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Center for  
**COMMUNITY PROGRESS**

Turning Vacant Spaces into Vibrant Places

**2011 ANNUAL REPORT**

## Message from the Chairman of the Board

Dear friends,

When I became Chairman of the Board for the Center for Community Progress in 2010, the mortgage foreclosure crisis was beginning to crest – and the scope and the consequences of this disaster were unfolding like a tsunami in cities and towns across the United States. At the same time, a growing number of these same communities had begun to band together at the local and regional level to explore – and embrace – some of the country’s cutting-edge strategies to address abandonment and blight.

The Center for Community Progress has been at the heart of this work. We’ve worked with towns and cities at the micro-economic level on initiatives that range from maintaining abandoned properties to protecting residents and neighborhoods from cascading blight. We’ve worked at the macro level to encourage our nation’s leaders and opinion-makers to adopt the long-range planning and strategic vision required not only to stave off disaster but to re-envision and build our blocks, neighborhoods and towns to meet the challenges and opportunities of the new century.

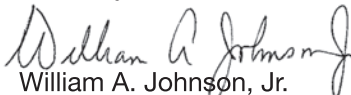
Property – how we use it, what we do with and on it, and how we integrate it into the economic and civic heartbeat of our communities – is at the core of the long-term viability of our cities and towns. Land has the capacity to serve as a tremendous asset in reimagining our nation as an economically and socially dynamic beacon of democracy. And underutilized, abandoned and vacant land and properties have the parallel power to undermine our communities’ spirit of dynamism and hope.

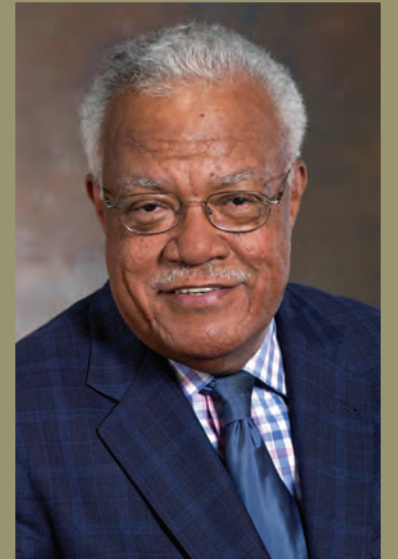
This annual report – our first for the Center of Community Progress – describes the challenges we’re helping communities confront, and the ways in which we’re working collaboratively to empower cities, towns, counties and states to take control of and convert liabilities into assets and flashpoints for community transformation and affirmation.

It’s been said of Community Progress that we have a lot of moving parts – that there are virtually no areas of endeavor, from crafting legislation to helping neighborhoods build support from stakeholders, in which we do not offer assistance. And that’s true. There’s a reason for this – Community Progress’ founders and funders recognized early on that what was required to address this most profound and thorny of issues was the ability and expertise to connect people with common goals and transcend partisan debate to support the greater good of our communities. Community Progress consistently brings the kind of inspired knowledge and support to the table that fosters real collaboration and the sense of common purpose that has always made this nation great.

I have been immensely inspired by what we’ve been able to accomplish in two short years. I know that in the months and years to come, as we build our network of partners and peers and the insights and goodwill that these networks engender, we’re helping to support thousands of those who share our commitment to the economic security and social vitality of our cities and towns.

Sincerely,

  
William A. Johnson, Jr.  
Chairman of the Board of Directors  
Center for Community Progress



## The Power of Transformative Expertise: Community Progress in New Orleans

In New Orleans' Lower 9th Ward, rows of newly renovated properties line the street on one side of the neighborhood – a powerful indicator of the area's revival in the wake of years of population decline, exacerbated by Hurricane Katrina and a national housing crisis that has forced millions of Americans from their homes. New Orleans' recent efforts to combat blight have emerged from a dynamic collaboration between the New Orleans Vacant Properties Initiative (NOVPI) and Mayor Mitch Landrieu's administration.

Beginning in 2008, NOVPI, which launched as a joint venture between LISC and the National Vacant Properties Campaign under the direction of Nicole Heyman before NVPC merged with Community Progress, has been providing the City of New Orleans and local stakeholders with technical assistance to formulate and implement an effective blight eradication strategy.

