

Unfair Property Taxes Creates Unjust Tax Foreclosures and Evictions!

This year, Detroit faces the largest tax foreclosure crisis in history. Over the last several years, waves of tax foreclosure have only increase the hardship and disruption of the lives of families and the devastation to our communities. **These auctions and foreclosures have driven many seniors and other lifelong residents from their homes, allowing speculators to grab them up on the cheap, increased the number that are abandoned, and failed to provide any significant revenue for the city.**

Initially, in 2015, there were about 37,000 “occupied homes”, that is about 100,000 residents facing foreclosure (including families). A wide spread effort was launched by non-profits, community groups, and the County to reduce this number, **it was partially successful, but...**

Despite State programs such a Step Forward, and a recently passed “Tax Cap” law, thousands of families still face loss of their homes through forfeiture to the County and sale by Auction this fall. **The Assistant County Treasurer has said “only” about 11,000 “occupied homes” (about 30,000 residents when families are included) remain in foreclosure.** Many of these folks are ineligible for payment plans or unable to meet “down payments” needed to qualify. Step Forward has over 57% rejection rate for those seeking relief and will reject people for being “too poor”, while at the same time they have allotted up to \$175 million to tear down homes!

Also, unfortunately most those that dodged this year’s foreclosure will be facing the same issue next year. For the about 8 thousand persons in payment plans, the County hasn’t even been able to implement the full “Tax cap” law or they still face monthly payments that are unaffordable. Tens of thousands more continue deep in tax debt and will be up for foreclosure again next year.

It’s not that people don’t want to pay, it’s that they can’t pay!

This crisis is a direct result of several key elements: 1). The City’s failure to fairly reassess property taxes after the housing market collapsed in 2008, and; 2). the failed “recovery” and reduced income of many residents after the Bank induced recession.

The combination of the above two factors (and others) resulted in the inability of tens of thousands of Detroit residents to pay their property taxes. The state’s excessive interest and penalties on tax debt has only increased these resident’s burden.

The city must own up to its role in the crisis

Mayor Duggan has admitted that the city has failed to properly reassess properties for years and has begun a plan for such reassessment. The Mayor supported the new “Tax cap” law that potentially could address some of the prior unjust taxes, **but the County has yet to implement it**, and homeowners must have a fair reassessment of their taxes, now, to even partially address is injustice. **A fair reassessment should be done immediately for all residents by the city, and the state must erase the unjust tax debt levied by the city, as well as, interest and penalties imposed.**

Moratorium (Halt) on Tax Foreclosures Now!

Recently, the Detroit City Council at the urging of community groups passed a resolution about the devastation and impact of these massive tax foreclosures, including some specific suggestions. While generally positive, we need to go further! The mayor must urge the County and State to declare an “Emergency” and Moratorium (halt) to all Foreclosures of “occupied” homes! There is legal precedent for such an emergency and a moratorium on foreclosures. Moreover the County Treasurer should and can remove these homes from auction or foreclosure pending a moratorium! Every level of government must work with communities to change this unjust and unfair property tax system during this moratorium. They must place “Keeping People in Their Homes” as a top priority!

Detroit Eviction Defense (Meeting Every Thurs. at 6pm; Old St. John’s Church, 2120 Russell, Det.)

Contact us at detroitevictiondefense@gmail.com, or (313) 740-1073 or Visit: detroitevictiondefense.net

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Proposal from Detroit Eviction Defense to Detroit City Council

Detroit Eviction Defense stands in full support of the “Stop the Foreclosures” resolution proposed by the Russell Woods-Sullivan Area Association for a moratorium on tax foreclosures and other actions.

The City Council should urge implementation of a “suspension” of property tax foreclosures, reversions and evictions of occupied homes in Detroit and Wayne County! First, by the removal of all owner/occupants (including those with unclear titles) from foreclosure by the Wayne County Treasurer. Then, by declaration of a “state of emergency” by the Governor of Michigan and a Moratorium on all foreclosures and evictions.

