

2014 Entry Form
(Complete one for each entry.)

Fill out the entry name *exactly* as you want it listed in the program.

Entry Name Eliminating Blight in Michigan

HFA Michigan State Housing Development Authority

Submission Contact Mary Lou Keenon

Phone 517-373-0011 Email keenonm@michigan.gov

Qualified Entries must be received by **Tuesday, July 1, 2014.**

For more information about Qualified Entries, [click here to access the 2014 Entry Rules.](#)

Use this header on the upper right corner of each page.

HFA Michigan State Housing Development Authority
Entry Name Eliminating Blight in Michigan

Communications	Homeownership	Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report <input type="checkbox"/> Promotional Materials and Newsletters <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Media	<input type="checkbox"/> Empowering New Buyers <input type="checkbox"/> Home Improvement and Rehabilitation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging New Production	<input type="checkbox"/> Multifamily Management <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation and Rehabilitation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging New Production	<input type="checkbox"/> Combating Homelessness <input type="checkbox"/> Housing for Persons with Special Needs
Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
<input type="checkbox"/> State Advocacy <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources <input type="checkbox"/> Operations <input type="checkbox"/> Technology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Special Achievement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

HFA: Michigan State Housing Development Authority
Category: Special Achievement
Entry Name: Eliminating Blight in Michigan

Overview, Background and Objective

Blight is an unsightly malady that invades communities and neighborhoods throughout the country, but it is particularly pervasive in Michigan. It creates long-lasting negative effects that malign the face of Michigan neighborhoods, increase public safety costs, contribute to foreclosures, cost jobs, and put the lives of Michigan residents in jeopardy.

In addition to rising crime rates, loss of jobs and overall economic misery, one of the most frustrating impacts that blight presented was declining property values and lessening success in foreclosure prevention efforts. As fast as we're aiding homeowners with Hardest Hit funds, these same homeowners were "giving up," based on the continued decline of values on their streets, in their neighborhoods and in their communities.

As far back as 2009, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority recognized the blight issue as one that would obstruct Michigan's economic recovery and invested millions into residential and commercial demolition in neighborhoods across the state.

The results were startling and not in a good way. Despite all the monetary investment and the successful elimination of a vast number of vacant and blighted structures, hardly a noticeable dent was made in the problem.

An Innovative Plan Responds to a State Need

MSHDA recognized that the blight issue was a complex one that needed to be tackled from more than one angle and developed a long-term plan to invest substantial resources into addressing each component that contributed to the ugly menace known as blight.

- A partnership with MSHDA and the Department of Human Services (DHS) Pathways to Potential program was formed as part of the state Neighborhood Revitalization initiative. The DHS locates social workers in schools. Schools become the focus as the core of a neighborhood. They provide the resources to improve outcomes for families in the areas of health, safety, education, school attendance, and self-sufficiency. The initiative makes students and their families stronger and safer by reducing truancy and offering integrated services.

Dangerous structures identified by school officials and families have been eliminated in 11 targeted school areas with an investment of \$10 million and 951 demolitions complete or in progress.

- A \$15 million statewide fund was created to invest in blight elimination projects in every Michigan region that achieved three key outcomes: the promotion of public safety, the stabilization of property values and the enhancement of economic development.

Nearly 1,000 commercial and residential structures have been demolished or are in progress, generating millions of dollars in new economic activity.

Michigan State Housing Development Authority Eliminating Blight in Michigan

- The funding of the Motor City Mapping Survey and participation on the Steering Committee of the Detroit Blight Task Force was another component of the multifaceted approach that MSHDA brought to the table in the fight against blight in Michigan. A \$300 million federal effort announced by the Obama administration in September 2013 focused on addressing blight removal, public works and public safety. The task force plan (the link is provided in the attachments that follow this narrative) lays out a strategic framework to address every blighted structure and parcel in the city of Detroit as quickly as possible.

The Motor City Mapping project provided condition data on every parcel in Detroit, and created a framework for use of an ongoing tool called “blexting.” Blexting allows community groups, residents, officials and the general public to submit ongoing updates to the data via a mobile phone app that will assist in the annual surveying process and ongoing management of the blight removal strategy in Detroit.

