



ALBANY COUNTY
LAND BANK CORPORATION

PRESS RELEASE

Albany County Land Bank Awarded AmeriCorps Service Grant

Land Bank awarded three fully funded full-time positions

AmeriCorps members will focus on neighborhood planning, community outreach and increasing homeownership opportunities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 25, 2017

Albany County, New York - The Albany County Land Bank Corporation has been awarded a LISC AmeriCorps grant for three new full-time positions.

The LISC AmeriCorps program is a nationwide program designed to help non-profit partners meet needs in the areas of economic opportunity, affordable housing, education, health, public safety, youth development, and community engagement. Funded through LISC's New York State Housing Stabilization Fund which uses bank settlement money, and through the Corporation for National and Community Service, LISC AmeriCorps provides opportunities to help New York State Land Banks meet needs in the affordable housing field through community engagement, property and community assessment, and homebuyer counseling. The program provides Land Banks with the additional personnel necessary to implement projects that they could not otherwise do without one or more AmeriCorps members.

"This grant will enable the Land Bank to enhance our neighborhood planning, deepen our community engagement and provide more opportunities for homeownership," said **Adam Zaranko, Executive Director of the Albany County Land Bank Corporation**. "We welcome the newest members of our team and thank LISC and New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman for this exciting opportunity to strengthen the Land Bank's community development efforts."

The Albany County Land Bank was awarded three AmeriCorps service positions, the maximum amount for any New York State Land Bank. AmeriCorps members will serve on a full-time basis for 10 months and assist with various aspects of the Land Bank's community development efforts.





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“LISC is excited to be supporting the Albany County Land Bank with three AmeriCorps members,” said **Denise Scott, LISC’s Executive Vice President**. “The Land Bank will have a greater impact in its neighborhoods thanks to the commitment of those members. LISC, for its part, is dedicated to recruiting members from communities served by the land bank, to helping them build skills for a career in community development, and to restoring properties to productive use.”

The Albany County Land Bank’s AmeriCorps service member program is centered on increasing collaboration between residents of the County’s most distressed neighborhoods and the Land Bank, identifying, developing and implementing creative and innovative approaches to the Land Bank’s work, and educating and assisting economically disadvantaged individuals to increase homeownership opportunities. Each AmeriCorps service position is structured to function independently and can also be integrated to better support the Land Bank’s programs and objectives.

Three service members have been locally recruited by the Land Bank through an open, competitive process to serve in the newly created positions:

- Sylvia Hahn Berman, Community Outreach Coordinator
- Charlotte O’Connor, Neighborhood Planning and Program Coordinator
- Virginia Rawlins, Housing Services Counselor

“Being part of AmeriCorps has always been a personal goal,” said **Sylvia Hahn Berman, Community Outreach Coordinator**. “I am excited to join the Land Bank and be part of its efforts to fight blight. As the Community Outreach Coordinator I look forward to working with communities to increase awareness about the Land Bank and to help empower residents so that they can invest in their neighborhoods.”

“Working at the Land Bank is an exciting opportunity,” said **Charlotte O’Connor, Neighborhood Planning and Program Coordinator**. “It’s great to be a part of such a hardworking team that is able to spark community development in not only my hometown of Albany, but throughout the County.”

“Serving as the Housing Services Counselor will give me the opportunity to assist individuals and provide the resources necessary to make homeownership a reality,” said **Virginia Rawlins, Housing Services Counselor**. “I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the mission of the Land Bank and to the revitalization of the County’s neighborhoods.”

In less than three years of operation the Albany County Land Bank has acquired more than 350 vacant and abandoned properties, made over 120 property improvements and enabled more than 70 properties to return to productive use throughout Albany County. To date the Land Bank has invested over \$2 million into stabilizing neighborhoods, incentivized an additional \$2 million in private investment and enabled the return of well over \$1 million of assessed value back to the tax rolls.



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About the Albany County Land Bank Corporation

The Albany County Land Bank was established in early 2014 by Albany County to facilitate the process of acquiring, improving and redistributing vacant and abandoned properties. The Land Bank is an organization committed to improving neighborhoods and has a responsibility to improve Land Bank properties for future use and return them to productive use. The Albany County Land Bank uses funding from New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, Albany County and the City of Albany to support property demolitions, acquisitions, stabilizations, lot improvements and rehabilitation projects.

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

About LISC

LISC equips struggling communities with the capital, program strategy and know-how to become places where people can thrive. It combines corporate, government and philanthropic resources. Since 1980, LISC has invested \$16 billion to build or rehab 350,000 affordable homes and apartments and develop 55 million square feet of retail, community and educational space—including athletic facilities and other recreational space. For more, visit www.lisc.org.

To learn more about AmeriCorps programs please visit <https://www.nationalservice.gov>.

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