



**RUTH JOHNSON**  
OAKLAND COUNTY CLERK/REGISTER OF DEEDS  
[www.oakgov.com/clerkrod](http://www.oakgov.com/clerkrod)

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Oct. 27, 2009

The Honorable Marie Donigan  
Chairperson, Intergovernmental and Regional Affairs Committee  
124 N Capitol Ave  
Lansing, MI 48933-1341

Dear Chairperson Donigan,

I'd like to thank you, Chairperson Donigan, and every member of the committee for taking the time to consider House Bill 5267, which will help families in foreclosure save their homes.

What House Bill 5267 would do is restore the ability of Oakland, Macomb and Kent counties – and ONLY those counties – to assist families in foreclosure by calculating the amount they need to pay to save their homes after sheriff's sale.

This is a service that our office provided for decades until the law was changed in 2005. Under that change in law, the responsibility for calculating "pay-off" or redemption amounts was taken from county registers and given to the investor or financial agent responsible for the home after the sheriff's sale. Unfortunately, those agents sometimes have a very real financial stake in preventing the home from being redeemed by the original homeowner.

Some homeowners able to scrape enough money together to get their homes are telling us those investors won't return their phone calls and are refusing to provide that information. Others say they are simply given a lump sum to pay with no information about what that total includes. They have little choice but to pay it if they want to save their homes. Worse yet, some investors and financial agents are charging as much as \$200 to calculate that amount for homeowners – and this to families already in financial crisis.

We believe that a neutral third party, county register office in those counties that wish to provide this service, could assist these families and ensure that every family that has the opportunity to save their home.

This legislation can't wait. Foreclosures are at record numbers. Oakland County alone is expecting as many as 8,500 foreclosures this year and had nearly 10,000 foreclosures last year. In some Michigan neighborhoods, as many as one out of every 5.2 households is in foreclosure.

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Pontiac MI 48341-0415  
(248) 858-0560  
[clerk@oakgov.com](mailto:clerk@oakgov.com)

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You will hear today from some of my fellow Register of Deeds today that they do not support this bill. Again, House Bill 5267 would only impact Oakland, Macomb and Kent counties. We are very respectful of their desire not to provide this service and would urge that they respect our position that we believe this could help families save their homes.

Several other proposals have been floated to remedy this situation – including pending legislation supported by some registers. That legislation, however, still puts the burden for calculating pay-off amounts on homeowners.

Oakland and Macomb counties wish to provide this service, which we had provided for decades, because is simply good public policy.

Please help us assist the families who can to save their homes by approving House Bill 5267. If I can provide any additional information, please contact Deputy Clerk Chris Ward at (248) 858-0560.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ruth Johnson  
Oakland County Clerk / Register of Deeds



**Ruth Johnson**  
**Oakland County Clerk/Register of Deeds**  
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October 21, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

Enclosed please find a certified copy of Miscellaneous Resolution #09240 – BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS – SUPPORT FOR ENACTMENT OF MICHIGAN LEGISLATION TO CLEARLY AUTHORIZE COUNTIES TO OWN AND OPERATE FARMER'S AND FLEA MARKETS which was adopted by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners on October 14, 2009.

As the County Clerk/Register, I have been instructed to provide you with a certified copy of this adopted resolution. Please forward Miscellaneous Resolution #09240 to the appropriate person(s). Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Ruth Johnson  
Clerk/Register of Deeds  
County of Oakland

Enclosure (1)

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Miscellaneous Resolution # 09240

BY: Commissioner David Woodward, District #18

JOHN SCOTT DISTRICT #5

RE: Board of Commissioners – Support for Enactment of Michigan Legislation to Clearly Authorize Counties to Own and Operate Farmer’s and Flea Markets

TO: Oakland County Board of Commissioners

Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen:

**WHEREAS** in 1952, the Oakland County Commission adopted a resolution to establish the Oakland County Farmer’s Market; and

**WHEREAS** the county administration reported that there was no record of the Oakland County Commission adopting a resolution to establish a Oakland County Flea Market; and

