

Vibrant NEO 2040 – Vision Session Q&A Transcript
Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium

Lake Erie College (Painesville, OH)
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Panel: Grace Gallucci, Executive Director NOACA (GG)
Chris Horne, Planner, Sasaki (CH)
Jeff Anderle, Deputy Director of Communications, NEOSCC (JA)

Question/Comment: I have never heard of this initiative. How are the meetings advertised?

A: The Plain Dealer and other radio stations. Actually the meetings are advertised.

Question/Comment: inaudible

G.G: Let's talk about what the project means. There is really two components. One component is data driven and factual. There is also public engagement and involvement. You are absolutely right that 500 people is not statistically significant nor is it meant to be. That is the public engagement side. Let me say that the 500 people that you are referring to is only the first series of meetings. Over the course of the project so far, I think that the number of people we have reached is 10,000. Even that number, we are not representing at all that that is statistically significant. There is however, statistically significant surveys that we have undertaken as part of this project. This is more about engagement and an opportunity for us to get more feedback.

Question/Comment: Ok, saw the presentation. Is it similar to many that I have seen before? You have this rough draft that you have created for 2040. But now you need people to implement it like RTA or County officials. What are the odds of the implementation for these programs over the next 10 years?

G.G: I can say that the beauty of this plan is that it cannot be imposed. It will take acts of local governments, it will take acts of the people. It will takes acts and the support of elected officials. That being said, the attempt to take data that is relevant as well as public engagement and outreach is trying to develop as best as possible the recommendations that are realistic and that would be implemented. So I say that the odds are pretty good that some of these things will be implemented. Now we have not come up with all of the recommendations yet. Clearly some of the things we are hearing will help us define that. But I think that there is enough interest throughout the region in wanting to make sure that the region is successful that there will be some recommendations that are implemented. These will be at the grassroots level. People through elected officials.

C.H: Implementation and recommendations are one part of this. It is also a toolbox. At the end of this process there will be an extensive list of resources that are going to be out there. These will be useful to different people in different ways. Maybe for some people it won't be useful at all. When we have done these in other regions, two years later people will call and ask for some of the maps or data we developed during the process. These are little things but when you add them up they become a big value.

Question/Comment: So that everyone knows before NEOSCC took one dollar this is what they said this (from the grant application) "historic patterns of development have not led to equal distribution of community assets and access to jobs, education, services, open spaces, transit and municipal programs, this has create large disparities in health, income and access to education. Our regional planning effort will identify how to best deploy resources to address this historic inequities in targeted communities." That is what they said. Spreading the wealth. Make no mistake about it. There are huge flaws and challenges with the process and the data and methodology. I have asked and continue to ask, where and when we can get that chance to challenge the data with the amount of effort and time that is equivalent to the impact that this is going to have on Northeast Ohio. We should have the opportunity to challenge everything that is in study. The other comment to my question. One thousand people signed petitions opposing this. I see that nowhere in there. We have asked repeatedly to provide real input. We have even provided our own forum hoping that it would stimulate real visibility on this. I have seen the presentation you have made before regarding strategies and what you strategies are to achieve more funding through businesses. We have allowed this conversation to go from individual private communities making decisions to a regional conversation. The question is not whether we should be talking regionally, should we think regionally. Is it better to think regionally or constitutionally? We have constitutional representatives in forms of government in townships and counties so on and so forth that represent us. So the question I have for you is, Why do you do you want to do this regionally because it impacts us individually, my individual freedoms, my individual liberties. Geauga County can make choices. The regional plan will impact my individual freedoms. Why would I want that?

C.H: One correction and it might sound like mincing words but it is not a plan. That is really important. What I would say is that there are a lot of issues that are local issues. For example, if you wanted to make a street more walkable, how would you do that? You have some information on that which a local community might find useful or might not. That is there prerogative. There is a whole set of issues that do not make sense to address regionally. There are some things that are very hard for a single community to be able to do. If you are talking about a transit system. In many instances, that transit system will cross multiple jurisdictions. You need to have collaboration among many communities to make that happen. I think about the Towpath Trail where they connected open space and bike trails up to Cuyahoga Valley National Park. In order to pull something like this off you have to work with multiple jurisdictions. There is a subset of issues that operate regionally like commuting, job sheds. People are moving around this region. Can you coordinate within that area where that dynamic plays itself out.

