



MEDIA CONTACT

Debra Pickett, MK Communications
312-822-0505, debra@mkcpr.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARQUETTE, INGHAM COUNTIES HONORED FOR LAND BANKING WORK ***Two Michigan Counties Receive 'Land Bank of the Year' Awards***

FLINT, MI. (June 13, 2011) – Marquette County Treasurer Anne Giroux and Ingham County Treasurer Eric Schertzing received top honors at a national gathering of experts in land reuse and reform held last week in Detroit.

The Center for Community Progress convened **Land Bank Conference 2011** as a forum for a diverse group of local officials, private developers and civic leaders to discuss how real estate resources – including vacant lots and foreclosed properties – can be used to promote economic development. Vacant and abandoned properties, once seen as a problem of only older, post-industrial cities, are now an issue for communities across markets and across the states. With foreclosures sweeping through Sunbelt neighborhoods and other cities, problem properties are now endemic to most any market that has seen a shift in real estate values and trends.

Land banking, taking control of problem properties and then redeveloping and/or disposing of them in a manner consistent with the public's interest, is a key strategy for cities and counties dealing with blight. Michigan has been a national leader in the land banking movement and the number of active land banking entities across the state is growing.

Community Progress co-founder and President Dan Kildee, formerly Genesee County treasurer and chair of its pioneering land bank, announced the "Land Bank of the Year" honorees to conference-goers from 18 states, saying "These are two great examples of the dedication and hard work it takes to create vibrant communities through the reuse of vacant, abandoned and problem properties in America's cities and towns. They are creating partnerships that truly are turning vacant spaces into vibrant spaces."

Marquette County Treasurer Anne Giroux accepted the Rural Land Bank of the Year Award, acknowledging the support of Habitat for Humanity, the County Brownfield Authority and the townships and cities of Marquette County. This year, the Marquette County Land Bank demolished a vacant middle school that will be redeveloped as 10 separate lots through Habitat for Humanity and private sale. The land bank also acquired 8 duplex units, former rentals, and rehabbed and sold them to private owner-occupants. These accomplishments were particularly notable, Kildee said, because the Land Bank has no staff and little funding, functioning solely as an extension of the treasurer's office.

Ingham County Treasurer Eric Schertzing accepted the Urban Land Bank of the Year Award for his office's innovative work in building partnerships with community organizations. In the last year, the Ingham County land bank has helped create the first farm in Lansing in over 50 years and is working with Lansing Community College to involve faculty and students in restoring vacant homes, with a focus on energy efficiency.

Land banks, as evidenced by these two examples, can be extremely flexible in their applications and uses. Because they can acquire properties more quickly than other entities, they can spot and prevent potential blight and assemble parcels of land for parks, public works projects and affordable housing initiatives. Land Bank Conference 2011 explored these and other land banking tactics in a series of workshops and interactive sessions.

###

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/ or call (877) 542-4842.