ST. LOUIS
LAND BANK ASSESSMENT

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WHAT IS A LAND BANK?

- Public entities

- Established to acquire and manage vacant, abandoned and tax-delinquent properties; and

- Bring these properties back into productive use and onto the tax rolls.

- Center for Community Progress estimates over 120 land banks currently in the U.S.

THE PROPERTY LIFECYCLE

- **Before a Land Bank Acts:** Property becomes vacant and tax-delinquent

- **Step 1: Acquisition**

- **Step 2: Maintenance**
  - » Including demolition or stabilization for structures where needed
  - » Including mowing and possible leasing of vacant lots for greening uses

- **Step 3: Disposition** for redevelopment, greening, or other permanent productive use

SOURCE: TOM JEWELL / CLEVELAND.COM

STRATEGIC ACQUISITION: CLEVELAND, OH

- **Cuyahoga Land Bank** in Cleveland is able to strategically acquire properties rather than accept all properties at a certain tax delinquency level. Benefits are:
  - » **Smaller inventory** = lower maintenance costs
  - » Facilitate **immediate redevelopment** projects
  - » Able to focus on the **most dangerous** and high-impact demolitions

MAINTENANCE: FLINT, MI

- **Genesee County Land Bank** in Flint publishes a maintenance plan outlining their resources and their approach to maintenance each year, as well as outlining how the community can participate.
  - » **Acknowledging limited resources** = community understanding
  - » **Facilitating partnerships** with community for maintenance = leveraging additional resources

The Process of VACANT LOTS
A guide to reuse vacant lots in Pittsburgh

Legend
- Decision (green = yes, red = no)
- Action by OPEN SPACE SPECIALIST
- Action by Participant/applicant
- Approximate time for City reviews

idea — and/or — VLTK

Intake Form

Intake Form Review/Processing + Send Right-of-Entry Application

lot unavailable choose new lot

CITY/URA — **OTHER** — **PRIVATE**

ADOPT-A-LOT PROGRAM

COMMERCIAL USE

Right-of-Entry Application

SIDE YARD SALE PROGRAM
Proceed through City - Real Estate Division / URA - Real Estate Department

Right of Entry Processing

Schedule a meeting with the OSS

Notice to Proceed with Soil Test + Perform Soil Test + Submit Results to OSS

Over 1,000 PPM for lead = choose new lot

Soil Test Processing + Program Type + Soil Use Type

Is the lot tax delinquent? — Treasurer's Sale

Permission from owner — Conservatorship lot unavailable choose new lot

Agreement with owner

Zoning/PLI

PA One Call/ Soil Test

Planting

SKIP TO ADOPT-A-LOT PROGRAM TYPE
(Continued on next page)

GREENING: PITTSBURGH, PA

- **The City of Pittsburgh** has created a Vacant Lot Toolkit to educate community organizations and residents about greening programs on public land.
  - » **Different requirements for different programs** such as farming, community gardening, commercial uses
  - » **Option to purchase** after a number of successful years of maintenance

DATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

COMPLETED BY: _____

STRUCTURE INFORMATION

Enter an "X" or a number in the yellow box where appropriate.

☐	Accessory structure only	☐	# Floors
☐	Apartment building	☐	Has basement
☐	# Units	☐	Has garage
☐	Duplex	☐	Has off-street parking
☐	# Bedrooms/unit	☐	Year built, if known
☐	# Bathrooms/unit	☐	Square footage
☐	Single family		
☐	# Bedrooms		
☐	# Bathrooms		

DEMOLITION OR REPAIR SCORING

Enter an "X" in the yellow box where appropriate. Otherwise, leave it blank. The score will automatically calculate. The repair/value ratio will automatically appear after the repair estimate worksheet is completed.

☐	Has been declared a dangerous building (5 points)	0
☐	Significant damage due to fire, water, and/or deterioration (10 points)	0
	Block condition	
☐	Good - Demolition will remove primary blighting factor (5 points)	0
☐	Fair - Some blight would remain after demolition (3 points)	0
☐	Distressed - Significant blight will still remain after demolition (1 point)	0
☐	Located in a historic district (-10 points)	0
☐	Is a contributing structure in a historic district (-10 points)	0
	Registered neighborhood association prefers:	
☐	Demolition (5 points)	0
☐	Repair (-5 points)	0
☐	A neighbor will purchase vacant lot after demolition (5 points)	0
☐	The structure impedes the sale of other properties (5 points)	0
☐	Vacant lot can be combined with adjoining Land Bank property (5 points)	0
	Repair cost to value ratio (repair/value) (Complete repair estimate)	
☐	Under 100 % (-10 points)	0
☐	100% to 150% (5 points)	0
☐	Over 150% (10 points)	0
	TOTAL SCORE: (max = 50)	0

DEMOLITION: KANSAS CITY, MO

- **The Land Bank of Kansas City, MO** has authorized demolition policies that prioritize properties for demolition based on an inspection checklist that gives each property a score.

