

THE GREATER MOHAWK VALLEY LAND BANK

Quarterly Newsletter - Special Issue
www.gmvlb.org

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Next GMVLB community
forum to address content,
questions, or comments:
Tuesday August 17th
@ 11:30am
email info@gmvlb.org to
request a virtual invite

EPA awards GMVLB \$800,000 Brownfield Grant

The Mohawk Valley was one of three locations in New York State to be awarded a multi-purpose grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to address brownfields, along with the Capital District and Long Island.

Across New York State, \$2.8 million was awarded for 5 proposals chosen to receive funds under the EPA Multipurpose, Assessment and Cleanup (MAC) Grants, aimed at resolving contaminated properties in underserved and economically disadvantaged communities. This funding will be used to address polluted and abandoned properties where redevelopment has been hindered by the presence of hazardous waste and readying these sites for reinvestment.

In the Mohawk Valley, GMVLB was awarded an \$800,000 multipurpose grant for projects along the Erie Canal Corridor. The preliminary sites include, among others, a mixed-use apartment building, an abandoned high school, a vacant masonic temple and a former general store and filling station - contaminated properties located in Little Falls, Fort Plain and Canajoharie. Grant funds will be used to create a brownfield site inventory, select sites for further investigation and at least 15 environmental assessments, clean-up of 5 properties, development of 6 reuse plans and support for community outreach activities to guide the process.

Addressing the environmental hazards is the first step in redevelopment at these sites, a step that will ultimately lead to economic growth for the area. Mohawk Valley Economic Development Growth Enterprise Corporation (MVEDGE) was also awarded \$300,000 EPA MAC grant cycle for developing a brownfield site inventory, conducting 14 environmental site assessments, and preparing 3 reuse plans in Rome, Utica and Sherrill.



Above: Fort Plain's Masonic Temple is a proposed location for site reuse under GMVLB's EPA award funds



Foreclosure Prevention

As part of the Zombie 2.0 Grant, the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank is partnering with the Utica Homeownership Center and Better Community Neighborhoods of Schenectady to offer support to homeowners who are at risk of losing their home to foreclosure.

A true “Zombie” property is a 1-4 family residential property where a bank or mortgage lender has started the foreclosure process and the owner has abandoned the property before the foreclosure is finalized. The bank is legally responsible for maintaining these properties, but often these residences are neglected and fall into disrepair.

In an effort to prevent the “zombification” of our neighborhoods, Zombie Grant funds support outreach to the public as well as referrals for those at risk of losing their home to NeighborWorks affiliates for foreclosure prevention. In the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank coverage area, the Utica Homeownership Center will serve the Cities of Utica and Rome, as well as Herkimer, Montgomery, and Otsego Counties, while Better Community Neighborhoods will serve Schoharie County.

NeighborWorks America and their member organizations across the nation are focused on creating options for affordable housing and strengthening communities. Utica Homeownership Center and Better Community Neighborhoods offer financial counseling and work with the homeowner and lender to explore all possible options to keep families in their home.

To learn more, visit:
www.mohawkvalleyzombies.org

The City of Utica and the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank are partnering on the Mohawk Valley Zombie Property Initiative to offer MohawkValleyZombies.com, a site where members of the public across GMVLB's coverage area can report a Zombie property and get information and referrals for foreclosure prevention services.

ZOMBIE PROPERTIES are abandoned bank foreclosures



Preventing foreclosure keeps families in their homes.

