



News from Livingston County

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State Approves Land Bank for Livingston County

The Livingston County Land Bank Corporation was approved by New York State on Thursday, June 29, 2017 at the monthly meeting of the Empire State Development (ESD) Corporation's Board of Directors. The County submitted an application to ESD, the state's economic development agency, requesting the creation of the land bank in late April, shortly after State Legislation increased the number of land banks allowed in the state from 20 to 25. After review and a recommendation by ESD staff, the Board of Directors approved the application citing that it met all of the criteria of the New York State Land Bank Program.

The NYS Land Bank Program was established to combat the problem of vacant and abandoned properties and allows municipalities to apply for and create land banks in their communities. Land banks are state-sanctioned nonprofits that are created under Article 16 of the New York State Not-for-Profit Corporation Law.

The primary focus of the Livingston County Land Bank Corporation will be the acquisition of real property that is tax delinquent, tax foreclosed, vacant and/or abandoned, and to use the tools of the NYS Land Bank Program to eliminate negative community impacts associated with these properties. Land banks help communities facilitate the return of vacant, abandoned and tax-delinquent properties to productive use and return them to the tax rolls. The land bank will also be able to acquire properties from the county's tax foreclosure list and redevelop them to better serve the public interest.

Livingston County officials have identified 225 properties that are potential candidates for rehabilitation or reuse. "These properties could better serve the community if they were repurposed for residential or commercial development, or for green space", said Ian Coyle, Livingston County Administrator. Most of the candidate properties are residential. Therefore, the land bank is expected to play an important role in improving the housing market by providing additional opportunities to those seeking housing options. Livingston County Board of Supervisors Chairman Eric Gott said, "Many rural local governments do not have sufficient resources or tools on their own to address distressed property issues. With a land bank now approved, we can provide resources that can assist our municipalities in improving community character."

The Livingston County Land Bank Corporation will initially be staffed and operated by the County Planning Department with assistance from other associated County departments. Land bank operations will be directed

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by a seven-member board of directors comprised of Coyle, Angela Ellis, director of the county planning department; William Fuller, director of the county's real property tax service; William Bacon, executive director of the county Industrial Development Agency; Amy Mann, county treasurer; Shannon Hillier, county attorney; and Daniel L. Pangrazio, the Caledonia town supervisor.

The County will be dedicating \$100,000 in a combination of cash and in-kind assistance to support start-up operations of the Livingston County Land Bank Corporation. Additional funding will also be sought from appropriate outside sources to support the land bank. It is anticipated that the land bank will reach a state of financial independence through efficient operation and program management.

“This is great news for Livingston County,” said Senator Catharine Young (R, C, I - 57th District).

“Approximately six years ago, when the state placed a cap on the number of land banks that could operate statewide, it inadvertently prevented counties like Livingston from being able to establish one. After local officials contacted me, I was happy to be able to author and pass legislation in the Senate this year that increased the total number of these programs throughout the state. Land banks have proven to be highly successful in helping to redevelop and revitalize blighted properties. I commend our Livingston County officials for their vision and for pursuing this option with me, and I believe this entity will be an incredible asset in generating local tax revenue, increasing property values and beautifying neighborhoods.”

Senator Patrick M. Gallivan (R, C, IP - 59th Senate District) stated, “The creation of a Livingston County Land Bank is long overdue and will help local officials deal with the problems caused by vacant, blighted and tax-delinquent properties. By rehabilitating and returning these homes to the tax rolls, communities will be revitalized and neighboring property values will be protected.”

"The Livingston County Land Bank Corporation's mission of revitalizing properties to promote new commercial activity, new opportunities and new revenue for local governments is critical. Their efforts to help residents secure the foundational promise of the American Dream - a home for their family- are even more important. This is an exciting development for Livingston County, and I am so appreciative for Sen. Young's leadership," said Assemblyman Joseph Errigo (R, C, I, Ref-Conesus – 133rd District).

According to a 2016 report from the New York State's Attorney General's Office, since 2013 the Attorney General has invested more than \$30 million in the state's land banks through its Land Bank Community Revitalization Initiative. This investment in land banks has reclaimed almost 2,000 properties from abandonment, returned more than 700 to the market and put them back in productive use, and demolished more than 400 unstable structures.