# NORTHEAST OHIO SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CONSORTIUM

# A Vision & Framework for Our Future

SCOPE OF WORK
AUGUST 2012

*Fortune favors the prepared mind*

*-Louis Pasteur*

*Visioning is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to take a long-range look at a region and envision what it could become as the future enfolds. Unique from typical planning processes, including general planning, land use code development, and permitting, visioning enables residents to take a fresh look at the future, explore newly relevant ideas, and to examine past trends. Most important, visioning is a public process, in which broad participation is invited and encouraged.*

*-Bear Lake Valley Blueprint and Toolkit: Building a Legacy Together*

*Aim high in hope and work*

*-Daniel Burnham*

# A Vision & Framework for Our Future

*Vibrant NEO 2040: A Vision & Framework for Our Future* is an opportunity for Northeast Ohio communities to explore the region's long-term development patterns and to think together about what we want our region to be like in the future. The goal of *Vibrant NEO 2040* is to create a shared Framework for Our Future that reflects the values, voices and vision of the public. Broad public participation at all stages is essential to building this framework and a legacy for generations to come.

## *Why Now?*

*Vibrant NEO 2040* recognizes that Northeast Ohio is a unique, "polycentric" region built around seven "legacy cities" and their suburbs. These legacy cities—Cleveland, Akron, Canton, Lorain, Elyria, Youngstown and Warren – were the region's economic engines in the industrial era. Since 1980, these cities have lost industrial jobs and employment opportunity as once-booming businesses downsized or closed entirely, leaving behind industrial Brownfields, abandoned neighborhoods and downtowns emptied of the department stores and other retail activities that made them the center of community life.

*Vibrant NEO 2040* recognizes that Northeast Ohio, like many other Great Lakes regions, has experienced little, if any, growth in population and employment over the past several decades. The population of the 12-county Northeast Ohio region comprised of Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Summit, Stark, Trumbull and Wayne counties peaked in 1970. Since that time, the region has lost seven percent of its population. Population projections suggest that the region's population will remain essentially the same for the next several decades.

*Vibrant NEO 2040* recognizes that Northeast Ohio, like all US metropolitan areas, has experienced significant new residential, commercial and industrial development in the past several decades. While the new development that has taken place at the edges of our already-established communities mirrors development patterns found in regions experiencing significant population growth, Northeast Ohio's new fringe development has been accompanied by wide-spread abandonment of long-established communities in the region's legacy cities and first suburbs. This pattern of "no-growth sprawl" is shared by other Great Lakes regions and is largely the consequence of the dramatic changes that have taken place in Northeast Ohio's economy since 1980. This pattern creates long-term fiscal challenges for our region's governments and unnecessarily burdens the region's taxpayers. On the one hand, we must invest in new infrastructure to meet the needs of emerging communities. On the other hand, however, we must invest in maintaining existing infrastructure serving already-established communities.

*Vibrant NEO 2040* recognizes that Northeast Ohio increasingly functions as an economically integrated region. In prior generations most people lived and worked in the same community. Today people travel further from home in pursuit of work. This trend follows the completion of the region's freeway network, the growth of new suburban communities and job centers, and the decline of employment in the region's historic cores. It is reflected clearly in the increase in the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) each year by our region's citizens. Adjusting our transit systems and other transportation investments to meet the needs of an increasingly dispersed regional

work force is essential to our long-term economic competitiveness. Providing more transportation options beyond a personal vehicle can begin to bring household transportation costs down to a more affordable level while reducing vehicle-related emissions.

*Vibrant NEO 2040* recognizes that our pattern of development has had an unequal impact on the region's communities and citizens. As residential and commercial building has increasingly pushed development beyond traditional city cores, benefiting some communities in the short-term while leading to disinvestment in many older communities, the result for older communities has been inadequate housing quality and options, leading to an underutilization of existing resources and community assets.

*Vibrant NEO 2040* recognizes that the world is changing and our region must change with it. Increasingly our country's metropolitan regions—and not just our historic core cities—are the geographic units of global competitiveness. The degree of a region's success in the global marketplace depends on how agile it is in meeting the demands of an ever-changing global economy. Regions across the United States are addressing this imperative by engaging in community visioning, a grassroots process of articulating community values, understanding the community's challenges and opportunities, and collaboratively crafting a broadly shared vision for the future. *Vibrant NEO 2040* offers all Northeast Ohio citizens the opportunity to craft just such a shared vision of our long-term future, complete with goals related to land use, housing, transportation, economic development and environmental protection.

*Vibrant NEO 2040* recognizes that vision alone is not enough to effect change. Tools, policies, and pilot projects must also be pursued and developed to encourage, equip, and support Northeast Ohioans to learn, share, create, and act together to create a more vibrant future.

## Why 2040?

*Vibrant NEO 2040* is a once-in-a-generation look at the way forward. As any young person learning to drive quickly comes to understand, it is easier to steer a car if you look at the road ahead and not at its hood. Communities likewise benefit by looking up from the daily challenges of today to ask "where are we really headed?"

The year 2040 is more than 25 years—an entire generation—in the future. Those just being born will be beginning their careers. What sort of jobs will there be in 25 years? Where will those jobs be located? And how will the future generation get to those jobs?

Those now leaving college or technical schools will be at the peak of their earning years. Will they elect to stay in Northeast Ohio or will they follow the course too many have taken and leave the region permanently, returning only infrequently to visit family and the "old neighborhood?"

And those now in the middle years will be retiring. Will they stay or will they go? If they stay, will they be able to find resources in their communities to "age in place?"

The choices we make today will have profound consequences on our communities a generation from now. Simply put, what legacy are we going to leave behind for future generations? What kind of future do we want to create for our children and grandchildren? A collective vision of the

future based on shared values enables better planning and decision-making today and throughout the next 25 years.

The year 2040 is the target for other regions such as Chicago and Greater Cincinnati that have worked to craft broadly-shared visions for an attractive, equitable, efficient and competitive region. Using 2040 as our horizon year allows Northeast Ohio to benchmark itself against other regions engaged in similar community visioning initiatives.

