



## **Ohio Land Bank Conference Panelists Cite Model for Transforming Communities**

A unique approach to fighting blight in Cleveland's Slavic Village could offer a model for other communities across Ohio, an expert panel told attendees at the Western Reserve Land Conservancy's recent [2016 Ohio Land Bank Conference](#). The successful effort created private and public sector collaboration and helped revitalize a neighborhood that was at the heart of America's foreclosure crisis, they said.

"The work we are doing in Slavic Village is replicable. Maybe not to the degree we did, but focusing on one neighborhood is more effective than a scattered approach," said Robert Klein, Founder and Chairman of [Community Blight Solutions](#) and [SecureView](#).

The "Transforming Blighted Communities" panel included Klein; Jim Rokakis, vice president of Western Reserve Land Conservancy; Anthony Brancatelli, Cleveland city councilman; and Justin Fleming, director of real estate services at Cleveland Neighborhood Progress. Each panel member plays an active role in the Slavic Village Recovery Project, which works to both demolish and rehabilitate abandoned homes.

With this focused approach, the organization was able to build trust within the community and show that it is committed to revitalizing the neighborhood. That alone pays dividends, Klein emphasized.

In addition to narrowing in on transforming one neighborhood, the panel also discussed using data to make informed decisions when determining how to address the best way to address each blighted property.

"Using data to our advantage helped the group think smart and help more people," Brancatelli said.

This data also helped the group ensure they were able to rehabilitate the abandoned properties in a way that provided a return on investment for the Slavic Village Recovery Project, fair housing values and, most importantly, a great home for residents in the neighborhood.

Elements from the Slavic Village Recovery Program that can be replicated include:

- Focus on a particular neighborhood
- Collaborate with the neighborhood development corporation
- Leverage foundational elements of the neighborhood
- Place energy on improving the neighborhood and fighting blight

To learn more about the Slavic Village Recovery Project, visit <http://slavicvillagehomes.org/>.

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