



Wayne Co. auction aims to unload 6,000 homes

Some Detroit streets have many for sale

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When Khalida Kakozi moved to Detroit 37 years ago, West Robinwood Street was filled with friends and family from back home in Iraq.

Now, nearly every house on the 60-year-old woman's street has been abandoned, burned or torn down. In the middle of the day, prostitutes walk along John R and cars zoom down the road as if it were a freeway.

Except for a few residents still hanging on by their teeth, West Robinwood Street is empty. It's also for sale.

The Wayne County Treasurer's Office is auctioning off about 6,000 tax-foreclosed prop-

erties in a sort of closed-bid fire sale that ends Monday. The parcels, including 20 on the half-mile stretch of West Robinwood between Woodward and John R, are nearly all properties that didn't sell in the 2011 auctions. The starting bid for a house is \$500. For a vacant lot, it's \$200. There is no deposit required to enter a bid. The auction started last month.

Although the properties are located throughout the county, most are in destabilized Detroit neighborhoods, some of which have no block clubs or other groups to advocate for them.

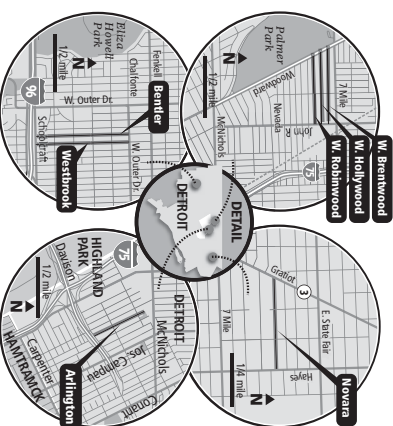
See **AUCTION**, PAGE 6A

FROM PAGE 1A

And the Treasurer's Office knows that. "Some are in extremely distressed condition," said Chief Deputy Treasurer Dave Szymanski. "Those will probably not sell at all."

When property owners fail to pay taxes, the county begins a three-year process to assume the land, the house or the build-

The Wayne County Treasurer's Office is trying to sell about 6,000 houses, most in Detroit, that didn't sell in auctions last fall. Several streets, including those below, have multiple houses on the auction block. For a list of houses in this auction, go to:



left from the 2011 auctions, taxes haven't been paid since 2008.

After trying to sell a staggering 13,000 properties last fall, the backlog of unsold properties was significant, said Zyemanski. Normally, he said, cities have the option of absorbing unsold property. After the 2011 auctions, some cities, such as Detroit, declined. This is the first time the county has tried to reduce its inventory in a mid-year auction and still plans to hold a fall auction.

"A lot of this has to do with land management," said Zyemanski. "The treasury should not be in the business of managing land."

In some neighborhoods, Szymanski said he'd like to see community groups buy some of the properties. He said the Treasurer's Office made efforts to inform those groups about the

He has sold houses to Bligh Busters for \$1 just so the homes could be demolished. There are about 1,400 such properties in this auction.

"There are some we believe are absolutely beyond salvation," he said.

Otherwise, he said, he's hoping the various land banks will step up.

The housing stock in Brighton was never meant to last. Built quickly of wood with open lofts between them, the homes were meant to give low-wage autoworkers land to grow as their families grew, said Kirtz as they families grew. "Mya Mayes of the Brighton Alliance. But when they'd save enough, the workers moved across the Southfield Freeway to the Grandmont neighborhood. Instead,

Now, Brightmoor has pockets of bustling businesses, maintained cottages and even a section of farming co-operative-style living surrounding a series of streets so empty and overgrown, they resemble the country.

Sandra Vlasator, who's block on Bentler in Brighton is nearly empty, said she doesn't think people will buy the houses for sale, and she's OK with that. She likes the wide-open spaces compared to the south-west Detroit neighborhood from which she came seven years ago.

"We've never had any problems. My kids always play outside. Even if you fix it, it's not worth it," she said.

Brightmoor's community groups said they would be happy to buy houses, and that they do, but the logistics of who owns what, the land between houses and lack of consistent funding make it difficult to buy large swaths of property to be cleaned up, rebuilt and hopefully, resolved.

Of the 296 houses being auctioned in the 48223 ZIP code, many are homes once owned by the Northwest Detroit Neighborhood Development Corp., which in 2008 lost donations



Mary Frazier, 85, of Detroit and Sonny the cat sit on her front porch on West Robinwood. The house on the street has been abandoned, burned or torn down. Many parcels are up for auction.

The Wayne County Treasure is auctioning off about 6,000 properties through a closed-bidding process that ends at 2 p.m. Tuesday.

There is no deposit required to place a bid. Houses start at \$500 and land starts at \$200. For more information, e-mail WCTLandMgt@co.wayne.mi.us or call 313-224-6954.

"It's not contiguous," says Jeff Adams of City Missions, looking at the auction list #48223. "This makes it hard to mean, you get a nice home, not a neighborhood."

More than a dozen properties are on the auction block on a single streets such as Westbr and Bentler. Scattered throughout those blocks are dozens of occupied houses rebuilt by Northwest Detroit Neighborhood Development Corp.

Compounding the statement of Brightmoor's housing situation is Mayes' understanding that the neighborhood is exactly the kind of distressed community that city officials have talked about in terms of limiting services and discouraging investment. Brightmoor could never streetlights and police there are also plans to m

In a sense, the groups said, the county is selling and the city is buying. "It's a good deal," says Jani, "but it's not worth the investment. Yet Meisler is moving near both Brightonmoor and West Rob- inwood, and Detroit Public Schools just put a new school in the thick of Brightonmoor."

"There's no communication," said Mayes. "Why spend \$23 million on a new school?"

Why is Meisler moving up the road? And here you are telling people we're going to leave you on your own?"

Taylor Manning, 18, used to walk about three-quarters of a

mile from her house on Novara to catch a bus to school on 8 Mile. Living just two blocks from where police found the body of carjacking victim Matthew Landry three years ago, she said she has been hassled so many times, her family finds \$100 per week to pay for cabs to get her to her bus stop safely.

There are 700 properties for sale in the 48205 ZIP code, which encompasses the Osborn neighborhood and several others. The Mannings' house, in the Regent Park neighborhood, is on the auction list, after the developer who vowed to pay taxes in exchange for selling it to Kathy Manning, 57, squelched.

boarded-up house
her. "They a

stripped.”

The Mannings a way off Novar watched people st houses before mov neighborhood. T with rogue dogs, s drugs, all while Ta tries to finish her tant degree to hel lege at the Univers gan.

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“I don’t know if I’m going to buy them or not. I’m not sure I’m going to do what you said, adding that he was not as nice-looking,” I’d like to buy.”