  » The checklist includes **multiple types of input** including community organizations' opinion; historic districts; market strength; and block condition.

- **The Land Bank of Kansas City, MO** allows purchasers to use "sweat equity" by discounting purchase prices for structures based on the cost of work needed to rehab these properties.
  » **Creating opportunities** for community members and small developers
  » **Checking back in after one year** ensures that the work has been completed and title is fully transferred

- **The Detroit Land Bank Authority** maintains a Community Partnership Program for qualifying non-profits, faith-based organizations, and community development organizations
  - » **Encourages** community organizations to redevelop and green vacant properties
  - » **Community can recommend a 20% discount** on winning property bids for partners
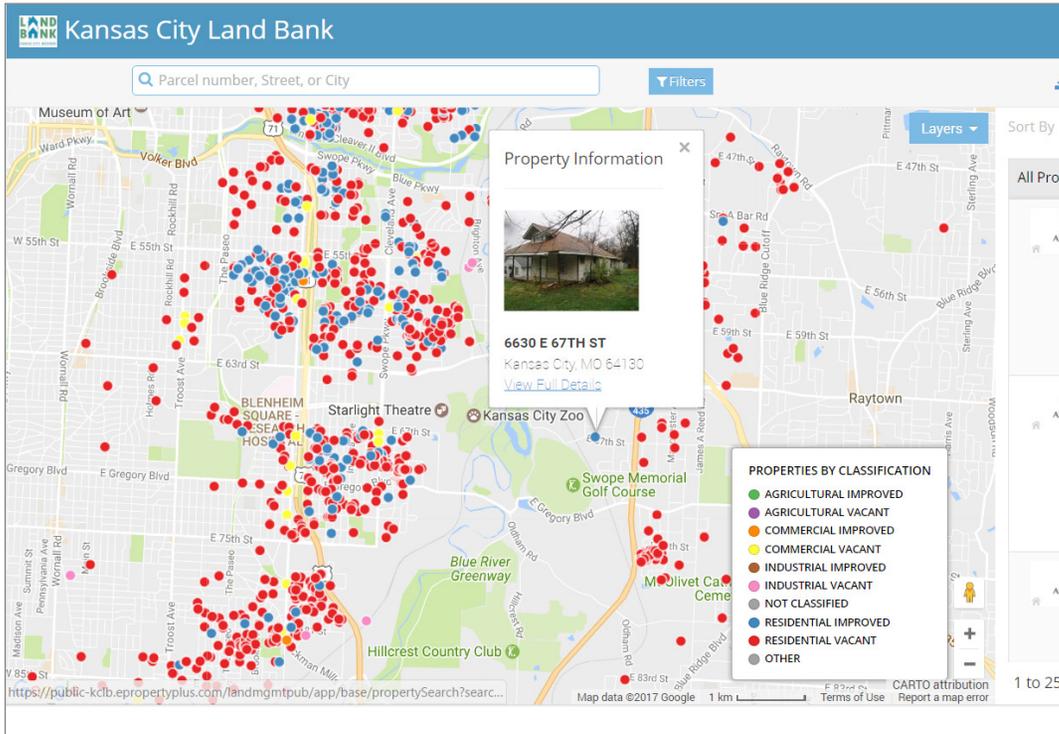
- **The Land Bank of Kansas City, MO** maintains a website with a detailed interactive map showing property information and pictures, as well as corresponding information on zoning, land use, historic districts, and more.

