



July 2015

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STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN: 2015 – 2017

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SECTION 1 | INTRODUCTION

The Broome County Land Bank Corporation was incorporated in June 2013 as a result of authorizing legislation, the New York State Land Bank Act passed in 2011. This legislation encouraged the creation of land banks for the purpose of addressing issues related to tax-foreclosed, vacant and abandoned properties. The BCLBC is a non-profit, public authority subject to the requirements of Public Authorities Law, Not-for-Profit Corporation Law and Public Officers Law.

The mission of the Broome County Land Bank is *“to foster economic and community development by acquiring, holding, managing, developing and marketing distressed, vacant, abandoned and under-utilized properties.”*

In November 2014, the BCLB board of directors embarked on its first in-depth strategic planning process, with the following objectives to:

- Review the organization’s mission, goals and objectives
- Conduct an analysis of organizational strengths and weaknesses
- Undertake a detailed needs assessment
- Develop an action plan that could be implemented by staff and Board of Directors

The board engaged the services of Susan Payne, Strategic Planning and Economic Development Consultant, to facilitate the process and work with the board to develop a strategic action plan.

SECTION 2 | PLANNING PROCESS

The strategic planning process was initiated in January 2015 and concluded with the BCLB board adopting a set of strategic objectives and action items in July 2015.

The planning process involved the following steps.

- Board self-assessment
- Consultant one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders and members of the Community Advisory Panel
- In-depth analysis of the organization’s internal strengths and weaknesses
 - ✓ Clear and concise mission statement
 - ✓ All legal and authorizing documents related to origination and operations
 - ✓ Board composition
 - ✓ Operating capacity and efficiency: staffing and operating resources
 - ✓ Compliance with required NYS legal mandates: policies and procedures
 - ✓ Role and relationship with Community Advisory Panel
 - ✓ Full range of financial documents
 - ✓ Budgeting, financial planning and management processes
 - ✓ Projected financial revenue and potential for financial sustainability
 - ✓ Ability to take advantage of opportunities and reduce the impact of change
 - ✓ Ability to leverage internal and external resources (financial and other)
 - ✓ Accountability and reporting

- In-depth external analysis of threats and opportunities
 - ✓ Image and visibility
 - ✓ Level of productive and meaningful relationships with stakeholder groups and partner organizations
 - ✓ Community and economic development conditions and opportunities
 - ✓ Assessment of options for the BCLB to fulfill its mission
 - ✓ NYS and other funding sources
- Review of Best Practices
- Preparation of detailed situation analysis
- Development of vision statement
- Agreement on a working definition of the BCLB's everyday purpose, role and responsibility to bring about real change and enhance the quality of life in Broome County
- Identification of the organization's priorities for the next three years
- Agreement on key partnerships required to bring about measurable results
- Establishing a set of realistic and achievable strategic objectives
- Development of specific actions required to achieve each strategic objective
- Agreement on measures to assess performance against the objectives and put in place a framework for accountability

SECTION 3 | COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Consultant undertook several activities to engage the stakeholders and secure their input on topics that would be valuable to the Board in the strategic planning process. The community outreach process involved twenty individual interviews including the Broome County Executive and Chair of the Legislature, elected officials and code enforcement officers from the various municipalities, and representatives of the Community Advisory Panel and key stakeholder groups. The purpose was to assess the BCLB's image and visibility, and the perceived roles and responsibilities of the Land Bank and its stakeholders; as well as, to gain a further understanding of the issues, challenges and opportunities over the next three years.

SECTION 4 | OUTCOMES AND DELIVERABLES

- Statement of the Board's vision for the BCLB for the next three years.
- Situation analysis of the organization's internal strengths and weaknesses, and its external opportunities and challenges.
- Detailed needs assessment and recommendations designed to ensure the organization fulfills its legal mandate, has the capacity to function at an optimal level and achieve its vision, remains financially sustainable on a long-term basis, functions effectively and efficiently on a daily basis, leverages assets, establishes Best Practices, maintains productive and meaningful relationships with stakeholders, is positioned to take advantage of opportunities and reduce the impact of change, and is accountable to itself and the stakeholders.
- Updates to internal policies and procedures, and website to ensure compliance with NYS regulations.
- Addition of policies and procedures to enhance internal operations such as annual budgeting and financial forecasting, as well as property acquisition and management procedures.
- A working definition of the purpose, role and responsibility of the Land Bank, in accordance with the NYS law that allows it to be a tool for turning vacant and abandoned properties throughout Broome

County into assets again, and its various partner and stakeholders; and an understanding of the roles, responsibilities and relationships with the stakeholder groups.

