



City of Cleveland Land Reutilization Corp. (Cleveland Land Bank) Information to Get You Started & Frequently Asked Questions

NOTICE: The Department of Community Development, Land Bank Office is updating its policies and processes. Information is current as of 8/15/2024. Check back for up-to-date information at the time of application.

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ABOUT THE CLEVELAND LAND BANK:

What is the Cleveland Land Bank?

The City of Cleveland's Land Reutilization Program (Cleveland Land Bank) owns, manages and maintains vacant land. Land bank property is made available for sale or lease to individuals, developers, partner agencies and non-profit organizations for the purposes of redevelopment. The goal of the Land Bank is to contribute to the social, economic and environmental health and vibrancy of Cleveland's neighborhoods through the redevelopment and revitalization of its land.

Who administers the Cleveland Land Bank?

The Cleveland Land Bank is a program of the Bureau of Neighborhood Revitalization, which is one of six bureaus in the Department of Community Development. The Land Bank was previously administered by the Division of Neighborhood Development. Additionally, the Department of Economic Development administers the City's Industrial-Commercial Land Bank.

What programs does the Cleveland Land Bank offer?

The Cleveland Land Bank currently offers three programs. Applicants can apply to buy land outright or lease it for specific uses. Other proposed uses may also be considered.

- Homeowner Yard Expansion:** Homeowners can buy Land Bank lots to make their yards bigger. The empty lot must be right next to or behind the house they own and live in.
- Infill Development:** Buyers can purchase Land Bank lots for infill development, which involves building structures with foundations and other permitted uses. Most projects involve constructing new housing units. Applicants interested in purchasing land bank property for business development and expansion should contact the [Department of Economic Development](#) to discuss their plans.
- Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens:** Community members can apply to lease Land Bank lots for gardens or farming, choosing between one-year agreements or multi-year options.





ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

Applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements in order for their request to be considered:

- Applicant is not tax delinquent on any property they own in the city of Cleveland.
- Applicant does not have open code violations on any property they own in the city of Cleveland.
- Applicant has current rental registration for all rental property they own in the city of Cleveland.
- If applying for a yard expansion, applicant owns and lives in the adjacent property as their primary residence. (Renters and off-premise landlords are not eligible to purchase lots under the yard expansion program, but may be considered for a fair market value sale.)

KNOW BEFORE YOU APPLY:

- **Pricing:** By law, all lots are sold for Fair Market Value. Yard expansions for adjacent, owner-occupied households and affordable housing developments *may be considered* for a reduced purchase price.
- **Site Plans:** Applicants must submit a detailed site plan showing proposed improvements at the time of application. Site plans must be submitted via email as a .PDF, .JPG or .PNG file.
 - For applications proposing development, site plans must include dimensions, setbacks from property lines, widths of structures and drives, etc. Neighborhood Planners can provide more info.
- **Design Review:** If an applicant is approved to purchase a lot for development (anything ranging from a driveway to a garage to a new home), design review approval from the Cleveland Planning Commission is required prior to transferring the parcel. Design Review is administered through the Cleveland Planning Commission. For information on the Design Review process and to contact your Neighborhood Planner, visit: [CPC Design Review](#).
 - Residential new construction for 1–5 unit properties are reviewed by staff. These projects require a preliminary design review and zoning check.
 - Residential new construction for 6–20 units requires approval from Neighborhood Design Review.
 - Residential new construction for 20 units or more requires approval from Planning Commission.
 - If the lot is located in a historic district, design review approval from the Cleveland Landmarks Commission is required. To look up if the lot is located within a historic district and who to contact, navigate to the [GIS Viewer](#) and click on the parcel you are applying for.
 - Commercial projects should contact Economic Development and Planning before applying.
- **Proof of Funding:** Development projects require proof that funding for the project is secured. Proof of funding can be submitted after application approvals but is required prior to transferring property. Bank statements, loan commitments, tax credit awards, etc. are accepted as proof of funding.
 - **WHY?** The Cleveland Land Bank seeks to transfer land for projects that will provide reinvestment and redevelopment in Cleveland neighborhoods. Proof of funding provides assurance that a project will move forward successfully.
 - Affordable Housing development projects *may be considered* for reduced purchase prices below fair market value, but proof of funding ensuring the long-term affordability of units is required (i.e. Low-Income Housing Tax Credit award letter, etc.)
- **Timing:** The application process can take several months to complete. If an applicant submits an incomplete application, including no site plan, the application cannot be processed and may be denied.





