



## **TOP TEN FACTS ABOUT PENNSYLVANIA'S LAND BANKS**

1. Pennsylvania's land bank enabling legislation authorized, for the first time, the establishment of public entities to *"confront the problems caused by vacant, abandoned and tax-delinquent properties through the creation of new tools to enable municipalities to turn vacant, abandoned and tax-delinquent spaces into vibrant places."*
2. The enabling legislation, approved in 2012, creates a framework for positioning a land bank as a single entity that can take charge of addressing the problem of blighted properties and can serve as a center of planning and program coordination to benefit other public agencies-- Code Enforcement, Community Development, Law, Revenue, and others—that have sometimes had to respond to this problem on a piecemeal basis in the past.
3. A land bank can be created by a county, a municipality with a population of more than 10,000, or a group of two or more smaller municipalities. A land bank is created by ordinance; for a multi-municipal jurisdiction, an intergovernmental cooperation agreement is also required.
4. A land bank is governed by a board consisting of an odd number of between five and eleven members, one of whom must be a) a resident of the land bank jurisdiction, b) not a public official/municipal employee, and c) a member of a local recognized civic association.
5. Land banks have "all powers necessary" to repurpose vacant and abandoned property. But, some of those powers—such as the ability to acquire, develop, and convey real estate, issue bonds, enter into contracts, and receive grant and loan funding—are already within the capacity of a redevelopment or housing authority, in which case a land bank may not need to be tasked with these activities.
6. A land bank does not have the power of eminent domain.
7. Land banks have certain unique powers including the following: a) acquire tax delinquent property at a judicial sale without competitive bidding; b) discharge tax liens; c) hold property tax-free; d) share up to 50% of the real property taxes for 5 years after conveyance of land-bank owned property; d) file an expedited quiet title action and consolidate multiple properties into a single complaint to quiet title; and e) convey properties without a redevelopment agreement.
8. A land bank can only function in concert and partnership with the governing bodies and local taxing authorities within the land bank jurisdiction. For example, a land bank must obtain prior approval by the county tax claim bureau and the local taxing authorities, including the school district, before it can exercise either of the first two powers listed in paragraph 7 above. The 5/50 tax sharing also requires the approval of the local taxing authorities.
9. A land bank is not a silver bullet for blight, but rather one element of a comprehensive strategy that includes strategic code enforcement, delinquent property tax enforcement, and redevelopment.
10. For all of these reasons, a land bank may best be regarded as a new resource—not necessarily as a new organization or agency--that can support the implementation of existing local and county policies and community plans and that can add value to the activities of existing planning and development agencies.