



## New citywide cleanup program targets vacant lots at no cost to city of Flint

By Kristin Longley | Flint Journal

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Ryan Garza/The Flint Journal

A Genesee County Land Bank crew clean empty lots at the corner of Fulton Street and Hobson Avenue in Flint on Thursday following a press conference for the Genesee County Land Bank partnering with the city for its weed and trash abatement program. The program uses federal stimulus dollars to hire work crews to remove trash and weeds and mow the grass at vacant lots.

**FLINT, Michigan** — As the cash-strapped city of Flint struggles to maintain basic services, a new citywide cleanup program is putting local people to work at no cost to the city.

The Genesee County Land Bank this year is partnering with the city for its weed and trash abatement program, which uses federal stimulus dollars to hire work crews to remove trash and weeds and mow the grass at vacant lots, officials announced Thursday.

The work will be done on properties throughout the entire city, which has been divided into 21 service areas. The crews are scheduled to visit each service area three times through October.

The crews also will board and secure vacant homes citywide as they receive complaints.

The work started this week, and — despite the cold and rainy conditions — crews were cleaning vacant lots in the East Gracelawn Avenue neighborhood on Thursday afternoon. Residents can identify the workers by their new neon T-shirts.

"They're working very hard helping out their own city," said Doug Weiland, executive director of the Land Bank. "This is tough, dirty, nasty work."

Flint Mayor Dayne Walling said the city is providing use of the pole barn at its Oak Business Center for equipment storage and as a central work site.

Walling said the program will help Flint become "cleaner and greener."

"This improves everybody's home value," he said. "That helps improve everybody's quality of life."

Crew member Adrian Perkins, one of the supervisors of the program, said he was unemployed before he was hired into the program. Workers are paid \$10-\$12 an hour, he said.

"It's enough money for people to help their families," said Perkins, 39, of Flint. "It helps pay the bills."

The Land Bank employs 60 people in the program, which is currently fully staffed, Weiland said. The Land Bank is talking with Career Alliance about possibly securing more funds to hire more workers, he said.

Walling said the program will complement the city's upcoming blight elimination pilot program for code enforcement.

Under the administration's plan, four blight elimination officers would ticket residents for code violations. The tickets would be processed through a new administrative hearings bureau, allowed under a new state law, City Attorney Peter Bade said.

The plan is under consideration by the Flint City Council.

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Genesee County Land Bank employee William Scrivner ties bags of trash gathered from a lot at the corner of Fulton Street and Hobson Avenue in Flint as a press conference goes on about the Genesee County Land Bank partnering with the city for its weed and trash abatement program.