



Community  
Legal  
Resources

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Connecting Lawyers and Communities

**VACANT PROPERTY EDUCATION SERIES:  
FINDING PROPERTY OWNERSHIP WITH  
INTERNET RESEARCH**

# SOFTWARE & SEARCH TIPS

When using the websites, the following chart may help you when using the search function

|  | City  | WCROD                                   | State of Michigan                       | WC Treasurer                           |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Best approach</b>   | Address; Leave out "Street" "Ave" etc. And don't use a direction unless you have to | Entity name without suffix (e.g. "LLC") | Entity name without suffix (e.g. "LLC") | Address; Leave out "Street" "Ave" etc. |
| <b>Partial Words</b> (e.g. "Community Legal Res" instead of "Community Legal Resources") | Yes   | No                                      | Yes                                     | Yes                                    |
| <b>Keywords</b> (e.g. "Community" instead of "Community Legal Resources")                | No  | No                                      | Yes                                     | No                                     |
| <b>Wildcards (*)</b>   | No  | No                                      | No                                      | No                                     |
| <b>Case (lower/UPPER)</b>  | Doesn't matter  | Doesn't matter                          | Doesn't matter                          | Doesn't matter                         |
| <b>Software Needs</b>  | None  | None                                    | JAVA plug-in                            | None                                   |

## IF YOUR SEARCH RETURNS NOTHING, TRY

- Alternate spellings and nicknames (Thomas, Tomas, Tom)
- Reversing first and last name (Jane Doe → Doe Jane)
- Typing in a partial name like the first three letters

# SOFTWARE & SEARCH TIPS

## CAPTURING A SCREEN SHOT:

- **Macintosh:**
  - Command-Shift-3 saves an screen shot as an image document on your desktop or use the “Grab” function.
- **PC (Running Microsoft Windows):**
  - Press the “print screen” key on your keyboard



<http://i195.photobucket.com/albums/z84/MatthBones/Come%20Fare%20Uno%20Screenshot/1-TastoPrintScreen.jpg>

- Open a blank MS Word (or other word processing) document
- Right-click on a space within the document, and click “Paste”

# CITY OF DETROIT PROPERTY SEARCH

| City of Detroit's Online Property Tax Information System |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Description</b>                                       | This system allows property owners to pay their property taxes electronically and view information about their property for free. In addition, it provides access to property information for a fee.  |
| <b>Website</b>   | <a href="https://is.bsasoftware.com/bsa.is/default.aspx">https://is.bsasoftware.com/bsa.is/default.aspx</a>   |
| <b>Cost</b>  | Free to view owner's name, but \$2.00 to access a detailed report   |
| <b>Search Process</b>                                    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Navigate to Detroit by clicking on "Search Municipalities" then "City of Detroit"</li><li>2) Click on "Property and Land Search" and enter in property address</li><li>3) A list of properties will appear after a successful search. The owner's name will appear to the right of the parcel ID and address</li><li>4) Provide valid credit card information to access detailed reports</li></ol> |
| <b>Search fields</b>                                     | Property address<br>Owner name<br>Parcel ID   |
| <b>Information provided for free</b>                     | Owner name<br>Parcel ID   |

# CITY OF DETROIT PROPERTY SEARCH

## **SPECIAL NOTES OR DEFINITIONS:**

- You may not need a street direction when searching. If your search comes up blank, try leaving the direction out.
- For streets that have numbers in the name, try both the number and spelling out the number to find the property.
- Leave out “Street” or “Ave” when searching, generally the street will pop up in the search with out it.
- The owner listed on the property is not guaranteed to be the current owner of the property. If you are considering purchasing a property, you will need to verify this information with the Register of Deeds and potentially with a title commitment.

# WAYNE COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS

| Wayne County's Online Collection of Recorded Property Documents |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Description</b>  | This system allows users to search millions of documents related to land transactions that have been recorded with the Wayne County Register of Deeds. This includes mortgages, deeds, liens and land contracts.  |
| <b>Website</b>  | <a href="http://www.waynecountylandrecords.com">http://www.waynecountylandrecords.com</a>   |
| <b>Cost</b>   | Free and pay-for search options available   |
| <b>Search Process</b>   | <p><b>Free Search</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Click on "Search Real Estate Index"</li> <li>2) Search by Grantor or Grantee (separated by first and last name)</li> <li>3) If desired, refine search by choosing a property document type</li> </ol> <p><b>Pay-For Search</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Sign up by clicking on "On-Demand Account Signup"</li> <li>2) Provide contact information and create username and password</li> <li>3) Verify credit card information</li> <li>4) Click on "Search Real Estate Index"</li> </ol> |
| <b>Search fields</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Company Name (<i>Free</i>)</li> <li>• First, Middle, Last Name (<i>Free</i>)</li> <li>• Document type (<i>Free</i>)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address, Tax ID, Street Name (<i>Pay-For</i>)</li> <li>• Reception Date (<i>Pay-For</i>)</li> <li>• Instrument, Liber number (<i>Pay-For</i>)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Information provided for free</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property legal and plat information</li> <li>• General record information: date, type and consideration amount</li> <li>• Returnee Address, if recorded</li> </ul>   |

# WAYNE COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS

## SPECIAL NOTES OR DEFINITIONS:

When viewing deeds:

- **GRANTEE:** The person(s) or entity buying or receiving a property
- **GRANTOR:** The person(s) or entity selling or giving a property

When viewing a mortgage document:

- **GRANTEE:** The bank or entity providing the mortgage
- **GRANTOR:** The person(s) or entity taking out the mortgage
  
- When a search is complete, the documents are not ordered chronologically. Click on “date” to sort documents by date.
- Free searches will only return up to 200 records.
- If a search doesn’t result after typing in a person’s name, try doing a partial search or guessing for a common misspelling.

