



The

# VIEW

Spring 2014

## Demolitions



### 539 Down & Counting!

Hardest Hit Fund Demolitions		Michigan Blight Elimination Grant Demolitions	
Demolition Status	Number of Demolitions	Number of Demolitions	Total Demolitions * As of 6/12/14
Down	451	88	539
In Process	1018	138	1,156

	Grant Award	Amount Spent/ Encumbered	% Spent
Hardest Hit Fund Demolitions	\$20,057,857.00	\$4,244,858.50	21.16%
Michigan Blight Elimination Grant	\$3,713,240.00	\$1,824,586.57	49.14%

#### From The Board Chair

Deborah Cherry



#### Tax Foreclosures Holding Steady

The total number of tax foreclosed properties for 2014 was 2,504 – slightly higher than the number foreclosed in 2013 (2,442). These numbers are somewhat lower than the 2,877 that were foreclosed at our peak in 2011. Of this year's foreclosures, 78% (1,948) were in the city of Flint while 22% were in communities outside of Flint (556).

Of course any tax foreclosures are too many, and that's why we have worked hard to prevent as many foreclosures as possible. This year, my office was able to postpone 1,176 residential foreclosures as well as 114 commercial foreclosures giving property owners additional time to pay their taxes and save their properties. We also assisted another 181 property owners through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority's Step Forward program.

The stories behind the numbers above reflect the real-life trials and tribulations of hard working people just trying to make a life for themselves and their families. Helping these people to save their property is one of the most gratifying things we do in the Genesee County Treasurer's Office.

Deb Cherry  
Genesee County Treasurer  
Genesee County Land Bank Authority, Chair

# Ballenger Square Strikes Again

When Ballenger Square residents decided to come together over a year ago to form the Ballenger Square Neighborhood Association it was determined from the very beginning that their association would not be a passive neighborhood group. Residents of Ballenger Square were not going to let their lovely neighborhood be consumed with blight when they could physically do something about the infestation. For the second time residents came together on May 10, 2014, with the help of Hurley Medical Center medical students to tackle blight in order to help to create a "Blight Free Flint."

Ballenger Square like many other neighborhoods has their share of vacant, neglected and abandoned properties. However, instead of complaining about the challenges and watching the blight continue to accumulate, residents used available resources to take action to eradicate the blight that was destroying their attractive neighborhood. Trash, weeds and debris were removed from 8 vacant and abandoned properties on Mackin Road which included front and back yards on some of these properties. Altogether Ballenger Square has removed blight from 25 properties.

Thank you Ballenger Square Neighborhood Association for making a difference in our city!

*By Raynetta Speed*



## Clean & Green Kicks-Off Tenth Year in 2014

On April 10, 2014 more than 100 community members gathered at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church to kick-off the tenth annual Clean & Green program. Participants represented the 52 community-based organizations that comprise the Clean & green program in 2014. From April to September, the 52 groups will clean and green more than 1,700 vacant properties in and around the City of Flint every three weeks, the equivalent of roughly 71 city blocks.



Block-clubs, schools, churches, neighborhood associations, and local non-profits are some of the 52 community-based groups participating in the 2014 Clean & Green program. Each group receives a stipend for maintaining at least 25 properties every three weeks. Many groups create greening projects, including urban orchards, food gardens, flower gardens, and pocket parks. Almost all of the groups include participation from neighborhood youth, who then create change in their own neighborhoods. More than 130 local youth are expected to participate in the program this year.

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. Through the program community groups seasonally maintain concentrated clusters of vacant properties. Groups are selected to participate in the program through a competitive application process. The 2014 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 [npruett@thelandbank.org](mailto:npruett@thelandbank.org) or call (810) 293-0663.

*By Natalie Pruett*

# German University Visits Flint and Studies New Master Plan



International Planning Systems graduate students in the field of Urban and Regional Development visited Flint from March 8th-15th this spring to learn from local community leaders about how the City of Flint is preparing to implement the new Imagine Flint Master Plan that was just completed last year. The group led by Prof. Karina Pallagst, University of Kaiserslautern, Germany met with representatives from the Land Bank, City of Flint, local foundations, neighborhood groups and toured the City. Germany has a well-developed planning system with national and regional plans that then support development of city plans. The community outreach and engagement in Imagine Flint's Master Plan and the 12 place-types and how they will be used were areas of interest for the University.

