

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Western Reserve Outreach Center Property to Change Ownership**  
*Twinsburg Township to Purchase and Redevelop Property at 8776 Harvard Road*

**Twinsburg Township, Summit County, Ohio – July 29, 2010** – The Board of Twinsburg Township Trustees at its July 27, 2010 meeting agreed to proceed, as soon as possible, with purchasing 5.35+/- acres of land at 8776 Harvard Road, owned by Western Reserve Outreach Center (WROC), a non-profit entity separate from the Township. In 2009 the Board entered into agreements to purchase the WROC property and an adjacent 4.82+/- acre parcel under separate ownership, subject to year-long due diligence periods. The extended due diligence periods were needed to resolve title issues on both properties and, in the specific case of the WROC property, to allow WROC to identify a long-term strategy for the Center on the property. While WROC property title issues have now been resolved, no strategy has, as of this date, materialized.

The Center, an 8,000+/- SF multi-service center building located on the property and formerly known as the Twinsburg Heights Community Center, originated more than 50 years ago as a meeting place for Heights neighborhood residents. Although it expanded in size and mission over the years, the Center continued to hold a dear place in the hearts of many longstanding Heights residents. Despite laudable volunteer efforts and local business generosity, the Center's funding decreased substantially over time. The Center then mortgaged the property to pay for operating expenses, a factor which gradually overwhelmed its finances. The mortgage has been in forbearance, and the property at risk of foreclosure, for several years. The Salvation Army of

Summit County in 2005 stepped into what was intended as a temporary role as WROC's fiscal agent. When that proved not to be the case, the Salvation Army withdrew from that role on March 31, 2010, on which date the Center also closed its doors.

The Center's main building has suffered for years from a lack of ongoing maintenance and has fallen into a state of severe disrepair. The Township had the building evaluated for potential use as a public facility. The Township's architect and the Twinsburg Fire Department identified numerous building and fire code violations, as well as safety and security concerns. Copies of both reports are available at Township Hall for public inspection. The buildings were found to be uninhabitable and unsafe for occupancy in their current condition, with the only options being either to repair and substantially upgrade, or completely replace, the building, and with the total cost of either option estimated in late 2008 to be in excess of \$2 million.

The property's outside amenities include tennis and basketball courts, a baseball field, pavilion, swing sets, playground equipment, parking, and lighting, all of which are similar in condition to the buildings. These improvements are also remote and inconvenient to nearby residents and have the potential to become security and safety concerns for the Township, as well as for the Sheriff as the Township's provider of police protection services. The tennis courts, swing sets, and playground equipment are beyond repair. The basketball courts, baseball field, pavilion, parking, and lighting, however, can remain and, at minimal cost, provide continued short term amenities for nearby residents until such time as all surrounding land has been acquired, a long term development plan is prepared, and capital and operating funding is secured.

From the beginning these property purchases were about assembling land for a 10+ acre park in walkable proximity to the most densely populated area of the Township. Because of their condition and location, the buildings and some of the outside improvements – while of interest to the Township – do not contribute to that initial goal. In addition the Township does not have the legal ability to provide the types of social services that were previously provided at the Center to

the greater population that it served. The Township also does not have the resources to renovate or replace the building on the property, and is unwilling to assume the liability for allowing anyone to use or even enter the building without such renovations.

For all of the above reasons, and unless one or more outside entities steps forward to fully fund (1) renovation or replacement of the building, and (2) provision of ongoing services from the building, the Township will demolish the building, remove certain site improvements, and take steps to enhance and maintain remaining site improvements on an interim basis, on or after October 1, 2010. The efforts of many who have done much to prevent this result are greatly appreciated and will be recognized in a respectful way on the property when it is redeveloped.

The Heights neighborhood deserves much more than what the blighted WROC property has been allowed to become. The Board of Trustees looks forward to immediately improving the appearance, condition, safety, and security of the WROC property. The Board also looks forward in coming months to completing its purchase of the adjacent acreage, and in coming years to developing an inviting, vibrant, and well-maintained 10+ acre community park. The Board has also scheduled and invites the public to attend a special meeting to occur at the 8776 Harvard Road pavilion on Saturday August 21, 2010 at 12:00 noon. At this meeting Township officials will answer questions about property acquisition, redevelopment, and future use(s).

### **About Twinsburg Township**

Twinsburg Township was founded in 1817 and had a population of 2,554 (est.) in 2009. For more information, contact Robert S. Kagler, Township Manager, via telephone at (330) 425-4497 or via e-mail at [rkagler@twinsburgtwp.com](mailto:rkagler@twinsburgtwp.com).

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