G.G: The other aspect is that it is not a regional plan. Think about it like that it is always better to have more information when making decisions. It is better to know the context of your surroundings when making decisions.

Question/Comment: How many elected officials have you talked to when making this plan. Not appointed officials but elected officials.

A: I don't have the exact number. But I can say the 2436 that Jeff mentioned earlier, we have sent letters to them explaining what we are doing and inviting them to sessions. A number of them have attended:

Question/Comment: How many.

A:I don't have the number.

Question/Comment: This is the first meeting like this I have attended. I understand that Chris, you are a planner in South Euclid. I would like to know who the other two people are. I would also like to know who you are responsible to and who pays your salaries.

A:Chris is with Sasaki who has been engaged by NEOSCC to work on the plan. That is Jeff Anderle. He is the Deputy Director of Communications and Enjoyment and he works directly for NEOSCC. I happen to be the Chairwoman of NEOSCC this year. That is not a paid position but is due to the fact that I sit on the board. I am the Executive Director of NOACA which is one of the four Metropolitan Planning Organization that applied for the grant and received it. The first year out chair was an elected official. The second year it was the head of another MPO now me.

Question/Comment: Who are you responsible to or are you just doing this on your own and decide what you are going to do.

G.G: NEOSCC is a non-profit organization to that extent it is accountable to its board. So it is not a governmental agency. The members of its board are members of other governmental entities and others are private sector. NEOSCC being a 501 c 3 is not government so it cannot implement or impose any of these things we are talking about.

Question/Comment: Thank you for having these meetings. I believe in transparency. I live in Ashtabula County and I know there was a meeting as Spire. I appreciate that you had that meeting. I am glad I was able to attend. Spire is a very new place and is handicapped accessible. This is the first time I have ever been at Morley Music Hall. Granted it was built in another era it is not handicapped accessible. I had to stand out front and look at the steps and there was not handicapped access for me. Not a good thing if you are visioning of the new 2040 that you could not vision someone like me attending a meeting. I appreciate coming to these meetings and hope that you continue to hold them. As I said transparency is very important so that everyone know what is going on.

G.G: Thank you for your comments and we should be assuring that facilities are accessible. I can tell you that it is a priority that it is on our list.

J.A: There was a miscommunication. It is my fault that this was overlooked. We apologize.

Question/Comment: I have mostly comments but I will save my questions to the end. I thought it was really interesting as we were going through the questions. There were polling questions but it seems to me you were expecting different answers. Don't shake your head, yes you did. It was very disjointed when there was a question and answer and very clearly for most of those questions, the majority of the people were against what you are trying to do. Here is a question, here is an answer, and we don't like it so the next slide is how we get there. I just wanted to say that I really do hope that you guys are taking into account that there are many people who are opposed to this. As a matter of fact if most people knew about this, your results and your research would probably be very different from the way they are now.

So my second question is that you guys are planning on giving the results of our polling questions to our elected officials. I don't care if the elected officials in Cuyahoga County get my opinion. I care that the elected officials in Lake County know what my opinion is. I don't think that the Lake County officials should care what someone in Medina thinks. So my questions is that when you publish the results are you giving them results for their constituents only or are you giving them the regional results for the entire process throughout the entire 12 counties.

Chris you mentioned collaboration. I don't want to speak for everyone else but collaboration if it is done by the Counties on their own. Like if Lake and Geauga County decided to collaborate on their own, I have no problem with that. I think it is a great idea. If they do it on their own, there is nothing wrong with that. What I do have a problem with is that an organization who brings in consultants from well outside the area. The consultants who are doing the same research around the country and somehow coming up with very similar results. If the local counties want to work together that is fine. We do not need an umbrella organization planning it ahead of time, plotting and planning, getting money from the Federal government. There is a difference between collaboration and regionalism.

If we don't get your question, please submit them on index cards. I would like to invite anyone that if you submit a question on an index card to email me at neocitizensforum@yahoo.com. Let me know what your question was and let me know if they responded. If they did I would like to know their answer.

