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Planning Progress

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Brownfields Coalition Applying for USEPA Assessment Grant

In 2014, the Stark County Brownfields Coalition was awarded a \$600,000 USEPA Brownfields Assessment Grant; October 2017 will mark the end of the current grant period. Encouraged by the USEPA Grant Administrator, the Stark County Brownfields Coalition is applying for another USEPA Brownfields Assessment Grant.

- If awarded, the grant would run from October 2017 - October 2020.
- Grants are awarded for up to \$600,000 for brownfield assessment funding.
- Applications are due in December; grants will not be awarded until mid 2017.
- A second grant would allow the Stark County Brownfields Coalition to build upon the existing program and current successes.
- This grant is for assessments of commercial/industrial sites with real or perceived environmental contamination. These can include closed factories, dry cleaners, businesses, and gas stations.
- Assessing properties can help bring vacant/abandoned properties back to productive use; adding to a community's tax base, potentially creating jobs, and improving public health and environmental quality.
- The grant may also fund assessments of abandoned gas stations, to assist with the "Class C determination" requirement of ODSA's new Abandoned Gas Station Clean-Up Grant.
- Funds are still available for the current round of funding.

If you are aware of a property that has real or perceived environmental contamination, please contact Emma Posillico at 330-451-7904 or emposillico@starkcountyohio.gov.

Stark County Fair Housing Reaches Agreement in Disability Discrimination Case

The Stark County Fair Housing Department (SCFHD) has reached an agreement with Foxhaven Apartment of Stark County and Efficient Property Management LLC resolving allegations that they denied the reasonable accommodation requests of a resident with disabilities.

Accommodations are alterations in the type of services being provided by a landlord or agent. There are times when the policies of a particular landlord or complex prevent people with disabilities from utilizing the services that they need. The fair housing law makes it illegal to “refuse to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices, or services, when such accommodations may be necessary to afford a person with a disability equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling.”

The SCFHD filed a complaint with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC) after receiving reports from a tenant claiming his rights were being violated because of his disability. The complaint alleges that Foxhaven Apartment of Stark County, Efficient Property Management and the property manager refused to waive the disabled tenant’s pet fees. Upon move in, the tenant was charged a \$200 pet deposit and a pet fee of \$25 per month. The tenant provided his request for accommodations, including documentation of his medical need for a companion animal. However, management continued to charge the monthly fee and did not refund the deposit. According to fair housing laws, service animals, such as guide dogs, companion animals and therapeutic animals are not considered pets, and therefore should not be regulated by “no pets” policies. In addition, the fair housing law makes it illegal to charge disabled tenants who require an assistant animal a pet deposit or pet fee.

The complaint further alleges that the owners and operators failed to move the tenant’s designated disability parking sign to his new apartment within a reasonable amount of time. Upon signing a new lease for a larger apartment, the tenant requested management move his designated disability parking space, which took four months after the initial request. The lengthy delay was unreasonable and unnecessary, and therefore violated the tenant’s rights.



On June 30, 2016, the OCRC agreed with SCFHD and made a Probable Cause finding. In October, the parties signed a Conciliation Agreement. Under the agreement, Foxhaven Apartment of Stark County and Efficient Property Management LLC will pay \$7,000-(\$5000 to the tenant & \$2000 to SCFHD), undergo fair housing training, develop a reasonable accommodation policy, include the phrase “equal housing provider” in all advertisements, and post and prominently display the fair housing poster. The housing providers admitted to no wrongdoing.

“At the time I felt angry and frustrated because the landlord refused to assign me a designated parking space. Now I feel elated and vindicated,” said Michael Murphey. “Once the fair housing department got the wheels in motion, things went smoothly. I got representation that I couldn’t afford. I feel proud the system worked and happy I contacted the Stark County Fair Housing Department. They took care of me very well.”

“This case should remind landlords of their responsibilities. Landlords must make reasonable accommodations in their policies if persons with disabilities need such accommodations,” said Valerie Watson, Fair Housing Coordinator. Common accommodations include the following:

- Providing an assigned parking space
- Contacting a third party for behavior problems rather than evicting
- Adjusting rental due date
- Changing a no pet policy to permit a disabled person to have an emotional support animal with no additional fees



Michael Murphey reviews the Conciliation Agreement.

Report housing discrimination! The federal and state fair housing laws protect people from discrimination in housing related transactions based on race, color, sex, religion, national origin, military status, ancestry, familial status and disability. If you have questions, contact the Stark County Fair Housing Department at 330-451-7775.

Stark County's FY 2017 HOME Funding

The Stark County Regional Planning Commission is under contract with the Board of Stark County Commissioners to administer the Stark County HOME program. Stark County receives this federal funding as a direct entitlement grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Last year, the County received \$620,222 in HOME funding. It is expected the County will receive approximately this same amount in FY 2017 funding. This funding will be available for use between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018.

HOME eligible activities are housing-related projects that benefit low-and moderate-income persons/households. Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDO) are encouraged to apply as 15% of the overall HOME allocation is required to be allocated to qualified CHDO projects. As such, the County plans to provide approximately \$93,000 of HOME funding to such activities.

