

David Whitaker, Esq.
Director
Irvin Corley, Jr.
Executive Policy Manager
Marcell R. Todd, Jr.
Director, City Planning
Commission
Janese Chapman
Director, Historic Designation
Advisory Board

John Alexander
LaKisha Barclift, Esq.
Timarie DeBruhl
Paige Blessman
M. Rory Bolger, Ph.D., FAICP
Victory Corley
Lisa DiChiera
Eric Fazzini, AICP
Willene Green
Christopher Gulock, AICP

City of Detroit
CITY COUNCIL
LEGISLATIVE POLICY DIVISION
208 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
Detroit, Michigan 48226
Phone: (313) 224-4946 Fax: (313) 224-4336

Ayesha Harris
Marcel Hurt, Esq.
Sandra L. Jeffers
Kimani Jeffrey
Anthony W. L. Johnson
Phillip Keller, Esq.
Edward King
Kelsey Maas
Jamie Murphy
Dolores Perales-Lara
Analine Powers, Ph.D.
W. Akilah Redmond
Renee Short
Floyd Stanley
Thomas Stephens, Esq.
Theresa Thomas
Janice Tillmon
Ian Tomashik
Emberly Vick

TO: Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director 
Legislative Policy Division

DATE: April 23, 2026

RE: Request for Information on Relationship Between DLBA and Wayne County Treasurer's Office

The Legislative Policy Division (LPD) has been requested by Council Member Mary Waters to provide a report answering a line of questions relating to the relationship between the Detroit Land Bank Authority and the Wayne County Treasurer's Office (WCTO). LPD notes that the answers and information to the questions presented are within the purview of the DLBA. LPD requested the assistance of the DLBA in providing the answer. The DLBA has responded to the questions in the attachment, LPD would like to thank the DLBA for their assistance regarding this matter.

If we can be of further assistance, please call upon us.



TO: David Whitaker, Legislative Policy Division

FROM: Tammy Daniels, CEO, Detroit Land Bank Authority

DATE: April 20, 2026

RE: Responses to Councilmember At-Large Mary Waters' Request for Information on Relationship Between Detroit Land Bank Authority and the Wayne County Treasurer's Office

In response to your questions regarding the Wayne County Treasurer's Office, the DLBA submits the following responses:

What contractual or formal agreement exists between the Detroit Land Bank Authority and the Wayne County Treasurer's Office regarding properties that do not sell at the Wayne County tax foreclosure auction?

Response: There is currently no contractual or formal agreement between the DLBA and the Wayne County Treasurer's Office regarding properties that do not sell at Wayne County's tax foreclosure auctions.

1. How many properties or homes are set aside or transferred to the DLBA each year from unsold county tax auction properties?

Response: The number of unsold tax foreclosed properties offered by the Wayne County Treasurer to the DLBA each year depends on how many properties do not sell at Wayne County's tax foreclosure auctions. The table below details the number of lots and structures transferred to the DLBA by the Wayne County Treasurer each calendar year since 2014.

Property Class	Vacant Lots	Structures	Grand Total
2014	1,155	5,678	6,833
2015	6,349	6,693	13,042
2016	7,160	8,450	15,610
2017	2,196	6,754	8,950
2018	129	412	541
2019	421	360	781

2020	0	2	2
2021	502	369	871
2022	405	311	716
2023	609	138	747
2024	137	150	287
2025	67	201	268
2026-TD	1	0	1
Grand Total	19,131	29,519	48,650

2. Is the WCT legally required under the Michigan Land Bank Fast Track Act to transfer certain tax-foreclosed properties to a land bank authority? If so, what specific sections of the law govern this process?

Response: Section 78m of the General Property Tax Act, 206 P.A. 1893, MCL 211.78m(7)(a) governs the process of county treasurers transferring unsold tax foreclosed properties to land bank authorities. The DLBA has historically accepted all unsold residential property in order to fulfill its function and purpose as the city's owner of last resort.

3. How many properties are transferred to the Wayne County Land Bank Authority compared to the Detroit Land Bank Authority?

Response: The DLBA does not possess data about the Wayne County Land Bank Authority. Questions about the transfer of properties to the Wayne County Land Bank Authority should be directed to the Wayne County Land Bank Authority.

4. What is the typical condition of the properties transferred to the DLBA?

Response: As the "owner of last resort", residential property transferred to the DLBA is typically not in good condition. This is true in terms of the condition of the land, the structure, and often the legal title as well, in addition to its lower value. After all, if the property was in better condition (in terms of structure and legal title), then the prior owner would likely have availed themselves of private market transactions to either avoid the loss of property through tax foreclosure or the voluntary donation of their property to the DLBA.

5. Are they primarily demolition candidates?

Response: No.

6. Are any structurally salvageable or suitable for rehabilitation?

Response: Yes.

