

LAND BANK TO SPONSOR COMMUNITY FORUMS

On October 8th, 27th, and November 5th, the Genesee County Land Bank will coordinate with the City of Flint and Mt. Morris Township to host forums on Strengthening our Community in the Face of Population Decline. The purpose of the forums is to share information on land use trends and interventions to deal with abandoned land, hear fresh ideas from local leaders and activists about making pro-active decisions to strengthen Flint and Beecher given the declining population, and provide residents with an opportunity to ask questions and present their ideas about stabilizing and transforming our neighborhoods into vibrant, safe and thriving places to live. Flint's population is about forty five percent smaller than it was in 1960. Thirty two percent of residential properties are abandoned. With a surplus of abandoned properties, sale values continue to decline. This year, the average sale value of a single family home in Flint is \$16,400. Given these and many other challenges, we need new strategies to strengthen neighborhoods and make better use of abandoned land with limited resources.



Former Civic Park Bar West Dayton & Dupont



During these forums, we have asked local leaders to share their ideas about how to manage the many challenges associated with population decline while also laying the foundation for a brighter future for Flint and Beecher. The panelists will talk about their ideas on how to increase care and re-use of abandoned land and improve and preserve neighborhoods. Immediately following the panel discussion, residents will be invited to share their ideas and questions about strengthening our community in the face of population decline. Elected officials will then lay out their plans for moving forward from here.

During the two meetings to be hosted in the City of Flint, Mayor Dayne Walling will present his plans to host neighborhood action planning meetings all across the city to ask residents to identify and prioritize action items and redevelopment opportunities for the areas in which they live. This information will help the city direct services and resources in a way that is responsive to residents needs.

At the Beecher forum, Larry Green, Mt. Morris Township Supervisor, and other local elected officials representing Beecher residents will share their plans to use federal resources to revitalize properties and encourage redevelopment.

- by Christina Kelly

Flint Sessions:

October 8th
6:00-8:00 pm
 Antioch Missionary Baptist Church
 1083 E. Stewart Ave.
 Flint, MI 48505

November 5th
6:00-8:00 pm
 Sarvis Conference Center
 1231 E. Kearsley
 Flint, MI 48503

Beecher Session:

October 27th
6:00-8:00 pm
 Our Lady Of Guadalupe Church
 2316 W. Coldwater Rd.
 Flint, MI 48505

DEVELOPMENTS IN CARRIAGETOWN

The Berridge Place Fully Leased!

The Berridge Place is fully leased! Many said it couldn't happen, but it has. The Berridge Place, a historic renovated 24,000 square foot building, has leased all 17 residential units, as well as, the two small commercial spaces. The Berridge Hotel had been a source of blight and nuisance to the surrounding neighborhood, now it houses units with high-end cabinets, fixtures, appliances, laundry, and security systems. The project also included converting the current historic Tinlinn Building, a 4,800 square foot, four-unit rental, into a 4-unit residential project. The Tinlinn Building, located directly next to the Berridge Hotel, still has a couple of units available. For rental information contact Linda at 810-813-0771.

The Durant Hotel to Open in Spring

Just a block down Second Avenue from the Berridge is the Durant Hotel project. The Durant is an eight story mid-rise building containing approximately 150,000 square feet of interior space. The project includes an extensive historic rehabilitation resulting in 93 residential units and approximately 20,000 commercial square feet. Two of the public rooms of the

Hotel, the dining room and the lobby, will be restored much to their original state. The roughly \$25 million project is scheduled to be completed in the spring of 2010.

Witherbee's Market Coming Soon

Witherbee's Market is coming soon, courtesy of Flint NIPP! This neighborhood-based grocery store will carry traditional grocery items, housewares, plants, pet supplies, green produce, dairy, meat, seafood, bakery and a deli. Services will be provided on a smaller scale than traditional large grocery stores; however, all necessities will be stocked for those who require the convenience of the downtown location, as well as those who do not have access to transportation. Witherbee's Market will coordinate with the Flint Farmer's Market and their vendors to support local and organic farmers. Additionally, a family-owned, Michigan-based (Alpena) grocery wholesale distributor has been selected to support this enterprise. It is Flint NIPP's intent to provide healthy alternatives seven days a week to community residents in a central city location. This enterprise, to be located at 601 Martin Luther King Avenue, is intended to open in February of 2010.

- by Amy Hovey

CLEAN & GREEN PROGRAM EXPANDS

As one of the Land Bank's most popular programs, Clean & Green allows community-based groups the opportunity to maintain Land Bank owned property in their neighborhoods with the incentive of being reimbursed for their efforts. Over the past several years, hundreds of Land Bank properties have been mowed, gardens have been planted, and youth have been involved in a positive summer activity as part of the program. The 2009 program was no exception. In

"We were able to take care of more properties this year because we had youth working for us on a regular basis, it was great," Skip Sieradzki, Freedom Center North

fact, twenty-nine community-based groups (a record number) participated in the program in 2009! Furthermore, federal economic stimulus dollars supplemented the program this year by allowing many of the Clean & Green groups to hire 14-24 year olds to work full time as part of the program. In total, 86 young adults were provided with full time summer jobs through this year's Clean & Green program.

"We were able to take care of more properties this year because we had youth working for us on a regular basis, it was great," stated Skip Sieradzki, who heads up the Freedom Center North



Holy Ghost Ministries Clean & Green Program

Clean & Green program. This is the second year that Freedom Center North has maintained Land Bank properties in the neighborhood near Saginaw and Hamilton as part of the Clean and Green program.

