

# MorningSider

AUGUST 2015

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## THE EVOLUTION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN DETROIT: THREE LEADERS TALK ABOUT THEIR WORK



By Amy Kuras

Community development corporations, or CDCs, are nonprofits formed to meet specific needs in their neighborhoods. Here in Detroit, where development has until recently been a risky proposition, CDCs were the entities preserving and developing neighborhoods when no one else saw the potential. Now those organizations are facing new challenges and opportunities of a revitalizing city.

We talked with the executive directors of three longstanding CDCs -- Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation, Vanguard Community Development Corporation, and U-SNAP-BAC -- about how the work of their organizations is evolving in 21st-century Detroit.

**Model D: What are the unique needs you are addressing in your neighborhood (or neighborhoods)? What are your neighborhood's biggest strengths/assets?**

***Tom Goddeeris, executive director, Grandmont-Rosedale Development Corporation:*** The housing market remains one of the biggest challenges and needs in our community. In the wake

*(Continued on page 6)*

# MorningSide

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# WARNING SIGNS OF A MAIN SEWER LINE CLOG



*A sewer line clog might be unseen, but it can cause extensive damage inside a home.*

The average homeowner probably knows that sewer lines help transport waste water from the home to underground sewer mains. Beyond that, most homeowners give little thought to their sewer lines until they have some type of clog.

A sewer line clog could lead to a raw sewage backup coming out of the drains, which could lead to significant damage to the home and an expensive sewer line repair or replacement.

Homeowners who understand and respond to their home's early warning system can stave off severe sewer and plumbing issues. Here are some things you should pay attention to.

### **Clogged drain or toilet**

The most common red flags, sewer main cleaners say, are water backing up out of a drain or the toilet plumbing, or a gurgling sound coming from the drains.

"Your house is basically going to talk to you," says Tammy Sims, senior technician with R & S Sewer Cleaning in Indianapolis. "If you notice that when you're done with the washing machine, the toilets start percolating – it sounds like a coffee pot percolating – or you'll get water around the floor drain in the basement, that's one of the first telltale signs."

Clogs can occur in the main sewer line or one of the secondary lines, Sims says.

"Your house is basically set up like a tree," Sims says. "You have one main trunk line that runs out of the house and then you have all these small branches off of that. If the clog is in the main line, that means any water you run in the house will cause problems. If it's a secondary line, it's just going to be isolated to that secondary problem.

"If it's just the bathroom sink, (for example), it will not go down or it will come back up into the bathtub, but you can flush the toilet and it works perfectly fine," she adds. "But if it's the main line, anything you run will cause the toilet to percolate and come up into the bathtub or the basement."

### **Tree roots**

Tree roots are the primary cause of a clogged sewer line, especially in an older home. In newer homes, common sources of clogging include feminine hygiene products, paper towels and even certain types of thicker toilet paper.

"A lot of people have broken-down drains in the ground that have tree roots in them," says Jay Bedell, of Bedell Plumbing in Carmel, Indiana. "That would be the No. 1 reason why people have drain problems. They have older pipes that trees in their yard have actually crushed."

*(Continued on page 5)*

Greetings MorningSide,

MorningSide is hosting a Fish Fry Fundraiser. The event will take place August 1, 2015 from noon until 5 PM, and will support community success through block club building, residential enlightenment to various opportunities in the MorningSide community and the city of Detroit and increasing neighborhood engagement.

As a valued friend, member, and supporter of MorningSide, we are asking for your support by purchasing dinners to back MorningSide's Fish Fry Fundraiser.

Don't miss this chance to support our community and help all MorningSide residents reach their full potential. We look forward to your participation in the MorningSide Fish Fry Fundraiser.

Thank you!



Zelda Anderson

MorningSide President

# MorningSide

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**Eric Dueweke**

Wayburn St. /Alter Rd.

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#### **State Senator**

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(517) 373-0154  
(District 2) Alberta Tinsley-  
Talabi  
(517) 373-1776

## GRILLED PEACHES WITH BOURBON WHIPPED CREAM



### Ingredients

1 cup heavy cream  
2 tablespoons sugar  
  
1/2 teaspoon of all spice  
  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1 teaspoon bourbon  
6 peaches, halved (with pits removed)  
olive oil  
  
Pinch of Salt

### Directions

Whip Heavy cream in an electric mixer, adding sugar, salt, vanilla, and bourbon as it starts to thicken and devolve soft peaks form, about 4 or 5 minutes. Refrigerate, don't over beat you will make butter.

