

Community and University Podcast Series

Interviewee: Jake Parcell, Deputy Director of the Wayne County Land Bank

Interviewer: Emma Gilbert, REI Research Assistant

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Emma Gilbert: Hello, and welcome to Community and University, the MSU Center for Community and Economic Development podcast aimed at providing outreach to both community members and students throughout the state of Michigan. The Michigan State University U.S. Economic Development Administration University Center for Regional Economic Innovation's (REI) mission is to stimulate innovative economic development in the most distressed communities within Michigan.

The **REI University Center** embraces a culture of regional collaboration and knowledge sharing between economic development professionals and committed scholars. The Center's model provides responsive community engagement, strategic partnerships, and collaborative learning to support the creation and identification of innovative tools, models, and practices to increase the number of small businesses; create access to job skill development; improve public infrastructure; advance high-growth entrepreneurship, and; encourage global competitiveness to strengthen underserved communities and historically excluded citizens.

The REI **University Center**'s most recent award focuses on four key pillars of community and economic development that together will build up the resilience, sustainability, and equity within the communities in which it partners. The four pillars include, resiliency planning, financial resilience, circular economies, and 21st Century communications. The **University Center** will work with community partners to address these themes in Michigan Economic Development Corporation's identified Redevelopment Ready Communities containing opportunity zone census tracts and/ **OR** large concentrations of ALICE populations—or those who are asset-limited, income-constrained employed.

I am Emma Gilbert and I am one of the hosts for 'Community and University.' Today, we will be spotlighting one of the 2022 REI Center's Student-Led, Faculty- Guided Project authors, Dr. Jake Parcell, who is working on a project entitled, "Wayne County Land Bank Practicum Project." The results of the research conducted for this project will help create strategies for the Wayne County Land Bank to return vacant and abandoned property to productive use. The research will uncover which of the land banks' existing programs are the strongest based on how they address community needs, the number of properties returned to productive use, and how well they fit the Land Bank's mission. Student-Led, Faculty-Guided projects provide assistance to Michigan communities in completing local and regional economic development initiatives. Work is completed by students at colleges and universities throughout the state under the supervision of experienced faculty. Through these projects, students gain first-hand and practical experience in the application of previously studied theory and economic

development professionals receive technical assistance that they might not otherwise receive. Projects typically include data collection, analysis, and the development of plans and implementation strategies. Welcome to the CCED Podcast, Jake.

Jake Parcell: Thank you, Emma. I'm really excited to be here' it's my first podcast so I'm very excited.

Emma Gilbert: Well, before we get started on your project, can you introduce yourself for our audience, including some of your educational and also professional background?

Jake Parcell: Yeah, definitely. I'm Jake Purcell, I'm the current Deputy Director for the Wayne County Land Bank. Academically, I have my bachelor's from Saginaw Valley State University, my Master's in Planning from Michigan State University, and recently at the end of 2020, wrapped up my Doctorate in Planning, Design and Construction with a focus on urban planning. During my Doctorate, I was the planner for the city of East Lansing and had an internship/assistantship through the Global Urban Studies program at Michigan State University. So, I've been at MSU on and off for four years in the last decade, and I'm excited to be giving back and working with the school again.

Emma Gilbert: That's awesome, I love that background. How long have you worked in your position at the land bank itself and originally, what inspired you to get involved in community and economic development work specifically, rather than a traditional planning role?

Jake Parcell: Yeah, so I've done traditional planning for a long time. In the city of Flint from 2016 to 17 and then East Lansing through 2017 until April 2021, right after I graduated with my Doctorate. I really love planning and zoning, I think learning about traditional planning gives me a strong basis for understanding how communities work, how they're formed, but I really wanted to get down to the Detroit area, my wife and I were really excited to move down there. So, I found an opportunity with the Wayne County Land Bank as the Deputy Director. I started in April 2021, and we moved down shortly after that, and I love it so far. I think from a county perspective, you'd have a really interesting role in the communities because not only do we get to work with certain communities and populations, is what traditional planner would do one at a time, but I get upwards of 40 some communities under my umbrella, so I get to work really closely with a lot of different community groups, community leaders, nonprofits, different governments and government departments, and a lot of different variety in neighborhoods and populations; that is really exciting to me. So, from a county perspective, I'm really enjoying it. I think that it gives us a larger platform to influence change in the most populous county in Michigan.