"Community Progress has helped us in many ways," said Jeff Hebert, Executive Director of the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority. "Their work has been critical to the success achieved thus far, from assisting in the development of our comprehensive blight-reduction strategy to providing best practices in land banking that will shape our long term strategy for properties abandoned after Hurricane Katrina."

To help decision makers understand the broader picture, the effort has included a focus on data-driven decision-making and the coordination of blight-tracking systems. At the heart of that effort has been the City's restructuring of its code enforcement strategy, undertaken with the close assistance of Community Progress. And that strategy is working: by the end of 2011, over 28,000 units had been inspected, 1,002 writs had been filed to seize and sell properties that went unmaintained by their owners, and 2,280 units were demolished. Another 1,750 lots were cleared of debris last year alone – including nearly 900 through a pilot program in the city's Lower 9th Ward where community members took responsibility for clearing and mowing vacant lots.

The program has also brought hope and a renewed sense of community to people in a city devastated by Katrina. The transformation of blighted properties in the wake of the 2005 hurricane has helped move New Orleans' population trajectory along a slow, steady rise. While much work remains to be done, Community Progress and the City of New Orleans are working together to promote dynamic community development, neighborhood stability, economic growth, and a best practices model for blight reduction that can be adopted and adapted by other cities across the nation.



*"The success we have achieved in a short time in New Orleans in reducing blight and abandonment would not have been feasible without the support of Community Progress."*

– Jeff Hebert, Director,  
New Orleans  
Redevelopment Authority

# INNOVATION, LEADERSHIP, SUPPORT:

The Center for Community Progress • January 2010 – January 2012

When the Center for Community Progress launched in January 2010, counties and municipalities across America were facing unprecedented challenges: the fallout from the mortgage foreclosure crisis continued to weaken the nation's housing markets, and communities around the country faced growing budget deficits alongside depressed property values and neighborhoods decimated by vacant and abandoned properties.

Community Progress brought together the nation's leading vacant property revitalization advocates – including the National Vacant Properties Campaign and the Genesee Institute – to help communities address the rising stock of vacant and abandoned properties that undermine neighborhoods' social and economic viability.

In the last two years, we've taken our expertise and our commitment to reimagine vacant and abandoned property as urban assets on the road, working with federal, state and local officials across the nation to identify and launch strategies that focus on both the immediate challenges of rampant foreclosures and the broader systems and legal tools that assist communities in managing problem properties over the long term. From helping state legislators in New York to craft and successfully pass a landmark land banking bill that will bring 10 land banks to the state, to our New Orleans Vacant Property Initiative, which is participating in a three-year project to reduce blight by 10,000 homes, our work seeks to stabilize chronically at-risk neighborhoods and rebuild our cities into vibrant, ecologically sustainable economic and cultural hubs.

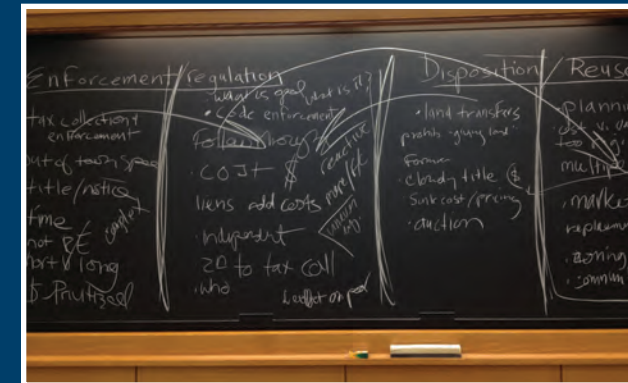
Our commitment to revitalization has helped us emerge as a national leader in the dialogue to address the national crisis of foreclosed, vacant and abandoned property. At the same time, we've be-

come a leading source of expertise and support for community efforts to create practical solutions to vacant and abandoned properties – support that we provide through an innovative, multi-pronged approach that amalgamates policy work, capacity-building, legislative expertise, knowledge-sharing and hands-on technical assistance.

In the last two years, we've provided assistance and advice in more than sixteen states, including efforts to develop and build support for land bank legislation in New York, Missouri, Georgia, Arkansas, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Nebraska. We've helped local leaders throughout the nation understand the benefits of a range of tools and approaches, from enhanced code enforcement strategies and information systems to creditor responsibility laws and planning and reuse strategies that prevent vacant properties from blighting the surrounding neighborhood.