- A set of realistic and achievable strategic objectives that promotes the Board’s vision, addresses the priorities established in the needs assessment, and provides both a framework for accountability and a quantitative measure of the impact that the Land Bank makes on Broome County.
- Consensus around the scope of work, functions and projects appropriate to support the mission.
- Criteria and a process for Board decision making; in particular, for the selection of properties to be acquired and a plan of action for each.
- Strategic action plan that includes the tasks, timeline and resources needed to successfully achieve each strategic objective; and criteria to measure performance against each objective.
- Assessment and recommendations related to image and visibility.

SECTION 5 | VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The Broome County Land Bank will be recognized as an essential and outcome driven partner with private investors, government agencies and economic development organizations to bring about a new vibrancy in distressed neighborhoods and build the foundation for economic revitalization by returning vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties to productive use.

SECTION 6 | GOALS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

It was understood that the BCLB adopted the following set of goals at the time of incorporation in June 2013 based on the expectations set forth by the NYS Comptroller’s Office for all NYS land banks.

- *Stem Disinvestment in the Neighborhoods Surrounding Abandoned Properties*
- *Protect the Public Health and Safety by Securing and Remediating Abandoned Properties*
- *Return Vacant, Abandoned, and Tax-Delinquent Properties to Productive Use*
- *Turn Vacant Spaces into Vibrant Spaces*
- *Provide a Mechanism for Coordinating Reuse of Flood Impacted Properties, Primarily for Hazard Mitigation Efforts*
- *Promote Increased Levels of Home Ownership*

The BCLB board agreed that these goals continue to be appropriate for supporting the vision set-forth. At the same time, the board recognized that it would be challenging to achieve measureable outcomes against these goals during the next 2-3 years unless it focuses on select strategic objectives and targeted geographic areas given its resources, challenges and opportunities.

Based on this position, the BCLB established the following strategic priorities for the period 2015 – 2017.

- 1. *Strengthen and Enhance Board Effectiveness***
- 2. *Be an Effective Community and Economic Development Tool to Attract Private Investment, and Promote Revitalization and Home Ownership in Distressed Neighborhoods***
- 3. *Achieve Financial Sustainability***
- 4. *Enhance Image and Visibility***
- 5. *Effectively Engage the BCLC Partners***

SECTION 7 | ACTION PLAN

Strategic Priority #1. Strengthen and Enhance Board Effectiveness

Action
1.a. Embrace the philosophy that the board is policy-driven, transparent and publicly accountable in its transactions.
1.b. Expand board membership to include at least one additional municipal in addition to the City of Binghamton.
1.c. Review and amend bylaws as needed in the next 12 months.
1.d. Enhance the board’s working knowledge and decision-making ability; i.e., routine review of policies and procedures, board education program on key topics, new member orientation.
1.e. Be proactive in terms of compliance, updating policies and reporting.
1.f. At a minimum, create the following policies and guidelines: Guidelines for Maintenance and Disposition of Real Property; and Residential Occupant Relocation Policy

Strategic Priority #2. Be an Effective Community and Economic Development Tool to Attract Private Investment, and Promote Revitalization and Home Ownership in Distressed Neighborhoods

