

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

Youngstown State University Williamson Conference Center (Youngstown, OH)  
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Panel: Hunter Morrison, Executive Director NEOSCC (HM)  
John Getchey, Executive Director, Eastgate Regional Council of Governments (JG)  
William D'Avignon, Community Development Director, City of Youngstown (BD)  
Jeff Anderle, Deputy Director of Communications, NEOSCC (JA)

Question/Comment: What can people do to stop the well documented threat as seen in other parts of the country of shale gas fracking? Ohio is constitutionally a home rule state but we have this exemption to this one industry the oil and gas industry and this shown everywhere else in the county. This is going to be a threat to many of the concerns that people have.

H.M: I don't have an answer to that question but we had the same question this morning. We did not address the shale and gas oil industry directly because of a variety of reasons. Economically, perspective the jury is still out about the impact and as you just stated the current state law says that local governments over the position of those enterprises. I think what were suggestion here is that there is a strong interest throughout northeast Ohio preserving clean land, air, and water. We didn't get into this but the second priority that came out is good jobs that are accessible. Finding that balance between the economic development and the opportunities that are identified and the environmental risk that is identified and challenges that we face. At this stage were reporting back to you what we're seeing across the region. It's been pretty consistent. We made it very clear.

Question/Comment: Citizens of Youngstown are going to be able to make a statement on Election Day because they put on a charter amendment to say we have local control and we have the right to clean air, water, and soil. So we will see what happens, other place like Broadview Heights and Mansfield have already passed that. It's going to be interesting to see how this things turn out.

H.M: I think we're trying to be accurate and objective in what we're hearing and seeing.

Question/Comment: I wanted your opinion about the Youngstown 2010 and how do you asset the success and failures? The plan was created 10 years before 2010 and your vision that's 25 years in to the future.

H.M: These plans and frameworks take a long time and several business cycles to happen. I can comment on 2010 but I think Bill can. I will comment on the Cleveland Civic plan. I can take you to Cleveland and walk with the plan book through all the projects that were done. Three mayors later, we brought in a planner that was well known and complete many projects throughout the county and we asked him, what's the secret, Cleveland is in default. He explained that the secret is a civil vision. A civil vision is a consistence community plan and the will to carry it out. The reason plans lay on the shelf because they miss the prefix or suffix. There is no consequence and or will. Their needs to be both and

there are neighborhoods in Cleveland that has both. We were able to develop a consistance plan and that's why East 4th street is the hottest place in Cleveland as well as other areas. Part of the 2010 plan have been carried out, one of the key ideas was to connect downtown to the University. We put thirty-five million dollars into the project and the city put in a million and a half. By the time the project was open, there was at least thirty-five million dollars in other development. One of the things that were trying to do here is to break this big ideal over 12 counties, a region the size of Connecticut in actionable things we can do for today, tomorrow, and the future. Try to break those down and say these are the easy, the hard ones, and the really hard ones. We're going have to think these things through. That's why it's so important to listen to each other and to develop an understanding of the challenges we face and the opportunities we have going forward.

B.D: One of the main objectives of through the visioning process is to change the image and the quality of life in Youngstown. Ii think that we have been very successful changing the image of Youngstown. Through what's happen downtown and what happening in neighborhoods, and the last two administrations that has been focusing on eliminating blight, I think we're making some great progress.

Question/Comment: I was listen very carefully tonight to the presentation, early on it said it's up to us. Well that's actually what we didn't hear tonight. All these groups that they have only have about 25 voters. You're also representing to their satisfaction the whole Mahoning County, so thanks to the 25 people that are hear and thousands of people of Mahoning County who didn't come out. You have to listen to when they talk about the open space. Open space is a very big word, one of the maps they showed around the confined spaces that people will be allowed to live, and all have those little dots around them. Which mean they are high risk investment areas, that means they are going to further consolidate all utilizes just too small spaces for a lot of people. They also said the compact housing. What do you guys think about compact housing? That means that is where everyone is going to live. This open space will be controlled from anyone living on those and the utilities will only be in those confined spaces. Out in the rural areas they are going to let the roads and infrastructure break down because no one is going to be out there. You want transportation, from Warren to Youngstown we have transportation and 74 people average everyday goes from Warren to Youngstown on the bus. Zero of those people go to work. Going the other way from Youngstown to Warren average less than 7 people. They showing transportation going from Mahoning Valley to Akron. How many of you need to go to Akron, everyday? This new system doesn't accommodate travel.

J.A: Do you have a question at the end of this because there is a time restraint.

Question/Comment: Hello my name is Aaron and I am running for governor of Ohio next year. I was wondering do you have any more room on your board. Also do you have an office in Youngstown?

H.M: The answer to the second question is yes we have an office in Youngstown; it's at Eastgate Council of Governments. The board is composing of representatives of organizations that founded the group and in-kind contributions. We have a set of advisory group's caucuses and would appreciate you information and your interest. What we would like is a network of people concerned across the region.

Question/Comment: Is the Youngtown office on the website.

H.M: I don't know if the field office is on the website. We have a field office in Youngstown and Cleveland. Our main office is located in Akron.

