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# Gloversville supports six-county land bank

May 11, 2016  
By KERRY MINOR, Leader Herald

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GLOVERSVILLE - The Common Council on Tuesday gave official support to the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District's six-county land bank.

Under the land bank plan, Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego and Schoharie counties would seek state money for the land bank, which buys foreclosed properties and makes them available for sale to developers or builders.

The Mohawk Valley Economic Development District does not need the city's approval, but representatives told the council in April they wanted the council's support.

### Article Photos



The Leader-Herald/Kerry Minor

Third Ward Councilman Vincent DeSantis said he feels the plan could benefit Fulton County's two cities.

"This could be a real opportunity, especially for both Gloversville and Johnstown when it comes to dealing with blight and dealing with substandard properties," DeSantis said. "Especially properties that are going into tax foreclosure."

DeSantis said some of the money could go to local land banks, such as one proposed by the Gloversville Housing and Neighborhood Improvement Corp.

Fifth Ward Supervisor Greg Young said during the meeting the county's finance committee turned down the proposal. Young said the supervisors were concerned that in a six-county arrangement, one county gets more than the others.

"There were a lot of concerns that in the past in six-county

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agreements, Oneida County has gotten the lion's share of the benefits and gets control over things," Young said. "So there were concerns of local autonomy and having a say on that board."

DeSantis said the county's decision not to support the concept does not close the door on the county signing on in the future.

DeSantis said the plan does not require municipalities to buy into it or turn properties over to it.

"It's something you can use," DeSantis said. "The regional land bank could be a conduit for state funding to local land banks."

Tolga Morawski of Keep Mohawk Valley Beautiful, which runs under the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District, said during the April 26 council meeting the group should hear from the state by June about its application.

If approved, the MVEDD would receive around \$100,000 to \$150,000 by the summer to hire workers and prepare the plan, and get \$1 million to \$2 million by the third quarter of this year.

DeSantis said it's likely the state will approve the application, since the state supports the concept.

Morawski said in April the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District is seeking to work with smaller projects around the area to support.

The money for the land bank comes from settlements made by banks after the foreclosure crisis connected to the 2008 recession, according to DeSantis.

"The state is now turning that money over to try and fix the foreclosure problem," he said.

The distribution of funding for the projects would come from the state attorney general's office. Applications go through Empire State Development.

The Mohawk Valley Economic Development District has until Sunday to send in its application.

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