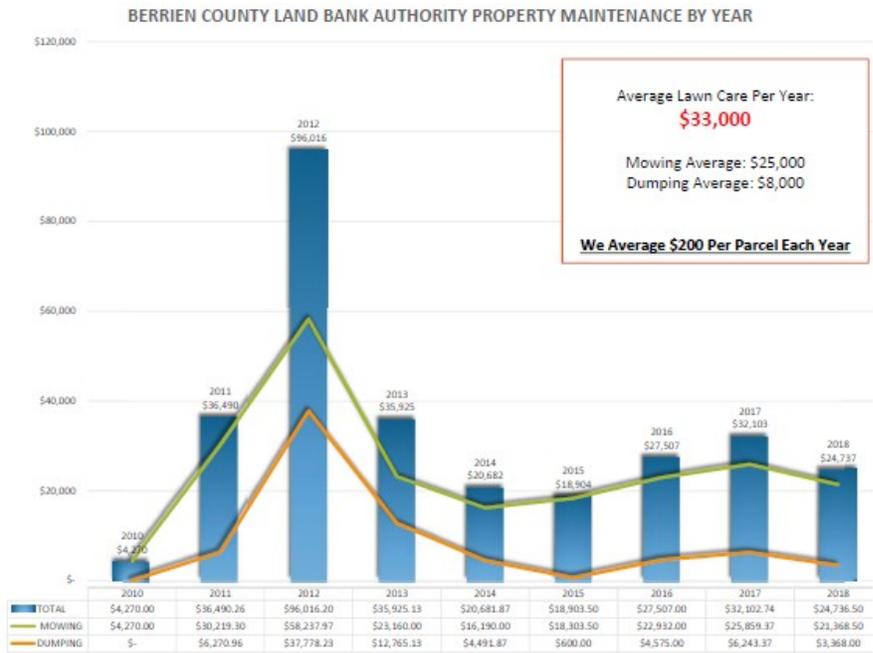
## Land Bank Budget Summary

### REVENUE

Prop Tax	\$17,367.19
Sales	\$ 6,712.12
Interest	\$ 552.37
PA escrow	\$20,000.00
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$44,631.37</b>

### EXPENSE

Contractual	\$30,084.27
Audit/legal	\$ 4,707.00
Recording fees	\$ 2,890.00
Mem dues	\$ 500.00
Taxes/misc	\$ 709.99
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$39,891.26</b>



## Success Story: Youth Build rehabilitates residential property – improving housing stock, employment and affordable

In 2015, the Land Bank received a Real Estate Owned donation of residential property located at 1221 Pearl St.. The property was in need of some minor update and repairs and we reached out to our partners. The Land Bank transferred

the property to Kinexus which planned to utilize the Youth Build program to train youth age 16-24 to learn skilled trades. The program participants eventually gutted the home and did a complete rehab.. Youth Build had its ribbon cutting ceremony on August 18, 2018 with participants and community partners celebrating their accomplishment. Projects take time and with patience, effort and resources, the project was completed –Rehabbed and

Ready. The property is listed for sale for \$49,000 and is a turn key home in the City of Benton Harbor. It isn't often that the Land Bank receives residential foreclosures that are in need or scheduled for demolition. We look forward to future successes like this.



Before



After

## Berrien County Land Bank Authority

Berrien County Administration Center  
701 Main St.  
St. Joseph, MI 49085

Phone: 269-983-7111 x8257  
Fax: 269-982-8611

[www.berriencounty.org/communitydevelopment/landbankauthority](http://www.berriencounty.org/communitydevelopment/landbankauthority).



*Hello Neighbor! View from a LBA vacant lot*

### *Berrien County Land Bank Authority Mission:*

*The mission of the Berrien county Land Bank authority is to alleviate blight and increase the tax base through thoughtful acquisition and disposition of tax reverted and abandoned properties, ensuring that land is developed with high standards in the most productive manner.*

*The Berrien County Land Bank Authority's vision is for Berrien County to be a premier destination for families to live and prosper. This successful community is filled with diverse neighborhoods, abundant rental and homeownership opportunities, viable downtowns incorporating mixed-use development, ample employment opportunities and reliable tax base to support public systems. Every resident and visitor takes pride in the community.*

## *Land Bank Summit*

This past October, the 5th Annual Michigan Land Bank Summit was held in Frankenmuth. The Summit was a forum for learning and networking with land bank leaders across the state. The Summit provided an opportunity to learn some best practices and innovations of the great work that land banks are doing throughout the state of Michigan. Thanks to the Michigan Association of Land Banks and all its members.



## *What's next*

The Land Bank is looking forward to 2019 where we will evaluate and update our Policy and Priorities, communicate with community officials and residents on who we are and what we can do and continue to foster new partnerships that support and implement our mission and vision.