By Heidi Phanuef

## 2014 Connect the Blocks: Flint Neighborhood Summit



On April 5, 2014 approximately 150 residents gathered to connect the more than 40 block clubs and neighborhood-level organizations they represent. The 2014 Connect the Blocks: Flint Neighborhood Summit was the third and largest annual summit organized by the Community Foundation of Greater Flint Neighborhood Small Grants Program (NSGP). The purpose of the event was to connect individuals who are doing neighborhood-level work in and around Flint. The afternoon began with recognition for 2013 neighborhood-level work. Certificates were awarded to community-based organizations that participated in one or more of the three funding opportunities offered by NSGP in 2013, including Traditional Mini-Grants, Neighborhood Inventories, and Next Level Mini-Grants. Lunch and time for individuals to share both neighborhood successes and challenges followed. "Musical Chairs: Neighborhood Networking" was next on the agenda, as participants moved from one station to another, to the sound of jazz, learning about potential projects in Flint neighborhoods. Lastly, participants received information on the Community Foundation of Greater Flint's 5% campaign. As they walked out the door, all participants then received a copy of the Neighborhoods Small Grants Program Traditional Mini-Grant application that offers up to \$1,000 of funding for neighborhood-level projects in and around Flint. The Neighborhoods Small Grants Program is a program of the Community Foundation of Greater Flint. Established in 1993 through a grant by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, nearly \$514,000 in small grants have been made to support a number of projects that bring people together to create positive change in and around Flint.

By Natalie Pruett

## Chevy Commons Redevelopment

The City of Flint and Genesee County Land Bank created a Site Design Plan for Chevy Commons [formerly Chevy in the Hole (CITH)]. This site design plan provides a "blueprint" to convert approximately 60-acres of the city-owned, former automobile manufacturing facility, into a natural area called *Chevy Commons*. The space will be redeveloped in phases to include open grasslands, woodlands, and wetlands interlaced with trails that will link to the surrounding institutions, neighborhoods, and regional trail network. The design detailed in the plan will serve as a guide for the development of phases as funding becomes available. The design is faithful to the goals and strategies identified by the City Master Plan.



The plan calls for the site to be capped with an attractive low-maintenance natural landscape intended to minimize maintenance and storm water management costs. Details on the first three proposed phases are included in the design plan.

The design work is funded by a US-EPA Brownfield Grant, managed by the Genesee County Land Bank. The grant and other direct funding by the US-EPA has enabled the City and Genesee County Land Bank to address immediate safety and environmental contamination concerns on the site and build the first phases of the green cap. The site design was prepared by landscape architects, engineers and environmental professionals with the guidance of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and the US-EPA to create a safe place for the public to enjoy. Design specifications are currently being drafted and construction and remediation is scheduled to begin this fall.

By Ryan Londrigan, AKT Peerless and Christina Kelly

Genesee County Land Bank Authority  
452 S. Saginaw Street  
Second Floor  
Flint, MI 48502-1832

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## 2014 MOWING SCHEDULE

Between April 1 and October 31 of 2014 the Land Bank crews will be working hard to mow grass and remove trash and debris from properties that are not maintained.

- In April crews will be mowing tall grass and removing trash and debris from properties that were not visited in 2013.
- In May crews will begin sweeping the city of Flint, mowing grass and removing trash and debris from all blighted properties. The Land Bank will mow all blighted properties in the city of Flint once in 2014.
- Crews will work according to the schedule on the reverse side of this sheet. The start dates provided are subject to change according to mowing and weather conditions.
- The Land Bank will also mow properties that it owns outside of the city of Flint.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- It would cost \$7 million to mow and remove trash and debris from all vacant properties in Flint, once a month from spring to summer.
- The Land Bank has just over \$1 million of funding for mowing and waste removal for 2014.
- The Land Bank owns one out of every two vacant lots in Flint.
- The Land Bank owns one out of every four houses in need of demolition in Flint.
- Land Bank properties account for 33% of the vacant properties in Flint.
- Because the Land Bank is dedicated to improving and stabilizing neighborhoods, the Land Bank mows and removes waste from all vacant properties in Flint, 67% of which it does not own.

By Natalie Pruett

**Many residents and community groups adopt or lease nearby lots to prevent blight.**

Thousands of vacant properties are annually mowed by nearby residents and neighborhood groups. By doing so, residents maintain the appearance of their neighborhoods and deter crime.

Local residents and organizations are currently caring for more than **350** lots through adoptions and leases with the Land Bank alone. The Land Bank is currently supporting 52 community groups that are collectively maintaining more than **1,700** vacant properties through its Clean & Green program.

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