

Genesee County Land Bank Authority
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Spring 2006

BIG PLANS FOR BIG SPACE



Great Lakes Technology Center

On March 15, 2006 at about 2:00 P.M. Genesee County Land Bank Authority President Dan Kildee handed a check for \$10 to Tom Vigliotti of GLTC LLC and the Land Bank became the owner of the Great Lakes Technology Center (Buildings F & G).

This concluded about a year and a half of negotiations that finally brought 500,000 sq. ft. of Class "A" office, light industrial, and Research and

Development space into the Land Bank Inventory.

The south portion of the 1.2 million sq. ft. complex has been 90% empty for several years and was slated for demolition before Genesee County and Land Bank officials began negotiations. With the encouragement of County Board Chair Richard E. Hammel and assistance from Ed Donovan of the Genesee Regional Chamber of

Commerce, the 465,000 sq. ft. of space is now ready for lease.

"There is no space like the GLTC in all of Genesee County", states Ed Donovan. "Its unique size and versatility present a tremendous opportunity for job creation and economic expansion in the region." The Chamber will be working closely with the Land Bank staff and the County to provide business incubator space, as well as office and research and development space within the complex.

Dan Kildee, President of the Land Bank Association Board and Genesee County Treasurer stated, "Because of the Land Bank's ability to hold property and provide certain financial tools, it made sense for the Land Bank to be involved", he states further that "We certainly cannot take on something of this magnitude alone, therefore the assistance provided by the County and the Genesee Regional Chamber is invaluable".

Those interested in inquiring about space at the Tech Center should contact Nell Taylor at 810-238-8318.

**Art Potter
 Executive Director
 Genesee County Land Bank**

PARTNERSHIP YIELDS GOOD THINGS FOR LAND BANK

Having a partner with financial resources is always a good thing. The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) has been a great partner to the Genesee County Land Bank. LISC recently underwrote a \$750,000 revolving line of credit for the Genesee County Land Bank for the purposes of acquisition, pre-development and construction for future projects involving Land Bank properties.

Pre-development will include feasibility analysis, architectural, environmental assessment, and other costs required to move projects to construction. In 2005, LISC made over \$1 million dollars in grants and loans for real estate investments in Flint, which will eventually lead to \$35 million of

residential and commercial activities – and that is a good thing. Since the inception of the Genesee



County Land Bank, LISC has been a partner in the development of vacant and foreclosed property in Flint and Genesee County. LISC is a national nonprofit that brings technical assistance and development resources to community development efforts

across the nation. LISC maintains a local presence in their downtown Flint office, where program staff works with the Genesee County Land Bank, local community development corporations, and other development entities to support comprehensive community revitalization strategies.

Chuck Vlieg, Program Vice President with LISC, said:

"LISC believes the Land Banking tool is a critical element for future community development and hopes the model can be replicated in other communities."

by Michael Freeman
 Program Officer of LISC

LAND BANK STAFF COMES TO A COMMUNITY NEAR YOU

Every year, the staff of the Land Bank hears from citizens by setting up public forums. Land Bank staff just completed the 2006 tour of community centers, churches and schools in each of Flint's nine wards as well as three Genesee County townships. At these meetings, the public is educated, updated and engaged. Staff offers detailed explanations of Land Bank programs, in addition to the County Treasurer's Foreclosure Prevention Program. They also provide updates on the results of these programs, especially pertaining to the particular ward or township in which the meeting takes place. And, of course, at the end of each presentation, ample time is provided for

folks to ask questions, relay comments, and offer feedback to staff regarding the Land Bank's performance.