7. Is the City of Detroit required to take ownership of these properties once they are transferred to the DLBA, or could they remain under the Wayne County Land Bank Authority? If not, what legal or administrative reason prevents that?

Response: No, the City of Detroit is not required to take ownership of unsold tax foreclosed properties located in the city of Detroit. While the General Property Tax Act specifically authorizes the DLBA as a land bank to take ownership of unsold tax foreclosed properties located in the city of Detroit it does not require it.

The current practice is informed by the troubling and longer history of tax foreclosure in our city. For decades, unsold tax foreclosed properties in the city of Detroit were scattered across multiple different governmental entities at the city, county, and state level. The scattered ownership did not alleviate the problems of abandonment and blight, it only denied neighborhoods and local leaders from the ability to proactively address the problems. The lack of consolidated and local control meant no side lot fairs, no clearing of legal title issue, no new infill housing, no new factories, etc. Indeed, this was part of the prompt for the community advocating for the Detroit Land Bank prior to its creation in 2009 as the owner of last resort. The sentiment was that *'we already own the problem, we might as well own the property'*. (The effect of this inconsistent and scattered approach over decades is documented and detailed in the "[Detroit Future City Strategic Framework: Land and Buildings Assets](#).")

Properties sold by the City and DLBA are much more frequently sold to Detroiters, are less likely to return to foreclosure, and more likely to become reoccupied. For example, 89% of property sold by the DLBA was purchased by Detroit residents. However, only 25% of Detroit property sold by the Wayne County Treasurer's Office was purchased by Detroit residents in 2025.

Property Use and Proceeds

1. How does the DLBA use the proceeds from property sales?

Response: The DLBA uses proceeds from property sales to fund its operations. Property sales revenue represents approximately 40% of all DLBA revenue and it supports all areas of operations.

2. What percentage of revenue is allocated to demolition, rehabilitation, administrative costs, or community programs?

Response: In FY26, the DLBA's budget allocated 100% of all revenue to fund annual expenditures. (Due to the lack of City subsidy, this resulted in a budget deficit which required the DLBA to allocate roughly \$4M of its fund balance to cover FY26 operations.)

The DLBA budget (see attached) allocates resources to residential property rehabilitation programming focused on strengthening the community. This is in line with the DLBA's larger responsibility of returning properties to productive use. It requires the allocation of finite resources to focus on multiple areas of this mission. As such, the DLBA operating budget is not comprised of limited allocations to rehabilitation and community programs, but a comprehensive focus on these components through all staff and service areas. Salaries and benefits comprise 46% of the current operating budget, which is specifically targeted to focus on rehabilitation and community programs. More specifically, property rehabilitation and administrative costs are 16% of total staff costs. There are no allocations for demolition costs as the DLBA no longer conducts demolitions.

3. How many properties acquired through the tax foreclosure process have been used in the DLBA NAP Program?

Response: Zero. If an unsold tax foreclosed property is transferred to the DLBA, there is no need or ability for the DLBA to then use the nuisance abatement program on that property.

4. The properties sold through the NAP Program, how many were purchased by: Detroit residents, real estate investors or companies, nonprofit community development corporations (CDOs)?

Response: The DLBA does not separately track the purchasers of NAP properties, but, of all property sold by the DLBA, 89% was purchased by Detroit residents.

5. How many NAP properties were ultimately rehabilitated and occupied by homeowners?

Response: Since 2014, over 2,500 properties have been rehabilitated and achieved compliance through the Nuisance Abatement Program.

6. What safeguards are in place to ensure that NAP properties are not simply transferred to speculative investors?

Response: The Nuisance Abatement Program's primary safeguard for ensuring that blight is addressed is its rehab agreement, which is a binding contract obligating a defendant property owner to rehab the property. If a nuisance property owner refuses to fulfill their responsibilities, the DLBA's other safeguard is to seek a court order transferring title to the DLBA for the purpose of abating the nuisance in order to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of the community. If a court does order a property transferred to the DLBA, and it is ultimately sold, it has an 89% chance of being purchased by a Detroit resident. All such sales come with an enforceable rehab agreement to ensure the purchaser returns the property to productive use.

Ownership and Heir Properties

1. Of the tax-foreclosed properties transferred to the DLBA, how many were previously heirs' properties or involved in probate disputes?

Response: The DLBA has no involvement in the tax foreclosure process and cannot speak to the prior status of any tax foreclosed properties. Questions about the tax foreclosure process should be directed to the Wayne County Treasurer's Office.

2. How does the DLBA handle properties that are later discovered to have unresolved probate or heirship claims?

Response: The DLBA created its Buy Back Program ten years ago to help individuals with a demonstrated history or family connection to a property regain ownership. Buy Back provides a structured pathway for occupants and family members of former owners to repurchase the home by verifying their connection and completing program requirements, such as financial counseling and tax compliance. This approach ensures that heirs and other connected individuals are given a meaningful, prioritized opportunity to reclaim property before it is made available for sale to the general public, while maintaining a transparent disposition process.

