

Wayne County Regional Land Bank Corporation

Annual Report

2020

Prepared by
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Executive Director

Board Members

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Steve Groat, Vice Chair
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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.

Our Message

Executive Director Report

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

I appreciate the support and encouragement we receive from so many in the community, especially the Wayne County Board of Supervisors, the Wayne County Treasurer, and Wayne County Officials and Departments. The support and encouragement are critical to the continued success of the Land Bank.

There has been a growing concern with blight and 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, the Land Bank 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 remove, improve and 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 County strategy to combat the decades-in-the-making blight. The strategy to decrease property 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.

Initially, the primary focus of the Land Bank was 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, most of the properties acquired by the Land Bank have been from the County's tax foreclosure process. The Land Bank is also able to accept property donations or purchase property as appropriate.

The Land Bank was not established, nor is it our intention, to replace the tax foreclosure auction. The Land Bank's purpose is similar to 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 sells these properties, but will do so with requirements and enforcement liens that the new owner must comply with.

Our efforts are diverse and include:

- Demolition
 - o A large number of the properties we obtain have exceeded their useful life and must 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 Some of the properties we acquire may still have useful life and provide quality housing. We are currently not performing rehabs ourselves, but are developing relationships with individuals and groups who have the ability, resources and capacity to re-develop and improve these properties.
- Partner
 - o We are developing relationships with municipalities, agencies, County Departments, and private individuals to deal with blight in our community. Our efforts include collaborating on grant opportunities and facilitating conversations and efforts of multiple and diverse partners.
- Facilitator
 - o We are a tool and facilitator in projects and efforts that require community-wide ideas, support, and intervention.
- Environmentally Challenged Properties
 - o We are partnering with Wayne County and the New York State DEC to obtain, remediate and re-develop sites that in the past remained in tax-free status due to the potential liability of foreclosing on such properties.

Our 2020 Accomplishments

In what turned out to be a crazy year for everyone, the Land Bank moved ahead with a variety of projects and activities. We ended up with significant 2020 accomplishments and made preparation for a very busy 2021. Highlights include:

- Demolished commercial structure at 42 Elmer Street, Lyons. This former cold storage on the southeast corner of Lyons has been an eye-sore and danger to the community for decades.
- Demolished 6 residential properties that were beyond their useful life and had become blight in their communities. We demolished residential property in the Towns of Palmyra, Galen, Williamson, Wolcott, Sodus, and in the Village of Clyde.
- Demolished a combined residential and commercial property in the Village of Sodus Point. Clean up of the Sodus Point site included removal of 65 ton of tires.
- Began abatement and demolition of a residential structure at 48 Broad Street in Lyons.
- Sold a property in Town of Wolcott with the buyer responsible for demolition and cleanup. Project is complete.
- Sold a property in Town of Sodus with the buyer responsible for demolition and cleanup. Project is complete.
- Sold a property in Town of Sodus to be renovated by buyer. Project is in progress.
- Accepted purchase offers and are finalizing the sale of vacant lots in Towns of Palmyra, Galen and Sodus.
- Accepted purchase offer and are finalizing the sale of residential property in the Village of Sodus to be renovated by the buyer.
- Secured additional grant funding from the NYS Attorney General through Enterprise Partners. The Land Bank asked for and received an additional \$200,000 grant from New York State. These funds will be used prior to June 30, 2021.
- Worked with the Town of Lyons and provided 50% cost share for the emergency demolition of a building at the corner of Canal Street and Rt 14 in Lyons.
- Purchased the former Sodus Hotel at 5 West Main St in the Village of Sodus from bankruptcy. The structures on this property will be demolished by March, 2021.
- Executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NYS DEC and Wayne County related to ownership liability of potentially contaminated properties. This MOU provides the framework for a partnership with DEC that will facilitate the acquisition, testing, remediation and re-development of properties that have sat idle for many years. This agreement limits the liability associated with the Wayne County foreclosure and Land Bank acquisition of these properties. We are one of only 3 Land Banks and Counties in New York State that has entered into such an agreement
- Engaged with numerous Town and Village officials and boards to introduce them to the Land Bank and begin discussions of their concerns and determine how the Land Bank can facilitate positive change in their community.

- Partnering with Wayne County and a local individual for the development of the first Wayne County Child Advocacy Center. This Center will be a significant tool to deal with the blight of child abuse in Wayne County.
- Partnering with Wayne CAP and the Wayne County Department of Social Services to plan for and develop emergency and transitional housing strategies.
- Partnering with Wayne County Planning and Economic development on two significant grants they applied for and received for affordable housing and Brownfield site assessment.
- Obtained IRS 501c3 status to facilitate donations of property to the Land Bank.
- Completed the transition of the Land Bank's bookkeeping and accounting processes to Quick Books.
- Completed PARIS (Public Authorities Reporting Information System) reporting and compliance measures.
- An independent certified public accounting firm performs the annual financial audit of the Land Bank. The 2019 report is available on the Land Bank website and the 2020 financial audit and report will be available by the end of March, 2021.

Our 2020 Expectations

Our 2021 agenda is very ambitious.

We plan to:

- Work with Treasurer and County staff to determine which tax-foreclosed properties are best suited for Land Bank Acquisition. With the potential of 2 years of foreclosure, the list for 2021 could be significant.
- Engage in conversations with Towns and Villages to discuss how the Land Bank can assist with properties of concern.
- Open the Child Advocacy Center. Completion is expected in March.
- Collaborate with Treasurer and appropriate County staff to determine which properties are best suited for Land Bank Acquisition. With the potential of 2 years of foreclosure, the list for 2021 could be significant.
- Deal with Roll Section 8 properties. 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 assessments on property the Land Bank acquires or considers acquiring. Use of County EPA Brownfield grant funds will facilitate many of these assessments.
- Acquire 20 or more properties through the Wayne County 2021 tax foreclosure processes.
- Demolish as many as 15 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).
- Depending on which properties are acquired by the Land Bank after tax foreclosure, we may sell up to 10 properties for rehabilitation by private investors and agencies; including Habitat for Humanity and Wayne CAP to provide quality single-family affordable housing. Private investors must commit to perform improvements to the property as deemed necessary by a review of the property to assure we are removing blight. All properties that are sold need to meet all applicable local codes and occupancy requirements.
- 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 Enterprise Partner grant funding.
- Apply for additional funding as appropriate and available to facilitate and fund Land Bank activities.
- Improve the marketing and sale of property acquired by the Land Bank to maximize Land Bank revenue and tax revenue to towns, villages, schools and the County.

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 a healthy, exciting and successful year.

Very sincerely,

mark