



July 1, 2015

Mayor Donald D. Lyons
City Council Members

Dear Mayor Lyons and City Council Members:

The following report has been prepared to provide you with an update on current issues or projects in progress:

Big Grey Demolition Grant

Just a short time ago, we received word on the grant application for the demolition of “Big Gray.” The good news is that we have been awarded a grant for \$250,000 towards the cost of demolition so we will begin to follow up with the state and begin the bid process immediately.

Attached you will find the press release that MSHDA just released.

Something for Everyone this Summer

Dowagiac is hopping with hot activities all summer. Make time to share these fun events with family and friends. Here are just a few:

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| July 3 | Fireworks at Russom Field |
| July 9 | Beckwith Park Concert Series |
| July 16-19 | Summer in the City Festival |
| July 18 | Sister Lakes Triathlon |
| July 23 | Beckwith Park Concert Series |
| July 25 | Steve’s Run at Southwestern Michigan College |
| July 30 | Beckwith Park Concert Series |

Behind the scenes, it takes hundreds of people and dozens of organizations and departments to make these fun and memorable events run so smoothly. While volunteers organize and operate the events, it should be noted that city crews provide a tremendous amount of assistance in the background. Cleaning of streets & parks, providing barricades, emergency planning with fire and police, electric setup, and banner installation are but a few of the many support efforts of city crews. By working closely with the event volunteers it is hoped that the residents and visitors to the city are able to gather and enjoy our summers.

July 3 – Friday Night Lights Join your friends and family and enjoy Russom Park, the trails, concessions, and fireworks at dark. Last year’s fireworks show was tremendous and we are appreciative of the leadership and enthusiasm the Young Professionals of Greater Dowagiac continue to share with this and other quality events in area.

Main & Pennsylvania Public Parking

Progress continues and the parking lot project at the corner of Main and Penn is nearing completion. This parking lot improvement will enhance and increase parking in this quadrant of downtown.



On Friday, weather permitting, the base coat of paving is scheduled to be placed with the final coat of asphalt and striping to follow shortly thereafter. City crews have done much of the construction at this site including the installation of storm sewer, landscaping, and grading of the site.



Museum The renovation of the second floor of the museum is nearing completion.

A one-month delay in the installation of flooring set the project back, but that issue has been resolved and the flooring has been completed. All that remains are inspections and some final touch ups for the space to be ready for installation of exhibits.



Museum Director Steve Arseneau has set an opening date of September 30 for the new permanent exhibit on Dowagiac from 1848 to modern times. According to Arseneau, this exhibit will include important Dowagiac stories and business histories that had to be omitted because of space limitations when the museum opened two years ago. The second floor also includes a temporary exhibit gallery and a storage and work room. The first temporary exhibit highlighting local military and wartime efforts will open in the winter. The storage and work room features rolling shelves, which will enable the museum to bring most of the archives on-site.

Blight Elimination Program

Staff continues to follow up on the recent council initiative to enhance efforts to deal with blight in residential neighborhoods. For several decades the city has staffed a part-time position dedicated to addressing long grass, unsafe buildings and property maintenance. This year council took the additional step of acquiring several properties that were in tax foreclosure with the commitment to address blight issues and, where possible, remarket the properties.

One example of these efforts are the adjacent properties at 303 Parsonage and 403 West Streets. The property on West St. had a basement full of water and the structure will need to be demolished. This lot will be combined with 303 Parsonage. The combination of properties will allow for a larger home to be built on the lot.

Another example is the property at 110 Ashland. This property has deteriorated to a point beyond repair and has become a danger to the adjoining properties. We look forward to getting this property cleaned up in 2015. These efforts will enhance the neighborhoods, residential property values, and quality of life.

Lighthouse Chorus to croon at the Beckwith Park Concert Series

Bring your lawn chair or blanket and enjoy the next concert on the green of Beckwith Park, downtown on Thursday, July 9, 7:30 pm.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin P. Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "K" and "A".