Emma gilbert: Especially given there's, you know, everything from villages, townships, cities, many of the biggest city in the state, you know, all in one county. So, I'm sure it's very interesting, very diverse set of issues.

Jake Parcell: Yeah, it's a really diverse set of issues, population. It's exciting work to do and exciting people to work with.

Emma Gilbert: That's awesome, I'm glad we got to establish some of your background, so now we're ready to get more into the details of your project. So, can you provide the audience with a little bit of an overview of the project itself and the research that was conducted as well as how you hope it will be implemented?

Jake Parcell: Yeah, definitely. I, as a former grad of the Planning School at Michigan State, have gone through practicum before, I understand the pros of having a practicum group to work for you. And we were lucky at the Land Bank on such a shoestring budget to have REI there to support our projects. So, we got a group of undergrads to do a program that needs assessment for the Wayne County Land Bank. Basically what they did was look at all of our programs, line them up with other programs from other land banks in the state, see where were the strongest and the weakest, how successful our programs have been over time by looking at how many properties come back into our inventory, how many properties are successfully returned to productive use through the land bank, and then kind of a social needs analysis of what our communities need from us as well, that they've accomplished, by doing a survey that they wrote and distributed and worked with communities on their own. So, it was a really ambitious project, and we had a really ambitious group. It ended up being incredibly beneficial to work with them. They also worked on our website, our social media presence as well, something that the day to day is way off our radar. So, we had a really interesting experience finding gaps in our day-to-day work that the practicum students were able to look at from an outside perspective on us and see where we have some serious shortcomings that are not on any of our minds.

Emma Gilbert: Can you give a little bit more detail about some of these important findings? You know, were any of these findings shocking or unexpected? Or was a lot of the research that you found to be along the lines of your kind of preconceived ideas about the status?

Jake Parcell: So, I was only with the land bank for six months when I applied for the practicum project. I think that a lot of the findings they had were really eye opening for me and things that I didn't think about at that time. I was so used to familiarizing myself with our programs, our guidelines, and how to expand ourselves so rapidly as the State is kind of recovering from the pandemic. And what they were able to do is look at different ways to approach some of the programs that are offered by the land bank. So, for instance, we do a side lot program, it's one of our most common sale programs. If there's a vacant parcel next to an existing house that's in good condition, we offer a reduced cost for someone to purchase that lot and then they can combine the lots and we move the stewardship of vacant lots over to people in the community. They looked at other best practices such as greening lots that are done in Philadelphia and other land banks across the country. So just using small things like that to work on bettering our lots while they are in our inventory so that we can constantly be improving the communities we work in as well, and even if a lot is still in our ownership and not in private ownership. So, things like that, we base everything we do off of best practices academically and research and collaboration with other land banks; they were able to find opportunities for that with us. And I think the biggest and most interesting thing they looked at is how many parcels per program we had. So, we have a compliance program, which is traditional salespeople who are expected to rehabilitate the lots. And then the side lot program I mentioned, program for people who are residing in a lot

that was foreclosed on, maybe unknowingly to them, are allowed to purchase the house through us at a reduced cost. And a couple other programs, we didn't want to give them a full run of them in such a small time, but they looked at the parcels that came back into our inventory through each program. So, we could see where we were having shortcomings in these programs that we thought are looking so great. So, if we say oh wow, we've sold 400 parcels in the side lot program in the last year and then realize that X percent comes back in our inventory, maybe it's not as successful as we thought. So, they helped us find gaps and stuff that we maybe didn't recognize on our own through an outsider's perspective, that was really helpful. And then looking at our website... obviously students may be more tech inclined than some, mostly me on staff, have looked at our website from a mobile perspective, looked at ways that people may have difficulty finding properties and finding applications for some of our programs and to purchase property. And then from that perspective, kind of a third party saying here's where your problems are, here's how you can make yourself more accessible to communities was really helpful.

Emma Gilbert: That's awesome. And were any of those properties that they analyzed that were coming back into your portfolio, were they concentrated in any geographical area within the county or were they more dispersed, can you give a little bit more insight into that?

