

For a Blight Free Flint Public Information Session

Note Card Questions with Answers

On Tuesday, August 20, 2013 the Genesee County Land Bank and the Concerned Pastors for Social Action hosted a public information session on blight in the Flint area, focusing on demolition funding recently awarded to the Genesee County Land Bank. Meeting participants submitted questions on note cards during the session. Questions submitted are provided here with responding answers from the Genesee County Land Bank. In some cases, questions are grouped together and one answer is provided to respond to multiple questions.

Q: “Roughly How many houses can be demolished with the \$20 million in Hardest Hit Funds?”

A: The Land Bank was awarded \$20.1 million of Hardest Hit Funds (HHF) to demolish as many as 1,700 properties.

Q: “Is the \$20 million for demolition or blight clean-up?”

A: The funding is for demolition, property maintenance after demolition, and project management for compliance with grant guidelines. Of the \$20.1 million, we have requested approximately \$1.1 million to mow the unsold lots for five years after the demolition is complete.

Q: “What is the projected date of completion to finish demolition for all of Genesee County?”

A: All Demolition funded by the Michigan Blight Elimination Grant (MBEG) and Hardest Hit Funds will occur between October 2013 and March 2015, pending final grant awards and agreements.

Q: “Will these funds be allocated for commercial blight?”

A: Hardest Hit Funds can be used for demolition of residential properties only and cannot be used for demolition of commercial properties. However, the MBEG does allow for demolition of commercial properties. Therefore, the Land Bank is requesting to include 20-22 Land Bank owned blighted commercial properties using MBEG funding.

Q: “How much money does it cost to demolish a home?”

Q: “What will it cost to demolish one house, approximately?”

A: Under a recent federal grant, the average cost to demolish a house was \$10,600. The exact cost of demolition varies from house to house, depending on the house size, construction material, condition, presence of hazardous material, and speed of utility “cuts and plugs.”

Q: “How long does it take to tear down a building?”

A: The time it takes from doing the initial building inspection to actually tearing down a building varies greatly depending on several factors. Before we can begin the process, grant funds must be secured and grant agreements must be in place. Contractors for different tasks are then procured using a process that aligns with state and federal requirements. The demolition process includes: dangerous building inspection, hazardous material inspection, abatement of asbestos and hazardous materials (including required notice to the state and waiting period prior to abatement), requesting and confirming utility cuts from Consumers and municipal utilities, securing demolition permit, demolition (including required notice to the state and waiting

period), removal of basement along with all structures and footings, inspection, backfill, final grading, seeding and mulching during the growing months, final inspections. The site cannot be seeded and closed out during the winter months. The length of the demolition process varies widely from house to house depending on the overall schedule for demolition, speed of utility “cuts and plugs” and final inspections by the city, weather condition, house size, construction material, house condition, and presence of hazardous material.

Q: “We have been here. Before, we were given \$ and we didn’t do it on time and we had to give it back. Will this happen again?”

A: Both demolition grants are being received and managed by the Genesee County Land Bank. The Land Bank has been doing demolition since 2003 and has never had to give back any grant funding.

Q: “What can be done to speed up the demolition process (2013 – 2015)?”

A: The Land Bank will be demolishing more than 2,000 blighted properties between the Fall of 2013 and the Spring of 2015 utilizing multiple contractors qualified to perform high volume demolition projects, in order to meet the demolition deadlines provided by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. There are many steps involved in the demolition process as described above. All steps of the demolition process must be properly completed to ensure that the Land Bank is in compliance with local, state, and federal rules and regulations.

Q: “How much is coming to Mt. Morris Township, when, and how many houses and properties are in Mt. Morris Township?”

3 blighted structures will be demolished under Michigan Blight Elimination grant in Mt. Morris Township. 85 blighted structures in Mt. Morris Township were identified to be demolished under the Hardest Hit Fund revised application submitted to MSHDA. Pending final approval of the revised request, the structures will be demolished between October 2013 and March 2015.

Q: “It is reported that city crews demolished in the past for around \$5,000 per demolition. Estimate now \$10,600 per. Why?”