Heat on the grill should be at medium-high heat. Brush lightly a pastry brush with a layer of a light oil. Olive is an excellent on each peach half. Put the peaches face down on the grill surface, then cover with a sauce pan or tent with foil. Turned peaches over upside-down to create a dome over the peaches. Your sauce pan covers up to 4 peaches, so you can cook them in bunches depending on how big peaches and sauce pan are.

Grill peaches for roughly 6 to 8 minutes, until there are distinct grill marks and the peaches feel warmed through and somewhat softened. Remove from grill (they may stick a tiny bit), but flip over, and top with a big dollop of whipped cream.

# WARNING SIGNS OF A MAIN SEWER...

(Continued from page 2)

Experts say slow flowing drains, and gurgling noises from your toilet bowls are the first signs that your sewer system is being affected by tree roots. If you don't take some action to remove the roots, a complete sewer line block will occur.



## Release the pressure

If you get a clog in your home and suspect that a blocked sewer drain is the cause, Sims says it's important to shut off the water at the source or at the main if it's a main line clog.

Homeowners who have access to their sewer cleanout line — typically a short, round, white pipe with a rubber cap located in the yard near the house — can remove the cleanout cap during a backup to release pressure build up; and send water outside instead of into the house.

Bedell's recommendation for keeping lines clear and avoiding plumbing problems doesn't involve chemical-based drain cleaners.

"Fill your sinks to the top and then drain them once or twice a month," Bedell says. "That (water pressure) will help ensure you have proper flow through the pipes and move out any waste that's sitting in the line."

## Request a camera inspection

Sewer line cleaning companies typically run a cable, also known as a drain snake or auger, through the clog to clear it. A simple cleaning or cleanout typically costs less than \$150. If they can't find the problem, many companies recommend a camera inspection. Experts warn consumers to avoid companies that offer a camera inspection before trying to clear the clog.

"A lot of companies out there now do that as a way to find work," Bedell says. "They'll inspect your sewer to (seek out) problems, not to help you, but to help themselves. We'll run a cable through it with a cutting device on it to try to open the drain first. That's the first defense against a clogged drain pipe. If the drain can't be opened with the cable, at that point, we'd give option to run a camera through the drain."

## Important Numbers

■ ■ ■

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#### Treasurer

Raymond Wojtowicz

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#### Sheriff

Benny N. Napoleon

(313) 224-2222

#### Commission (District 1)

Timothy Killeen

(313) 224-0920

#### Prosecutor

Kym L. Worthy

(313) 224-5777

#### Register of Deeds

Bernard J. Youngblood

(313) 224-5854

# Important Numbers



**Detroit**

**Mayor**

Mike Duggan

(313) 224-3400

**Clerk**

Janice M. Winfrey

(313) 224-3260

**City Council Member**

**(District 4)**

Andre L. Spivey

(313) 224-4841

**Department of**

**Neighborhoods**

**- District 4**

***District Manager***

O'Dell Tate

(313) 236-3518

***Asst. District Manager***

Toson Knight

(313) 236-3520

# THE EVOLUTION OF COMMUNITY...

*(Continued from page 1)*

of the major national housing crisis, we saw vacancies shoot up and prices drop. We have been working to revitalize the housing market and help people stay in their homes. We're also trying to revitalize the commercial district; we think remaining a viable residential neighborhood means we need to have the kind of businesses people are looking for, as well as other things we address, such as public safety, parks and other amenities.

[In terms of assets] we have a very attractive and historic housing stock which does attract a lot of people to the community, and homes are available at affordable prices. It's more than just housing – we have a very strong community fabric and residents are very well organized.

**Pamela Martin-Turner, executive director, Vanguard CDC:** We are the neighborhood most immediately near to Midtown. As Detroit is being revitalized, it's really important for us that the people who have been here in the neighborhood are able to stay and people like them are able to come here.

In North End, there is really a sense of place, and of this being a specific neighborhood with a specific history. At one point this was a Jewish community with a thriving commercial district; then it became an African American community and there was still thriving commercial district. Along Oakland Avenue there was night life -- singers and bands came through and played in clubs here. People have a real emotional connection to this neighborhood even if they don't live here any longer.

**Linda Smith, Executive Director of U-SNAP-BAC:** One of our unique needs in the Morning-side Neighborhood is stabilizing the neighborhood. Housing conditions have declined, with most houses in need of renovations or repairs. Over 20 percent of all properties in the neighborhood are vacant lots.

Our biggest assets are that residents who live in the neighborhoods are long-time residents. Block clubs are organized, and residents maintained some of the vacant property for years without support from the city of Detroit.

