



## MEDIA ALERT

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### RECLAIMING VACANT PROPERTIES CONFERENCE OFFERS SOLUTIONS TO URBAN BLIGHT

*Cleveland, home to early innovative tactics, showcased as a model for recovery*

**WHAT:** Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference  
**WHEN:** Wednesday, Oct. 13, 2010 to Friday, Oct. 15, 2010  
**WHERE:** Renaissance Cleveland Hotel, 24 Public Sq., Cleveland, Ohio  
**WHO:** Shaun Donovan, secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich; journalist and author Alex Kotlowitz; policy makers, local government leaders, academics, nonprofit leaders

**WASHINGTON (Oct. 6, 2010)** – Despite signs of economic recovery, vacant and abandoned homes and property continue to blight cities and towns, affecting property values and providing haven for unseemly activities. News reports have long chronicled the problems facing property owners after the economy collapsed in 2008, and statistics show that more than 2 percent of owned properties and more than 10 percent of rental properties are vacant.

But hundreds of individuals and community groups are working to turn vacant properties from public eyesores to community assets, adding a new element to the story: Solutions for recovery.

Government leaders, academics, community activists and nonprofit leaders from across the country will gather to discuss these themes and more at the third national [Reclaiming Vacant Properties](#) conference, taking place Oct. 13 to 15 in Cleveland at the Renaissance Cleveland Hotel. Organized by the [Center for Community Progress](#) and [Neighborhood Progress, Inc.](#), the event will teach attendees not only about cities that have successfully reclaimed vacant areas, but also how to implement successful strategies and overcome barriers to progress at home.

“There have been modest signs of recovery, but it’s pretty apparent that this recession is still affecting municipalities in America,” said Dan Kildee, president of the Center for Community Progress. “There’s no quick fix to the problems plaguing our cities, but what we are able to do here is to offer solutions, ideas and inspiration.”

Workshops and plenary sessions that include speakers from government and nonprofit organizations touch on a wide variety of topics, including:

- Case studies of urban revitalization detailed by Mayor A.C. Wharton of Memphis and Mayor Dayne Walling of Flint, Mich.;
- Innovative ways to turn blighted properties around, including landbanking and brownfield grants;
- “Ask the Doctor,” a session which studies the anatomy of foreclosure, including what neighbors can do to combat vacant properties;
- A detailed look at the role skewed property-tax assessments are playing following the subprime mortgage debacle;

For a full list of topics and descriptions, [click here](#).

Opening remarks will be made by journalist Alex Kotlowitz, [who wrote about foreclosures in Cleveland](#) for the *New York Times Magazine* and is perhaps best-known for his book “There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America,” a fascinating chronicle of life in Chicago’s Henry Horner Homes public housing development. Shaun Donovan, secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, will deliver closing remarks.

Cleveland itself, despite being hard hit by the economic downturn, will serve as a classroom for attendees and reporters, with numerous mobile workshops showcasing the city’s efforts to combat urban blight and vacancies.

One workshop follows the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority’s HealthLine, a public transit route that runs between two major universities and the city’s major health institutions in the revitalized Euclid Corridor area. Once a symbol of wealth and opulence, population shifts changed the face of the area, taking jobs, residents and traffic with it. But efforts to revitalize the area have proven successful.

Other workshops focus on the city’s sustainability efforts; how the adaptive reuse of the Broadway Slavic Village neighborhood has turned the recession on its head, creating a thriving and stable neighborhood of choice, and how the efforts of community members contributed to the Detroit Shoreway neighborhood’s eco-village, a vibrant, energy-efficient arts district.

“Cleveland has proven to be an innovative center for solutions to urban blight,” Kildee said. “In 1992, Cuyahoga County was the first county in the country to examine the uses for brownfield land. The city has had a lot of success in combating the economic downturn. There is still work to do, but Cleveland can serve as an inspiration to the whole country.”

The Center for Community Progress is a new nonprofit organization that helps local and state governments seize the opportunity of reusing vacant and abandoned properties for the economic and social benefit of their communities.

Neighborhood Progress, Inc. (NPI) is a local funding intermediary that invests in neighborhood revitalization in Cleveland through grants to community development corporations, real estate loans, training, technical assistance and development. In recent years, NPI has added local and regional policy work and citywide programming to address the issues of foreclosures and vacancy.

For more information on the conference, please visit <http://reclaimingvacantproperties.org/>. To learn more about the Center for Community Progress, please visit [www.communityprogress.net/](http://www.communityprogress.net/) or call (877) 542-4842. To learn more about Neighborhood Progress, Inc., please visit [www.neighborhoodprogress.org](http://www.neighborhoodprogress.org) or call (216) 830-2770

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