A: The cost of the demolition depends on the size of the structure and the condition and materials in the house. It is possible to complete a demolition for \$5,000 if it is a small structure and does not require abatement. \$10,600 is an average cost based on an analysis of all demolitions of all sized. The cost includes all demolition related costs from start to finish including inspection, abatement, backfill, basement removal, grading, seeding and mulching.

Q: “Regarding contractors – how will section 3 be enforced?”

Q: “Can we make sure we get Genesee County contractors and local workers?”

Q: “Will section 3 qualified workers get a chance to compete for contract bids and/or jobs?”

Q: “Are all bids to include the demolish start to finish?”

Q: “Can companies partner together to make a bid? Can a company sublease jobs?”

A: The Land Bank selects all demolition related contractors through a competitive bidding process. Separate bids are done for inspection, abatement, and demolition (including basement removal, backfill, and final grade). Demolition related contractors must comply with many federal, state, and local laws and requirements. The Land Bank strongly encourages contractors to hire local residents. We also give companies extra points in the selection process if they hire local workers and if they are locally owned. Pre-qualification materials can be found at our website: www.thelandbank.org

Q: “When can Flint apply for another demolition grant? What can we do to help get more vacant structures demolished?”

A: The Land Bank is constantly searching for demolition funding. Residents can contact local, state, and federal representatives if they wish to express their views on demolition.

Q: “What about properties Land Bank don’t own?”

Q: “Do you know who owns these bad properties and can they be reached? Can you destroy these homes without them knowing or did they just give up their homes?”

A: You can find out who owns a property by doing a property search on the City of Flint Assessor’s website at: www.taxes.cityofflint.com/search.asp. Privately owned properties must go through the City of Flint’s code enforcement and standard motion process to be eligible for demolition. Demolishing privately owned properties is not feasible under the Hardest Hit Fund.

Q: “Vacant home owned by real estate agency but not being checked on. Has now been broken into and scrap metal removed. How does Flint address this issue? Real estate agency unaware of damage to home?”

A: Private property owners are responsible for monitoring and maintaining their properties. Block clubs and neighborhood associations often work to establish relationships with landlords and real estate agencies in their neighborhoods, articulating what is expected of property owners and reporting issues as they arise. To report a blighted property issue, contact **Raul Garcia** from the City of Flint at **766-7284 ext. 2733**.

Q: “Why not hold the landlord for the upkeep of their property, such as tearing down blight or cutting grass and add it to their taxes?”

A: The City of Flint has very limited resources for code enforcement due to revenue cuts. The Land Bank does not have the authority to enforce city code on privately owned properties.

Q: “What is the projected date of completion to finish demolition for all of Genesee County?”

A: All demolition funded by the Michigan Blight Elimination Grant and Hardest Hit Funds is scheduled to occur between September 2013 and March 2015.

Q: “Will the Land Bank cut the grass more than two times per year?”

Q: “Who is cleaning up the one time property clean up?”

Q: “I understand that the City has turned over the lawn care of the City’s vacant houses so is it true that the Land Bank can only do it once a year and why?”

Q: “How can high grass be cleaned and secured around schools? Why can’t they be priority even if the Land Bank does not own?”

Q: “Why can’t street corners be a priority for mowing? High grass is a safety hazard for all walking/driving where this condition exists?”

Q: “There are areas that need to be cut because they are blind spots.”

Q: “Will the city cut these yards that are too tall to see other cars coming?”

Q: “When the Land Bank mows do they clean the fence lines?”

A: Every year the Land Bank staffs Blight Management crews that mow high grass and remove trash, as funding is available to do so. The Land Bank is mowing high grass in the City of Flint and throughout Genesee County again in 2013. All properties that have high grass in the City of Flint will be mowed by the Land Bank’s Blight Management crews once through a partnership with the City of Flint. Blight Management crews are sweeping through the City by starting in the northwestern neighborhood and finishing in the northeastern neighborhood. The crews use

commercial-grade equipment to mow grass from the street to the rear of the property. The Land Bank also mows all properties that it owns outside the City of Flint.

Q: “Is it true if a community cleans up 25 homes in their area that the Land Bank will give \$500 for their effort?”

