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More than 14,000 People Registered for Cook County Land Bank Authority Home Giveaway Registration remains open until Sept. 15

Note: Photos are at the end of this press release:

Chicago (Sept. 5, 2019)-- More than 14,000 people have registered for the Cook County Land Bank Authority's (CCLBA) third annual Home Giveaway, sponsored by Fifth Third Bank, compared to 3,874 registrants last year. **Registration**, which opened Aug. 10, **remains open until Sunday, Sept. 15**. After the registration period closes, the Land Bank will select a lucky winner to receive the keys -- and the deed -- to a free, beautifully rehabbed single family home in the Washington Heights neighborhood on Chicago's South Side this fall.

The Land Bank's annual [home giveaway](#) raises awareness of its [Homebuyer Direct Program](#), which enables people to purchase vacant, abandoned homes at below-market rates, rehab them and earn immediate equity. Since its inception in 2017, the Homebuyer Direct program has provided more than 140 homes to homebuyers and earned them an average of \$20,000 in equity. The program focuses on boosting homeownership in areas where lingering effects of the 2008 mortgage crisis slowed community development and left a glut of vacant and abandoned properties in Cook County.

"The beauty of the Homebuyer Direct program is that it breaks down barriers to homeownership and helps transform communities by offering fixer-upper homes at below-market prices," said Robert Rose, Executive Director of the Cook County Land Bank Authority. "People who own homes are more vested in them and, in turn, more vested in the health of the community. We're happy to give away a free home to shine a light on this great program."

Fifth Third Bank is a sponsor of the home rehab. "The work of the Cook County Land Bank Authority aligns with our mission to deliver innovative solutions to the most important needs in our communities," said Nicole Johnson-Scales, SVP, Community and Economic Development at Fifth Third Bank. "We are committed to helping people achieve affordable homeownership and enhancing their financial literacy, and that's why we're proud to sponsor the Land Bank's home giveaway."

The rehabbers of the Washington Heights home, located at an address to be revealed later this fall, are the popular twin [Downing Brothers](#) of the HGTV pilot show "Double Down." "We have rehabbed many homes, but this is one of the most impactful projects we've been involved in because it helps make affordable homeownership more accessible," said Anton Downing. "The rehab that we've done on the giveaway home is so wonderful that my brother and I would love to live in the home ourselves, but we're excited to turn it over to a winner this fall."

People interested in the home giveaway drawing can register online at www.cookcountylanbank.org/homeownergiveaway.

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The newly rehabbed home is a 1,063-square- foot brick bungalow with three bedrooms, 1.5 baths, a basement and a two-car detached garage. The new homeowner would be responsible for paying only property taxes, insurance and utility bills.

The Cook County Land Bank Authority, chaired by Cook County Commissioner Bridget Gainer, 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 in order to sell them at below-market rates to qualified community-based developers, who then rehab the homes. This not only keeps revenue and jobs in the community, but also helps local developers grow their businesses.

Photos:

Before Rehab photo:

[The "old" kitchen](#)

After Rehab photo:

[The new kitchen](#)

[Outside of home](#)

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