How does this play out in practice? In Flint, Michigan, a hotel vacant for over 30 years has reopened its doors as housing and gathering space and is spurring a renewal of Flint's downtown. In New Orleans' lower 9th Ward, neighborhood residents worked alongside ex-prisoners to clean up nearly 1,000 vacant lots, bringing a renewed sense of hope to the community as it continues to rebuild.

Community Progress' highly tailored technical assistance and capacity building efforts dovetail with our Land Bank conferences, our Reclaiming Vacant Properties conferences, and our intensive Community Progress Leadership Institutes – tools that connect local communities with the skills, the expertise, the networks and the vision to create real transformation on the ground. Our in-depth experience in working



## Empowering Communities & Changing the Game in New York

For Buffalo, New York – like cities across western and central New York – factory closings and residential flight have left more than 10,000 properties vacant, deterring investors and posing safety issues and rampant fire hazards. In 2007, over 40 percent of all fires in Buffalo were in vacant buildings.

“Buffalo was facing one of the most severe abandoned property problems in the nation,” said former state Assemblyman Sam Hoyt. “I was constantly looking for examples of urban revitalization success stories, and in my research I consistently found the work of Community Progress cited as pioneers in the rebirth of distressed cities, so I contacted them to ask for assistance.”

Community Progress worked closely with state legislators to address the abandoned property crisis in Buffalo and across the state, with a key focus on helping people understand how tools like land banking could benefit local communities. Those efforts ultimately led to the passage of the New York State Land Bank Act in 2011.

“Vacant properties pose a looming challenge for neighborhoods that could otherwise be poised for revitalization,” says Dominic Robinson of CenterState Corporation for Economic Opportunity in Syracuse. “Community Progress did an incredible job of educating stakeholders about how land banking can be used to stem vacancy and blight.”

New York’s land bank legislation will create ten land banks tailored to each municipality’s goals – whether that means selling a vacant home to a responsible occupant willing to rehab it, or demolishing a blighted property and turning the lot into a community garden. The Empire State Development Corporation, which is overseeing the effort, is currently assessing applications.

“We have to deal with the negative consequences of these properties – the fire hazards, the public safety issues, the impact on nearby property values and neighborhoods as a whole,” says Newburgh Fire Chief Mike Vatter, who’s worked closely with fellow Newburgh officials on local land banking plans. “Land banking gives us a powerful tool to repurpose land that otherwise could remain blighted for years.”

That’s a huge advance in a state where the volume of abandoned housing stock has overwhelmed county and municipal authorities, hurt property values and depressed communities. “Thanks to the help we got from Community Progress, it wasn’t just about creating the legislation, it was about getting people solid information and generating the excitement about how land banking can function as a robust, effective tool to make a real difference,” says Robinson.

*“While I am proud that a bill that I first introduced nearly 5 years ago is now considered to be the gold standard for land bank laws in the United States, I can say without hesitation that there would not be such a law in New York State were it not for Community Progress.”*

*– Sam Hoyt, Regional President of the Empire State Development Corporation*



with states and municipalities to educate and advocate for systemic change has helped us build a vast national network of partners and supporters of revitalization efforts in local communities. We continually seek to grow this network in the coming year as we continue to help municipalities rethink and reuse existing urban assets and retool the way they manage the land that forms the backbone of our communities.

### Our Support for Legislative Reform:

Crafting, passing, and implementing the underlying structural and legislative changes that address a specific state or locality’s direct needs has been a critical aspect of our work. In 2011, New York State passed groundbreaking land banking legislation – legislation that Community Progress played a central role in crafting – that will bring 10 land banks to the state. New York currently faces a volume of abandoned housing stock that has overwhelmed counties and municipalities, and the New York State Land Bank Act will allow communities to repurpose vacant properties consistent with each municipality’s goals.

The Empire State Development Corporation (ESD) – the state agency mandated with oversight of New York’s land bank efforts – has now brought Community Progress on board to help with the next phase of the state’s efforts, including advising ESD in developing an application process for cities and towns seeking to create land banks and shaping criteria to ensure that land banks function transparently, responsibly and effectively. Our work includes training sessions and direct assistance to ESD staff and their partners on the basics of land banks, best practices of land bank models around the country, and specific insight into how this information can best be used to evaluate land bank applications. We also conducted initial site visits and a statewide land banking workshop in March 2012, and will provide additional training and technical assistance to both ESD and the state’s first 10 land banks, which should be selected and operational by the end of 2012.

