



Planning Progress

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Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant

Stark County is expected to receive \$2.7 million dollars as part of the Department of Energy's (DOE) Energy Efficiency & Conservation Block Grant program (EECBG) in the very near future. This program was created in 2007, but never funded until the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. EECBG is designed to help communities improve energy efficiency in the building and transportation sectors while creating and/or retaining jobs and ultimately stimulating the economy. It will be administered by Stark County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) on behalf of the Stark County Commissioners.

The majority of the grant will go toward energy efficient retrofits in multiple county-owned buildings. These retrofits are based on an energy audit conducted in 2008 and could save the county up to \$425,000 annually and include items such as boiler replacements, lighting, energy management systems, windows, insulation, and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) units. The county will set aside a portion of the money from the savings to later carry out plumbing retrofits. County-owned buildings scheduled for retrofits include: Engineer's Building, County Office Building, Administration Building, Court House, Board of Elections, Data Center, Sanitary Engineer's Building, Dog Shelter, and the County Jail. RPC will also launch an educational campaign with technical assistance to increase energy efficient practices within county offices.

EECBG - con't.



A Programmable Thermostat Rebate Program will allow the county to issue \$25 rebates to homeowners and very small business owners (5 employees or less) that can show proof of purchase of an Energy Star qualified programmable thermostat during the program period. There will be a limit of one rebate per person per address. This will include all of Stark County outside the city limits of Canton (the city received its own grant). These thermostats properly programmed can save homeowners approximately \$180 per year.

The grant allows Stark County to offer an Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Fund in partnership with Stark County Housing Rehabilitation. Loans will be available in 2010 in order to reduce emissions and increase energy efficiency. It will be a 5-year 0% interest loan secured through a mortgage. The Housing Rehab program targets low- to moderate-income homeowners, but for the EE loan, any homeowner and small business owners may apply as well. The loan can be used for energy efficient windows, insulation, furnaces, hot water tanks, and doors. Again, homes in the city of Canton are not eligible.

Also provided from the grant are rebates for retrofits for local governments. The 35 local jurisdictions (cities, townships, villages) can receive up to a \$1000 rebate for purchasing energy efficient thermostats, windows, lighting, HVAC units, and insulation.

A portion of the cost of purchasing nine American-made fuel-efficient county vehicles will be covered as well. The new ones will replace older, less reliable, and non-fuel efficient vehicles. They are designed to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

RPC will develop and promote sustainable zoning and planning guidelines that encourage energy efficient development within the county. They will also publish, promote, and distribute these guidelines to all political subdivisions throughout the county.

Details will be available after the grant is announced. For questions regarding the grant or these projects, visit the RPC website at www.rpc.co.stark.oh.us or call 330-451-7389.

New Law Protects Tenants In Foreclosed Properties



The Protecting Tenants Foreclosure Act was signed into law on May 20, 2009. The law protects tenants from immediate eviction by persons or entities that became owners of residential property through the foreclosure process.

Highlights of the Law

- Tenants must receive a 90-day notice prior to an eviction.
- Tenants with leases must be permitted to occupy until end of lease.
- New owner may terminate lease on a 90-day notice if he or she will occupy the unit as a primary residence.
- If lease ends in less than 90 days, owner may not evict without giving a 90-day notice.
- Owner must continue all Section 8 voucher leases and Housing Assistance Payment contracts.
- If you have any questions, contact the Fair Housing Department at (330) 451-7775.



Township Zoning Inspectors Plan Meetings, Tours



The township zoning inspectors, along with RPC staff and members of other county agencies, as well as zoning and building department employees of cities and villages, make up the Zoning Inspector's Mutual Assistance Committee. It meets every month to discuss a wide variety of topics of concern relating to the duties of the zoning inspectors. Each meeting is hosted by one of the townships or another agency, and a main subject is presented, before opening up for other topics to be discussed.

This year, the inspectors have met to discuss updates on small wind energy legislation hosted by Lake Township, zoning of electronic billboards hosted by Canton Township, site improvement plan reviews hosted by the RPC, and low-impact development zoning hosted by the Stark Soil & Water Conservation District. In addition, they heard a presentation on zoning for agricultural preservation hosted by Nimishillen Township, a Stark Parks update and tour of Walborn Reservoir hosted by Lexington Township and a session on public utilities, which was presented by Chuck Greene of the Ohio Utilities Protection Service of Ohio and hosted by Plain Township.

The rest of the 2009 meetings have been planned for Stark State College, hosted by Jackson Township, with a presentation by the Prosecutor's Office on Religious Land Use and Institutional Persons Act (RLUIPA) followed by a tour of the fuel cell technology department in October. The Stark County Health Department will host the November meeting and give a presentation on the Health Department's role in nuisance abatement as well as a RPC presentation on determining categories of divisions of property. In December, Perry Township will host the inspectors for a roundtable discussion of ideas and planning for the 2010 Zoning Inspector's Mutual Assistance Committee Meeting programs.

The 2010 program is already beginning to take shape, with Marlboro and Osnaburg Townships offering to host meetings early in the year. RPC staff members are hoping to have even more representation from zoning and building officials of cities and villages in the coming year.

Zoning for Agriculture

The following is a synopsis of Zoning Inspectors' Mutual Assistance Meeting presentation by RPC staff member Rachel Lewis.

Since 2002, Stark County has lost more than 37 farms to development, representing over 7,000 acres of viable farmland. This figure coincides with the fact that even though Ohio is 22nd in the nation in terms of population growth, it ranks second for lost farmland, a staggering fact that illustrates the sprawling, low density development becoming increasingly characteristic of much of Ohio, including Stark County.