J.G: There are four regional agencies, actually five agencies in this study. Eastgate Regional Council of Governments, if you're not familiar with, we do administer five major programs in Mahoning, Ashtabula, and Trumbull counties. These programs include transportation, environmental, Appalachian regional commission, economic development administration, and the state public works program. Our office is in the City Center building downtown on the 10th floor. You are welcome to stop by. Those four or five regional agencies in Youngstown, Canton, Akron, Cleveland and a development agency in the Akron area. We represent all 12 counties and elected officials of townships and cities. I'm trying to give you an ideal of how we represent all 12 counties.

Question/Comment: I was wondering who your biggest financial contributor for this project is.

H.M: This project is funded by a federal grant from the Housing and Urban Development, The Department of Transportation, and The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and also by a local coalition of foundations across the region called the Fund of Economic future. As I said before there is a very significant in-kind contribution from participating agencies, which is staff and meeting space.

Question/Comment: Can I and the group gain a better understanding of compact housing and what is involved and the pros and cons?

H.M: Compact Housing is housing like we have in many of our traditional cities. It can range from all the way up to apartments like you have in New York. What we modeled in this is the type of development that is compact that are with in the neighborhoods of Youngtown, Cleveland and the first suburb. They tend to be 5,6,7,8 units per acre. Houses that you can see your neighbor that have driven ways, sidewalks, and pretty ordinary stuff. There is a new product that has been coming out in the last 20 years, which are townhouse. They can be anywhere from two units four units to 16 to 20 units. They tend to be building close to the street with back courts. You see some small units almost like apartment buildings. That is what the market is calling for. I think you can also declare that project down the street with renovations as compact housing. From the market perspective compact housing is extremely hot. There is an emerging market in the county for compact housing and in Northeast Ohio. Their younger people that want choices on where they live and they don't want to live in the suburbs. That's the demand that we have been noticing in Cleveland and the demand is the same in downtown Youngstown. When we did the plan we had no idea that this was possible.

Question/Comment: What are the occupancy rates of downtown Youngstown Housing?

H.M: To my knowledge they are full. People want different choices then what they wanted 25 years ago. We work with home builder association particularly the one in Akron and what we hear from them is we would like to do more of this, but it's difficult to get permits. There is an emerging financial community

that understand the value of this and an emerging development community. It's more focus in Cleveland but I think it's more in other communities.

Question/Comment: The International Council of Local Environmental Issues initiative is a group that call themselves ICLEI and they focus on local governments for sustainability. There are member cities are Youngstown and Cleveland which is Northeast Ohio and the places were talking about. Their big activates for sustainability, are you guys integrated or involved with them?

H.M: This is the first time I have heard of them.

B.D: Where a member city, and we joined to do a climate action plan to look at greenhouse gas emissions by the City of Youngstown.

Question/Comment: So you guys didn't think about that and you guys had no clue.

B.D: It's really irrelevant to what we're doing.

Question/Comment: It's a sustainable initiative about the environmental issues

J.A: They focus on other sustainable issues; I am familiar with them as an organization.

Question/Comment: They focus on the environment, I think that pretty much include pretty much everything in our society.

J.A: None of our board members never brought it up at our board meetings.

Question/Comment: These vision sessions that are open to the public, when you have someone that maybe irrational or concerned, why won't would you not want to comfort them with more information about the details rather than laugh at them.

H.M: I don't think no one was laughing.

J.A: I think we are open to providing as much information as people request. We take every question and request seriously.

Question/Comment: I have a housing related question, in the course of my career I got to live in the people republic of Davis, CA and the people republic of Boulder, Co and both of those places have co-housing where there would be smaller individual spaces and then there would be share areas where everyone can have a big recreational area or dining room. Is there any place in Northeast Ohio trying that or considering that? I'm not sure how successful they are in those communities.

H.M: I have heard of some groups who come together and say we like to do this. But I'm not aware. Their some inter-generation housing in Cleveland, but that deals with generations and kids. The co-housing I'm not aware of any projects and if they are, they are very small.

Question/Comment: She mentioned something about compact housing and you said about 7 units per acre. All these people living in compact housing, how far do they have to walk or bike to the store, job?

There not going to be a train that is going to go to each of their house or how far will they have to go to the mall if there would be a mall. How far do people have to travel to leave their compact house? Do they have to walk, bike, or get into their garage, or go where people want to go.

H.M: People do that now.

Question/Comment: I know they do that now, but what about 2040?

H.M: I'm saying that every one of our communities qualify as compact housing. Were developed that way and often have services in walking distance and short drives and have the densities to support public transportation option.

J.A: Let's follow up with that because I want to get this last question in. This will be the last question.

Question/Comment: Are their co-working spaces are factored into this plan at all. A space where people will be working and sharing the same offices.

H.M: Were not getting down to the architectural details, but one of the things suggested is mixed use development. We turn to the ideal that office and retail have to be separated; it can be brought back close together. A lot of people like it that way. A lot of that depends on the local codes and local ordinance, that sort of development supports local retail because the density supports the market share.

Question/Comment: Would that usually be commercial, i don't know many that are public completely funded but I'm not 100%. We live in an environment in a world that driven by markets. The best a city can do is support the emerging stages of a market. That's what the tax credits downtown do, they help to push over the edge. But as a market takes off, you don't have to push anything off the edge. So what cities try to do is remove the barrier and try to get things to happen the entrepreneurs see. Some of the barriers are projecting the investment because we never did something like this.

J.A: Bill, John, and Hunter will be up for a couple of minutes. We do have to start to vacate the building.

H.M: Thank you guys for coming out, hope to see you again.