Land banking working group meeting summary

June 24: Deeper dive into key issues

This is a summary of the most recent Regional Land Banking Working Group gathering. Meeting materials and all initial research and case study materials can be found at this shared drive: Regional Land Banking Working Group - File Sharing.

Thank you to everyone who joined our second convening of the Regional Land Banking Working Group on June 24. We appreciate the strong participation and thoughtful engagement across jurisdictions, development partners and community-based organizations.

Meeting recap

The second meeting began the shift from framing the need for land banking to digging into examples for how a program could be structured and implemented in the greater Portland region. The project's consultant team, led by national land banking experts Center for Community Progress, presented information on the evolution of land banks and responded to participants questions. The meeting focused on clarifying the core functions and powers of land banks in other regions and identifying key questions across governance, financing, acquisition, and inventory management. The working group then surfaced their main priorities through a gallery walk prioritization exercise and group discussion

What we heard

1. Governance Is the Working Group's First Priority

Across discussions, governance emerged as the top priority for the working group to dive into — above financing or acquisitions.

Participants raised important questions:

- How can a regional entity move quickly while maintaining accountability?

- What role should local jurisdictions play in decision-making?
- How do we balance nimbleness vs. oversight?

There was strong interest in a governing board model that includes appointed expertise, particularly real estate experience, avoids excessive approval layers that slow down projects, and bylaws that allow for periodic reassessment of the land bank's goals and bylaws in accordance with regional priorities and market conditions.

2. Changes are Needed to Scale Up Metro's Current Acquisition Programs

Working group members expressed interest in a structure that can capitalize on the expertise and capacity within Metro, along with the decision-making processes that exist; but there was also broad acknowledgment that continuing the current model without structural changes will not achieve the scale or speed needed.

- Metro's housing land acquisition and dispositions are limited to roughly 1–2 per year with current staffing levels due to the timing of thorough environmental review and other due diligence.
- Staff shared that concerns surrounding legal liability and the exposure of Metro's general fund can slow down and sometimes prevent acquisitions of complicated sites.

The group was interested in the programs and powers of acquisition in other regions:

- Land depository programs for nonprofits, such as the one through the Metro Atlanta Land Bank, which allows nonprofit developers to "deposit" owned sites into the land bank to lower their holding costs during the pre-development period
- Mechanisms such as public lien enforcement and direct government transfers, such as those that exist in Ohio and are well used by the Cuyahoga Land Bank.

3. Strong Interest in a Nimble Decision-Making Structure

Many participants saw potential advantages in creating a more independent entity, including an ability to isolate liability and risk from existing public agencies, and greater opportunity to attract philanthropic and private capital.

At the same time, participants noted important tradeoffs with starting a new entity:

- Higher operations costs and complexity
- Questions about balancing influence over governance and accountability

4. Land Banking Should Address More Than Acquisition

Discussions reinforced that a land banking program in the region should focus on making sites development-ready, not only on buying and holding land.

Key themes included:

- Environmental due diligence and cleanup are significant bottlenecks and should be addressed as soon as possible
- Infrastructure and entitlement readiness often determine whether projects move forward
- There is interest in models that can handle site preparation, as well as subdivide or assemble land

5. Financing and Scale Are Still Open Questions

Participants explored the range of funding sources used to start-up and operate land banks in other parts of the country. The group also raised questions around what the appropriate size and scale of a land bank might be in the region.

There was strong interest in exploring tax-related tools (e.g. property tax recapture) while acknowledging that Oregon's reliance on property taxes makes this more challenging.

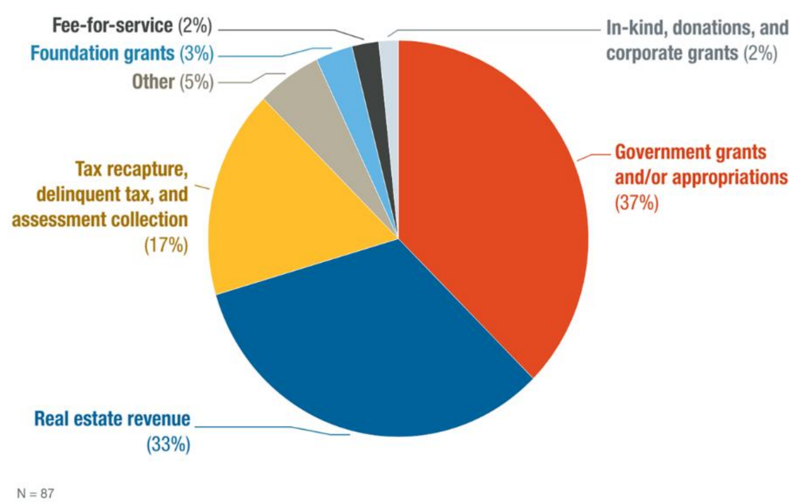

Chart: Center for Community Progress • Source: 2023 State of Land Banking Survey
Source: 2023 State of Land Banking Survey, Center for Community Progress

6. Anti-Displacement and Equity Remain Core Goals

Participants emphasized that land banking should:

- Help secure sites early to prevent displacement
- Align with community priorities and regional housing goals
- Support long-term affordability, not just project delivery

What's next

At our next meeting, the focus will shift toward developing concrete options for partners to react to, as well as a set of evaluation criteria.

In the meantime, Metro staff will contact working group members to schedule 1:1 conversations with jurisdictions and other community partners to understand interest, concerns, and priorities.

Key dates

Staff will present an update to Metro Council at a work session on July 23rd beginning at 10a.m.

Please join us for our next convening on July 29th from 10am-noon will continue to narrow toward a preferred direction and identify actionable next steps. RSVP for the meeting here by 7/22.

Materials & Resources

Meeting slides are available here: Regional Land Banking Working Group - File Sharing

We encourage you to review these materials and share them and the invitation to our next meeting with colleagues who may be interested in participating.

Thank you again for your time, insights, and partnership in shaping this work.