**Model D: Has your mission changed to address changing conditions (social and physical) in your neighborhood?**

**Goddeeris:** The biggest change is around public safety. We led a whole citywide effort around the idea of a special assessment district to address the issue. We were successful in getting the city to pass an ordinance, but it has not been implemented. We're trying to launch a petition drive for that. That's been the biggest change, in terms of doing something that is not our traditional mission, but is addressing a pressing need.

**Martin-Turner:** The mission has not changed, but the environment has. There is much more of a demand for land. In real estate development, the foundation of a project is site acquisition. If you can't acquire the site, you can't do the development. That's been a fundamental change in the way we work. It's becoming a lot more competitive than it once was. It just makes it more challenging moving forward, but it's something to consider and we have to plan for it.

**Smith:** Our mission has not changed but the work has changed. U SNAP BAC is a housing development corporation organized to stabilize neighborhoods with brick and mortar. Today, we have to think about vacant land turning it into community gardens, side lot programs, and green venture projects. Our current work consists of helping families to stay in their homes by providing resources with property taxes and mortgage assistance programs.

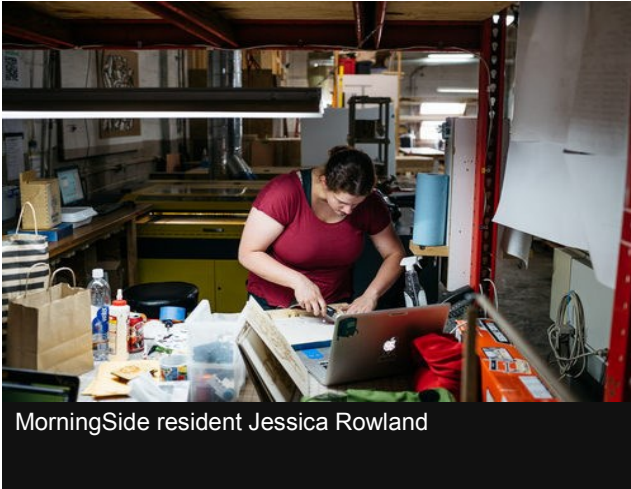
**Model D: What roles do you see CDCs playing in a post-bankruptcy Detroit that may differ from what you've always done?**

**Goddeeris:** Organizations like ours end up filling some of the gaps left by the city when it no longer has the resources it needs. Our organization ends up stepping into those gaps and or-

*(Continued on page 13)*

# METRO DETROITERS PREPARE INVENTIONS AND ART FOR MAKER FAIRE

by Rebecca Golden



MorningSide resident Jessica Rowland

Maker Faire hit the Henry Ford last weekend with displays of inventions, arts, crafts and even PancakeBot. While many of the event's 300 entrants traveled from out-of-state, Metro Detroit has a thriving maker community centered on maker spaces—warehouse-like buildings managed cooperatively where members can build inventions or make art and craft projects on a large scale. One such space, Ferndale's i3, was a hub of frenzied activity last week as members worked on their Maker Faire projects. In addition to individual entries, group members have collaborated on a battle boats project sure to garner tons of attention.

Nate Bezanson, one of the co-op's founding members, said that Maker Faire is the biggest event of the year for i3 members.

"It's basically the auto show meets senior prom meets black Friday meets finals," he said. "It's the biggest event of our calendar by far, and in addition to a whole bunch of members having projects at the Faire, we're also hosting the official party in our space Saturday night."

Last week, members worked on a diverse collection of projects including an air-vortex (and smoke-rings) shooting gallery, a 3d printer, intricate artwork made with a laser cutter, and even a harmonograph—a machine that draws pictures using the mechanism of a moving pendulum.

3members come from all over the metroplex. MorningSide resident and working Detroit artist Jessica Rowland uses i3's laser cutter to create her artwork, while Troy metal-forming engineer Jamie Burdeski works on stress-polarized plastic and other science demonstration projects and Detroit resident Vivian Sanders of Tap Tap Click, LLC worked on creating prosthetic hands. Last Saturday, i3 hosted the official Maker Faire after party, featuring free eats, craft beers and a DJ after 10 pm. The celebration took place in the maker space at 1481-A Wordsworth, Ferndale. Admission was free, though donations were much appreciated.