Jake Parcell: Yeah, so with Wayne County being as geographically large and populated as it is, we had them focus on three different communities where we do most of our work, which are the ones that are in need of assistance from a stabilization, revitalization perspective. So, they looked at Highland Park with the City of East Port and River Rouge, two of them in Southwest County at Highland Park right in the middle of Detroit. And they were able to notice where we were having more success in those communities in different programs, we should start to maybe implement more of those communities. So, their recommendation of doing a greening program in Highland Park is really useful because we own a wealth of vacant property through demolition that we have for that community. So, instead of letting it become overgrown or potentially hazardous with debris, which we try and clean up on our own, but they give us the strategies to do that. So new things to look into and assess our inventory based on that. So, it was really helpful to focus geographically where we have our largest holding as well.

Emma Gilbert: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense, especially considering this project was only about, what, four and a half months?

Jake Parcell: Yeah, one semester. So, we got them right after the beginning of the semester in January, lead them on a crash course through the county right after that and threw a bunch of data their way and then let them work with it. And we gave them a lot of free rein to do things that made sense to them. Obviously, I view the practicum project as getting, essentially, a professional consultant or a team of them. And you want them to be as candid and honest with the results as you can be because otherwise, you're just getting a feel-good piece about what you've been doing. So, we really wanted data we could use.

Emma Gilbert: And just for context for any of our listeners, I should've preface this earlier, but the practicum project that this student-led, faculty-guided initiative was taken up under is the senior capstone course for undergraduates, as well as graduates, in the Urban and Regional

Planning Program at Michigan State University. So, that's where the group of students came in as part of that course, and then obviously Jake, and others, come in and present projects. So just in kind of moving forward and in the progression of this project, were there any partners, other than the students in the class, that kind of helped with this project, provided data, anything like that?

Jake Parcell: Yeah. So obviously we can't give direct access to a lot of people who have purchased homes through the practicum project to people, but we created a survey, and I found a list of contacts for every municipality and allowed the student who was in charge of the survey on the practicum team to reach out and send the survey to all the community members, then I encourage them to respond following there. That way should any of the students come in and look for a job in Wayne County, they then immediately have contacts in 40 some communities that they had worked with right prior to graduation. So, I thought that was a beneficial way for the students to get their name out a little bit, but also to provide a really rich data source for the project. So, I was actually really impressed with the responses they were able to get, upwards of 35 in just a week or two from the different communities, which is impressive. It's a lot of people and a lot of departments to reach out to throughout the county. So, we're focused on partnering and making better partnerships with our community members, and they were able to do that with our project as well.

Emma Gilbert: Were any of those partnerships' kind of previously in development that you kind of were getting a push to move forward with now? Is that concentrated also in those geographical areas with those local municipalities too?

Jake Parcell: Yeah, so they were definitely included, the cities that they focused on getting the data in. But for the county wide portion of it, we are working really hard to expand our outreach to our municipalities. Obviously, with the pandemic, there's this huge disruption of work that is done and communication that's been disrupted between partners that have been together in the past. So by having them reach out to every community, we can find what communities have had really positive experiences with us since our formation, which ones have had no interaction with us, and which ones have had potentially, you know, questionable problems with us in the past in terms of our property, you know, in terms of purchasing and selling property, so we were able to find out, since before I got there, who has worked with the land bank, who wants to continue to work the land bank, and then we can move forward on creating stronger partnerships based on that survey as well.

Emma Gilbert: Sounds like a great initiative to me, especially given this kind of reemergence that's occurring right now after the hard-hitting pandemic. So, what motivated you to take on this project or more specifically, even you know, what did you observe in the land banks' interactions with the community that may have motivated this project? I know you said you were kind of new in this role, but was there anything in terms of that observation that maybe kind of pushed you to do this initiative?

