



## THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR DOMENIC J. SARNO

*HOME OF THE BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME*

### PRESS RELEASE



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### **SPRINGFIELD SELECTED TO TACKLE BLIGHT AND VACANCY AT COMMUNITY PROGRESS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**

*February 27, 2014 -Springfield, MA-* Delegations from eight cities have been selected to attend the 2014 Community Progress Leadership Institute (CPLI), a training program focused on equipping leaders with the skills to address large inventories of blighted and vacant properties for the benefit of their communities. CPLI, a program of the national Center for Community Progress (Community Progress), will be held at Harvard Law School on March 18-21, 2014.

Mayor Domenic J. Sarno stated, “Blighted and vacant properties are a cancer in our neighborhoods. The City has been very aggressive in trying to keep people in their homes and going after banks for accountability along with demolition or rehabilitation of structures when and where possible. It is nice to be recognized nationally for the leadership the City has demonstrated in trying to stabilize our neighborhoods.”

Delegations of up to seven people from each of the following cities will participate: Wilmington, Del.; Springfield, Mass.; Battle Creek, Mich.; Detroit, Mich.; Jackson, Miss.; Oklahoma City, Okla.; Huntington, W.Va.; Milwaukee, Wis. Cities were chosen through an invitation-only, competitive application process.

The Springfield Delegation will consist of Office of Housing Director Gerry McCafferty, Deputy Director of Neighborhood Stabilization Tina Quagliato, Associate City Solicitor Lisa DeSousa, City Council President Mike Fenton, City Councilor Melvin Edwards, Develop Springfield Executive Director Jay Minkarah and Sarah Page from HAP Inc.

Office of Housing, Director, Gerry McCafferty stated, “This will be a great opportunity for the City of Springfield to share some of our successes and to learn other best practices from communities who are recognized as leaders in dealing with this nation-wide crisis.”

The cities were selected for CPLI because they also demonstrate strong leadership and a commitment to developing new solutions for blight. The selected cities range in population from 50,000 to over half a million and have vacancy rates of 10-29%, while also facing high rates of foreclosure, tax delinquency and other property challenges.

Community Progress Leadership Institute sessions will address how to prevent blight and vacancy and how to return vacant buildings and land to productive use. Some of the technical tools that will be explored are market analysis, reuse planning, delinquent tax enforcement reform, strategic code enforcement and land banking. In addition, Cambridge Leadership Associates will lead sessions on effective leadership.

“When these eight teams enter the CPLI classroom on the first day, their stories will illuminate how blight is impacting communities across the United States,” said Tamar Shapiro, president and CEO of the Center for Community Progress. “And when they head back home, there will be a new chapter to write: how they’re part of a national movement to reclaim our communities, a movement that is forging new connections and sparking fresh idea

2014 marks the third time Community Progress has brought together a Community Progress Leadership Institute class since 2010. Past graduates of CPLI have worked with legislators and other stakeholders to draft, advocate for, and pass state and local laws; improved local code enforcement operations; held statewide leadership institutes; and developed new systems that enable cross-agency 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. More information is available at <http://www.communityprogress.net>.

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