



Onondaga County Legislature

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PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES – APRIL 17, 2024 DAVID H. KNAPP, CHAIR

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Meaker, Ms. Harvey, Mr. Olson

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Ryan

ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Burtis, Mr. Romeo, Mr. Brown, also see attached

Chair Knapp called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m. and the previous meeting’s minutes were approved.

1. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Marty Skahen, Director

a. Expressing Support for Onondaga County’s Application for Restore NY Funding for the Solar Street Rehabilitation Project

PURPOSE:

Resolution to support grant application to Empire State Development for a RESTORE NY Community Initiatives program for a project on Solar Street in Syracuse

OBJECTIVE/ WORK PLAN:

Community Development submitted an Intent to Apply to ESD on March 25, 2024. This is an application for demolition of a building at Solar and Spencer streets. All applications require a support resolution passed by the County Legislature.

FUNDING SOURCE:

Selected project will provide any matching funds required

BUDGET:

None



- Restore NY grant is designed for revitalization or removal of blighted structures so development can occur
- COR is looking to demolish 261,000 square foot building and bring 8 acre site to shovel ready
 - Can do project for \$2.5M
 - \$2M from grant
 - COR will pay remaining \$500K for demolition and asbestos abatement
- Plan is to add a mixed use development site
 - 600 apartments
 - 30,000 square feet of commercial space
 - 900 parking spaces in open lot and garage
- The grant ask is half of what is allowed, which makes the grant request more competitive
 - The grant allows up to \$3.8M for demolition
 - Additional grant money is allowed for asbestos
 - Applicants requesting less money are granted priority
- Legislative approval is required in order to submit application
 - Intent to apply has been submitted to the State
 - Application is due May 22, 2024

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Is this the only property that qualifies in the County or was it the best?
 - It is the best and most blighted property in that area
- How many of the 600 units will be affordable?
 - The City requires 12% for 75 units or more

A motion was made by Mr. Olson to approve this item.

- What is the address?
 - 128 Spencer Street
- How is COR coming in far below the \$3.8M that could have been applied for?
 - They have done multiple bids
- What happens if grant is received and COR can no longer do the work for \$2.5M?
 - The grant amount is the grant amount, COR would have to come up with the difference
 - Restore NY awards the grant as a reimbursement when the project is ~ 90% complete
- Is there a timeline for the demolition to be completed?
 - Within 6 months of the award

Mr. Meaker seconded the motion. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

2. **GREATER SYRACUSE LAND BANK:** Katelyn Wright, Executive Director
- a. **INFORMATIONAL – Annual Report**

(Annual Report on file with the Clerk)

As required by section 1612 of the New York Land Bank Act:

(c) In addition to any other report required by this chapter, the Land Bank, through its chairperson, shall annually deliver, in oral and written form, a report to the municipality. Such report shall be presented by March fifteenth¹ of each year to the governing body or board of the municipality. The report shall describe in detail (1) the projects undertaken by the Land Bank during the past year, (2) the monies expended by the Land Bank during the past year, and (3) the administrative activities of the Land Bank during the past year. At the conclusion of the report, the chairperson of the Land Bank shall be prepared to answer the questions of the municipality with respect to the projects undertaken by the authority during the past year, the monies expended by the municipality during the past year, and the administrative activities of the municipality during the past year.

I. Introduction

The Greater Syracuse Land Bank is a local public authority created by the City and County in 2012 to acquire vacant and abandoned properties and facilitate their return to productive use. The Land Bank is the default recipient of properties foreclosed upon by the City of Syracuse for delinquent taxes. Our community already had strong not-for-profit affordable housing developers, but they can only do a limited number of projects each year based on available grant funds. The Land Bank was designed to complement their work and to take control of abandoned properties sooner in the cycle of abandonment:

- To date, the Land Bank has acquired over 2,000 properties and sold 1,300
- Completed over 600 demolitions
- Number of vacant buildings in Syracuse reduced by 44% since Land Bank started
 - Had 1,800 when Land Bank started
 - Currently have just over 1,000
- Land Bank has become default recipient for all City tax foreclosures
 - Can triage and come up with solution for best re-use of property by:
 - Putting it back on market
 - Hold on to in order to assemble with neighboring properties
- Syracuse has been able to get more grant money than any other Land Bank in NYS
 - Received from Attorney General’s office
 - NYS Homes and Community Renewal
- 2 years ago NYS budgeted General Fund dollars for Land Banks to fund:
 - Capital projects
 - Certain number of demolitions
 - Certain number of stabilizations/renovations
- Rely on financial support from County and City to help with carrying costs
 - Lawn mowing
 - Liability Insurance
 - Trash removal from illegal dumping
- Costs ~\$2M per year to keep Land Bank running
 - Staffing
 - Office Rent
 - Property maintenance
- Bring in ~\$1M from real estate sales
- Have broken even the last 3 years
- Doing demolition and removing blighted buildings is the first step to stabilizing real estate values
- Building new will grow neighboring property values
- Partner with Home Headquarters
- Property values are increasing in most blighted neighborhoods
- Created many shovel ready sites in the “Blueprint 15 footprint”
 - Adams Street to Colvin Street
 - Route 81 to Midland Avenue
- Land Bank has owned many properties in this area for quite some time
 - Holding on to properties has been necessary in order to have shovel ready sites to build on
 - 3 or 4 demolition lots can be turned into 2 building sites to provide more property for new buyers
- County funded homes:
 - 4 being built on 300 block of Kennedy
 - 4 being built on Furman Street

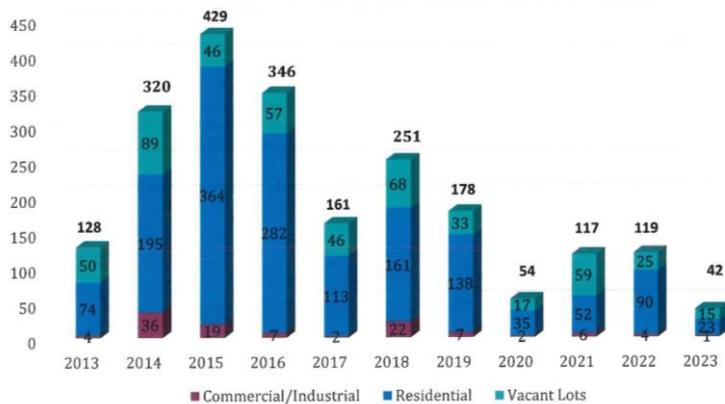
- Home Headquarters funded homes:
 - 8 homes on Baker, Woodland, and Garfield
 - 6 single family homes on State Street where Woodland dead ends
 - 3 two-family homes on Salina
- Housing Visions funded homes:
 - 10 going up on Midland
 - 5 at the corner of Midland and Colvin
 - 5 at the corner of Midland and Beard
 - 4 on the 200 block of Beard
 - 2 on the 100 block of Wood Avenue
- Received \$6M grant from EPA for environmental testing

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- There has been a moratorium on foreclosures over the last few years
- City may start it up again
 - If they go fast, there might be a glut
 - The speed of foreclosures has been a source of aggravation

The Land Bank acquired 42 properties in 2023.

ACQUISITION METHOD	TOTAL
City - Tax Foreclosure	24
Deed in Lieu of Foreclosure	13
Transfer of City-owned Property	3
Donation - Private	2
TOTAL	42



- Land Bank Act passed in 2011
 - City has become a better collector on delinquent taxes
 - Historically collecting ~\$3.2M per year in delinquent taxes, fees, penalties
 - For every \$5 collected; \$3 goes to the City, \$2 goes to County
- Collection for those trying to avoid foreclosure have significantly increased

	Delinquent Taxes Collected in Excess of Historic Levels Since Land Bank Was Established	budgeted for Land Bank	net gain
City	\$ 23,131,123.67	\$ 10,000,000.00	\$ 13,131,123.67
County	\$ 16,009,083.11	\$ 3,100,000.00	\$ 12,909,083.11
net gain to date for local gov (delinquent collections only):			\$ 26,040,206.78

- + reduced City maintenance costs
- + training environment for police, fire, codes
- + site control = state grant \$ and sites for new construction
- + on-time revenue - at least \$2 mill/year from properties returned to the tax rolls
- + \$47.8 million in private investment leveraged
- + \$52.7m in grants leveraged
- + construction wages
- + construction materials sales tax
- + increase to value of neighboring properties (tax base + home equity growth for existing homeowners)