**WHEREAS** a successful farmer’s market and flea market has been operating at 2350 Pontiac Lake Road, located in Waterford, Michigan for many years; and

**WHEREAS** the County Market offers fresh farm, garden, orchard and greenhouse produce to the general public; and

**WHEREAS** the County Flea Market, operating every Sunday on the same site, offers booths selling antiques, collectibles, household items, furniture, books, records, tools and new items; and

**WHEREAS** the Michigan Legislature, in a comprehensive rewrite of the laws governing municipal borrowing, adopted Public Act 299 in 2002 which repealed a 1923 statute which granted to counties the authority to construct, equip, or purchase buildings to be used as a public market; and

**WHEREAS** the Oakland County administration, after being asked to look into the issue, concluded there is no statutory authority that allows Oakland County to operate a flea market; and

**WHEREAS** the Oakland County administration has announced that the Oakland County Flea Market will close after October 25<sup>th</sup>; and

**WHEREAS** flea markets and farmer’s market can have positive impact; they provide a place where people easily interact with social and economic activity; and

**WHEREAS** state legislation may be needed in order to clearly define the ability of counties to be able to own and operate farmer’s markets and flea markets.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Oakland County Board of Commissioners hereby requests the Michigan legislature to draft and adopt the necessary statues that will clearly provide Michigan’s county’s with the authority to operate farmers and flea markets.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Oakland County Board of Commissioners requests its lobbyist to provide assistance in seeing that the legislature is made aware of the urgency of this matter and that the appropriate legislation is drafted, introduced and adopted as expeditiously as feasible.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Oakland County Clerk is requested to forward copies of this adopted resolution to resolution to Governor Jennifer M. Granholm, the Oakland County delegation to the Michigan Legislature, the Michigan Association of Counties and Oakland Counties Legislative Lobbyists.

Chairperson, we move the adoption of the foregoing Resolution.

David Woodward  
Commissioner David Woodward  
District #18

[Signature]  
Commissioner  
District # 21

[Signature]  
Commissioner  
District # 23

[Signature]  
Commissioner  
District # 14

[Signature]  
Commissioner  
District # 25

[Signature]  
Commissioner  
District # 15

Bill Bullard  
Commissioner  
District # 2

[Signature]  
Commissioner  
District # 3

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Commissioner  
District #

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Commissioner  
District #

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Commissioner  
District #

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Commissioner  
District #

[Signature]  
Commissioner  
District # 5

Mattie Mitchell  
Commissioner  
District # 10

Manea Gersken  
Commissioner  
District # 17

Helaine M. Zuck  
Commissioner  
District # 22

Gary R. McGilley  
Commissioner  
District # 24

[Signature]  
Commissioner  
District # 11

Shelley Toeb #16  
Commissioner  
District #

[Signature]  
Commissioner  
District #

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Commissioner  
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Commissioner  
District #

Moved by Woodward supported by Middleton to suspend the rules and vote on MISCELLANEOUS RESOLUTION #09240 – BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS – SUPPORT FOR ENACTMENT OF MICHIGAN LEGISLATION TO CLEARLY AUTHORIZE COUNTIES TO OWN AND OPERATE FARMER'S AND FLEA MARKETS.

Vote on motion to suspend the rules:

AYES: Douglas, Gershenson, Gingell, Gosselin, Greimel, Hatchett, Jackson, Jacobsen, Long, McGillivray, Middleton, Nash, Potter, Potts, Runestad, Schwartz, Scott, Taub, Woodward, Zack, Bullard, Burns, Capello, Coleman, Coulter. (25)

NAYS: None. (0)

A sufficient majority having voted in favor, the motion to suspend the rules and vote on MISCELLANEOUS RESOLUTION #09240 – BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS – SUPPORT FOR ENACTMENT OF MICHIGAN LEGISLATION TO CLEARLY AUTHORIZE COUNTIES TO OWN AND OPERATE FARMER'S AND FLEA MARKETS carried.

Moved by Woodward supported by Middleton the resolution be adopted.