- We crafted an application to the U.S. Department of Treasury, the department administering the Hardest Hit Fund, with a request to repurpose some of those federal funds already allocated to MSHDA. We asked specifically for \$100 million to fight blight in five of our major urban areas: Detroit, Flint, Grand Rapids, Pontiac and Saginaw. Treasury reviewed our proposal and approved it in June 2013, and the Hardest Hit Blight Elimination program became the first of its kind in the nation. Each targeted area identified meets one or more of the following criteria:
 - Is in direct support of proposed investment of public or private funds including properties that will be redeveloped for residential or commercial use
 - Is directly adjacent to or across from recent public or private investment, proposed investment or other assets designated as critical investments or institutions by state or local officials
 - Is in close proximity to schools and institutions
 - Is critical for investment in or improvement of infrastructure, public parks or other locally or state-endorsed projects
 - Assists in the stabilization of neighborhoods with high rates of foreclosure prevention services, homeownership or other tipping point indicators
 - -- Prevents a visual impediment along key corridors

MSHDA began working with land banks across the state to strategically select the areas of the cities that needed the biggest hand. Though we couldn't resolve all the blight issues in every neighborhood, we focused on those areas that would have the greatest impact on positive economic growth once the blight was removed.

We are proud to report that this innovative program, created by repurposing \$100 million dollars of our Hardest Hit funds, has begun processing over 3,000 blighted properties for demolition. The initial strategic plans from all the designated cities indicate that this program will eliminate more than 11,000 blighted structures.

**Michigan State Housing Development Authority
Eliminating Blight in Michigan**

Summary

From state and local elected officials to community and neighborhood organizations to economic development professionals to the people of Michigan, everyone agrees that blight elimination is crucial to the state's continued economic recovery. MSHDA has played a leadership role in bringing all these factions together to successfully address the issue and great strides have been taken in accomplishing what was once thought to be an impossible task. Michigan has gained nationwide attention for its positive progress, especially blight elimination. Please note the following attachments that include media coverage as well as internal communication. As each demolition takes place, people are voicing their satisfaction, taking pride in their neighborhoods, keeping their homes and watching their property values rise as their communities thrive once again.

Attachments

- Detroit Blight Removal Task Force Plan and Link to Downloads
- Media Coverage (in same order as Monday Morning News articles)
- Monday Morning News (Internal Employee Newsletter) Blight Articles
- Before and After Photos of Hardest Hit Funding Demolition

Link to Downloads: <http://report.timetoendblight.org/>

Download Full Report PDFs



**Michigan State Housing Development Authority
Eliminating Blight in Michigan**

Media Coverage of Michigan's Blight Efforts

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2013-05-30/detroit-survival-depending-on-destruction-of-housing-mortgages> June 3, 2013 Bloomberg

<http://www.annarbor.com/news/ypsilanti/demolition-of-ypsilanti-townships-liberty-square-townhome-complex-to-begin-within-3-weeks/> Ann Arbor News, May 20, 2013

<http://www.themorningsun.com/article/20130514/NEWS01/130519778/plans-being-made-for-demolition-at-mt-pleasant-center> Mt. Pleasant Morning Sun, May 20, 2013

<http://www.annarbor.com/news/ypsilanti/first-of-liberty-squares-buildings-demolished-1/> Ann Arbor News, August 12, 2013

<http://wdet.org/news/story/082113-Detroit-Blight-Woosley/> WDET Public Radio, August 26, 2013

<http://www.freep.com/article/20130826/NEWS01/308260115/About-4-000-blighted-Detroit-buildings-being-demolished-under-52M-plan> Detroit Free Press, September 3, 2013

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10151770232876855.1073741835.53714581854&type=3> MSHDA Facebook page photo coverage, September 3, 2013

http://www.mlive.com/news/muskegon/index.ssf/2013/09/bluffton_school_and_plumbing_s.html MLive Michigan, October 7, 2013

http://www.mlive.com/business/mid-michigan/index.ssf/2013/10/barth_street_property_first_ho.html MLive Michigan, October 21, 2013

<http://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20140216/NEWS/302169966/lovelands-passion-battle-blight#> Crain's Detroit Business, February 17, 2014, Article on "Blexting"

<http://metroland.net/2014/02/20/bringing-back-the-neighborhood/> Metroland, a weekly publication of New York state's capital region, written by Michigan's 5th District Congressman, Dan Kildee

