

## Land Bank Tackles Weeds and Trash

Crews of workers in bright neon green T-shirts began appearing on Flint streets on April 5. That's when the Land Bank kicked off its weed and trash abatement activities this year as part of a commitment to clean up abandoned properties – not just Land Bank owned properties, but all abandoned properties in Flint.

The Land Bank currently owns or manages about 5,800 properties in Flint while the total number of abandoned properties is closer to 20,000. "In making the decision to clean any abandoned property, the Land Bank determined that we couldn't just clean our properties and leave those standing on either side without giving them attention, too" said Land Bank Executive Director Doug Weiland. "People assume that any abandoned property is owned by the Land Bank so we are tackling the entire problem. Feedback from residents has been very positive as many of these properties have not been cleared in years."



2010 Weed & Trash Crew



Garbage Truck provided by the City of Flint

This year's program is part of a partnership with the City of Flint, Career Alliance and Mott Community College that began in 2009. To aid the effort, the City has made available a 10,000 square foot building at the Oak Business Center for the Land Bank to use as its center of operations. The City is also making some surplus equipment available to use in the work, including several tractors, two vans and a garbage truck, while Career Alliance and Mott Community College have made workers available courtesy of various federal stimulus funds and worker training programs.

Since beginning work in April, the Land Bank has completed work in parts of Wards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7. These areas were mowed last year by private contractors but little, if any, trash abatement has been done in these areas in some years. The Land Bank crews have been removing the equivalent of 12 tons of trash daily, literally twice what was expected. Since April the Land Bank's crews have removed the equivalent of 500 tons of trash from the central core area of the city and we expect that number will double as the season progresses.

Plans call for making three passes through the entire city by the end of October. While it has been slow going initially, the crews are expected to speed up as they move into other parts of the city with fewer abandoned properties. In addition to the crews working their way around the city, the Land Bank also has complaint crews that are responding to specific complaints for heavy trash clean ups and for boarding and securing houses. Complaint crews are also responding to calls on Land Bank owned properties in other cities and townships within Genesee County.

by Doug Weiland



Mowing & Weed Crew

## Building Neighborhood Power Seeks to Strengthen Efforts of Community Groups

Many residents expressed interest in learning more about neighborhood organizing to create plans for change at the *Strengthening Our Community in the Face of Population Decline* forums held in the fall of 2009, organized by the Genesee County Land Bank and community partners, and during the ongoing City of Flint Neighborhood Action Sessions. In response to this demand, the City of Flint Police Department, the Genesee County Land Bank, Applewood Initiative for Gardens and Community, Salem Housing Community Development Corporation, Durant-Tuuri-Mott Community Center, and other individuals involved in neighborhood capacity building, joined together to organize these trainings to Build Neighborhood Power. These free training workshops give residents the skills they need to form effective neighborhood groups and create a stronger community.

Building Neighborhood Power trainings started in January with four repeating introductory workshops on *Starting and Strengthening a Block Club*. The first workshop of the series guided residents through the process of establishing a block club or similar organization and registering it with the City of Flint. During the five subsequent workshops, participants have explored many of the aspects of coming together to create

the type of community they want to live in. More than 100 residents have participated in the training so far.

The sessions were designed to give residents the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in and lead productive group conversations, hold effective meetings, expand and sustain participation, develop and access resources to implement project and neighborhood plans. There is one upcoming training session that all residents are welcome to participate in: **Designing the Neighborhood You Want**, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 10:00-2:00pm, Brennan Community Center, 1301 Pingree Ave., Flint MI 48503. The sessions are free and refreshments will be provided. To attend this training, please be sure to register by calling (810) 257-3088 ext 536 or (810) 237-6926 or emailing Raynetta Speed at [rspeed@co.genesee.mi.us](mailto:rspeed@co.genesee.mi.us) by no later than noon on the day before the session.

### Designing the Neighborhood You Want

June 12<sup>th</sup>, 10:00-2:00pm

by Christina Kelly

Presented by:



## Clean and Green Program's Largest Year Ever

The Clean and Green Program is in full swing as 42 neighborhood groups, churches and civic organizations beautify and maintain over 1140 vacant Land Bank owned properties in neighborhoods throughout the City of Flint and some of areas of Beecher. The Clean and Green groups are responsible for mowing, litter removal and light maintenance of at least 25 lots in their area and one community gardening project. **The Genesee County Land Bank would like to thank all the Clean and Green Groups and their participants for all the hard work they have put into beautifying the community.** Here is a list of the organizations that are participating this year:

- Block by Block Revitalization Corporation
- Cathedral of Faith COGIC
- Christian Xposure
- Church Without Walls
- Covenant House
- Don't Dump On Me
- Eliezer Church Apostolic Faith
- Flint Foursquare Church
- Flint Urban Gardening and Land Use Corp
- Freedom Center North
- Friendship Community Development COGIC
- Garfield Bunche Community Service Group
- Genesee County Habitat for Humanity
- Gift of Life COGIC
- Goodwill Industries of Mid Michigan
- Guiding Light COGIC
- Greater Friendship AZUSA COGIC
- Greater New Bethel COGIC
- Help Center for Youth
- Holy Ghost Ministries COGIC
- Holy Hill COGIC
- International Academy of Flint
- Jackson Memorial Temple COGIC
- Metawananee Hills Neighborhood Assoc
- Metropolitan Baptist Church
- Mission of Hope
- Mt Olive Missionary Baptist Church
- Mt Tabor Missionary Baptist Church
- My Brothers Keeper
- New Life Tabernacle COGIC
- New Resurrection Church International COGIC
- Northeast Carpenter Road Neighborhood Assoc
- Northeast Village Citizen District Council
- Open Door Temple COGIC
- Piper Green Corps
- Prayer Garden COGIC
- Road to Freedom Inc
- Salem Housing CDC
- Second Chance Ministries COGIC
- St. George Beth-el COGIC
- T.R. Harris CDC
- Urban Community Youth Outreach

