



# County of Ottawa

## *Press Release*



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For Immediate Release

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### **Ottawa County Funds Environmental Assessment to Spur Economic Development**

The Ottawa County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (OCBRA) approved its first brownfield redevelopment assessment project as a part of its \$400,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields Program. The County will be working with the City of Holland to conduct a Phase I environmental site assessment (ESA) on a site in the South Shore Village Shopping District, which is located approximately one block from Lake Macatawa in the City of Holland. The initial assessment is estimated to cost around \$4,000.

According to Joel Dye, the City's Community Development Coordinator, the city plans to install a pedestrian promenade in the 500 block of West 17<sup>th</sup> Street to connect to the Heinz Boardwalk, as well as street-scaping and a parking lot to service nearby retail and business establishments. The estimated cost of the improvements is \$430,000. The project is expected to increase the local tax base, eliminate blight, create recreational space, and serve as a catalyst for additional redevelopment and neighborhood improvements. The partnership with the City as well as the overall impact of the proposed improvements to the South Shore Village area makes this an exciting project for the OCBRA.

The City of Holland currently owns one of the parcels in the project area and is working with a private property owner to purchase the remaining property needed to complete the project. However, because previous development at the site included a gas station, carwash, and dry cleaner, the site may be considered a brownfield, and environmental assessments are needed in order for the City to complete the property acquisition.

The Phase I ESA is the first step in the environmental assessment process. A Phase I ESA is essentially a report that identifies past uses of a site and the surrounding area to determine any potential sources of contamination. Phase I ESAs involve reviewing records, making site visits, and conducting interviews with property owners, neighbors, local government officials, and others. When potential sources of contamination are found during a Phase

I ESA, a Phase II ESA is then required. The Phase II ESA involves sampling and testing soil and water, as well as any buildings, tanks, and drums at the site to confirm the presence and concentration of hazardous materials.

Depending on the results from the Phase I ESA, the South Shore project may require a Phase II ESA, which will likely be considered for approval by the OCBRA at the next meeting.

Environmental assessments can be costly, they must be completed by trained environmental professionals, and they can be an impediment to redeveloping otherwise desirable properties. In order to assist property owners and developers in Ottawa County with the cost of these assessments, and to encourage brownfield site redevelopment, the County applied for and received \$400,000 in grant funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Program.

The County is currently accepting applications for these grant funds. To be eligible for funding, a property must be located in Ottawa County and the current property owner cannot be responsible for the contamination. A Project Nomination Form can be found on the Ottawa County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority website at [www.miottawa.org/ocbra](http://www.miottawa.org/ocbra).

Each nominated site will be evaluated based on several considerations including, but not limited to, known or suspected chemical use on the site; the extent to which a known public health issue will be positively impacted; the extent to which redevelopment will remove blight, encourage additional redevelopment, increase tax base, and create permanent jobs; and support of the local unit of government to assess, clean-up, and redevelop the site. Projects that are approved will be funded on a first-come, first-serve basis until the grant funds are exhausted.

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