Discussion followed.

Vote on resolution:

AYES: Gershenson, Gingell, Gosselin, Greimel, Hatchett, Jackson, Jacobsen, Long, McGillivray, Middleton, Nash, Potter, Potts, Runestad, Schwartz, Scott, Taub, Woodward, Zack, Bullard, Burns, Capello, Coleman, Coulter, Douglas. (25)

NAYS: None. (0)

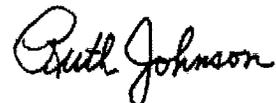
A sufficient majority having voted in favor, the resolution was adopted.

**DOES NOT REQUIRE COUNTY EXECUTIVE ACTION**

STATE OF MICHIGAN)  
COUNTY OF OAKLAND)

I, Ruth Johnson, Clerk of the County of Oakland, do hereby certify that the foregoing resolution is a true and accurate copy of a resolution adopted by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners on October 14, 2009, with the original record thereof now remaining in my office.

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of the County of Oakland at Pontiac, Michigan this 14th day of October, 2009.



Ruth Johnson, County Clerk

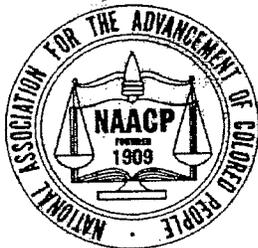
# House Bill 5267 (State Rep. Fred Miller) Calculating Foreclosure Redemption to Help Families

## PROBLEM:

- In 2005, local Registers of Deeds were prohibited from providing a redemption amount to homeowners who wanted to redeem their home out of foreclosure.
- Currently, the only way homeowners in a foreclosure crisis can get this amount is by contacting the lender or their agent who may have a financial interest in seeing the home foreclosed upon.
- Many homeowners trying to save their homes have not been able to get the correct amount due to unreturned phone calls, changed telephone numbers and unavailable lenders.

## SOLUTION:

- Senate Bill 350 and House Bill 5267 were introduced earlier this year because Oakland, Macomb and Kent counties would like to provide this important service to homeowners in need as a neutral third party.
- Because of objections from other local registers, the bills only affect the counties requesting the legislation.
- These bills would restore a neutral third party into the process to ensure homeowners have a fair chance to save their homes.



## SOUTHERN OAKLAND COUNTY NAACP

PO Box 2769, Southfield, MI 48037  
Office: 248.569.9700; Fax: 248.559.9515  
Website: www.socnaacp.com

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December 2, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Cassis  
Michigan State Senator  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Senator Cassis:

The Southern Oakland County NAACP supports the passage of Senate Bill 1390 as a means to make it easier for families in foreclosure to save their homes.

We understand that SB1390 restores the ability of county registers of deeds to calculate the amount of money needed to redeem a foreclosed home and provide that calculation to the homeowner.

As our region is looking at record foreclosure numbers, it is critical that we do everything we can to help families keep their homes.

Our Oakland County Clerk/Register Ruth Johnson has received complaints from some homeowners who say it is nearly impossible to find out the amount needed to save their homes. Phones are disconnected. Telephone calls reportedly aren't returned. Some have been forced to hire attorneys to force companies or investors to release what is very basic information.

Worse yet, some of these institutions are charging more than \$200 to provide the calculation, which literally takes just minutes – and this to families already in financial crisis.

As the Southern Oakland County NAACP understands it, many county registers successfully provided redemption amounts for years until the law was changed in 2005. SB 1390 would not force all county registers to provide amounts, only allow counties that see a need to do so.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (248) 559-9079.

Sincerely,

James Ralph

CITIZEN ADVISERS

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A Journal Register Company Newspaper

OAKLAND PRESS Journal Register AUGUST 2009

EDITORIAL

# Senate should OK new foreclosure bill

**W**e're not exactly sure what's wrong with Lansing, but most likely our officials are so preoccupied with politics they can't take a minute to act on a reasonable and fair piece of legislation.

Senate Bill 350 has been languishing in the Banking and Financial Institutions Committee since March 10, when it was introduced by Sen. Nancy Cassis, R-Novi.