3. Are heirs or family members given an opportunity to reclaim the property before it is sold by the land bank?

Response: Yes, that is the central feature of the Buy Back Program. Buy Back gives occupants and connected individuals first priority by channeling those claims into an ownership opportunity via Buy Back. It is specifically aimed at people who have family ties to the property or were victims of deed fraud. Heirs and family members are given a meaningful opportunity to reclaim the property if they can demonstrate a connection and meet program requirements.

4. What policies exist to prevent the loss of generational homes due to tax foreclosure and probate complications?

Response: The DLBA has no involvement in the tax foreclosure process. The statutory authority to foreclose on property for delinquent taxes belongs to the Wayne County Treasurer's Office and so questions about the tax foreclosure process should be directed there.

Transparency and Accountability

1. Does the DLBA publish annual reports detailing: the numbers of properties acquired, the number of sold, demolition totals, rehabilitation outcomes?

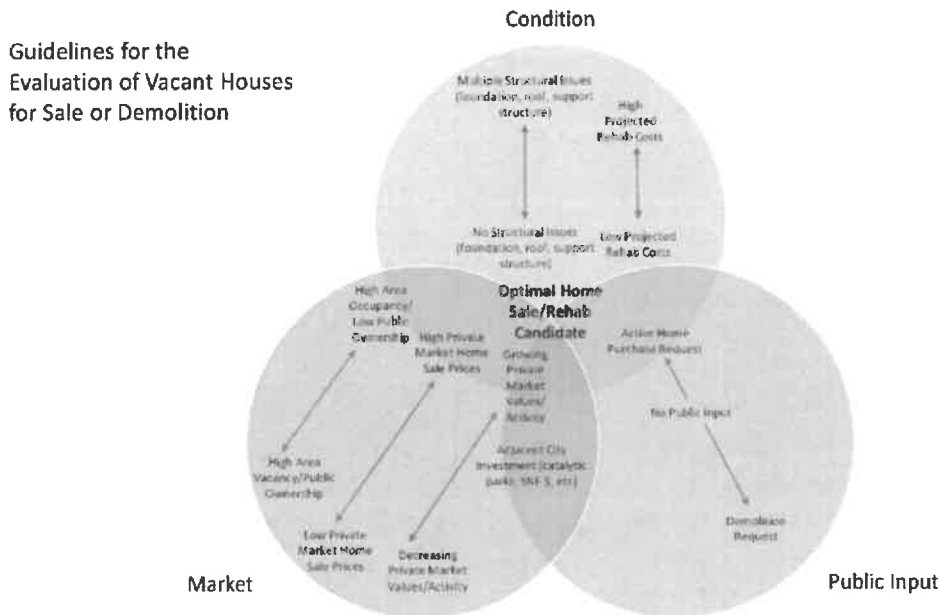
Response: Yes. In fact, the DLBA has published these reports four times every year on a quarterly basis since 2014 and then presented them to the City Council. All of these reports and others can be found on our website at: <https://buildingdetroit.org/dlba-reports>.

2. How many properties transferred from the WCT remain vacant or unsold after five years?

Response: Of the 28,349 unsold tax foreclosed residential structures transferred from the WCT to the DLBA between 2014-2020, only 249 (or 0.88%) are still vacant structures in DLBA's inventory after five years.

3. What criteria determine whether a property is demolished versus rehabilitated?

Response: The DLBA uses three lenses to assess structures – structural inspection, market assessment, and public input. Whenever the DLBA acquires a structure, its building inspectors conduct at least one thorough inspection of the property to determine the feasibility of rehab, including foundation, utilities, structure, envelope, roof, and other major systems. Staff then weigh these results against market demand in the area, looking at values, volumes, and past listing performance in nearby areas. Finally, staff assess the DLBA's inquiry history for the property to assess whether neighbors and other stakeholders are requesting to purchase or demolish the property. Staff balance all three of these factors in moving a structure to the demolition or sales pipelines. Please find a graphic summarizing these considerations below.



4. How does the DLBA coordinate with neighborhood residents or community groups before deciding the fate of properties?

Response: In recent years, the DLBA has received approximately 100,000 formal and informal inquiries from residents each year, expressing interest and concern about properties. DLBA staff are constantly assessing this feedback to triage and re-triage properties to be responsive to resident feedback (and residents do not always agree with each other). While staff assess existing public input when making initial pipeline assignments for a structure, staff conduct ongoing monitoring of this feedback, and will re-inspect properties when the DLBA receives new public inquiries requesting purchase or demolition. Staff routinely move properties between the sales and demolition pipelines, and the impetus for these changes is typically public feedback.