*More about Jessica Rowland:*

*I'm a recent College for Creative Studies graduate and I decide to stay in the lovely city of Detroit after graduation. I bought a house here in the city limits and I spend most of my time starting wacky art projects. I like working with wood and acrylic to make traditional items in an unexpected fashion. It's important to me to make things that hold up against the love of daily use.*



MorningSide volunteer Vivian Sanders

## Important Numbers

■ ■ ■

### Detroit

#### Building Safety

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#### Environmental

#### *Dangerous Buildings*

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#### *Property Maintenance*

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# Important Numbers

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### Police Department

#### Chief of Police

James E. Craig

(313) 596-2200

#### Assistant Chief

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#### (Neighborhood

#### Policing)

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#### Eastern District

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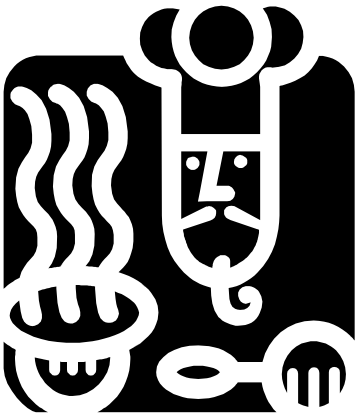
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Baiting

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## MORNINGSIDE DETROIT TRIVIA CONTEST

Each month we will have a MorningSide Detroit Trivia contest. This contest will have a trivia question for MorningSide and a trivia question for Detroit. The winner will be randomly chosen from all correct responses submitted. To enter please send an email to contest@our-morningside.org with your name, address, phone number and the answers to the questions below.

**ONLY CORRECTLY SUBMITTED ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED!!!**

### MorningSide

Who donated the MorningSide Gateway Park? \_\_\_\_\_

### Detroit

What year was Detroit founded in? \_\_\_\_\_.

### Last month's answers

#### MorningSide

What is the name of the movie theater in MorningSide?

The Alger Theater, presumably named for Michigan governor Russell A. Alger, was built by Detroit theater developers Saul and Hattie Sloan. The Sloans leased the theater to Detroit theater magnate George Washington Trendle, and it first opened on August 22, 1935 as a neighborhood cinema.

#### Detroit

What are the names of the major sports venues within the city of Detroit?

Joe Louis Arena, Ford Field and Comerica Park

**Last month's winner: no entries**

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## TIPS FROM AMERICA'S MASTER GARDENER JERRY BAKER

FLOWERS

**Q: How deep should I plant my bulbs?**

**A:** That depends on what you're planting. As I discuss in my Year-Round Bloomers book, small bulbs like crocus, muscari, and scilla will do just fine if planted 3 inches deep. On the other hand, tulips, hyacinths, and daffodils need a bit more room, and should be buried 6 inches deep. After planting, sprinkle a little bonemeal over your bulb bed to help your bulbs get off to a flying start.

**Q: Should I remove the dying leaves after my daffodils and tulips fade?**

**A:** Absolutely not! Go ahead and remove the flower stems after the flowers fade, but leave the leaves alone. The bulbs need the leaves to develop strength and energy for next year's flowers. So leave them on as long as possible. You might try rubber-banding them in place, or planting daylilies around them to hide the dying foliage.

**Q: I have a beautiful fern that's been growing great for years, but lately its leaves are turning brown. What am I doing wrong?**

**A:** Your fern is probably suffering from scorch, which occurs when the soil dries out, if it just gets too darn hot, or the fern's exposed to a lot of windy weather. Your best bet is to keep your fern in a moist, shady area that's protected from strong winds. Be sure to water it frequently and deeply to keep the soil from drying out.

**Q: How can I protect my geraniums from the cold winter ahead?**

**A:** My Grandma Putt's solution was to jerk 'em out of the soil when they turned brown after the first frost. Then she wrapped each one in a double layer of newspaper, and put them in her cold cellar until March. (If you have a damp basement, I suggest hanging them upside down, and spacing them well apart to allow air to circulate. Otherwise, they may rot.) In the middle of March, she unwrapped them, cut off a third of the roots and two-thirds of the tops, and repotted them in clay pots. She gave them a light feeding, and slowly brought them back to life.

**Q: How can I treat hollyhock rust?**

**A:** First thing, you'll want to destroy all the infected leaves that you see. Then you'll need to treat the plant with sulfur. To prevent rust from breaking out in the future, be sure not to get the leaves wet when you water them. Hollyhocks also need room to breathe, so if they're getting too crowded, divide some of the clumps to allow air to circulate.

**Q: All of the leaves on my hostas are getting brown edges. What's causing this, and what can I do?**

**A:** Hostas get brown edges when their roots get too dry or they are in an exposed location. They do best when they are kept out of a lot of direct sun or wind. Whenever the weather gets dry, be sure to give 'em lots of water.