GENERAL APPLICATION PROCESS:

STEP 1: Applicant completes the [Land Bank Expression of Interest](#) form online and emails a detailed Site Plan to CD-DND@clevelandohio.gov as a .PDF, .JPG, or .PNG file attachment.

- *If you need assistance submitting the Expression of Interest and site plan, a community engagement intake specialist can assist you. Call 216-664-4126 or visit Cleveland City Hall, Dept. of Community Development, Room 320, Monday through Friday 9 AM – 4:30 PM for assistance.*

STEP 2: Applicant receives an auto-generated email confirming that the submission was received. Land Bank Staff are notified of a new submission in the City's portal and a case file is generated.

STEP 3: Land Bank Staff review application for completeness, confirm applicant eligibility, ensure the parcel is owned by the Cleveland Land Bank, and confirm if it is available for sale for the proposed use.

- a. If the application is incomplete, applicant will be contacted via email for follow-up information. Outstanding information must be submitted within 14 days or the application will be closed-out.
- b. If parcel is not owned by the land bank and/or is not available, application will be closed-out.

Step 4: Request is forwarded to local stakeholders including the Councilmember, Neighborhood Planner and area Community Development Corporation. These stakeholders have 45 days to review the request and submit their approval or denial in writing, or request a 30-day extension.

- a. If application is approved by stakeholders, application moves forward to the next step.
- b. If stakeholder feedback varies or if no response is received, staff re-review the application to determine if it will be recommended for approval or denied.

Step 5: Applicant is notified of decision. If approved, final information is gathered from applicant. Land Bank may attach certain conditions to the sale.

Step 6: Land Bank Staff create a resolution for the Director of Community Development and the Board of Control. Resolutions include the sale price for the land (typically fair market value). If the resolution is approved, legal descriptions are drafted and authorized by the City's Survey Section.

Step 7: For development projects, Land Bank Staff verify the following items are in place before proceeding with transfer: (1) Design approval from Planning Commission and (2) Proof of adequate financing.

Step 8: Deeds are drafted by the Law Department and circulated to the applicant and City Officials for signature. Payment and associated fees are due to the Land Bank Office at the time of deed signing. Staff can provide additional detail regarding closing process and fees.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q: What are the initial eligibility requirements to purchase a lot through the land bank?

A: Applicants must be current on property taxes and have no active code violations on property they own. If applicant owns residential rental property, applicant must be current on all rental registrations.

Q: I live next door to a City land bank lot and would like to expand my yard. What's my first step?

A: The yard expansion program is available to homeowner-occupied residents who live in the home that borders a City land bank property. Owner-occupants in one, two and three-family homes are eligible. The City reserves some parcels for new construction in order to support neighborhood investment and create housing, so not all parcels are available as yard expansions. Interested homeowners should submit an Expression of Interest and site plan, and Land Bank staff will help you determine if the parcel is available. *Note: The Land Bank Office is working on an online mapping tool to help applicants determine eligibility & approved uses before applying. Stay tuned!*





Q: I live next door to a City land bank lot and would like to build on it. Does this qualify as a yard expansion?

A: It depends. Applicants seeking to improve property with permanent improvements are considered a development, and are not usually available as yard expansions. These improvements include paved surfaces and structures that require a foundation, and require lot consolidation. Land Bank Staff will review your submission to determine if your request qualifies as through the Homeowner Yard Expansion Program, or if it will be processed as a development application. We're here to help!

Q: How much will the land bank parcel cost?

A: Most land bank parcels are sold for Fair Market Value. Fair Market Value is established by a representative appraisal conducted by the Dept. of Community Development, and adjusted based on market typologies in order to support equitable development and access to parcels. Applicants are notified of the sale price after a case file is generated. Approved homeowner yard expansions and affordable housing developments *may be considered* for a reduced purchase price.

