



PRESS RELEASE

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Hantz Woodlands Gets Green Light; State of Michigan Continues Blight Elimination in Detroit

Hantz urban woodlands/agriculture project moves forward; 1,500 blighted land parcels cleared for demolition with Gov. Snyder's signature as greening of Detroit neighborhoods continues

Detroit, Mich. Oct.18, 2013—The Michigan Department of Human Services and Hantz Farms, Inc. are pleased to announce that the purchase agreement of 1,500 blighted parcels of land on Detroit's East side has been approved by the emergency manager and signed by Gov. Snyder.

The transaction was celebrated earlier today with demolition of a long-blighted structure at 3050 Belvidere Street, along with tours for media and stakeholders of adjacent properties and unveiling plans for future use as green space and productive agriculture within the city.

The agreement will allow Hantz to begin demolition of blighted structures and start the active repurposing of hundreds of properties as part of the largest urban farming and woodlands project in the United States.

The lots sold to establish Hantz Woodlands consist of approximately 140 acres of land in an area roughly bounded by Van Dyke Street on the west, St. Jean Street on the east, Mack Avenue on the north and Jefferson on the south.

The property demolished today was formerly part of the inventory of the Michigan Land Bank, under director Kim Homan, which has conveyed more than 130 parcel addresses as part of the Hantz Woodlands project.

"We are pleased and delighted that this project is moving forward. We appreciate the efforts of Governor Snyder and DHS Director Maura Corrigan," said John Hantz, Chairman and CEO, The Hantz Group. "Their commitment to cleaning up the blight and repurposing vacant land is clearly demonstrated in Hantz Woodlands. This summer we have been clearing and mowing more than 700 lots in this area, and we believe it has already made a big difference to the vitality of this neighborhood. And it is only the beginning."

Within two years of closing on the parcels, Hantz Woodlands will clean all vacant land acquired and mow vegetation at least every three weeks during the growing season. At the same time, Hantz will demolish at least 50 dangerous structures while planting at least 15,000 hardwood trees.

Surveys conducted by local media and work completed during development of the Lower Eastside Action Plan have established that more than 90 percent of residents within the Hantz Woodlands development area support the project as a cost-effective approach to making neighborhoods more livable.

Today's event and the finalized agreement for the sale also underscore the commitment of the state and Gov. Snyder to improve life for Detroit residents, increase public safety and support innovative ways to reinvent the city of Detroit and the state of Michigan.

The state has partnered with Hantz and others to demonstrate how larger scale agriculture and natural resource management can be used as a cost effective tool in the repurpose of blighted surplus publicly owned property. It's also working to build relationships in the marketplace that result in commercial urban agriculture becoming a vibrant new sector within Michigan's broader agricultural economy.

Over the past two years the Snyder administration has worked actively on the issue of blight with many entities, including the federal government; the departments of Human Services, Treasury and Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA); Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) and the Michigan Land Bank; the Michigan Legislature, Mayor Bing and Detroit City Council and other stakeholders. The Governor and the various agencies have pursued an action plan of blight elimination in Detroit and other key locations outstate.

The first \$25 million for blight elimination, overseen by the Department of Human Services, was appropriated by the legislature and approved for projects in 2012 and 2013, with \$10 million earmarked for Detroit properties adjacent to Pathways to Potential school sites. The remaining balance was awarded on application to a diverse group of critical projects outstate.

More than 425 blighted structures have been eliminated under this project in the city of Detroit, while dozens of other demolition projects are either completed or underway elsewhere in Michigan with funding designated by the legislature.

More recently, the federal government approved another \$100 million to assist with blight elimination in Detroit and four other Michigan cities, with those funds administered by the state and MSHDA under its executive director, Scott Woosley.

“We have made tremendous progress on blight elimination through great collaboration,” Corrigan said. “That partnering between public and private will continue, as we advance the governor’s plan for a resurgent Detroit and find innovative solutions—like this one—that help get us there.”

The state of Michigan has also assisted with the Hantz Woodlands project by:

- Reviewing workforce development needs.
- Committing to partner in the hiring of employees from distressed economic sectors.
- Helping to establish local schools as hubs for economic and community development within our development area.
- Assisting in communicating with Michigan leadership involved in authorizing implementation of our development agreement with the city of Detroit.
- Assisting with zoning issues affecting the potential for larger scale agriculture ventures within urban centers.
- Attaining technical support and collaboration from Michigan State University.

For more information on the Department of Human Services, please visit www.michigan.gov/dhs

For more information on Hantz Woodlands project, please visit www.hantzfarmsdetroit.com

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