**Q: For some reason this year my peonies are not blooming. Is there something wrong**

*(Continued on page 11)*

(Continued from page 10)

**with them?**

**A:** If the peonies have been in the ground for many years, I suspect they might need to be lifted. The "eye" of the roots shouldn't be planted any more than 1-2 inches below the soil. If they're deeper than this, (which can happen over time) then they won't bloom. Lift and replant them to the proper depth in the fall. Another possibility is that some of the trees in the area have grown since the peonies were put in, causing them to sit in the shade all day long. They need full sun (afternoon shade in the south). Feed them with a balanced fertilizer such as 8-8-8 and bonemeal after they would normally flower and again in the fall. This should do the trick.

**Q: What should I do to protect my roses from the freezing temperatures this winter?**

**A:** Most roses are fairly hardy, but they still need a bit of protection to do well. To start with, you need to make sure you clean up all the leaves and debris under your roses and dispose of it. After the first killing frost, but before the ground freezes, pile up 8" to 10" of soil around the canes. Then pile hay, straw, or leaf mulch over the mounded canes, and add a half-cup of crushed mothballs per bushel of mulch. Mix it all up well, mound over the canes, and then throw a few shovelfuls of soil on it to hold it all in place. You can find lots of other tips for keepin' those roses healthy and beautiful in my Year-Round Bloomers book.

(Continued on page 12)

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**Last Monday** – Noon -1:00 p.m. - Monteith Library – 14100 Kercheval at Eastlawn

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## TIPS FROM AMERICA'S MASTER GARDENER JERRY BAKER

*(Continued from page 11)*

**Q: My roses have big, beautiful blooms. When should I prune them so that they look just as good next year?**

**A:** It will depend on the type of roses that you have. My book, *Year-Round Bloomers* gives information on when and how to prune the different types such as climbers, ramblers, bush, or tree roses. For regular bush type roses, you'll want to do your pruning in the early spring in order to get good growing shoots. When the buds begin to swell in the spring, prune back any dead or diseased wood. Stop when you hit healthy green wood and an outward facing bud. Then you'll want to sterilize all of the cuts you made with a mixture of 2 tsp. of ammonia and 2 tsp. of dishwashing liquid per quart of water. Once the pruning is done, lay a few tea bags on the soil under each bush. The tannic acid in the tea bags gives the roses a little acidic pick-me-up.

**Q: How do I get rid of black spot on my roses?**

**A:** The first thing you need to do is cut off and destroy all of the infected leaves. You don't want any trace of the disease hanging around. Then, when you first start to see the spots appear, apply a fungicide that is safe for use on roses, and is labeled to treat black spot. This should heal your roses, and help prevent future outbreaks.

For a homemade control, spray them with a mixture of 1 tbsp. of baking soda, 1 tbsp. of light vegetable oil, and 1 tbsp. of dishwashing liquid in 1 gallon of water. If all is lost, and you can't save your plant, next time, try buying a black spot resistant rose. Your local nursery should be able to point you in the right direction as far as which roses grow best in your state.

**Q: When is the best time to separate and divide my perennials?**

**A:** I devoted a section to this subject in my book *Perfect Perennials*, along with my *Steps to Division Success* to walk you through it. The best time to divide perennials is when they're not actively growing. For most, this means early to midfall, although there are exceptions. The temperatures are cooler, and a gentler sun allows divided plants to recover quickly. For this reason, it is also important to start digging in late afternoon, after the hot morning sun has cooled down. To avoid having to redo all of your perennial beds at the same time, plan on dividing only a few at a time. This way, you'll always have beds in bloom.

For an extra special "perk-me-up," saturate the area with my *Perennial Perk-Up Tonic*: 1 can of beer, 1 cup of ammonia, ½ cup of dishwashing liquid, and ½ cup of corn syrup in a 20 gallon hose-end sprayer after planting.

**Q: How often should I water my annuals?**

**A:** If the weather is hot, sunny, or windy, water the plants at least once a day; twice a day is even better, so long as the soil is dry to the touch. Do this until the plants have adjusted to their new surroundings, for about a week. After that, water thoroughly to a depth of 6 to 8 inches, once a week in cool weather, and every three or four days during the hot summer months. Never let your plants wilt; it will seriously weaken them.

## THE EVOLUTION OF COMMUNITY...

(Continued from page 6)

ganizing both volunteer efforts and private funding sources that address some of those community needs the city hasn't been able to.