# I.    Background

## *Sustainable Communities Initiative*

The Fund for Our Economic Future, a unique multi-county coalition of Northeast Ohio philanthropies and allied civic organizations, convened governmental and non-governmental organizations across Northeast Ohio to apply for funding from the first round of the innovative and highly-competitive Sustainable Communities Initiative. The Sustainable Communities Initiative is a program initiated through an interagency partnership between the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the US Department of Transportation, and the US Environmental Protection Agency. The initiative was designed to promote the adoption of sustainable development practices at the local and regional level. The Fund for Our Economic Future provided the catalytic funding essential to convene a diverse leadership group drawn from the 12 counties of Northeast Ohio and prepare a competitive grant proposal. In October 2010, with the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) serving as lead applicant, the region secured a $4.25 million, three-year Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant from HUD to develop a strategic regional sustainability policy plan for a more sustainable future.

## *NEOSCC*

The Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC or "Consortium") an Ohio 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, was established in January 2011 by the 23 members of the applicant committee. The purpose of NEOSCC is to create conditions for a more vibrant, resilient, and sustainable Northeast Ohio. Its vision is to be a transformational regional collaboration whose members practice sustainability principles and advocate for policies and programs to create an enhanced and an enduring quality of life in Northeast Ohio. Its growing membership includes public agencies, elected officials, philanthropic and non-profit organizations, colleges and universities, and community leaders.

Consortium members entered into Consortium Agreements that outline their commitment to the effort. Through the agreements, members devote their understanding, resources, and personal participation to build the collaborative capacity of Northeast Ohio to develop and adopt a comprehensive regional vision and strategic regional policy plan, or framework. Agreements also provide for the required local match to the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant. Consortium members have pledged nearly $3 million in in-kind staff time and other leveraged match resources, inclusive of a program grant of $0.5 million from the Fund for our Economic Future. State and federal tax-exempt status was secured to enable the Consortium to apply for additional grant funding to further implementation of the framework.

Current Consortium members, listed by organization type, as of August 22, 2012, are:

- Metropolitan Planning Organizations/Areawide Coordinating Agencies:
  - Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS): Summit and Portage counties and Chippewa Township in Wayne County
  - Eastgate Regional Council of Governments (Eastgate): Mahoning and Trumbull counties in Ohio and Mercer County in Pennsylvania
  - Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA): Cuyahoga, Lake, Lorain, Medina and Geauga counties
  - Stark County Areawide Transportation Study (SCATS): Stark County
  - Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO): Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne counties
- Counties:
  - Ashtabula
  - Cuyahoga
  - Lorain
  - Mahoning
  - Stark
  - Summit
  - Trumbull
- Cities:
  - Akron
  - Cleveland
  - Elyria
  - Youngstown
- Colleges/Universities:
  - Cleveland State University, Levin College of Urban Affairs
  - Lorain County Community College
  - Youngstown State University, Center for Urban and Regional Studies
- Metropolitan Housing Authorities (MHAs):
  - Akron MHA
  - Cuyahoga MHA
  - Stark MHA
  - Youngstown MHA
- Entities by Representation:
  - Cleveland Metroparks (on behalf of the region's metropolitan, state, and federal park systems)
  - Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (on behalf of the region's transit systems)
  - Summit County Health District (on behalf of the region's health districts and departments)
- Regional Non-Governmental Organizations:
  - Fund for Our Economic Future
  - Regional Prosperity Initiative
- Community-Based Organizations:
  - Akron Urban League

- o   Catholic Charities, Diocese of Youngstown
- o   The Center for Community Solutions
- o   Cleveland Museum of Natural History
- o   Northeast Ohio Community  Development Alliance
- o   Policy Bridge

In addition to the 33 board members and their alternates, the Consortium has engaged over 200 individuals and organizational representatives on its seven Workstreams, or working groups.

The NEOSCC Governing Board is supported by a professional Program Management Office (PMO) Staff hired to guide development of the regional vision and products. The PMO is based in Akron, Ohio in a space donated by the City of Akron. The Consortium also established field offices in downtown Cleveland and in downtown Youngstown in spaces provided by NOACA and the Eastgate Council of Governments, respectively. The Consortium has engaged a staff of eight full- and part-time employees, augmented by consultants and supported by in-kind leveraged match staff resources from board members. NOACA, which is the federal grant recipient and serves as the Consortium's fiscal agency for the purposes of administering the federal grant, provides accounting services.

## *The Region & Its Metros*

Northeast Ohio is an urbanized region uniquely endowed with four Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), herein after referred to as "Metros": Metro Akron (Akron, OH MSA); Metro Canton (Canton-Massillon, OH MSA); Metro Cleveland (Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor, OH MSA); and the Mahoning Valley Metro (Youngstown-Warren-Boardman, OH-PA MSA). For the purposes of this program, Metro Canton has been expanded to include Wayne County and the Mahoning Valley Metro has been expanded to include Ashtabula County.

Each Metro has a well-established, professionally-staffed metropolitan planning organization (MPO), which serves as an intergovernmental forum for developing strategic Long-Range Transportation Plans with horizons of at least 20 years. The MPOs are charged with making capital investment decisions regarding the development and maintenance of transportation infrastructure within each of the respective Metros. Although these plans do not commit funding to projects, any project using federal transportation dollars must be consistent with MPO policy recommendations. The organization of each MPO is specific to the needs and history of its respective Metro. NOACA is a free-standing MPO, Eastgate is a free-standing council of governments, SCATS is a program of the Stark County Regional Planning Commission, and AMATS is responsible for transportation planning in the Akron metropolitan area. In addition to these four MPOs, the Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO) serves Portage, Stark, Summit and Wayne counties as their council of governments. Over time, individual MPOs have assumed additional, specialized missions in subject areas such as air and water quality planning, environmental planning and regional economic development.

The Consortium intends to utilize the region's existing structure of NEFCO and the four MPOs (as amended to incorporate Ashtabula and Wayne Counties) as the organizational framework for undertaking the development and implementation of *Vibrant NEO 2040*. These organizations are

broadly representative of the governmental units within each of their service areas and have, for over 40 years, served as established forums for collaborative inter-governmental decision-making.

