



BUILDING A BOLD MOVEMENT

2015 IMPACT REPORT





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 vacancy, abandonment, and deterioration, and to build stronger neighborhoods for and with the people living in them.

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 vacancy, abandonment, and property deterioration no longer exist in American communities. The mission of Community Progress is to ensure that communities have the vision, knowledge, and systems to transform vacant, abandoned, and other problem properties into assets supporting neighborhood vitality. Community Progress serves as the leading resource for local, state, and federal policies and best practices that address the full cycle of property revitalization.

DEAR FRIEND,

In 2015, Flint, Michigan, home to our headquarters, dominated national headlines for all the wrong reasons: a change in water supply from Detroit to the Flint River, without the addition of anti-corrosive agents, leached lead from old pipes and contaminated the city's drinking water.

The story in Flint is about more than water, and represents one horrifying symptom of broader systemic injustices. Flint's challenges are the result of inequitable public policies, and sadly echo similarly distressing stories shared by the majority of the places where Community Progress works. Flint's great need is emblematic of why we work to create systemic change around land use practices. There is so much work yet to be done to create communities that are safe, vibrant places of opportunity for all residents.

In this annual report we share three stories from 2015 that offer a brief snapshot of our work around the country supporting community revitalization: At our 2015 Community Progress Leadership Institute, public officials and private and nonprofit practitioners from nine cities engaged in a transformational four-day training that further equipped them to lead equitable land use reform. We awarded one of our technical assistance scholarships to Gary, Indiana, and assisted the City in overhauling its code enforcement practices. And at our 2015 Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference, themed Building a Bold Movement, more than 1,100 people joined us in Detroit to soak up knowledge and learn new tools.

The challenges of 2015 were tragic and deeply distressing. Yet, they also revealed opportunities to strengthen the dynamic and growing movement to ensure that land in distressed neighborhoods is transformed into a source of community power, wealth, and opportunity. We are proud to carry this work forward alongside our partners.

Sincerely,



ELLEN M. LEE
Board Chair



TAMAR SHAPIRO
President and CEO



ELLEN M. LEE



TAMAR SHAPIRO



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair

ELLEN M. LEE

Director of Housing Policy
and Community Development
City of New Orleans
New Orleans, LA

Vice Chairperson

PRESLEY GILLESPIE

President
Neighborhood Allies
Pittsburgh, PA

Treasurer

MICHAEL TIERNEY

Washington, DC

Secretary

LISA LEVY

Portland, OR

GEOFF ANDERSON

President and CEO
Smart Growth America
Washington, DC

WILLIAM JOHNSON

CEO, Strategic Community
Intervention, LLC
Former Mayor, Rochester, NY
Former Professor, Rochester
Institute of Technology,
Rochester, NY

MICHAEL BROWN

President
Prima Civitas
Lansing, MI

ERIKA POETHIG

Director of Urban Policy
Urban Institute
Washington, DC

MARGARET DEWAR

Professor of Urban and
Regional Planning
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI

