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Press Release

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\$2.6 million in Hardest Hit Funds awarded for demolition in Civic Park

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) awarded an additional \$2.6 million to the Genesee County Land Bank (GCLB) to carry out blight elimination activities on 225 blighted and publicly owned properties in the Civic Park Neighborhood.

"I am pleased to see the level of engagement from public and private partners in Flint to preserve this historic neighborhood," said MSHDA Acting-Executive Director Wayne Workman. "These new funds will allow strategic demolitions in Civic Park that will aid in the preservation of the entire neighborhood for generations to come."

In October 2013, MSHDA awarded the GCLB \$20.1 million in Hardest Hit funds to demolish, green, and maintain 1,604 vacant and blighted properties in public ownership. The Land Bank is on target to meet funding award goals with more than 560 blighted properties improved, an additional 343 are in process, and 701 are being prepared for demolition and greening. The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Hardest Hit Fund, part of the federal Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), is designed to help homeowners in states hit hardest by the housing crisis. Last year, Michigan designated \$100 million of its Hardest Hit Fund allocation for blight elimination activities in an effort to further prevent foreclosures and stabilize neighborhoods.

"The Hardest Hit Fund has enabled the Land Bank to make the single largest investment in blight elimination that this community has seen yet," said Deborah Cherry, Genesee County Treasurer and Chairperson of the Genesee County Land Bank. "Neighborhoods throughout the Flint area are now experiencing the many benefits of blight removal. We are excited that these benefits will be extended to the Historic Civic Park neighborhood to support the ongoing blight elimination work of residents and partners."

Nearly half of all properties in the Historic District of Civic Park are currently Land Bank owned (397 properties) or 2014 tax foreclosures owned by the Genesee County Treasurer (71 properties). Nearly all are in need of demolition and greening because of deterioration and scrapping.

Despite its status as one of the areas most devastated by disinvestment and foreclosure in the City of Flint, the Civic Park Neighborhood is experiencing the beginnings of neighborhood revitalization fueled by the vision set forth in the City of Flint Master Plan combined with investments by neighborhood residents and Flint-based organizations. City of Flint Mayor Dayne Walling sees this as a crucial step to build upon the momentum created by ongoing work to revitalize the neighborhood.

“Residents and community partners have been working for years to improve the neighborhood. Removing blighted houses in Civic Park will support these investments and create new opportunities for re-development.”

Community Partners, including the City of Flint, St. Luke N.E.W Life Center, and Joy Tabernacle Church have already invested over \$1.9 million in the Civic Park Neighborhood in recent years. Once blight is removed, these and additional partners, including Habitat for Humanity, estimate that an additional \$5.1 million will be invested in improvements within the next few years.

Rev. McCathern, Pastor of Joy Tabernacle Church, shared that he “is pleased that the hard work the community has done has not been in vain.” He considers Civic Park to be “the ‘Comeback Kid’ Neighborhood.”

Maurice Davis, President of the CPNA and a member of the City of Flint Historic District Commission is excited about blight elimination activity in Civic Park, “We are glad the residents have come together to clean-up the neighborhood and that the City of Flint Historic District Commission supported demolition in our neighborhood. Things are really coming together to improve Civic Park.”

The successful application for Civic Park HHF demolitions was developed in collaboration with community partners including the City of Flint, Genesee County Habitat for Humanity, St. Luke N.E.W Life Center, Diplomat Pharmacy, Joy Tabernacle Church, the Civic Park Neighborhood Association, Flint Area Reinvestment Office, Haskell Community Center and the Flint Police Activity League (PAL).

More information about the Land Bank’s Hardest Hit program can be found here <http://www.thelandbank.org/blightfree.asp> and more information about the Civic Park Historic District and Neighborhood Association can be found here <http://www.thelandbank.org/civicpark.asp> .