

Volunteers Work Alongside Land Bank Crews To Stop Illegal Dumping

More than 80% of groups participating in the Land Bank's Clean & Green program regularly remove illegal dumping from the vacant lots they volunteer to maintain. Used tires, construction debris, furniture and other household belongings are often dumped on lots.

To help support efforts to clean up neighborhoods and prevent new cases of illegal dumping, the Land Bank partnered with the University of Michigan, Youth Violence Prevention Center to design and research illegal dumping interventions in Flint neighborhoods. Multiple groups were selected to participate through a competitive application process to be part of the pilot program. With help from the City of Flint Blight office in securing dumpsters for the project, GCLBA crews worked alongside Clean & Green groups to clear areas that are known hot spots for illegal dumping. Groups had the option to select one or multiple interventions that they believe will be the most effective in preventing illegal dumping within their areas, including solar lighting, trail cameras, barriers and native planting garden edges. GCLBA crews worked with Clean & Green groups to install the interventions selected for each site following the clean ups.

So far we have noticed that the rock barriers work best to prevent dumping. We have also used the cameras to identify dumpers and put pressure on illegal dumpers to stop dumping- and in one case, return to the site to clean the mess they left behind.

Researchers from University of Michigan will be evaluating the effectiveness of the interventions and the general patterns of illegal dumping across the city. We also hope to create a model for effective illegal dumping prevention that can be used in other areas.

Tire shops, contractors and others doing cleanout and improvement projects should take waste to a landfill and stop illegally dumping in neighborhoods. Report illegal dumping to Crime Stoppers at 1-800-422-Jail (5245) so those committing these crimes can be prosecuted.
- By Melissa Hertlein



Bennet St. cleanup. Photos by Renee Harvey

Message from our Executive Director, Michael Freeman, and Board Chair, Deborah Cherry



Deborah Cherry

Greetings from the GCLBA!

This Summer has been a serious challenge for our community. We have seen significant increases in illegal dumping, arson and violent crime. Many residents are frustrated, exhausted and fearful of the future

of our neighborhoods. We at the Land Bank understand this without a doubt and we share these pains. In response, we are working with the City of Flint to come up with new blight mitigation strategies; as well as developing new partnerships in the community to take back our streets and create cleaner and safer conditions for everyone. We will continue to seek funding, programs and grant support that will deal with the blighted and burned-out structures, advocate for more community cleaning and greening initiatives, deal with environmental contamination and support neighborhood redevelopment and revitalization. We will continue to work with the community and will identify new ways that the Land Bank can serve Flint and Genesee County.



Michael Freeman

While there is always more that we need and want to do, we cannot thank our community partners, volunteers, and neighbors enough for their assistance and support. You have reported blight and been the eyes and ears we need to address blight and illegal dumping. You have shown up for neighborhood and lot clean ups, helping us fill countless dumpsters. Many of you have taken on the responsibility of dealing with overgrown lots, keeping them attractive and manicured. We want to thank our community residents that understand we are all dealing with the impacts of blight, foreclosure and abandonment. You are helping to make Flint a better place to live, one property at a time, and we could not do this without you.

Working Together to Better Fight Blight

The Genesee County Land Bank, The City of Flint, and the Flint Police Foundation are partnering to be more strategic about fighting blight. Our goals are to foster and inform strategic thinking around blight elimination; increase coordination of new and existing efforts; and increase funding and resources for blight elimination work. We also hope to build a shared understanding amongst all partners, including governmental agencies, community development organizations, funders, developers, community groups, and residents, of blight elimination plans, accomplishments, and challenges. To this end, we are gathering input on resident priorities, conducting data analysis on existing conditions and blight elimination activities, and identifying immediate action items for improving the efficiency and effectiveness. We have received over 650 responses so far and we hope to receive more. Go to our website at www.thelandbank.org

to find the survey link or click on the link here to fill out a survey today! <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScOdJu3QBEw9QzNYJ4D5bHAVZXwCJ46FR5Cx8PkhDBtUXtV-Q/viewform>

Are vacant and blighted properties a problem in Flint today?

What needs to happen?

