



Albany County Land Bank and City of Albany partner to transform gateway to Arbor Hill neighborhood

Partnership is seeking proposals that will address community priorities and create a mixed-use development that includes affordable housing

Twenty-two vacant properties have been assembled for redevelopment

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | August 18, 2021

ALBANY, NEW YORK – The Albany County Land Bank and City of Albany through the Albany Community Development Agency have partnered to redevelop 22 vacant properties located at the intersection of Henry Johnson Boulevard and Clinton Avenue in Albany’s Arbor Hill neighborhood.

Today, the partnership released a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking proposals from qualified and experienced developers or partnerships that will result in the creation of a high-quality, mixed-use development that includes affordable housing and advances community priorities for this historically underserved neighborhood.

Both the Albany County Land Bank and Albany Community Development Agency are committed to fostering the equitable redevelopment of vacant properties to address racial and economic disparities and create healthy, affordable, and sustainable neighborhoods that serve all residents. Community priorities were identified by reviewing existing neighborhood plans and holding a series of discussions with local elected officials, community leaders, neighborhood associations and public meetings. Through this effort, several core community priorities emerged including the need for more affordable housing (both rental and homeownership), increased opportunities for economic advancement (such as the creation of quality living wage jobs), addressing an undersupply of services and amenities for existing residents (including access to nutritious food, pharmacies, and health/dental care), mitigating climate change, and improving public health and safety.

To achieve more equitable outcomes that support community priorities through reclaiming vacant properties, the Albany County Land Bank and Albany Community Development Agency structured the RFP to incentivize respondents to develop proposals that preserve or expand affordable housing options that promote healthy, safe, and affordable housing for all family sizes and incomes, that prevent displacement and advance at least one additional community priority. Through this approach, proposals will be evaluated on the quality and viability of their development plan as well as the ability of the respondents to successfully implement the plan, rather than solely based on purchase price. The approach is part of the Land Bank’s continued expansion of programs, partnerships and resources designed to return vacant properties back to productive use, address housing disparities and better serve historically underserved populations.

“If you want to achieve a different outcome then you need to take a different approach,” **said Adam Zaranko, Executive Director of the Albany County Land Bank Corporation.** “Through this partnership and unique RFP structure, we hope to deliver a project that transforms vacant properties into something that serves existing residents and creates a welcoming, vibrant gateway to the capital of the Empire State.”



To support neighborhood revitalization, the Albany County Land Bank has been proactively acquiring, securing, maintaining, and assembling strategic clusters of real estate in and around historically disinvested neighborhoods. This process, known as “land banking,” creates clusters of property that can be used strategically to support larger-scale revitalization projects. In June 2019, the Land Bank formed a multidisciplinary team to develop creative and actionable plans for these clusters. This collaborative effort examined existing community plans and drew upon feedback from community groups, municipal leaders, and real estate developers to help shape redevelopment concepts that provide quality affordable housing for persons of all incomes, increase opportunities for homeownership, advance local and community priorities and improve quality of life for existing and future residents. Through this first-of-its kind approach the project team identified three property clusters with potential to support neighborhood redevelopment, including the intersection of Henry Johnson Boulevard and Clinton Avenue.

“Since taking office my administration has been laser-focused on revitalizing our neighborhoods and working with partners such as the Albany County Land Bank to create a city where every neighborhood works,” **said Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan.** “This joint request will help begin the process of transforming this historically underserved gateway in Arbor Hill and turn these abandoned properties into quality housing and mixed-use retail space.”

The cluster of 22 properties offer a unique opportunity to design, finance and implement a mixed-use development plan that benefits current residents, the surrounding neighborhood and city of Albany. Fifteen of the properties are under the jurisdiction of the Albany Community Development Agency and the balance have been acquired and assembled by the Albany County Land Bank. The properties are located along two primary roadways, including Henry Johnson Boulevard — a corridor lined with several civic uses that serves as a primary entry point into New York State’s capital city and is used by over 20,000 vehicles per weekday— and Clinton Avenue, which connects Albany’s Arbor Hill, West Hill, and Sheridan Hollow neighborhoods with Downtown and the waterfront.

