

Wayne County Regional Land Bank Corporation
Annual Report
2019

Prepared by

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Executive Director

Our Mission

The mission of the Wayne County Regional Land Bank Corporation is to address the problems of vacant, abandoned, derelict, contaminated, or tax delinquent property in Wayne County in a coordinated manner through the acquisition and disposition of real property and returning that property to productive use in order to strengthen the economy, improve the quality of life, and improve the financial condition of the municipalities, through the use of the powers and tools granted to Land Banks by the Laws of the State of New York.

Our History

In January, 2016, the Wayne County Board of Supervisors created an ad hoc committee of the Board to address properties acquired via the County's tax foreclosure process. The ad hoc committee recommended the creation of the Land Bank which was formally incorporated in March, 2018 as the Wayne County Regional Land Bank Corporation.

In 2018, the Land Bank acquired 4 properties from the County's tax foreclosure process.

In June, 2019, the Land Bank hired me as the Land Banks Executive Director.

Our Message

Executive Director Report

I joined the Land Bank in June, 2019 as Executive Director. Previously, I had been an administrator in the SUNY system, most recently at SUNY Oswego. I retired from SUNY in May, 2019.

I was and am very excited to serve the Wayne County community in this role. I am very excited about what the Land Bank has done and will continue to do in the future.

In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the negative impact of vacant, abandoned, derelict, contaminated and tax delinquent properties on neighborhoods and communities throughout Wayne County. As the Land Bank grows and expands its efforts, it will be a valuable tool to improve our communities, the local economy, and property revenue generation through the intentional collaboration with municipalities, private individuals and entities to redevelop property what would otherwise be a blight in our community.

Derelict property has been a growing problem in Wayne County. These properties lower neighboring property values, attract crime, pose health and safety concerns, and erode community pride.

The Land Bank is part of a long term strategy to combat the decades-in-the-making problem of these properties. The strategy to decrease vacancies and promote strong neighborhoods includes coordination with code enforcement, strategic planning for land use and housing, and collaboration with private investment and local agencies to effectively re-develop our neighborhoods, downtowns and communities.

The primary focus of the Land Bank so far has been the acquisition of derelict properties through the tax foreclosure process and to develop strategies to eliminate the harms and liabilities caused by such properties.

To date, the properties the Land Bank has acquired have all been from the County's tax foreclosure process. The Land Bank is able to accept property donations or purchase property as appropriate. We will consider these acquisition options as deemed appropriate in the future.

The Land Bank was not established, nor is it our intention, to replace the tax foreclosure auction. The Land Bank has the same purpose as the auction which is to sell the property to individuals who will redevelop the property and turn them back into tax generating parcels. The Land Bank will also sell these properties, but will do so with requirements that the new owner must comply with.

In 2019, the Land Bank acquired the worst properties available in the foreclosure process. The goal with these properties is to either demolish them or find private investors who are willing to purchase the property and agree to perform required repairs and upgrades to improve the property and meet local building and housing codes.

We ended up accomplishing more in 2019 than we expected and are very excited about the opportunities and plans for 2020.

Our efforts are diverse and include:

- Demolition
 - o A large number of the properties we obtain have exceeded their useful life and will be demolished. We are looking for individuals and groups that are interested in these properties and have the resources and capacity to demolish unusable structures. In some cases, if appropriate, the Land Bank will complete the demolition.
- Rehab
 - o A large number of the properties we obtain may still have useful life and provide quality housing. We are currently not doing rehabs ourselves, but are developing relationships with individuals and groups who have the ability, resources and capacity to re-develop these properties.
- Partners

- A major effort the past few months has been to get the word out about the Land Bank and talk with individuals and groups who may want to partner with us
- Getting property on the tax roll
- Contaminated properties

Our 2019 Accomplishments

We ended up accomplishing more in 2019 than we expected and are very excited about the opportunities and plans for 2020. Some highlights include:

- Secured CDBG Grant from Wayne County in September. We are the subrecipients of these funds from the County.
 - Secured funding from the NYS Attorney General through Enterprise Partners. The Land Bank had applied for and received a \$500,000 grant from New York State. The contract for these funds was completed in August.
 - Acquired 17 properties through the Wayne County Tax Foreclosure process.
 - Sold 5 properties, beginning in late, 2019. These properties were returned to the tax roll.
 - Performed necessary Environmental testing on 8 residential and 1 larger commercial property to be demolished.
 - Established operational procedures to perform Land Bank functions
 - Developed numerous relationships with potential public and private partners across the County.
 - Began development of bid packages for the demolition of 8 residential and 1 large commercial property.
 - Educated the community related to the Land Bank's mission and goals. I attended and spoke at several meetings of local organizations. I also participated in numerous meetings and conversations with individuals and groups interested in the Land Bank and our efforts.
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- Leverage private investment to redevelop properties obtained by the Land Bank. Of the five properties we sold in 2019, 3 of them are being renovated and 2 are being demolished.
 - We do not replace the Tax Foreclosure process
 - The Land Bank conducted ?? public meetings
 - An independent certified public accounting firm performs the annual financial audit of the Land Bank. The 2018 report is available on the Land Bank website and the 2019 financial audit and report will be available by the end of March, 2020.

Our 2020 Expectations

Our agenda for 2020 is very ambitious. In 2019 we developed capacity that will maximize the impact of our efforts in the future. For 2020, we plan to:

- Finalize a memorandum of understanding with Wayne County and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) that will limit the risk to both the County and the Land Bank to foreclose on and re-sell environmentally challenged properties. In the past these properties were not foreclosed on and many remain on the Roll Section 8 Real Property Tax list. Our goal is to eliminate these properties by moving them back to the tax roll and either collecting taxes or foreclosing on the property if the owners do not pay the taxes.
- Perform appropriate environmental studies as appropriate on property the Land Bank acquires or considers acquiring.
- Acquire at least 20 properties through the Wayne County 2020 tax foreclosure process.
- Demolish as many as 20 residential properties that have exceeded their useful life. The lots will be sold and used for side-lots to existing property, sold for re-development or developed by municipalities to provide green space. Our efforts in this regard will be coordinated with the local municipality(s).
- Sell up to 10 properties for rehabilitation by private investors to provide quality affordable housing in the community. Private investors must commit to perform improvements to the property as deemed necessary by a review of the property. All properties will need to meet all applicable local codes.
- Demolish at least one large commercial structure already identified for demolition
- Begin to accept donated properties as appropriate.
- Develop strategies to effectively market and aggressively sell Land Bank owned properties.
- Utilize and close out the CDBG funding obtained from Wayne County.
- Utilize and close out the New York State Attorney General funding obtained through Enterprise Partners.
- Apply for additional funding as appropriate and available to facilitate and fund Land Bank activities.

Again, it is very exciting to be part of the Wayne County Regional Land Bank Corporation and to be serving the Wayne County community in this capacity.

I look forward to an exciting and successful year for the Land Bank.

Very sincerely,

