

Token award for land bank

Region gets \$150,000 of \$12.5M available

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The Capital Region was largely shut out of the first round of big-money funding to help the state's newly formed land banks battle blight by acquiring abandoned properties and steering them toward productive re-use.

Attorney General [Eric Schneiderman](#) announced nearly \$12.5 million in grants Tuesday to land bank efforts in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Newburgh, as well as Suffolk and Chautauqua counties.

But the local effort led by the cities of Schenectady and Amsterdam and Schenectady County had to settle for \$150,000 for "capacity building and staff support" to bolster its application ahead of the next deadline, which could come as soon as June.

Schneiderman's office said the funding was competitive but could not say why the local effort, the [Land Reutilization Corporation of the Capital Region](#), was not chosen.

Schenectady Mayor [Gary McCarthy](#) was disappointed but said he is hopeful the local partners will be better positioned to cash in next time.

McCarthy said few properties — perhaps as few as one — from Schenectady have so far been turned over to the land bank. And he noted that Albany County has yet to finalize its entrance into the nonprofit corporation, which was formed in the wake of a 2011 law authorizing the creation of 10 around the state to boost community revitalization.

"The reality is, I'm not sure that we would be able to effectively use it until next spring or next summer," he said of the money. "The attorney general has worked across upstate New York to help facilitate and deal with some of these problems, so I appreciate his partnership in this."

[Mary Rozak](#), a spokeswoman for Albany County Executive Dan McCoy, also expressed optimism.

"There's still time," she said. "We haven't written it off, and it sounds like we haven't been written off, either."

But one vocal advocate said boosters of the Capital Region effort deserve answers about why it was not chosen.

"I'm just in shock. I'm just in complete shock," Albany County Legislator [Chris Higgins](#) said. "Disappointing doesn't even begin to explain how upset I am. And I think we deserve an explanation."

Schneiderman awarded the grants from a \$20 million from a mortgage-related settlement with major banks.

The [Buffalo Erie Niagara Land Bank](#) Corporation was awarded \$2.1 million, the [Rochester Land Bank](#) Corporation was awarded \$2.8 million, the [Greater Syracuse Property Development](#) Corporation was awarded \$3 million, the [Chautauqua County Land Bank](#) Corporation was awarded \$1.5 million, the [Newburgh Community Land Bank](#) was awarded \$2.5 million; and the [Suffolk County Land Bank](#) Corporation was awarded \$675,000.

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