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## Albany County Land Bank, Social Enterprise and Training Center YouthBuild Albany, and Home HeadQuarters, Inc. Break Ground on Innovative New Partnership and Affordable Home Prototype

*YouthBuild Albany will help construct prototype of small home designed to fit on small vacant lots and help combat the affordable housing crisis*

*Project marks expansion of YouthBuild program in the city of Albany*

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**ALBANY, NEW YORK** – The Albany County Land Bank, Social Enterprise and Training (SEAT) Center, YouthBuild Albany, and Home HeadQuarters, Inc. were joined by elected officials, community leaders, neighborhood residents and YouthBuild Albany participants today to break ground on a new, small footprint affordable home prototype. Today’s groundbreaking celebrates the first project to emerge from a new partnership between the Albany County Land Bank, SEAT Center and Home HeadQuarters, Inc. and marks the first construction project undertaken by SEAT Center YouthBuild Albany and the first new construction home to be built by the Land Bank.

The prototype home will be constructed at 360 Sheridan Avenue in the city of Albany on a vacant lot provided by the Land Bank. The lot is 25 feet wide and 90 feet deep, which is smaller than most typical buildable lots in the city. These smaller-sized lots are located throughout the city of Albany and other municipalities in Albany County and represent a considerable proportion of the vacant lots that the Land Bank acquires through tax-foreclosure. The new prototype home will be a two-story single-family home that consists of three bedrooms and one full bathroom. At approximately 1,190 square feet, the 14-foot wide and 48-foot-deep home is designed to fit on smaller, narrower vacant lots while still providing adequate living space, functionality, and constructability. Upon completion, the home will be sold to a first-time homebuyer at an affordable price.

“This new partnership will enable us to transform often overlooked vacant lots into affordable homes to help revitalize our communities while providing an opportunity for young adults to build skills that will last a lifetime,” **said Adam Zaranko, Executive Director of the Albany County Land Bank.** “Thank you to the SEAT Center and Home HeadQuarters for helping us deliver this new, innovative approach to reclaiming vacant properties and creating more affordable homeownership opportunities. By working together we’re building more than just a home; we’re building new opportunities and a better future.”

“While young people from the city of Albany are transforming their lives, they are also transforming their community,” **said SEAT Center Founder/CEO Jennifer Lawrence.** Thanks to this partnership with Albany County Land Bank, SEAT Center will work with young people, ages 18-24, in the city of Albany, teach construction skills through building a new home from the ground up, while teaching academics that lead to a high school equivalency diploma. At SEAT Center, we believe in the power of young people to create the change that they want to see, through providing them with access, opportunity, and resources to realize their full potential.”



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“Home HeadQuarters is proud to be a part of this innovative and impactful community partnership with the Albany County Land Bank and the SEAT Center,” **said Home HeadQuarters’ Chief Executive Officer Kerry Quaglia.** “We’re honored to make the needed construction and development investment to get this first home off the ground, and even more excited to provide the first mortgage financing for the first-time homebuyer. We look forward to many more homes to come.”

The SEAT Center will build the new home as part of their YouthBuild program. The SEAT Center is a non-profit organization that connects underrepresented young people to meaningful work through an array of programs and services, including YouthBuild. YouthBuild is a program that helps transform the lives of young people through training, community service, and sustainable wage jobs. The program is designed to help those without a high school degree obtain their GED all while learning useful skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. There are 275+ YouthBuild programs operating in the United States and the SEAT Center is re-establishing the program in Albany, New York. Through this partnership, YouthBuild students will have an opportunity to participate in a construction project to revitalize their community and learn valuable hand-on construction skills while creating a new, affordable home for a first-time home buyer.

Construction financing and the first-time homebuyer mortgage will be provided by Home HeadQuarters, Inc. a nonprofit Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) that invests in people, properties, and projects that are underserved by traditional financial institutions. Home HeadQuarters has provided over \$1 million in acquisition and rehab financing to families and individuals that have purchased property from Albany County Land Bank.

“Through the power of partnership and community-driven innovation, we’re paving the way for a brighter future in Albany County. The Urban Infill Affordable Homeownership Pilot Project exemplifies the Albany County Land Bank’s commitment to transforming neglected spaces into vibrant homes, fostering skill development among our YouthBuild participants, and ultimately, bringing affordable homeownership dreams to life,” **said Assemblymember Patricia Fahy.** “This prototype project is a model for not just constructing houses, but creating a strong foundation for equitable growth, revitalization, and a stronger sense of belonging. This project is a testament to the boundless potential of collaboration and the lasting impact it can have on our neighborhoods.”