- **The Philadelphia Land Bank** has clear descriptions of programs that describe how the public can utilize their properties.
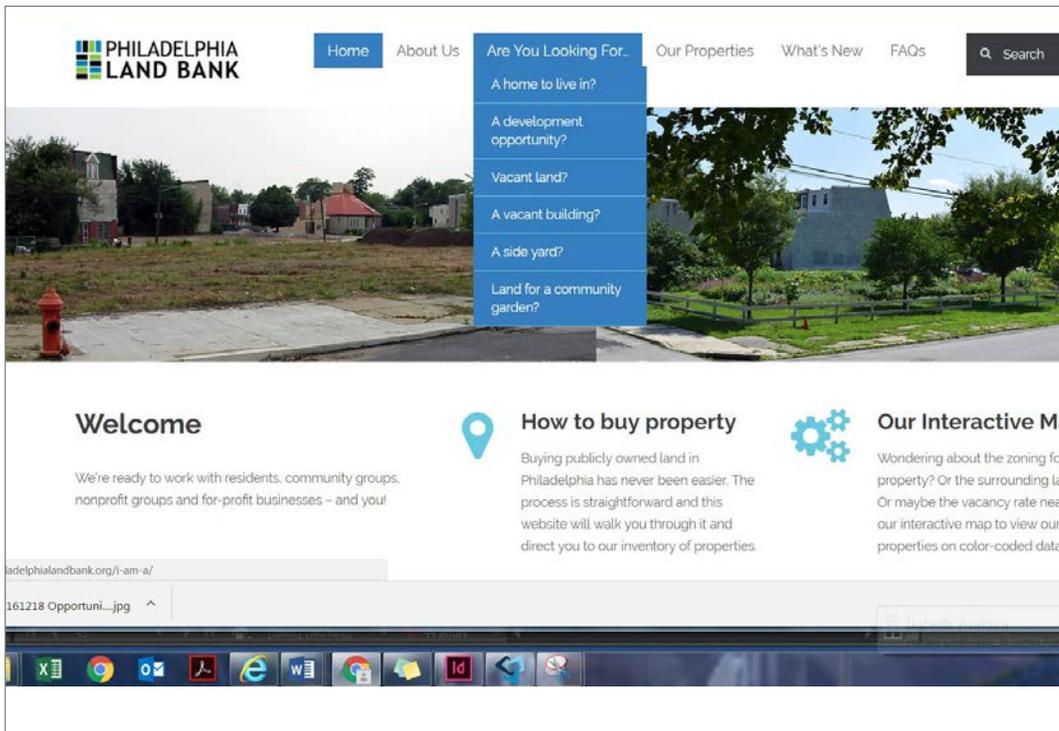
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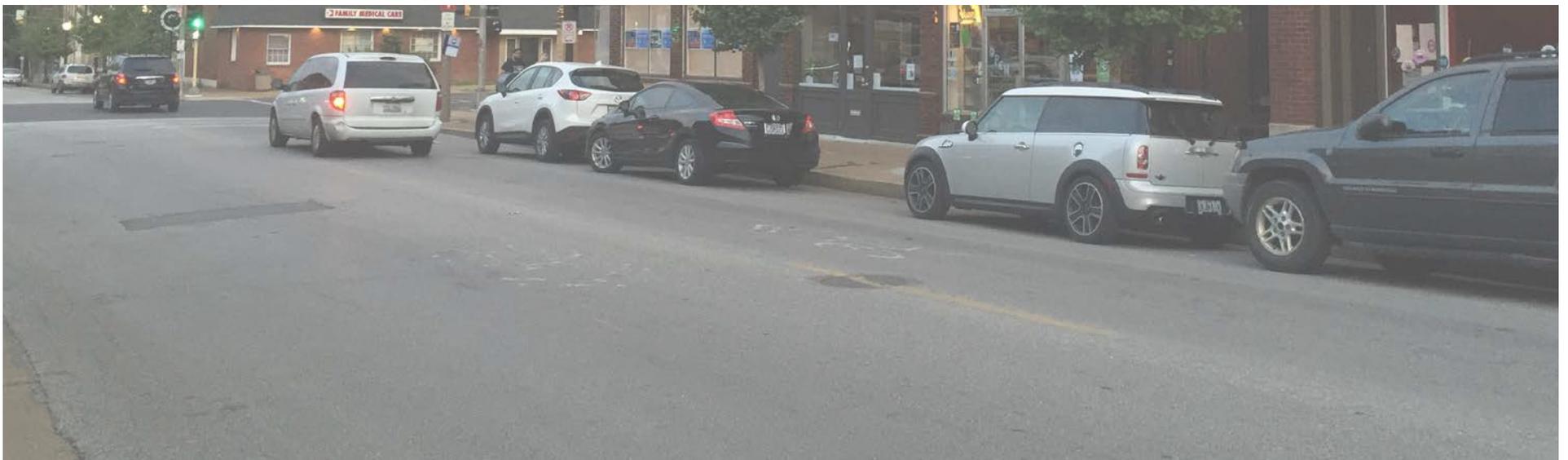
PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

