



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Donovan Smith, Chair, Detroit City Planning Commission  
**From:** Robert Linn, Director of Planning & Analysis, Detroit Land Bank Authority  
**Date:** August 20, 2025  
**Subject:** A summary of the DLBA's vacant land programs and outcomes

### OVERVIEW

This memorandum provides a summary of the Detroit Land Bank Authority's (DLBA) vacant lot programming, the benefits these programs generate for Detroit residents and neighborhoods, and the ways in which the City and DLBA strategically manage land to support housing, infrastructure, and economic development priorities.

### DLBA VACANT LAND PROGRAMMING

In total, the Detroit Land Bank Authority operates 10 programs to sell vacant lots to residents, community groups, developers and builders, and other stakeholders that vary in scope, intended purpose and audience, and locational limitations. For the sake of clarity, this memo will break the programs into four categories based on shared similarities.

- **Side Lots** – Launched in 2014, the Side Lot program is the DLBA's flagship land sales program. The program offers Detroit homeowners the opportunity to purchase contiguous vacant lots adjacent or behind their homes at a \$100 fixed price. The land bank prioritizes competing application first by the resident living closest, and then by the order in which the application was received. To date, the land bank has sold 25,348 Side Lots to Detroit homeowners.
- **Neighborhood Lots** – Launched in 2021, the Neighborhood Lot program is the DLBA's largest program by listings, with 23,417 lots listed for sale currently, and second largest program by sales, with 4,663 lots sold thus far. The program allows owner-occupants within 500 feet of a lot to purchase the land for \$250, after a lot has gone unsold in the Side Lot program for 180 days. The land bank prioritizes competing application first by the resident living closest, and then by the order in which the application was received. The program requires the endorsement of an eligible local community group, area non-profit, Council Member, or District Manager for purchase.
- **Specialized Vacant Land Programs** – The DLBA operates a number of specialized vacant land programs that operate like the Side Lot program but are focused on selling unusual lots that require a specialized review or controls. These programs – Accessory Structure Lots, aimed at selling garages and sheds; Improved Lots, aimed at selling lots fenced in with residents' homes; Oversize Lots, aimed at selling especially large parcels over 7,500 square feet; and Homestead Lots, aimed at selling lots bundled with DLBA homes – have collectively sold fewer than 400 lots.



- **Development-Focused Programming** – The DLBA operates a number of application-based programs – Infill Housing Lots, Create-A-Project, Neighborhood Beautification, Economic Development, and Community Partners – aimed at supporting the development of infill housing, greenspaces, parking, and other uses. Since these programs are aimed at supporting projects, rather than selling to nearby neighbors, purchasers are not constrained by location, and the pricing is typically set by the market and then discounted based on the community benefit of the project (up to 90% in some instances). Sales through these programs typically require approval of City agency staff, whether that is Department of Neighborhoods approval for Create-A-Project sales, or regional planning team approval for Economic Development sales.

## PROGRAM IMPACT & OUTCOMES

Detroiters benefit from this work in many ways. Residents of the city purchase the overwhelming majority of the land sold through these programs, benefit from the new infrastructure and development projects resulting from properties held, residents gain an opportunity to develop new projects on their land, and these sales contribute to city's real estate market and tax rolls.

