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City hopes land bank could improve housing options

The city might be getting another tool to help it fight blighted and dilapidated properties.

Mayor Robert Palmieri backs the Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development District's efforts to establish a land bank in the region.



S. Alexander Gerould [Follow](#)

Posted Jul. 28, 2015 at 10:41 AM

UTICA

The city might be getting another tool to help it fight blighted and dilapidated properties.

Mayor Robert Palmieri backs the Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development District's efforts to establish a land bank in the region.

He voiced that support in a letter to the Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council dated July 16.

"Our Urban Renewal Agency is really parallel to what a land bank is, and we've been extremely successful," Palmieri said. "What we're looking for, on a land bank, is to be able to receive some of the benefits that help with either demolition or curb appeal that currently under the guidelines of Urban Renewal that is not part of it."

The primary focus of a land bank is the acquisition of real property that is tax delinquent, tax foreclosed, vacant and/or abandoned. The tools of the program are then used to eliminate the harms and liabilities caused by such properties, according to the website of Empire State Development Corp., the state's economic development arm.

Land banks have taken shape across the state, including in the Syracuse, Buffalo, Rochester and the Capital Region.

"What they do is they ultimately are trying to improve the outcomes of the real estate market in depressed (markets) or markets that don't function well," said Tolga Morawski, chairman of the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District/Keep Mohawk Valley Beautiful land bank committee.

In those markets, perfectly good houses or other buildings might go unsold or go into decline or disrepair, Morawski said.

"What happens is land banks have kind of sprung up to help address the situation," he said. "They

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often partner with banks because what happens is a bank ends up with a house. The bank, if there is somebody like a Habitat for Humanity or land bank, they often want to work with them to give them the building so that it doesn't either sit there or eventually cost them money in liability like if it falls or hurts somebody or something like that."

Morawski and his team are trying to bring a six-county land bank to the Mohawk Valley region – serving Montgomery, Fulton, Schoharie, Herkimer, Oneida and Otsego – and they are moving forward with an application process that requires state approval.

In his letter, Palmieri wrote that the city's Urban Renewal Agency has been successful in taking properties the city acquired through tax foreclosure and quickly returning those properties to private hands.

Over the years, the occasional property has been foreclosed upon by the city, which has been difficult, if not impossible, to sell due to a number of issues, he wrote.

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<i>Wednesday, July 29, 2015</i>						
Movie time!				10:00 am		
Valley Cinema						
Tabletop Gaming				1:00 pm		
Utica Public Library						
LEGO Club				1:00 pm		
Utica Public Library						
Chicken BBQ						5:00 pm
WestSide Senior & Community Center						
Creative Gathering				5:30 pm		
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