

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 24, 2025



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*****PHOTO RELEASE*****

COOK COUNTY LAND BANK AUTHORITY CELEBRATES THE SUCCESS OF SMALL DEVELOPERS IN CREATING \$258 MILLION IN COMMUNITY WEALTH AT 2025 AWARDS LUNCHEON

The Annual Event Recognizes Community Developers Turning Abandoned Properties into Valuable Assets and Returning Value to Communities

CHICAGO—The [Cook County Land Bank Authority](#) (CCLBA) on Thursday celebrated the success of small developers in creating \$258 million in community wealth creation and more than 1,400 jobs at the Land Bank’s annual Awards and Recognition Luncheon.

This year’s event, “From Vacant to Vibrant,” highlighted how the CCLBA, developers and community partners have come together to transform blight into new homes, businesses, and community spaces. Hosted by ABC7’s Val Warner and with a keynote address from Michael Strautmanis of the Obama Foundation, the 2025 Awards and Recognition Luncheon celebrated projects completed in 2024. Photos of the event are available below and for download [here](#).

“We chose the theme ‘From Vacant to Vibrant’ because it reflects the real impact of our work turning abandoned spaces into opportunities for growth,” said **Jessica Caffrey, Executive Director of the Cook County Land Bank Authority**. “The Land Bank has helped to create enormous economic impact in Cook County, but our real success is more than numbers. It’s about the lives changed through the work of all those in our ecosystem — developers, small business owners, nonprofits and community leaders. This event gave us a chance to share stories of impact and award those who have helped to create it.”

As part of the celebration Bridget Gainer, Cook County Commissioner, CCLBA Chair, and Land Bank Co-Founder, presented the prestigious Mark Satter Visionary Award to artist and Rebuild Foundation founder Theaster Gates, who has transformed vacant lots purchased from the Land Bank into Kenwood Gardens, a vibrant green space in Greater Grand Crossing. Named after civil rights activist Mark Satter, the award honors leaders who share the Land Bank’s mission.

“The Land Bank’s success proves that when we invest in small developers, we invest in the future of our communities,” said **Bridget Gainer, Cook County Commissioner and CCLBA Board Chair**. “By cutting through red tape and increasing accessibility for developers to

purchase property, we're not just revitalizing vacant spaces — we're creating opportunities for local entrepreneurs and tradespeople, strengthening neighborhoods, and building generational wealth where it's needed most."

"The Land Bank is not just about redeveloping properties — it's about restoring equity and empowering local developers to shape the future of their own neighborhoods," said **Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle**. "With a network of over 1,000 community developers leading these transformations, often in areas overlooked by big developers, the Land Bank's greatest strength is its ability to put resources directly into the hands of those who know their communities best."

The 2025 award winners include:

Mark Satter Visionary Award

Theaster Gates

West Side Developer of the Year

GT Alternatives

West Suburban Developer of the Year

Tim's Realty and General Contractor LTD

South Suburban Developer of the Year

Homes by Wesbrook LLC

South Side Developer of the Year

Araj Consulting LLC

New Construction Project of the Year

Greenline Homes, LLC

Commercial Project of the Year

The Flavored Jamaican Inc.

Multi-Unit Developer of the Year

KBM Holdings LLC

Residential Project of the Year

Homan Housing LLC

Newcomer of the Year

Manuel Romero



ABC anchor and emcee for the 2025 Developer Awards and Recognition Luncheon Val Warner and CCLBA Executive Director Jessica Caffrey smile on stage.



President of the Cook County Board of Commissioners Toni Preckwinkle awards developer Anthony Westbrook with the South Suburban Developer of the Year award.



Executive Vice President for External Affairs of the Obama Foundation Michael Strautmanis delivers keynote speech at the 2025 CCLBA Developer Awards and Recognition Luncheon.

PHOTOS: Available for download [here](#).

About the Cook County Land Bank Authority

The Cook County Land Bank Authority, an independent agency of Cook County, was founded by the Cook County Board of Commissioners in 2013 to address residents and communities hit hard by the mortgage crisis. CCLBA gives local developers, community groups and potential homeowners the tools to transform their own communities from within. The Land Bank acquires properties that have sat tax-delinquent, abandoned and vacant for years and sells them at below-market rates to qualified community-based developers, who then rehab the properties. This approach not only keeps revenue and jobs in the community, but it also helps local developers grow their businesses. Learn more about the Cook County Land Bank Authority at <http://www.cookcountylandbank.org> or email info@cookcountylandbank.org.

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