- In total, the Detroit Land Bank Authority has sold more than 30,000 lots through its vacant land programs, and more than 88% of these sales were to Detroiters. The Side Lot Program is limited to owners of occupied homes, and the Neighborhood Lot program is limited to owner occupants. Because of these rules, as well the land bank's commitment to resident engagement, nearly 9 in 10 buyers are residents.
- Per the land bank's memorandum of understanding with the City of Detroit, the DLBA takes planning direction from the City of Detroit. In the context of vacant land programming, this direction takes the form of Land Review Areas. In some areas, City Departments – ranging from the Planning & Development Department and Housing & Revitalization Department to the Airport Department and General Services Department – can, with the approval of relevant department leadership and the Director of Planning & Development ask the land bank to implement a Project Hold Area, to restrict the sale of some or all land bank property in an area. While this process does impinge on resident access to land in these areas, it has facilitated the assembly and transfer of more than 3,500 parcels to the City of Detroit to support scores of projects, from the Ossian Sweet Home cultural corridor and park expansion projects across the city, to Brightmoor green stormwater projects and the Choice Neighborhoods Project affordable housing developments in Corktown. At the direction of Planning & Development Department staff, the land bank also administers Inclusive Housing Opportunity Areas (IHOA) in neighborhoods with the highest home values and demand for new housing. These areas cover neighborhoods such as Brush Park, Woodbridge, Indian Village, and Green Acres. In total, these areas represent less than 1,000 DLBA-owned lots, or less than 2% of current inventory. In these areas, the land bank sells Side Lots, but



with additional requirements, including that residents are limited to a single lot and must be an owner occupant who has lived in the property for at least 24 months. Additionally, Side Lots in these areas are sold with a deed restriction preventing development without land bank approval for a period of 10 years. Since the inception of the program, 11 of the 25,348 (0.04%) Side Lots sold to date have included this deed restriction language.<sup>1</sup> This policy was implemented in an effort to deter speculative purchases of Side Lots that hinder affordable housing construction. A map of these IHOA zones is included at the end of this memo.

- Through these vacant land programs, Detroiters have an unmatched level of access to land and development opportunity. Currently, 47% of Detroit households are eligible to purchase a Side Lot or Neighborhood Lot. Except for lots in sold in IHOA areas, all lots are sold free and clear of encumbrances that prevent new development.<sup>2</sup> Hundreds of residents have leveraged this opportunity to invest in their lots by building driveways, greenhouses, additions, garages, playscapes, or ground up construction.
- The DLBA's vacant land program sales have also benefitted the benefitted the City and its residents financially. The land bank's vacant land program sales – excluding land sold for infill housing and other projects – have an aggregate assessed value of more than \$37,000,000, making a meaningful contribution to the City's tax base and property tax receipts. At the same time, these lots have an average market value 50-fold higher than their purchase price, creating wealth for residents.
- The City and its residents also benefit financially from these vacant land policy programs. For example, the land bank's Side Lot and Neighborhood Lot sales, alone, have an aggregate assessed value of more than \$3,600,000, creating a meaningful contribution to the City's annual property tax revenue. At the same time, residents have created an average of \$6,800 in wealth with each purchase given prevailing average vacant land values. Additionally, a 2019 University of Illinois graduate research project found that Side Lots increase the value of adjacent homes 10-15% when included in the sale, creating an even greater opportunity for wealth creation.

## OVERVIEW

This memorandum outlined the land bank's vacant land programming, including the residents' remarkable ability to purchase vacant land, and in 99.96% of cases, build upon these lots without prior DLBA approval. While these programs are at times guided or restricted by various City planning agencies in specified areas,

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<sup>1</sup> Staff are currently studying the opportunity to raise the market threshold that defines these areas (\$100/SQF) to reduce their scope, and change the deed restriction from one prohibiting development to one prohibiting transfer for a profit.

<sup>2</sup> A sample IHOA deed with this restriction and sample standard Side Lot deed without this restriction are included below.



these lots are used to address areas of critical public concern, including parkland, affordable housing, economic development, and cultural amenities.