In Georgia, Community Progress brought together leaders from the state’s existing land banks and local stakeholders for a series of work sessions to talk about community needs, and at the same time worked with Atlanta’s DeKalb County officials to help them create a county land bank. In 2011, the state’s local land banks came together to create the Georgia Association of Land Bank Authorities, and based on our input asked Community Progress to create new legislation that builds on best practices and enhances regional cooperation to tackle broad patterns of vacancy and abandonment. That legislation was introduced in the Georgia Senate in the spring of 2011.

As part of that effort, Community Progress convened a series of meetings beginning in the summer of 2011 with stakeholders, counties, tax commissioners and city officials to provide education about the legislation, which passed the state senate by a vote of 49-0 in March 2012. Georgia officials also participated in Community Progress’ first webinar in December 2011, which explored the partnerships and strategies that worked in New York – part of

an effort to strengthen the networking and information-sharing strengths of Community Progress Leadership Institute participants – and allowing Georgia officials to refine their approach as they educated state legislators about the initiative.

The Georgia experience underscores how Community Progress endeavors produce tangible benefits for local stakeholders, and more broadly the benefits of Community Progress-initiated and sustained networking opportunities. Georgia’s current initiatives are part of a dramatic uptick in interest on the state level for land bank legislation in states that include Ohio and Arkansas – where land bank legislation has already passed – and Nebraska and Missouri, where Community Progress has supported legislative efforts that have been introduced and achieved significant progress in very short periods of time.



## Inspiring Revitalization through Little Rock's Land Bank

Nearly sixty long-vacant, blighted properties in Little Rock, Arkansas are being turned into housing for public employees by the city's Land Bank Commission – a story with roots in a not-so-chance collaboration between two determined women and the Center for Community Progress' Dan Kildee.

The path to a land bank began in 2005, when Little Rock Board of Directors member Joan Adcock and former City Director Myra Jones flew up to Flint, Michigan to hear Dan speak at a land bank conference.

"Our city was becoming overrun with blight, and we really needed some help," said Adcock. "Myra had seen an article that mentioned land banking and the Genesee County Land Bank's work, so we decided to go and find out what it was all about. During a break in the session, I asked Dan if he would come to Little Rock, because what he had is what we needed, and he said absolutely. That started the fantastic relationship we have today."

Dan's visit helped outline how land banking could help, and the women got to work. They put together legislation, met with officials, and mounted a campaign to raise awareness and support – winning approval for the Little Rock Land Bank Commission in 2008.

"This project is an important part of what the city can do to deal with a substantial number of vacant or abandoned properties and houses," says Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola.

The land bank focused on assembling property near landmarks and institutions like Little Rock Central High School and the local children's hospital – with the Little Rock Board of Directors recently approving a proposal to distribute 56 properties to employees of the city and the Little Rock School District, free of charge.

"One of our biggest challenges was the negative stigma of blighted neighborhoods, which many people saw as unsafe and undesirable," said Adcock. "By targeting areas that also have key assets to draw people to live nearby, we transform these properties into marketable lots for development. It took time until we started seeing results, but now people are very excited about it, new homes are being built, and communities are being revitalized. Our land bank has been essential in bringing that about."

Myra Jones died suddenly in February 2012, but she leaves behind her friend Joan Adcock and the many people of Little Rock with whom she partnered – and who are carrying on her commitment to the revitalization of her beloved city.

*"Land Banking has proved a dynamic tool in bringing renewal to Little Rock's neighborhoods. By coordinating revitalization efforts and concentrating resources in our blighted areas, it's helped us address challenges and allow residents to realize an impact and investment in their communities by seeing new development happening in the area."*

– Joan Adcock,  
City Director



## Our Conferences, Leadership Institutes and Intensive Trainings:

Working with communities to change the way they think about land is at the core of what we do: by rethinking and reusing existing urban assets, we can work to create dynamic and sustainable cities. The series of conferences and leadership institutes that Community Progress has held since its inception is crucial to spreading this message, offering training in the range of strategies to tackle vacant and abandoned land, helping grow both a national community of practice and increase stakeholders' relationships to peers, and empowering civic leaders with the comprehensive skills they need to transform the mechanisms and tools they use to address vacant and abandoned properties.