In the video at the you showed at the beginning there were clips of people sitting at the tables filling out the maps. Which workshops were those from?

J.A: Some were from Akron, some were from Lorain.

C.H: It was the first series.

Question/Comment: I was noticing on the map there was no Lake Erie. Just noticing that the map look different.

G.G: In answer to your first question, were we expecting different answers? I can say absolutely not. Particularly, we open and structure the questions to get open answers. I can tell you particularly for this night, we did receive the emails that identified a prep session for this evening. So that citizens could come and give them a whole list of things to do at this meeting. We did expect your answers since you told us in advance that you were attending. Your objective was to put that out there. So that's terrific.

Question/Comment: I have a feeling if people did not show up here based on or as a result of the emails that we sent out. You are marketing what you are doing. We are trying to get people here. You guys do use group manipulation tactics. So what the list of things to do were to counter those manipulation tactics. We did not send a list of questions or a how you need to answer.

C.H: The question about data aggregation. We provide both at the regional and event level. So we would provide the results as the Painesville polling results as well as the regional. The idea about collaboration happening on its own is fine. There are communities and counties that want to collaborate and needs tools to do it. It is not like we are coming in and saying you and you have to work together. Those communities that want to collaborate are self-selected so here are the tools to make that happen.

This effort, as far as I know, has dedicated an unprecedented amount of resources to reaching out to the public to promoting event to putting advertisements out there. We created an entire piece of software to get people to participate. This actually goes well beyond what is usually done. We did conduct statistically valid surveys. Those results very closely match the results we have to the composite regional results. Show me the planning process anywhere else in the world that is fully statistically representative of that community. It is like voting. Voting is not statically valid. Voting is who takes the initiative to vote.

Question/Comment: This really sounds to me like another big brother project like you don't think that people in the communities are smart enough to take care of their own business. I move to Lake County 20 years ago because that is where I wanted to live. I don't want to help Cleveland. I think it is great that all of these other communities want to fix their roads. I want my tax dollars to stay where I live. You folks get into these think tanks and think what our organization can do to make some money. I heard Chris that you are from Mass. Why do you care what we are doing in Northeast Ohio? To me this just sounds like another of our current administration's philosophy of take from those who have to give to those who have not.

C.H: I can tell you why I care. I grew up in Philadelphia and I can see the devastation over time.

GG: Who pays for what? This is not a big brother organization, I already said that it is a non-profit. It is not government. When it comes to tax dollars particularly when it comes to infrastructure. Is that your gas tax dollars are collected locally but they are given to the State in Columbus and given to the Federal government in Washington. How the dollars are dispersed is not based on who paid them into them but how the region. How they define that is based on the census. Because things like roads don't end at one jurisdiction, the highway systems and road systems really have to work together. This organization would not supersede or tell a local government what to do at all.

Question/Comment: You said that you are not a government organization but you do get grant money from HUD, the Department of Transportation and the EPA. How do you extrapolate to 2040 when there are so many unforeseen variable that you cannot see. Also, I don't remember one of these meetings being in Geauga County.

G.G: We did not have a meeting in Geauga County because we were specifically asked by the County Commissioner not to have meetings in Geauga.

Question/Comment: I wonder why probably because you would get the negative response.

G.G: No, they chose not to join this effort. Geauga County is not part of this effort. They are not.

G.G: Geauga County did not sign up. They are not one of the Counties that are part of the process.

Question/Comment: Then why is it part of the region.

G.G: Because it is included in the MPO areas.

C.H: We use Scenario Planning precisely because the future is uncertain. If we knew the future we would not have to do Scenario Planning. We are laying out a range of outcomes that are explicitly tied to whatever input assumptions that you want to change.

