

Celebrate Progress

2014 IMPACT REPORT



Center for
**COMMUNITY
PROGRESS**

Vacant Spaces into Vibrant Places



Community Progress envisions a future in which entrenched, systemic vacancy and abandonment do not exist in American communities. Formerly blighted lots have become integral components of strong, healthy communities. City and civic leaders are equipped to combat blight and vacancy and to build stronger neighborhoods for and with the people living in them.

Dear Friend,

The end of 2014 marked an opportunity for celebration, and reflection, at the Center of Community Progress: it closed out our fifth anniversary and a year of progress across the country.

When we opened our doors in 2010, the country was firmly in the grips of the Great Recession and the mortgage foreclosure crisis. In 2014, communities continued to struggle with unprecedented levels of vacancy and abandonment in the wake of the crisis, but leaders were meeting the challenge with increasing sophistication and strategy.

In this annual report, we are excited to share three of these stories from our work. Atlanta, Georgia; Huntington, West Virginia; and Flint, Michigan, each deployed fresh approaches to help stabilize, and revitalize, struggling neighborhoods. It was a privilege to assist these and dozens of other communities in 2014.

Community Progress exists to ensure that communities have the vision, knowledge, and systems they need to transform vacant properties. We believe that these properties can be tremendous resources if returned to productive uses that benefit residents.

In all of our work, we seek to build strong neighborhoods for the people who live in them by nurturing comprehensive, equitable, and sustainable change. We are grateful to our generous supporters who share this vision and drive positive change in neighborhoods throughout the country.

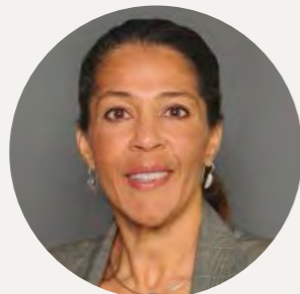
While the continuing challenges are real and complex, steady progress is taking hold across the nation. We look forward to continuing to build this momentum over the next five years and beyond.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Shapiro'.

TAMAR SHAPIRO
PRESIDENT AND CEO



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ellen M. Lee'.