- Develop a deep understanding of current LRA operations

- Research national best practices of land banks, including the Land Bank of Kansas City, MO

- Make recommendations for operational and process improvements

PROCESS & SCHEDULE

- Initial research on best practices

- 3 site visits

- Over 80 total stakeholders consulted through interviews and focus groups

- Multiple interviews with LRA leadership and key City agency partners

- Draft recommendations vetted and improved

- Final recommendations issued (February 2017)

GATEWAY GREENING'S BELL DEMONSTRATION GARDEN
SOURCE: GATEWAY GREENING

FINDINGS: EXISTING EFFORTS

- Mow to Own program

- Center for Community Progress technical assistance

- Americorps mapping of a percentage of vacant properties

- Metropolitan Sewer District partnership - land disposition for stormwater management

- Vacancy Task Force

OLE NORTH ST. LOUIS RAIN GARDEN

- **Adopt National Best Practices**

  » Inclusive mission & vision

  » Adoption of additional policies & procedures

  » Managing the full "property lifecycle" from acquisition, to maintenance, to disposition

  » Communications & transparency to build partnerships

  » Leveraging new resources and partnerships

FINDINGS: KEY THEMES

- **Recognize & Address Resource Constraints**

  » Few staff per property compared to land banks nationally

  » A smaller budget & fewer sources of revenue than other land banks - reliant entirely on property sales for funding

	Flint, MI (Genesee County Land Bank Auth.)	Cuyahoga County, OH (Cuyahoga Cty. Land Reutilization Corp.)	New Orleans, LA (New Orleans Redevelopment Authority)	Detroit, MI (Detroit Land Bank Authority)	Kansas City, MO (The Land Bank of Kansas City, Missouri)	St. Louis, MO LRA
Professional Staff Members	26	28	38	41	4	8.5
Properties in Land Bank Inventory	13,120 (as of 2015)	1,156 (as of 2013)	2,200 (as of 2016)	95,387 (as of 2016)	5,000 (approx., as of 2016)	12,000 (approx., as of 2016)
Properties per Staff Member	504	41	58	2,327	1,250	1,412

FINDINGS: KEY THEMES

- **Manage the Full Lifecycle of a Vacant Property**

  » Acquisition: Strategically target properties for tax enforcement

  » Maintenance, Stabilization, Demolition: Create plans that further strategic use of existing resources, while also stating long-term goals

  » Disposition: Define strategic areas for redevelopment, stormwater management, greening & adopt disposition policies

ONE OF 26 PROPERTIES TARGETED FOR DEMOLITION IN 2014 NEAR RANKEN TRCHNICAL COLLEGE.
SOURCE: NEXTSTL.COM

- **Build on Work Completed by the Center for Community Progress**

  » Partner with the KCMO Land Bank to address insurable title issues at the state level

  » Define plans that address overall goals of CCP report while refining benchmarks

GOAL 1: Define a forward-looking, inclusive LRA mission and vision.

EXAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Produce a study defining the **costs of vacancy**, as CCP's study recommends.

- Partner with stakeholders to analyze the **economic and social benefits of greening projects** such as community gardens, urban farms, habitat enhancement, beautification, etc.

GOAL 2: Formalize LRA policies and procedures.

EXAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create an LRA **policies and procedures** manual.

- Adopt an LRA **Annual Operating Plan** and release an **LRA Annual Report** each year.

EXAMPLE COMPONENT OF ANNUAL REPORT PUBLISHED BY THE GENESEE COUNTY LAND BANK, FLINT, MI
SOURCE: GENESEE COUNTY LAND BANK.

Putting Property Back on the Tax Rolls

Revenue from the sale of tax-foreclosed properties is the primary source of funding for the operation of the Genesee County Land Bank (GCLB) and the maintenance of vacant properties. Fiscal year 2014/2015 has turned out to be the second best year for sales at the GCLB with 943 properties sold generating a total of $4.2 million in gross revenue. Approximately half (425) of these sales were houses sold on land contracts, primarily to first time home owners. 269 of these properties were vacant lots sold to adjacent homeowners or businesses. The remainder were commercial and cash sales of structures.