<http://www.miningjournal.net/page/content.detail/id/595598/Sawyer-demolition-project-highlights-county-land-bank-year.html?nav=5006> The Marquette Mining Journal, March 3, 2014

<http://wdet.org/shows/craig-fahle-show/episode/michigan-housing-detroit-blight-money/> WDET Radio, Detroit, The Craig Fahle Show with Executive Director Scott Woosley on the "Blight Fight," March 10, 2014

Demolition Begins as Michigan's AG Settlement Grants are Awarded



Grant funds for blight elimination were part of a \$97-million settlement banks agreed to pay the state for the banks' role in the foreclosure crisis. Selecting projects and distributing money was done through a partnership among MSHDA, the Department of Human Services and the Michigan Land Bank. The awards ranged from \$10,000 to as high as approximately \$3.7 million. All geographic regions were represented. Some of those projects are getting under way.

To read more [click here](#) for Ypsilanti Township and [here](#) for Mt. Pleasant.

Families

- [What's Happening at Idlewild?](#)
- [Interested in Reading How Detroit Free Press Business Writer Sees Detroit in Five Years?](#)
- [MSHDA Takes Step Forward Michigan Faith-Based Initiative to Pontiac](#)
- [Sara Driver's Daughter Now a NATIONAL Champion](#)
- [Finance Division's Sherri Moyer's Sister Writes Children's Book](#)

Engage with MSHDA

Feel free to re-tweet, repost, join in conversations and share MSHDA social media postings with your friends and followers on your social media sites. See how by [clicking here](#).



You Know You're a Michigander if ...



Come on all you Michiganders! Submit your most creative

responses to keenanm@michigan.gov. Here's an example:

You know you're a Michigander if you can actually pronounce Ypsilanti and Okemos.

Now let's hear yours!

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Halloween Candy Count - October 28-November 1
- Pumpkin Decorating Contest - Details TBA
- MSU/U of M Tailgate - October 28

(Submitted by Alicia Toupin, Executive Division and the VME Team)

First Building Demolished in Ypsilanti Housing Complex

The demolition of 17 homes in Liberty Square complex began last Monday



This demolition project is funded, in part, by a grant from the Michigan Land Bank, newly housed here at MSHDA on the 2nd floor. Ypsilanti Township is one of 34 grantees awarded funding through the Michigan Blight Elimination Program. Kim Homan, the land bank's director was on site to help knock down the first wall.

"Blight removal improves property values and helps grow area businesses," she said. "The partnership for this demolition between the Michigan Land Bank and Ypsilanti Township is a perfect example of how land banks can assist municipalities with getting properties back into productive use. With the ability to remove blighted structures, the township can now move forward with plans to rezone the property for commercial and retail space, bringing additional resources into the community in the form of jobs and revenue."

The grant funds were part of a \$97 million settlement banks agreed to pay the state of Michigan for their role in the foreclosure crisis. The settlement came after a national class action lawsuit filed by Michigan, 48 other states and the federal government, and some of the money was earmarked for blight elimination projects. (See "AG Announces First Anniversary of National Mortgage Settlement" MMN article below).



Receive Updates



Monday Morning News, August 26, 2013

Michigan State Housing Development Authority sent this bulletin at 08/26/2013 05:06 PM EDT



Monday, August 26, 2013

- [You Know You're a Michigander if...](#)
- [Root Beer Floats Thursday](#)
- [Detroit Bus Tour Photo Gallery](#)
- [MSHDA, Governor Launch Largest Residential Blight Removal Effort in State History](#)
- [MSHDA Board Takes Action on Michigan Mezzanine Fund](#)
- [It's Time to Sign Up for Detroit House Party](#)
- [Managers and Staff Both Share Responsibility for Engaged Performance](#)
- [MSHDA Tours U.P.](#)
- [MSU Study Shows Ingham County Land Bank has \\$58 Million Impact on Region](#)

Engage With MSHDA

Feel free to re-tweet, re-post, join in conversations and share MSHDA social media postings with your friends and followers on your social

MSHDA, Governor Launch Largest Residential Blight Removal Effort in State History



Gov. Snyder, MSHDA and U.S. Treasury Under Secretary for Domestic Finance Mary Miller today kicked off the largest

residential blight removal effort in state history at a news conference that featured the simultaneous demolition of five blighted and abandoned houses in a Detroit neighborhood.

