



COMMUNITY FORECLOSURE COALITION

JACKSON, LENAWEE & HILLSDALE

Foreclosure: From Crisis to Opportunity

March 12th Tri-County Leadership Summit

Speaker Biographies

Lorray S. C. Brown, Managing Attorney – Michigan Poverty Law Program & Director- Michigan Foreclosure Prevention Project

Lorray S. C. Brown has been an attorney since 1984 and has been the managing attorney and the statewide consumer law specialist at the Michigan Poverty Law Program (MPLP) since 2001. In her role as the statewide consumer law specialist, she provides litigation, advocacy and case consultation support in consumer law which includes foreclosure prevention and anti-predatory lending. In the summer of 2008, she worked at the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) in Boston as a consumer law fellow. At NCLC, she reviewed and analyzed mortgage documents and wrote a chapter in the NCLC Foreclosure Prevention Counseling manual. She is also the director of the Michigan Foreclosure Prevention Project. The Foreclosure Prevention Project is a project of the Michigan Poverty Law Program.

Neeta Delaney, Director – Community Foreclosure Coalition (Jackson, Lenawee & Hillsdale)

After over a decade as an administrator at Eastern Michigan University, Neeta left the university in 1997 to become the President of the Jackson County Community Foundation in Jackson, Michigan. While there, she led several community-wide initiatives including the development of the Nonprofit Support Center, Jackson County's Promise to Youth, neighborhood resource center network and the Arts & Culture Alliance of Jackson County. She left the foundation in 2002 to develop the Armory Arts Project on the site of the original Jackson prison. While spearheading this effort, she also served as an Executive on Loan to Governor Jennifer Granholm focusing her work on cultural economic development. During this period, she also led Jackson's Cool City collaborative garnering the City this distinction in 2004. From 2007 – 2008, Neeta served as President & CEO of ArtServe Michigan, a statewide arts and cultural advocacy organization, heading up its merger with the Michigan Association of Community Arts Agencies. She recently launched a consulting career and was contracted by the Community Action Agency in July to develop and lead the Community Foreclosure Coalition of Jackson, Lenawee and Hillsdale counties. Neeta has served on several state and local boards including the Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs, Council on Michigan Foundations, Michigan Nonprofit Association and Allegiance Health Care System.

Ron Ellison, President American Title Company of Jackson

Ron Ellison is the President of American Title Company, a locally owned family business located in Jackson, Michigan for over 30 years. He also currently serves as the chairman the Jackson County Economic Development Corporation. Ron has been a Licensed Real Estate Broker in the State of Michigan for over 30 yrs. He is also a former mortgage loan officer.

Mike Hamm, Mott Chair – MSU Department of Sustainable Urban Agriculture

Michael Hamm is the C. S. Mott Professor of Sustainable Agriculture at Michigan State University. Mike has a B.A. in Biology from Northwestern University and a Ph.D. in human nutrition from the University of Minnesota. Mike is currently affiliated with the Departments of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies; Crop and Soil Sciences; and Food Science and Human Nutrition. Prior to moving to MSU he was Dean of Academic and Student Programs for Cook College, Rutgers University. He was co-founder and director of the New Jersey Urban Ecology Program, an effort to address sustainable food systems in New Jersey. He was founding director of the Cook Student Organic Farm as well as board member and board president of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey. At MSU he is co-founder of the C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems which engages communities in applied research and outreach to promote sustainable food systems. Community food security, community and sustainable food systems are active research areas. Mike is a member of the Governor-appointed Michigan Food Policy Council, a member of the Eastern Market Corporation Board of Directors and chairs the National Advisory Committee of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Food and Fitness Initiative.

Heidi Mucherie, Executive Director – Community Legal Resources

Heidi has over thirteen years experience working in Detroit’s community development field as an urban planner, policy analyst, and program evaluator. Her previous experience includes working as a community and land use planner and policy analyst for the Detroit City Planning Commission. In addition, Heidi coordinated an evaluation of Detroit’s Community Development Block Grant program under a research grant awarded to Wayne State University by the City of Detroit in 1997. Heidi began working with Community Legal Resources in 2006 as a Pro Bono Program Manager and was appointed Executive Director in January 2007. Under her leadership, CLR has quadrupled its staff and budget and developed and launched a package of legal and technical services to help communities respond to the foreclosure and vacancy crisis. Heidi is a 2000 graduate of the Master of Public Administration program at Wayne State University.

Lisa Nuskowski-Director – Michigan Foreclosure Task Force

Lisa Nuskowski, Co-Lisa is the Co-Director of the Michigan Foreclosure Task Force. The Michigan Foreclosure Task Force is a statewide clearinghouse and unified voice to keep families in their homes, advocate for stronger consumer legislation, and address the neighborhood impacts of foreclosure on communities across Michigan. Prior to this position, Lisa served as Chief of Staff for House Majority Floor Leader Steve Tobocman, where she worked on community and economic development policy, including property tax foreclosure prevention efforts in Detroit. Lisa has also worked for the City of Detroit on citywide strategic management initiatives, as well as information technology strategy. She has a Master of Public Policy from the University of Michigan’s Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Central Michigan University.

Eric A. Schertzing, Ingham County Treasurer & Land Bank Chair

Eric A. Schertzing holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Michigan State University’s James Madison College and a Masters of Public Administration from Western Michigan University. He has been elected Ingham County Treasurer since 2000. Prior service includes 8 years as Chief Deputy Drain Commissioner and 9 years as Special Assistant to Congressman Bob Carr (D-MI). In 2005, Eric led the creation of the Ingham County Land Bank Fast Track Authority, the second County authority in Michigan, and serves as Chair. In 2007, the Land Bank began working with the Ingham County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority to establish plans and issue bonds to fund eligible work on Land Bank properties. The Land Bank budget has grown from \$600,000 in 2006 to over \$5,000,000 in 2010. The Land Bank is a major partner with the City of Lansing’s Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP1) and the Land Bank and City were recently awarded over \$17,000,000 under NSP2.

James D. Smiertka, General Counsel – Prima Civitas Foundation

As general counsel for PCF, Mr. Smiertka oversees legal matters related to PCF activities and engages as a principal in PCF economic development projects throughout Michigan. He assists local communities and groups to create economic development non-profits of varying natures, networks and collaborates with various governmental and private groups throughout the state concerning economic and workforce development, and links these groups to assets and agencies to facilitate their purposes. Prior to his engagement with PCF, Mr. Smiertka served for over four years as Senior Policy Executive, Special Assistant for Legal Affairs, and Acting Deputy Director for the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth (DLEG). From 1994-2004, Mr. Smiertka held the position of City Attorney of Lansing, Michigan. During his tenure with Lansing, in-house experience was developed in the Law Department to enable the City to engage in multi-jurisdictional projects of significant regional importance, such as PA425 agreements resulting in the two new GM assembly plants; the Jackson national Life headquarters; and a residential development in Meridian Township.