Exhibit 1: Map of Inclusive Housing Opportunity Areas

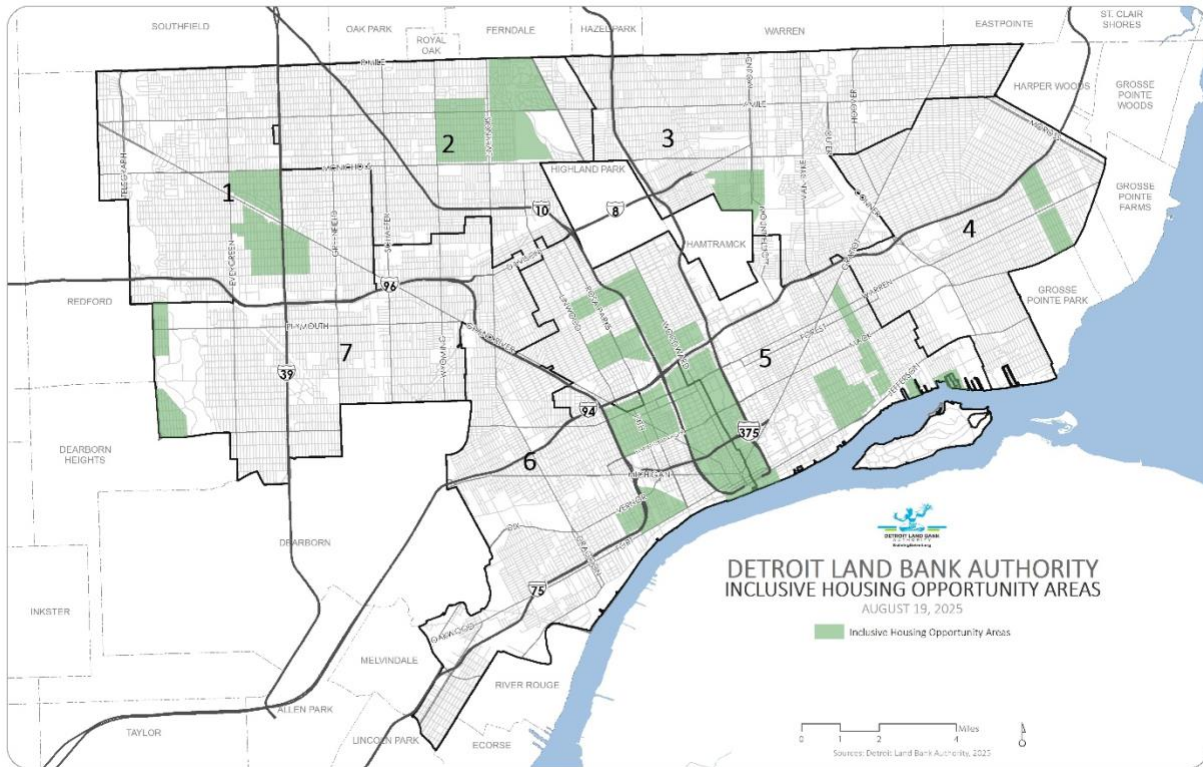


Exhibit 2: Example Standard Side Lot Deed, without Deed Restriction Language



2021425547 L: 57248 P: 523 QCD  
12/07/2021 10:57:25 AM Total Pages: 1  
Bernard J. Youngblood, Register of Deeds - Wayne County, MI  
ELECTRONICALLY RECORDED

#### QUIT CLAIM DEED

The Detroit Land Bank Authority, a Michigan public body corporate ("Grantor"), whose address is 500 Griswold, Suite 1200, Detroit, Michigan, 48226, conveys to Hafeed Alammari, ("Grantee"), whose address is 7849 Payne, Dearborn, MI 48126, the following premises in the City of Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan:

Legal Description: E AUBURN LOT 208 & W 1/2 VAC ALLEY ADJ FLORENCE PARK SUB L48 P82 PLATS, W C R 22/276 40 X 133

Parcel ID: 22092097.

Commonly known as: 6244 Auburn, Detroit, Michigan 48228

together with all and singular the tenements, hereditaments, fixtures, and appurtenances of that property, for the full consideration of One Hundred Dollars and 00/100 (\$100). This conveyance is exempt from taxes pursuant to MSA 7.456(5)(h)(i); MCL 207.505(h)(i); MSA 7.456(26)(h)(i); MCL 207.526(h)(i).