The demolition took place near the University of Detroit-Mercy campus and kicked off the campaign aimed at reducing foreclosures and stabilizing neighborhoods. In addition to reducing the number of vacant and abandoned properties in Detroit, it will do the same for four other Michigan cities in the coming weeks and months: Flint, Grand Rapids, Pontiac and Saginaw.

Michigan's \$100 million anti-blight campaign comes from \$500 million the state was allocated in 2010 as part of the Troubled Asset Relief Program's Hardest Hit Fund, designed to help homeowners in states hit hardest by the housing crisis.

with new buses that deliver higher fuel economy and lower emissions.

This project was a part of the Michigan Clean Diesel Collaborative (MCDC) – an initiative that replaced and upgraded diesel vehicles in Lansing, Flint, and Detroit. The MCDC is administered by Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision (SDEV), with GLACC and NextEnergy as project partners implementing aspects of the initiative.

To read more, [click here](#).

Valentine Candy Count Winners Announced



Four MSHDA employees enjoyed an extra special Valentine's Day Friday by winning the candy count contest in their respective office buildings.



Center



Building Michigan Communities Conference April 28-30

The annual Building Michigan Communities Conference will be held April 28-30 at the Lansing Center in Lansing. Registration will be opening soon and if you would like to attend, a MSHDA code will be provided that is necessary to register. In the meantime, check with your supervisor for approval. More details will be available on the conference [website](#).

Battling Blight in Detroit



For the past nine weeks, 50 crews of two — one driver, one surveyor — have been spotted around the city of Detroit armed with Google Nexus 7 tablets "blexting" every property within Detroit's 139 square miles. From their cars, they point the tablet at the property, snap a photo and fill out a short questionnaire. Is the building vacant or inhabited? Is there a structure? Is the condition "good," "fair," "poor" or "recommend demolition"?

A property has just been blexted. "Blight" + "texting" = "blexting." The technology was developed by a startup company called Loveland. Company founders are working with the Detroit Blight Removal Task Force and have been able to complete the survey in record time. Findings will be presented to Detroit's Mayor Mike Duggan and Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr by the end of March.

[Click here](#) to read the rest of the Crain's Detroit Business article.

and parts of Canada.

The Neighborhood Assist cause submission phase is open from March 3-23 and each Facebook user who downloads the free application can submit up to three causes. Anyone living in the U.S. or Canada with a Facebook account is eligible to submit a cause. It's better to submit early since only a maximum of 4,000 submissions will be accepted. All you have to do is submit the cause; you don't have to "run the program." The cause must fit into the categories of safety, community development or education.

For more information, [click here](#).

Joe Connolly Leaving MSHDA



Joe Connolly, student assistant and social media guru in Governmental and Media Affairs, is venturing out into the world after landing a fantastic new job with a social media firm



The Skillman Foundation has created a video showcasing the innovative work and technology that makes up the Motor City Mapping Project. The project aims to survey every parcel in the city of Detroit to determine the full extent of the blight problem. Data Driven Detroit is a key partner in the project, working to compile and understand the vast amount of data being collected.

For more information on the project, [click here](#).

Genesee County Land Bank Finds Innovative Ways to Fight Blight-Becomes Model for Others in Michigan and Nationwide



Blight elimination often brings to mind demolition or bulldozing or other forms of removal, but what can happen after demolition occurs is where the Genesee County Land Bank shines, and it is drawing attention around the state and even nationwide.

In the decade since Genesee County first took steps to create its nonprofit land bank, a growing number of municipalities, counties and states have begun to embrace

based in St. Louis. Joe will be focusing his attentions in the Grand Rapids area, so he won't be too far away from his MSHDA friends.



We just learned that Joe and the band, Gunnar & the Grizzly Boys, will be performing as special guests of Kid Rock at the Jones County Fair in Iowa this summer.

What with his recent engagement to Sarah, a new job and a gig with Kid Rock, Joe is going to be a busy boy and we wish him luck and best wishes. You have a bright future ahead, Joe. Be sure and stay in touch so, one day, when you're nominated for a Grammy, you can get tickets and invite all your MSHDA friends to attend.

land banks as a tool to systematically address vacant and abandoned properties. And the Genesee County Land Bank serves as a model for others to follow.