In addition, the Northeast Ohio region has a universe of other agencies, boards and authorities that are involved in environmental, transportation, economic development, land use and community planning for the region as a whole and in each of its four Metros. The region is also uniquely endowed with a network of state colleges and universities which have long been involved in urban and environmental planning, economic development, geography/GIS, urban design and transportation planning: Cleveland State University, Kent State University, Stark State College, the University of Akron, and Youngstown State University.

## II.   Mission & Purpose

Through open dialogue and communication with decision makers and the public, the Consortium will develop a preferred regional vision and framework, collectively called *Vibrant NEO 2040: A Vision & Framework for Our Future*. The regional vision and framework, including its key tools, policies, and pilot projects, will:

- Encourage land use patterns and promote economic development strategies that address region-wide economic prosperity and housing equity;
- Support development of sustainable, intraregional multimodal travel options;
- Restore and enhance the region's natural systems and significant built environments; and
- Promote cost-effective investment in the region's infrastructure and public services.

The Consortium believes that by adopting sustainable planning and development principles and encouraging associated communities of practice among local governments and non-profit organizations Northeast Ohio will improve efficiency across all sectors, lessen the burden of government on the region's firms and households and improve the region's ability to compete in the emerging global economy.

*Vibrant NEO 2040* will identify and address subject areas that have the highest potential to affect the region's economy, significant physical assets, or the quality of life of its citizens. These subject areas include regional economic development policies and strategies; region-wide transportation, energy and logistics systems; housing quality, affordability, and accessibility; and resources of significance in the region's natural and built environments. This strategic policy plan will also identify and address significant regional assets and facilities. Additional strategic regional subject areas may be included that relate to the particular needs and circumstances of the region as a whole or of its four Metros.

In addition to the boards and staffs of the MPOs, COGs, and the other member organizations, the Consortium will engage in the planning process of other public, private and non-profit entities that share the Consortium's mission to develop a long-range vision that addresses the sustainability of the region. In order to ensure the planning process is fully representative of the region's wide diversity of interests, the Consortium is committed to engaging communities at all levels who may not normally be involved in such planning initiatives.

*Vibrant NEO 2040* will support land use patterns and decision-making processes that promote accessible regional employment centers and region-wide multimodal travel alternatives, reduced vehicle miles travelled (VMT), equitable housing access and quality, community-focused economic development, improved environmental quality, collaborative regional initiatives, and place-based community design. It will identify linkages between land use, transportation and the natural environments in the region, and will seek to establish and further policies and practices that strengthen and enhance those linkages.

*Vibrant NEO 2040* will be comprised of the preferred regional vision and framework. To support *Vibrant NEO 2040,* an interactive Vibrant NEO Dashboard, tools, policies, and pilots will be developed that can be adopted by the MPOs and other jurisdictions at their discretion. Such implementation tools will hopefully guide their decision-making and ensure that land use, transportation, and environmental considerations are simultaneously addressed by their processes.

It is the Consortium's intent that the regional vision and framework lead to the development and use of reasonable planning and development standards, criteria, and metrics that recognize the relationships between land use, transportation, infrastructure investments, and environmental quality. These standards, criteria and metrics will be available for implementation at the Metro and local levels at the option of their respective decision makers.

## III. Goals & Outcomes

*Vibrant NEO 2040* is a regional visioning and decision-making framework that marks a shift in the way Northeast Ohio does business. It is premised on the idea that a shared vision for the future, developed through a robust community and stakeholder engagement process, will result in aligned planning processes and resource allocation, resulting in a healthier, more economically and socially equitable future for the region.

To ensure necessary buy-in so that Consortium members advance the vision, NEOSCC will seek Governing Board approval of *Vibrant NEO 2040* in October 2013. The Board will jointly consider the preferred Vibrant NEO Regional Vision, developed through the engagement and scenario planning process, and the strategic Framework for Our Future. Additional key Board actions in advancing the vision will include adoption of the Vibrant NEO Dashboard and the Vibrant NEO Core Tools, Policies & Pilots list.

The process for developing the regional vision, framework, and products is designed to achieve the following goals and outcomes:

### *Goal 1: Enable Inclusive & Transparent Public Planning*

The visioning process behind *Vibrant NEO 2040* actively seeks increased participation and decision-making by traditionally marginalized populations. It will enable citizens, businesses, and local government leaders throughout the region to explore together the challenges and opportunities we face, and will engage communities to co-create a viable long-term policy framework to guide the future of our region.

## Goal 2: Reflect Shared Values

The resultant preferred NEO Regional Vision and Framework for Our Future, complete with regional and metropolitan area goals and priorities related to land use, housing, transportation, economic development, and environmental protection, will illustrate the need for collaborative planning and action. By establishing a shared vision that all Consortium members support, inconsistent policies and investment decisions can more easily be aligned to effect change.

## Goal 3: Respect Choice

*Vibrant NEO 2040* will reflect the shared values and capture the common aspirations of our region's citizens while respecting the central role that local government plays in our region's governance. Preserving our quality of life, expanding choices for Northeast Ohio's citizens, and respecting local government and individual property rights are essential principles that guide development of the framework.

## Goal 4: Promote Informed Decision-Making

*Vibrant NEO 2040* is a process for region-wide citizen engagement in developing a shared framework that can be used by local governments and regional agencies such as MPOs to guide their decisions. It is based on the belief that both citizens and their representatives will make sound decisions if they are presented with good information and real choices. Currently, many decisions and practices are made in the absence of accurate and accessible region-wide or local data. *Vibrant NEO 2040* aspires to provide that information and articulate those choices clearly and unambiguously. This includes the articulation of the region's current conditions and trends, as well as the needs and actionable frameworks that would help to preserve and expand Northeast Ohio's opportunities.

## Goal 5: Coordinate Efforts & Investments

The goals of *Vibrant NEO 2040* will be translated into shared elements for regional and local plans of member organizations that are tied to comprehensive land use and capital investment plans. The effort seeks to demonstrate that by relentlessly driving for improvements in how we do business, Northeast Ohio will be able to eliminate waste of resources through better planning and coordination so that regional assets, investments, and opportunities may be leveraged to their fullest potential.

