



NEWS RELEASE

From Mayor Dean DePiero

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PARMA TO HOST FORUM ON HOUSING CRISIS

(PARMA) – The city of Parma will host a Housing Forum Tuesday, August 26 at Parma City Hall to address questions about the nationwide mortgage crisis. The special program is presented by the city and ESOP, Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People.

“This is an ideal opportunity for Parma residents and those from across Greater Cleveland to learn more about the foreclosure crisis,” said Parma Mayor Dean DePiero. “This forum will offer invaluable information on how homeowners can prevent foreclosure. The city and county experts will also address what residents can do once the foreclosure process has started.”

Housing experts have labeled Cleveland as the nation's foreclosure epicenter. Ohio and Cuyahoga County have led the country in the number of annual foreclosure rates over the past several years. By the summer of 2007, Cleveland had four of the top 21 ZIP codes for foreclosure filings in the United States. Slavic Village has been one of the hardest hit communities in the nation.

According to Cuyahoga County Treasurer Jim Rokasis, more than 15,000 foreclosures were recorded in the county in 2007. Rokasis says that number is split 50-50 between the city of Cleveland and mortgages that went belly-up in the suburbs. The county says for every homeowner who escapes foreclosure, approximately 15 new mortgage defaults are filed with the Cuyahoga County Treasurer's Office.

“We will provide a lot of answers to questions residents have about foreclosure as well as foreclosure prevention programs that work,” said ESOP Community Organizer Kelly McGowan. “Vacant homes are the fallout from the crisis, and that leads to vandalism, arson, crime and a tremendous loss of tax revenue for local communities.”

The entire city of Parma, with a population of approximately 82,000 residents, has only about 200 vacant homes that are now in the foreclosure process. The houses are inspected on a weekly basis to ensure the properties are safe and properly maintained until the homes are sold.

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The public forum will provide updates on the enactment of local anti-predatory lending ordinances and related issues impacting all northeast Ohioans. Local Parma residents will speak at the forum to explain methods they used to successfully prevent foreclosure.

Statewide, the organization Policy Matters Ohio reports foreclosure filings at least quadrupled in 70 of the state's 88 counties over the past decade. The economic think tank says both job loss and considerable population shrinkage has contributed to the continuous economic setbacks.

"This has been a brutal learning experience for tens of thousands of people," said Mayor DePiero. "Our aim at the forum is to explain how homeowners can learn to play on a level playing field and avoid an economic catastrophe. We're expecting a lot of interest in this free program."

The Parma Housing Forum will begin at 7:00 p.m. in Parma City Council Chambers.

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