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Grant Provides Funding for a Park on the Site of the Former Hithergreen Center

Washington Township residents will soon have a new park at the site of the former Hithergreen Center, thanks to a grant that will cover 75 percent of the cost for land acquisition, building demolition, and land conservation and restoration. The \$558,000 grant from the Clean Ohio Fund Green Space Conservation Program, administered by the Ohio Public Works Commission, was awarded Tuesday afternoon to the Centerville-Washington Park District which will own and manage the park.

The nearly 15-acre parcel of land is located at 5900 Hithergreen Drive, the former site of the independent nonprofit Hithergreen Center. Building demolition will occur in 2019, followed by plans to restore the landscape and begin maintenance as a public park. Washington Township Public Works will handle building demolition and the Centerville-Washington Park district will remove non-native invasive plant species such as honeysuckle, fell dead or dying trees, and plant native butterfly gardens on the property to create a healthy ecosystem for native plants and animals. A small portion of the parking lot will remain to facilitate easy access for park visitors.

When it became apparent in 2015 that the facility would need to be closed due to state funding cuts, the township and park district discussed the idea of turning the land into a park, however funding for building demolition, conservation and restoration was not in place. After a proposed residential development for the property was withdrawn, the park district and township worked together on terms of purchase, including the condition that the park district needed to first win a grant to preserve the site.

“This new park will provide recreation space in a busy residential area, and it will help to clean runoff to the tributary stream on the property,” said Arnie Biondo, director of the Centerville-Washington Park District. “Centerville-Washington Park District is committed to the preservation of open space and natural habitats.”

“This is a win-win for the community and the Hithergreen neighborhood. This neighborhood will now have a park within a ten-minute, safe walk of every home,” said Washington Township Administrator Jesse Lightle.

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