

OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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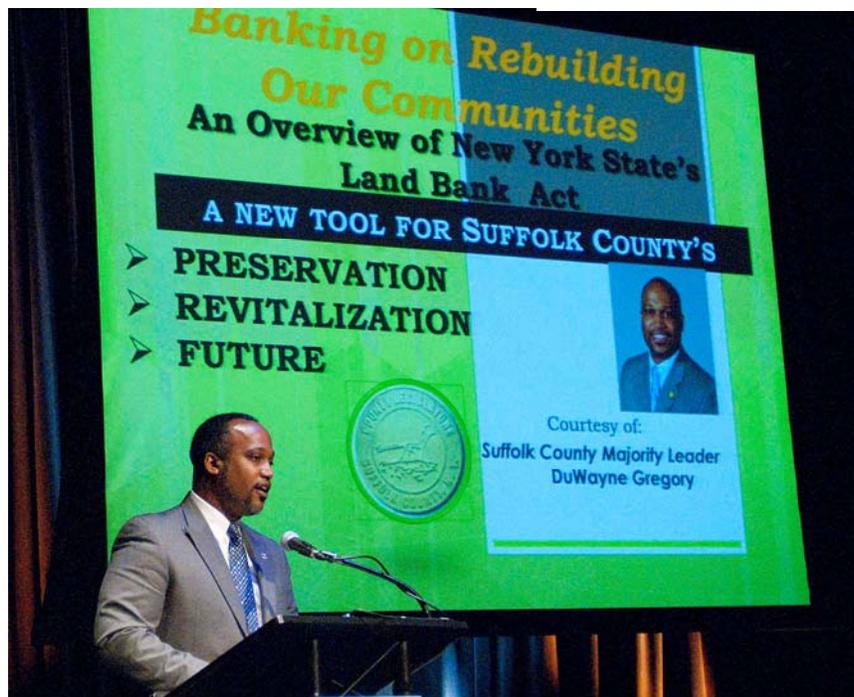


PRESS RELEASE

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Land Bank Remarks On Point

**Gregory Gives Power Point Presentation on Land Banks
at Suffolk County Housing Summit**

STONY BROOK, NY—Last Wednesday, February 8th, Suffolk County Legislative Majority Leader DuWayne Gregory (D-Amityville) was a “Best Ideas” presenter at the Suffolk County Housing Summit. Hosted by the Suffolk County Planning Commission, the day-long event at the Wang Center on the campus of Stony Brook University was billed as a forum for “policy makers and thought leaders to strategize about our region’s housing needs”. Gregory, the only elected official asked to give a presentation, delivered a report titled [*Banking on Rebuilding Our Communities: An Overview of New York State’s Land Bank Act*](#). His remarks focused on the role land banks can play in rehabilitating problem properties and improving the communities they blight.

– MORE, MORE, MORE –

Last December, Gregory's colleagues in the Legislature unanimously adopted a resolution ([R.1117](#)) he authored directing the County Planning Department to analyze state enabling land bank legislation and weigh the potential benefits associated with establishing a land bank here in Suffolk.

"Since it's founding, the Genesee County Land Bank, where Flint Michigan is located, has sold 1,600 properties and raised \$6.4 million. It has boosted property values county-wide by more than \$100 million," says Gregory, who told attendees about why he is looking to create a land bank here in Suffolk County. "If a land bank can achieve that kind of success in a city as fundamentally depressed as Flint, can you imagine the potential impact here on Long Island?"

"Majority Leader Gregory's remarks on the role that land banks can play in revitalizing Suffolk's housing market were right on point," says David Calone chairman of the Suffolk County Planning Commission and host of the summit. "If we hope to find a way out of our housing crises we need leaders with innovative ideas like this to help get us there."

Gregory's remarks were indeed timely. As he addressed the 300+ audience and spoke of the role robo-signing (*the process of signing complex documents without first evaluating their contents*) played in creating and exacerbating the nation's foreclosure crises, news reports out of Washington were announcing the attorneys general of 49 states (*Only Oklahoma did not sign the long-anticipated accord*) and the federal government reached a \$25 billion agreement with the nation's five biggest lenders (*Ally Financial, JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo, Citigroup, and Bank of America*) to end mortgage-servicing and home-foreclosure abuses stemming from so-called "robo-signing" practices. New Yorkers will receive about \$13 million of that amount.

An additional \$10 billion will be used to reduce the principal of mortgages made by the five banks, and owed by almost 1 million households who are financially "under water" -- owing more than their homes are worth. About \$495 million of that amount is expected to be spent in New York.

Last June the New York State Legislature amended the not-for-profit corporation and the public authorities' laws to allow for the creation of land banks to help local governments convert vacant, abandoned or tax-delinquent properties into productive uses like green space, urban farming, side lots, community amenities, commercial development and affordable housing.

– MORE, MORE, MORE –

If the Legislature chooses to establish a land bank it would have to be done as a separate, third-party not-for-profit corporation. The County could establish the bank on its own or choose to partner with interested municipalities. Either way, it's not likely that operating the bank would cost the County because properties taken for non-payment of taxes could simply be conveyed to a potential land bank for disposition and development.

If the County were to establish a land bank, it could potentially be eligible for further funds as early as this June from the US Department of Housing and Development's (HUD) Neighborhood Stabilization Program.

Gregory's resolution gives the Department 180 days (mid-May) to issue a written report with recommendation to the Legislature and County Executive Steve Bellone.

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