Over 400 citizens attended this year's nine meetings, along with the appropriate Flint City Council members, county commissioners, and township supervisors. "I noticed at this year's meetings that the audience seems younger than usual," stated the Land Bank's Executive Director, Art Potter, who helped facilitate the meetings. "This is a good sign in that younger folks are starting to take an interest in what is going on in their community." The ward meetings are a unique and beneficial way to keep in touch with who is represented and what they are interested in when it comes to the future of Flint.

by Jeff Burdick
 Neighborhood Planner for the GCLB

BROWNFIELD PLAN CHANGING TO ACCOMMODATE MORE PROPERTIES

By Lucille James, Brownfield & Demolition Program Coordinator and Christina Kelly, Lead Planner

The Genesee County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (GCBRA) developed a Brownfield Plan that included approximately 1900 Land Bank owned properties. The GCBRA recently amended the plan to include approximately 900 additional properties. By including these additional properties in the Brownfield Plan the GCBRA and the Land Bank Authority can work together with local units of government to return these properties to productive use and place them back on the tax rolls.

Communities benefit from the elimination of blight, property improvements, and increased property values. Research from other cities indicates that using the Brownfield Plan to demolish abandoned and blighted structures, clear debris from vacant lots, and renovate homes helps to increase the value of surrounding properties.

The following local units of government passed resolutions in support of the Brownfield Plan amendment: the City of Flint, Flint Township, Mt. Morris Township, City of Mt. Morris, Fenton Township, Genesee Township, Grand Blanc Township, City of Grand Blanc, Davison Township, Flushing Township, City of Swartz Creek, Forest Township and Thetford Township.

In February, the Genesee County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution approving the Brownfield Plan. The final step for the amendment is approval from the State of Michigan.

Under this Plan, the Land Bank has achieved significant results. The amendment will enable the Land Bank to continue to aggressively eliminate blight and contribute to neighborhood revitalization. The Land Bank results during 2005 are detailed to the right.

LAND BANK RESULTS As of December 2005

DEMOLITION

- Demolished 524 blighted structures, 290 in 2005 under the Brownfield Plan.

MAINTENANCE

- Mowed 2219 lots and removed 380 tons of debris in 2004
- Mowed 4082 lots and removed 270 tons of debris in 2005 under the Brownfield Plan.
- 464 properties maintained through our "Clean and Green" program, where we pay a neighborhood block club or similar organization to maintain Land Bank properties.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

- Completed an inventory of approximately 1800 tax foreclosed properties
- Completed 13 Phase I Environmental Site Assessments and 5 Phase II ESAs and Baseline Environmental Assessments

TITLE CLEARANCE

- Cleared titles on 47 properties, including 23 under the Brownfield Plan.

DEVELOPMENT/SALES

- Sold 260 "side-lots" to next-door neighbors of Land Bank properties for \$1.
- Partnered with non-profits by supplying land for development along with other support. 147 units are planned, completed, or underway.
- Completed 17 single-family rehabs (15 in 2005).
- Entered into development agreements with private for-profit developers, which are enforced by a land-contract sale. Currently 50 such rehabs have been initiated with 14 completed in 2005. Invested \$3.8 million in mixed-use redevelopment of a 4-story 30,000 square foot downtown building foreclosed in 2003. It now houses the Land Bank, with commercial space on the first floor and loft apartments on the 3rd and 4th floors.

LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

Mamadu Camaru left his parents and the warmth of his native land in search of opportunity. In



November of 1993, he boarded a plane leaving the Ivory Coast of West Africa and headed

to New York City. He remembers arriving at the New York Airport without a jacket and asking people why it was so cold. Winter was quite a shock as he had never before seen snow or experienced freezing temperatures. Mamadu found it difficult to get ahead and fulfill his dreams in New York City due to the

high cost of living. "Everything there was very expensive," he said. After five years in New York, he traveled to Flint, Michigan to visit his cousin and his life began to change.

Mamadu met and married his wife in Flint. He settled in, and tried to pay his bills, though it was difficult keeping up with his debt and the dream of owning his own home seemed very far away. One day while watching television, Mamadu spotted a commercial for Mission of Peace, a non-profit organization offering credit counseling. He made inquiries about their programs and began working with one of their credit counselors. He persisted, and for two-and-a-half years attended their home ownership classes while working to clean up his credit.

Finally Mamadu was ready. With the assistance of Mission of Peace

in partnership with the Genesee County Land Bank, he was able to secure a home on land provided by the Land Bank. "I love it," said Mamadu when speaking of his new home. He especially likes the extra space it provides. "I can sit and do my homework while my son plays in another room."