Question/Comment: I am really concerned about the process as something that could get in the way take the opportunity to solve real problems. I realize that coming into this process, the word final up there scares me. We are talking about 2040 planning. Hopefully the take home message and the way I am feeling, the presentation is going to talk about values about participation opportunities about collaboration. We have a long way to get there. There is a lot of mistrust, a lot of assumptions built into the questions. I find it very hard to believe that people in this room are opposed to environmental conservation but I can understand in the context presented why the questions would come out that way. Similarly with the other questions. I have participated in other process including the Sustainable Cleveland model. While it is not perfect it is a lot more focusing on the problems, let's talk about the value we share and let's come up with creative ideas. Rather than looking at binaries or zero sum choices that inevitably come out. I applaud you for trying. I believe we need to have regional collaboration. There is a real mix here. I heard tools for collaboration. I would urge you to slow down the process and really look at the democracy as a value. You have people here that want to take control and participate in creating our future where we can make that happen. This type of process is polarizing if it is not handled right. I applaud you for doing this.

G.G: It has been three years since all of this activity has been going on. It would be really difficult for an individual to be assured that they have participated in the entire process. It is not perfect. The intents are good to try and get the most people involved and the most input.

Question/Comment: As I was preparing for the meeting tonight, this is my first meeting. I was reading in your literature that there are 33 organizations from 12 counties. I understand from tonight that perhaps you are not represented from one of those counties. Correct?

G.G: There are counties as County organizations that chose not to participate as organizations. These include Geauga, Lake, Wayne, Medina and Portage. Those are county organizations. The geography is still there. What made us choose those 12 counties are the Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Councils of Governments? The four MPO's were the grantees. We applied for that to try and look at the issues within the region that those organizations are part of. That is how those 12 counties were selected. I will say that even the Federal Government said that was a very ambitious agenda. Certainly one of the benefits from this process is that I can extract some of the data and look at it just for my five counties.

Question/Comment: The list of 33 organizations and I took the time to see where exactly they reside. There are not any of those organizations that reside in the five counties you mentioned. I was just curious about that. I know that you have MPO's. At some point it would be important to explain what you mean by statistically valid. Maybe other people who have attended meetings would have a better understanding of the presentation. I am sure you are consolidating a lot of information into a little bit of time. For me it raises more questions, other than trying to ask a few clarification questions, you show these charts and trends and say they are based on objective data. It would be good if you have a place where I could go and look at the data that you put together. And how you used that data to generate trends. Also what kind of assumptions are associated with those. Any model has to have underlying assumptions. Is your model a static one where you are making these assumptions? Based on those assumptions that nothing is going to change based on policy changes that are being implemented.

C.H: The data will be made available. A lot of it is data that is derived from open sources like the census. There is a couple different models - a land use model that basically tells you. It is called Envision Tomorrow. It is open source and resides at the University of Utah. The fiscal model is an expanded is an expanded version of the Federal FIT Tool. FIT stands for Fiscal Impact tool that the Federal Reserve Bank created. There are also several isolated models to measure impacts in different areas (i.e. traffic modelling).

Question/Comment: The data will be on the website along with the assumptions that you used?

G.G: Yes it will be available. Because we now own the modelling software, we can engage the public in different kinds of processes to look at one county or five counties. We can do this because we already have the software and data available. It would have cost my agency about half a million dollars. I am happy to have these tools for this and other processes.

Question/Comment: How have those models been validated?

G.G: I can tell you the assumptions that were done with the models were completed by the consultants and the MPO's. So all four of the MPO's participated in the analysis and the development.

C.H: The models are pre-existing and based on a level of validation. Within one year, would not have the time to create a land use model that could be validated. We are using tools that already exist. Beyond that we have reached out to regional experts to validate different subject areas that are unique to this region.

Question/Comment: I would reiterate, I do appreciate you coming. It is still a difficult format. There is disconnect still. It is difficult when it is advertised to get your input and questions. This is hard when you go so quickly through the material and the questions. I know that you may be irritated with us but it is a difficult format to not ask questions but that is why you are asked to come. I am appalled always when demographics come up and why does my voice get voted by what I am. Why is that being collected? I know that you say that it can't be imposed and different groups are not participating but everyone that I speak with says that there will be regulations as a result of this. Some of the things that I hear really put fear in me. When you said, do I support an expansion of housing, small housing. That is really saying can we come to change your zoning so that it is smaller lots or multiple housing units. You did not say it that way but that is changing our zoning. Another one is that you said there would be barriers for geographic location for private sector. It kind of scares me that a company will not be allowed out there. The barriers sound scary. The riparian setbacks, these counties have a lot of private ownership of that land. Do you foresee that all waterfront will be publically owned?

