

WESTERN RESERVE LAND CONSERVANCY

INTERN JOB DESCRIPTION

SUMMER, 2022

Title: Urban Research Intern

Department: Thriving Communities

Reports to: Urban Revitalization Fellow (Tim Dehm)

Location: Thriving Communities, Cleveland

Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.; Some evenings and weekends as required.

Internship Timeframe: June 2022 – August 2022

Compensation: \$2,500 for 10 weeks

How to Apply: Please submit a resume and cover letter describing your interest in this position to Tim Dehm at tdehm@wrlandconservancy.org

Application Deadline: May 2, 2022

POSITION SUMMARY

Western Reserve Land Conservancy (the Land Conservancy) is leading a two-year initiative funded by the US EPA to improve the process of vacant land reuse in Cleveland. The final outcome of this initiative is to create a planning tool to guide vacant land reuse projects and management strategies for the advancement of environmental justice, public health, and quality of life for Cleveland's underserved communities. This initiative seeks to build upon previous investments in vacant land reuse planning and management and therefore requires a comprehensive and rigorous analysis of those investments.

The Land Conservancy requests student(s) who can produce three deliverables by December 2022:

1. A report that details the process of vacant land re-use based on a set of interviews with key decision makers at the City of Cleveland and community development practitioners
2. A parcel-level dataset that geographically locates past, present, and proposed vacant land reuse projects in Cleveland
3. A compilation of priorities for vacant land reuse identified in plans and reports

Through this research, the students will not only gain a robust understanding of planning initiatives in Cleveland, but also a sense of the on-the-ground work to transform paper plans into physical places. The students will also engage with the wide spectrum of organizations who collaborate with the Land Conservancy to create more efficient and equitable vacant land reuse outcomes for the residents of Cleveland.

Furthermore, the students will:

- Attend regular meetings with the Land Conservancy and project stakeholders regarding the implementation of the US EPA Environmental Justice Grant
- Provide weekly updates to the project team regarding the status of their research
- Collaborate with the Land Conservancy's project consultant to produce graphic summaries of the research

EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE AND CAPABILITIES

This individual should be pursuing a Master's level degree from an accredited college or university. A diverse range of majors are appropriate for this role, though majors in urban or environmental studies, urban planning, public policy, political science, business or economics would be helpful. This person should also possess effective verbal and written communication skills, the ability to handle multiple tasks and projects at the same time, and strong collaborative skills combined with the ability to work effectively in a team-based setting. This individual should also demonstrate a connection to some aspect(s) of the mission of Western Reserve Land Conservancy.

ABOUT WESTERN RESERVE LAND CONSERVANCY AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Western Reserve Land Conservancy is a nonprofit organization that works to conserve natural areas, preserve farmland and revitalize urban centers. In March of 2011, Western Reserve Land Conservancy launched the Thriving Communities program in response to the foreclosure crisis that ravaged many of Ohio's communities, in particular low-income communities and communities of color. Today, the Thriving Communities program works with cities and organizations throughout Ohio to revitalize urban neighborhoods through the reclamation and transformation of vacant properties, urban reforestation, code enforcement, vacant land reuse, and the creation of trails and high-quality green space.

ABOUT OUR US EPA VACANT LAND REUSE INITIATIVE

This project seeks to build upon previous investments in vacant land planning to establish an environmental justice framework for vacant land reuse and management in the City of Cleveland, Ohio. There are over 30,000 vacant lots in the city, many of which experience illegal dumping and pose a legitimate health and safety threat to residents. Creative reuse and management can turn vacant land into a tremendous public asset that not only stabilizes neighborhoods, but also addresses pressing environmental justice and public health challenges. Vacant land reuse that improves air and water quality, reduces illegal dumping of hazardous material, and increases access to greenspace will help create communities that are more resilient to climate change and airborne pandemics such as COVID-19. Throughout this two-year project, the Land Conservancy will use the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model to engage major stakeholders in vacant land management to synthesize existing plans and priorities, and build a framework for vacant land reuse that establishes metrics for determining the highest and best use of a vacant lot and clear, data-driven policies for implementation. The final product will be a collaboratively-built, open source database and planning tool to guide vacant land reuse projects and management strategies for the advancement of

environmental justice, public health, and quality of life for Cleveland's underserved communities. As this project will address health outcome disparities from air pollution, among other EJ challenges, it is believed to be eligible for ARP funding.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

Tim Dehm

Urban Revitalization Fellow

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