

# Wayne County Regional Land Bank Corporation

## Annual Report

### 2022

Prepared by  
Dr. Mark C. Humbert  
Executive Director

#### **Board Members**

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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. We have significantly expanded the scope of our work.

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.

In 2022, the Land Bank accepted donations of property in the Village of Newark and the Town of Lyons. The property in Newark was demolished and is available to the Village to facilitate a public works project. The property in Lyons is adjacent to a building we currently own and in a neighborhood we have targeted for transformation.

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.
  - o For 2023, we are considering at least two rehabilitations or stabilizations of buildings in the Village of Clyde and the Town of Lyons.
- Partnership and Collaboration
  - o We are developing relationships with towns, villages, 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 2022 Accomplishments**

We had significant accomplishments in 2022 and made preparation for a very busy 2023.

Highlights include:

- Demolished a donated commercial structure in the Village of Newark. The property in Newark was demolished and is available to the Village to facilitate a public works project. This property has been an eye-sore and danger to the community for decades.
- Demolished 5 residential properties that were beyond their useful life and had become blight in their communities. We demolished residential property in the Towns of Wolcott, Savannah and Butler.
- Continued the clean-up of the former Sodus Hotel parcel, that included the removal and of 6 fuel and oil tanks.
- Completed the remediation of the Elmer Street property in Lyons.
- Performed environmental testing on numerous properties.
- Sold the former Sand Hill Trailer park with the requirement that the site be completely cleaned up.
- Sold a property in Town of Arcadia, with the buyer responsible for demolition and cleanup. Project is complete.
- Sold a property in Town of Savannah, with the buyer responsible for demolition and cleanup. Project is complete.
- Sold a property in Town of Butler, with the buyer responsible for demolition and cleanup. Project is complete.
- Sold 5 vacant lots in the Towns of Rose, Lyons and Wolcott to adjacent property owners.
- Continued efforts to test and remediate a commercial building in the Town of Huron.
- Sold a commercial building in the Village of Sodus, with the buyer responsible for renovation.
- Awarded NYS Land Bank Initiative Funding. These funds include \$150,000 per year for 3 years for program expenses, including salaries and office expenses.
- Collaborated with the Town of Lyons on two significant grants to transform the Geneva and Canal Street neighborhood of Lyons. This area includes several buildings that the Land Bank currently owns or has plans to purchase.

- Continued to Engage 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.
- Applied for a significant EPA – Brownfield grant for the testing and cleanup of the Canal and Geneva St neighborhood in Lyons.
- An independent certified public accounting firm performs the annual financial audit of the Land Bank. The 2021 report is available on the Land Bank website and the 2022 financial audit and report will be available by the end of March, 2021.

### **Our 2023 Expectations**

Our 2023 agenda is very ambitious.

We plan to:

- We will be hiring a Deputy Director.
- Work with Treasurer and County staff to determine which tax-foreclosed properties are best suited for Land Bank Acquisition. There may be a significant number of such properties in 2023.
- Engage in conversations with Towns and Villages to discuss how the Land Bank can assist with properties of concern and help them improve their efforts to keep properties from becoming blighted.
- Continue to deal with Roll Section 8 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. We have almost completed our efforts related to these properties that have been placed back on the tax rolls since 2020.
- 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 as many as 20 or more properties through the Wayne County 2023 tax foreclosure processes.
- Acquire several properties to facilitate the planned transformation of the Geneva and Canal St neighborhood in Lyons.
- Possibly acquire and stabilize historical property in Lyons and Clyde.
- Demolish as many as 15 of the properties we may acquire that have exceeded their useful life. The lots, after demolition, 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 several properties for rehabilitation by private investors. 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.
- Continue to accept donated properties as appropriate.
- Improve strategies to effectively market and aggressively sell Land Bank owned properties.
- Close out the CDBG funding obtained from Wayne County.
- Apply for Land Bank Initiative Grant funding to purchase, demolish and/or stabilize and renovate property owned or acquired by the Land Bank.
- Apply for additional funding as appropriate and available to facilitate and fund Land Bank activities.
- Begin the transformation of the Geneva and Canal St neighborhood in Lyons if State funding is awarded to the Town and Land Bank for this purpose. This would be a very significant project that would include up to 40 affordable supportive living units and considerable retail and office space. The project would be a very significant step to completely transform this once proud neighborhood.

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,

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