ELLEN M. LEE
BOARD CHAIR

ABOUT

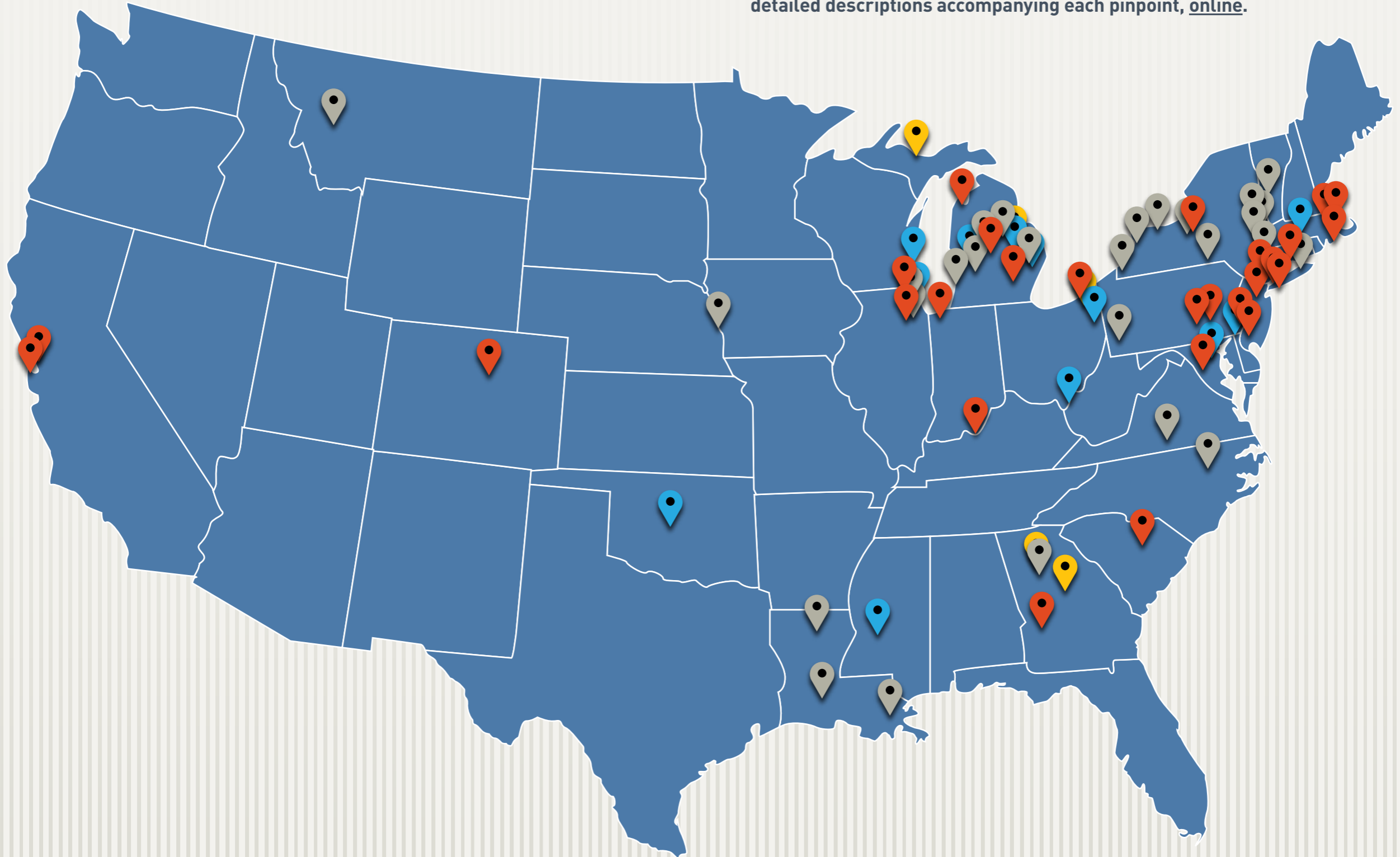
Founded in 2010, the Center for Community Progress is the only national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization solely dedicated to building a future in which entrenched, systemic blight no longer exists in American communities. The mission of Community Progress is to ensure that communities have the vision, knowledge, and systems to transform blighted, vacant, and other problem properties into assets supporting neighborhood vitality. As a national leader on solutions for blight and vacancy, Community Progress serves as the leading resource for local, state and federal policies and best practices that address the full cycle of property revitalization.



Where We Worked in 2014

-  Speaking Engagement
-  Leadership and Education
-  Technical Assistance
-  Research

View the complete map of where we worked in 2014, with detailed descriptions accompanying each pinpoint, [online](#).



2014 By the Numbers

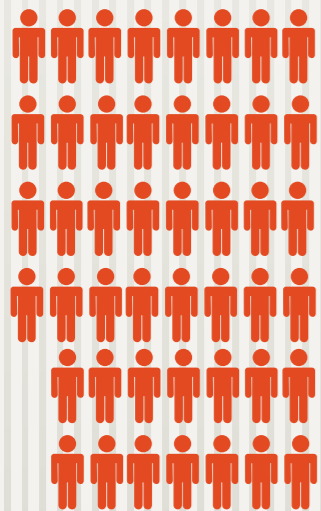
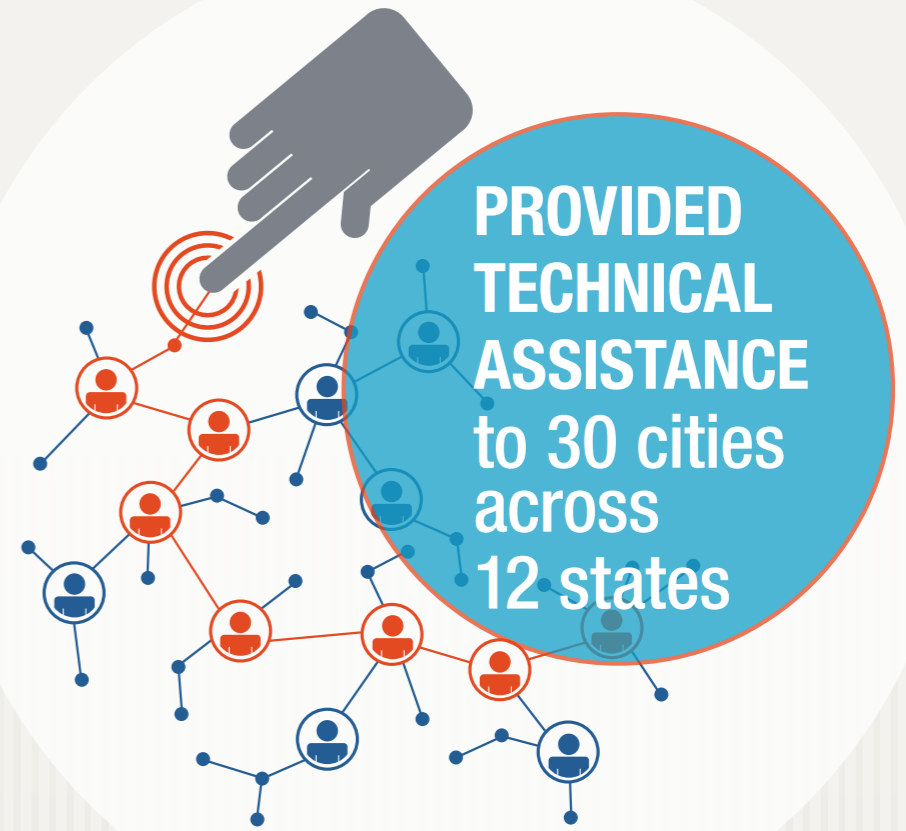
Featured
or sought
out as
experts



