

LAND BANK REFORM

THE PROBLEM

- **Too many community urban gardens and green spaces are vulnerable to gentrification, and the current Land Bank policies both fail to protect these spaces and make it very difficult for folks from vulnerable communities to become landowners.**
- The Land Bank's mission is to return vacant and underutilized property to productive use through a unified, predictable, and transparent process that is intended to revitalize neighborhoods, create economically diverse communities, and strengthen the City's tax base. However, the Land Bank has proven unpredictable and non-transparent, and has destabilized neighborhoods while benefiting developers over communities.
- Black and Brown urban gardens provide not only food but also community space, cultural preservation, and economic opportunity. Gardening is a practice of resilience.
- Aggressive gentrification has brought attention to these previously overlooked and tax-delinquent lands and piqued the interest of developers, who have bought out the land from underneath community members in Sheriff Sales.
- Even if the Land Bank acquires the land through a Sheriff Sale, community members are still likely to be left out of the process, due to the resources required to buy the land and the short notice of the sale. Further, community members who have put in expressions of interest on land in the Land Bank have been left waiting for up to two years, only to be told that the land is not available.
- Many garden leases are only granted to non-profits, on terms too short for land work.
- About 500 lots in the city that people are currently growing on are land insecure.

OUR SOLUTION

- Create opportunities for community accountability and transparency in decision-making around who gets land from the Land Bank and how land is sold.
- Protect, preserve, and expand affordable and accessible housing and green spaces in Black and Brown communities.
- Ensure community control of land.

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

- Amend the Acquisition and Disposition Policies of the Land Bank by:
 - Enforcing the existing Land Bank and establishing accountability by publishing Land Bank sales information accessibly on the website in real time, both before and after transactions.
 - Putting publicly held and tax-delinquent land into the Land Bank and ensuring this land is given, for a nominal fee, to groups for community benefit: low-income and affordable housing, food production, community green space, or economic development that creates living wage jobs.
 - Ensuring community control of land for gardeners and farmers that have worked the land: fix the broken Expression of Interest process to create a transparent and accessible pathway for land ownership, extend garden leases beyond 1-5 years, approve garden leases to individuals, not just non-profits, and increase transparency around land allocation decision-making.
- Hold the Land Bank accountable to:
 - Community elected representatives on the Land Bank Oversight Board that will include a community gardener and someone with experience developing or living in low-income housing.
 - Holding Land Bank and Council Quarterly Town Halls for community accountability, leadership, and authority in Council's decisions around land use and ownership per district.

