

BUFFALO ERIE NIAGARA LAND IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT REPORT FY 2015

Mission Statement: the Buffalo Erie Niagara Land Improvement Corporation (BENLIC) seeks to confront and alleviate the problems distressed properties cause to communities by supporting municipal and regional revitalization efforts and strategically acquiring, improving, assembling and selling distressed, vacant, abandoned and and/or tax-delinquent properties.

❖ **Return distressed, vacant, abandoned and/or tax-delinquent property to productive use.**

The Corporation obtained and holds clear title on all of its property:

- I. Acquired eleven (11) tax-delinquent and tax-foreclosed properties using the preferred bid power of the Corporation at the County's In Rem auction 163, including seven (7) single-family residential properties, two (1) two family residential properties and three (3) vacant lots.
 - i. The Corporation began rehabilitating all single-family and two-family residential single-family residential acquisitions in 2015 as part of the Corporation's Round Two Community Revitalization Initiative (CRI) grant award from the New York State Office of the Attorney General (OAG). Rehabilitation will continue through the first quarter of 2017 and the properties will be resold to low-moderate income buyers.
 - ii. The Corporation disposed of eleven (11) properties: eight (8) vacant lots and three (3) residential structures. Each disposition enhanced land use planning objectives in the respective municipality in which the parcel resides.

- II. Acquired two (2) vacant and abandoned properties via REO (Real Estate Owned) bank donation, including one single and one two-family property.

- i. The Corporation rehabilitated these properties using a portion of the cash donation received as part of the donating bank’s donation agreement and made additional repairs to each property using CRA funding from the Office of the Attorney General.
- III. Acquired one (1) tax-delinquent property via internal “judicial foreclosure” process.
 - i. As part of its 2013 PILOT project, the Corporation received from Erie County three (3) tax certificates. With such tax certificates, the Corporation itself may act as a foreclosing governmental unit and commence foreclosure proceedings on the property. The foreclosure of one (1) property was completed and the Corporation acquired at its own public auction the property. The cost of foreclosure was born by the Town of Cheektowaga. The Corporation intends to dispose of the property to a private owner.

❖ **Enhance the quality of life within neighborhoods**

- I. Prior to property acquisition in 2015, disposition plans – prepared by the municipality, for every property – were received by the Corporation. The disposition plans reflect the goals of the municipality with respect to the various properties and their neighborhoods. Property was selected for acquisition by the Corporation in part for its effect on the quality of life within neighborhoods upon return to productive use.
- II. The Corporation began rehabilitating eleven (11) properties in 2015. These properties are blighting proximate property and neighborhoods at-large. A property’s rehabilitation will increase its value and improve neighborhood perception. Many of the Corporation’s rehabilitation projects are nestled between or amongst otherwise properly-maintained properties; it is expected that rehabilitating this sort of property will provide the highest positive neighborhood externalities.

❖ ***Actualize, stabilize and grow the value of the real property tax base***

- I. Properties undergoing rehabilitation by the Corporation or otherwise improved will likely see their assessment increase, providing for a growth in the value of the real property tax base.

II. Disposition guidelines of the Corporation function to responsibly return property to productive use to owners / interests that will improve, maintain, make code-compliant and safe, and keep conveyed property from returning to its formerly distressed, vacant, abandoned and/ or tax-delinquent status.

❖ ***Provide economic growth, encourage economic opportunities***

Education and Outreach is conducted continually throughout Erie County during the course of the year. Each town and village in Erie County received an annual notification of properties “ripe” for foreclosure which is interpreted as at least three years behind in tax liens. These properties are considered Land Bank candidates. BENLIC conducts training sessions, presentations, and one on one visits to municipal leaders. These sessions are intended to perform participants as to the benefits of Land Bank participation, the economic opportunities the Land Bank offers, and the value of returning vacant, abandoned structures to productive use.

❖ ***Lessen the burden on local government***

- I. The Corporation completely insured and secured its property in its own name.
- II. Funding through the OAG’s CRI program allowed for thirty-five (35) demolitions in the City of Buffalo, five (5) demolitions in the City of Lackawanna, and five (5) additional demolitions throughout Erie County. The cost of these demolitions amounted to approximately \$800,000.00. All property was reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Board prior to demolition. All property was vacant and abandoned: such property is more probably suspect to criminal activity, therefore its demolition and removal constitutes a reduction in the probability of crime within a neighborhood.

❖ ***Build Organization Capacity***

- I. Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (DEP) continued to provide excellent in-kind staff services through the work of the department's Deputy Commissioner and Senior Housing Inspector. Corporation staff works daily with DEP's Senior Housing Inspector to plan, develop, coordinate, review, approve and verify repairs and improvements to the Corporation's residential rehabilitation projects. A number of practices have been implemented under this cooperation in 2015 that will serve to improve the Corporation's rehabilitation projects in years to come.

- II. The Corporation acquired a \$10,000.00 grant from the John R. Oishei Foundation for the purposes of preparing BENLIC's first Strategic Plan. The Plan is intended to guide the future of BENLIC and a responsibly increase in organizational capacity. A retreat was hosted for BENLIC Board of Directors in April of 2015 by a representative from the Center for Community Progress - national land bank experts. A complete Draft of the Strategic Plan will be placed before the Board for Adoption in March of 2016