For Immediate Release
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City of Richmond Selected to Tackle Vacant and Problem Properties at Leadership Institute

Richmond, CALIFORNIA – Richmond 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.

“The City of Richmond has been battling the vacant, foreclosed and zombie property crisis for over 7 years,” said Mayor Tom Butt. “While we have implemented some progressive initiatives to address Richmond’s blight issues, we will take the opportunity to bring new best practices from the Leadership Institute that will strengthen our collaborations to more effectively address our distressed, foreclosed and abandoned property crisis.”

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.

The City of Richmond Delegation are represented by members of the Police Departments Code Enforcement Unit, The Office of the Mayor, The City Manager’s Office, County Supervisor John Gioia’s office, The County Treasurer – Tax Collector’s Office, and the Richmond Community Foundation. Together we are hoping that the leadership institute will provide guidance and out of the box solutions
to our ongoing vacant property challenge. The costs associated with the leadership institute are covered by the Center for Community Progress.

The participating cities range in population from just over 40,000 to nearly 700,000 and have citywide housing vacancy rates ranging between 8 and 19%. Richmond 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.

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.

“The diversity of the cities chosen for this year’s Leadership Institute reflect 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.

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