Community Progress convened its first **Community Progress Leadership Institute (CPLI)** in March, 2011 at Harvard University, for 82 people from four states – New Jersey, Tennessee, Minnesota and Georgia – who received intensive training and technical assistance on a variety of land reform concepts designed to unlock the value of forgotten urban land, plus extensive follow-up technical support from Community Progress to address individual issues. That first CPLI built on the July 2009 Community Land Reform Institute convened by the Genesee Institute, one of the two major organizations that came together to form Community Progress, with participants from New York State, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan and the City of Baltimore participating.

Community Progress just hosted our second CPLI in March 2012 at Harvard Law School with local and state officials from Illinois, Indiana and Louisiana. The gatherings have sparked practical progress on the ground in participants' communities, as well as national interest among elected officials and civic leaders for our work, and are helping build a growing network of stakeholders and practitioners in cities and states across the nation.

That first CPLI produced some powerful synergies – and supporting those kinds of synergies is a core part of the organizational strength we bring to our work. In the fall of 2011, for example, we convened a code enforcement roundtable with our Baltimore partners that included people on the front lines in our host city, plus participants from Atlanta, Memphis and New Orleans. Much of the impetus for this gathering stemmed from our commitment to working with civic leaders to identify areas in which they need help – and to meet those needs by pulling together the experts and leaders in the field to brainstorm options and shape a path forward that balances shared issues with the unique needs of a particular city. That remarkable brainstorming session gave participants the opportunity to learn, identify reforms that

would work for their cities – and envision how they could implement those changes.

This October, we'll bring together community development practitioners from around the country in Kalamazoo for our **2012 Land Bank Conference** – an invaluable opportunity for stakeholders from cities and towns across the nation to learn about and share strategies to learn more about mission-driven land banking as a powerful tool to repurpose vacant, abandoned, and foreclosed properties. This conference has become a linchpin for the national dialogue on using land banking as a tool to efficiently acquire, hold, manage, and develop tax-foreclosed property to help communities realize their potential as drivers of the new American economy.

This conference has grown significantly over the last two years, increasing from an attendance of 140 in 2009 to over 400 attendees from 30 states joining us for the June 2011 conference in Detroit. Speakers tackled topics that ranged from land banking and organizational development to greening, title issues, technology and more – all of the crucial issues that local communities and county and state

## Revitalization in the American Heartland: Flint's Durant Hotel

Once a vacant, crumbling reminder of Flint's economic downturn and a symbol of a decaying downtown, the historic Durant Hotel building has been transformed into a symbol of the city's rejuvenation and the foundation for a vibrant urban area. After laying vacant for more than 35 years, the Durant's \$30 million renovation was made possible by the confluence of two inspired forces: the re-imagining of the property by community residents, and the ability of the local land bank – with the help of many private and public funding partners, most notably the Mott and Ford Foundations – to help the community realize its vision.

A variety of redevelopment ideas for the hotel had been proposed but never realized over the last three decades. Enter the Genesee County Land Bank, then led by Community Progress' own Dan Kildee and Amy Hovey. The land bank listened to the community clamor for a viable redevelopment effort, then laid the groundwork for and led the transformation of the vacant structure into a 93-unit residential building with commercial and office space on the lower floors. The Durant reopened its doors to residents in the fall of 2010 and reached full occupancy less than a year later. The hotel's beautifully renovated 400-person capacity ballroom has hosted scores of community events, including a high school prom and dozens of weddings.

The Durant redevelopment marks a major step forward for the City of Flint, and has already generated renewed excitement in urban living and brought new residents and businesses to the downtown area. With close proximity to the University of Michigan/Flint, the sheer beauty of the rehab and the positive response to the project, the Durant has spearheaded resurgence in the northern section of downtown Flint. The project has been heralded as a successful model for future development in the area and a prime example of the power and promise of land banks.

The Center for Community Progress and its staff (and the Genesee Institute before it) have been deeply involved in shaping and supporting the creation of Flint's land banking efforts. Today, that land bank is playing a critical role in bringing vacant buildings and land back into productive reuse in a city that has become emblematic of the effort to replace post-industrial decline with revitalization and hope.



