

SPOTLIGHT:

309 Onondaga Ave. Renovation



Gary Cole saw great potential in a house on Onondaga Avenue and renovated it into a beautiful home for him and his family. The once-neglected property now prominently takes its place on this block with an American flag swaying from the flagpole out front and fresh flowers lining the porch. Inside, the refinished hardwood floors glisten and the dark wood trim throughout the house harkens back to this home's historic beauty that lay dormant for so many years.

In the Spring of 2015, Gary was looking to relocate from Cato to Syracuse in order to be closer to his work. While driving through Syracuse to look for potential homes, this foursquare style home on Onondaga Ave. caught his eye. The house had a grand front porch and was within walking distance to Onondaga Park. He saw the Land Bank's sign on the property and called the office.

After getting in touch with the Land Bank and touring the home, Gary used his renovation background and skills to draft a renovation plan for the home that would restore the house to its potential. He described the purchase process as very easy and smooth. Eager to get started on his new home, Gary said the waiting for the Land Bank's approval at their next monthly board meeting was the only difficult part of the process.



Living room before (left); after (right)

Gary's renovation also went smoothly. Although there was a lot of work that needed to be done, he had the skills and experience to complete a majority of the renovation himself. Gary's previous renovations of other



Before



After

rental properties and his work experience equipped him with knowledge in construction, building, plumbing, and electrical that made this a straightforward project.

Gary also has some words of advice for others interested in renovating a Land Bank property. He recommended for those who are not experienced in



Kitchen before (top); after (bottom)

renovations to find an expert to take with them for inspections to make sure that they make accurate estimates of renovation costs. Gary said other problems can arise during the renovation that were not expected, but a comprehensive understanding of the total investment can prevent budget issues. Low purchase prices do not always mean low over project costs, understanding what renovations the house needs, their associated costs, as well as budgeting for the unexpected are more than half the battle. He notes that sound project management of these renovations is key to a successful rehab.

When asked what the benefits of working with the Land Bank were, Gary mentioned the application

contribute to the revitalization that is occurring throughout Syracuse. Gary added that it was helpful that the Land Bank's process, unlike an auction, enabled him to walk through and inspect the home prior to purchase and that their staff were available to answer any questions he had throughout the application process.


Gary says he would definitely work with the Land Bank again and has already referred them to several people.

Gary's full renovation included:

- Replacing the hot water tank
- Replacing plumbing
- New attic windows
- Kitchen remodel: new cabinets, counters, and appliances
- Interior painting
- Front and Rear porch repairs
- Furnace repair
- Repairing interior sheetrock ceilings and walls
- Landscaping

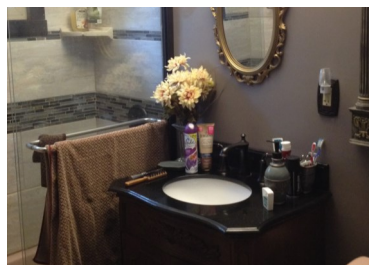
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Bathroom before (left); after (right)

process again and said the Land Bank's prices made for a good deal, as well, if you're able to do some of the labor yourself. He said he was happy to be able to put money into a home that would help restore a historic home and