

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:

- a. Acquired twenty-two (22) tax-delinquent and tax-foreclosed properties using the preferred bid power of the Corporation at Erie County's and City of Buffalo's in Rem Auctions. Acquisitions include twelve (12) single-family residential properties, one (1) two-family, one, seven (7) vacant lots, one (1) converted residence, and one (1) vacant lot located in a commercial area.
 - i. The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) granted funds to BENLIC to rehabilitate distressed properties, and additional funding associated with the National Community Stabilization Trust (NCST). NCST is a part of the Bank of America – New York Attorney General Mortgage Fraud Settlement; funding administration, new construction, and rehabilitation activities. The Corporation used these funds to rehabilitate six (6) single-family, (1) two-family residential acquisitions, and two (2) new construction of single-family homes as a part of a Pilot Project for urban infill on a vacant lot. The properties under the LISC grant funds will be resold to low-moderate income buyers. The Corporation anticipates the remaining rehabilitations to continue through the beginning of 2019 and reach completion by the end of first quarter.
 - ii. The Corporation disposed of thirty-two (32) properties: twenty-one (21) residential structures and eight (8) vacant lots. BENLIC sold five (5) residential structures under its rehab program; one (1) new construction residence; sixteen (16) "Note and Mortgage" residential structures, and five (5) lots to adjacent homeowners or residential property owners.
 - iii. Bid Assignment – City of Buffalo parcels

BENLIC and the City of Buffalo continued their partnership through the bid assignment process. In 2018, the City submitted a list of strategic properties in which the Corporation was tasked with acquiring by way of the 'Preemptive Bid' authority. The aforementioned properties were then struck to the City with the purpose of being incorporated into their ongoing planning and community development efforts. A total of 41 such properties were bid by the Corporation in 2018. Two (2) of these properties (2 vacant residential lots) were selected and retained by BENLIC. Five (5) of the properties were selected with intent to dispose to qualified City of Buffalo operating not-for-profit corporations – Habitat for Humanity Buffalo and Bailey Green Imitative/Harmac for the purpose of infill housing construction and the Valley Community Association.

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

- a. Accompanying property acquisitions in 2018 and planned 2019 acquisitions, were adopted municipal resolutions and property applications (including re-use plans)– The Request for Foreclosure process continued successfully in 2018 (and initiated the process for 2019) as the Corporation fine-tuned its Standardized Inspector Report / Maintenance Disposition and Reuse Plan form (SIR/MDR) application forms into separate forms for structures and vacant lots – in order to clarify and order the application and review process. Additionally, BENLIC provided each community the addresses of vacant and foreclosed parcels/properties list specific to their community in a package addressed to Mayors, Building Inspector’s, Clerk’s, Planner’s, and other related fields. Of the municipalities whom submitted RFF Packages, BENLIC Staff selected properties for acquisition by the Corporation in part for its effect on the quality of life within neighborhoods upon return to productive use.
- b. The Corporation commenced or continued rehabilitating thirteen (13) properties in 2018. 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 amongst otherwise properly-maintained properties; it is expected that rehabilitating this sort of property will generate very significant economic and social impacts.

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

- a. Properties undergoing rehabilitation by the Corporation, or otherwise improved, will likely realize an increased assessment. This increase will provide for future growth in the value of the real property tax base.
- b. Disposition guidelines of the Corporation function to responsibly return property to productive use to owners 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.

BENLIC also seeks partnership with qualified not-for-profits with affordable housing missions. In 2017, the Corporation assisted Habitat for Humanity, the Bailey-Green Initiative, and University District Community Development Corporation(UDCDC) to acquire properties for rehabilitation and resale.

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

- a. The Corporation completely insured and secured its property in its own name.
- b. The remainder of funding from the OAG’s CRI program allowed for one (1) demolition within Erie County. The cost of these demolitions amounted to approximately \$18,900. 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***

- a. The Corporation hired one of its prior year AmeriCorps members, Andrea Folgherait, as a full-time employee in Fall 2018. Ms. Folgherait performs, among other duties, as the BENLIC Assistant Program Coordinator, particularly developing Bid packages and property maintenance, assisting in grant timelines and communication with grant providers, and managing BENLIC financial accounts.
- b. Ben Brown, BENLIC In House Sales Specialist, was promoted and took on an additional role of Program Coordinator to assist with taking on some of the tasks under the previous Assistant Program Manager.
- c. The OCGA developed by Human Resource Consultants, EK Ward and Associates, provided BENLIC the insight to create a new position at BENLIC, Program Manager. The Program Manager will provide comprehensive support to BENLIC across operational, financial, administrative functions, and leadership.
- d. BENLIC is considering Undergraduate and Graduate Students for Intern opportunities.