*“The Durant redevelopment is an important step forward for our community. The building's transformation has brought new residents and businesses into the heart of our city and is now acting as an anchor for further revitalization in an expanded area including neighborhoods and commercial corridors around downtown Flint.”*

– Flint Mayor  
Dayne Walling

agencies must understand to begin to effectively grapple with vacant and abandoned property.

Finally, our **Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference** has evolved into one of the nation's leading forums on tackling vacant and abandoned property. Our 2010 RVP conference drew nearly 1,000 government officials, academics, community advocates and non-profit leaders from across the country, and offered a chance for those on the cutting edge of revitalization efforts to share their expertise and help other attendees jumpstart efforts in their own communities. Among the key takeaways for attendees were the tremendous benefits of accessing collective expertise and building partnerships to turn communities around.

The 2012 RVP conference, scheduled for June in New Orleans, is expected to be even more dynamic, drawing the nation's leading experts and hundreds of local practitioners from across the nation and beyond the U.S. borders. This year's RVP is themed around the endeavor to remake America for the 21st Century, with more than one hundred speakers and presenters gathering over three days for a stimulating mix of breakouts, specialized trainings, plenaries, and coordinated peer-to-peer learning and networking activities designed to provide practical expertise and durable insights that empower participants when they return to their home communities.

### Our Technical Assistance, Capacity Building and Outreach:

Since Community Progress' inception, we've provided direct technical assistance and capacity building for hundreds of local governments, community stakeholders, land banks, non-profit organizations, grassroots groups and their partners. This work includes helping our partners acquire the necessary skills and expertise to build capacity and im-

prove the effectiveness of land use strategies and revitalization efforts for the long-term benefit of community residents. Our customized technical assistance ranges from helping localities assess the inventory of foreclosed, vacant and abandoned properties to developing and implementing strategies related to the prevention, acquisition and repurposing of those properties. We currently provide technical assistance in a range of our core areas of expertise – from system assessments and tax reform to code enforcement, land banking and reuse planning – on projects underway or planned in more than a dozen states, including Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Tennessee.



These efforts, led by Kim Graziani, Community Progress' Vice President of Capacity Building, have dovetailed with our education and outreach work over the last two years through national organizations and forums, including presentations

across the country by Community Progress staff at venues that range from major national conferences to academic exchanges. Our outreach effort includes presentations at major national conferences, including the American Planning Association, the National Community Action Foundation, the UM/Urban Land Institute Real Estate Forum, the New Partners for Smart Growth conferences, the Living Cities Sustainable Communities Boot Camp and the National Brownfields Conference.

The Center for Community Progress' comprehensive approach to neighborhood revitalization has helped regions throughout the country rethink their approach to urban communities and define a focused and responsible urban land-use agenda. By targeting the immediate challenges of foreclosures while providing innovative remedies to the underlying systems that exacerbate the problems of vacant properties, Community Progress is helping Amer-

## Garden Grows into Community-Wide Project in Eastside Kalamazoo

In Kalamazoo's Eastside neighborhood, amidst boarded up and sagging structures and abandoned houses stripped for scrap, a garden has begun to grow – and it's spreading its roots into the broader community.

In 2010, longtime Eastside residents Dale Abbott and Tomme Maile acquired a vacant lot adjacent to their home from the Kalamazoo County Land Bank, and transformed it into a small garden. The Center for Community Progress has worked extensively with the Kalamazoo Land Bank since it was founded, and we continue to provide the agency with technical assistance – including strategies to support reuse projects like neighborhood gardens.

When the land bank subsequently came into possession of three vacant lots flanking Abbott and Maile's garden, it sought them out to expand their garden to those vacant lots to create a vibrant community space.

Over the course of the next year, Kalamazoo County Land Bank staff worked with Abbott and Maile and other neighborhood residents to create a holistic plan for the area. That plan will eventually become the Trybal Revival Eastside Eco-Garden, and vacant lots that once held boarded up homes will now house a garden bursting with fruits and perennial plants.

"With the Kalamazoo County Land Bank, we coordinated an effort last fall to build a garden resource center that will house tools and equipment for other community gardeners to share," said Dale Abbott. "It was done entirely with volunteer labor, and it was funded by the land bank."

