CALS NYS Internship Program
INTERNSHIP POSITION DESCRIPTION
City of Amsterdam – Department of Community and Economic Development

1. **Name of Host:** City of Amsterdam Department of Community and Economic Development.

2. **Host Background Information:** City Government chartered 1885 under the laws of the State of New York to perform a broad range of governmental activities to provide for the general wellbeing of its citizens. For more information, see: www.amsterdamny.gov.

3. **Internship Project and Title:** Vacant Property Inventory and Assessment/Community and Economic Development Specialist.

4. **Project Context:** A problem facing almost all Upstate New York municipalities is vacant or abandoned properties: these reduce the tax base directly through lost revenue and indirectly through lowered property values, depressed quality of life and civic vitality, and the inability to attract or retain residents and businesses. Most local comprehensive plans address this by suggesting a variety of methods to deal with the problem but do not provide a practical mechanism to bring this down to the parcel-by-parcel level, where the decisions are being made on a day-to-day basis. Further, there is often a lack of coordination and common knowledge between planners and the various agencies determining specific property dispositions. There is a need for a simple system which all stakeholders can use and help maintain regularly for mutual benefit.

5. **Description of Work:** Working under the direct supervision of the Director, Community and Economic Development (in conjunction with the City Engineer, Assessor, Corporate Counsel, Chief of Fire Department, and other city officials, as well as select volunteers on city boards, commissions, and associations), the intern will develop a vacant property inventory and assessment system. Successful completion of this project entails completing the following sequential actions (specific time allocations are estimates only and can be reapportioned as deemed mutually advisable as the work progresses):

- Identify through web-based literature search the best practices for reuse of vacant property. Prepare a summary description with salient points and selected references for each. (1 week)

- Develop a logical framework for a computer database of vacant properties that can be easily updated and accessed by a variety of users. (1 week)

- Develop a methodology for selecting a projected best use for each vacant property which considers best practices, but also such factors as: local neighborhood needs, proximity to similar uses, zoning and comprehensive planning, etc. (1 week)

- Develop graphic tools to demonstrate the methodology (e.g., flow charts, logic diagrams); work with Montgomery County Planners to produce GIS-based map representations of both vacant properties and proposed best use. (1 week)

- Inventory vacant properties within the City of Amsterdam (or a significant portion thereof), through records search and street side examination. (3 weeks)

- Apply the methodology to vacant properties in a selected portion of the City of Amsterdam. (1 week)
• Brief potential system users and neighborhood stakeholders on the proposed best uses as determined in the step above and obtain their input on both product and process. (1 week)

• Modify system and related materials as necessary based on above step; conduct final briefings to users, release forms and procedural instructions. (1 week)

6. Basic Qualifications and Preferred Experience:

• Superior writing and presentation skills.

• Ability to think systemically and logically.

• Attention to detail.

• Working knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Power Point, Excel, etc). A more thorough knowledge of data bases is preferred but not required.

• Drivers License valid in New York State.

7. Work Schedule: 32 hours (80%) of a standard forty-hour work week to be devoted to position requirements; 8 hours (20%) to the CALS community engagement project for a total of ten weeks. It is preferred that this 20% be taken as either one eight-hour day or two four-hour days, but the host can be flexible in this regard.

8. Expected Outcomes for Intern:

• General knowledge of community and economic dynamics of Upstate New York (particularly urban areas).

• General knowledge of New York State local government: laws, structure, operations, planning procedures, grants and funding environment, etc.

• Practical experience in working with local government officials, business and property owners, and the general public in a public sector setting.

• Practical experience in developing forms, procedures, graphic tools, and database for government and public use.

• Detailed knowledge of best practices to deal with vacant and abandoned properties in the general context of New York State (Including land banking: Amsterdam is one of only five municipalities authorized to form such in the State of New York to date).

• A concrete, complete, and demonstrable example of individual work product for use in resume/portfolio.

9. Location of Assignment: Department of Community and Economic Development, Amsterdam City Hall, 61 Church Street, Amsterdam, New York 12010.

10. Other:

• The intern will be required to sign a waiver that holds harmless the City of Amsterdam, its employees, officials, volunteers, and other participants for any bodily injury or property damage
that is not the direct result of the negligence of the City of Amsterdam. Also, to sign an agreement requiring the appropriate handling of confidential or proprietary information encountered as part of the work assigned.

- A city vehicle, credentials, camera, and other required equipment will be furnished for the use of the intern during the period of assignment.

- Work will infrequently require visits to the Montgomery County offices in Fonda, New York (seven miles distant).

- The City of Amsterdam authorizes CALS to share the products of this project with any interested municipality, without any specific property information, and with appropriate credit to CALS, City of Amsterdam, and the involved individuals.