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MICHIGAN COMMUNITY RESOURCES HELPS STABILIZE PROPERTIES, NEIGHBORHOOD THROUGH NUISANCE ABATEMENT PROGRAM

DETROIT – March 27, 2014 - Starting in 2010, Michigan Community Resources (MCR) piloted a Nuisance Abatement Program with Michigan Municipal League that explored innovative legal solutions to nuisance properties in low-income communities. Nuisance properties are those where the conditions of the building or the activities taking place on the premises place the community at risk by endangering its public health, safety or welfare. Nuisance properties are not merely vacant eyesores, but lay in stark disrepair and often attract and facilitate criminal activity.

Through this program, MCR began working with Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation (GRDC) in 2011 to identify and address several key nuisance properties in the GRDC service area. Prior to pursuing legal action, GRDC attempted to work with the owners to conduct routine maintenance and to resolve conditions to neighborhood standards without litigation. When it became clear that non-litigation tactics might be insufficient, MCR connected GRDC with excellent pro bono counsel - Larry Dudek and Noah Hood from law firm Miller Canfield.

“This is another example of how MCR has connected GRDC with outstanding pro bono legal services to tackle important community issues,” said Tom Goddeeris, executive director of GRDC.

Larry and Noah worked with GRDC to pursue legal action against the owners of a blighted home that had stood vacant for over 30 years. Under their expert guidance the case moved through motion practice and discovery. On the eve of trial, Larry and Noah negotiated a favorable settlement for GRDC. Now a blighted property on an otherwise stable and attractive block will be donated to GRDC for nuisance abatement. GRDC intends to donate the property to the Detroit Land Bank Authority with the goal of demolishing the building in partnership with the City of Detroit and its anti-blight initiatives.

“This really is a great example of how our volunteer attorneys can make a real and positive impact on the communities we serve,” said Jill Ferrari, CEO of MCR. “We couldn’t be more pleased with this outcome for GRDC and more proud of the work the Miller Canfield team accomplished. It is wins for the community like these that we are here to make possible.”

Each entity played an important role for the success of this legal referral. The GRDC organized its residents and acted on their behalf to shield them from potential negative response from the property owners. The residents identified and prioritized the problem property and reported and recorded nuisance offenses. MCR secured volunteer legal assistance, and provided staff support and facilitation for the project. And Miller Canfield’s expert legal team brought a significant victory to the neighborhood.

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“It was a pleasure working with MCR and the high quality attorneys on its staff to make a real difference in the community,” said Dudek, principal at Miller Canfield.

In addition to Larry and Noah, Doug Eyre, presently Vice President and Associate General Counsel with Flagstar Bank also worked on the case while with the firm of Miller Canfield. In addition, Scott Lesser assumed a major role in drafting the settlement documentation.

MCR’s nuisance abatement program is a collaborative model where private law firms, community groups and residents partner to address pervasively problematic properties that decrease resident and business morale and erode property values. Since 2011, MCR has engaged over 35 community organizations and helped improve numerous properties through both legal assistance and community organizing guidance.

About Michigan Community Resources

Michigan Community Resources supports and empowers nonprofit community organizations in Michigan that serve low-income individuals and communities – with an emphasis on community economic development – by providing pro bono legal services and technical assistance. Founded in 1998, MCR has provided over \$13 million in free legal assistance to over 1000 nonprofits in Michigan and vacant property related assistance to over 200 community organizations in Detroit. Find MCR at www.mi-community.org.

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