

**COUNCIL PRESIDENT COCKREL, JR LAUNCHES  
NEW HOUSING PROGRAM**

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Detroit City Council President Kenneth V. Cockrel, Jr. today won approval of a new housing initiative he hopes will help eliminate blight and foster home ownership. Cockrel's "Friendly Neighbor" Program was approved during a 9-0 vote of the Council. The goal of the program is to connect prospective homeowners with abandoned homes which they can fix up and live in.

Cockrel partnered with the City's Planning and Development Department and Faith Community Homebuyers, a local non-profit agency, to develop the program. The agency has previously assisted over 600 families in purchasing homes in the Detroit Metropolitan Area and has provided over \$2 million in down-payment assistance to low income homebuyers in Wayne County.

"I probably get more complaints about abandoned homes than anything else," he said. "Our hope is that we can get these properties into the hands of people who can live in them, beautify them, and most importantly put them back on the tax rolls."

Council's action authorized the City to sell five homes to Faith Community Homebuyers at a discount rate. The agency will then identify citizens and provide them with intensive training on home ownership that includes budgeting, repairs on a shoestring, and dealing with contractors. FCH will also assist these new "Friendly Neighbors" with low interest financing and title clearance where necessary.

Dina Harris, Executive Director, of FCH, said: "I'm excited to join the city in a partnership like this. I'm looking forward to the positive impact this can have in the community."

Through the City previously operated similar programs, most notably the Nuisance Abatement and Repair to Own Programs, both were later suspended due to various problems. Cockrel said: "The new program should solve those problems."

"By having the City partner with Faith Community Homebuyers, a non-profit group with a proven track record for successful homeownership programs, we've think we have come up with a model that works," he added.

If the pilot project proves successful, the program will be expanded.