Q: I am interested in building a new home on a City land bank lot. Where should I start?

A: The City Planning Commission and Department of Building & Housing can provide you with information to help you get started. Here are some initial considerations:

1. **Site Plans are required to get started:** Applicants can start the land bank application process by submitting a complete Expression of Interest and a site plan. Required site plan elements include key dimensions such as setbacks from property lines, widths of structures and drives, etc. *It is important to note that if your application is approved, the parcel cannot transfer until design review approval and proof of financing are completed and submitted.
2. **Shop around for architects and builders:** Find a contractor who is licensed and experienced. Check references and ratings including the Better Business Bureau. Builders must be registered with the City of Cleveland in order to pull permits. These entities will also be able to help you with a site plan to get started.
3. **Gather Financing:** Speak with your bank or local lenders to ensure you will be able to secure funding to finance your home construction project.
4. **Complete the Design Review process:** Submit your building plans to the City for approval. Applicants will work with their Neighborhood Planner to guide them through the process.
5. **Secure a building permit:** You need permission from the City to start building. Contact the Department of Building & Housing to learn about the permit application process.
6. **All Building and Zoning codes apply.** Your home must meet the City's building codes and zoning rules. Codes help ensure the structure is safe. You must also follow the City's design guidelines and secure the proper permits. Typically, your neighborhood planner and builder will help you navigate these processes.

Q: I am interested in purchasing a lot for a community garden. Where do I start?

A: The Land Bank currently leases properties for community gardens and agricultural uses. The Land Bank is exploring policy updates to consider sale of land for gardens and agriculture following a successful license period. Stay tuned for more information! In the meantime, in order to request a license or lease for a community garden or agricultural use, start by filling out the [Land Bank Expression of Interest](#) form online.

Q: Do I pay for the lot when I return the application?

A: No. You will be contacted via email if your application is approved. Payment is not required until all approvals are completed, and deeds are prepared for signature. Land Bank Staff can provide you with more information.





Q: There is a City land bank lot near my home that is poorly maintained. What can I do to get it cleaned-up?

A: The Department of Public Works maintains City-owned lots. Please call 3-1-1 to report any dumping, misuse or grass-cutting issues on City land bank property.

Q: Where can I learn more about the laws that govern the City's Land Bank?

A: Cleveland's Land Reutilization Program ordinance can be found here:

https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/cleveland/latest/cleveland_oh/0-0-0-6072

Q: Who can I contact if I have more questions?

A: If you have more questions, you can contact the City's land bank office. We are here to help you through the process. Please contact: CD-DND@clevelandohio.gov or call 216-664-4126.

USEFUL LINKS:

- **Cleveland Planning Commission:** [CPC Design Review webpage](#)
 - o Please reach out to your neighborhood planner to learn more about the design review process and receive an application. To look up which neighborhood planner to contact, navigate to the [GIS Viewer](#) and click on the parcel you are applying for.
- **Department of Building & Housing:** [Permit Application information](#)
- **Division of Engineering & Construction:** [Information on Survey, Parcel Consolidation & Engineering](#)
- **Department of Economic Development:** If you are interested in expanding your business onto land bank property, start by connecting with a [Neighborhood Investment Managers](#) in the Dept. of Economic Development to learn about what technical assistance and financial support the City can offer.

We hope this FAQ helps you understand how to successfully apply for and purchase or lease property from the Cleveland Land Bank. We look forward to working with you!





QUICK START GUIDE:

How can I purchase land from the Cleveland Land Bank for infill development?

Buyers can purchase Land Bank lots for infill development projects. There are many steps in the process and four main phases. Land Bank staff is available to help you through this process. Call 216-664-4126, email CD-DND@clevelandohio.gov, or visit City Hall if you need assistance.

