



News from: **City of Oakland**

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oakland selected to tackle vacant and problem properties at leadership institute

Oakland, CA – Oakland is one of nine cities across three states and the District of Columbia that have been selected to attend the 2016 Community Progress Leadership Institute, a program that equips practitioners with the leadership and technical skills to address significant blight and vacancy challenges. The Leadership Institute, a program of the national Center for Community Progress (Community Progress), will be held on the campus of Harvard Law School on March 15-18, 2016.

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“Oakland is estimated to have 20,000 vacant, abandoned and problem properties, which contribute to blight, crime, and economic inequality while also draining public resources,” said Mayor Libby Schaaf. “Vacant lots attract illegal dumping and squatters, and the resulting blight has a snowball effect, further discouraging investment and depressing property values in impacted neighborhoods. Given Oakland’s unprecedented housing crisis and the resulting displacement of long-term residents, it is imperative that we develop new strategies to turn problem properties into housing that is safe, healthy and affordable to low-income Oakland households. We are honored to have been selected for the 2016 Leadership Institute and stand ready to translate lessons from national experts into comprehensive local solutions.”

Delegations of up to six people from each of the following cities will participate: **Richmond, Calif.; Fresno, Calif.; Oakland, Calif.; Erie, Pa.; Harrisburg, Pa.; York, Pa.; Danville, Va.; and Richmond, Va.** In addition, California, Pennsylvania, and Virginia will each be represented by two state-level participants, and **Washington, D.C.** will have an eight-person delegation. Cities were chosen through an invitation-only, competitive application process.

Oakland’s delegation will be led by Michele Byrd, Director of Housing and Community Development, and include the following delegates: Heather Hood, Northern California Deputy Director, Enterprise Community Partners and Co-Chair of Mayor Schaaf’s Housing Cabinet; Jennifer Duffy, Director of Business Development for nonprofit organization Hello Housing; Richard Illgen, Deputy City Attorney; and Lin Chin, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator, and Rodolfo Dueñas, Rehabilitation Supervisor, of the city’s Department of Housing and Community Development. Oakland delegates look forward to engaging with state and local partners to bring home creative, collaborative tools and strategies to combat blight and abandonment, including innovative approaches to transforming vacant properties into affordable housing.

Oakland was selected for the Leadership Institute because it has demonstrated the leadership and commitment necessary to develop new solutions for vacant, abandoned, and other problem properties. Oakland’s recent efforts in this area include a unique pilot program with the office of Alameda County Treasurer-Tax Collector Don White and nonprofit partner Hello Housing to reclaim and develop tax-defaulted residential properties into scattered site affordable homes for both renters and homeowners.

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Leadership Institute sessions will explore the following topics: understanding markets, legal barriers to revitalization, strategic code enforcement, land banking, rental regulation and licensing, access to capital to fund revitalization efforts, community engagement to support innovation reuse, and adaptive leadership.

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“The diversity of the cities chosen for this year’s Leadership Institute reflects the fact that communities across the country continue to feel the fallout from the mortgage foreclosure crisis,” said Tamar Shapiro, president and CEO of the Center for Community Progress. “By attending the Leadership Institute, however, these delegations commit to tackling the challenges of vacancy and abandonment head on, to help ensure that the housing recovery reaches every neighborhood.”

This year marks the fifth time a Community Progress Leadership Institute class has convened since 2010. Past graduates of the Leadership Institute have worked with legislators and other stakeholders to draft, advocate for, and pass state and local laws; streamlined systems to acquire and dispose of properties; improved data collection and use; deployed strategic local code enforcement operations; convened statewide leadership summits; and developed new systems that enable cross-agency and multi-stakeholder coordination on blight remediation.

About Center for Community Progress

Founded in 2010, the Center for Community Progress is the only national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization solely dedicated to building a future in which entrenched, systemic blight no longer exists in American communities. The mission of Community Progress is to ensure that communities have the vision, knowledge and systems to transform blighted, vacant and other problem properties into assets supporting neighborhood vitality. As a national leader on solutions for blight and vacancy, Community Progress serves as the leading resource for local, state and federal policies and best practices that address the full cycle of property revitalization, from blight prevention, through the acquisition and maintenance of problem properties, to their productive reuse. Major support for Community Progress is provided by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

About City of Oakland’s Department of Housing and Community Development

The Department of Housing and Community Development believes that all Oakland residents should have decent and affordable housing in healthy, sustainable neighborhoods with full access to life-enhancing services. We work on several levels to create and preserve affordable housing by:

- Supporting organizations that develop and preserve affordable rental and owner-occupied housing;
- Providing direct assistance to first-time homebuyers and existing homeowners;
- Administering the City’s programs to stabilize rents and ensure compliance with the Just Cause for Eviction Ordinance; and
- Supporting organizations that provide economic development, public facilities, infrastructure, and social services for low and moderate income communities.

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