

July 20, 2012

President Toni Preckwinkle
Cook County
Office of the President
118 N. Clark St., Room 537
Chicago, IL 60602

Commissioner Bridget Gainer
Cook County
118 N. Clark St. Rm 567
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear President Preckwinkle and Commissioner Gainer:

On behalf of the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), I am writing to applaud your proposal for a countywide land bank, focused initially on the south suburbs where local leaders have demonstrated their commitment to coordinated redevelopment by jointly pursuing a subregional strategy to reclaim vacant properties.

Given the extent and complexity of the challenge, and the diversity of opportunities across Cook County, we appreciate your proposal's balanced approach:

- It sets forth a vision of a versatile and scalable tool, but also provides opportunities for refinement by local leaders and advisors whom you will appoint for their wide range of technical expertise and geographic perspectives.
- The new Land Bank would be structured as a nonprofit entity, empowered by the County's home rule authority to acquire and hold properties tax-free, clear up title issues, and allow local innovation to play a strong role in pursuing the optimal reuse of acquired properties.

We believe this thoughtful approach positions Cook County to create an effective tool that will serve the needs of both the City of Chicago and suburban communities across the county.

Further, we appreciate both of your ongoing interest in fostering subregional strategies, such as those underway in the south suburbs. There are clear efficiencies to be gained when towns work together to develop and pursue shared redevelopment priorities and plans. As community and municipal leaders struggle to address the many ripple effects of the foreclosure crisis, the land bank's resources can be leveraged as an incentive for subregional planning and capacity building.

MPC's work with these suburban collaboratives has benefitted greatly from Homes for Changing Region, a planning model deployed by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, and supported by MPC, in partnership with groups of suburban communities around the region. By helping local stakeholders understand projected demographic changes in their communities and envision the housing and land use policies needed to accommodate those changes, Homes creates both a subregional strategy as well as a mechanism for engaging and educating local leaders. Based on the value of the two subregional

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plans already completed for leaders in south and west suburban Cook County, and a third underway in northwest Cook, we urge you to consider this as an entrée and incentive for future efforts.

Beyond the 85,000 households currently struggling with foreclosures in Cook County and the thousands of vacant properties already marring the landscape, a flood of new foreclosure filings threatens to further undermine families and neighborhoods. The County's leadership – in this, the most densely populated part of Illinois, representing more than 130 municipalities – is particularly critical and timely. MPC thanks both of you for your strong leadership on this issue and pledges to work with you to shape a land bank strategy that serves as a national model while addressing the unique demands of our region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "MarySue Barrett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

MarySue Barrett
President