by Heidi Phaneuf

## The Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) Part 2

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) took the lead last year in assembling a consortium of twelve communities and eight land banks to submit a joint proposal to the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for a Neighborhood Stabilization Program grant application. The approach MSHDA used was to couple each community with a local Land Bank or with the Michigan Land Bank Fast Track Authority to form a very powerful alliance of interests in the hardest hit economic areas of the state. The approach succeeded in getting Michigan the largest single award of any State in the Union with some \$223 million in funding to come over the next three years. The amount to be shared by Flint and the Genesee County Land Bank totaled just over \$25 million.

Every participating community had to meet MSHDA and HUD requirements which narrowed the geographic scope of the program in each community. The intent was to concentrate efforts within a limited number of neighborhoods would yield noticeable results as opposed to spreading funds across such large areas that the overall impact would be lessened. To define those areas, the City's Community and Economic Development staff and the Land Bank staff collaborated in identifying ten Census Tracts that met HUD and MSHDA requirements for concentration of foreclosures (both mortgage foreclosures and tax foreclosures), poverty and unemployment. Another requirement was that the areas selected had to have an active neighborhood association or other group and that they had to have developed some form of neighborhood plan. Since winning the grant, efforts have been made to add four more Census Tracts to the plan.

The MSHDA and HUD requirements included defining areas of high mortgage foreclosure as "tipping point" neighborhoods, and areas of both high mortgage and high tax foreclosure as "redevelopment areas". Each area will be treated somewhat differently in terms of programming. Tipping point areas will see some prescriptive demolition and rehabilitation in areas where attending to a few properties will help keep the area stable. Mott Park would be one such area. Redevelopment areas will see demolition and rehabilitation at a higher level where attending to multiple properties within a little wider area will help to revitalize the neighborhood. The area around I-475 would be one such area and the old Eastside of Flint would be another.



*Before*



*After*

The \$25 million total will be administered jointly between MSHDA, the City of Flint and the Land Bank with the City taking the lead in rehabilitation and demolition and the Land Bank taking the lead in acquiring, maintaining and holding properties for future redevelopment. While plans are still being developed, all parties have agreed that it makes sense to use Land Bank properties wherever possible to save on acquisition costs and to expedite the process.

- **Home Rehabilitation.** The total scheduled for home rehabilitation is nearly \$14 million. That is to acquire and rehab 104 homes and includes the cost of acquiring and disposing of up to 39 side lots to increase the size of some yards, housing counseling for home buyers and providing over \$1 million in additional home buyer assistance. The amount budgeted per home for rehab and preservation of the property until sold is about \$96,000.
- **Demolition.** The total scheduled for demolition of 255 homes is just over \$2.5 million and includes any necessary environmental remediation. HUD guidelines would allow no more than 10% of the total award to be used on demolition, however, a waiver is being sought to allow us to do far more demolition.
- **Land Banking.** The total scheduled for acquiring and land banking 579 properties is about \$8.7 million which includes over \$3 million for acquisition with another \$5.6 million to cover the cost of property maintenance, clean up, title clearance and title insurance, and preparation and maintenance of the property for future development over the next three years (until 2013).

*by Doug Weiland*

## Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) Part 1

**The Genesee County Program.** Last year, the Genesee County Planning Commission and The Land Bank were awarded funds from HUD for neighborhood stabilization in parts of Genesee County outside the City of Flint. The program is centered in portions of the Cities of Mt. Morris, Burton, Clio, Fenton and the Townships of Genesee, Mt. Morris and Flint. The program includes both demolition and rehabbing of problem properties in each community. The total amount awarded was over \$7 million.

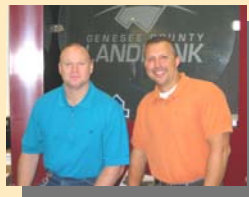
Working with officials in each of the local units of Government, the Planning Commission and the Land Bank are acquiring properties that have been foreclosed so they may be demolished or rehabbed. In total about 80 homes will be rehabbed and more than 200 will be demolished. The properties include both mortgage foreclosed and tax foreclosed properties.

The overall goal of the program is to help stabilize neighborhoods where there have been high rates of foreclosure and where demolition or rehab of selected properties will help stem the spread of blight.

**The City of Flint Program.** Flint was awarded some \$4.5 million in the NSP1 program for selected home rehabs and some demolition. In addition, the Land Bank was awarded another \$1.2 million in NSP1 funds mostly for demolition. A small amount was also awarded to do several rehabs in the Carriagetown area near Hurley Hospital. As with the other NSP programs, the intent is to help stabilize neighborhoods where blight is a problem.

## STAFF NOTES

The Land Bank has brought on board two temporary staff members to assist the County's Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) efforts outside the City of Flint. **Kyle Stottmeister** and **David Nemer** started work in April to assist the County Planning Commission in its work preparing homes for rehabilitation in several communities including Mt. Morris, Genesee, and Flint Townships and the cities of Burton, Mt. Morris and Clio. Both men are experienced licensed builders and have been assigned to write work specifications that will be used by the County to hire builders for the rehabilitation of about 80 homes in Genesee County. This work is part of a larger project that will include the demolition of over 200 dilapidated homes in the same communities and rehabbing another 80 homes. Kyle and David will be working on the project for the next several months.



Kyle & David

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