FLINT BLIGHT PRIORITIES SURVEY

SUMMER 2021



Thank you to Land Bank Crews!

Thank you to the 26 Land Bank crew members who are working hard to clear Flint and surrounding communities of blight. They are making their way through neighborhoods mowing ALL (not just Land Bank owned) unmaintained vacant properties in the City of Flint that they encounter. Although they are short staffed with less than half as many team members as we have had in past years, they have kept up with the challenge by working extra hard and often working overtime on the weekends. We appreciate their hard work and dedication to cleaning, clearing and mowing vacant properties in Flint and Genesee County. - Christina Kelly



2021 Genesee County Land Bank Authority

Property Maintenance

Weed & Trash Abatement Crew

Digging Chevy Out of the Hole



The history of the 67-acre site, in the heart of the City of Flint, cradling the banks of the river, is both infamous and celebrated. “Sit-down Strike,” “Billy Durant,” and “General Motors” are synonymous with the site. In 2004, well after the last car was built there, General Motors demolished the last standing structures, leaving behind a contaminated, concrete-clad, multi-acre brownfield. Since then, an ever-expanding coalition of dedicated people and organizations has worked to dig the site out of the “Hole” and bring it into the light with fields of native plants, shrubs, and trees and plenty of opportunities for community recreation. Back in 2007, the first concept plan, “Reimagining Chevy in the Hole,” developed in partnership with students at University of Michigan with funding from the Genesee County Land Bank’s US EPA Site Assessment Grant, outlined two possible alternatives for the site, one which imagined the site becoming a State Park in two phases, completing the transition by 2040.

At the onset of the effort, there were multiple roadblocks to overcome. Genesee County Land Bank secured the funding from the US EPA, and the City of Flint secured site ownership and an agreement with EPA that governed the uses, liability, and care of the site. In 2014, a community informed design plan was created, dividing the work into phases as available funding was limited and future funding was uncertain. Construction began east of Chevrolet Ave on just 16 acres in April of 2015. Surprisingly, funding was secured and work was completed on subsequent phases covering 60 acres in quick succession over the next 6 years. The transformation of the blighted concrete pad into community greenspace laid the groundwork for the July 2021 announcement that Chevy Commons would be a part of Genesee County’s first State Park.

Since 2004, when Congressman Dan Kildee, then Genesee County Treasurer and Genesee County Land Bank Board Chair, decided to champion this project with his vision of transforming Chevy in the Hole into a park, the project has had many champions. Without whom, this site would not be the success it is today: Genesee County Treasurer; City of Flint; US Environmental Protection Agency; Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy; Michigan Land Bank Authority; United States Forest Service; Genesee County Parks; C.S. Mott Foundation; Kettering University; Flint River Watershed Coalition (and Corridor Alliance), AKT Peerless; Wade Trim; LA Construction, and many others.

Of the ever-changing cast of supporters, Matt Didier from EPA Region 5 and Christina Kelly from the Genesee County Land Bank have remained committed since the beginning— seeing the project through some significant hurdles and maintaining project momentum since 2004. Without their dedication and hard work, Chevy Commons may very well still be “Chevy in the Hole” and would not be on the track to become part of a State Park today. While the names of these individual and organizational champions may never be top-of-mind in a free association exercise, their impacts on the future of the site are as significant as General Motor’s role in the site’s history. On behalf of everyone that has, and anyone that will, find themselves enjoying the sun, trails, and nature that the former Chevy in the Hole now has to offer: Thank you, Matt, Christina and all of the project supporters.

- Faith Finholm

The Flint Public Art Project

The Flint Public Art Project (FPAP) is a dynamic organizational partner for the GCLBA, and more broadly, the city of Flint. FPAP's mission is "to organize public events, workshops, permanent and temporary installations to inspire residents to reimagine the city, reclaim vacant and underutilized buildings and lots, and use innovative tools to steer Flint's long-range planning." They support collaborations among residents and organizations with leading artists, architects, urban planners and community organizers from around the world. Their efforts in public art have connected the city of Flint to regional, national, and global movements which revitalized neighborhoods and cities through art and urban design. Since 2018 alone, FPAP has ambitiously installed nearly 200 murals in the city of Flint through the financial support of fundraisers, local and national grants, and commissioned work.