Kelly Clarke, Executive Director of the Kalamazoo County Land Bank, sees the community garden as an important community recreational space – and the land bank as a powerful solution to foreclosed and abandoned properties, empowering communities to turn problems into solutions that benefit neighborhoods and the people who inhabit them. "The garden brings a significant improvement to the formerly vacant land that was just sitting there," said Clarke. "I'm excited about it being a space for people to gather, interact with one another and garden. We have visions for a community greenhouse on the site, and have been very impressed with the residents and the energy and enthusiasm they've brought to this project."

The garden resource shed is opening its doors for the first time this spring, enabling the community to borrow tools and access seeds and gardening materials. And this past January, the Kalamazoo Planning Commission approved a special-use permit to build a 2,300-square-foot greenhouse to be used for year-round gardening and classes, bringing to the community a source of fresh produce and a space for collaboration and cooperation in the effort to revive downtown Kalamazoo.

*"The Kalamazoo County Land Bank brings a new tool to the table because it provides access to vacant land, so for those folks in urban neighborhoods who want to improve the community – through redevelopment, community gardening, or a commitment to productive reuse – we're able to connect them to the lots and resources that they need."*

*- Kelly Clarke,  
Executive Director of  
Kalamazoo County Land Bank*



ica's cities forge a sustainable path towards renewal. Our technical assistance work underscores the diversity of our experience, including for two of our largest state-oriented, place-based initiatives:

### Louisiana:

Our work in New Orleans and across the state of Louisiana through Community Progress' New Orleans Vacant Properties Initiative (NOVPI) is emblematic of our effort to empower stakeholders to identify a vision for local land use and utilize our vast knowledge base to help them realize their goals.

Led by Nicole Heyman, Vice President-New Orleans Vacant Properties Initiative, for the Center for Community Progress, the project has played a critical role in formulating New Orleans' blight eradication strategy. We've worked in lockstep with the City of New Orleans to enhance and implement code enforcement, which we helped identify as a critical arena in need

of systemic reform, and with the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA) on land banking and acquisition, disposition and reuse strategies.

For example, we provided the technical assistance that allowed the City to combine its housing and health code departments, create new workflow systems, establish a hearings bureau that supports consistency and transparency in property maintenance policy and procedures, and implement wholesale improvements that have vastly improved the City's ability to identify and address problem properties. Our work to improve the lien foreclosure process has cut the time it takes to move to remediate problem properties by more than half, from 12-18 months to 3-6 months. Our work included establishing a loaned executive program for the City's Code Enforcement Department and bringing on board former City of Chula Vista Code Enforce-

ment Director Doug Leeper to support the effort, and empowering community residents to participate in developing neighborhood-based strategies to remediate blight.

Statewide, we're collaborating with leaders from Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Shreveport, Monroe, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Alexandria, New Iberia and Ruston, as well as with representatives from the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, NORA and non-profit and philanthropic groups, on vacant and blighted property reclamation and reuse.



That includes our support for legislative reforms that ease obstacles to reuse, and to provide statewide technical assistance in code enforcement, land banking and tax foreclosure reform. The effort is being expanded to a wider network of local governments and non-profit housing and economic development groups, to provide stakeholders with the tools they

need to curb crime and blight caused by problem properties and improve the quality of life in underserved and forgotten communities.

### Michigan:

An essential component of our technical assistance and capacity building has been our work to support community efforts to leverage funds through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP). Land banking first appeared in federal legislation in the summer of 2008, before Community Progress was created, but both Dan Kildee and Frank Alexander – two of the co-founders of Community Progress – testified in 2008 in support of this legislation, which ultimately evolved into the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, with Community Progress co-founder Jennifer Leonard, our Vice President and Director of Advocacy and Outreach, among the core participants in the advocacy efforts to create the pro-

gram. One of five permitted uses for those funds authorized by the Housing and Economic Recovery Act (HERA) was land banks.

In Michigan, we've partnered with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority and local governments and land banks through Michigan's NSP 2 consortium, which received nearly \$224 million – the largest single grant in the nation – to support revitalization efforts in a dozen of Michigan's hardest hit communities, from Benton Harbor to Detroit.

Community Progress also works with a handful of partners on the community engagement and technical teams for the Detroit Works Project, a sweeping initiative to support long-term planning to improve the physical, social and economic landscape of the city.

