



# EDWARD J. LEONARD

## *Franklin County Treasurer*

373 S. High Street, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor, Columbus OH 43215-6306 (614) 462-3438

[www.franklincountyohio.gov/treasurer](http://www.franklincountyohio.gov/treasurer)

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Contact: Lillian Williams Purkey  
614-462-3379

### **Treasurer Leonard Leads County's Redevelopment Efforts in Weinland Park**

Treasurer Ed Leonard spearheaded Franklin County's efforts to overcome delinquent tax impediments to the redevelopment of a blighted property within the Weinland Park neighborhood of the University District. The property, located at the corner of North Fourth Street and East Eighth Avenue, has two vandalized apartment buildings that have been vacant for years and are a magnet for criminal activity.

"These severely distressed buildings sit just two blocks north of the Weinland Park Elementary School," said Leonard. "I've asked the Board of Commissioners and Auditor to join me in working with non-profit developers to make sure these buildings are taken down and the land is redeveloped with safe, affordable housing."

Campus Partners, Ohio State University's affiliated non-profit community development corporation, proposed a plan for the site as part of a larger revitalization project in the Weinland Park area. Plans include the demolition of the blighted buildings on the site and, if an adjacent site is acquired, the construction of up to ten new single-family homes with estimated construction costs of \$1.2 million. Campus Partners is working in the Weinland Park neighborhood in collaboration with The Affordable Housing Trust, JPMorgan Chase Foundation, the Columbus Foundation, the United Way of Central Ohio, and many neighborhood partners.

"The project's goal is to foster greater security near the school and to eliminate the blighting influence of these properties while providing affordable housing to attract new Weinland Park homeowners," according to Campus Partners President Doug Aschenbach. "Due to its rundown condition, this property has long been a criminal hotspot in the City of Columbus."

However, with \$156,000 in accumulated delinquent property taxes on this particular site, the project wouldn't be economically viable without the county's involvement. Working with Auditor Clarence Mingo, the county agreed to accept ownership of the property to abate the delinquent taxes and allow the deal to go forward.

"The cost of asbestos remediation and demolition alone far exceeds the market value of the property in its current state," said Leonard. "The likelihood of selling these rundown buildings to collect back taxes is extremely remote and, if the county can eliminate that roadblock to redevelopment, then we are going to use the county's land bank authority to get this property back to productive use," the Treasurer said.

Leonard brokered an agreement with officials of Campus Partners and The Affordable Housing Trust to get the property into and out of the county's possession. In exchange for the tax relief, though, Campus Partners is required to take the property from the county and remove the asbestos and demolish the buildings within three months. At least three single family homes must be constructed within two years. That number would increase to up to seven homes if a zoning variance is approved by city officials. All told, after demolition and with the construction of seven new homes, Campus Partners could make a total investment of close to one million dollars for this property.

While a sales price for each unit has not yet been determined, the Commissioners are also requiring that the new homes be affordable to low and middle-income homebuyers.

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