Jake Parcell: Yeah, definitely. It's the data that you get from using a project of this caliber is irreplaceable. So, we have a really small staff for the scope of work that we do. I think it's about seven people total. And now we have one intern who we brought on from our practicum team

actually. So, if you look at our field team alone, it's three people, 1200 properties, it's 400 properties a person, spread out throughout the entire county. And we have one attorney, one person who generally does applications and sales and spread very thin. So, coming in now, there were only five people when I started and now, we're up to seven. So, the data in the working with the practicum team basically gave us a jumpstart on everything since so many people on staff were new, and we had new directions we wanted to go to help communities recover after the pandemic. So, I found it a valuable opportunity through MSU to get some data that was really nice and to help improve our networking when we had staff limitations at the time, just in terms of filling positions from people who've left our last couple years. So, it was like a way to jumpstart our community relations and our analysis of our programs as we started to come back into the office and in person more. And I thought that would be really beneficial and I also think that land banks are something that are one, very important because they're so multidisciplinary from legal issues, housing issues, community issues, things like that, but they're not really discussed enough, at least when I went to school, because they were still new and new work in the state of Michigan. So, I thought this was an opportunity to get a really strong multidisciplinary group of students in here. They could follow whatever interested them within the practicum group that the land bank touches on, vacancies, housing, etc., and then help prepare them for a job in the future.

Emma Gilbert: It's also kind of like an opportunity for everyone to learn at the same time. You have new people coming in, they're learning like the newest, hottest, greatest data that they possibly can, at the same time that everyone else is so it kind of gives you a nice starting place altogether, too.

Jake Parcell: Yeah, I agree entirely. We've had two people who've been there for five years, one for about two and two for about one and a half. I'm one of them, so I'm still new in this position and am still finding ways to improve our operations within the county. And then two people who started just last summer, so bringing in the practicum team was a really amazing way to get a jumpstart on some of the data that we have, and then provide them with the unique perspective into Land Banking as well.

Emma Gilbert: Has the research that you guys discovered, has that kind of helped you also kind of redefine your role? Or what you think the Wayne County Land Bank's role should be in the community? You know, thinking about broadly defined the role that a land bank could play, but then coming off of the opportunities that are out there and really setting something defined for yourself, or a mission, I should say, or maybe yourself.

Jake Parcell: Yeah, 100%. So, it's a really critical time for land banks in the state as they're transitioning more into development authorities and within our land bank as well, as we're starting to receive all of this new property from the foreclosure moratorium. So, throughout COVID, there was a foreclosure moratorium which was great, it kept people in their homes, but now they're going to start getting hit harder and harder as foreclosure starts to ramp up again, or as people have just abandoned properties, left them in their community, potentially move, moved in with family members, and now we have to find these properties and find what to do with them. So, this is our first year that we're working on getting this huge list of foreclosed properties

back and very much economic development is a very important thing for everyone to focus on right now as we try and recover from the pandemic. We're under the umbrella of the county's economic development team. So, we have a large role to play in that as well. So, reexamining all of our projects and proposals that we have out for grant funding, and things like that, with new data is important to reassess where we are and where we want to go moving forward. There's a lot of federal funding becoming available through the American rescue plan, and it's something that we really need to be taking advantage of to kind of make a greater imprint in the county. And you need fresh data for grant proposals, and you need a way to kind of reframe how projects have gone, pre and post pandemic. So, getting this practicum team at this point was incredibly valuable to us, came at almost a perfect time.

Emma Gilbert: Yeah, especially because getting data from the years during the pandemic can be extremely difficult depending on what variable you're trying to focus on.

Jake Parcell: Yeah, there's this huge dip in sales or in inventory that happened during the last year, mostly in 2020, that affected us. So now as we come back, we want to come back stronger, we want to make a bigger difference and really expand the reach of the land bank. We have a full staff, we're incredibly capable. It's a very amazing staff full of talented people. And now we have new outlets on where to find who can make the biggest impact.

Emma Gilbert: That's great, taking an opportunity and really making the most out of it.

Jake Parcell: Yeah, yeah, and we got, fortunately, great work from the practicum team that's going to help us do that.

Emma Gilbert: So maybe moving forward from talking about the actual research to the impact that this will have, the implementation strategy and maybe what impact do you expect this research to have on, you know, either Wayne County or similar communities specifically in Wayne County, and even going beyond the county itself or cities within it? To whom within the community do you anticipate your work having the largest effect as, you know, talking about community relations, is there any kind of extension and coordinating in that regard?

