

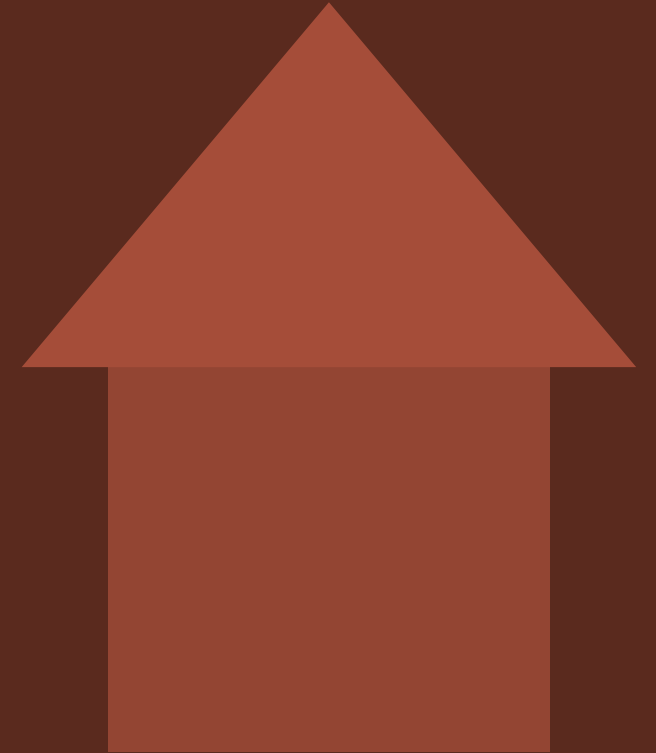
INTERIM STUDY · OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE

Turning Vacant Property Into Affordable Housing for Oklahomans

The Oklahoma Land Bank Act (SB 1478) and the Path to 2027

Angie Barker, JD

- Licensed Attorney, Affordable Housing & Civil Rights Compliance
- Board Member, Disability Rights Oklahoma
- Adjunct Professor of Real Estate & Property Law, Rose State College
- Retired, REALTOR
- Retired, Licensed Commercial Contractor



OPENING

Thank You, Senator Julia Kirt

Thank you to Senator Julia Kirt for sponsoring this legislation, and to this committee for the opportunity to speak today.



This bill matters to:

- Oklahomans needing affordable housing
- Municipalities dealing with that lack of affordable housing
- Nonprofits committed to creating affordable housing
- Developers working to turn problem properties into affordable housing

TODAY'S GOALS

- Review what SB 1478 does and doesn't do
- Respond directly to the concerns raised by opposing stakeholders
- Recommend a few targeted changes to help this bill succeed in the 2027 session

THE PROBLEM

Oklahoma's Housing Paradox

Vacant properties sit empty across the state while the lowest-income Oklahomans cannot find a home they can afford.

220,000+

Vacant Housing Units

*OK Housing Finance Agency,
Housing Needs Assessment*

80,000+

Rental Homes Needed
(for lowest income
Oklahomans)

Oklahoma Watch, Mar. 2026

~12,000

Vacant or Abandoned
Buildings (OKC)

*City of Oklahoma City
estimate*

Vacant, tax-delinquent property is a resource sitting idle. A land bank is the legal tool that lets a community turn that resource back into housing.

THE BILL

What SB 1478 Actually Does

A land bank is a private/public (quasi-governmental) entity a municipality may **choose** to create, either by ordinance or resolution, to acquire, hold, and transfer problem property (tax delinquent) for redevelopment.



