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**COOK COUNTY LAND BANK AUTHORITY AND URBAN MALE NETWORK  
CELEBRATE GRAND OPENING OF EMPOWERMENT CENTER IN ENGLEWOOD**

*The Organization Purchased the Abandoned Building from the Cook County Land Bank and  
Transformed it into a Resource Hub for Youth*

**CHICAGO** — The Cook County Land Bank Authority (CCLBA) and Urban Male Network today celebrated the grand opening of the Urban Male Network’s Empowerment Center in Englewood, a rehabbed property purchased from the CCLBA and dedicated to empowering men of color within the Englewood neighborhood. The Empowerment Center will offer workforce development and enrichment programming, alongside podcast production and conference rooms designed to facilitate mentorship, education and collaboration.

“Before the construction of the Urban Male Network’s Empowerment Center, this property was an abandoned building providing no real value to the community,” said **Toni Preckwinkle, Cook County Board President**. “Today, this new establishment will be a hub for mentorship and brotherhood and a key indicator of community revitalization on Chicago’s South Side.”

The Urban Male Network has provided services and resources to individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds for over nine years. Dr. Marlon Haywood founded the organization as a pillar to his community and with a goal of creating impactful programs for youth that inspire leadership and change.

“The grand opening of the Empowerment Center marks an important step in advancing our mission of redefining what it means to be an urban male,” said **Dr. Marlon Haywood, President and CEO of the Urban Male Network**. “Thanks to the Cook County Land Bank Authority, we were able to turn an abandoned building into a space that represents hope, opportunity and growth for Englewood.”

CCLBA previously donated land to Dr. Marlon Haywood, which he transformed into a neighborhood basketball court. In the case of the Empowerment Center, Haywood purchased the property for the Empowerment Center from the CCLBA and transformed this once-abandoned 3,400-square-foot building and the lot adjacent to it into a new space for young men of color and families in Englewood.

“This ribbon cutting is a huge milestone for the Englewood neighborhood and is a celebration of the work we’re committed to and the future we’re building,” **said Jessica Caffrey, Executive Director of the Cook County Land Bank Authority.** “The Urban Male Network had a vision, and we’re thrilled to have helped bring it to life.”

The CCLBA works to transform vacant land and abandoned properties like this one back into valuable assets that help drive communities forward. This model has disrupted decades of disinvestment, created jobs and built community hubs like the Empowerment Center that help lead to greater stability in Cook County communities.

For more information about the Cook County Land Bank Authority, visit [www.cookcountylandbank.org](http://www.cookcountylandbank.org).

#### About Cook County Land Bank

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](mailto:info@cookcountylandbank.org)

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