The bill just makes sense — maybe that's Lansing's problem.

One of its staunch supporters is Oakland County Clerk Ruth Johnson. She says the bill would close a loophole in a previously approved law that allows "some unscrupulous investors and overwhelmed financial institutions to steal the last chance some families have to save their foreclosed homes."

In what can often be a rather confusing set of standards leading up to foreclosure, homeowners are actually being hampered in their efforts to save their property.

Homeowners who lose their homes to foreclosure have six months from the date the property was auctioned to redeem the house.

However, in 2005 state lawmakers changed real estate law to prohibit Michigan's county registers (county clerks) from calculating the amount of money needed to redeem a house that has gone through foreclosure. That was a service provided by county clerk offices for years.

Since 2005, however, that power is vested with the buyer — the person or persons with a financial stake in keeping the foreclosed house. Obviously, if a dishonest buyer purchased the home at a bargain basement price, he's not going to tell the homeowner how much is owed.

That's wrong. Homeowners have a right to know.

In some cases, those in foreclosure are being charged more than \$200 simply to find out what is owed. And these are people in debt.

Johnson says her office could research and provide the information for as little as \$50, just enough to cover expenses. The fact lobbyists are working against the proposal shows there is money to be made.

This bill should look familiar to some legislators. It is the same as the 2008 Senate Bill 1390, which finally passed the Senate but died in the House.

The problem with this kind of bills is that while they don't cost taxpayers any money and they do help people, there are no lobbyists to speak for the average consumer.

Johnson notes there are many registers of deeds statewide who are against this. We're not sure why, and we won't speculate at this time.

Because of that, she says this year's version would affect only Oakland, Macomb and Kent counties. These three are the most interested in helping the homeowner.

As Johnson says, "It's unconscionable what's happening, and it is literally taking away a family's last chance to save their home."

You would think that most honest investors would make the information on the amount of money due readily available to someone who is losing their home, and then somehow manage to come up with enough funds to save it.

Unfortunately, it's a matter of greed — something that our society permits to readily, from the federal government on down, and it's even worse in corporate America.

So, passing Senate Bill 1390 would be an easy, fair and honest way to help people keep their homes.

## GOOD MORNING

Your home may be your castle, but if it's made of sand, you have to watch out for waves.



## EDITORIAL

# Bill would help people stay in their homes

**W**ith mortgage foreclosures at an all-time high in Michigan, you'd think lawmakers in Lansing would jump at a chance to legally keep more people in their homes.

But logic, it seems, is sometimes overlooked in the brutal world of politics.

Still, we can't think of a single good reason any honest lawmaker would be opposed to Senate Bill 1390.

Both Oakland County Clerk Ruth Johnson and Macomb County Clerk Carmella Sabaugh have provided testimony of their support of the bill to the Senate Banking Committee.

Not one to mince words, Johnson said the bill would close a loophole in a previously approved law that allows "some unscrupulous investors and overwhelmed financial institutions to steal the last chance some families have to save their foreclosed homes."

In what can often be a rather confusing set of standards leading up to foreclosure, homeowners are actually being hampered in their efforts to save their property.

Homeowners who lose their homes to foreclosure have six months from the date the property was up for auction to redeem the house.

That, of course, requires them to have the money to do so.

In 2005, however, state lawmakers changed real estate law to prohibit Michigan's county registers (county clerks) from calculating the amount of money needed to redeem a house that has gone through foreclosure. That was a service provided by county clerk offices for years.

Since 2005, however, that power is vested with the buyer — the person or persons with a financial stake in keeping the foreclosed house.

"Homeowners in foreclosure should have a neutral place to go and should

not be forced to track down the company that bought the mortgage simply to find out how much must be paid to save their home," Sabaugh said. "I am fighting to make it a little easier for those in foreclosure to find out how much money is needed to save their home."

In some cases, those in foreclosure are being charged more than \$200 simply to find out what is owed. And these are people in debt.

Johnson and Sabaugh say their offices could research and provide the information for as little as \$50, just enough to cover expenses.