IN 120
NEWS
ARTICLES.



WE DISTRIBUTED MORE
THAN 2,200 COMMUNITY
PROGRESS PUBLICATIONS.



Our Michigan office
**REACHED LEADERS
FROM 40 CITIES
AND COUNTIES**
through state-focused
trainings and
technical assistance.

We build
long-term
relationships

**TEAMS
FROM
11 CITIES**
were accepted
into our two
flagship
programs:

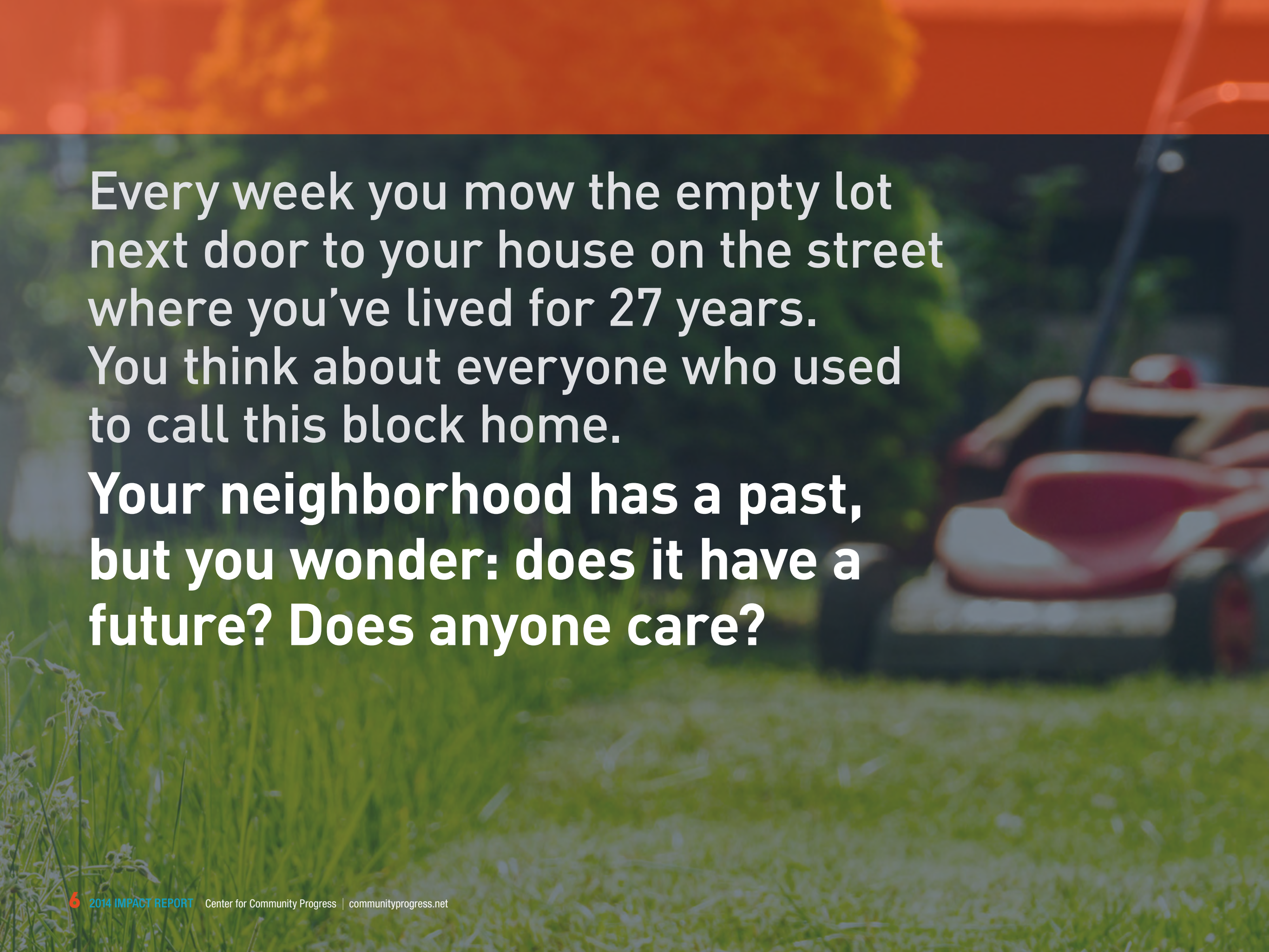
the
Community
Progress
Leadership
Institute
and the
Technical
Assistance
Scholarship
Program

