



# Revolving Loan Fund Community Involvement Plan

July 2024

**Former Sears and Sears  
Auto  
West 130<sup>th</sup> Street and Smith  
Road  
Middleburg Heights, Ohio**

**Prepared For:**

City of Middleburg Heights  
15700 Bagley Road  
Middleburg Heights, Ohio 44130

**Prepared By:**

TRC  
1382 West Ninth Street, Suite 400  
Cleveland, Ohio 44113

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## 1.0 Introduction

This Community Involvement Plan (CIP) has been prepared to describe the City of Middleburg Heights, Ohio (hereinafter, “Middleburg Heights” or “City”), strategy to address the needs and concerns of residents potentially affected by the proposed cleanup [asbestos containing materials (ACM) and hazardous material abatement] at the Former Sears and Sears Auto property located at West 130<sup>th</sup> Street and Smith Road in Middleburg Heights, Ohio (the Site). This CIP outlines how the City will involve interested residents, City officials, and local organizations in the decision-making process regarding the cleanup at the Site.

The Site is currently comprised of a two-story department store building with a basement built in 1964, with a small addition made in 1970, and a standalone, two-story automotive shop built in 1964. There are currently no occupants at the two buildings. The last occupants listed were Sears Department Store and Sears Automotive Center. Exterior areas are primarily paved, concrete walkways, and landscaping.

Surveys for ACM and other hazardous materials began at the Site in 1994, with an additional inspection in 2008. Between 2014 and 2023, several phases of environmental investigations were conducted at the Site, including additional ACM and hazardous materials surveys. These investigations revealed the presence of ACM and hazardous materials within the existing structures on the Site, in addition to identified impacts to soil and soil gas as the Site.

The asbestos abatement and removal of hazardous materials is to be funded, in part, by a loan from the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA)-Vibrant NEO Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and is administered by NOACA. The RLF will be used by Middleburg Heights to conduct abatement of ACM and other hazardous materials at the Site in order to facilitate future renovation or building demolition.

Environmental cleanup at the Site will be conducted in accordance with the applicable federal, state, and local regulations and conducted by an Ohio Department of Labor Standards licensed asbestos abatement contractor.

### 1.1 Spokesperson and Information Repository

The spokesperson for this project is Charles Bichara, Director of Economic Development with Middleburg Heights, who may be contacted at the following address and phone number:

Charles Bichara, Director of Economic Development  
City of Middleburg Heights Department of Economic Development  
15700 Bagley Road  
Middleburg Heights, Ohio 44130  
(440) 234-8811  
[cbichara@middleburgheights.com](mailto:cbichara@middleburgheights.com)

An Administrative Record and Information Repository has been established on the City website. Persons wishing to review reports and/or other information relative to environmental conditions at the Site should visit <https://middleburgheights.com/>.

The project will be discussed at regularly scheduled City Council meetings hosted at City Hall, located at 15700 Bagley Road, Middleburg Heights, Ohio. City Council meetings dates and times are posted on the City's website, and key dates are listed in Section 3.3 of this document.

## **2.0 Site Information**

This section summarizes the Site location, history, and existing environmental conditions.

### **2.1 Site Location**

The Site is currently comprised of one parcel (parcel number 372-31-006) located at 6950 West 130th Street, Middleburg Heights, Ohio, on approximately 14.93 acres of land. The Site is depicted as a two-story department store building with a basement built in 1964, with a small addition made in 1970, and a standalone, two-story automotive shop built in 1964. There are currently no occupants at the two buildings. The last occupants listed were Sears Department Store and Sears Automotive Center. Exterior areas are primarily paved, concrete walkways, and landscaping. The parcel can be accessed by West 130<sup>th</sup> Street from the east and Smith Road from the south and west. According to the Cuyahoga County Auditor, the Site is currently owned by the City of Middleburg Heights.

The Site is located in a predominately commercial and residential area of Middleburg Heights. Adjoining properties are commercial in nature with northern surrounding properties also under commercial usage. Beyond the adjoining properties, surrounding properties to the east, south, and west are residential in nature.

### **2.2 Site History**

Based on information provided in TRC's July 2023 *Ohio Voluntary Action Program Phase I Property Assessment*, the Site was historically developed with agricultural use with a small area of wooded land. The Site was developed in 1964 with the current buildings and has been used for retail and auto repair from the time of development through the late 2010s, when Sears ceased operations.

### **2.3 Nature of Threat to Public Health and Environment**

The current proposed phase of environmental remediation is limited to abatement of ACM and removal of hazardous materials. The ACM Confirmation Survey and Hazardous Materials Inventory conducted by TRC in 2023 indicated the presence of friable and non-friable ACM within the two Site buildings. Future building renovation or demolition would disturb ACM and other hazardous building materials at the Site. Disturbance of ACM would result in asbestos being made airborne which would result in an increased potential for human exposure via inhalation to construction workers and nearby public. Environmental response activities including the proper abatement and disposal practices of asbestos and other regulated hazardous materials are required prior to and/or during any building demolition and/or renovation activity that will disturb these materials at the Site.

### 3.0 Community Involvement Plan

*This section summarizes the community background, previous community involvement activities, and the plan for continued community involvement for the Site.*

#### 3.1 Community Profile

The City of Middleburg Heights, incorporated as a village in 1928 and as a city in 1961, has a total area of 8.06 square miles. According to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau, the City is home to 16,004 year-round residents.