The fact that there are lobbyists working against the proposal shows there is money to be made through a legal loophole.

As Johnson notes, it's important to act quickly — more than 9,000 people in Oakland County alone have lost their homes to foreclosure since the bill was introduced on Jan. 4, 2008.

You would think that most honest buyers would make the information on the amount of money due readily available to someone who is losing their home, but somehow manages to come up with enough funds to save it.

But obviously it's a matter of greed — something that is all too permissive in our society, from the federal government on down and even worse in corporate America.

So, passing Senate Bill 1390 would be an easy, fair and honest way to help people keep their homes.

Amid this hectic lame duck session, legislators need to remember the season and do the right thing. It doesn't cost a penny, just a little time.



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## OAKLAND BUSINESS REVIEW

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Opinion »

### Guest Opinion: Families deserve help calculating the cost to redeem a foreclosed home

By Erica J. Finley  
November 25, 2008, 7:00AM

The worst of times isn't bringing out the best in some people.

Here in Oakland County, some unscrupulous investors and overwhelmed financial institutions are, in effect, "stealing" the last chance some families have to save their foreclosed homes.

The problem is this: Most homeowners who lose their homes to foreclosure have six months - even after the home has been sold at sheriff's sale - to redeem their home. All they need is the money and the amount they need to pay.

In March 2005, however, well-intentioned state lawmakers changed real estate law to prohibit Michigan's county registers from calculating the amount of money necessary to redeem a home that has gone through foreclosure - a simple calculation registers had provided for years as a public service.

The change in law had unforeseen consequences. It gave the responsibility of calculating the redemption amount to the investor who had purchased the home - the people with a very real financial stake in keeping the newly purchased home.

We have had complaints from original homeowners who say it is nearly impossible to find out the amount needed to save their homes. Phones are disconnected. Telephone calls reportedly aren't returned. Some have been



Ruth Johnson

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forced to hire attorneys to force companies or investors to release what is very basic information.

Worse yet, some of these institutions are charging more than \$200 to provide the redemption amount, which literally takes just minutes to calculate - and this to families already in financial crisis.

Our office, working with Macomb County Clerk/Register Carmella Sabaugh in a bipartisan effort, has pushed for legislation that would restore our ability to provide redemption amounts as a neutral government agency with no financial stake in the outcome - known as Senate Bill 1390. We believe we can provide that same calculation for \$50 or less, just to cover our expenses.

We have run into opposition - lobbyists are working very hard against this consumer protection bill. Senate Bill 1390 would not mandate that other county registers get back into the business of providing calculations, just allow those of us who want to provide that service to do so.

The legislation, sponsored by Sen. Nancy Cassis, (R- Novi), was approved by the Michigan Senate Banking Committee last week and now goes to the Senate for consideration. If it isn't taken up and passed by both the Senate and the House of Representatives by the end of the year, the bill dies.

Times are tough, but common decency shouldn't be. It's important to act quickly - more than 9,000 people in Oakland County alone have lost their homes to foreclosure since the bill was introduced on Jan. 4, 2008.

We aren't asking for a bail-out or a tax credit - just the ability to perform a simple calculation that will help families save their homes. I would urge you to contact your local senator to urge support for Senate Bill 1390.

*Ruth Johnson is the Oakland County clerk and register of deeds.*

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# Daily Tribune

Serving southeastern Oakland County



## Opinion

# Law needed to close loophole to help prevent foreclosures

Published: Friday, August 14, 2009

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Since 2005, however, that power is vested with the buyer — the person or persons with a financial stake in keeping the foreclosed house. Obviously, if a dishonest buyer purchased the home at a bargain basement price, he's not going to tell the homeowner how much is owed.

That's wrong. Homeowners have a right to know.

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And these are people in debt.

Johnson said her office could research and provide the information for as little as \$50, just enough to cover expenses. The fact lobbyists are working against the proposal shows there is money to be made.

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The problem with these kinds of bills is that while they don't cost taxpayers any money and they do help people, there are no lobbyists to speak for the average consumer.