G.G: Thank you for coming. We think it is important that people attend whether or not they agree or disagree with the process or the outcomes. We truly want participation so that is terrific. In terms of the value of this process, for us it is to bring people to the table. We want to engage more people on government and when you as citizens participate you have more control. This is a transparent process. In terms of your other question. It is not our intent to interfere with private property rights or zoning or any of those things that local government is responsible for. It is simply to provide information and recommendations that what the process has determined could change things for the better.

J.A: Regarding demographics, we can say these are the types of demographics that attended our meetings. This enables us to describe where attendance are came from.

Question/Comment: One of your earlier slides mentioned the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing. In August, the HUD Secretary said he was going to bring fair housing laws into a new era by going into every single census tract to analyze racial diversity to ensure it meets the standards he sets. Given that your funding is from HUD, what is your relationship with HUD regarding the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing?

G.G: The Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing (AI) has to be done by recipients of certain HUD funding. In your case, Geauga County has to do that analysis anyways since it takes dollars from HUD. In regards to this process, the idea was to do just one single analysis for the 12 counties. That analysis then could be used by those who do not want to spend the money on their own study. It would also provide context for the rest of the region.

C.H: The AI is much more specific than people think. Historically certain races were denied mortgages or financing.

Question/Comment: The HUD Secretary was saying regardless of history, he was going to make sure every single census tract had the correct ratio.

GG: We cannot speak specifically to what the Secretary said.

Question/Comment: The AI was forced on us in Geauga County.

G.G: Again, it is geography and population. Those that have said they are not participating are the county administrations themselves.

Question/Comment: Cleveland back in the 50's was the fifth largest city in the nation. I don't believe there is anyone in this room that does not want to preserve the environment and have a natural capability in our region that is not going to be available to future generations. With all of the planning that you are doing here. I think you would have more bang for the buck to figure out why Cleveland had a million residents and today has 400,000. What from a forensics standpoint were the policies that they did wrong that led to the city becoming uncompetitive to its outer lying districts. Solving that would be far more useful and result in perhaps what you want. To be market competitive find out what you did wrong and fix it. That is where the bang for the buck is not some governmental regulation that ultimately many of us our concerned about. Even though you say you are a 501c3 who knows what happens in the future. Figuring out what went wrong.

C.H: What we show is an aspirational outcome. We are not naive about what it is going to take to get there. Schools, crime, we are not naive about them. Those are the kind of things that we are spending our time looking at. We are not saying this is magic. We know that there are major reasons why certain neighborhoods are not attractive.

G.G: That is part of the process even if it has not been articulated that well. Your point is very well taken and that is one of the reasons we are here tonight. It is important to note that this is not just Cleveland. It is Cleveland, Akron, Canton and Youngstown. What they have in common is that they have been hollowed out and there are many reasons why. We are hoping that this helps identify the reasons.

We have lost population but increased our footprint which has cost us more. We do need to understand why and how.

For example, the total cost of roads in a region, you get a certain amount of road funding from the Federal government based on population. In our region, there were dollars that came in through the region for certain population based that perhaps was spent in areas that did not have the population. It is not suggesting by any means that you should not be able to move wherever you want to move. There are policies in place that encourage that and vice versa too.

Question/Comment: What would be great in your presentation is if you have the competitiveness of legacy cities versus outlying areas.

G.G: That is not in the scope of this effort but we are looking at trying to identify it. We want everyone to be winners. In other regions have spread out but have also added population which helps pay for it.

Question/Comment: Fifty years ago, the best place to get a job as a teacher was in the City of Cleveland. Now it is the worst place to get a job. People are moving out of the cities into the suburbs because they are looking for a better place for their kids to get an education.

G.G: I do know that Mayor Jackson recognizes that and is putting a tremendous amount into it.

Question/Comment: Why were the other neighboring counties not included?

A: They were not included due to the size of the county's population.

Question/Comment: Is there going to be a recommendation for the four planning agencies to continue coordination after this study?