Census data further indicates that 95.4 percent are white, 2.2 percent are black or African American, 8.8 percent are Asian, 0.2 percent are American Indian or Alaska Native, 4.6 percent are from two or more races, and 0.0 percent Pacific Islander. The median household income for Middleburg Heights is \$74,109.

American Community Survey's (ACS) 2022 5-year estimates indicate that 5.4 percent of Middleburg Heights residents live below the poverty level. Approximately 7.1 percent of children under the age of 18 live in poverty. Middleburg Heights has an employment rate of 56.7 percent, which is lower than surrounding communities located in Cuyahoga County, per the Middleburg Heights Community Master Plan, discussed below.

#### 3.2 Chronology of Community Involvement

Redevelopment of the Site is guided by the 2022 Middleburg Heights Community Master Plan. The process for creating this plan involved gathering input from residents, business owners, stakeholders, and interested groups.

The project's overall community engagement and involvement process began in 2020 and included community engagement opportunities in 2020, 2021, and 2022. For each opportunity, meeting information was posted on the City's and Cuyahoga County Planning's websites, announced at other City meetings, posted on social media, shared in e-newsletters, and provided through high-quality videos created by the City. As a part of each community engagement opportunity, an online survey/activity was open for at least one month to allow residents enough time to share their thoughts.

The Master Plan goals for the overall Southland area, where the Site is located, include 1) carrying overall redevelopment and site improvements for all properties in the Southland Shopping Center Business District; and 2) accommodating the mixing of uses in order to refocus the site as a community space to live, work, shop, dine, and thrive.

The redevelopment plan for the Site itself consists of one main mixed-use building comprising of 375 multifamily rental units and 40,000 to 50,000 square feet of ground-level restaurant and retail space. Additional retail and restaurant outparcels will also be constructed on the property along the two main roadways that border the property. Additional public park and gathering space will also be incorporated into the development for the benefit of the residents of the property as well as the general public. The total investment is expected to be approximately \$120,000,000.

### 3.3 Continued Community Involvement

The City will use its best efforts to engage members of community in the development of the cleanup plan and provide regular updates on the cleanup activities. Throughout the Site's redevelopment, the project team will be responsible for reporting to City leadership and the awarding agency, the NOACA, on development progress and project compliance. The project team will keep the City and the NOACA apprised of project updates, progress, changes and issues during the Site's abatement.

Outreach relating to the site's abatement and demolition activities will use multi-media including but not limited to City Council Meetings, website information updates, social media posts, and informational literature. Information will be presented in concise, non-technical language that is understandable by a broad audience.

- Middleburg Heights City Council Meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays of each month at 7 pm at the Middleburg Heights City Council Chambers, 15700 Bagley Road, Middleburg Heights, Ohio 44130. City Council Meeting agendas are posted on the City's webpage 5 days prior to each meeting.
- Public notices will also announce that the City's website has been established as the information repository for this project. The website is available at <https://middleburgheights.com/>. Hard copies of documents in the administrative record will be available for review upon request at City Council's chamber at City Hall. This administrative record website will also contain a project schedule and progress summary which will be updated at least twice a month to coincide with the postings of City Council Meeting agendas.
- Interested parties may request to be included in any mailing list associated with project updates. Throughout the cleanup process, the public may contact the spokesperson for this project, Charles Bichara, (440) 234-8811, [cbichara@middleburgheights.com](mailto:cbichara@middleburgheights.com).

Per EPA's reporting requirements, once a draft Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA) has been completed, a legal notice will be on the City's website, announcing a 30-day public comment period on the report. During the comment period, the City will provide written responses to comments received, and these written responses will become part of the administrative record. The City will hold community audiences as listed in this CIP, scheduled to be held in conjunction with City Council meetings, during the 30-day comment period, to inform residents of the proposed cleanup plan and answer questions regarding the project. The community is encouraged to ask questions during these public meetings and/or submit any comments or questions during the 30-day comment period on the proposed cleanup of the Site.

Key dates surrounding the 30-day public comment period are listed below:

Task	Estimated Start Date	Estimated Completion Date
Publish Public Notice on the City’s website (which will announce public meetings, timing of minimum 30-day public comment period, and availability of information repository)	August 24, 2024	August 24,2024
30-Day Public Comment Period for Draft ABCA	August 24, 2024	September 24, 2024
Public Meetings (City Council meetings held on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month)	September 10, 2024, and September 24, 2024	September 24, 2024
End of Public Comment Period	September 24, 2024	September 24, 2024
Respond to Comments and placement of responses in Administrative Record.	September 24, 2024	October 8, 2024
Finalization of ABCA/NOACA Issues Decision Document	September/October 2024	September/October 2024
Implementation of Remedial Alternative	October/November 2024	May 2025

## 4.0 References

Middleburg Heights Community Master Plan; Middleburg Heights, Ohio; accessed June 3, 2024; [https://s3.countyplanning.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/MBH\\_FullPlan\\_FINAL.pdf](https://s3.countyplanning.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/MBH_FullPlan_FINAL.pdf)

United States Census Bureau; Middleburg Heights, Ohio; accessed June 3, 2024; <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/middleburgheightscityohio,columbuscityohio/SBO010217>

United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey; accessed June 3, 2024; <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>