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Johnson said, "It's unconscionable what's happening and it is literally taking away a family's last chance to save their home."

You would think that most honest investors would make the information on the amount of money due readily available to someone who is losing their home, so they somehow manage to come up with enough funds to save it.

Unfortunately, it's a matter of greed — something that is all too permissive in our society, from the federal government on down, and even worse in corporate America.

So, passing Senate Bill <sup>350</sup>~~1390~~ would be an easy, fair and honest way to help people keep their homes.

## Comments

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- 2) Be polite.
- 3) Don't hate.
- 4) If you object to someone's post, use the "Report Abuse" button and we'll review it.
- 5) Users who don't play by the rules will be blocked and won't be allowed to participate.

Name:

Email: (optional)

# COULD YOU SAVE YOUR HOME?

This is a quiz to illustrate what a homeowner in foreclosure under current law must do if they wish to save their homes. Prior to March of 2005, a homeowner in Oakland and Macomb counties could simply go to their Register of Deeds who could perform this service in a matter of minutes. Registers are now prohibited by law from providing this service to help people in need. Some say this is a simple task for the homeowner. We ask that you complete this quiz to see if it is....

Imagine if you will that you are a homeowner in foreclosure. The sheriff's department has held an auction for your home. You now have six months to redeem your house and save it for your family. In the last week of the six months, your uncle comes through with a personal loan in the nick of time.

The first thing you do is try to contact the lender who had the winning bid at the sheriff's auction. After three days of leaving voicemails and not receiving returned phone calls, you decide to take matters into your own hands.

You obtain a copy of the recorded sheriff's deed on your property from your county Register of Deeds. At the sheriff's sale on March 17, 2009 your home was sold for \$156,289.98. This deed also says you owe a per diem rate of \$32.37 for every day from the day of sale to the day you redeem the property.

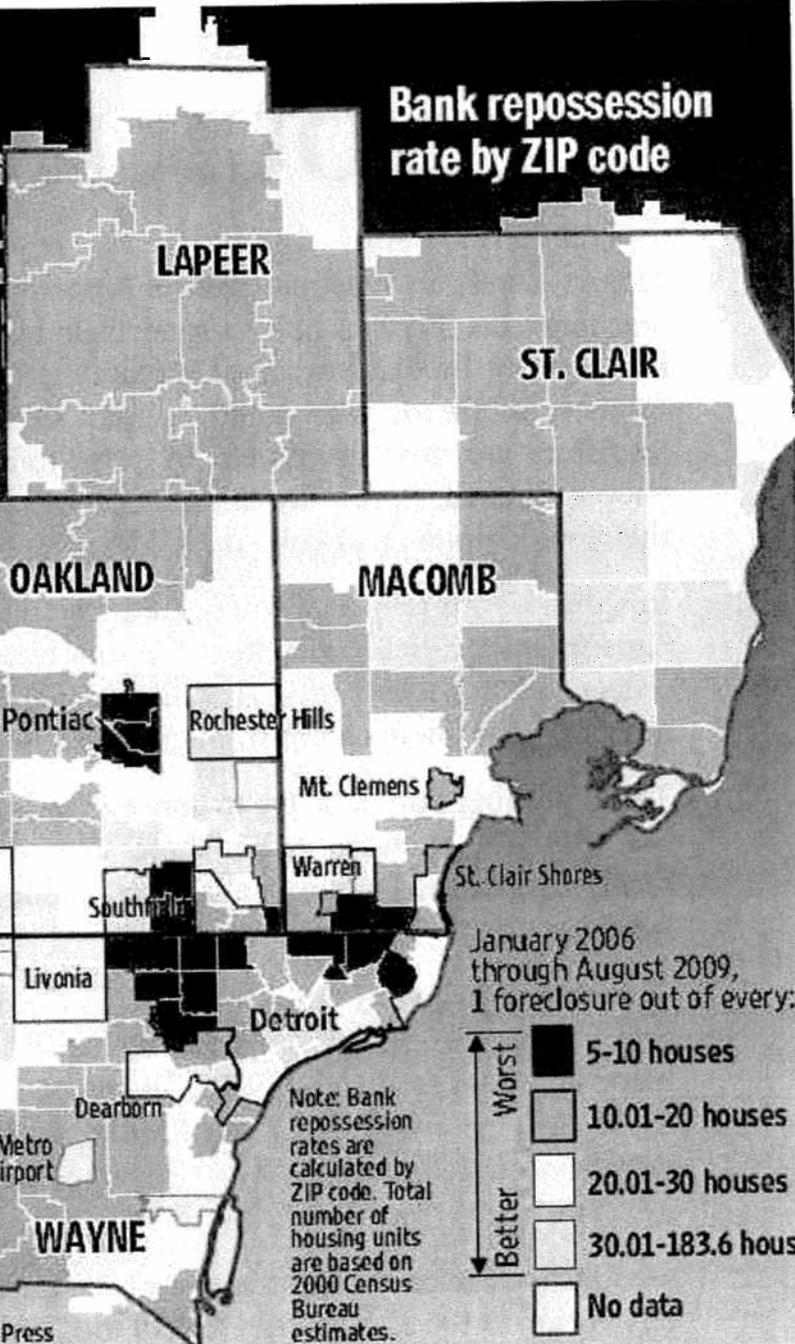
Luckily, you call your local register of deeds to make sure everything is all set and find out that there are two affidavits attached to the property. Six days prior to the last day to redeem the lender paid for taxes and insurance. Property taxes were paid in the amount of \$1,260.45 plus interest at your mortgage rate from the date they made the payment until the date you will redeem the property. Homeowner's insurance was paid in the amount of \$425.00 for a one year policy. Even though you already had homeowner's coverage, you are responsible for six months of this cost plus the same interest rate on the taxes. You dig through your files and find that would have been 7.56%