1. IDENTIFY

Vacant, abandoned, or tax-delinquent parcels **within the local jurisdiction**



2. ACQUIRE

Through tax foreclosure, donation, purchase, or municipal transfer



3. HOLD & PREPARE

Tax-exempt while the land bank clears title and readies the site for productive reuse



4. RETURN TO PRODUCTIVE USE

Conveyed for public space, affordable housing, or other **locally set priorities**

THE BILL

Accountability Is Already Built In

-  **NO power of eminent domain**
Section 7(B) expressly denies land banks that power, full stop.
-  **Open Meeting & Open Records Acts apply**
Section 12: Every meeting and every record is public.
-  **Board members serve without compensation**
Section 5(F): No salaries, no per diem beyond reasonable expense reimbursement.
-  **Conflict-of-interest ban**
Section 14: No board member or employee may hold an interest in land bank property or contracts.
-  **Bonds are NOT backed by taxpayers**
Section 11(G): Land bank debt is NOT a debt of any city, county, or the State.

ADDRESSING THE OPPOSITION



THE FEAR

“Government Land Grab”

“Land banks let government seize private property and take land out of the market.”

THE REALITY



NO EMINENT DOMAIN anywhere in this bill

Section 7(B) bars it outright. A land bank can only acquire property that is already tax-delinquent, abandoned, donated, or voluntarily transferred.



Every land bank is OPT-IN

A municipality must affirmatively adopt an ordinance or resolution to create one. Nothing is imposed by the OK Legislature.



The goal is to EXIT the property, not hold it

Land banks acquire property specifically to: 1) clear title, 2) convey it back into private ownership, and 3) return property to the tax rolls.

The bill moves land out of limbo and back into productive, taxpaying, private hands, the opposite of a land grab.

ADDRESSING THE OPPOSITION



THE FEAR

“This Costs Taxpayers”

“Land banks will drain city budgets and shift costs onto residents.”

THE REALITY



No mandatory tax appropriation

Land banks are funded by grants, loans, and self-generated revenue — rents, sale proceeds, and service fees (Section 10).



Board members serve without compensation

No salaries. Only actual expenses may be reimbursed (Section 5(F)).



Debt stays with the land bank, not the public

Bonds are the land bank's own limited obligation and must say so on their face — municipalities and the State are not liable (Section 11(G)).



The tax capture is a net gain, not a loss

The 5-year, 50% tax-revenue share (Section 10(C)) applies only to property that was previously producing little or no tax revenue at all (previous tax payer burden).

Every dollar a vacant lot currently costs in mowing, code enforcement, and lost tax base is a cost cities already carry. This bill is built to shrink that cost, not add to it.

ADDRESSING THE OPPOSITION



THE FEAR

“Loss of Local Control”

“Oklahoma City shouldn't dictate how every community handles its vacant property.”

THE REALITY



It does not. The bill only authorizes.

The State creates no land banks. Each one is formed, sized, and governed entirely by the local jurisdiction that opts in (Section 3).



Local boards, local bylaws, local priorities:

The municipality sets board size, appointment method, and the priority uses for reclaimed land — public space, housing, commercial reuse, or otherwise.



Dissolution is a local decision, too.

A land bank's own board can vote to dissolve it, returning all assets to the local jurisdiction (Section 13).

This is a tool on the shelf for communities that want it. It is NOT a state mandate for those that don't.

Strengthening SB 1478 for Next Session



Put teeth behind the housing priority:

Section 9(E)'s use hierarchy is optional (“may”). Make an affordable-housing set-aside and deed-restricted, income-targeted covenants mandatory on disposition, not just a discretionary policy choice.

Require a community engagement plan:

The Center for Community Progress identifies resident trust and ongoing engagement as essential to land bank success. SB 1478 has no such requirement today.

Allow broader regional formation:

Best-practice land banks form at the widest workable scale, often county or multi-county, to reach the largest, most diverse property market. Clarify and encourage multi-jurisdiction land banks.

Add annual public reporting:

Require a yearly report on properties acquired, disposed, and outcomes achieved. This directly answers the cost and transparency concerns raised by opponents.



Let's Give Oklahoma Communities This Productive Tool!

SB 1478 is a sound foundation. With targeted changes like a real housing set-aside, community engagement, and regional flexibility, it can move Oklahoma's vacant and abandoned property back into use for the Oklahoma families who desperately need it.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.

Resource: Center for Community Progress · www.communityprogress.org