Furthermore, the Northeast Ohio regional planning and visioning process, and the dozens of other plans being developed across the country through the Sustainable Communities Initiative, may demonstrate to federal partners that there is a need to realign federal planning and investment resources to mirror the local and regional strategies for achieving more prosperous and sustainable communities.

## Goal 6: Enable & Promote Action

The Consortium is committed to planning for action in Northeast Ohio, and the visioning process is intended to stimulate broad public participation that will lead to development of a shared

regional vision and strategic policy framework plan, a dashboard, tools, policies, and pilots so that the Vision will be politically actionable at many levels of government. The breadth of the region's shared vision will enable and encourage our local and county governments to think beyond their boundaries and to appreciate the opportunities that come by thinking and acting in a "truly regional" manner. Planning and collaboration tools will be developed to help Consortium members and the region effect change.

## Goal 7: Improve Quality of Life

The regional visioning process and associated products will be used to promote practices of integrated regional land use, housing, transportation, and capital investment planning. An integrated approach will enhance the region's economic competitiveness, increase its resilience, provide its citizens better access to decent, affordable housing, and offer more cost-effective transportation choices. Metrics and indicators will be established to demonstrate progress in meeting these goals.

# IV.  The Approach

## Findings: Existing Conditions & Trends

The first phase of the Consortium's work was centered around data gathering on existing conditions and trends. Board members committed in-kind staff for the project, who, along with stakeholders and engaged citizens, were convened in five core Workstream committees organized by the following subject areas: economic development, the environment, housing and communities, transportation (Connections), and place-based design (Quality Connected Places). The Workstreams were tasked with collecting existing relevant plans and reports for their subject areas, along with information on key issues and trends. These Workstreams were augmented and supported by two enabling process teams, Data & Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Communications & Engagement. The Workstreams and in-kind staff were integral in creating the Consortium's first work products, including a regional land use map, regional zoning map, and the Conditions & Trends Platform.

## Vision: Planning for Our Future

*Vibrant NEO 2040* is designed to achieve a broadly-supported, publicly-created, region-wide vision of how Northeast Ohio's citizens want the region to develop over the course of the next several decades. The basic tool for developing this vision is a "scenario planning" process that enables citizens to understand the region's likely future if current trends remain in place for another generation – the "business as usual" case. It establishes the frame of reference for judging the effectiveness of "alternative scenarios" that involve different community choices.

Scenario planning enables citizens and regional stakeholders to create, examine, and test several alternative growth patterns and to compare them with the business as usual case. By developing scenarios that are anchored in HUD's six "livability principles" we can evaluate the impacts of today's decisions on quality of life in our region and our communities. *Vibrant NEO 2040* will evaluate sustainable land use patterns and infrastructure investments that support:

- Community-focused economic development;
- Regionally-accessible employment centers;
- Equitable housing access and quality;
- Improved environmental quality;
- Region-wide multi-modal transportation alternatives; and
- Reduced VMT.

Scenario planning will allow citizens and stakeholders to examine alternative regional development patterns and weigh the long-term costs and benefits of each. Of particular concern to the Consortium is reducing the long-term costs of government for Northeast Ohio's citizens and businesses. The Consortium believes that Northeast Ohio will become truly competitive on the global stage when we learn to "do more with less." This means more consistent and collaborative efforts across our region to efficiently manage limited public dollars while striving to create the highest quality of life for all of our citizens.

## *Products & Programs: Making Our Vision Happen*

As a complement to the regional vision and framework, the Consortium will design and develop products to enable the public, agencies, and Northeast Ohio communities to inform, prioritize, align, and coordinate actions to advance sustainability in their areas of impact and interest. NEOSCC products and programs will be designed to:

- Develop and lead the case for sustainable change through the Consortium's planning, issue and policy research, prioritized issues and metrics, and communication and engagement platform;
- Model coordinated decision-making, integrated regional data monitoring, and resource allocation through the Consortium's regular cycle of meetings and shared database management;
- Share sustainable values, principles, practices, and policies through a robust state of the art engagement platform and Vibrant NEO Dashboard; and
- Enable communities throughout the Northeast Ohio region to design and carry out their own sustainability projects through a tool kit, best practices, model policies, and pilot projects.

# V.  Scope of Work & Process Overview

As the Consortium enters its visioning, planning, and production phases, it will contract with a regional planning consultant to provide additional operational capacity, project management skills, and scenario planning expertise for the remainder of the grant-funded period of the project.

## *Technical Steering Committee*

A technical steering committee comprised of members of the region's MPOs and COGs, acting in service to the NEOSCC Governing Board, will be established to facilitate the work of the PMO and execution of the regional visioning process and framework. This steering committee

will assist with higher-level decision-making, on behalf of the Consortium's Executive Committee and in coordination with the PMO Executive Director, on scoping, direction, and execution of the regional planning consultant's work to keep the project moving forward.

## Workstreams & Teams

For the next phase of work members of the Consortium's five core Workstreams will be reoriented from a data-gathering mode grouped around subject areas to a production mode. A large product team will be assembled to provide the capacity, skills, and resources needed to design and develop, with assistance from the regional planning consultant and other consultants as may be needed, the core products of the Consortium. Also, in addition to the existing enabling process teams, Data & Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Communications & Engagement, two more teams, Policy & Systems Analysis and Administration, will be populated. The product team will be supported by the enabling process teams to ensure that all products of the Consortium are designed holistically and in service to the goals of NEOSCC and the regional vision.

Workstreams were effective in gathering information on the issues and bright spots in the fields members are used to working in and are focused on, but will not be as effective in figuring out how to make transformative changes. Looking systemically at the issues is what sets the Sustainable Communities Initiative apart. This strategic realignment of the Workstream membership into product and enabling process teams will be undertaken by the PMO, with support from the regional planning consultant. A Leveraged Match Resource Allocation Plan covering team operational design, an inventory of available resources (skills, time, availability, subject matter expertise, area of interest), schedule, and task assignments will be developed.

