



Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Northern Illinois Land Bank Authority Expands Service Area

ROCKFORD, IL — Region 1 Planning Council (R1) is pleased to announce that Lake County, Illinois is now part of the Northern Illinois Land Bank Authority (NILBA). NILBA now serves six counties in northern Illinois: Stephenson, Winnebago, Boone, McHenry, Ogle, and Lake.

“We are honored to be trusted by Lake County leaders to assist the county’s municipalities with their land bank operations,” said Michael Dunn, Jr., Executive Director of Region 1 Planning Council “This partnership allows the Northern Illinois Land Bank Authority and Region 1 Planning Council to reduce blight and redevelop neighborhoods across the entire Stateline.”

“The Lake County Land Bank Authority (LCLBA) is thrilled to be joining NILBA. Together, the larger organization can amplify its voice and ability to promote positive change throughout Northern Illinois,” said Taylor Wegrzyn, Director of Economic and Community Development for the City of North Chicago. “Ultimately, this partnership will translate into greater benefits for all the communities involved, including accelerated redevelopment, more efficient nuisance abatement, an increase in housing options, collaborative economic development, and an improved quality of life across the region. It is a prime example of the regional collaboration and innovation needed to address the issues impacting communities today.”

Under this partnership, LCLBA will refer suitable properties to NILBA, whose staff will administer all necessary tasks for property disposition. The originating municipality retains full authority to make strategic decisions regarding properties acquired and sold through NILBA. Municipalities included in LCLBA are the City of Waukegan, Village of Round Lake Beach, Village of Round Lake, City of North Chicago, City of Zion, Village of Beach Park, Village of Fox Lake, and the Village of Winthrop Harbor.

Both NILBA and LCLBA received support from the Illinois Housing Development Authority’s (IHDA) Land Bank Technical Assistance Program. This initiative gives local governments participating in a land bank the tools to manage their local housing stock while promoting sustained economic development.

“By acquiring, managing, and repurposing vacant properties, land banks do more than address blight, they breathe new life into neighborhoods, attract investment, and help restore pride in communities across Illinois,” said IHDA Executive Director Kristin Faust. “Land banks are becoming essential partners in building a brighter future across urban, suburban, and rural Illinois. I commend NILBA and LCLBA on their merger, which will strengthen their impact, increase efficiency, and bring renewed hope to distressed communities as they work to create vibrant, equitable, and sustainable neighborhoods across the six counties they serve.”

NILBA's Impact

NILBA has acquired and sold 44 properties since its inception, totaling nearly \$1.5 million in sales. The current fair market value for these properties is now more than \$5 million. These properties went from being tax-delinquent, crime-ridden, vacant and abandoned nuisances to new homes for 44 families. As a result, neighbors have seen their property values increase due to improvements made to these properties

NILBA also works on larger scale projects, bundling properties to make neighborhood-sized change. Within the past year, NILBA helped address blight and a local housing shortage by acquiring 30 lots in the half-built Emerson Estates subdivision. NILBA then sold the properties at a discount to Habitat for Humanity, who is now using their volunteer-based home building expertise to create 30 new homes for families. Without NILBA's acquisition, this subdivision would have remained half-built and unused for decades to come.

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ABOUT NORTHERN ILLINOIS LAND BANK AUTHORITY – The Northern Illinois Land Bank Authority (NILBA) works to acquire abandoned properties and put them back into productive use. This increases the property tax base by increasing property values, combatting unsightly blight. NILBA was established in 2019. Current members are the City of Belvidere, Boone County, City of Freeport, Lake County Land Bank Authority, City of Loves Park, McHenry County, Village of Machesney Park, City of Rochelle, City of Rockford, Village of Roscoe, City of South Beloit, Stephenson County, and Winnebago County.

ABOUT R1 – [Region 1 Planning Council](#) is a special-purpose, regional government agency providing cross-jurisdictional, government-to-government collaborative planning for Northern Illinois. The regional planning model provides an efficient means to promoting a well-informed, comprehensive dialogue that holistically addresses regional issues by fulfilling the needs of government entities for long-range planning, securing funding, and analyzing and providing data in support of regional projects and initiatives.

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