Stark County participates in the HOME program as a consortium with the cities of Massillon and Alliance, thus a portion of Stark County's HOME funding will be provided to each. The cities will receive 15% and 14%, respectively, of the HOME grant balance after CHDO apportionment.

In August of 2013, new regulations went into effect to amend the HOME Investment Partnership (HOME) Program. These amendments to the HOME regulations represent the most significant change to the HOME program since its development back in the early 1990s. As such, potential HOME applicants are highly encouraged to become familiar with the "HOME Final Rule" document and the changes it made to the HOME program.

A HOME "Request for Proposal" workshop was held on November 16th, with applications for the upcoming 2017 HOME program being due by Friday, January 6th at Noon. After the applications are received, they will be reviewed. A decision in regard to the 2017 program is expected to be presented to the public by mid-March, with a public hearing to take place in early April presenting the proposed program to the Board of Stark County Commissioners. For questions about the HOME program, please contact Lynn Carlone, Assistant Chief of Community Development at 330-451-7774.

Land Bank Awarded \$1,280,279 in Additional Funds for Demolition

In early October, the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) announced additional funding awards under the Neighborhood Initiative Program (NIP) to 16 newly established and 19 currently participating land banks in Ohio. The Stark County Land Bank (administered by the Stark County Regional Planning Commission) is among the 19 land banks who were previously participating in NIP. The NIP is designed to remove the influence of blight by preventing future foreclosures and stabilizing property values through the strategic demolition of blighted residential property. A total of \$238 million has been allocated from the Department of Treasury's "Hardest Hit Fund" Program to land banks across the nation for NIP demolitions.



Blighted property on 3rd Street SE, Canton, OH - to be demolished with the use of NIP funding

In 2015, the Stark County Land Bank received a total of \$4,735,000 to demolish vacant and blighted structures. In early 2016, the Stark County Land Bank received another \$6,017,166, and then most recently it was awarded an additional \$1,280,279.

With the recent allocation of additional funds for demolition, the Land Bank will receive a total of \$12,032,445 to demolish over 750 vacant and blighted structures within targeted areas in the cities of Canton, Massillon and Alliance by the end of 2019.

Annual Dinner

The Stark County Regional Planning Commission will be holding its Annual Dinner on Wednesday, March 15, 2017 at Skyland Pines Rustic Lodge and all local officials and interested residents are encouraged to attend. A cash bar will open at 6:00 p.m. with dinner following at 7:00 p.m.

This year's guest speaker will be the President from Walsh University, Richard Jusseaume. He will be speaking on the recent growth of the university.

Plan now to attend. Registration deadline is March 8th. The cost per person is \$27. For additional information or to register, please call 330-451-7405 or email mrwatkins@starkcountyohio.gov.

Sunshine Law Training

An Ohio Sunshine Law Training Session will be held Friday, April 28, 2017 at Stark Parks' Exploration Gateway. The Ohio Attorney General's Office will be presenting the training, and certification will be given to those who complete the 3-hour session. This free training will be from 9:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

Please visit the Ohio Attorney General's site to register for the training.
<http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Media/Briefing-Room/Events?page=2>
(Once you are on the site, go to Training & Education- Events)

Stormwater Education Update

The theme for Stark County's Stormwater Education Program this year is "Water Goes Where, Circle or Square?" It will focus on the differences between a storm sewer and a sanitary sewer and keeping our water clean.

The Public Involvement/Public Education (P.I.P.E.) Committee has decided to do several of the same successful activities as last year. There will be a Billboard Contest for grades 6-12, a booth at the Home & Garden Show, a radio advertising campaign, a new brochure, the Nimishillen Creek LEAP (Litter, Elimination, Awareness, and Prevention) Clean-Up, and presentations as requested.

For more information, contact Malia Morrison at 330-451-7405 or visit our website at www.rpc.starkcountyohio.gov.

Trees Really Do Affect Stormwater Runoff



Trees and forest systems are an important part of the hydrologic cycle. These systems efficiently store stormwater, return water to the atmosphere, and filter pollutants from runoff. Retaining forest systems during construction and returning forest structure to the built environment can help mitigate stormwater runoff, improve water quality, and conserve stormwater as a natural resource. When this is assessed during the planning phase of land development projects, cost efficiencies can be realized by quantifying and utilizing the multiple benefits of existing forest stands. Identifying areas for forest retention before construction and actively conserving them is a good first step.

Replacing tree canopy cover and forest systems where possible and appropriate after construction can further help increase rainfall retention/detention and thus regulate the amount of stormwater runoff.

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Aarin Teague & Eric Kuehler -October 2016/stormh2o.com





Stark County Regional Planning Commission
201- 3rd St. N.E.
Canton, Ohio 44702

Upcoming Events

January

3	Subdivision Review	1:30 PM
3	SCRPC	7:30 PM
23	SCATS	1:30 PM

February

6	Subdivision Review	1:30 PM
7	SCRPC	7:30 PM
27	SCATS	1:30 PM

March

6	Subdivision Review	1:30 PM
7	SCRPC	7:30 PM
27	SCATS	1:30 PM

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