## Visioning

Visioning and scenario planning is the foundation and framework for all of our collective actions moving forward. The regional planning consultant will integrate its efforts with those of the Consortium's community engagement consultant, Cobalt Group, Inc., and its communications consultant, R Strategy, to execute a scenario planning process that will produce the regional vision and framework, *Vibrant NEO 2040*. Successful scenario planning requires input and participation from the public and stakeholders. The Vibrant NEO Communications and Engagement Framework, which has drawn attention nationally by HUD, and which will serve as a foundational document for NEOSCC's evolving engagement planning, was developed assist the Consortium in generating broad-based participation for all of its efforts. Additionally, the Learn-Share-Create-Act model and elements of the framework are already being utilized by Consortium members in their own organizations.

To inform and support the visioning process the Consortium developed the first-ever region-wide online Conditions & Trends Platform, which presents information about the region's conditions and trends to date. It provides critical information about the base case status of Northeast Ohio. This platform, developed through support of NEOSCC's Workstream committees, establishes a foundation for informing and engaging a broader set of regional stakeholders through a publicly accessible, web-based venue which is searchable, provides basic tools for stakeholder

interaction, and can be easily updated to accommodate new and changing information. It can be found at http://cat.neoscc.org.

The Conditions & Trends Platform, regional land use map, and regional zoning map will serve as the basis for inputs and trends for the "business as usual" base case scenario. At the end of the scenario planning process *Vibrant NEO 2040: A Vision & Framework for Our Future*, inclusive of maps and goals related to areas including land use, housing, transportation, economic development and environmental protection, will be adopted by Consortium and its member organizations.

## Product Design

Products will be designed along the following value stream (Figure 1) to ensure that each of the Consortium's products is vetted and improved through the iterative engagement process and tied directly to the goals, purpose, and vision of the region. PMO Staff, the product teams, enabling process teams, and the consultant will follow this design process to ensure that all products developed through the Consortium are relevant, impactful, and clearly tailored to help achieve the vision for the region's future.
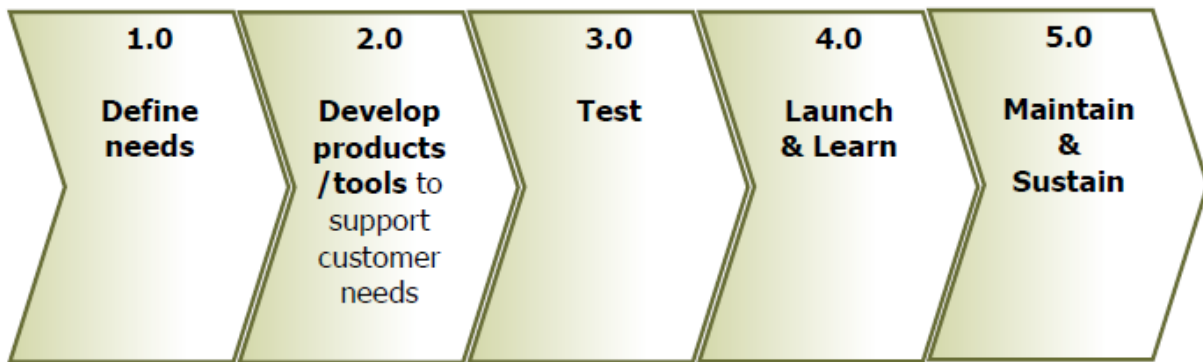


**Figure 1: End-to-End Value Stream for Consortium Product**

The cycle of product development – define needs, design & develop, test, launch & learn, and maintain & sustain – will begin immediately, but will be refined and informed through the community engagement and visioning process. Using information and data gathered through the Conditions & Trends Platform, and iterative feedback from the engagement process, the consultant will work collaboratively with the PMO to assemble a Vibrant NEO Core Tools, Policies & Pilots list, along with broad scopes of work needed to develop these products over the life of the grant period and beyond. This list of specific products to be developed will be adopted by the Consortium Board, and will be used mobilize the product team. Enabling processes that will be used to create the products will be discussed later in this document.

## Products

The visioning and scenario planning process will directly inform and guide development of the Consortium's five core products (See Figure 2):

- *Vibrant NEO 2040: A Vision & Framework for Our Future* (the preferred regional vision & strategic policy plan)
- Vibrant NEO Dashboard;
- Tool Kit & Practices;
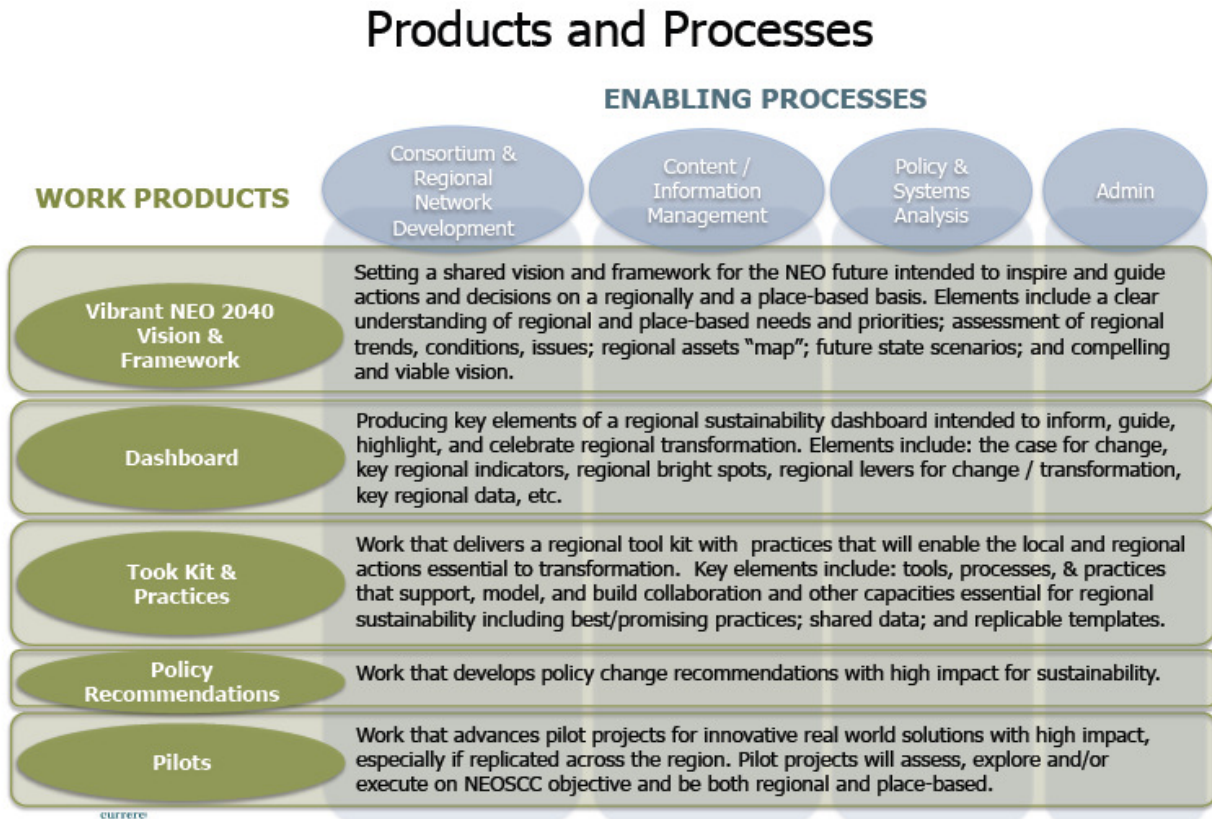- Policy Recommendations & Supportive Actions; and
- Pilot Projects.

