

Spring 2016



Land Bank Executive Director Doug Weiland Announces His Retirement!



Deborah Cherry

From The Board Chair, Deborah Cherry - Doug Weiland has announced his retirement from the Land Bank as of June 3, 2016. Having served as the Executive Director since October, 2008, he has been the longest serving Director since the establishment of the Land Bank in 2004. Much has changed at the Land Bank since that time. The number of foreclosures has grown and the community went through the housing crisis that began in 2008 with its effects continuing even now. "I'm proud of the fine staff we have assembled at the Land Bank," Doug said. "We have a group of very talented, devoted and community-minded individuals who work hard every day for the citizens of Genesee County. They are the people who do the real work of the Land Bank and have made my job so much easier. While this work is not glamorous in any way, it is very rewarding in that we have a real effect on improving the quality of people's lives."

One area where the Land bank has improved people's lives involves home ownership. When Doug first arrived, the Land Bank held about 230 land contracts. The Land Bank now holds over 1,600 land contracts – each one representing a family who now owns their own home. Many of these are first time homeowners who could not otherwise qualify for tradition financing.

Another change since Doug came to the Land Bank was an increased emphasis on community engagement. One of his first moves was to create the position of Community Outreach Coordinator at the Land Bank with the mission to engage the public at every level in the community. "Having a respected member of the community engaging people at every level has improved our standing in the community and made a real difference," said Doug.

The Land Bank has also seen a huge investment in federal dollars, now at about \$49 million in Hardest Hit Fund grants for residential demolition. Those dollars represent a total of over 3,700 blighted properties that will have been demolished by the time this funding is spent down, and there will be more that comes later. From removing thousands of tons of trash and debris from the community and cutting weeds and high grass on tens of thousands of abandoned properties the Land Bank has done as much as possible to attack blight and improve the community under Doug's leadership. "I will certainly miss our staff and the various officials we work with routinely. I will especially miss working with my Board and my Board Chair, Deb Cherry," Doug said.

On a personal note, Doug is looking forward to spending more time with his wife Sherry and doing some traveling to see family. Doug's son and his family live in Raleigh, NC and his daughter and her family live in Dallas, TX. His elderly mother lives in Milwaukee, WI and his brother and his family live in Orange, CA.

- Deborah Cherry, Genesee County Treasurer and Genesee County Land Bank Authority, Chair



Douglas Weiland

\$13.9 Million for Demolition in the Flint Area



The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSDHA) awarded the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA) an additional \$13.9 million in Hardest Hit Fund (HHF) dollars for demolition. The GCLBA will use the funds to demolish an estimated 1,030 blighted and tax-foreclosed houses in previously approved HHF areas within and just outside of the City of Flint. This new award will bring the GCLBA's HHF award up to nearly **\$49 million supporting the demolition of more than 3,700 blighted and abandoned houses.** "The new HHF funds will enable the Land Bank to continue the largest and most aggressive blight elimination campaign ever undertaken in Flint's history," said Deb Cherry, the Chair of the Genesee County Land Bank Authority and the Genesee County Treasurer.

- By Christina Kelly

Demolition of Glen Acres Apartments Spurs Hope

Officials and residents are hopeful that the demolition of Glen Acres Apartments on Pierson Road (1718 W. Pierson) in Flint will spur reinvestment and redevelopment on the city's north end. With total project costs just over \$1.7 million, the property will be demolished in two phases. The City of Flint and the Genesee County Land Bank collaborated to complete Phase I of the demolition of this blighted and problem property on one of Flint's main thoroughfares on the north side. The work was funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development's CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) from the City of Flint. The grant funds enabled the Genesee County Land Bank to address immediate safety and contamination concerns on the site. The grant funds will cover the full clean up, demolition and greening of this 8-acre property; which will stabilize surrounding neighborhoods and spur the redevelopment of this property and the Pierson Road corridor.

Phase I includes demolishing 8 of 13 buildings (more than 145,000 square feet) and removing debris, parking lots, and brush. After demolition, 7,000 tons of debris were transported off site with 420 truckloads. Nearly 9,000 yards of back fill will be hauled onto the property and the site will be graded and seeded. Phase II of the project (the remaining 5 of the 13 structures) is tentatively scheduled for August of 2016.

SC Environmental of Lansing, Michigan is the General Contractor and began on-site work around April 1st. Laborers Local 1075 from Flint are supplying union laborers for the asbestos abatement work and SC Environmental has hired approximately eleven Genesee County residents to work on the project.

- By Cheryl McHallam



"Good Bye" to the Former Ramada Inn

The eyesore that created many issues for Mt Morris Township is now gone. It was easy to say "Good Bye" to approximately 400 truckloads and 6,500 tons of debris as it was hauled from the former Ramada Inn site at 4300 W Pierson Road. This project, along with many other blight elimination projects and infrastructure improvement work on Pierson Road, is helping to prepare the area for redevelopment. The site is now on the market with Cooper Commercial Reality for \$575,000 and the Genesee County Land Bank hopes to say "Hello" to a new investment prospect.