Dated: 12/6/2021

Signed by Grantor

Detroit Land Bank Authority

By:

Jeanne Hanna

Director, Disposition

STATE OF MICHIGAN )  
 ) ss.  
WAYNE COUNTY )

This document was acknowledged, subscribed and sworn before me this 6<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2021, by Jeanne Hanna, Director, Disposition, Detroit Land Bank Authority.

Signature of Notary

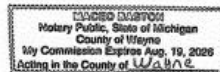
Maceo Baston

Printed name of Notary

Notary Public, State of Michigan, County of: Wayne

Acting in the County of: Wayne

My commission expires: August 19, 2026



When recorded return to: Hafeed Alammari 7849 Payne Dearborn, MI 48126	Send subsequent tax bills to: Hafeed Alammari 7849 Payne Dearborn, MI 48126	Drafted by: Robert G Spence Detroit Land Bank Authority 500 Griswold, Suite 1200 Detroit, Michigan 48226
Tax Parcel ID: 22092097.	Recording Fee: \$	Revenue Stamps: \$

Exhibit 3: Example IHOA Side Lot Deed, with Deed Restriction Language



2025015521 L: 59296 P: 952 QCD  
01/16/2025 10:49:19 AM Total Pages: 1  
Bernard J. Youngblood, Register of Deeds - Wayne County, MI  
ELECTRONICALLY RECORDED

#### QUIT CLAIM DEED

The Detroit Land Bank Authority ("DLBA"), a Michigan public body corporate, whose address is 500 Griswold, Suite 1200, Detroit, Michigan, 48226, quit claims to Jesus Vega ("Grantee"), whose address is 42945 Whitestone Ct, Northville, Michigan 48168, the following premises in the City of Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan:

N TEMPLE W 1/2 OF LOT 12 BLK 94 WILLIAM L WOODBRIDGES SUB L4 P82 PLATS, W C R 8/34 25 X 115

Parcel ID: 08000732.

Commonly known as 1548 Temple, Detroit, Michigan 48216

together with all and singular the tenements, hereditaments, fixtures, and appurtenances of that property, for the full consideration of one hundred dollars (\$100.00). This conveyance is exempt from taxes pursuant to MSA 7.456(5)(h)(i); MCL 207.505(h)(i); MSA 7.456(26)(h)(i); MCL 207.526(h)(i).

#### Notice of Covenant

This conveyance is given subject to the following restrictive covenant which shall be construed as a covenant running with the land and shall be binding upon the Grantee and Grantee's successors and assigns and enforceable by Grantor.

In accordance with the section of DLBA's Amended and Restated Vacant Land Policy regarding Inclusive Housing Opportunity Areas, for a period of ten years beginning on the date of execution of this conveyance, no structure shall be erected, placed, or permitted to remain on the land herein conveyed unless this restriction is waived in writing by DLBA, which such waiver may or may not be granted in DLBA's sole discretion.

#### DETROIT LAND BANK AUTHORITY

Dated: 01/16/2025

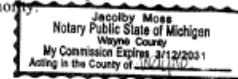
STATE OF MICHIGAN )  
COUNTY OF ) ss

Jeanne Hanna  
Jeanne Hanna  
Director, Real Estate, Sales and Marketing

This document was acknowledged, subscribed and sworn before me this 16 day of January, 2025  
by Jeanne Hanna, Director, Real Estate, Sales and Marketing, Detroit Land Bank Authority.

Jacoby Moss  
Signature of Notary

Jacoby Moss  
Printed name of Notary



Notary Public, State of Michigan, County of: Wayne; Acting in the County of: Wayne

My commission expires: 03/12/2031

When recorded return to and subsequent tax bills to: Jesus Vega 42945 Whitestone Ct Northville, MI 48168	Drafted by: John Hills Detroit Land Bank Authority 500 Griswold, Suite 1200 Detroit, Michigan 48226
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