## Products and Processes



**Figure 2: NEOSCC Core Work Product Areas**

*Vibrant NEO 2040: A Vision & Framework for Our Future*

Scenario planning facilitates input and priority-setting among stakeholders from the public, local government, and the private/nonprofit sectors to develop a shared regional vision. This process will be lead by the regional planning consultant and/or a subcontractor to it, and will identify strategic regional issues based on regional values, and define associated regional goals and policies that will serve as the framework, or policy plan. Scenario planning can then help regions anticipate the impact that different future conditions may have on values, policies, or goals that have been established or considered. Scenario planning will help regional constituents identify the likely long-term future of the region (baseline) and several alternative scenarios which address the region's need to define a sustainable future. Scenario planning will help lay the groundwork for the dashboard, tool kit, policy recommendations, and pilots.

### Vibrant NEO Dashboard

The Vibrant NEO Dashboard is the quick reference guide that will keep the region moving in the right direction. The dashboard will include the highest impact issue areas, prioritized by the public and Consortium members, in land use, housing, health, transportation, economic development and environmental protection. The dashboard will include Northeast Ohio "bright spots" where specific actions have successfully addressed the issue area, and promising practices from anywhere in the world to emulate. Embedded indicators, developed through the community engagement process and agreed to by the Consortium board, will track our progress, point to areas where we need course correction, and provide proof that we are getting the results we need in order to achieve the vision. The regional planning consultant will assist the PMO with prototyping and developing the dashboard.

### Tool Kit & Practices

The regional planning consultant will assist the product team, led by the PMO, in developing the tools and practices identified in the adopted Vibrant NEO Core Tools, Policies & Pilots list. Tools already identified include a Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice and "typologies" of what constitutes the look and composition of current and future land uses and conditions. Additionally, two key planning tools, the first-ever 12-county regional general land use and zoning maps, were developed during the first phase of the project. These parcel-based maps were developed by a group of 13 organizations, including GIS staff of the region's five MPOs and COGs and the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission. They are scalable and updatable and can be used both to guide the creation of the Regional Vision and as a tool for local and county government interested in better managing its land use decision-making. The Vibrant NEO Communications and Engagement Framework will also be included in the tool kit.

### Policy Recommendations & Supportive Actions

The consultant will assist the Product Team and Enabling Process Teams, led by the PMO, in developing model policies and "white papers" identified in the adopted Vibrant NEO Core Tools, Policies & Pilots list. Core policies and supportive actions will be compiled in the Framework for Our Future. Additionally, the consultant will assist the PMO with developing a strategy for continued collaboration of the Consortium beyond the original grant term, including the preferred roles and size of NEOSCC and PMO, areas of focus and responsibility, and funding.

### Pilot Projects

The consultant will assist the Product Team, led by the PMO, in developing model pilot projects identified in the adopted Vibrant NEO Core Tools, Policies & Pilots list. This will include development of a selection procedure, evaluation methodology, and tracking and reporting mechanism. Additionally a listing of all active and relevant pilots in the region will be developed.