The GCLB currently has 1,495 active land contracts with a balance of $7,826,230.00. In addition to generating funds for Land Bank operations and property maintenance, these properties generate tax revenue for local, regional and state government. During the 2014/2015 fiscal year, 186 land contracts were paid off and deeded to the purchasers.

- By Phil Stair

PROPERTY SALES

GOAL 3: Manage vacant properties comprehensively.

EXAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Work with the KCMO Land Bank** to implement CCP recommendations related to insurable title and waiting periods.

- Define a **comprehensive maintenance plan** that includes target standards for maintenance and stabilization for all properties in the LRA inventory.

- Promote and facilitate **alternative land uses and greening**.

EXAMPLE FORMAT FOR COMPREHENSIVE MAINTENANCE PLAN COMPONENTS INCLUDING CURRENT TARGETS, LONG=TERM GOALS, AND RESOURCES.

Maintenance Program Element	Current Annual Target	Long-Term Goal
Mow all vacant lots on a regular basis to preserve community quality of life and safety.	Mow all vacant lots seven times per year. *Resources Required:* Existing resources of $225,000 per year, plus additional financial resources contributed by the Forestry Department.	Mow all vacant lots twelve times per year to reduce overgrowth. *Resources Required:* An increase in budget of $200,000 per year for the LRA, plus additional resources of $400,000 per year and potential maintenance partnerships for the Forestry Department.

GOAL 4: Foster clear communication and transparency to build trust.

EXAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a new, stand-alone **website** for the LRA based on national best practices.

- Develop tailored **materials, seminars, and learning sessions** for groups at varying levels of capacity.

EXAMPLE WEBSITE BEST PRACTICE: KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

GOAL 5: Grow the LRA's staffing and financial resources.
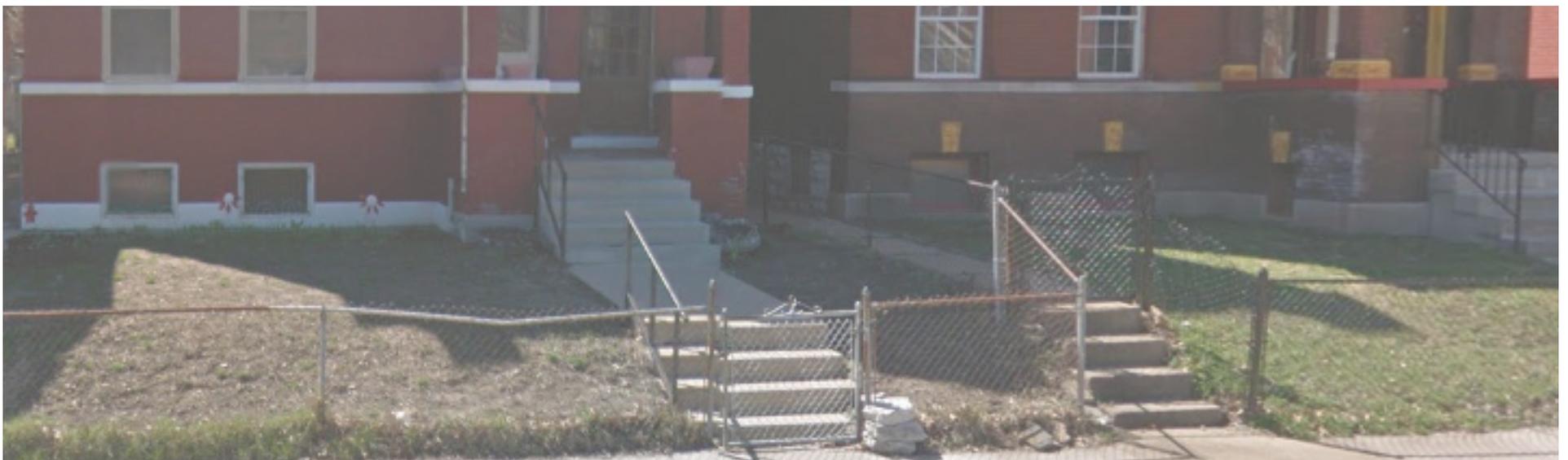
EXAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Hire at least **four new staff** in the next 1-3 years. Potential focus areas:

  » Strategy & partnerships

  » Communications

  » Community engagement

  » Greening

- Develop a comprehensive strategy to **increase LRA revenue**.

GOAL 6: Build and solidify partnerships to further the LRA's mission.