Kevin P. Anderson
City Manager

Contact:

Misty Miller

MSHDA Communications

517-373-1858

millerm58@michigan.gov

June 30, 2015

Dowagiac gets \$250,000 grant to help fight blight *MSHDA allocates \$3.8 million to help 19 communities tackle blighted properties around the state*

DOWAGIAC, MICH. – Soon Dowagiac residents will see a change in the skyline of the central business district with help from the Blight Elimination Program.

The three-story building set for demolition is located at 200 East Division Street. According to the grant application, the property is approximately 100,000 square feet and has been vacant since the mid-90s.

A structural study done in 2007 revealed “significant deterioration that would continue unless repair was made as soon as possible.” The application says minimal repairs have been made to the facade facing the pedestrian sidewalk to repair and remove chunks of concrete that were falling off the building but no other work has been done.

This blight elimination project fits within the guidelines of the City of Dowagiac’s Master Plan, which has been in place since the 1990s when renovation efforts in the central business district first began.

This grant is funded through a portion of Michigan’s Homeownership Protection Fund that was appropriated to MSHDA in 2012 and repurposed last year to continue to address blight elimination needs across the state.

County Land Banks and local units of government statewide were invited to apply for up to \$250,000 in assistance. Forty-nine applications were submitted, requesting more than \$8 million to fight blight. Three different groups scored each application and the combined scores were used to select the 19 grant recipients.

Proposals were evaluated by representatives from MSHDA and the Michigan Land Bank Authority based on their anticipated impact on public safety, stabilizing property values and enhancing economic development. Public and private investment in the project and alignment with a local place plan or other placemaking effort were also factors.

Eligible projects were required to involve demolition of blighted buildings in business districts, downtowns, or commercial corridors; full or partial demolition of commercial buildings that are part of a development project with funding commitments and/or involve demolition of blighted residential structures.

The following cities received grant funds through the Blight Elimination Program:

- Genesee County Metropolitan Planning Commission; preliminary award amount \$250,000
- City of Mt. Pleasant; preliminary award amount \$250,000
- Marquette County Land Bank; preliminary award amount \$223,250.00
- City of Battle Creek; preliminary award amount \$250,000
- City of Harbor Beach; preliminary award amount \$150,000
- Kent County Land Bank Authority; preliminary award amount \$50,000
- City of Springfield ; preliminary award amount \$135,000
- City of Dowagiac; preliminary award amount \$250,000
- City of Monroe; preliminary award amount \$200,000
- City of Muskegon; preliminary award amount \$250,000
- City of Bay City; preliminary award amount \$250,000
- Berrien County Community Development; preliminary award amount \$250,000
- City of Manistique; preliminary award amount \$201,550
- City of Kalamazoo; preliminary award amount \$217,350
- City of Alpena; preliminary award amount \$245,000
- City of Ypsilanti; preliminary award amount \$250,000
- Clare County Community Development; preliminary award amount \$157,500
- City of Coldwater; preliminary award amount \$65,250
- Village of Marcellus; preliminary award amount \$155,100

The Blight Elimination Program has funded approximately \$25 million in demolition projects dating back to 2012 and has applied the newly repurposed \$3.8 million to continue efforts to demolish vacant and abandoned structures.

“By investing in blight elimination we are investing in the future of Michigan,” said Kevin Elsenheimer, executive director at MSHDA. “Eliminating blighted properties promotes public safety, stabilizes property values and enhances economic development opportunities.”

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) provides financial and technical assistance through public and private partnerships to create and preserve decent, affordable housing for low- and moderate-income residents and to engage in community economic development activities to revitalize urban and rural communities.*

*MSHDA's loans and operating expenses are financed through the sale of tax-exempt and taxable bonds as well as notes to private investors, not from state tax revenues. Proceeds are loaned at below-market interest rates to developers of rental housing, and help fund mortgages and home improvement loans. MSHDA also administers several federal housing programs. For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/mshda.