Action
2.a. Be in alignment with other local or regional tools and community programs in order to achieve and sustain vibrant, healthy, and secure neighborhoods; i.e., complement community activities such as code enforcement, tax collection and enforcement, data collection and analysis, and smart growth principles and community development.
2.b. Support development of grass root efforts in towns and villages where BCLB can be a partner by empowering them to determine the level and location of BCLB involvement in neighborhood revitalization.
<p>2.c. Stem disinvestment and revitalize targeted neighborhoods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Work closely with community and economic development agencies to acquire and demolish abandoned properties to allow for new development. ✓ Link more closely to Broome County’s foreclosure process. ✓ Promote increased levels of home ownership by engaging in an “intervention-to-revitalization” effort. ✓ Work with local municipalities to leverage CDBG, HRC, CFA and other funding. ✓ Leverage the strengths of banks, residents, local government, and the local business community.
<p>2.d. Support the Regional Economic Development Council’s strategy for investment in community “opportunity zones” and main street revitalization activities by collaborating with other agencies to focus on revitalization of the urban cores of Binghamton, Johnson City and Endicott as identified by the REDC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Serve as a tool to facilitate re-development of target urban cores by acquiring site control over properties and assisting in redevelopment process such as demolition of abandoned warehouses, manufacturing and other large commercial structures in blighted areas to make room for new development. ✓ Work collaboratively with economic development agencies and municipalities to strategically reduce blight and increase home ownership in the target neighborhoods. Example: Work with The Agency and Broome County to identify clusters of residential properties that have potential for strong market value and sales potential.

Strategic Priority #3. Achieve Financial Sustainability

Action
<p>3.a. Strengthen Policies and Procedures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Establish a structured process for developing an annual budget and tracking performance on a monthly basis.✓ Prepare a multi-year budget projection, including sources of revenues and projected expenditures.✓ Adopt policies and procedures to manage financial and real property assets.
<p>3.b. Reduce the Land Bank's Financial Exposure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Consider models such as Suffolk County that reduces the land bank's exposure; i.e., land bank allows for site assessment, lien transfer, and sale. The tax liens are sold to qualified private developers/individuals.✓ Prepare a detailed check list of risks associated with property ownership; i.e., environmental status.
<p>3.c. Increase Revenues Needed to Support Annual Operations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Actively pursue grants such as ARC; particularly those that permit administrative fees.✓ Develop partnerships with entities such as the proposed Greater Binghamton Fund, Binghamton Housing Authority and First Ward Action to target neighborhoods and jointly pursue funding for acquisition, demolition and rehabilitation of properties.✓ Charge fee to private developers.✓ Consider charging membership fees to participating municipalities.✓ Issue requests for development proposals and take fee for consideration.

Strategic Priority #4. Enhance Image and Visibility

Action
<p>4.a. Prepare and promote a clear statement of what the BCLB can do as a community and economic development partner.</p>
<p>4.b. Effectively utilize communication tools to educate and share important information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Maintain the BCLB website ... it is functional and informative.✓ Track outcomes and consistently report back to stakeholder groups and the general public that investments being made are realizing positive gains.✓ Work with the Advisory Panel to create a clear understanding of the BCLB tools and role it can play in partnering to bring about change; both housing and commercial.✓ Educate by demonstrating how the BCLB is a partner and tool in revitalizing neighborhoods and commercial districts. Example: Utilize 50 Front Street ... BCLB laid the foundation (acquisition, demolition) and functioned as a "partner" --- not the lead agency. The private developer eventually becomes the driver.
<p>4.c. Be proactive in outreach efforts to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Be inclusive of the smaller communities.✓ Address the stakeholder's limited knowledge.

Strategic Priority #5. Effectively Engage the BCLC Partners

Action
<p>5.a. Clarify the role of the Community Advisory Panel and more actively engage them; i.e., solicit input as part of the agenda.</p>
<p>5.b. Build working relationships with partners including local municipalities, Board of Realtors, private developers, Southern Tier Builders Association, economic development agencies (The Agency and Town of Union), neighborhood associations such as First Ward Action Group, Habitat for Humanity, SEPP, Safe Street Coalition, Deposit Partners, Windsor Partnership, Binghamton Housing Authority, etc.</p>
<p>5.c. Actively engage the various partners in gaining an understanding about how they can be involved in bringing about successes using the BCLB tools.</p>
<p>5.d. Proactively develop and package projects that involve identifying and orchestrating appropriate partnerships, and maximizing the leverage and resources available from these partners.</p>