

PRESS RELEASE FROM
PRESIDING OFFICER DUWAYNE GREGORY



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Landbank Holds Affordable Housing Lottery For Properties in Sound Beach, Mastic



Suffolk County Legislature Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory, second from right, pulls a name at a lottery to determine priority order of income-eligible applicants wishing to purchase one of two zombie properties that the Suffolk County Landbank has renovated and converted to affordable housing. From left, 3rd District Legislator Kate Browning's aide Josh Slaughter, 6th District Legislator Sarah Anker and 10th District Legislator Tom

Cilmi look on. At right is James Britz of the Long Island Housing Partnership, which facilitated the lottery, held Feb. 4 at the H. Lee Dennison Building in Hauppauge.

HAUPPAUGE, N.Y. – The Suffolk County Landbank held a lottery Feb. 4 to determine priority order of more than 100 applicants wishing to purchase one of two former zombie properties that the Landbank has acquired and renovated for conversion to affordable housing.

The homes are located at 4 Sinclair St. in Mastic and 6 Lawrence Dr. in Sound Beach.

Created by legislation introduced by Suffolk County Legislature Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory and funded by a grant secured through the New York Attorney General’s Office, the Landbank purchases and renovates zombie properties, which are then sold to income-eligible buyers and returned to the tax rolls. The Landbank is expected to complete renovations on 11 properties by the end of this year.

Officials from the Long Island Housing Partnership (LIHP) facilitated the lottery, which was held at the H. Lee Dennison Building in Hauppauge. Presiding Officer Gregory; 10th District Legislator Tom Cilmi, who serves on the Landbank’s Board of Directors; 6th District Legislator Sarah Anker, who represents Sound Beach; and a representative of 3rd District Legislator Kate Browning, who represents Mastic, took turns drawing names of applicants.

The first 20 applicants drawn in the lottery have been notified by mail of their status and must return formal applications verifying their eligibility for the program to LIHP by Feb. 25. To qualify for the program, annual household income must not exceed 80 percent of the area’s median income, as determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. For a family of four, the limit is \$87,200.

The homes are expected to be under contract by the beginning of April, with the new owners taking possession of the properties before June.

“Suffolk County’s Landbank program accomplishes multiple objectives that are critical to neighborhood revitalization,” said Presiding Officer Gregory. “Since its inception, the Landbank has recouped more than \$4.5 million in property taxes from the owners who abandoned these homes. It has cleaned up blighted and brownfield properties, ridding surrounding communities of environmentally-hazardous eyesores. Most importantly, the Landbank will return these properties to the tax rolls while making the dream of affordable home ownership a reality for income-eligible buyers.”

“This is an excellent program to help people get into home ownership,” said LIHP President Peter Elkowitz. “We applaud Suffolk County for putting this program in place and reaching out to LIHP to help these homebuyers purchase these newly-renovated properties, which will now be put back onto tax rolls. Thank you to Presiding Officer Gregory and his colleagues for making this program a reality.”

“We’re very blessed that this program is available, and we’re happy to be a part of it,” said Ariel Santiago, who lives in Mastic Beach with his wife, Ivette Ruiz, and their three children. His

name was drawn 21st, but first of the applicants who attended the lottery. He plans to apply for future homes offered for sale by the Landbank.

“As a member of the Suffolk County Land Bank Corporation Board of Directors, I was delighted to participate in our first auction for new homeowners,” said Legislator Cilmi. “Our zombie home program allows us to acquire vacant dilapidated houses which are often a blight on communities, and working with nonprofits like the Long Island Housing Partnership, turn them into lovely homes for folks who need a little helping hand. It’s taking lemons and making lemonade.”

“The housing crisis has led to record foreclosures across the nation, and Suffolk County was one of the hardest hit areas,” said Legislator Browning. “Communities I represent have been devastated by this crisis, and I have worked hard to address the negative impacts. The creation of the Suffolk County Landbank has become a vital solution, and I am proud to see that Mastic is the first neighborhood to benefit. Purchasing, rehabbing and selling foreclosed properties to homeowners is the most effective way to rebuild our communities. The response to the housing lottery was tremendous, and I look forward to growing this program so that we can eliminate the blight and give every eligible resident a home here in Suffolk County.”

“For so many families on Long Island, the dream of homeownership is fading,” said Legislator Anker. “Fortunately, the Suffolk County Landbank was created in an effort to make that dream possible for some of those families. The Landbank program not only provides attainable housing, but also helps to revitalize blighted properties to improve the quality of the surrounding neighborhood as a whole. I am truly glad that a property in the Sixth District was one of the first homes to be renovated through this program, and I look forward to congratulating the new owners of this beautiful home in Sound Beach.”

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