Building community by razing vacant homes

As this region battles the ongoing effects of the foreclosure crisis, no topics have received more discussion than vacancy and demolition. Should we demolish, mothball or preserve? Can a neighborhood retain its identity if many of the structures that helped shape that identity are gone?

As the organizer of county land banks in more than a dozen communities around Ohio, I can tell you this is not just a Cleveland problem: It is a problem communities in the industrial Midwest struggle with every day.

Of course, the issues related to what to do with vacancy aren't just practical; they're also emotional. People with roots in struggling Cleveland neighborhoods are generally distressed by the decline of the community where they, their parents or even their grandparents were raised. But we need to check our emotions when dealing with these problems and agree on certain irrefutable facts that can help guide us as we prepare struggling communities for their next phase of development.

For more information, visit www.thrivingcommunitiesinstitute.org or www.greaterohio.org.

For questions or sponsorship opportunities, please contact Kate Hydock of Thriving Communities at khydock@wrlandconservancy.org or (216) 515-8300 or Christina Burke of Greater Ohio Policy Center at cburke@greaterohio.org or (614) 224-0187.

Lorain, Thriving Communities to conduct vacancy study

Thriving Communities Institute and Lorain are expected later this month to begin a comprehensive study aimed at identifying the number of vacant structures in the city. The comprehensive, citywide survey will cover approximately 25,000 parcels, using uniform methodology to identify vacant properties. The survey is expected to take about two months to complete. The goal of the study is to provide the city of Lorain with information that can be used to prioritize properties with the goal of strategically using available demolition funds and determining the need for additional demolition funding.

The results will also be helpful in future land-use planning for vacant land and for creating a development strategy.

Crain's names Sarah Ryzner person to watch in nonprofit world

Crain's Cleveland Business has named Sarah Ryzner, director of projects for Thriving Communities Institute, to its Who to Watch list for nonprofits. Ryzner joined Western Reserve Land Conservancy and Thriving Communities after working as a real estate lawyer and as a site-acquisition consultant for commercial interests. Sarah, who also holds a master's degree in urban planning from Cleveland State University, is responsible for identifying and managing key real-estate transactions in urban areas and, in conjunction with our partners, promoting healthy land in urban neighborhoods. She also builds relationships and promotes Land Conservancy programs. Sarah lives in Cleveland.
Western Reserve Land Conservancy
main office
3850 Chagrin River Road
Moreland Hills, Ohio 44022
Ken Wood, director of communications and marketing
(440) 528-4161
kwood@wrlandconservancy.org

Upcoming Events

Grand River Cleanup
8 a.m.
Saturday, May 18
Hidden Valley Metropark
4880 Klasen Road
Madison Township, Ohio 44057

Come help us keep the Wild and Scenic Grand River in Ashtabula and Lake counties clean and pristine! Team River collects trash and debris from the banks of the Grand with help of canoes, donated by Lake Metroparks and ODNR Scenic Rivers. Team Terra Firma will hit the parks along that stretch to keep the land around the river trash-free.

Conservation Rocks!
6:30 p.m.-midnight
Friday, June 7
Beachland Ballroom
15711 Waterloo Road
Cleveland, Ohio

Join us for a night of music and fun as musicians who work in local conservation play the venerable Beachland. Performers will include Paul Van Curen and Julie Patton, Foster Brown, Paul Pira, The Rust Buckets, Fat City and Pete McDonald & the Black Oaks. Tickets are $10 and can be purchased through the Beachland website or by contacting a Land Conservancy staffer.
www.beachlandballroom.com

Raccoon County Music Festival
Noon - 8 p.m.
Saturday, Aug. 17
Century Village Museum
Burton

A day of music, food and fun for people of all ages!

Revitalizing Ohio’s Vacant Properties: Tools and Policies to Transform Communities
October 22-23
The Westin Columbus
310 S. High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Revitalizing Ohio’s Vacant Properties is a two-day interactive training and policy conference details and more from Thriving Communities Institute
solutions summit that will offer hands-on techniques and strategies to address vacant and abandoned property challenges and generate redevelopment opportunities. For more information, please visit www.thrivingcommunitiesinstitute.org or www.greaterohio.org.

For questions or sponsorship opportunities, please contact Kate Hydock of Thriving Communities Institute at khydock@wrlandconservancy.org or (216) 515-8300 or Christina Burke of Greater Ohio Policy Center at cburke@greaterohio.org or (614) 224-0187.

For more information on Land Conservancy events, visit www.wrlandconservancy.org

Quicklinks

Thriving Communities Institute
Western Reserve Land Conservancy

How Thriving Communities was formed

In March 2011, Western Reserve Land Conservancy launched a region-wide effort to help revitalize our urban centers. We named the effort Thriving Communities Institute because of all the connotations the word thriving holds for urban centers: flourishing, prospering, blossoming and successful. Our cities have thrived in the past; and we believe they will thrive again. They will move from vacancy to vitality.

Thriving Communities Institute, led by director Jim Rokakis, is already lending its hand to transform vacant and unproductive properties into new opportunities to attract economic growth, to bring green space to our cities, and to support safe, beautiful neighborhoods. In working with community leaders in our region, we have learned that urban revitalization is a process, one with many steps supported by great partnerships.