Emma Gilbert: Yeah, definitely. So well, first of all, the first thing that we really are already working on that our interns played a wonderful role in is updating our website, making ourselves more technically accessible. And that is going to be really important for a lot of the grants projects that we're starting to launch. So, that's the first thing that we noticed when we took a look back at the practicum report and started to do it. But I always like to think that land banks operate in this negative space. We operate where there are vacancies, blighted foreclosures, and our role is to find the neighborhoods that are the hardest hit through our inventory and begin to stabilize them and to make them more resilient and make the property return to use. So, our goal is to have an impact on the communities that have been the hardest, particularly coming out of this foreclosure crisis in the last decade, and then the pandemic after that, and then return the property to productive use. And there's so many ways to do that, so many different best practices to follow from throughout the country. It's finding what works best for each community. So, our goal is to work more closely with the communities, take their feedback and the feedback that they've already given us, and begin to kind of tailor our programs to work with them in a better

capacity. Obviously, we've worked in areas where housing markets and economic development are in a role because we're getting the foreclosed property. So, finding a way to be accessible, open, and I'd say flexible, for those communities is important. And that's where we anticipate having the largest impact; reusing these vacant lots into new developments, partnering with different groups that can take advantage of it, if it's a nonprofit, a community group, community garden, finding what the community needs and filling that role from a housing and from a land perspective is going to be important and that's where we're going to have the most impact.

Emma Gilbert: I'm really happy to hear that, because I think there's a lot of hesitation in piloting new programs and the fear of, you know, this failing or failing worse than something that was already not working out very well. But then if you don't try new strategies, right, you never know the 'what if.'

Jake Parcell: So, you know, I agree. Every program we have, in my opinion, from everyone who has worked for the Wayne County Land Bank before me, is very well thought out, it's very, very practical and multifaceted in the terms of the way to tax the vacancies and the parcels in our inventory. There's always a difference in communities that we're going to have in Wayne County, in terms of socioeconomic status, the amount of housing, vacancy, housing cost, even demographics. Within each community, there's all sorts of different people that need different things. And we need to be as specific as we can for each community to have the greatest impact. Maybe our side lot property program works really well in a community with high amounts of vacancies. Put in others where there's really dense neighborhoods with a lot of occupancy, but one house that needs special attention, we can find something else to do. So, we have to be flexible, we to pay attention to what each community within the county needs.

Emma Gilbert: Now I'm really seeing why you chose the word flexible instead of multifaceted or something else. Because that makes a lot of sense, right? You have to identify what works well within a very specific kind of context, considering you're working in so many different contexts at the same time.

Jake Parcell: Yeah, definitely. We don't work in every community, some just don't have the need, but we work a lot with them. And sometimes it's on a scale of hundreds and hundreds of properties. Other times it's eight, it just depends.

Emma Gilbert: And have you encountered any specific challenges or barriers in working on this project? I know data can sometimes be an issue. Any kind of personnel issue or something that the land bank was looking for that wasn't received, anything like that?

Jake Parcell: The biggest thing that we tried to do is not overwhelm our students. So, we had all this data, I think that was something I had to work on as the semester went on. So, we had all this data and we're really easily an organization that is driven by metrics. We can see everything that's been tracked since our inception, and to give a group of people who are students a bunch of data and just say here you go, just tell us what to do is not going to end well. So, I think I had to really reframe how I approach the project as well. But from a personnel standpoint, no we are really active in taking the data and implementing it, and kind of creating new programs that can fit what the data shows. And I think we have a really talented team that is going to be able to take

this data and move forward with it in a good fashion that, you know, helps the communities. But I didn't notice any problems just yet, other than, you know, getting through the barrier of having to do it all.

Emma Gilbert: And also coordinate a group of like six to seven undergraduate students who all have very different interests and skill sets.

Jake Parcell: Yeah, yeah. No, we got a lot of findings that were broad and diverse that we never thought we would, so that was a positive.

Emma Gilbert: That's great. And do you have any next steps developed in this initiative? You know, taking the research or the recommendations that were derived in that report, and really putting them into action? Or do you have an implementation strategy that you're working on or anything like that?