Not that long ago, the Beach Street corridor of Flint was in pretty bad shape with 16 trash-filled vacant lots. Just a year later, this two-acre lot a mile south of downtown Flint has been transformed into Flint River Farm, the city's largest urban farm, complete with a passive solar hoop house for year-round growing. The two women who farm this land own three of the lots and lease the others from the Genesee County Land Bank.

This complimentary article on Flint, *Bringing Back the Neighborhood*, appears in *Metroland*, a weekly publication of New York state's capital region. To read more about how land banks can stabilize bighted urban areas, [click here](#).

Capuchin Soup Kitchen, Detroit Habitat for Humanity, COTS Receive \$1 Million in Donations from GM Foundation



The Capuchin Soup Kitchen was overwhelmed with gratitude when GM Foundation volunteers presented a \$500,000 check just before breakfast was served one morning last week. The volunteers made two more stops, delivering \$400,000 to Habitat for Humanity Detroit and \$100,000 to the Coalition on Temporary Shelter (COTS).

The donations were made, based on need, in honor of the auto company's former CEO Dan Akerson who retired in January.

[Read more...](#)

also wear their EEE buttons.

A Green Tip to Reduce Your Impact

Purchase appliances that have the Energy Star logo (above) on the product. It means that the appliance meets or exceeds standards set by the the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency.



Environmentally Safe Cleaning Tip



Make your floors look new again by cleaning the grout. Spray the grout with a mixture of 7 cups of water, 1/2 cup baking soda, 1/3 cup ammonia (or lemon juice) and 1/4 cup vinegar. Let sit for an hour, then scrub vigorously with a scrub brush.

Environmental Update For Municipalities

vision. Having something to look forward to should help to keep the day-to-day routine fresh.

4. **Create alternative ways to get the job done.**

Peel back the onion a few layers to find some of the unheralded benefits of your work and the services you provide as well as who the end users are and how you can cultivate relationships with them.

5. **Take your job seriously; don't take yourself seriously.** It's an old standby, but one that, if mastered, will endear you to your colleagues as well as your family and perhaps more importantly, prevent you from living your own Groundhog Day.

(Excerpt from article written by PRNews blogger Matthew Schwartz)

Scott Talks About Detroit's Blight Fight on WDET Radio's Craig Fahle Show

Click below to hear the audio of Scott's conversation on Detroit's public radio station WDET



Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan announced during his first State of the City speech that the city would use \$20 million in unspent insurance industry funds to remove blight. Governor Snyder announced in August of last year that Detroit will get \$52 million toward blight removal. Scott interviewed on the Craig Fahle Show on public radio's WDET last week to present MSHDA's view of what that \$72 million will look like in Detroit's fight against blight.

"Everyone has brought their own funding to the table and it is being approached in a much more strategic way," Scott said of the federal, state and city funding sources during the conversation. "After Mayor Duggan approves the report (Motor City Mapping Project), you're going to see a pretty massive effort in terms of demolition."

If your position with MSHDA calls for working with local municipalities where environmental matters have an impact on development, this update from ASTI Environmental might be of interest.

[Click here](#) to read more.

Upcoming Events

VME March Madness Celebration March 19



**Save the Date
March 19**

**Lower Level-Lansing Office
See Flyer at Right**

Michigan Housing Council Annual Meeting



**Michigan Housing Council
2014 Annual Meeting & Spring Conference**

Tuesday (Tomorrow)

He added that because of the blight-mapping project, some houses can be deconstructed and parts salvaged as opposed to being demolished.

Listen to the entire interview by clicking on the photo above.

VME Hosts Annual March Madness, St. Patrick's Day Celebration



MARCH MADNESS St. Patrick's Day
LUNCHEON

When: Wednesday, March 19, 2014
Time: 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Where: Lower Level - MSHDA Building

Sloppy Joes, Chips, Corned Beef & Cabbage & a beverage for \$3
(There will be these versions of Sloppy Joe Turkey, Venison and Beef)
Bake Sale Items for a \$1

Prize Activities Include:
NCAA Team Bracket - fill-in the bracket sheet & turn it in at lunch
Gold Coin Candy Count - Guess how many coins are in the jar
Best Dressed Leprechaun - Person with the most green on
Most Spirited - Person with the most NCAA Team Spirit

This is a VME Sponsored Event and VME Bucks may be redeemed

MSHDA Logo Updated

logo





Before



After



Before



After