

2 aides to attend Harvard program

The Center for Community Progress at Harvard University has announced that two officials from Orange have been selected to attend a week-long program that will address vacant and abandoned properties.

The center will present what it calls a "Community Progress Leadership Institute" in which attendees are expected to learn and discuss subjects and ideas related to these properties.

The program begins March 14 and will be conducted at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass. City officials said Valerie Jackson, director of planning and development, and Stephanie Gidigbi, chief of staff, will attend.

According to a statement released by center officials, "Cities invited to be part of the Community Progress Leadership Institute have demonstrated a commitment to taking a systemic approach to the problems of vacant and problem properties in their communities, as well as the capacity to carry out such an approach. The participating cities will be used as national models to address vacant and abandon property."

Center officials said representatives of participating states and cities will learn new ideas and approaches and share their successful practices. Subjects representatives are expected to discuss include:

- Creating and using data systems to identify and track vacant and problem properties;
- Evaluating the reuse potential of vacant properties to maximize revitalization opportunities;
- Exploring ways to streamline tax collection, tax lien, and foreclosure systems.
- Creating policy frameworks and cost-effective systems for cities to hold, maintain and dispose of properties;
- Ensuring compliance with property maintenance and improvement standards by private owners;
- Identifying creative collaborations among stakeholders to further neighborhood revitalization;
- Identifying potential sources of funding and financing;
- Establishing benchmarks to track results.