This “suspension” or moratorium on foreclosures and evictions is pivotal in giving owner/occupants a reprieve from the many injustices addressed below and just relief. During this time, the City of Detroit, Wayne County, the State of Michigan and the Federal Government must work with the community (along with other issues they raise) to investigate and act in their respective roles in the tax, the tax relief, and the auction process. Among these are to:

- 1. Reassess all property values and roll back property tax debt of owner/occupants to compensate for City’s failure to properly and fairly “reassess” property taxes.** Establish a fair and simplified tax assessment process and year around application for tax reassessment, to allow appeals beyond “February Assessors Review” window (Feb. 1-15).
- 2. Retroactively eliminate interest and penalties on back property taxes for owner/occupants. Establish reasonable and affordable repayment plans,** broadly interpreting the “distressed” homeowner status, and including such plans for owner/occupants of “reverted” homes.
- 3. All aspects of the Property Tax and Auction process must be fair, accountable, and transparent. Remove all tax liens for past-due water bills.** Expand, and expedite an owner/occupant’s title rights, retroactively extend the poverty and residential exemption, and/or other reductions of property taxes, where eligible. **Restitution or relief for those losing their homes due to unjust foreclosure and auction actions.**
- 4. Increase the funding to Step Forward for tax relief. Transfer the Hardest Hit funding allocated for “blight removal” to foreclosure relief. Simplify the process and eliminate barriers to access these funds for all owner/occupants.**
- 5. Adjust Detroit Land Grant Authority and City policy to keep “people in the homes they occupy.” Restore “publically owned” homes to those losing them to the city through the unjust auction and foreclosure.** Facilitate and recognize home ownership of those families occupying “public property” or property “abandoned” by absentee owners.
- 6. Work in concert to provide relief and legal remedies for homeowners and communities suffering from unscrupulous developers, landlords and investors that have used the recent auctions and housing crisis to push residents from their homes, saddled new owner-occupants with unpaid taxes, tenants with unreasonable rents, degraded the quality of our housing and further devastated our communities. Impose reparations from banks and financial institutions for Detroit properties that were blighted because of their negligence, and institute laws and penalties to prevent their future dumping of property on the city.**

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Keep Kenny Brinkley and Sandi Combs in their Home!

Call and demand that they call
off the eviction of Kenny
Brinkley and Sandi Combs!



Kenny Brinkley and Sandi Combs are facing eviction from their Detroit home, which has been in Kenny's family since 1951. Kenny is a former Motown musician and Sandi is an artist and educator.

After Kenny's health started to fail and Sandi was laid off from her full-time job, the couple lost their home in a 2010 tax foreclosure auction to a company called Detroit Property Exchange. The company had them pay rent every month, telling them that the money would go towards them purchasing their home. After four years, they found out that not only had none of their payments gone toward purchasing the home, but also that Detroit Property Exchange hadn't paid any property taxes. Their home was again sold at tax foreclosure auction to a company from out of state called Sussex Immobilier, LLC.

Sussex refused to accept any rent or to entertain any offer from Mr. Brinkley and Ms. Combs to purchase their home, and instead hired a property management company from Grosse Pointe Farms called Blackbird Asset Management to evict them. Mr. Brinkley and Ms. Combs are willing to pay a reasonable monthly rent and make a reasonable offer to buy their home back, but Sussex and Blackbird seem more interested in kicking them out.

Join us as we fight back and send the message that we will not stand by while our neighbors are being evicted and our communities are being destroyed by vulture developers and property speculators.

Take action to support Kenny Brinkley and Sandi Combs!

Call these numbers: Eric Novak from Blackbird Asset Management at **313-588-0377**, Sussex Immobilier LLC at **732-213-8040**, and John Hagling of Sussex LLC at **818-913-4481** and say: "I am calling to demand that you work with Kenny Brinkley and Sandy Combs and allow them to stay in their family home at 678 Taylor Street in Detroit, Michigan. They are willing to pay a reasonable amount to purchase their home back. I support Kenny and Sandi in their fight to stay in their home."

**Detroit Eviction Defense meets every Thursday at 6pm at
Old St. John's Church on 2120 Russell - detroitevictiondefense.org**