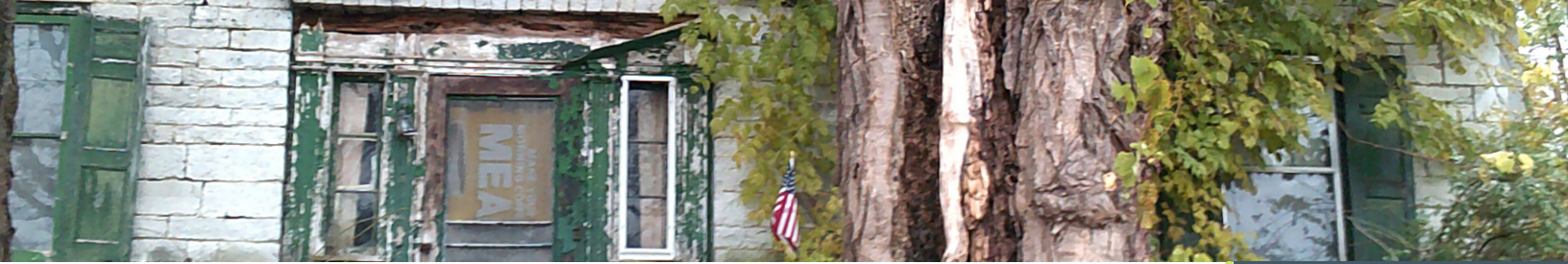
Find Help

We are partnering with local NeighborWorks affiliates to help those struggling to make mortgage payments and in danger of losing their home. Visit:

www.MohawkValleyZombies.com

Save the Date!

Tarik Abdelazim, National Expert on Vacant and Abandoned Properties from the Center for Community Progress will be a guest speaker at the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District (MVEDD) Board Meeting on 9/29/21. Registration will be at 5:00pm. To RSVP with MVEDD: email: info@mvedd.org or call: 315-866-4671.



Zombie Team Supports Local Code Enforcement

Many local Code Enforcement Officers (CEOs) have limited available resources, including time, yet enforcing codes is a critical step to combating vacant and abandoned properties in our communities. Under our Zombie 2.0 Grant, the Zombie Quarterback, Allysa Dupont Rader, and David Grosse, Zombie Code Enforcement Officer (ZCEO), make up the "Zombie Team". The Zombie Team are available to support municipal CEOs in their work addressing vacant and abandoned properties. Two municipalities, the Town of Herkimer and the Village of Frankfort, are partnering with the GMVLB under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for a pilot program, which includes access to technology (tablets and software) for citing code violations, tracking code inspections, and contacting property owners.

Once an owner has been notified of the violations and given time to remedy the situation, the municipality can decide how to move forward constructively with property owners. The municipality may chose to have their Department of Public Works (DPW) remedy some of the property issues, such as boarding windows and patching a leak. The cost of this work would then be re-levied onto the property taxes, a process known as "summary abatement". The municipality may also consult with their legal counsel and chose to take action in court, or GMVLB and the Zombie Team can report the property to the Department of Financial Services (DFS) if it is bank owned or assist the municipality with Article 19A proceedings (More on 19A on page 4).

Below: Flow chart representing process for code enforcement support offered to municipalities



GMVLB Project Manager
John Mazarella III
completed renovations on
21 State Street
Fort Plain June 2021





The Numbers

GMVLB's successes since our establishment in 2016

- \$2,000,907 spent on projects in our 6 FGUs
- 31 Demolitions completed/participated throughout catchment area
- 2 renovations completed + 4 w/ scheduled completion summer 2021
- 13 properties sold + 8 sales pending
- \$424,396 additional investment commitments from private funds

Article 19A in Ilion, NY



Above and Below: Abandoned properties on Lester Ave in Ilion



Lester Ave in Ilion is a cluster of abandoned homes. On this hillside sits a street-full of homes, empty and collapsing. A runoff event caused by a heavy rain storm during 2013 left these properties in complete disrepair but ineligible for FEMA demolition/clean-up funding. Right around the corner, 11-13 View Terrace in Ilion was damaged by fire and sits vacant.

The Village of Ilion is a co-applicant on the Zombie 2.0 grant; under the terms of this grant, GMVLB was able to fund legal assistance for the Village of Ilion to acquire title for these properties using a legal practice referred to as Article 19A. This legal practice is a tool of last resort that municipalities can use when there are no other options to remedy an unsafe property. Through this process, ample time is given for interested parties to respond to notices regarding an unsafe vacant, abandoned and distressed property and to remedy the hazards. The matter of the abandoned property is then brought to court, where a judge can sign an order granting title of the property to the municipality to remedy the concerns. Once title is acquired, the municipality can either proceed on their own or work with the Land Bank to demolish the building. When the municipality has gained title to an abandoned property, funding for demolition can also be sought. Using 19A, title to these properties in Ilion was granted to the Village and now GMVLB is seeking the additional funding needed to begin demolition of these hazards in late 2021- early 2022.

GMVLB has a 19A guide available for municipalities to utilize, and access to legal counsel is available, as funding allows.