Jake Parcell: Yes. So our first step is building off of the county wide survey that our students did, crafting a combination of our existing programs and projects and some of the data we got from the practicum team and some of the communities to go around for all of the counties of Wayne County, or all the cities within Wayne County, find a time to meet with their staff, present what we do as a land bank and introduce them to us on a personal level, and then strengthen these partnerships that we've already introduced to them through the practicum project. So that was a really good way to get the communities thinking about what we did and how we can work together. And now we're going to follow up, face to face, fingers crossed that we continue to be able to work face to face and have this opportunity to get a little more in-depth data for each community through each of these little presentations. So, we're going to be working on that. And then accessibility through the website is something that we're already working on. Like I said, our intern is working on that, moving forward with that, and finding a way to advertise us on social media in ways that the average public is more easily able to digest than searching out what the land bank does. So, making ourselves more accessible to people. There's this connotation in land banking where it's negative, we demolish properties, we hold all these foreclosed properties. There's instances where there's people who live in homes of ours that, for safety reasons, have to be taken out of the structure. If it had been arson or is so severely blighted that it is potentially dangerous to be in, we want to remove any negative connotations of what we do and start to showcase this positive impact that we have in our communities and building the relationships with them was the first step and then moving forward with specializing our program for each community is going to follow.

Emma Gilbert: This really sounds like reframing, you know, the negative maybe like threat that a land bank seemingly poses or like has a role in the threatening parts of community work, right? Like dealing with those foreclosures, that can feel threatening to community members, but really reframing this as a way to build resilience within your community.

Jake Parcell: Yeah, and we have programs that are specifically created to do that. So, we have an occupied program for people who are residing in structures of ours that are in our inventory. And we get a lot of people who are victims of rental scams or are unaware of the foreclosure due to difficulty noticing them, or just unawareness of what's been happening the last couple of

years, it's been so difficult with the pandemic, that there are any number of times, there's people potentially living in a structure that we have in our inventory. So, our job is to find the person, reach out to them, and give them a very detailed, but at the same time, understandable way to purchase the property from us with no penalty at a highly reduced cost. And if they need any resources to provide them, so homeownership classes, financial literacy classes, things like that, that we can connect them with other community partners and make it so it's not so potentially scary that they may lose their home through something that they may have had no idea that's happening.

Emma Gilbert: That sounds like very important work. Your home is really where you start feeling a sense of self, family, community, friends, all of that stuff.

Jake Parcell: Yeah, and that's what our goal is with our resiliency planning to, is at the neighborhood level, is making the neighborhoods more resilient to having these gaps in it. So, putting people in the houses that can build a life for these communities that will then strengthen the neighborhood, reduce vacancies, reduce blight, and then strengthen the neighborhoods which will strengthen the cities. So, moving from just a very grassroots, parcel by parcel approach of helping these communities become strengthened.

Emma Gilbert: And then, you know, we kind of previously touched on this, you know, given the nature of reframing and also talking about the policies and the programs, but what do you think makes this project truly innovative?

Jake Parcell: I think that moving forward, innovation is important for finding ways to dispose of, or sell off, these properties that are sticky, they stick in our inventory, they come back in our inventory. So, we need to be innovative in terms of finding ways to get them back to productive use constantly. So, finding ways, as our practicum team told us, green vacant lots and make them more approachable, from a visual perspective, make the neighborhood look better, is going to be something that can help, even while they're in our inventory strengthens the neighborhood. And to me, little things like that are what lead to long term innovation. So getting rid of parcels or identifying programs for parcels come back into our inventory and making sure that they stay in a productive use is going to be important, whether that comes from working after we do our face to face with every city and different ways to look at the zoning code, or the master land use plan and reframing how we sell the property or what program we sell the property under is going to be important. Working with communities that have needs such as demolition or rehabilitation is going to be important, and then finding ways to move forward from where we've been in the last couple of years and help the communities come forth as we recover a state from the pandemic and through any foreclosures that have been happening. So, really just adapting. Finding ways to get the parcels out of our inventory and back to productive use is our main goal, and innovative approaches built on best practices and built on research are important in order to do that.

Emma Gilbert: It sounds like, you know, you're not just giving up the environmental or, I should say, the economic and social benefits that, you know, kind of reimagining the role of a land bank, but also in looking at this new greening opportunity, thinking about the environmental

benefits that come from that, too. So, you're really looking at this from a truly intersectional resilience lens.