“I’m proud that Albany County sends hundreds of thousands of dollars to the County Land Bank each year because it has a proven track record of transforming blight into new homes and businesses. This bold initiative along one of the city’s busiest corridors is another great example of that,” **said Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy.** “By investing in this piece of the historically underserved Arbor Hill neighborhood plagued by Red X’s, we can raise property values and improve access to goods and services that could start a chain reaction of additional investment, improved quality of life and better opportunities for our residents. I’m hopeful we can find a bidder who wants to be a part of that vision.”

“I applaud the Albany County Land Bank and the Albany Community Development Agency for coming together and proposing a visionary revitalization project to enhance the standard of living for residents in the Arbor Hill neighborhood. This is an opportunity to transform our communities and turn our blighted and abandoned properties into affordable living spaces. If we duplicate these efforts, block by block, we can create a city that offers housing for all,” **said Albany County Legislature Chairman Andrew Joyce.** “The Legislature offers its support in this project and its continued partnership with the Land Bank to tackle blighted and vacant properties throughout Albany County.”

The neighborhoods surrounding the project site have been subject to decades of disinvestment created by historic discriminatory housing and lending practices such as “redlining,” which has resulted in large concentrations of vacant and abandoned properties and the current racial housing and income disparities that affect the majority of residents in the neighborhoods. The Albany County Land Bank, City of Albany and many other public, private, and non-profit organizations have been working to revitalize this section of Albany. The Albany County Land Bank has enabled over 275 vacant properties to return to productive use in the West Hill, Sheridan Hollow and Arbor Hill neighborhoods since it was established in 2014, including properties that have been rehabilitated into affordable housing by private individuals and nonprofit housing organizations.



The City of Albany has made capital investments in the Clinton Avenue corridor and is undertaking a \$10 million investment in revitalizing nearby Clinton Square under New York State's Downtown Revitalization Initiative. In July, the State of New York and City of Albany announced the completion of \$56 million rehabilitation of 70 distressed row houses along a large portion of Clinton Avenue and Ten Broeck Street. In addition, the Albany Community Development Agency and several nonprofit housing organizations have invested in rehabilitating vacant properties and creating affordable homeownership opportunities to further stabilize the neighborhood.

Proposals are due on November 19, 2021. To view the full Request for Proposals please visit <https://www.albanycountylandbank.org/henryjohnsonblvd>.

About the Albany County Land Bank Corporation

The Albany County Land Bank was established in 2014 by Albany County to facilitate the process of acquiring, improving, and redistributing tax-foreclosed, vacant, or abandoned properties. The Land Bank is a nonprofit organization committed to revitalizing neighborhoods and strengthening communities throughout Albany County. The Land Bank uses funding from the Office of the New York State Attorney General, Enterprise Community Partners, Inc., and Albany County to support property demolitions, acquisitions, stabilizations, lot improvements, and rehabilitation projects. The Albany County Land Bank works in partnership with state and local government, non-profits, residents, community groups, and responsible developers and investors to return properties to productive use and support community development.

To learn more about the Albany County Land Bank please visit: www.albanycountylandbank.org.

About the Albany Community Development Agency

The Albany Community Development Agency (ACDA) is a public benefit corporation established by the City of Albany, New York, and is governed by a board of directors appointed by the Mayor of Albany. ACDA's goal is to provide suitable living environments and economic opportunities for persons of low and moderate income. Funds used by ACDA come primarily from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The major sources of HUD funds are the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), which is ACDA's largest funding source, the HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME), the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG), the Housing Opportunities for Persons with Aids Grant (HOPWA), and the Lead Paint Abatement Program. These programs account for a majority of ACDA's revenue. Other smaller sources of revenue are funded through Federal and some non-Federal sources. ACDA provides direct assistance to meet the goals stated above and provides funding to sub-recipients, based on the merit of their applications, to meet the objectives as well. ACDA operates based on HUD's National Program Objectives and ensures that funding source requirements and compliance needs are met. For more information about the Albany Community Development Agency please visit: <https://www.albanyny.gov/159/Albany-Community-Development-Agency>.

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