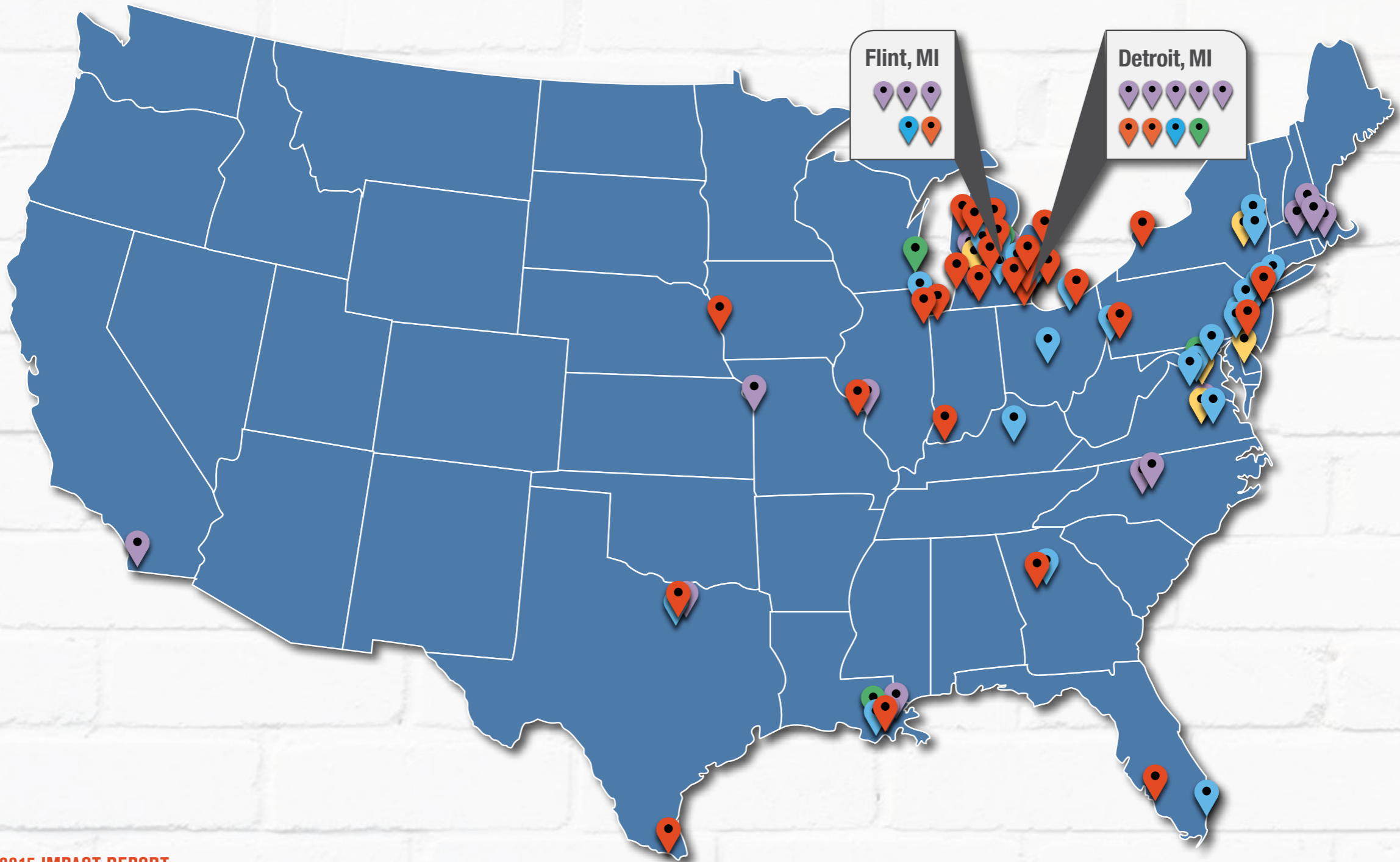
SCOT SPENCER

Associate Director, Advocacy
and Influence
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Baltimore, MD

2015 WHERE WE WORKED

View the complete map of where we worked in 2015, with detailed descriptions accompanying each pinpoint, at communityprogress.net

-  Technical Assistance
-  Speaking Engagement
-  Research & Publications
-  State & Federal Policy
-  Leadership & Education



2015 BY THE NUMBERS



Teams from 9 Cities were accepted into our two flagship programs, the Community Progress Leadership Institute and the Technical Assistance Scholarship Program.

7 of the 9 Cities have gone on to seek out additional trainings, conferences, and technical assistance from us.

1,100 people attended our national Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference in Detroit



Provided technical assistance to **25 cities and counties** in **13 states**



DISTRIBUTED 4,779 COPIES of Community Progress publications



Reached approximately **4,200 people** through speaking engagements

FEATURED OR SOUGHT OUT AS EXPERTS IN 124 NEWS ARTICLES, including The Wall Street Journal, The Atlantic, Politico, and regional press in 16 states



2015 RECLAIMING VACANT PROPERTIES CONFERENCE

2015 RECLAIMING VACANT PROPERTIES CONFERENCE BEYOND BLIGHT: BUILDING A BOLD MOVEMENT

More than 1,100 individuals descended on Detroit in May of 2015. They hailed from 37 states and collectively traversed tens of thousands of miles to form the largest gathering of urban change-makers in Community Progress' history: the sixth national Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference (RVP).

The Conference, themed "Beyond Blight: Building a Bold Movement," demonstrated that work to stabilize and revitalize communities facing vacancy and abandonment is reaching a critical mass across the country. Both returning and first-time attendees left with new tools and solutions for strengthening neighborhoods.

2015 RVP featured fifty-seven sessions and more than 200 speakers tackling topics that included land banking, arts and place making, green reuse, code enforcement, demolition, and tax and mortgage foreclosure reform. Attendees offered effusive praise for the session content.

"Each year, I find this conference to be an essential information source for a diverse audience, including practitioners, policy and community advocates, and local leaders," shared Lavea Brachman of The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, and previously with the Greater Ohio Policy Center, following the event.