We've continued to provide sweeping technical assistance – from educating on how to create an affordable housing trust fund, analyzing an inventory of vacant property and marketing newly renovated homes to providing real estate development assistance and strategic planning for newly developed land banks – to Michigan land banks and community groups. In Flint, for example, we're providing strategic planning and support for the Flint River Corridor Alliance, a dynamic mix of government, non-profit and private sector stakeholders working to revitalize the river as a community asset for residents, businesses and visitors. For 2012, we've just completed the new strategic plan for the Michigan State Land Bank Fast Track Authority (MLB) – our first strategic planning effort for a state agency – and are continuing our work with CEDAM, the Community Economic Development Association of Michigan, including facilitating their Comprehensive Community Development Institute Training Program for Commercial and Residential Development.

## Looking ahead for Community Progress and the nation:

Our work over the last two years has been grounded in our commitment to identifying and promulgating practical strategies and long-term policy that helps communities grapple with vacant and abandoned properties over the long term. That commitment has included supporting and shaping the national dialogue on these issues – a role we look forward to continuing to play as the nation continues to reset the way it thinks about turning vacant spaces into vibrant places.



Our first two years have seen us extend our reach, expand our staff, and positively impact a growing number of national, local and state efforts to address abandonment and blight. We continue to transform as an organization – and this year that will include the leave of absence of Community Progress co-founder and President Dan Kildee, with his responsibilities to be assumed for the interim by our able, inspired co-founder and Chief Operating Officer and Senior Vice President of Capacity Building, Amy Hovey.

What Community Progress has come to represent is much bigger than any individual staff member, and the platform of expertise we bring to the table for our community partners and clients continues to grow in reach and depth. Our founders, our board, our funders, our staff and most importantly, the communities and stakeholders with whom we work every day – these are the people whose passion and vision inspire our work as we move into our third year of operation. It is this support that makes possible our abiding goals as an organization – to empower communities and their residents to repurpose vacant properties into sources of economic and civic vitality over the long term, and to transform the land that lies at the heart of our communities into positive community assets going forward.

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## Our Funders

Initial funding to launch Community Progress has come from the generous support of the Ford Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. We are also grateful for support from the Foundation for Louisiana, the Greater New Orleans Foundation, the Surdna Foundation, Enterprise Community Partners and Fannie Mae, as well as to Bank of America, the Kresge Foundation, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the Rockefeller Foundation and Smart Growth America, which have supported our work in the past.

## Our Staff

**Daniel T. Kildee**  
President and Chief Executive Officer

**Amy Hovey**  
Chief Operating Officer and  
Senior Vice President of Capacity Building

**Jennifer R. Leonard**  
Vice President and  
Director of Advocacy & Outreach

**Frank S. Alexander**  
Co-Founder

**Kim Graziani**  
Vice President of Capacity Building

**Nicole Heyman, JD, LLM**  
Vice President - New Orleans Vacant  
Properties Initiative

**Michael Freeman**  
Program Director - Capacity Building

**Courtney Knox**  
Program Officer - Capacity Building

**Amanda VanKuren**  
Business Manager

**Leah Landes**  
Executive Assistant to the President

**Jeanine Graessle**  
Field Staff Support Director

**Alan Mallach**  
Senior Fellow

**Wil Griffin**  
Detroit NSP 2 Project Manager

**Paul C. Brophy**  
Senior Advisor

**Joseph Schilling**  
Senior Advisor

## Our Board of Directors

(January 2010 - January 2012)

**William A. Johnson, Jr., Chair**  
Former Mayor, Rochester, New York  
Professor, Rochester Institute of Technology  
Rochester, NY

**Geoff Anderson**  
President and CEO, Smart Growth America  
Washington, DC

**Robert Beckley**  
Professor and Dean Emeritus,  
Taubman College of Architecture and Urban  
Planning, University of Michigan  
Ann Arbor, MI

**Daniel T. Kildee**  
President, Center for Community Progress  
Flint, MI

**Ellen M. Lee**  
Senior Vice President,  
Greater New Orleans Foundation  
New Orleans, LA

**Lisa Levy**  
Portland, OR

**Phil Shaltz**  
President, Shaltz Automation  
Flint, MI

**Diane Silva-Martinez**  
Chief Deputy City Attorney,  
Code Enforcement Unit—City of San Diego  
San Diego, CA

**Michael Tierney**  
Chief Operating Office (retired), Local  
Initiatives Support Corporation  
Washington, DC