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## **Settlemyer named executive director of the newly formed Hartford Land Bank**

March 20, 2020 - Connecticut

Hartford, CT The Hartford Land Bank (HLB) has named its first executive director, Laura Settlemyer will head the land bank, the first such entity in the state created for the purpose of helping municipalities more effectively address blight.

Settlemyer is a local resident and, since 2016, has served as the city's director of blight remediation. Under her leadership, the blight remediation team created a comprehensive inventory of vacant, blighted properties citywide, and helped get hundreds of those properties out of blight, working with homeowners, residents, and non-profits.

Settlemyer has worked with city residents to strengthen the city's anti-blight ordinance, create a citywide property-maintenance code, and, most recently, complete a comprehensive overhaul of the city's housing code - the first such revision in nearly 40 years. The code revisions were recently approved by the city's Court of Common Council and are expected to help the city more proactively monitor and address conditions that lead to unsafe and unhealthy housing conditions citywide. Settlemyer led efforts to secure federal tax exempt status for the newly incorporated land bank as well as its initial equity and grant capital, which includes \$5 million from the Connecticut Department of Housing.

, and additional support from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

"We are thrilled to have someone as experienced and knowledgeable as Laura leading the city's effort to get these long neglected properties back on the tax rolls and into productive use," said Melvyn Colon, Chairman of the Hartford Land Bank Board of Directors. "She is a proven leader in this field and her intimate understanding of our mission and involvement in bringing the land bank into being make her the ideal choice."

Steve Harris, a resident of Hartford's Northeast neighborhood who served on the Blight Remediation Task Force that recommended the creation of a Blight Remediation Director, agreed. "Laura's been a tremendous partner from the city in helping neighborhood residents address blighted properties in our community, and I'm confident she'll continue this important work while she's leading the new Land Bank," he said.

Settlemyer holds a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and a law degree from Emory University. Prior to moving to Hartford, she was Assistant General Counsel for Michigan Initiatives

for the Center for Community Progress (CCP), where she assisted with neighborhood revitalization efforts in the cities of Flint and Detroit. While working with CCP in Detroit, she worked closely with the Detroit Land Bank, the largest land bank in the U.S. She is a noted national expert on blight remediation and regularly speaks on the topic at conferences and as a guest lecturer. Before moving to Michigan, Settlemyer, working as a city attorney in New Orleans, first established herself in the area of land banking and blight remediation, specializing in code enforcement, housing, and community development matters, helping residents in that city recover and rebuild following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

Last year, she also drafted and helped pass statewide legislation authorizing the creation of land bank authorities, and separate legislation that provides community development organizations, creditors, or neighbors with the legal tools needed to remedy blighted properties.

The Hartford Land Bank will be working with residents and announcing more opportunities as it plans to acquire its first properties in 2020.

“We are excited to get the Land Bank up and running, and Laura Settlemyer is a great choice to lead its efforts,” said Mayor Luke Bronin. “In her three years with the city, she helped us reduce blight and create a framework to make an even bigger impact going forward. The City and the Land Bank will work closely not only to get properties fixed up, but also to get them into the hands of residents and people who will care for their homes and invest in our community.”

Settlemyer also serves as a Commissioner on the Housing Authority of the City of Hartford, Chair of the Connecticut Vibrant Communities Coalition, and Adjunct Professor with University of Hartford’s Department of Architecture, teaching Advanced Urban Issues. Her new responsibilities with the Hartford Land Bank will start in February, 2020.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540