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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City of Kankakee Approves the Creation of the Kankakee County Land Bank Authority

KANKAKEE, III - (September 8, 2020) – The City of Kankakee Council approved the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to begin the creation of the Kankakee County Land Bank Authority with the partnership of Kankakee County. The vote to approve was unanimous.

A land bank is a governmental, or can be a non-governmental entity, that acquires, manages, and disposes of vacant, abandoned, or blighted property for the purpose of stabilizing neighborhoods and encouraging redevelopment. During 2018, the City of Kankakee was awarded a \$150,000.00 grant from the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) to study the need for and potentially create a land bank. A feasibility study was completed by Teska and Associates in 2019 that supported the need for a land bank organization. During 2019, the City of Kankakee was awarded an additional \$50,000 IHDA grant to continue their efforts. In order to establish a land bank, two or more governmental agencies must work together. The City of Kankakee approached County officials last year to begin working on an IGA that would help launch the new entity.

“Having a local land bank provides a tool to strategically acquire vacant or abandoned properties and return them to productive use, reduce blight, and support our community’s goals,” states Economic and Community Development Agency (ECDA) Executive Director, Barbi Brewer-Watson. “I want to thank the City of Kankakee team and Teska and Associates for all of the research that went into this project. I also want to thank County Chairman Wheeler for his partnership along with the assistance of Ben Wilson, Kankakee County Transportation and Economic Development Project Coordinator. The key to the success of any land bank is a partnership between two governmental bodies.”

Issues of an aging housing stock and growing inventory of vacant or abandoned properties is not just a City of Kankakee challenge. Across America, municipalities are developing strategies of their own to mitigate the issues these properties create in their neighborhoods. The first land banks were developed in St. Louis, Louisville, and Atlanta. These cities used the land banks to break the cycle of decline that results from blighted properties, especially within the communities that have experienced years of disinvestment. Land banks also provide government the opportunity to gain control of tax burdened properties or tax-foreclosed properties from investors who don't have a stake in the local community and make them viable and contributing properties again.

“Tonight’s vote to approve the Intergovernmental Agreement presents a great opportunity for the City of Kankakee to further address blight in neighborhoods and repurpose the use of land in our community. The administration is working hard to strengthen partnerships with developers and stakeholders while enhancing quality of life for residents, business owners and visitors,” said Mayor Wells-Armstrong.

Kankakee County still needs to approve the IGA in order for the land bank to move forward. The City of Kankakee is working with the County over the next few weeks and are hopeful for an October vote of approval. Once both parties have signed the IGA, they will appoint three members to a board of directors who will be responsible for the creation and operation of the Kankakee County Land Bank Authority.

To view the land bank feasibility study, visit the Economic and Community Development Agency “Meeting Information” web page at www.cityofkankakee-il.gov.

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About the Economic and Community Development Agency (ECDA):

The Kankakee Economic and Community Development (ECDA) is a local government agency whose mission is to improve the lives of Kankakee residents and enhance the economic vitality of communities through housing, economic development and community development. The ECDA administers programs that serve the neighborhoods and residents of the City of Kankakee provided by federal, state and local funding. For more information, contact ECDA at 815-933-0506, Monday – Friday between 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Visit our website at <https://ecda.citykankakee-il.gov/>.

About the City of Kankakee, Illinois:

The City of Kankakee is dedicated to protecting, building and nurturing the community while enhancing lives. We are a historic, vibrant and active riverfront community. We continue to transform into an extraordinary place to dream, grow and thrive. Embracing our diversity, we strive to be progressive, inclusive and innovative. For

more information on the City of Kankakee, please visit the website at www.citykankakee-il.gov.