

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 thirty-eight (38) 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, five (5) two-family, one (1) three-family home residential property, seventeen (17) vacant lots, one (1) multi-unit/apartment, one (1) converted residence, and one (1) 1- story small structure.
 - i. The Corporation began rehabilitating all single-family and two-family residential single-family residential acquisitions in 2017 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 2018 and the properties will be resold to low-moderate income buyers. 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.
 - ii. The Corporation disposed of twenty-five (25) properties: eighteen (18) residential structures and (7) vacant lots. BENLIC sold six (6) residential structures under its rehab program; one (1) new construction residence; seven (7) "Note and Mortgage" residential structures; two (2) lots for commercial use, 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 2017, 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 36 such properties were bid by the Corporation in 2017. Three of these properties (three two-family homes) were selected and retained by BENLIC. Two of the properties were selected with intent to dispose to quality City of Buffalo operating not-for-profit corporations – Habitat for Humanity Buffalo and Bailey Green Initiative/Harmac for the purpose of rehabilitation and resale to home buyers and occupants.

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

- a. Accompanying property acquisitions in 2017 and planned 2018 acquisitions, were adopted municipal resolutions and property applications (including re-use plans)– The Request for Foreclosure process continued successfully in 2017 (and initiated the process for 2018) 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. 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.
- b. The Corporation commenced or continued rehabilitating thirty (30) properties in 2017. 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 three (3) demolitions throughout Erie County. The cost of these demolitions amounted to approximately \$51,000. An additional \$82,200 was appropriated for strategic demolitions in the City of Buffalo. 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. In an effort to increase effectiveness in diagnosis and rehabilitation of properties, the Corporation hired an in-house Building Inspector with extensive construction and trades experience.
- b. Two AmeriCorps members were provided by LISC to assist in operations, community outreach, and various other capacities. The work of these Outreach Planners affords full time staff increased time for identifying acquisition opportunities. An additional AmeriCorps began her term in late 2017 adding additional support and capacity.
- c. In late 2017, BENLIC hired one of the AmeriCorps Outreach Planners in a full time capacity as BENLIC In-House Sales Agent.