A: Relative to the participation. If Cleveland, Akron or Canton succeeds the region benefits. If Geauga County, Ashtabula County succeeds, the region benefits. They are inter-related. We are now looking at what will happen to the organization now that the grant funding has gone away. What could we still do and how can the MPO's coordinate continue. Our intent is to keep it moving with private dollars either with memberships or philanthropy. With MPO's, the leaders agree that this process has been terrific for collaboration. What you won't see is the four organization overlapping in some government way. It is about collaboration.

Question/Comment: You fix the schools you fix the family and lower taxes.

Question/Comment: I wanted to say a couple of things. Welcome to urban sprawl. I call it urban flight. My background is in economics. It is not rocket science. It is the invisible hand that Adam Smith wrote about years ago. The marketplace works, if you let the marketplace do its thing. It will take care of all of these things that you are trying to re-engineer. One of the big problems is 2 and half to three decades of educating everyone into the same box and no skilled labor anymore. I don't see anything here about education. This is the number one reason why the region has gone down economically. As a business man in Cleveland for 30 some years, I watched that decimation of the business community. I worked with ad agencies exclusively now we don't work with ad agencies at all.

Let's start with education. It not hear at all. Also, why aren't we also talking about the free market place? It will accomplish everything we want including freedom. We have townships, we have cities,

and we have villages. Allow those folks to live in those types of communities. Some cost more some cost less but we all get to choose where we want to live.

C.H. Education. When we put together the draft list of objectives, we did not want to overreach. We looked at land use, transportation, the environment and fiscal impact as well as other initiatives could. Perhaps we should put there anyways. Every major western economist, including Adam Smith, has acknowledge that capitalism is a balance between government and the free market. Things like the Health line which are a good example of the balance.

Question/Comment: I would not talk about the Health line because I work downtown. I love going down Euclid Avenue now since no one is there. When I saw your analysis of the positive economic impact, I had to laugh because it put all of these business out of business. It has not accomplished anything that it was trying to do. What you are suggesting is using zoning and government regulations and incentives?

G.G: Could that be one of the recommendations sure. One of the other recommendations could be not subsidizing development. So there is different things.

Question/Comment: That is my analysis to see where we came from and to see where we need to go. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that an unfriendly business environment started to occur in the 1960's. The easiest maxim in economics is that money flows where it can do the most good. Well it can't do the most good in Cleveland Ohio.

G.G: (Described business education and background) I don't think that a pure market economy is possible. Most textbooks will tell you it does not exists only in concept.

Question/Comment: It was called the Industrial Revolution. That is where you had a lack of intervention. What happened it was the largest revolution in the history of mankind. You can take all the degrees you want and all the Fortune 500 companies you want. Econometric modelling you can change one small item and it will change the outcome.

G.G: This is why Scenario Planning is so great.

Question/Comment: Are you aware that there was another rail study done 15 years ago and cost of re-pping and re-casting for reuse.

Question/Comment: I just want to give you an opportunity to clarify something you said earlier. I am hoping it is not what you meant. It was when we were talking earlier about the email that I send out and you referred to them as "my people". I think people might be offended by that. I am concerned citizens and met with other concerned citizens to spread the word. Yes we did use email to communicate. It appeared that you were trying to marginalize anyone that was here as a result of that email. Their opinions must not matter since they are just following the herd or whatever. I can tell you that for the most part, I don't know who is hear because of the email. I don't know a lot of the people here. I guess what I am going to finish saying. You are getting the word out in your own way in a top down matter. We are trying to get the word out in a grass roots matter without money. How is it ok for you to get the word out in a top down matter but not ok for me and some other people to get the word out bottom up.

G.G: First of all you did misinterpret what I said. I would not have mentioned it at all if you had not suggested that the presenter did not expect the outcomes we go this evening. We knew full well that there would be people here with different opinions because we received the email. I believe after my comments that I said that it was terrific that you all came.

Question/Comment: You did not offer a presentation for those who have a different opinion. It is just totally dismissing our opinions.

G.G: If we did not care about your opinions, we would not be having these public forums. We do this because we truly care. If you would like to submit recommendations to us please do.

Question/Comment: I did not receive the emails. The first time it came to my attention was a robocall.

J.A: We did robocalling and the numbers come from phone databanks