**10 OUT
OF THE
11 CITIES**
have gone on
to seek out
additional
trainings,
conferences,
and technical
assistance
from us.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Atlanta received a technical assistance scholarship, then requested additional technical assistance and sent leaders to a daylong code enforcement workshop in Baltimore and our Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference in Detroit. Coming full circle, Atlanta leaders have gone on to share their expertise as presenters at two of our trainings.

Huntington, West Virginia, joined us at the Community Progress Leadership Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts, then requested our assistance with a Leadership Institute-inspired statewide summit in West Virginia. A number of leaders went on to attend the Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference in Detroit.



Every week you mow the empty lot next door to your house on the street where you've lived for 27 years. You think about everyone who used to call this block home.

Your neighborhood has a past, but you wonder: does it have a future? Does anyone care?

A Roadmap for Blight Elimination in Flint

19,842. That's the number of properties in Flint, Michigan, that were in need of blight elimination at the end of 2014, including commercial properties, homes, and vacant lots. Altogether, that's more than one-third of all properties in the city.

Now, for the first time, the city has a clear way forward. In 2014, Natalie Pruett, who became our Flint Fellow in 2015, authored the Flint Blight Elimination Framework, a strategic plan to help guide the city toward a brighter future. The City, Genesee County Land Bank Authority, Center for Community Progress, and Flint Area Reinvestment Office partnered to provide strategic guidance and feedback throughout the Framework's development.

The Framework aims to help stabilize Flint's population and improve quality of life for its residents. It sets blight elimination benchmarks and serves as a roadmap for partners and advocates.

"We needed to put everything in context and be genuine about the scale of the problem. We've calculated, for the first time, the total cost of removing blight: \$107,748,130," said Natalie. "It can be daunting, but we're dealing in reality. The Framework gets people who love this city and want to contribute to the solution on the same page."





That figure includes the cost of demolition (66% of the total), mowing (28%), waste removal (5%), and board-ups (1%). The Framework also describes—and, uniquely, quantifies—specific actions that individuals, institutions, community groups, businesses, and local government can and do take to help move Flint forward. For example, it calculates that efforts of residents, community groups, and the local government partnered in neighborhood cleanups, mowing, and boarding valued at an incredible \$5.6 million in 2013. It might be the first time a City has ever quantified the dollar value of volunteer efforts in eliminating blight.

“In Flint, community groups and neighbors come together to play a major role in eliminating blight from our neighborhoods, and this Framework quantifies that for the first time,” said Clarence Campbell, vice president of Flint Neighborhoods United (FNU), an organization that represents neighborhood associations and block clubs, in a news release announcing the Framework. “The level of volunteerism and the love that we as a community have for our city is what I believe to be critical to moving Flint beyond blight.”


The Flint Blight Elimination Framework is honest and direct about the scale of the challenges facing the City, and in so doing, it provides a clear path forward.