## *Enabling Processes*

The following enabling processes (Figure 3) will be used in conjunction with the design outline about to develop the Consortium's vision and products:
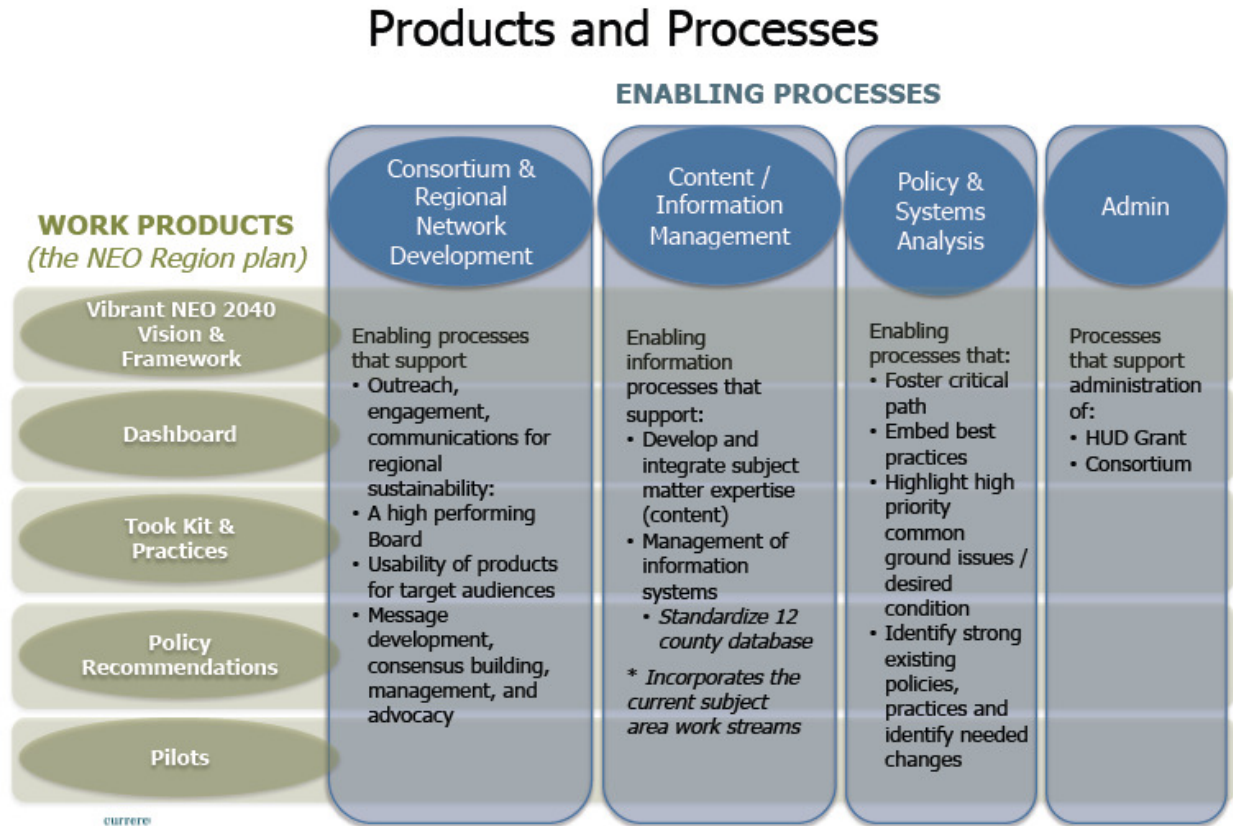


**Figure 3: NEOSCC Enabling Processes**

### Consortium & Regional Network Development

The regional planning consultant will work collaboratively with the community engagement and communications consultants, Cobalt Group, Inc and R. Strategy, respectively, to develop the regional vision and framework through a robust and interactive platform that creates shared language and understanding around sustainability and connects users to each other. The process will deliver reliable and relevant information to enable communities to prioritize issues. Communication and engagement tools and processes include:

- NEOSCC.org Website launched September 2011;
- Vibrant Northeast Ohio newsletter launched January 2012;
- Social Media presence launched January 2012;
- Young Leader Events first of five rounds completed April 2012; and
- 12 Counties, 12 Months program of Governing Board meetings begun June 2012.

Additionally, in order to gauge the level of understanding of and support for "sustainability," the first of three regional public opinion surveys was conducted in April 2012. These surveys are prepared and administered by the communications consultant and will be used by the Consortium to measure the public's overall knowledge base and support for sustainability.

Future engagement activities and efforts spelled out in the community engagement plan include small and large group meetings, stakeholder meetings, online interactions and surveys, workshops, and subregional and regional convenings. All will build on the "network of networks" that can be tapped into via Consortium members, partner agencies, advocacy groups, educational institutions, professional organizations, and engaged citizens.

## Content/Information Management

The regional planning consultant will work with the PMO Staff to determine the most appropriate method of storing, refining, and sharing large amounts of data. Communications relating to this data will be managed with and between the PMO, Board, teams, and other consultants utilizing appropriate media such as memos, conference calls, and Glasscubes. Additionally, the consultant will:

- Utilize the database/GIS report developed for the Consortium by the Center for Community Solutions to determine a strategy and cost to acquire or develop needed data; and
- Work closely with PMO Staff to develop a strategy for short-, medium-, and long-term data/GIS standardization, acquisition, maintenance, and distribution.

## Policy & Systems Analysis

The regional planning consultant will work with the PMO Staff to identify policies and practices that are impediments to achieving the preferred regional vision. This will be coalesced into the Framework for the Future. The consultant will likewise work with the PMO Staff to identify supportive actions that should be left in place or strengthened in order to achieve the regional vision.

## Consortium Administration

The PMO will continue to manage the HUD grant, completing all necessary compliance work, including the logic model and semi-annual reporting. It will contract with vendors and consultants necessary to develop the vision and products for the effort. It will continue to work to effectively manage staff and leveraged match resources, and to facilitate communication between itself and the Governing Board.

The regional planning consultant will provide overall increased operational capacity for the Consortium. It will work in tandem with the PMO to develop products through the enabling processes. The consultant will also:

- Develop its own coordinated work plan and schedule in support of the Consortium Scope of Work that provides sufficient detail to guide, track, measure, and report on its

progress, and that of the entire project, to the PMO, fiscal agent, and Consortium Governing Board;

- In collaboration with the PMO, develop a Leveraged Match Resource Allocation Plan covering product and enabling teams operational design, an inventory of available resources (skills, time, availability, subject matter expertise, interests), and task assignments and management that is supportive of the needs of the Consortium in achieving the vision and developing its Vibrant NEO Core Tools, Policies & Pilots list;
- Furnish all financial reporting and documentation as needed and required to support the PMO and fiscal agent for audit and compliance purposes; and
- Develop evaluation metrics for the project**.**

## NEOSCC Products & Processes Summary Table

A summary table of the Consortium's core products and enabling processes follows (Table 1). Additional deliverables may be identified through the iterative engagement and visioning process.

