



# News Release

**Russell M. Pry – Summit County Executive**  
**Kristen M. Scalise, CPA, CFE – Summit County Fiscal Officer**  
**Summit County Council**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **County Leaders Introduce Legislation to County Council to Explore Creation of Summit County Land Reutilization Corporation**

On Monday, December 5, 2011, County Executive Russell M. Pry and Council Members Ilene Shapiro and Frank Comunale will introduce legislation to the Summit County Council that represents the first step toward the possible creation of a countywide land bank program. The legislation was proposed to Executive Pry and Council Members Shapiro and Comunale by County Fiscal Officer Kristen M. Scalise, CPA, CFE. The legislation proposes to hire Western Reserve Land Conservancy's Thriving Communities Institute, a northeast Ohio non-profit corporation, to assist the County in investigating, creating and initially operating a County Land Reutilization Corporation ("CLRC"). Under Ohio law, counties can create CLRCs with a mission to acquire, rehabilitate, demolish and/or remarket abandoned and vacant properties in the County.

For the past several months, Fiscal Officer Scalise, Executive Pry and Council Members Shapiro and Comunale have been collaboratively researching the possible creation of a CLRC in Summit County. "The recent countywide property tax reappraisal revealed that market values of real property decreased in every community in Summit County," said Scalise. "Homes and businesses that are vacant and abandoned due to foreclosures and other reasons have contributed significantly to depressing the real estate market in the County. My hope is that this legislation will be the first step in addressing and correcting this problem."

"My administration looks forward to working with Ms. Scalise and County Council toward the possible creation of a CLRC for Summit County," said Pry. "While Summit County has fared better than most other metropolitan counties in terms of abandoned and vacant properties, it is still a problem that affects everyone in our community in terms of health, crime and property values."

CLRC's are non-profit corporations with a five to nine-member board consisting of the County Fiscal Officer, Executive and a member of Council, along with other community and government representatives. The CLRC is responsible for acquiring vacant and abandoned properties from delinquent tax foreclosures, commercial banks, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and government supported entities such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. After acquiring the properties, the CLRC can demolish dilapidated or unused structures, renovate and resell the property. The CLRC can also sell the property to adjacent or other interested buyers and assemble several parcels for redevelopment.

According to Scalise, “State law gives CLRCs broad authority to acquire, rehab and resell abandoned and vacant properties from a variety of sources. The proposed contract with Western Reserve Land Conservancy’s Thriving Communities Institute will allow us to determine the scope of the role that the CLRC will play in Summit County and to proceed with setting up the CLRC in that manner.” Additionally, the County intends to work with the Thriving Communities Institute to determine how the CLRC will be funded from the several options available under State law.

The initial CLRC in Ohio was established in Cuyahoga County in 2009, under the direction of former Cuyahoga County Treasurer Jim Rokakis. At that time, State law allowed only Cuyahoga County to create a CLRC. Based on the success in Cuyahoga County, State law was later amended in 2009 to allow other counties in Ohio to create CLRCs. Since that time, Hamilton, Lucas, Trumbull, Montgomery and Mahoning counties have created CLRCs. Summit County now joins a growing list of additional counties that are in the process of creating CLRCs.

In March 2011, Rokakis, widely recognized as the innovator of CLRCs in Ohio, was named the Director of the Thriving Communities Institute. Under the direction of Rokakis, the Thriving Communities Institute has assisted several counties with setting up CLRCs in ways that are tailored to the unique situation of each county. The County’s contract provides for the Thriving Communities Institute to assist in the investigation, creation and operation of a CLRC in Summit County. The contract will be funded by local non-profit agencies rather than taxpayer funds. Already, Akron Community Foundation has agreed to commit \$15,000.00 to the project and the GAR Foundation has agreed to contribute \$25,000.00.

County leaders expressed their thanks to both organizations, with Executive Pry stating, “Once again, both GAR Foundation and Akron Community Foundation have shown their commitment to improving the lives of residents and the economic well-being of Summit County.”

The legislation will be introduced to Council on December 5, 2011, and will be discussed in the Planning and Economic Development Committee on December 12, 2011. “I believe this legislation is crucial to improving the economic vitality of the residents and businesses of Summit County,” said Ilene Shapiro, chair of Council’s Planning and Economic Development Committee. “Not only could a CLRC assist with declining property values, it can assist with future redevelopment of depressed neighborhoods and redevelopment of commercial land for economic development and job creation.”

“I look forward to working with my fellow Council Members as well as Fiscal Officer Scalise and Executive Pry in exploring the potential benefits of a CLRC,” said County Council member Frank Comunale. “As a Council member, I have personally seen the negative effects of abandoned and vacant properties on our neighborhoods.”

The proposed legislation could be adopted by Council as early as December 12, 2011. If approved, Fiscal Officer Scalise, Executive Pry and County Council Members will begin working with Western Reserve Land Conservancy’s Thriving Communities Institute before the end of the year.

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