Jake Parcell: Yeah, yeah. And we have property of every kind of status or land use classification you can imagine so, vacant land, residential structures, commercial and industrial vacant land and commercial and industrial structures. It's really wide, diverse, most of its residential, but there's different structures and different vacant land and all sorts of different mosaics layered throughout the county that we need to be aware of.

Emma Gilbert: And moving from innovation to really looking at the lens of equitable development and, you know, goals of resilience planning as a theory in and of itself, how do you feel that this project furthers the REI mission of equitable development?

Jake Parcell: Yeah, so REI works, as your website says, in really vulnerable communities from an economic perspective, which is, I've said, is where land bank's function, in that kind of negative space where something needs to be done in these properties. They're in our inventory, but they're not quite in limbo, they're being remediated, in a way, and that's how we need to focus on building resiliency in our communities, like I said, through a parcel-by-parcel process. So not only are we looking at ways to make the communities resilient, but actual development is very important for what we do because we understand that there needs to be opportunities available for everyone to have the potential to purchase these homes. So, most of our communities, we want to look at getting people in who will be long term residents who would find their home in these communities and have the ability to live in a house that, you know, they may not have had the opportunity to purchase otherwise. And then the people who are still in these communities, we have our, like I said, our side lot program and all these vacant lots that we want to give to people at such a severely reduced cost that they can improve their equity in their property, and then take over the stewardship of some of these vacant lots and provide themselves with more long-term space for them to live in as well. So, it's something, equitable development is really important to us in finding ways to get these properties out of our inventory into productive use is going to go a long way in helping people find opportunity as well.

Emma Gilbert: Yeah, and homeownership has not been something that's been available to everyone throughout history. And so, it really sounds like you're trying to rewrite some of the programmatic areas within the land bank so that there is a program that fits the needs of each of these community types or property types so that they can increase, you know, the rate or the likelihood that someone can become a first-time homeowner, is that a correct assumption?

Jake Parcell: Yeah, yeah, we're really trying to focus more on affordable housing. So, the State Land Bank Authority is doing something they call Land Banking 2.0, which is their movement into the development of vacant parcels or blighted or nearly demolished parcels and using that to create opportunities in these communities. So, the state has been an incredible partner for us in technical guidance. And now as we move forward finding areas for opportunity, we're hoping to move forward into transitioning into this Land Banking 2.0 model as well. So, finding opportunities to create new developments, affordable housing. In the past, there's been discussion in early 2020, before it fell apart a little bit, with the Veterans Housing initiatives and things like

that, so finding opportunity to use our land to help people is important and finding opportunity to create development where there is none is some of our biggest goals moving forward.

Emma Gilbert: That's really awesome. Is there anything else that you would like to share with our listeners about your research or any opportunities for local resilience planning that you're aware of before we sign off for today?

Jake Parcell: We're always looking to build partnerships with other organizations that work in our space. So, in Wayne County, we work a lot with housing, nonprofits, housing coalitions, neighborhood groups, urban farming groups, different communities. And if you're in the area and you need anything from us, please feel free to reach out. Building partnerships at the government and community level is important from the county government, which is what we represent. So, we're here to help. We're here to do the best we can to remove these properties out of our inventory and help strengthen our communities and sometimes it takes a lot of different partners on it and our doors are always open for anyone who has ideas or potentially has a need for property in these areas. And we're happy to work with everyone as best we can to help mutual goals be accomplished. So definitely, you know, we're looking forward to implementing more and more of this research that we got through this. I am incredibly thankful for REI and MSU for helping us fund it and for the data that we got back, and I look forward to being a part of the Summit and hopefully doing this again in the future.

Emma Gilbert: That's awesome. I look forward to hopefully hearing more if you have the opportunity. So, thank you for joining us today. We look forward to the completion of your project as you go off into the next month to the Summit.

This has been 'Community and University' with Dr. Jack Parcell discussing his project, "Wayne County Land Bank Practicum," to help create strategies for Wayne County Land Bank to return vacant and abandoned property to productive use. Tune in next time for another interview with a REI project leader!