- Work with the IT department and other agencies to ensure that **all sources of data related to vacancy** can be reliably accessed and utilized within a single database.
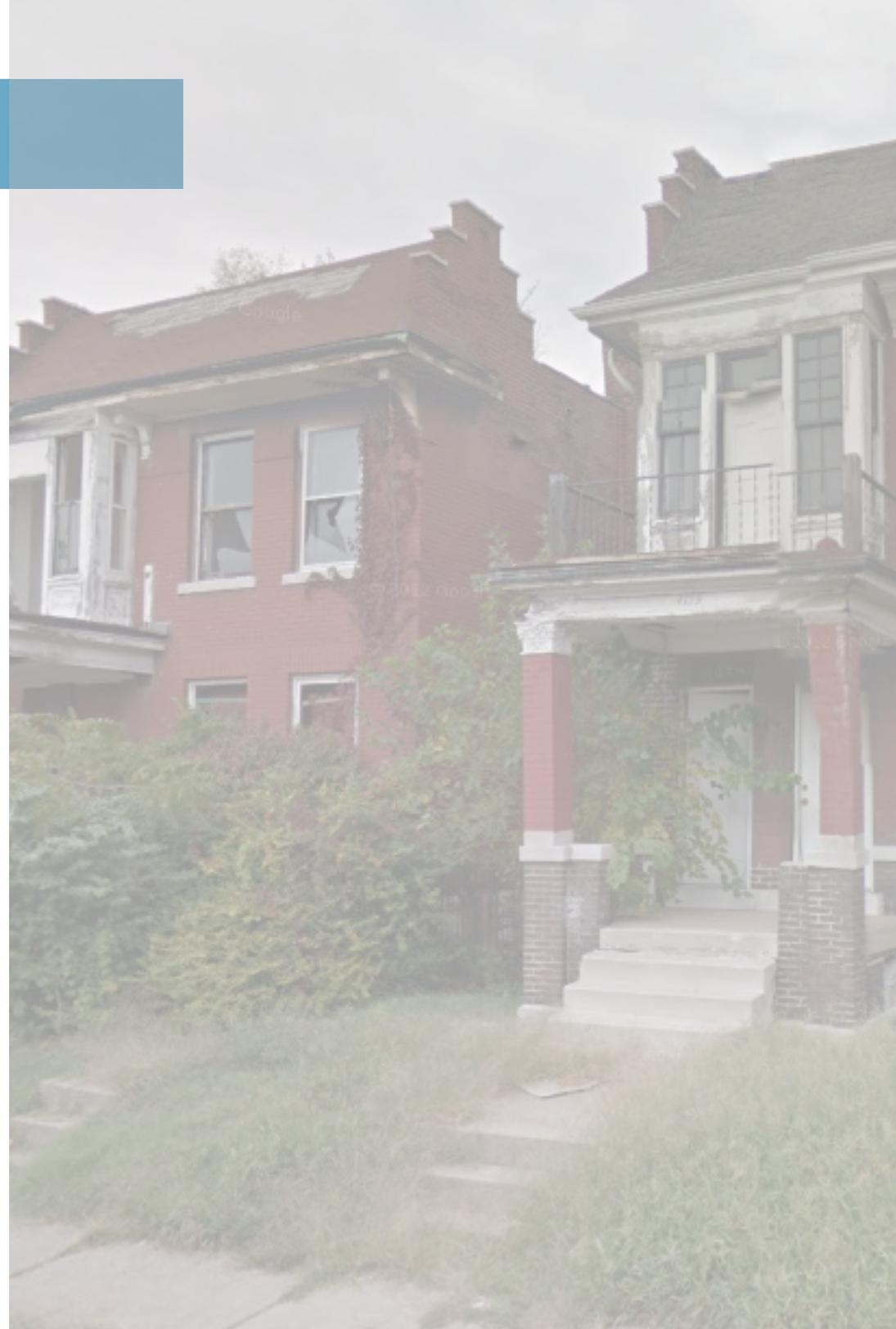