The GCLBA is proud to have partnered with FPAP on 16 murals throughout the city of Flint, which 9 murals have been directly curated on GCLBA-owned properties. These murals activate observers' imaginations, beautify urban spaces, commemorate the service of public servants, and create a sense of place in our communities. We commend the efforts of FPAP in envisioning vacant spaces into vibrant places that further instills the community pride in Flint.

- By Moses Timlin



GCLBA Spotlight: Raynetta Speed, Community Relations Manager

GCLBA Spotlight series features Land Bank staff and community members. The series is intended to highlight the important work our staff and community members do to keep the Land Bank running smoothly and to support our mission of restoring value to the community through responsible land ownership.



Today, we're interviewing Raynetta Speed, the Community Relations Manager at the Genesee County Land Bank. Raynetta plays a central role in building relationships and improving communication between the Land Bank, residents and community partners. She brings years of knowledge, skills and experience to her work and she is passionate about improving Flint neighborhoods.

What did you do before you worked here and what made you want to work here?

Before I became a member of the Land Bank team, I worked for GM for 30 years. During those 30 years I was also fortunate to hold the title as a Genesee County Commissioner for the 1st County District. I served in that capacity for 12 years. After retiring from GM and serving as a county commissioner, there was a job opening at the Land Bank. I applied and was offered the job as the Community Outreach Coordinator in 2009 and most recently became the Community Relations Manager. I have always felt in my heart that the Genesee County Land Bank had the potential to be a change agent for the greater Flint community and I wanted to be a part of making that a reality.

How do you manage to bring so much passion to your work every day?

My passion evolves from my life as a child growing up in the city of Flint. Our neighborhoods were safe, clean, beautiful and one big family. We cared and looked out for each other. Small businesses were plentiful and thrived throughout our neighborhoods. Flint Community schools were a model for the entire country. I cherished those days and I want to help bring that back for our future generations.

Cleared and Ready for Reuse!

This summer, the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA) completed the cleanup of two former multi-family apartment complexes that have stood abandoned and blighted for years. Physical work began on both the former Greenview Manor Apartments, located at 817 N Stevenson St., and the former Arena East Apartments, located at 3332 and 3362 Lapeer Rd., in 2019 with investigative reports on site conditions funded by an US EPA Site Assessment Grant. GCLBA successfully used these reports to pursue additional grants for the cleanup of both sites.

Abatement, demolition, and site restoration at 817 N. Stevenson, funded through US EPA Multipurpose Grant, City of Flint Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and a grant from the C.S. Mott Foundation were completed in April 2021. The former eyesore has been transformed into rolling hills of low-growing, pollinator friendly clover! Abatement, demolition, and site restoration on the former Arena East Apartments were completed in July with funding from the City of Flint CDBG in support of the South Flint Community Plan.

Both sites have transformed the look and feel of the neighborhoods around them, and they are ready for re-use! We look forward to sharing success stories about these sites with you into the future.

-Faith Finholm



817 N Stevenson —Before



817 N Stevenson —After



3332 and 3362 Lapeer Rd —Before



3332 and 3362 Lapeer Rd—After

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5- Vacant Positions

Michael Freeman, *Executive Director*

Upcoming Featured Home: 6910 Clio Rd, Flint



Open House Dates:

This property is scheduled to be shown in early
September 2021.

Please check our website for the Open House schedule
for this house and others in our Featured Homes Pro-
gram. [http://www.thelandbank.org/
featured_homes.asp](http://www.thelandbank.org/featured_homes.asp)



Featured Homes Program

To find out which properties are available for sale, check out the Featured Homes section on our website, follow us on Facebook, submit your e-mail address on the Featured Home page of the Land Bank website to receive a weekly e-mail with that week's open houses— http://www.thelandbank.org/featured_homes.asp.

OPEN HOUSES

#SafetyFirst PROCESS

To be allowed entrance, you must:

 **Wear a Mask**

 **Bring Photo ID**

 **Complete a COVID-19
self assessment**



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www.thelandbank.org