



Legislators Are Ignoring 40 Years Of Failure

Published on *Show-Me Institute* (<https://showmeinstitute.org>)



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[The Kansas City Star reports](#) that a bill to create a land bank in Kansas City is one step closer to becoming law. If the bill passes, the land bank would have the power to incur unlimited debt, bid against private buyers at tax auction, and — most disturbingly — be able to say no to private buyers who want to buy vacant city property.

The legislation has out-of-state advocates. Dan Kildee, [the head of a nonprofit that has advocated for land bank legislation in numerous states](#), is quoted in the *Star* extensively. Kildee told the *Star* that a land bank could acquire abandoned property in order to keep it out of the hands of private speculators. **This statement ignores the fact that if a land bank is acquiring property because it thinks a *better buyer* will come along in the future, then the land bank itself will be acting as a speculator.**

We have seen this model fail in Saint Louis. The Saint Louis land bank, also known as the Land Reutilization Authority, has existed for more than 40 years. In that time, it has amassed about 10,000 parcels of vacant land. [My research showed that during the past eight years, the Saint Louis land bank rejected almost half of all formal offers to purchase its property](#). The most common reason for rejection was that the property was being "held for future development." Sadly, the hoped-for development rarely materializes.

Instead of taking heed of the 40-year-old failure in our own state, legislators are willing

to bet Kansas City's future on glorified accounts of a land bank's operations in Michigan.

That land bank, the Genesee County Land Bank, has been trying to sell vacant property for less than a decade. When I have testified about the failure in Saint Louis, legislators and lobbyists quickly state that Saint Louis is "different" than Kansas City. Why, exactly, is the short-term record of a land bank that is more than 500 miles away more relevant than the long-term failure of a land bank in our own state?

About the Author



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[2] <http://www.kansascity.com/2012/03/19/3501634/land-bank-in-kc-is-a-step-closer.html>

[3] <http://www.communityprogress.net/>

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