With the 2009 program winding down, over 600 Land Bank properties have been maintained several times this summer and at least twenty vegetable and/or flower gardens have been planted in total by the Clean & Green groups.

- by Jeff Burdick

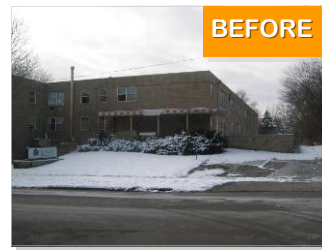
FROM EYESORE TO GREEN SPACE More Demolition Coming Soon

The Genesee County Land Bank Demolition program coordinates the process of demolishing dilapidated structures on Land Bank properties. The demolition strategy developed by the Land Bank is to identify and demolish structures that create an immediate danger to neighbors and the community at large; that are dilapidated and/or obsolete and located within strategic development areas of the Land Bank and its partners; and that will help to stabilize neighborhoods.

Since the Land Bank was created, we have partnered with the city to demolish over 1,000 structures. As more and more properties are foreclosed each year, the number of houses in the Land Bank inventory that need to be demol-

ished increases. After years of searching for more funding, the Land Bank and the City of Flint will receive \$1.2 million each from the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) for demolition. This will fund 250—300 demolitions in the City of Flint.

The former Heartland Manor nursing home demolition is a success story of the Land Bank's Demolition Program. The building was been vacant since 2002 and was a blighted structure along the University Avenue corridor. The property was deeded to the Land Bank in 2006 as part of a land banking agreement between the Land Bank and Hurley Medical Center. The Land



Heartland Manor site

Bank partnered with Hurley Medical Center, the City of Flint and Kettering University to demolish Heartland Manor and return the property to green space. The City of Flint was able to secure funding from MSHDA (Michigan State Housing Development Authority) to support the project. This site will remain in the Land Bank under the land banking agreement until there are plans for redevelopment.

- by Lucille James

STIMULUS WORKERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

When residents see several trucks driving into their neighborhood pulling lawn mowers and wood chippers and carrying a couple dozen workers the next thing they see is a flurry of activity as high weeds and debris are cleared from abandoned properties.



In May, the Michigan Department of Labor, Energy & Economic Growth (DLEEG); Career Alliance; and Mott Community College teamed up with the Land Bank to put 60 unemployed men and women to work cleaning up abandoned properties in Flint and other communities with Land Bank properties.

Thousands of debris strewn and overgrown properties have been cleared courtesy of funds that were made available through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act – otherwise known as stimulus funds. Workers hired through the Recovery Act have boarded and secured properties, worked with community activists to prepare urban gardens, and have

cut high grass and weeds around thousands of properties – not just Land Bank owned properties, but any property in need of the attention.



The result has been noticeable and appreciated by residents. And what about the workers? They have not only been making a difference but they feel good about doing work that is making a difference for everyone.

- by Doug Weiland

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PUTS EX-OFFENDERS TO WORK

The Land Bank received a grant from the Community Foundation of Greater Flint to provide training for ex-offenders who are part of the Michigan Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative (MPRI). The grant provides funds for training in urban agriculture and gardening to workers who have returned to the community after serving time in one of Michigan's correctional facilities. The program not only provides useful training while performing a valuable public

service, but it also is allowing these individuals a second chance to succeed in life. Thus far they have been working on clearing an area in Mt. Morris Township that had been an overgrown dump site to make way for an orchard being developed by the Harvesting Earth Educational Farm on property owned by the Land Bank. The work has involved cutting and pruning trees and clearing a large area where

they will next use farm implements to plow, till and plant a cover crop on the cleared land. The next step will involve planting various fruit trees to complete the orchard. Other projects being developed include clearing large blocks of vacant lots owned by the Land Bank where wild flowers and decorative plantings can improve the appearance of the area while having the added advantage of being easy to maintain.

- by Doug Weiland

STAFF NOTES

The Land Bank is pleased to acknowledge the contribution to our work that is being done by several new people on our staff.

Roxanne Adair began work in May as our urban gardening coordinator. She is working with various community groups to support their efforts in creating urban gardens throughout the area. Currently there are some 75 gardens on Land Bank owned properties in the Flint area. **Jamel Jones** has been working in the Land Bank's sales office assisting in preparing properties for sale or rental. **Jennifer Riggs** also began work in May as our receptionist. She is the person at our front desk who welcomes visitors to the office, takes most incoming phone calls and assists in maintaining our property inventory data base. Roxanne, Jamel and Jennifer are at the Land Bank courtesy of Recovery Act funds.

Another new staff member is **Mr. James Jones** who came on board this spring as our property maintenance technician. Mr. Jones has a background in building and construction, having owned his own company for a number of years. His work includes maintaining the Land Bank's various rental properties and directing the activities of our Recovery Act work crews on a daily basis. Mr. Jones replaced another Land Bank employee who left in February. Also new to our staff is **Renee Auten**. She is taking the position as transaction specialist replacing Debbie Starkey who is retiring from the Land Bank. Renee most recently worked in the County Treasurer's office. We welcome them all to the Land Bank.



James Jones, Property Maintenance Technician



(From Left)
Roxanne, Jamel, Renee & Jennifer

1st ANNUAL EDIBLE FLINT FOOD GARDEN TOUR



Over 180 people came out to show their support for the "edible flint food garden tour". Four buses took participants on a guided tour of 6 gardens located throughout Genesee County where they enjoyed a meal catered by *Steady Eddy's Café*, listened to the Mott Community College steel drum band, learned about new vacant land reuse strategies, gardening tips and tricks, and how they can be involved in the urban gardening movement that is sweeping across the country.



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