**Martin-Turner:** Compared to when we were doing this 15-20 years ago, in some respects it is a lot less difficult. We had to convince all of the funders and the city and the state that we had the capacity to make a difference. There was a lot of doubt we could accomplish anything that would push the needle forward. There were not really good systems in place. In other respects it is now easier – there is more financing available and a certain level of confidence in the CDCs. There used to be lot less competition with private developers, and that makes it harder — there are trade-offs.

**Smith:** The funds are no longer available to support homeowners with grants to fix up their homes. Currently, we are one of 11 CDCs who are intake centers to provide assistance with the zero-percent interest loans on the behalf of the city of Detroit/LISC.

**Model D: There's been a great deal of development downtown and in Midtown, but much of it has not benefitted the neighborhoods. How does your organization approach the challenge of neighborhood revitalization? What potential "spinoff" benefits do you see to your neighborhood from a revitalized central core?**

**Goodeeris:** Not everybody wants to live in downtown or Midtown. A lot of people still want the traditional single-family home with a backyard and their own garden. We have some people moving out of the Midtown area as their stage of life changes -- we're always finding people moving into the neighborhood from outside of Detroit who want to be part of the city's revitalization. Neighborhoods like ours have benefitted from the revitalization of downtown. It gives people more optimism about the future of the city in general –there's room for everybody.

**Martin-Turner:** This is the thing about revitalization -- it has to start somewhere. It doesn't start everywhere, it starts somewhere. I don't have as much angst about downtown versus the neighborhoods. It's a matter of time and it seems logical to me. Here in Detroit it started downtown because that was the logical place for it to start. I believe over time there will be significant revitalization in many neighborhoods, but it takes a minute. Think how long it took for Detroit to be distressed. It would take a significant amount of time to become revitalized. Because we are at the edge of Midtown, it will happen for us sooner rather than later, but it's a double-edged sword because there is also the whole idea of balancing what the community wants with what developers want.

**Smith:** I don't see potential "spinoff." Each of the communities in the City of Detroit is unique in their own way. Our neighborhoods are all so different. We have to figure out that what works in one neighborhood will not work in another neighborhood, without some new planning taking place. Some of the stronger neighborhoods may not require a new plan, but working with the infrastructure that is currently in place. A weaker neighborhood is starting from a zero-percent base and not sure where to start.

**Model D: How does increased availability of data help you do your jobs better? What tools have proved helpful for you?**

**Goodeeris:** One of the things that has really changed for us over last few years is the availability of data that is accessible online and in map form, like what Loveland Technologies has put together. We try to keep track of trends in the neighborhoods, such as houses that are vacant and need to be demolished or rehabbed. A lot of that stuff used to be literally kept in notebooks, then kept in Excel, but it was always difficult to keep up to date. And now that has changed. The Loveland website saves us a lot of time on the collection end and makes it much easier to zero in on certain target areas.

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# NEW MEDICARE SCAMS SPREAD ACROSS U.S.

Investigators trace patterns of billion-dollar frauds



by Tom Dunkel

Last fall a telemarketer dialed Ryan Stumphauzer's work number in Miami. "Are you 65 or older? Do you have chronic pain?" the caller asked, offering to hook Stumphauzer up with a doctor who would prescribe a topical pain cream, for which the government would pick up the tab. "All we need is your Medicare number."

Talk about barking up the wrong tree. Ryan Stumphauzer is only 39 years old. What's more, he's a lawyer who, before entering private practice, was deputy chief of the health care fraud unit at the U.S. attorney's office in southern Florida.

Such cold-call solicitations "are 1,000 percent a red flag," explains Stumphauzer, who immediately notified the FBI. "Legitimate health care practitioners don't go around fishing for clients." Nor do they collect Medicare numbers over the phone.

Stumphauzer's experience is indicative of how brazen fraudsters can be, shotgun-blasting people at random. Why so bold? Maybe because the profit margins on seemingly innocuous medications can be high. Topical pain creams can carry a Medicare price tag of more than \$260 a tube. Unscrupulous doctors in league with corrupt pharmacists or crooked medical suppliers will overprescribe the creams to patients. The doctor, pharmacist or supplier bills Medicare, then they divide the pie as they see fit. Sometimes they'll even substitute a cheap pain cream for the real thing.

This scam illustrates a basic feature of Medicare fraud: Like a pernicious virus, it is constantly evolving, giving investigators all they can handle as they seek to keep it under control.

## **Always a new ploy**

"They're [always] looking for other scams," explains Dennis Jay, executive director of the Washington-based Coalition Against Insurance Fraud. "There's far too much money in this for them not to." When the heat gets turned up on one type of Medicare fraud — as it did on motorized wheelchairs and nutritional supplements — perpetrators shift gears and devise a new ploy.

