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Mayor Tishaura O. Jones, Joined by Collector Gregory F.X. Daly and Community Allies, Announce Investment of \$500,000 from American Rescue Plan for Real Estate Tax Assistance Fund

ST. LOUIS - On Wednesday, March 9, Mayor Tishaura O. Jones, joined by Collector of Revenue Gregory F.X. Daly, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, Park Central, Prosperity Connection, and the St. Louis Community Credit Union, announced that the City of St. Louis will move \$500,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to the St. Louis Real Estate Tax Assistance Fund (RETAF) to help keep families in their homes ahead of this year's tax sales, the first of which takes place on April 19th.

"Preventing foreclosures benefits our entire city, and with the American Rescue Plan Act, we're trying new ways to get St. Louisans the support they need," said Mayor Tishaura O. Jones. "I'm excited to work together with Collector Daly and fellow members of the RETAF coalition to keep families in their homes, and I encourage donors to consider this important fund moving forward to keep support running past 2026."

Over the last three years, almost \$4.5 million in real estate taxes have gone unpaid in the city. RETAF, a public-private partnership, was launched last year to raise funds to assist owner-occupant homeowners in paying off delinquent taxes on homes scheduled for tax sale. The \$500,000 infusion by the Jones administration shatters the group's initial fundraising goal of \$300,000, helping get relief to families in the short-term while providing a strong foundation for further private donations down the road.

"The great people of this city expect their government leaders to work together with public and private groups to solve the most pressing problems we face," said Collector Daly. "Good work happens when leaders put community first and join to make things happen for the good of our neighbors. That's exactly what we are doing today. We are so pleased that Mayor Jones has joined the RETAF effort. A region is really only as

strong as its urban core. We hope that the city's announcement of the \$500,000 donation can inspire citizens throughout the region to join us by donating to RETAF."

In St. Louis, the Collector of Revenue normally obtains a money judgment against a parcel when its real estate taxes remain delinquent for two to four years. After the judgment and before the tax sale, a homeowner can redeem their property by paying the required balance due before the sale date. RETAF intervenes during this period by remitting up to \$3,500 of the judgment amount directly to the Collector of Revenue on behalf of the homeowner in need, preventing the loss of the home and helping to restore much-needed city revenues.

Park Central Development, which manages the fund, evaluates applications to determine eligibility, the amount of financial assistance needed, and the need for additional wraparound supportive services.

"Committing to equitable development in our city means ensuring that residents who want to stay in their neighborhoods can stay," said Park Central Executive Director Abdul-Kaba Abdullah. "Strong public-private partnerships like RETAF make that possible. The Mayor's commitment of \$500,000 in ARPA funds, along with the Collector of Revenue's support from day one, will help our neighbors stay housed and keep communities together."

Legal Services of Eastern Missouri's Neighborhood Vacancy Initiative is available to offer legal aid free of charge to qualifying homeowners whose properties have title issues. Prosperity Connection will offer participating homeowners financial education, one-on-one financial coaching and services to help build credit and improve financial health.

"Tax foreclosures have a long-term destabilizing effect on neighborhoods and contribute to vacancy and displacement in vulnerable communities," explained Peter Hoffman, Managing Attorney of the Neighborhood Vacancy Initiative. "With the support of the City's ARPA commitment and the philanthropic community, the Real Estate Tax Assistance Fund will fill a critical gap in support for both homeowners and neighborhoods."

The RETAF Coalition will work with the Collector to identify vulnerable households at imminent risk of tax sale, and contact owners to offer assistance. To be eligible, an applicant must be a City of St. Louis homeowner whose home is listed for tax sale this year. The home receiving funds must be the applicant's primary residence and there must not be outstanding mortgage debt on the property. The applicant's household income must not exceed 100% of Area Median Income (AMI) for St. Louis.

"The loss of a home due to foreclosure or tax sale is traumatic to the people and neighborhoods that are impacted," said Paul Woodruff, Vice President of Community Development for St. Louis Community Credit Union. "We support the efforts of the RETAF Coalition because it is a clear-cut way to keep low-income families from being

displaced, as well as to preserve the generational wealth that exists within their homes. Our region can solve this issue. Now is the time for our corporate community to step up and support this critical work.”

The fund continues to invite private support to help keep St. Louis families in their homes. Learn more at retaf.org.

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