“For many years the Albany County Land Bank has been an essential resource to revitalize and strengthen our communities for future generations, and I applaud this partnership as the latest example,” **said Assemblymember John T. McDonald III, RPh.** “This partnership between Albany County Land Bank, the SEAT Center and Home HeadQuarters, Inc. will work toward the goal of creating affordable homeownership opportunities, while also teaching YouthBuild students a trade that will guide them on the path to finding meaningful work. I look forward to watching this project come to fruition!”

“We continue to face an affordable housing crisis here and across the state, and we need innovative solutions to help those struggling to make ends meet. I’m thrilled to see that we’re taking another positive step forward with the groundbreaking of this small footprint affordable home prototype,” **said Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy.** “This new partnership spearheaded by the Albany County Land Bank is a desperately needed investment in our minority neighborhoods by helping individuals build capital through homeownership, which ultimately helps stabilize the surrounding community.”



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“The intention behind this project is to breathe new life into neighborhoods that have experienced unfortunate systemic discrimination; by arbitrarily categorizing family homes as “redlined” housing. This practice of racial discrimination in housing has negatively impacted already distressed neighborhoods for generations,” **said Albany County Legislature Chairman Andrew Joyce**. “There is a pressing need for reinvigoration efforts in these areas that are in a significant state of deterioration. Albany County is dependent on affordable development and creating opportunities that make the city and surrounding area accessible to younger generations and newcomers. Redevelopment projects like this one on Sheridan Avenue demonstrate the unwavering dedication of our community to reclaim Albany’s innovative, impartial, and flourishing culture. Thank you to The Albany County Land Bank, Social Enterprise and Training Center and Home HeadQuarters for creating opportunities of growth through refurbishing current properties into affordable housing.”

"Hundreds of new units of housing continue to be built in Albany each year however we know that the supply is struggling to keep up with the demand, which is why I am so grateful that the Albany County Land Bank continues to create new affordable homes like this one," **said Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan**. “This new home will not only provide a first-time home buyer housing, but it also is an opportunity for young people in our community to play a part in its construction. Albany has very little undeveloped space and building small footprint, in-fill homes is yet another example of how our partners are thinking outside the box to ensure we create even more housing for those living in Albany and looking to move here. We are excited to see this project come to fruition and compliment the additional units of affordable housing the Albany County Land Bank and City of Albany are partnering to build across our Arbor Hill, West Hill, and South End neighborhoods."

Informed by the prototype, the partnership will continue to refine the design and work together to secure state and federal affordable housing funds to scale the initiative and unlock the potential of smaller vacant lots, filling in the “missing teeth” of a block and transforming overgrown, abandoned lots into new, quality and climate friendly affordable homes. The new partnership will create more opportunities for YouthBuild participants and graduates, decrease the number of vacant properties plaguing communities, increasing the housing supply to catalyze neighborhood revitalization and help combat the growing affordability crisis.

#### **About the Albany County Land Bank Corporation**

The Albany County Land Bank was established in 2014 by Albany County to facilitate the process of acquiring, improving, and redistributing tax-foreclosed, vacant, or abandoned properties. The Land Bank is a nonprofit organization committed to revitalizing neighborhoods and strengthening communities throughout Albany County. The Albany County Land Bank works in partnership with state and local government, non-profits, residents, community groups, and responsible developers and investors to return properties to productive use and support community development.

To learn more about the Albany County Land Bank please visit: [www.albanycountylanbank.org](http://www.albanycountylanbank.org)

#### **About the Social Enterprise and Training Center**

The Social Enterprise and Training Center (SEAT) connects young people to meaningful work through an array of programs and services to provide transformative educational and workforce experiences that create a sense of purpose and hope in our communities and connect business to real time solutions. SEAT exists to work alongside underrepresented young people to create a SEAT at the table in their community regardless of income status, neighborhood, race, and educational inequities.

To learn more about the SEAT Center please visit: [www.seatcenter.org](http://www.seatcenter.org)



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### **About Home HeadQuarters, Inc.**

Home HeadQuarters (HHQ) is a Syracuse, New York-based non-profit neighborhood and housing development organization and certified Community Development Financial Institution that has, since 1996, helped more than 4,000 families become first-time homebuyers; provided nearly 11,000 homeowners with \$113 million in home improvement loans and grants, and redeveloped nearly 900 formerly vacant properties. Recognized nationally for its innovative and equitable loan products, Home HeadQuarters is annually recognized as the leading home improvement lender to families of color living in Syracuse, out lending all other financial institutions combined. The organization is the country's first designated Community Based Development Organization (CBDO) and is a chartered member of NeighborWorks America. HHQ was recently awarded the designation of 2020 Top Home Improvement Lender in the Nation amongst 240+ NeighborWorks America member organizations.

To learn more about the Home HeadQuarters, Inc. please visit: [www.homehq.org](http://www.homehq.org)

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