- Abandoned properties foreclosed on are not paying taxes
 - 1,300 properties sold are generating ~\$2M per year in local property taxes

- Can you talk a little more about collaboration with Community Development (CD)?
 - This is the first time we have worked together on new construction
 - CD has hired Home Headquarters to build 5 single family homes
 - The fund company will sell to low income occupants
 - CD deeded property to Housing Visions to build 3-2 family homes that they will own, operate and rent for 15 years
- Thank you for the work you are doing
- How many are tax delinquent?
- The City, and others, are doing a disservice to residents by letting them go so far
 - ~2,700 in the City
 - Urging the City to catch up as quickly as possible
 - Would like homeowners to receive notices at the 2 year mark so they can catch up
 - Many of the tax delinquent properties are occupied
 - Most of the time sub-standard conditions for people to be living in
 - Contract with Catholic Charities to offer relocation assistance
 - Provide cash assistance for 1st month's rent and moving expenses
 - Taking 3 times longer due to housing crunch
 - If not in terrible shape, the preference is to have tenants buy the home
 - If not able to pay appraised value, County will offer a discount in exchange for 5 year residency
- Demolitions are down, what is going on?
 - Do as much as possible with the grant money that is available
 - 2021-2022 increased due the City's ARPA funds
 - Starting to get caught up; less than 100 demolition candidates in inventory
 - Expect number to grow as City provides foreclosures over the summer
 - Maintenance staff prioritizes the ones that are the biggest health and safety hazards
 - Any money left over goes to preparing shovel ready sites
- If you had more money, you could take more down?
 - Yes, absolutely
- This is pivotal to the success of the City and County
- Once property is taken over with tenants in it, is there a Property Management Division to handle it
 - 2 property maintenance employees to handle maintenance issues
 - Katelyn Wright deals directly with leases
 - Occasionally offer 18 month leases depending on the condition of property and what the end goal is
- The goal is not always to relocate?
 - Preference is to turn tenants into owner occupants if possible
- Any issues with squatting?
 - Specific addresses become targets for squatting
 - 250 buildings in inventory; only 3 or 4 are repeat squatting problems
 - Maintenance staff routinely monitors all properties
 - Repeat squatting addresses are checked every morning
 - Communicate frequently with Syracuse Police Department
 - Fire and Police often use vacant buildings for training
- Anything happening on the Northside of Syracuse?
 - Putting together big enough sites to build on has been a challenge on the Northside
 - Far fewer foreclosures
 - Many vacant buildings are tax current
 - Have been no foreclosures in May 2023 due to Supreme Court decision Tyler vs. Hennepin County
 - NY is one of 12 states impacted by Tyler vs. Hennepin
 - Most NY communities follow Article 11 of the Real Property Tax law

- 160 municipalities including Syracuse and Onondaga County opted out of that law in the early 1990's
- The government cannot take more than what they are owed
- County can make up own rules as long as they are compliant with Tyler vs. Hennepin
- Have not heard if County is working on an amendment to local Tax and Assessment Act

Law Department:

- The City developed a surplus law that is now in effect
- Had discussions with local delegations
- State is taking expansive approach adding homeowner protections, does not just address Tyler vs. Hennepin
- Option could be a similar stand-alone proceeding; waiting for budget process
- County does not fall under Article 11

- Mr. Skahen, how are we doing inventory wise?
 - Have 10 properties left
 - Rehabbing South Collingswood home to sell to first time homebuyer
 - Bid going out this week
 - Have to catch up on grants with timelines
 - Fund company operates on own timeline, so they are currently on the back burner

- Appreciate everything the Land Bank is doing

The meeting was adjourned at 10:22 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



TAMMY BARBER, Deputy Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

DATE: **APRIL 17, 2024**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Katelyn Wright	Land Bank
Suzanne Boyle	Community Dev
Marty Skahen	" "
Michael LaFlair	" "
Joe Fratelli	County Leg Atty
Joseph Italiano	Homeowner
Megan Costa	Planning
Ben Yant	Law
Darcie Lesnick	Leg
Jojo Beebe	Leg
John Desantis	Leg.