After all this frantic activity, you are ready to redeem. The date is September 17, 2009. How much do you write the certified check for? Just remember if you're wrong your family's home may be gone forever.



REGINA H. BOONE/Detroit Free Press

Hazel Park has the highest rate of foreclosures of any city in metro Detroit.



Source: RealtyTrac Inc.

Detroit Free Press

### Top 50 foreclosure rates in region by ZIP code

County	City	ZIP code	Repossessions	Foreclosure rate*
Wayne	Detroit	48205	4,166	5.23
Wayne	Detroit	48224	3,718	5.34
Wayne	Detroit	48228	4,407	5.6
Wayne	Detroit	48219	3,305	6.9
Livingston	Hamburg	48139	6	7
Wayne	Detroit	48234	2,377	7.06
Wayne	Detroit	48235	2,816	7.27
Wayne	Detroit	48227	3,067	7.34
Wayne	Detroit	48223	1,723	7.88
Macomb	Warren	48089	1,639	8.15
Oakland	Hazel Park	48030	924	8.21
Macomb	Eastpointe	48021	1,623	8.34
Wayne	Detroit	48221	2,078	8.36
Oakland	Pontiac	48342	912	8.69
Oakland	Pontiac	48341	898	8.96
Wayne	Redford Township	48240	806	9.23
Oakland	Southfield	48075	1,045	9.3
Oakland	Pontiac	48340	1,027	9.98
Oakland	Southfield	48076	1,100	9.98
Wayne	Redford Township	48239	1,518	10.04
Wayne	Harper Woods	48225	636	10.4
Macomb	Warren	48091	1,286	10.44
Wayne	Inkster	48141	1,122	10.71
Wayne	Detroit	48238	1,714	10.88
Wayne	Melvindale	48122	438	10.89
Macomb	New Haven	48048	182	11.14
Wayne	Ecorse	48229	430	11.17
Wayne	Detroit	48213	1,409	11.18
Wayne	Dearborn	48126	1,511	11.19
Wayne	Dearborn Heights	48125	813	11.24
Wayne	River Rouge	48218	363	11.41
Wayne	Romulus	48174	1,010	11.52
Wayne	Detroit	48206	1,226	11.66
Wayne	Lincoln Park	48146	1,427	11.72
Wayne	Highland Park	48203	1,589	11.83
Wayne	Detroit	48204	1,465	11.93
Macomb	Washington	48094	419	12.09
Lapeer	North Branch	48461	221	12.15
Lapeer	Otter Lake	48464	71	12.15
Livingston	Fowlerville	48836	333	12.45
Wayne	Westland	48186	1,168	12.77
Oakland	Oak Park	48237	1,006	12.81
Macomb	Roseville	48066	1,625	12.92
St. Clair	Capac	48014	101	13.46
Macomb	Mt. Clemens	48043	572	13.54
Wayne	Detroit	48217	316	13.57
Macomb	New Baltimore	48047	908	13.65
Wayne	Detroit	48210	1,070	13.71
Wayne	Hamtramck	48212	1,251	13.71
Lapeer	Columbiaville	48421	196	13.74