Mamadu acknowledges that without the support and assistance of the Genesee County Land Bank and the Mission of Peace, his dream of home ownership would have been much more difficult to fulfill. "They led me through the process step by step. They were always friendly and quickly answered all of my questions," he said, "I appreciate everything they have done and I hope they are around for a long time because there are a lot of people like me who need help."

NEIGHBORHOOD BY NEIGHBORHOOD

By Amy Hovey
President, Protogenia Group

The Carriage Town Neighborhood that includes Stone Street is the site of one of the next neighborhood redevelopment projects utilizing property acquired through the Land Bank.

The Genesee County Land Bank has strategically acquired several parcels throughout Flint's Carriage Town Neighborhood to support comprehensive neighborhood redevelopment efforts in highly visible areas. In keeping with the historic elements of the neighborhood, all designs will be approved by the Historic District Commission. The project will include nine new and six rehabilitated homes, with new sidewalks, streetlights and trees. These homes will be sold to prospective homeowners with sales prices ranging from \$130,000 - \$150,000.



The proposed redevelopment will provide high quality housing currently not available in many of Flint's neighborhoods. Presently, Flint has a significant amount of vacant land and abandoned structures due to a history of disinvestment. Redeveloping these properties will not only help to improve the appearance of the Carriage Town Neighborhood, but also stem the cycle of decline. This approach, concentrating the development in a tightly defined area, guarantees a better return on investment and encourages neighborhood stabilization.

The project is still in the predevelopment phase.

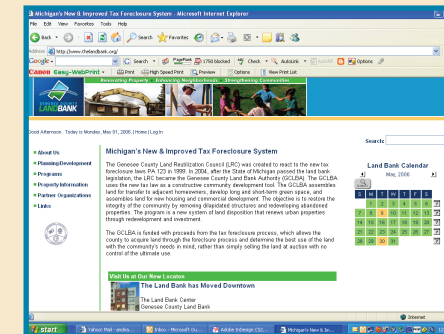
Funding is currently being secured, yet still needs firm commitment from investors. Staying on target, the Genesee County Land Bank Authority plans to begin the construction phase of the project this summer.

NEW UPDATED WEBSITES GIVE EASE AND FREEDOM

Some significant upgrades have recently been made to three websites that give access to important information on properties and programs. Finding out who owns vacant property and the specifics about each property is now easier. Perhaps the most exciting new component on line is the new search engine. These upgrades give options to search for property by township, city, or zip code. It's a great

tool. Also recently available is a listing of all 2005 foreclosures. And, starting this month, those 2005 foreclosures will be available for sale. People can now get information without having to call or visit. There are three important websites for accessing information about property.

The first is the Land Bank's website which can be found at www.thelandbank.org. Once there, click on *Property Information* and then on *Find Property*. This will bring up a search engine which allows you to search by parcel number, street name, township/city, zip code, property class and market value. If you are looking for a home, select *Res Imp* (residential improved) from the *Property Class* drop down menu. Once *Search* is clicked, a list will appear. To see more information about a property, click on the parcel number. If a property was not listed on the Land Bank website, then you may want to search another website.



www.thelandbank.org

The City of Flint's website is very informative regarding properties is located in Flint. To access this website go to <http://taxes.cityofflint.com>. You can search by address, street, parcel number or owner name. When you find a property you want to see more information about, click on the parcel number. A page will be displayed that provides the owner's name and his/her mailing address as well as a physical description of any structure on the property.

If you want to know when the property was purchased, you may search the Register of Deeds website at www.co.genesee.mi.us/registerofdeeds. Select *Instrument Search* then *Advanced Search*. The search engine allows you to search using up to 17 variables. The search results will allow you to view the ownership history of a property, including name and addresses of individuals having any type of interest in the given property.

The Land Bank, City of Flint and Register of Deeds websites provide information about property and its owners, making it very convenient to search for this information via the internet from home. If you don't have access to the internet, your local library provides free internet access. Of course, if you should have any questions during your search, the Land Bank staff is available for assistance. Happy searching!