View the Flint Blight Elimination Framework on the City of Flint’s [website](#).



MICHIGAN INITIATIVES

Community Progress is headquartered in Flint and maintains an embedded staff presence dedicated to serving the State of Michigan. We work closely with Michigan communities to develop and support effective and equitable systems, policies, and programs to tackle vacancy, abandonment, and other property challenges. Our work includes technical assistance, learning exchanges, webinars, in-person workshops, and support for a statewide land banking community of practice.



That house across the street grows more hazardous by the day. The porch is collapsing. The weeds are waist-high. The owner is who-knows-where. **You feel like you're just waiting for it to catch on fire. When will something be done?**

Expanding the Toolbox in Atlanta's Community Stabilization Work

Fix it up, pay it up, or give it up. That's the menu of options that irresponsible owners of vacant and abandoned properties in Atlanta, Georgia, will have to choose from following the implementation of previously unused code enforcement procedures. In 2014, the City was awarded one of our first Technical Assistance Scholarships to implement and coordinate more effective enforcement among various City and County stakeholders.

Atlanta is often thought of as a thriving metropolis, but some neighborhoods are disproportionately impacted by vacancy and abandonment. These lots and structures harm the wellbeing of residents and are costly to the municipal government.

In 2014, Sara Toering, our general counsel, and Frank Alexander, co-founder and senior advisor, evaluated Atlanta's problem property strategies. They discovered that Atlanta had two key civil tools on the books that could dramatically reshape the City's approach to community stabilization: judicial *in rem* code enforcement and the judicial *in rem* tax sale.

To date, the City has used a largely criminal process for housing and building code enforcement. A criminally focused system is ineffective and inequitable where code-delinquent properties are owned by corporate, indigent, or out of state owners. Furthermore, such a system provides no means to attach public funds expended as a priority debt on the property, which can potentially force a property transfer to responsible hands.





Through the civil code enforcement process, owners who fail to comply with a code violation by not fixing up their property risk losing it. Judicial *in rem* code enforcement allows costs the City has incurred demolishing a hazardous, code-delinquent structure to be affixed as a “super-priority lien” to the property itself, and such liens may be added to the property tax bill. The judicial *in rem* tax sale enforcement process then forces owners to either pay the code lien costs associated with the property taxes or give up the property through the tax foreclosure sale.

Though technical in nature, these policy changes will have a very real impact on the lives of residents who’ve been living amongst blighted structures and can bring new life to communities. “It’s hard to get people to redevelop a neighborhood or to move back into that neighborhood as long as the blight still exists,” said Major Barry Shaw of the Code Enforcement Section in the Atlanta Police Department.

Community Progress was pleased to help bring change to Atlanta through our Technical Assistance Scholarship Program (TASP), which launched in 2014 and is supported by the JPMorgan Chase Foundation. Through TASP, “we can make our technical assistance available, at a highly subsidized rate, to communities that are ready to innovate,” said Tamar Shapiro, president and CEO.


Terri Lee, deputy commissioner for the Department of Planning and Community Development described Atlanta’s participation in TASP as, “an absolute no-brainer... It could only serve to bring a level of expertise to the City that we could definitely not afford at that time.”

Curious to learn more about our work in Atlanta through TASP? Check out our video interviews with [Major Shaw](#) and [Deputy Commissioner Terri Lee](#) on YouTube.



NATIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Since our launch in 2010, Community Progress has provided technical assistance and support to more than 150 communities in 30 states. Through this work, which includes the Technical Assistance Scholarship Program and fee-for-service opportunities, we’ve helped communities assess, reform, develop, and implement systems and policies to effectively address large-scale vacancy and abandonment. From property tax systems to code enforcement to land banking and beyond, we work closely with communities to customize our assistance to meet local needs and priorities.



You're from a small city. Funds are limited. Time is limited. Sometimes it feels like you aren't gaining ground: there's always another property to board up, to mow, to save, or to knock down. It's lonely work, and new solutions aren't easy to find.

