

## For Immediate Release

### *Preparing for an end to Emergency Financial Management* **Ecorse Emerges**

**New video documentary tells a story of hope for this Michigan city, as citizens create their own vision of a better future.**

ECORSE, Mich. – January 9, 2012 – One of Michigan’s most troubled cities, Ecorse is on the road to recovery. After over a year of management by a state appointed financial manager, citizens from throughout the city gathered last fall to create an optimistic vision for the future and establish specific goals for their elected officials and themselves as engaged civic activists.

*Ecorse Emerges* is a 24-minute documentary video chronicling an intensive community visioning process designed and facilitated by the Land Information Access Association (LIAA) in cooperation with the Michigan Municipal League (MML) and the City of Ecorse. The process, known as *Envision Ecorse*, brought community residents together to define a shared vision and set goals for the future of Ecorse. Energized by citizen activists, the effort created a new strategic plan to help guide the actions of public officials, civic leaders and others well into the future, providing a foundation for the city’s transition away from emergency management.

LIAA developed the process at the request of City of Ecorse officials and MML. Joyce Parker, emergency financial manager for Ecorse, saw it as a way to revitalize community involvement ahead of the transition toward renewed independence.

“The city had not moved forward in terms of progress and development as a lot of other communities have, and I think a big part of that related to getting residents involved and engaged in government and working as a stakeholder to move the community forward,” Parker says in the video. “(*Envision Ecorse*) was a very good process, it was energizing, and I think it really raised expectations here in the community.”

“The word that came to mind was *awakening*,” said Karen Folks, city attorney for Ecorse. “I felt that there had been an awakening that these folks, for the first time in years and years, suddenly realized that the future was in *their* hands, not in an elected official’s hands but in *their* hands, that they had the ability to actually do something and design a future.”

“This video does a good job of describing our approach to civic engagement in response to the challenges facing many Michigan communities,” said Joe VanderMeulen, executive director of LIAA, which has conducted community planning and development projects across Michigan for nearly 20 years. “Ecorse has experienced tremendous difficulties; but, through this process we found a

community filled with enthusiasm, optimism, drive and commitment. Ecorse has a very bright future, and we think the same process can help communities throughout Michigan.”

Dan Gilmartin, MML executive director and CEO, agrees. “Finding a blueprint for what we can do in similar communities throughout Michigan was just as important, and that’s why the work of LIAA is so important,” Gilmartin said.

The full documentary can be viewed online through the LIAA website at [www.liaa.org](http://www.liaa.org) and on YouTube by searching for “[Ecorse Emerges](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9EMBu6Y0yk).” The direct link is: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9EMBu6Y0yk>.

The *Envision Ecorse* strategic planning process was supported by grants from the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, the Michigan Municipal League, LIAA and LIAA’s *Partnerships for Change Program*. To learn more, contact LIAA at 231-929-3696.

## **About LIAA**

Founded in 1993, LIAA is a federally approved 501(c)3 nonprofit community service organization that helps people shape better communities through participation, education, information and the effective use of technology.

Headquartered in Traverse City, Michigan, LIAA provides innovative community-building and support services for governments, organizations and individual citizens, including community planning and development; website, software and database development and IT support; geographic information systems (GIS) and mapping; community-access media and digital video production; and related training and education.

To learn more about LIAA and support its mission, please call 231-929-3696 or visit [www.liaa.org](http://www.liaa.org).

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