In addition to general sessions, attendees had the chance to participate in mobile workshops, which are special opportunities to experience on-the-ground work in Detroit firsthand. Groups set off on workshops that included seeing green reuse on Detroit's East Side, how open spaces have been activated by community-driven art, and much more.

First-time attendee and local activist Alicia Smith of the Junction neighborhood in Toledo, Ohio, attended a discussion about the next round of our Technical Assistance Scholarship Program while at RVP and became inspired to work with us further. "I was looking at all of the work going on in other communities, and I thought, 'Why not Toledo?'" she said. RVP often serves as the beginning of a longer term relationship with partner communities, and in 2016, we awarded a technical assistance scholarship to Toledo/Lucas County, Ohio, to develop a unique, resident-driven open space action plan for the Junction neighborhood.

Detroit is, in many ways, the epicenter of the fight against property vacancy and abandonment occurring nationwide, and is increasingly hailed as for its creativity and boldness in tackling these challenges. We are grateful to our partners in Detroit for helping to bring the Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference to the city, and we look forward to seeing all of the ways in which knowledge gained in Detroit continues to carry forward the movement to reclaim communities from abandonment.

"Each year, I find this conference to be an essential information source for a diverse audience, including practitioners, policy and community advocates, and local leaders."

COMMUNITY PROGRESS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

COMMUNITY PROGRESS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE HIGH POINT, NORTH CAROLINA

The Story of One Participating City

With just over 100,000 residents, High Point, North Carolina, faces challenges familiar to many other small cities. Between 2005 and 2011, High Point lost almost a quarter of its manufacturing jobs, resulting in hundreds of newly abandoned residential and commercial buildings, many concentrated in downtown. High Point was in need of new and innovative strategies, and they turned to Community Progress.

“Community Progress was the first organization we’d ever encountered totally focused on reclaiming vacant properties,” shared Michael McNair, Director of Community Development and Housing.

After a successful application process, a group of dedicated change makers from High Point, including McNair, joined colleagues from Greensboro and two other states at the 2015 Community Progress Leadership Institute with the goal of growing their expertise in critical tools to address vacancy and abandonment. Their time at the Leadership Institute sparked a transformational shift in the way that High Point approached strategic code enforcement and neighborhood revitalization.

The Leadership Institute is a profound, immersive experience that equips leaders to take bold action to address systemic vacancy through a rigorous, four-day training. Participants leave with a deeper understanding of how to overhaul the systems that keep properties stuck in decline. The six-person High Point delegation included individuals from the public and nonprofit sectors, all of whom jointly attended sessions covering topics such as access to capital, improving rental housing, and land banking.





“We were having ‘ah-ha’ moments,” shared McNair. “The Leadership Institute helped us get a better feel for how we should be thinking strategically about vacancy and abandonment. Everyone came back very excited.”

During the Leadership Institute, Community Progress staff also facilitated intensive action planning sessions for each of the participating cities, including High Point, to ensure that training takeaways translated into reform.

Once home, officials in High Point wasted no time making investments in policies and practices that support neighborhood vitality. The City increased code enforcement staff from 2 to 6 officers and reorganized the division under the Department of Community Development. The City Council published a strategic plan that highlighted code enforcement benchmarks for the first time ever. Additionally, in November of 2015, the City partnered with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro’s Center for Housing and Community Studies to conduct a housing market analysis to help guide future investments and policy decisions.

Moreover, numerous city officials and City Council members have stayed connected to Community Progress through attendance at our Code Enforcement Academy and the Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference.

“The impetus for policy change came from the knowledge that something could be done,” McNair noted. “We’re changing the organizational culture here in High Point. There are discussions taking place at the highest level that didn’t exist before. Instead of talking about how ugly a building is, we’re talking about what we’re going to do about it.”

“We were having ‘ah-ha’ moments,” shared McNair. “The Leadership Institute helped us get a better feel for how we should be thinking strategically about vacancy and abandonment. Everyone came back very excited.”

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM GARY, INDIANA

In early 2015, we named the city of Gary, Indiana as an awardee of our highly competitive Technical Assistance Scholarship Program (TASP). In their successful application to the program, Gary sought assistance assessing the City's data and information management systems and practices in order to better tackle vacancy and abandonment.

Local leadership was dedicated to improving Gary, but faced significant barriers to making efficient and equitable change in a cash-strapped city. After several months of engaging with Community Progress, the City had a clear path forward and had demonstrated the strength of its leadership and resolve.