As Jennifer Leonard, an FBI agent in charge of the Washington field office, puts it: "Fraudsters morph." They ply their illegal trade by telephone and many other means. A scam will work in one region of the country, then be picked up by criminals elsewhere. The best way to protect yourself from being victimized is to be aware of the most recent types of fraud emerging around the country. Here's a sample of Medicare schemes currently attracting the attention of antifraud experts.

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**A simple bait-and-switch scam** making the rounds in Texas — via telemarketing, TV commercials and pushy door-to-door salespeople — involves an all-purpose "arthritis kit." Medicare recipients are targeted. They're promised relief from chronic joint discomfort, thanks to the latest in lightweight, high-tech osteoarthritis braces specially designed for troubled knees, backs, ankles, hands and elbows. "Instead you get a bunch of Velcro braces and assorted knee and ankle wraps," says Micky Heidrich Moore, a volunteer member of the Senior Medicare Patrol, a federal public education program. Meanwhile, the kit supplier bills Medicare \$3,000 for state-of-the-art braces and splints.

**Home health care scams**, which Moore has seen in South Texas, are proliferating in places around the country.

In April alone, federal prosecutors won criminal convictions against home health care fraudsters in Louisiana, Michigan and Illinois. The new wrinkle is to sign up clients for services ranging from physical therapy to cooking and cleaning assistance. Companies charge Medicare for professional-caliber services but provide either low-level care or nothing at all. "The thing that continues to surprise me is how creative scammers are," Moore says. "Scammers are the most creative people on the planet, second only to [computer] hackers."

**Phony mental health centers** geared toward seniors are popping up in some communities, says Diane Cutler, supervisory special agent in the Investigations Branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Inspector General. Some are nothing more than storefront social clubs, but the operators bill Medicare for phantom psychological counseling and even conspire with ambulance companies to bill for unnecessary rides. Community mental health center scams are believed to have originated in Miami, which is "ground zero" for Medicare fraud, Cutler says. They have since cropped up in Texas, Louisiana and Michigan. "Fraud is migratory in nature," she says.

John Fullerton, a geriatric internist in San Francisco who is an expert for the government in prosecuting Medicare fraud and abuse in California clinics, says the popular forms of Medicare abuse he's watching entail doctors and pharmacists unnecessarily prescribing "high-value" Medicare Part D prescription drugs (or filling phony prescriptions) and ordering unwarranted high-end diagnostic tests. Fullerton says the public doesn't grasp the degree of collusion behind most Medicare scams. "They are sophisticated. They involve multiple cities. It's coordinated. It equals organized crime," he says. "There's no other way to define it."

Brooklyn leads the nation "by far" in physical therapy billings, says Scott Lampert, lead investigator for the HHS inspector general in New York, and these numbers are driven by frivolous claims. For example, a sleazy doctor or physical therapist will give a patient a hydromassage — which Medicare does not consider a reimbursable treatment — and bill Medicare for \$100 to \$150 of physical therapy. Some patients get this treatment nearly every day, and some get \$20 in hush money per session. "We have a group of professional beneficiaries," Lampert says.

### **An expanding numbers game**

This universe of Medicare graft — which also encompasses the likes of diabetic test strips and hospice nursing care — is ever expanding. The conservative estimate is that sundry frauds total about \$60 billion a year, roughly 10 percent of the program's overall expenditures. However, Malcolm Sparrow, a professor at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, has tracked Medicare crime for more than 20 years and believes the fraud rate "could easily be as high as 20 or 30 percent." He notes that Medicare is considered such easy pickings "some of the street gangs in Los Angeles are now involved in health care fraud." Ryan Stumphauzer, the former federal fraud prosecutor, says "the problem is bigger than people can imagine."

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## THE EVOLUTION OF COMMUNITY...

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**Martin-Turner:** When I started, data wasn't that available. It made it more difficult to plan targeted development that could create a positive change in a particular area. We would have to go out and create as much data ourselves as possible – there was no GIS mapping, I can tell you for certain. [The availability of data has] made a positive difference for us. I believe institutional knowledge is important, but it's part of my responsibility not to have all the information only in my head.

**Smith:** The data helps us to make key decisions and to market the neighborhood strengths. Data also engages residents to participate in planning their neighborhoods.

