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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **LEADERS COME TOGETHER TO FORGE PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION** ***Leadership Institute to Tackle Abandonment of Properties***

**CAMBRIDGE, MA. (March 15, 2011)** – With foreclosures and business closings affecting cities long considered stable as well as those experiencing long term decline, state and local officials from 14 communities will gather in Boston this month to learn and share ideas about effective strategies to address the vacant properties left in their wake. On March 15th, at Harvard University, the Center for Community Progress, the nation's preeminent organization concerned with prevention and adaptive reuse of vacant buildings and land, will hold its first Leadership Institute bringing together leaders from a variety of states from Georgia, Minnesota, New Jersey and Tennessee. These are diverse places, but all share a common concern with vacant properties and other challenges, many of them stemming from the recession and foreclosure crisis.

Dan Kildee, President of the Center for Community Progress and former Treasurer of Genesee County, Michigan, where he developed one of the nation's first "land banks," will lead the group through an intense curriculum touching upon key techniques for prevention, control and adaptive reuse of vacant buildings and land, including tax foreclosure reform, the land bank concept, code enforcement and land re-use planning. In addition, other Community Progress staff and experts will focus on issues of policy change and strategies for building public support for land reform efforts.

For the 14 participating sites, the Harvard sessions are only a beginning – to be followed up with visits to each community by a team of experts assembled by Community Progress, who will work with local and state governments and advocates in applying the general principles to their locales.

"As gratifying as it is to see change come to one community," says Kildee, who championed renewal efforts in post-industrial Flint, "the Leadership Institute takes our work to another level entirely. By launching our reform efforts at this kind of scale – fourteen cities in four different states – we address the problem in a way that will make a real difference. This is the best way to tackle the challenges facing so many US cities today. We can't afford to wait for things to happen in one city at a time."

The cities of Atlanta, Valdosta-Columbus, and Macon, Georgia; Minneapolis, St. Paul and Duluth, Minnesota; Newark, Millville, Jersey City and Orange/Irvington, New Jersey and Memphis, Knoxville and Chattanooga, Tennessee, along with officials from each of those four states, will be represented in the Community Progress Leadership Institute.

The initial seminars will begin on the Harvard Law School campus on Tuesday, March 15 and continue through Friday, March 18.

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The Center for Community Progress is a non-profit group with offices in Flint, MI; Washington, DC and New Orleans, LA dedicated to revitalizing and reinventing American cities. To learn more, please visit [www.communityprogress.net/](http://www.communityprogress.net/) or call (877) 542-4842.

Enterprise Community Partners, the nation's leading provider of capital and expertise for affordable housing and community development, is a sponsor of the Community Progress Leadership Institute. For more information about Enterprise, please visit [www.enterprisecommunity.org/](http://www.enterprisecommunity.org/) or call (800) 624-4298