Sharing Knowledge, Building Networks Statewide in West Virginia

A group of dedicated leaders from Huntington, West Virginia, attended the 2014 Community Progress Leadership Institute (Leadership Institute) with the goal of increasing their expertise in critical tools to address vacancy, building leadership skills, and collaborating as a team to create change. **They met these goals but, perhaps unexpectedly, they also emerged as statewide leaders.**

The City of Huntington has just shy of 50,000 residents and faces challenges familiar to many other small cities. The disappearance of manufacturing plants and jobs caused steep population decline from a 1950s peak of 86,000, leaving the city with thousands of vacant properties. In 2009, city leaders established the first land bank in West Virginia, expanding its ability to return vacant properties to productive use.

The Leadership Institute was an apt opportunity for the City to dig into land banking and other tools. “Because we are the only land bank in the state of West Virginia, we just wanted to get around other people who had done this and who had success with it,” explained Christal Perry, the Huntington land bank administrator.

The Leadership Institute is an intensive four-day program that brings together teams of leaders from multiple cities and states for training in both technical skills and leadership development. The seven-person Huntington delegation included individuals from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors.





At the Leadership Institute, the Huntington team developed actionable next steps for addressing blight at home. “We know that our tax structure system needs to be looked at, and we got started on that as soon as we got back,” said Christal.

With a clear vision and fresh ideas, the team left wishing that other cities in West Virginia had access to the knowledge that they had gained. “They decided that they wanted to host, together with partners, a statewide summit on vacancy and abandonment, and they called on us to help them put together that summit,” said Tamar Shapiro, president and CEO of Community Progress.

As a result, in October 2014, the City of Huntington hosted the West Virginia BAD (Blighted, Abandoned, and Dilapidated) Buildings Summit, modeled after the Leadership Institute. Along with other partners, Frank Alexander, our co-founder and senior advisor, and Kim Graziani, vice president and director of National Technical Assistance, spent three days assisting leaders from across the state of West Virginia with identifying both opportunities and challenges and formulating strategies.

Phoebe Patton Randolph, a Huntington team member, praised the Summit outcomes. “Nearly 100 attendees on nine community teams attended the Summit and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. We are so appreciative of the support from the Center for Community Progress and truly believe a significant impact was made in West Virginia through this event.”



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION

Community Progress works to create a national community of practice, populated by well-informed, collaborative leaders, to share knowledge on practices that support the transformation of vacant, abandoned, and problem properties. Our national leadership and education initiatives focus on mobilizing cross-jurisdiction problem solving and encouraging coordination among state and local leaders. In addition to the Community Progress Leadership Institute, we host the national Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference and numerous other educational and training events.

Our mission is to ensure that communities have the vision, knowledge, and systems needed to transform problem properties into assets that support neighborhood vitality. In all of our work, we seek to build strong neighborhoods for the people who live in them by nurturing comprehensive, equitable, and sustainable change.

Financials

Condensed Statement of Financial Position

as of December 31, 2014

Cash	\$ 4,344,690
Other Current Assets	171,916
Net Fixed Assets	<u>12,944</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 4,529,550
Accounts Payable	\$ 90,511
Deferred Revenue	134,000
Other Liabilities	<u>118,395</u>
Total Liabilities	<u>342,906</u>
Board Designated Reserves	1,850,000
Other Unrestricted Net Assets	542,280
Temp Restricted Net Assets	<u>1,794,364</u>
Total Net Assets	<u>4,186,644</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$ 4,529,550

Condensed Statement of Activities

for the year ended December 31, 2014

	Unrestricted	Temp Restricted	Total
Foundation Grants	\$ -	\$ 3,080,183	\$ 3,080,183
Fees for Services	202,511	-	202,511
Event Registration & Sponsorship	34,736	-	34,736
Other Income	<u>1,730</u>	-	<u>1,730</u>
Total Revenue	238,977	3,080,183	3,319,160
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	2,660,769	(2,660,769)	-
Expenses:			
Program Services	2,586,902	-	2,586,902
General & Administrative	<u>760,798</u>	-	<u>760,798</u>
Total Expenses	3,347,700	-	3,347,700
Increase(Decrease) in Net Assets	(447,954)	419,414	(28,540)
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	<u>2,840,234</u>	<u>1,374,950</u>	<u>4,215,184</u>
Net Assets - End of Year	\$ 2,392,280	\$ 1,794,364	\$ 4,186,644

Source: 2014 Center for Community Progress audited financials.

2014 Major Contributors

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FORD FOUNDATION

JPMORGAN CHASE FOUNDATION

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

OAK FOUNDATION

FOUNDATION FOR LOUISIANA

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