



## Joint News Release

from the Office of State of Illinois Senator Steve Stadelman,  
City of Rockford, and Region 1 Planning Council

### For Immediate Release

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### Intergovernmental Collaboration Leads to Community Revitalization Grant Awards

**ROCKFORD, IL** — Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) has awarded \$425,000 of its Strong Communities Program funding to benefit the Rockford region. The program, funded through the Rebuild Illinois capital plan, supports affordable housing and community revitalization efforts throughout the state by awarding funds to local governments and land bank authorities for the acquisition, maintenance, rehabilitation, and demolition of abandoned residential properties.

Senator Steve Stadelman stated, "There are thousands of vacant lots across Illinois. Sadly, this includes hundreds in Rockford. The cost of blight in our communities is enormous, dragging down property values and tearing the social fabric of our neighborhoods, to say nothing of the hard maintenance cost shouldered by taxpayers. I'm confident this funding will provide much needed revitalization opportunities in Rockford and Winnebago County." Mayor Tom McNamara confirmed, "This grant award is critical in meeting the City's demolition goals as part of our focus on addressing blight in our neighborhoods. It is a key component to improve quality of life in neighborhoods and increase property values."

City of Rockford was awarded the per-agency maximum of \$250,000. By having a land bank authority, the Rockford area will benefit above and beyond that limit with an award of \$175,000 to the Northern Illinois Land Bank Authority, a Region 1 Planning Council operation. City of Rockford is among the eight members of the Land Bank Authority along with Boone County, City of Belvidere, City of Freeport, City of Loves Park, City of South Beloit, McHenry County, Village of Machesney Park, Winnebago County.

Region 1 Planning Council's executive director, Michael Dunn, Jr., said, "Intergovernmental collaboration, as represented by the Land Bank Authority, allows us to leverage opportunities that represent and serve our

region well. Resource development and multi-jurisdictional cooperation is fundamental to our purpose as a planning council.”

### **About Land Banks**

Land banks have been successful in many states over the past decade. Though relatively new in Illinois, they are quickly gaining momentum as a critical tool to efficiently fight blight. The Illinois Housing Development Authority has awarded Region 1 Planning Council grant funding to form the Northern Illinois Land Bank Authority.

The most useful tool a land bank offers against blight is the ability to provide a clear title to new purchasers. Subject properties are typically those with value-diminishing back-taxes or other liens and liabilities tied to the property which prevent it from being sold on the private market. Through a judicial deed process, the land bank may acquire abandoned property, then leverage its legal ability to clear the title, and find a qualified buyer for the property.

Numerous properties each year qualify as legally abandoned under Illinois State statute. These properties sit at length, often years, vacant and deteriorating. With a land bank, properties may be acquired and returned to market at a higher market value in a more efficient and cost-effective manner, putting an end to the vicious cycle of declining equalized assessed valuations.

The Land Bank also gives local governments more control over abandoned properties in their communities. Through the typical auction process, communities have no authority over who purchases the properties or what they do with the properties after they are acquired.

For more information, visit <http://r1planning.org/landbank>.

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