Gary bears all the scars of former industrial legacy cities—the loss of industrial jobs and population, white flight, concentration of poverty, and decades of disinvestment. At its peak during the middle of last century, more than 178,000 people lived in Gary. Today, the population doesn't break 79,000.

The conditions that Gary faced combined with the strength of its leadership's commitment to addressing vacancy and abandonment made the City an ideal candidate for TASP. Through TASP we make our technical assistance available, at a highly subsidized rate, to communities that are ready to innovate.





We conducted a number of site visits to Gary, led a community forum on blight and vacancy, and interviewed city officials before releasing a report with recommendations. The report's suggestions included soliciting philanthropic support to bolster community development work, improving working conditions for code enforcement inspectors, relocating code enforcement officers to the Building Department, and addressing most code violations through the administrative process instead of the criminal one. Addressing code violations through the administrative process provides the City with a mechanism for seizing properties from "bad actors" and returning them to responsible ownership.

Rodney Pol, Assistant City Attorney for the City of Gary, reported that Gary has made progress toward implementing these strategies and that addressing vacancy and abandonment is regarded as a top priority. Following our TASP engagement, weekly interdepartmental meetings took place with the goal of instituting the recommendations. This degree of interdepartmental communication surrounding vacancy and abandonment was a first for the City. Gary was also awarded a substantial grant through Knight Cities Challenge for a vacant property deconstruction project. Additionally, Lake County, which encompasses Gary, formed a Land Bank Authority this past year.

Rodney feels strongly that working with Community Progress significantly shaped Gary's progress towards revitalizing its neighborhoods. "It was absolutely necessary to have an outside source step in and make the recommendations," he shared. "[Our] process had been so embedded, any change would had to have come from the outside. That's why it was so great."

"It was absolutely necessary to have an outside source step in and make the recommendations, [Our] process had been so embedded, any change would had to have come from the outside. That's why it was so great."

CARING NEIGHBORS
MAKE GOOD
COMMUNITIES

Our mission is to ensure that communities have the vision, knowledge, and systems needed to transform vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated 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.

WE THANK OUR 2015 CONTRIBUTORS FOR
MAKING THIS WORK POSSIBLE.

Charles Stewart
Mott Foundation

Oak Foundation

Ford Foundation

Foundation for
Louisiana

JPMorgan Chase
Foundation

John S. and James L.
Knight Foundation

The Kresge
Foundation



2015 FINANCIALS

CONDENSED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

as of December 31, 2015

Cash and Investments	\$ 2,548,583
Other Current Assets	94,581
Net Fixed Assets	<u>14,680</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 2,657,844
Accounts Payable	\$ 65,245
Deferred Revenue	54,000
Other Liabilities	<u>96,222</u>
Total Liabilities	<u>215,467</u>
Board Designated Reserves	1,850,000
Other Unrestricted Net Assets	146,157
Temp Restricted Net Assets	<u>446,220</u>
Total Net Assets	<u>2,442,377</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$ 2,657,844

CONDENSED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

for the year ended December 31, 2015

	Unrestricted	Temp Restricted	Total
Foundation Grants	\$ -	\$ 1,425,064	\$ 1,425,064
Fees for Services	258,899	-	258,899
Event Registration & Sponsorship	551,190	-	551,190
Other Income	<u>15,052</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15,052</u>
Total Revenue	<u>825,141</u>	<u>1,425,064</u>	<u>2,250,205</u>
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	2,773,208	(2,773,208)	-
Expenses:			
Program Services	3,075,135	-	3,075,135
Fundraising	143,863	-	143,863
General & Administrative	<u>775,474</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>775,474</u>
Total Expenses	<u>3,994,472</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,994,472</u>
Increase(Decrease) in Net Assets	(396,123)	(1,348,144)	(1,744,267)
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	<u>2,392,280</u>	<u>1,794,364</u>	<u>4,186,644</u>
Net Assets - End of Year	\$ 1,996,157	\$ 446,220	\$ 2,442,377

Source: 2015 Center for Community Progress audited financials.



HEADQUARTERS

111 E. Court St.
Suite 2C-1
Flint, MI 48502

(877) 542-4842

 communityprogress.net

 [@CProgressNews](https://twitter.com/CProgressNews)

 facebook.com/CenterForCommunityProgress

NATIONAL OFFICE

1001 Connecticut Ave. NW
Suite 1235
Washington, DC 20036