- By Cheryl McHallam



Spring Over to Chevy Commons



Spring over to Chevy Commons to enjoy bright colors along the river. Luscious green grasses, flourishing red bushes and blossoming yellow flowers are growing where concrete factory floors once sat. The Genesee County Land Bank, City of Flint and Genesee County Parks Department formed a new partnership to initiate Phase III of site development as part of the larger Flint Riverfront Restoration Project. The design for this phase is now underway. It will be exciting to see the progress and transformation that Chevy Commons will be “falling” into next season.



Save the date for **Saturday September 24, 2016** for

Cycling Circles at Chevy Commons, a great new program for toddlers and young children to ride their tricycles/bikes around the beautiful new trails while stopping at fun activity stations, exercising, learning and gathering freebies.

- Cheryl McHallam



2016 Clean & Green Kick-Off

More than 120 community members gathered to kick-off the 2016 Clean & Green in April program. Participants represented the 59 community-based organizations that comprise this year's the Clean & Green program. From April to September, Clean & Green groups will clean and green more than 3,200 vacant properties in and around Flint every three weeks, the equivalent of roughly 133 city blocks. Block-clubs, schools, churches, neighborhood associations, and local non-profits are some of the community-based groups that make-up Clean & Green.

Each group receives a stipend for maintaining at least 25 vacant properties every three weeks. Most groups use the stipends to train and employ local youth in improving their neighborhoods. Approximately 250 Flint youth are expected to participate in Clean & Green this year, half of which will be employed.

Clean & Green has been a program of the Genesee County Land Bank since 2004. The program started as a way to acknowledge and support the vacant property maintenance work that was already occurring in many neighborhoods where vacant properties exist. Thus, the purpose of the Clean & Green program is to support innovative community groups and organizations in the cleaning, maintaining, and beautifying of otherwise vacant properties in Genesee County. Groups are selected to participate in the program through a competitive application process. The 2016 Clean & Green program is supported through grant funding from the Ruth Mott Foundation and the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center. For more information on Clean & Green e-mail rspeed@thelandbank.org or call (810) 293-0663.



- By Natalie Pruett

50 Properties to be Demolished with County Funding

The Genesee County Treasurer and the Genesee County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved a request to make \$1 million dollars of funding available to enable the Genesee County Land Bank to demolish blighted tax-foreclosed properties in Genesee County communities outside the City of Flint. Demolishing these problem properties abandoned by former property owners will go a long way to help increase public safety, stabilize property values and enhance economic development opportunities.

Local units of government (LUG) were invited to submit applications requesting the demolition of high-priority blighted residential or commercial properties owned by the Treasurer or the Genesee County Land Bank (GCLB). On January 30th, the GCLBA received applications from six LUGs requesting a total of 60 demolitions. The GCLBA found that six of these properties were not owned by the Genesee County Land Bank or the Treasurer and four properties were scheduled for demolition by the Genesee County Metropolitan Planning Commission with HUD CDBG funds. The 50 remaining properties (6 commercial and 44 residential) will be demolished with the \$1 million in county funds. The residential properties will be demolished in the late summer/early fall and the commercial demolitions will be completed before the end of the year.

- By Cheryl McHallam

2016 Vacant Property Mowing & Maintenance

The Land Bank is mowing vacant properties in Flint and Genesee County again this year. Land Bank crews service vacant Land Bank properties outside of the city of Flint. Vacant properties located in Flint are mowed through a multi-faceted plan.

LAND BANK CREWS

Land Bank crews are mowing grass and removing trash from all vacant properties in Flint:

- In May, crews start sweeping the city off Flint, mowing grass and removing trash from all vacant properties – vacant houses, vacant buildings, and vacant lots. Crews will visit all vacant properties in Flint at least once in 2016.
- Vacant and blighted properties that are next to occupied properties are completely mowed.
- Mow strips are used for vacant and blighted properties that are not next to occupied properties.



CLEAN & GREEN

This year, 59 community-based groups are maintaining more than 3,200 vacant properties in and around Flint through the Land Bank's Clean & Green program. Groups receive stipends for their work, which start at \$3,000. Most groups use the stipends to train and employ local youth in improving their neighborhoods. Approximately 250 Flint youth are expected to participate in Clean & Green this year, half of which will be employed.

LOTS AVAILABLE

Hundreds of vacant lots are being maintained this year through the Land Bank's Lots Available program. Through the program, the Land Bank makes its vacant lots available through Adopt-A-Lot agreements, Lease-A-Lot agreements, and Side Lot sales.

For more information on the 2016 Vacant Property Maintenance Plan and Schedule please visit our website: <http://thelandbank.org/weed.asp>

- By Natalie Pruett

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Two (2) Vacancies

Douglas Weiland,
Executive Director

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