SEE COMPLETE CLEVELAND LAND BANK FAQ FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Before you submit an application to the Cleveland Land Bank:

- Ensure you have no tax delinquencies or code violations on properties you own.
- Develop a site plan for how you'll use the land. You will need to submit a site plan with your application. Applications without site plans will not be reviewed.
- Hire a licensed builder registered with the City.
- Make a plan for how you will finance for your project. You will need to submit proof of financing before the property is transferred to you.
- For projects involving business expansion, contact a Neighborhood Investment Manager in the Dept. of Economic Development.
- Contact your Neighborhood Planner to understand design review and zoning requirements for your project.

When you're ready to submit an application to the Cleveland Land Bank:

- Fill out the online [Land Bank Expression of Interest](#) form.
- Email your site plan to CD-DND@clevelandohio.gov.
- Wait for application reviews to be completed by staff and local officials. Respond promptly if more information is needed.
- If approved, review the purchase price and confirm you want to proceed.

After your application is approved and you agree to the purchase price:

- Work with your Neighborhood Planner on Design Review approval.
- Submit proof that the project is funded and will break ground.
- Provide any final requested information.
- Sign necessary documents and pay required fees to complete the transfer.

After you own the property:

- Secure building permits within 90 days.
- Complete the project within 12 months.





QUICK START GUIDE:

How can I purchase land from the Cleveland Land Bank for yard expansion?

Homeowners can request to purchase Land Bank lots to make their yards bigger. The empty lot must be right next to or behind the house they own and live in. Land Bank staff is available to help you through this process. Call 216-664-4126, email CD-DND@clevelandohio.gov, or visit City Hall if you need assistance.

SEE COMPLETE CLEVELAND LAND BANK FAQ FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Before you submit an application to the Cleveland Land Bank:

- You must own and live in a home next to Cleveland Land Bank parcel.
- Owner-occupied home must be a one, two or three family.
- Ensure your property has no tax delinquencies or code violations.
- Create a simple site plan showing how you'll use the extra land.

When you're ready to submit an application to the Cleveland Land Bank:

- Fill out the online [Land Bank Expression of Interest](#) form.
- Email your site plan to CD-DND@clevelandohio.gov (.PDF, .JPG, or .PNG format).
- Wait for Land Bank staff to review your application and confirm if the parcel is available for yard expansion.
- Your request will be reviewed by local officials (may take 45 days or more).
- If approved, you'll receive the purchase price. Yard expansions may qualify for reduced prices.
- Provide any additional information requested in order to finalize sale.

After your application is approved and you agree to the purchase price:

- Parcel may require consolidation. Land Bank staff can assist you with the process.
- Sign necessary documents and pay required fees.
- Maintain the expanded yard according to city regulations.





QUICK START GUIDE:

How can I lease land from the Cleveland Land Bank for urban agriculture or a community garden?

Community members and organizations can lease Land Bank lots for gardens or farming, choosing between one-year agreements or multi-year options. Land Bank lots are currently NOT available for sale for this use. Land Bank staff is available to help you through this process. Call 216-664-4126, email CD-DND@clevelandohio.gov, or visit City Hall if you need assistance.

SEE COMPLETE CLEVELAND LAND BANK FAQ FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Before you submit an application to the Cleveland Land Bank:

- Ensure you have no tax delinquencies or code violations on properties you own.
- Create a clear site plan and management plan for the community garden or urban agriculture project.
- Contact land bank staff to learn more about training requirements and soil testing.
- Obtain liability insurance for up to \$1,000,000. You may be able to partner with a local nonprofit or CDC to obtain this.

When you're ready to submit an application to the Cleveland Land Bank:

- Fill out the online [Land Bank Expression of Interest](#) form.
- Email your site plan to CD-DND@clevelandohio.gov (.PDF, .JPG, or .PNG format).
- Wait for Land Bank staff to review your application and confirm if the parcel is available for lease.
- Your request will be reviewed by local officials (may take 45 days or more).
- If approved, you'll receive the lease terms including annual lease rate. Community projects may qualify for reduced rates.
- Confirm you want to proceed with the lease.

After your application is approved and you agree to the lease price:

- Complete soil testing. Land Bank Staff can connect you with resources.
- Ensure your project adheres to all City codes and requirements.
- Sign necessary documents and pay required fees.
- Begin implementing your garden or agriculture project according to your plan.
- Remember: Leases are typically year-to-year.