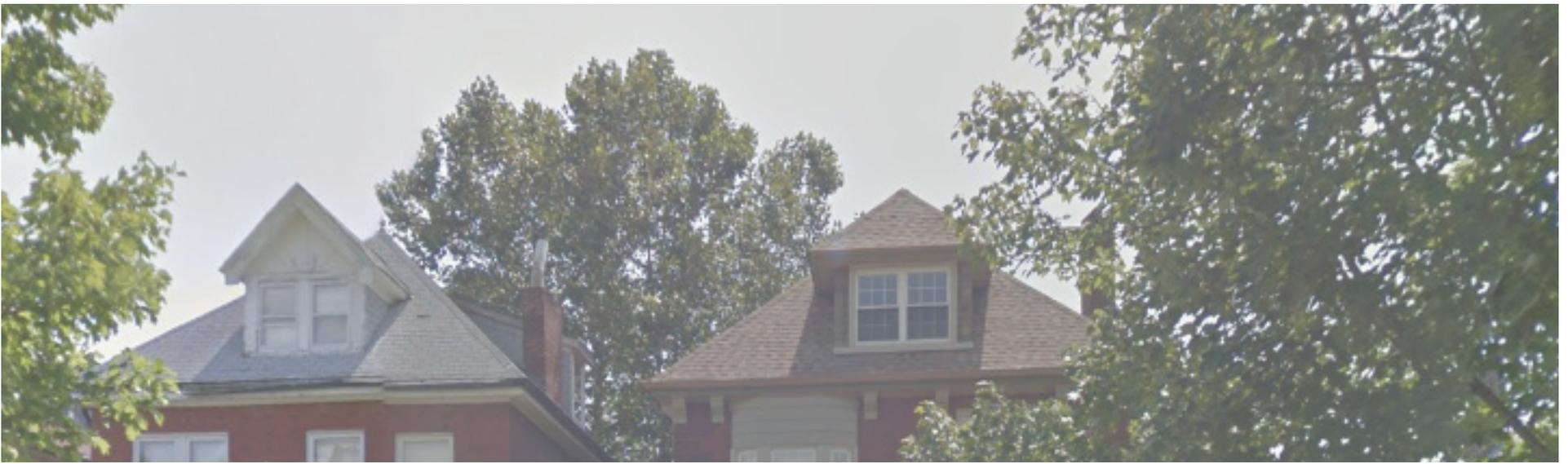
THANKS to the EPA, LRA, City, and stakeholders who contributed time & energy.
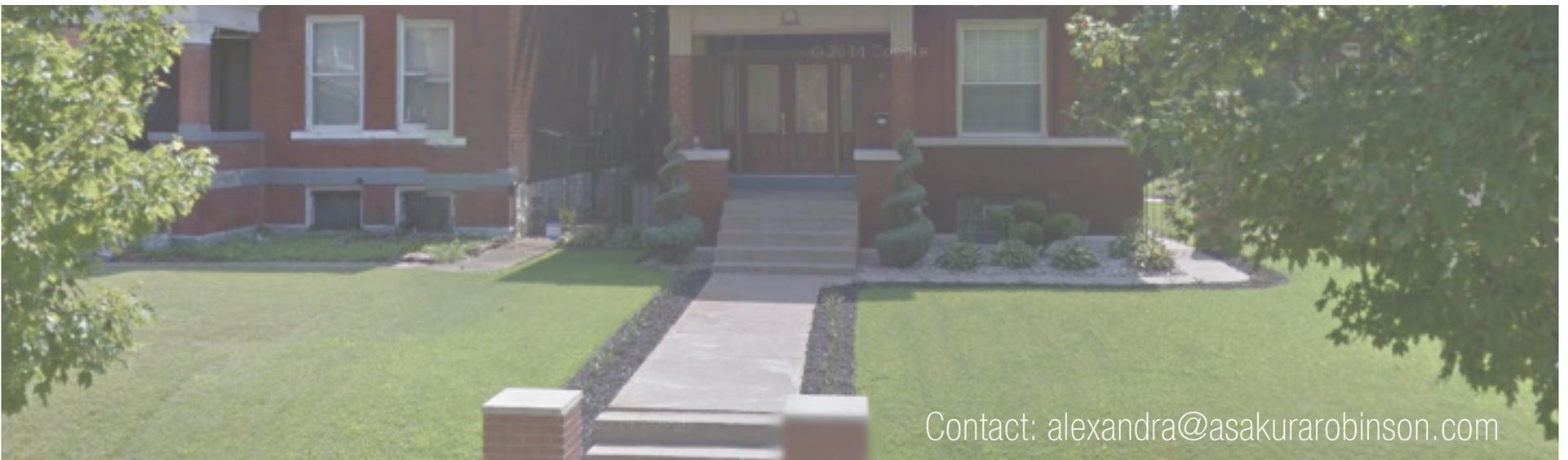
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