This year, residents and neighborhood groups are maintaining more than 1,800 vacant lots in Genesee County through Land Bank programs alone. Community groups receive stipends for maintaining large numbers of Land Bank lots through the Land Bank’s Clean & Green program. Clean & Green is a seasonal Land Bank program. Participants are selected through a competitive application process during the winter of each year. Community-based organizations that have their own equipment and commit to care for at least 25 Land Bank lots are eligible for Clean & Green. In addition to Clean & Green, many residents adopt and lease Land Bank lots in their neighborhoods. Visit the Land Bank’s website or office to find out how you can access available Land Bank lots and for more information on Clean & Green.

Q: “After the demolition of these properties, what are the development plans?”

Q: “After the blight is removed what is the plan for replacement?”

Q: “Is there (a) plan to convert those properties into green space?”

A: The Land Bank demolishes blighted structures because they decrease property values, increase the perception of crime, encourage additional blight, and often pose safety hazards. Once a building is demolished a vacant lot remains. The Land Bank has several programs for vacant land care such as the sale of vacant lots to adjacent homeowners through its Side Lot program. Many residents also adopt and lease Land Bank lots in their neighborhoods. Community groups annually care for more than 1,500 lots through the Clean & Green program.

Q: “Info on land contract purchasing of home?”

A: Most of the Land Bank’s residential sales (houses) are sold through land contracts. Many of the houses the Land Bank receives are blighted. The Land Bank offers houses for sale that are in good or fair condition. Go to www.thelandbank.org to search for properties to purchase and fill out an application to purchase a property that you are interested in.

Q: “How do you get a list of homes available for sale through the Land Bank?”

A: Lists of Land Bank owned houses are available at the Land Bank’s office for a \$2 fee. You can also get a list of houses available for sale by visiting the Land Bank’s website and download a list for free.

Q: “What type of programs do you have in place with the renovations of properties to get people in the houses?”

Q: “How much money is spent to renovate the homes and where does that funding come from?”

Q: “There is a house downtown that is 150 years old will be repaired and a house down the street 50 years old that has only the siding removed that won’t be repaired.”

A: The Land Bank received Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funding to rehabilitate 40 homes between 2010 and 2012 in NSP eligible neighborhoods designated by MSHDA and the City of Flint. The neighborhoods where renovations occurred include: Northwestern, Central Park, Carriage Town/Grand Traverse, and South Parks. . A few historic homes that were not eligible for demolition were renovated in Carriage Town. The City and its partners developed homes in Smith Village Visit the Land Bank’s office or website for more information on houses still available for sale.

Q: “What is the definition of a blighted property, what criteria is needed?”

Q: “What is the difference between demolition and blight?”

Q: “When owner of home is in secured area (lock down) how/what does City of Flint address temporary vacancy?”

A: There are many definitions for the term “blight.” Blighted properties typically involve overgrown vegetation, accumulated trash, and/or dilapidated structures. A property can be blighted, but not necessarily in need of demolition. Structures are selected for demolition by the Land Bank after they are inspected. Occupied houses are not demolished. A house must be vacant and in poor or structurally deficient condition to be eligible for demolition.

Q: “How do you go about a neighborhood watch?”

A: There are many block clubs and neighborhood associations in the Flint area, some of which organize neighborhood watches. Flint Neighbors United is a network of neighborhood-level groups that shares neighborhood successes, challenges, and ideas. Flint Neighbors United meets on the first Saturday of each month from 9 – 11 AM at 1909 Kearsley Park Boulevard.

Q: “Can Flint make more Renaissance areas, tax free neighborhoods, so that residents can use the tax money to fix up their homes?”

A: The Land Bank does not determine Renaissance zones. For more information on Renaissance zones contact the City of Flint Department of Community and Economic Development at (810) 766-7426.

Q: “Can we get copies of speakers’ presentations?”

A: Yes! The presentation from the meeting is posted to the Land Bank’s website under the “For a Blight Free Flint” page.

Q: “What is the projected date of completion to finish demolition for all of Genesee County?”

A: All Demolition funded by the Michigan Blight Elimination Grant and Hardest Hit Funds is scheduled to occur between September 2013 and March 2015.

Q: “What about the wild animals around homes and vacant lots?”

A: The Land Bank does not have programs or resources for addressing animal concerns. Residents should contact Genesee County Animal Control regarding animal concerns.