



For Immediate Release

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**City of Olean Awarded Surplus
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Funds**

November 16, 2021—Olean--William J. Aiello, Mayor of the City of Olean, is pleased to announce that the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) has awarded the City of Olean an additional \$50,000 in surplus funds to support its work through April 20, 2022. The funding will support the Zombie Coordinator position, legal consultant and technology tools related to the project.

In 2017 the City of Olean was successful in its application and received a grant in the amount of \$100,000 from the Zombie and Vacant Properties Remediation and Prevention Initiative from LISC. The grant was used to create a homeowners outreach and retention program, including foreclosure prevention information; to create a database of all vacant and zombie properties; to contract for legal and inspection services; to research, develop, and implement innovative local policies to address housing vacancy and abandonment; and to hire a part time inspector to coordinate all activities associated with vacant and “zombie” properties.

The City was fortunate to receive a second grant from LISC 2.0 in the amount of \$100,000 in 2019. During the term of the two grants the zombie coordinator performed 335 windshield inspections, 101 on site visits and 450 property inspections that identified, assessed and catalogued the condition of properties for Code compliance. These inspections identified 145 vacant/zombie properties.

The City acquired multiple vacant/zombie properties and demolished 4 properties and one accessory structure. In addition 13 work orders were performed on vacant/zombie properties to secure and eliminate any immediate danger. A Revolving Revival Fund was established to make repairs mandated by the Zombie Law, which covered the repair costs incurred by 12 noncompliant properties. All funds were recouped and the fund was replenished.

During the terms of the two grants, the City has partnered with the Cattaraugus County Land Bank to build a resilient system for future acquisition, holding or demolition of vacant properties. In addition the City developed best practices to prevent vacant/zombie housing and when vacant, worked to place the property into the hands of new and responsible owners.

“The fight against blight in the City of Olean has been an organized team effort between numerous departments including Community Development, the Fire Department, Code Enforcement, the Department of Public Works, the Assessor’s Office, and the IT Department. The staff has done an excellent job isolating the root causes of the problem and coordinating an effective plan to eliminate blight,” Mayor Aiello said. “The generous grants from LISC provided the critical financial impetus to establish strategies and policies that will allow the City to continue our mission to improve our neighborhoods and the living conditions for our residents.”

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