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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 16, 2012

HIGGINS, ELECTED OFFICIALS, COMMUNITY LEADERS ANNOUNCE PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO CREATE ALBANY COUNTY LAND BANK CORPORATION

ALBANY, N.Y. (Aug. 16, 2012) — Albany County Legislators Chris Higgins, Tim Nichols, Noelle Kinsch, Doug Bullock, joined by fellow elected officials and members of the community that includes the Hudson/Park Neighborhood Association, local ministries, and Stakeholders Inc., announced the proposal of legislation that would establish the Albany County Land Bank Act that would create the Albany County Land Bank Corporation.

“Whether it is in our urban cores or in suburban communities, we need a stronger, more organized way to combat blight across Albany County. The creation of this land bank will benefit the people of Albany County in exactly the way we need it to,” said Albany County Legislator Chris Higgins (D-Albany).

“A land bank is a powerful tool for turning vacant and abandoned properties into assets and revitalizing neighborhoods. I look forward to working on this important issue with my colleagues and the broader community,” said Albany County Legislator Noelle Kinsch (D-Albany).

“This property (208 Elm Street) and its delinquent landlord remind me of 566 Washington Avenue, in which was an abandoned dry cleaners location sat for over a decade. Recently, chemical tests revealed toxic substances were left on the property and the building had to be torn down. This property also had a runaway landlord. I fully support the land bank which is a potent remedy to the blight of abandoned buildings in Albany County. A land bank will fight this disease and must begin now or it will get worse,” said Albany County Legislator Doug Bullock (D-Albany).

“Blight isn’t just left to the urban centers but something we face in our suburban communities. The land bank will provide a needed solution to handling these situations on behalf of taxpayers and I am thrilled to be a part of this,” said Albany County Legislator Tim Nichols (D-Latham).

“Albany County has a unique opportunity to deal with vacant and deteriorating buildings. Establishing a land bank is a win-win for county and city taxpayers; it will enhance economic development and neighborhood revitalization initiatives in our core urban communities. I strongly support this effort, the time to act is now,” said Albany Common Council President Pro Tempore Richard Conti.

Article 16 of the New York State Not-for-Profit Corporation Law authorizes up to ten land banks statewide to help combat blight and re-purpose abandoned and vacant property. The Albany County Land Bank Development Corporation would be composed of nine members, six of which are nominated, and three selected from applications by stakeholders and others. The six nominated members will be selected by the Chairman and Minority Leader of the Albany County Legislature, the Treasurer of the City of Albany, and Albany County Executive. Each member is allowed a maximum of two years.

“If Albany’s goal is to attract increased residential and commercial rehab development, we need tools to free properties trapped in legal and tax quagmires. Land banks are exactly one of those tools,” said Michael Guidice, a local entrepreneur and a member of Stakeholders Inc.

"A land bank will add another tool to Albany County municipalities trying to alleviate the burden vacant and abandoned properties place on local governments. The current process in place to deal with this problem is too cumbersome and time-consuming. A land bank will help to rectify this problem," said Albany Common Councilman Dominick Calsolaro.

"Abandoned, distressed and foreclosed properties depress neighborhoods and deter economic development. A properly functioning land bank can transform under-performing properties back to valuable uses, and revitalize neighborhoods where the dream of homeownership has been crushed by the recession," said Richard Berkley, President of the Hudson/Park Neighborhood Association in Albany.

"Abandoned buildings are a major eye sore in our neighborhoods and what is more concerning they are a public safety hazard. In the City of Albany, they often become headquarters for crime. The proposal for land bank will give us another tool to fight this urgent and important battle against blight," said Albany Common Councilman Anton Konev.

Schenectady County was the first land bank created in the Capital Region, which features the same basic organization, and includes both cities of Schenectady and Amsterdam. Unlike Schenectady County that uses a third party to handle foreclosures, Albany County handles foreclosures in-house.

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