**Model D: What roles do collaborations with other CDCs, city departments, the private sector, etc. play for you?**

**Goodeeris:** We found we had less resources available for housing through the city of Detroit, which used to be the biggest part of what we did. We have had to use more private sources. Kresge and Neighborworks America supported our housing rehab program, and that would not have happened 10 years ago. We have a partnership with Michigan State Housing Development Authority for our low-income home repair program. Without that partnership that program wouldn't happen.

One thing that has changed a lot in the last year or two is that we have more relationships with organizations working on business development, such as ProsperUS and TechTown. A lot of those other nonprofits are working towards the same goals we are. A lot of those partnerships have been really helpful because you don't have to feel like as one organization you have to develop all the capacity. They bring what they are good at to the table and we help each other.

**Martin-Turner:** Because we are in this particular place, we need to be able to work well with other people and work for the greater good. There is way more than enough work to go around. There is not really competition – that's not the environment that is supported. Even if you're inclined to be that way, you are not going to be a success if you do.

**Smith:** It helps to influence local policy and build relationships with each other. It also provides access to financing to support community development.

## NEW MEDICARE SCAMS SPREAD...

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The numbers game favors chicanery. Medicare paid \$247 billion for assorted outpatient services in 2013. Every month some 18,000 new providers — from nursing homes to pharmacists to physical therapists — enter the system. Every day Medicare processes roughly 4.4 million claims, most of which by law must be paid within 30 days. There's no time for rigid oversight; only 3 percent of all claims are spot checked by Medicare staff.

### **Turning up the HEAT**

The good news is that the federal government's HEAT initiative (an acronym for Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team) has proved very effective. It's a joint effort of the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services. Medicare Fraud Strike

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Force investigative teams now operate in nine cities: Miami, Tampa, Baton Rouge, Los Angeles, Detroit, Brooklyn, Houston, Dallas and Chicago. The main criticism of the strike force teams? There aren't enough of them.

Since 2007, strike force operations have brought charges against almost 2,100 defendants responsible for more than \$6.5 billion in bogus Medicare billings. The strike forces initially focused heavily on high-priced durable medical equipment, in particular motorized wheelchairs and scooters, which had become something of a fraud fad. Doctors took kickbacks from distributors to prescribe power chairs for healthy, ambulatory patients. The distributors, in turn, provided no-frills wheelchairs but sent Medicare a bill for models costing thousands of dollars more. As strike forces tightened the screws, annual Medicare spending on motorized chairs declined precipitously, from \$686 million in 2007 to \$190 million in 2013.

While a lot of dirt is being flushed out of the pipeline, no one harbors any illusions about completely cleaning up Medicare fraud. "It's where the money is," says the FBI's Jennifer Leonard. "It's a growth industry for opportunists."

The future of fraud detection presumably lies in the evolution of data analytics, which should make it possible to quickly flag suspicious Medicare billing activity and identify bad players. But Dennis Jay of the Coalition Against Insurance Fraud predicts the battle won't be won without a substantial public awareness component. A large majority of Americans need to realize Medicare fraud isn't a victimless crime, that this is a social contract every citizen has an obligation to preserve and protect.

"The real savings in all of this is not the technology to catch people," Jay says. "It's convincing people never to commit fraud."

### **Antifraud Experts Offer Tips to Help Control the Crime**

**Know your Medicare coverage.** Offers for free medicine or medical equipment are probably scams.

**Be as cautious with your Medicare card as you are with your credit card.** Never give your Medicare number to a stranger, especially over the phone.

**Be wary of medical suppliers who contact you out of the blue.** Legitimate companies don't use that sales tactic.

**Your personal physician should participate in medical decisions.** Never allow a doctor you've never met to prescribe any medications, medical equipment or home health care services.

**Review your monthly Medicare statement** to see if it contains billing charges that seem suspicious.

**Report activity that you think might be fraudulent** to Medicare via the website [stopmedicarefraud.gov](http://stopmedicarefraud.gov) or by phone: 800-MEDICARE (633-4227) or 877-486-2048 (TTY line). The Department of Health and Human Services also has a special antifraud hotline: 800-HHS-TIPS (447-8477) or TTY 800-377-4950.

**If you want to take an active role,** join the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP), a nationwide network of volunteers who educate the public about Medicare fraud. You can find information about the SMP office that is nearest you at [smpresource.org](http://smpresource.org) and [stopmedicare-fraud.gov](http://stopmedicare-fraud.gov).



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# Contact Us

Primary Business Address

P.O. Box 24690

Phone: (313) 881-4704

Email: [communications@our-morningside.org](mailto:communications@our-morningside.org)

Web: [www.our-morningside.org](http://www.our-morningside.org)

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