| NEOSCC PRODUCTS & PROCESSES SUMMARY | CONSORTIUM & REGIONAL NETWORK DEVELOPMENT | CONTENT/INFORMATION MANAGEMENT | POLICY & SYSTEMS ANALYSIS | CONSORTIUM ADMINISTRATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***VIBRANT NEO 2040: A VISION & FRAMEWORK FOR OUR FUTURE***<br><br>_____<br><br>DELIVERABLES:<br><br>• Regional civic engagement platform ("network-of-networks")<br>• *Vibrant NEO 2040: A Vision & Framework for Our Future*<br>• Base case mapping<br>• Alternative scenarios mapping<br>• Alternative scenarios report<br>• Leveraged Match Resource Allocation Plan<br>• Vibrant NEO Core Tools, Policies & Pilots list<br><br>COMPLIANCE DELIVERABLES:<br><br>• Program evaluation metrics<br>• Semi-annual reporting<br>• Logic model<br>• Annual audit | • Develop and iterate the **Conditions & Trends Platform**<br>• Develop and execute **communications strategy**<br>• Develop and execute **community engagement plan** and process<br>• Using Conditions & Trends Platform findings develop **"business as usual" base case scenario**<br>• Identify and evaluate **alternative regional future scenarios** through enabled civic engagement<br>• Identify **preferred Regional Vision** | • Refine and improve **data and findings** in Conditions & Trends Platform<br>• Develop **mapping series** to support scenarios planning<br>• Using Conditions & Trends Platform and engagement efforts develop **preliminary list of tools** to be developed | • Assess **policy implications** of Conditions & Trends Platform and dashboard findings<br>• Identify **systemic impediments** and levers to "move the needle"<br>• Develop **preliminary list of policy recommendations** to advance during and post grant<br>• Develop **strategic policy plan element** for the Framework for Our Future | • Contract with **consultants** to lead or assist with developing: communications strategy; Conditions & Trends Platform; regional community engagement plan; Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice; and regional vision planning, inclusive of scenarios planning, *Vibrant NEO 2040: A Vision & Framework for Our Future*,<br>• Strategically deploy **program management office (PMO) resources** across processes and products<br>• Facilitate **communication** between PMO and Governing Board<br>• Effectively manage consortium **leveraged match resources** |

| NEOSCC PRODUCTS & PROCESSES SUMMARY | CONSORTIUM & REGIONAL NETWORK DEVELOPMENT | CONTENT/INFORMATION MANAGEMENT | POLICY & SYSTEMS ANALYSIS | CONSORTIUM ADMINISTRATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **VIBRANT NEO DASHBOARD**<br><br>———————<br><br>DELIVERABLES:<br><br>• Conditions & Trends Platform<br>• Vibrant NEO Dashboard | • Iterate the **Conditions & Trends Platform**<br>• Iterate **communications strategy**<br>• Iterate **community engagement plan** and process<br>• Develop and test the **Vibrant NEO Dashboard**: address case for change, indicators, bright spots, etc. | • Develop **protocols** to maintain, coordinate, and improve dashboard components, data sets and maps post grant | • Identify **systemic impediments** and levers to "move the needle" | • Contract with **consultants** to lead or assist with developing Vibrant NEO Dashboard |
| **TOOL KIT & PRACTICES**<br><br>———————<br><br>DELIVERABLES:<br><br>• Specific tools and practices identified through Vibrant NEO Core Tools, Policies & Pilots list<br>• 12-County zoning map<br>• 12-County land use map<br>• Inventory of regional Best Practices<br>• Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice<br>• Typologies manual for current and future land uses and conditions/what it looks like and necessary components | • Engagement for **Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice**<br>• Using Vibrant NEO Core Tools, Policies & Pilots list, test and finalize through engagement efforts necessary **tools** and **practices** to support the Regional Vision<br>• Assemble **best/promising practices** and **case studies**<br>• Identify **replicable templates** | • Develop and maintain searchable, open-source **inventory** of tools<br>• Build out **data sets** as needed<br>• Develop, or contract for development, identified **core tools**<br>• Develop **protocols** to maintain, coordinate, and improve tools post grant | • Identify **impediments** to use of best practices<br>• Recommend **supportive measures** to accelerate adoption and improvement of tools<br>• Work with members to develop agreements to **maintain and expand** open-source inventory of tools post grant | • Working with consultants, strategically deploy **PMO resources** to develop tool kit<br>• Effectively manage consortium **leveraged match resources** |

| NEOSCC PRODUCTS & PROCESSES SUMMARY | CONSORTIUM & REGIONAL NETWORK DEVELOPMENT | CONTENT/INFORMATION MANAGEMENT | POLICY & SYSTEMS ANALYSIS | CONSORTIUM ADMINISTRATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS & SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS**<br>_____<br>DELIVERABLES:<br>• Regional policy report<br>• Policy "white papers" on indicator areas (land use/zoning; housing, transportation; environmental; economic development) | • Using Vibrant NEO Core Tools, Policies & Pilots list, test and finalize through engagement efforts necessary **policies and supportive actions** to advance the Regional Vision | • Develop a searchable **inventory** of policy recommendations and supportive measures<br>• Develop **protocols** to maintain and improve policy inventory post grant | • Write, or contract for writing, identified **core model policies and supportive actions** to implement Regional Vision<br>• Analyze the **NEO regional economy**<br>• Define **competitive job centers and corridors**<br>• Prepare regional policy report<br>• Work with members to develop agreements to **maintain and expand** inventory of policy recommendations and supportive measures post grant | • With consultants, strategically deploy **PMO resources** to develop policy recommendations and supportive measures<br>• Effectively manage consortium **leveraged match resources** |
| **PILOT PROJECTS**<br>_____<br>DELIVERABLES:<br>• List of regional pilot projects supportive of NEOSCC goals<br>• Report on implementation of pilots | • Using Vibrant NEO Core Tools, Policies & Pilots list, test and finalize through engagement efforts necessary **pilots** to demonstrate preferred regional vision<br>• **Celebrate** pilots | • Develop **templates and procedures** for selection<br>• Develop **evaluation protocols**<br>• Data on **results and lessons learned**<br>• Develop **protocols** to maintain and improve pilots post grant | • Identify **impediments** to use of the tools and policies prototyped and piloted<br>• Recommend **supportive measures** to improve efficacy<br>• Identify and prototype **training strategies**<br>• Work with members to develop agreements to **maintain and expand** pilots post grant | • With consultants, strategically deploy **PMO resources** to develop prototypes and pilot projects<br>• Effectively manage consortium **leveraged match resources** |