\* Represents 1 foreclosure per X number of households. For example, the rate in ZIP code 48205 is 1 for every 5.23 households.

Continued from FORECLOSURES on Page A01

## **Foreclosure epidemic slams suburbs**

### **Hazel Park is trying to turn home 'crisis into an opportunity'**

**By GRETA GUEST and KRISTI TANNER**

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

Two blocks north of 8 Mile in Hazel Park, for sale signs are nearly as abundant as potholes on George Avenue.

The city, all contained in the 48030 ZIP code, is struggling with the highest foreclosure rate in metro Detroit.

One out of every 8.2 households has been repossessed by the lender from January 2006 through August 2009, according to a Free Press analysis of ZIP code data compiled by Realty Trac Inc. of Irvine, Calif. "One of the reasons we're not surprised by this data is we were the No. 1 recipient of subprime loans in Oakland County," said Ed Klobucher, Hazel Park's city manager. "Foreclosure is a national problem. Even though we didn't create it, we have to solve it."

Eastpointe and Pontiac ranked second and third with rates of 8.3 and 9.2, respectively. Detroit ranked fourth with one foreclosure for every 9.3 households.

The foreclosure epidemic spread throughout metro Detroit, hitting nearly every community.

Birmingham had one foreclosure for every 20.8 households; Dearborn Heights had one foreclosure for every 13.2 households, and Washington Township had one foreclosure for every 12.7 households.

Communities with the lowest rates include Pleasant Ridge, with one foreclosure for every 69.6 households; Wixom, with one for every 58.7 households, and Huntington Woods, with one for every 51.3 households.

Hazel Park officials are utilizing federal and state money to help solve the problem and have an aggressive city program to deal with foreclosures. It received \$1.6 million in federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds earlier this year.

The city is using some of that money to tear down abandoned homes in bad shape and fuel the rehabilitation of older, occupied homes.

"We are going to try to turn this crisis into an opportunity to improve our housing stock," Klobucher said.

A drive down George Avenue shows the challenges — vacant homes with weedy lots next to neatly tended homes and a number of vacant lots.

Marshall Mandell, a foreclosure specialist for Re/Max Classic in Farmington Hills, has a bank-owned house for sale on George Avenue in Hazel Park for \$9,900.

The two-bedroom, two-bath house has 881 square feet and a detached garage.

He has been handling bankowned homes for more than six years in Michigan. He said he has his theories about why Hazel Park has suffered more than other cities. Being over the 8 Mile border from Detroit makes it a bit more expensive, and the housing stock isn't as nice as Detroit's in some cases. "I think it would be very difficult to determine why that happened. It could be that those are areas where people are leaving the state and abandoning their homes," Mandell said.

Another possibility is that overall home prices have fallen so far across metro Detroit that some areas unattainable in the past are now within reach of more people's budgets, making the lower-priced areas less appealing.

"You can buy a home in West Bloomfield for \$250,000 that is a newer, beautiful four-bedroom, two-bathroom home," Mandell said.

"It's just amazing, and the prices are still falling."