In terms of sprawl, Stark County is in an even more critical position than many other counties in Ohio largely because of the fact that the County contains large areas of some of the best agricultural lands in the State, which simultaneously have a higher potential for development. The 2007 Agriculture Census attests to the superior quality of Stark County's farms through their ranking of Stark County as number 10 in the state for overall agriculture sales, number 2 for livestock inventory of broiler and other meat-type chickens, and number 5 for the production of corn for silage. Farmland also contributed over \$2 billion to the Stark County economy through direct and value-added products.

What can be done to protect Stark farmland, which consequently represents over 40% of the County's land use? Zoning is one of the most widely used methods for conserving agriculture in the country. Different zoning options include agriculture-exclusive zones, which make agriculture the primary permitted use, and all other uses conditional. Large lot zoning increases the

lot size required in residential zone districts where farming operations exist, a requirement usually set at no less than 10 acres per lot. Cluster or low-impact development is another zoning option, which provides for a denser concentration of development in an area, but also reserves the additional land remaining for farm or open land. These are just some of the many zoning options available for agriculture preservation, which can be implemented individually or as a combination. Zoning can also be paired with state and federal land conservation programs, many designed specifically for farmland preservation. In an age where time and money is of the essence, these various opportunities can at times be somewhat difficult to initiate; however, once farmland is lost to development, it will be near impossible to ever re-acquire it. Those vistas of rolling hills and swaying cornstalks will have disappeared, and only a memory of them will remain.



For further information, visit <http://www.agri.ohio.gov/divs/FarmLand/Farmland>.

New Employees



On September 14th, Adityaraj (Raj) Chavada started working full time for the RPC as a GIS Technician. He had previously been an intern at RPC since May of 2008. Raj graduated in August 2009 from the University of Akron with a Master's Degree in GIS. He will be working on the NPDES Phase II Storm Water mapping requirements.

Originally from Vadodara, Gujarat, India, Raj now resides in North Canton. In his spare time, he enjoys reading, cooking, relaxing on the beach, meeting new people, and learning new cultures.

There is a new face greeting everyone in the front office. Jill Ross accepted the secretarial position and began on August 10th. Previously, she worked for 12 years as the Administrative Assistant to the President of TransGlobal Adjusting Corporation.

Jill lives in Green with her husband, John, and their two children. In her spare time, she enjoys scrapbooking, reading, and spending time with her family.



New CEO for SARTA

The RPC would like to welcome Kirt Conrad, SARTA's new Executive Director, to Stark County. Conrad, the former Director of Planning for Metro Regional Transit Authority in Summit County, brings a wealth of experience with him as he joins the SARTA staff.

He served as the Metro Planning Director since 1996 and has been an active member of the Akron City School Board and local community groups such as the Kenmore Development Partnership and the Firestone Park YMCA.

During his tenure at Metro, he dealt with service reductions and expansions, construction of transit centers, and even worked on a railroad (Metro owns the tracks that the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad utilizes in Stark County).

We look forward to working with Conrad as we continue to plan for the success of the Stark County Community.

Help Keep Our Water Clean

Every time it rains there are massive amounts of chemicals, oils, and heavy metals running off our roof, through our grass and flower beds, down our driveways and into our storm drains which lead out to our natural waterways, and streams which lead to lakes and rivers.

If our ground cannot absorb the water efficiently and effectively and perk back down into our underground water supply, it ends up in the storm drain. The chemicals, oils, etc. break down the beneficial bacteria and micro-organisms that keep our lakes and streams healthy. What we end up with is an over abundance of algae which, believe it or not, is harmful to our eco-system. It cuts down on the oxygen levels in the water and the beneficial bacteria cannot do its job to keep the water clean and healthy for fish and fowl.

This is not something the average American sees everyday. We don't think about where the water goes when its rushing down the street and into the storm drains. For us...it stops there. But it is actually just beginning.

We can make a difference one yard at a time. If every homeowner made simple changes, we could save our lakes, streams and rivers. Our eco-system depends on it. Not only does storm water run-off affect fish, it affects water fowl, birds, and all the animals that eat the fish, and drink from the lakes, streams and rivers.

There are many ways to reduce the amount of water that runs from your property into the storm drain:

Install Rain Barrels -Thousands of gallons of water can be captured off the average roof each year, and clean rainwater is better for plants, shrubs and lawns, washing the car, the dog etc.

Use Native Plants- Native plants are plants that are naturally indigenous to your specific area. Native plants will grow better, require less maintenance, water, and fertilizer (organic of course), and they provide a natural habitat for our wild creatures. For a list of native plants, visit- <http://www.plantnative.org> - under "Native Plants," click on *regional plant lists*.

Go Organic!- The use of traditional chemicals to feed your lawn and garden leach into the water every time it rains. Chemical fertilizers and controls do the most damage. Organic fertilizers and control products do not leave residual effects in the soil and are more widely available today than ever. They work well, are competitively priced with chemical fertilizers, and don't have huge warning labels. Organic products come from the earth. They will not damage it. Organic fertilizers are safe for pets, children, you, and our environment.

Summarized from-
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Upcoming Events

October

5	Subdivision Review	1:30 PM
6	SCRPC	7:30 PM
26	SCATS	1:30 PM

November

2	Subdivision Review	1:30 PM
3	SCRPC	7:30 PM
18	CAC	1:30 PM
23	SCATS	1:30 PM

December

7	Subdivision Review	1:30 PM
8	SCRPC	7:30 PM

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