# STATE OF MICHIGAN BUSINESS ENTITY SEARCH

| STATE OF MICHIGAN'S DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS' CORPORATION DIVISION BUSINESS ENTITY SEARCH |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Description</b>  | This system allows users to search for records of corporations, limited liability companies, and limited partnerships authorized to transact business in the State of Michigan.   |
| <b>Website</b>  | <a href="http://www.dleg.state.mi.us/bcs_corp/sr_corp.asp">http://www.dleg.state.mi.us/bcs_corp/sr_corp.asp</a>   |
| <b>Cost</b>   | Free  |
| <b>Search Process</b>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) You can select one of three options for searching the database: (1) name, (2) key word, (3) identification number. Start with "by name".</li><li>2) Click on "Entity Name or ID Number" and enter in the business's name as it appears on the WCROD website, deed, or other source you have.</li><li>3) A list of businesses will pop up under the header "Entity Name". Click on the name that best matches your information; the next page will provide contact information and other details.</li><li>4) There may be a link to "View Document Images" at the bottom of this page; click on this to view required documents that may provide further contact or background information.</li></ol> |
| <b>Search fields</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Business name</li><li>•Business keyword</li><li>•Business ID number</li></ul>  |
| <b>Information provided for free</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Business ID, Name, Type, Resident Agent, Registered and/or Mailing Address, Formation Date, Jurisdiction of Origin, Status (active/inactive)</li><li>•Images of: Annual statements, Articles of organization</li></ul>   |

# STATE OF MICHIGAN BUSINESS ENTITY SEARCH

## SPECIAL NOTES OR DEFINITIONS:

- If you have trouble viewing documents, you may need to download a java plug-in (try: <http://www.java.com/en/download/>).
- When looking at “Corporate Entity Documents”, you will likely come across many types, e.g. annual reports, articles of incorporation or organization, application for certificate of authority, certificates of amendment, renewal or termination, appointments, etc. **All of these documents have the potential to provide further contact or other information about the business you’re looking for.**
- If the business entity you are searching **does not come up in the search** and you suspect it’s registered in a different state, try Googling “business entity search [state name]”, or something similar.

# WAYNE COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR

| Wayne County Tax Assessor Lookup     |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Description</b>                   | This system allows property owners to access property tax listings for all municipalities in Wayne County. Taxpayers can also pay delinquent real property taxes on the site.   |
| <b>Website</b>                       | <a href="http://www.waynecounty.com/treasurer_payonline.htm">http://www.waynecounty.com/treasurer_payonline.htm</a>   |
| <b>Cost</b>                          | Free  |
| <b>Search Process</b>                | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Accept disclaimer to ensure understanding that the information is not the official statement of total tax liability</li><li>2) Enter property address or parcel ID</li><li>3) If more than one property matches, the search will return a table of potential addresses; select the correct address</li></ol> |
| <b>Search fields</b>                 | Property address<br>Parcel ID   |
| <b>Information provided for free</b> | Taxpayer Name<br>Back taxes, interest, and fees<br>Property status  |

# WAYNE COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR

## SPECIAL NOTES OR DEFINITIONS:

- **Taxpayer ≠ Owner**
- **DELINQUENT:** Year one of non-payment of taxes
- **FORFEITURE:** Year two of non-payment of taxes
- **FORECLOSED:** Year three of non-payment of taxes

**Example: Non-payment in 2011 will mean that in March of**

**2012** the taxes will be **DELINQUENT**

**2013:** the taxes will be **FORFEITED**

**2014:** the taxes will be **FORECLOSED**

- Properties can remain in one stage for several years, depending on the payment arrangements made with the Treasurer's office.

# ADDITIONAL WEBSITES

## OWNERSHIP/CONTACT INFORMATION:

- White Pages (<http://www.whitepages.com/>)
- Wayne County Probate Court (<http://public.wcpc.us/pa/>)

## NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION:

- Crime Mapping (<http://www.crimemapping.com/>)
- CityDNA: foreclosures other housing data  
(<http://socialcompact.org/dd/aboutCityDNA.htm>)
- Demographic Mapping (<http://open.cridata.org/maps/mapas/map.html>)

# CLR CONTACTS & LINKS

## PLANNING AND TECHNICAL PROGRAM STAFF:

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- Sam Butler, Manager | [sbutler@clronline.org](mailto:sbutler@clronline.org), 313.969.7160
- Elizabeth Luther, Manager | [eluther@clronline.org](mailto:eluther@clronline.org), 313.969.7166

## ONLINE ACCESS TO THESE MATERIALS:

- CLR's website: [www.clronline.org](http://www.clronline.org)
- View/download a PDF copy of this document:  
[www.clronline.org/resources/VPES\\_PropertyOwnershipTraining.pdf/view](http://www.clronline.org/resources/VPES_PropertyOwnershipTraining.pdf/view)
- Access links to online video tutorials:  
<http://clronline.org/resources/new-workshop-and-online-video-tutorials-help-take-the-mystery-out-of-property-ownership/>