

**Vibrant NEO 2040**  
**Vision, Framework and Products**  
**January 1, 2014**



Over the course of the last year, the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC) engaged residents, elected officials, and experts throughout our 12-county region in a rigorous scenario planning process to identify the choices we can make now to help create a Northeast Ohio that is more vibrant, resilient, and sustainable in the future.

Based on the community engagement process, the overarching theme the Vibrant NEO 2040 Regional Vision seeks to pursue is:

**PROMOTE INVESTMENT IN NORTHEAST OHIO’S ESTABLISHED COMMUNITIES.**

The following were identified as the critical objectives to address this mission:

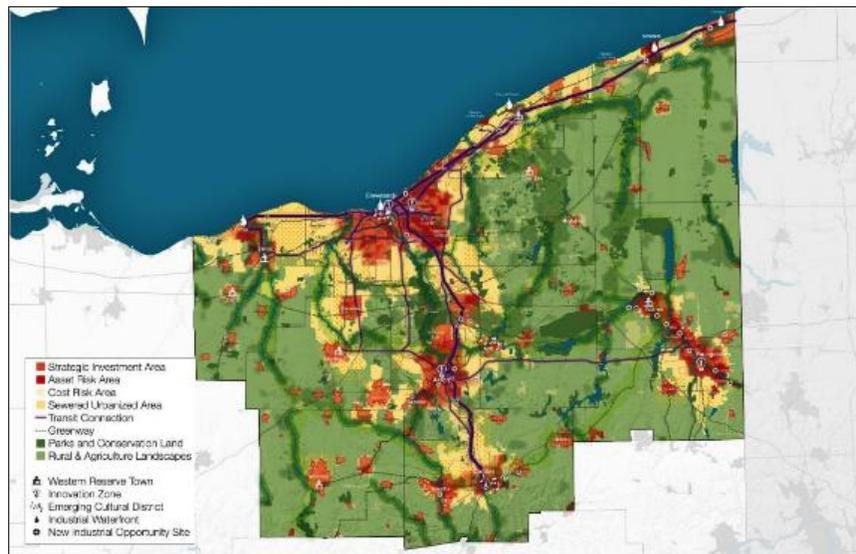
- Protect our soil, water, air, and ecologically sensitive areas
- Improve our regional fiscal health
- Develop our regional economy with accessible employment opportunities
- Enhance our regional transportation network
- Cultivate and celebrate our local assets and places of public value
- Expand our parks and open-space network
- Preserve and value our prime farmland as a regional economic asset.

**THEMES FOR THE VISION AND IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES**

NEOSCC and the Vibrant NEO 2040 team presented the objectives and potential recommendations during a series of public meetings during the month of October that built on two prior phases of large-scale public engagement. Utilizing the feedback received, four thematic areas and nine recommendations emerged as the foundation for the Vibrant NEO 2040 Vision and Framework.

Strengthen Established Communities	Increase Transportation Choice
Preserve and Protect Natural Resources	Promote Collaboration and Efficiency

**SUMMARY MAP: VIBRANT NEO 2040 PROPOSED REGIONAL VISION**



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The nine Vision NEO 2040 Recommendations, and their related Initiatives, are:

### **1. Focus new residential and commercial development on sites within established communities**

- *Initiative 1.1: Encourage infill and redevelopment through the use of tax credits and other direct and indirect public incentives.*
- *Initiative 1.2: Fix it first: continue to privilege projects that maintain the existing road network in a state of good repair, rather than building additional capacity.*
- *Initiative 1.3: Improve the ability of municipalities and townships to analyze the long-term impacts of new development and better manage their own development.*
- *Initiative 1.4: Continue development throughout the region in accordance with local zoning requirements and preferences, but prioritize public subsidies to projects within the region's established communities.*
- *Initiative 1.5: Require the users of new sewer extensions that serve previously unsewered areas to pay the full cost of service.*
- *Initiative 1.6: Consider instituting a land value tax to replace existing improvement-based property assessment and taxation methods.*

### **2. Develop a robust network of regional job centers connected by multimodal transportation corridors within and between counties**

- *Initiative 2.1: Strengthen regional job centers—and the corridors that connect them—by diversifying and intensifying land uses and investing in strategic local economic development within them.*
- *Initiative 2.2: Use transit oriented development (TOD) to create stronger, more accessible, regional job centers.*
- *Initiative 2.3: Implement a tiered approach to local parking requirements.*

### **3. Pursue the remediation, assembly, marketing, and redevelopment of abandoned properties at both the local and regional levels**

- *Initiative 3.1: Develop and maintain a regional vacant industrial and commercial properties database and criteria for determining the most appropriate successive use, whether for redevelopment, green infrastructure, food production, or parks, or natural areas.*
- *Initiative 3.2: Expedite permitting and remove barriers for adaptive reuse of abandoned buildings and empty lots.*
- *Initiative 3.3: Expand and coordinate existing land bank efforts to acquire, assemble, manage, and dispose of vacant properties throughout the region.*
- *Initiative 3.4: Identify, evaluate, and—where appropriate—pursue the reuse of vacant and abandoned industrial sites endowed with significant preexisting infrastructure that could provide unique opportunities for regional economic development. Advocate for a brownfield redevelopment fund and promote these sites through a large-scale marketing campaign.*

### **4. Encourage a higher frequency of mixed-use development and a range of diverse, affordable housing options**

- *Initiative 4.1: Include mixed-use designations and/or planned unit overlay districts in zoning codes throughout the region.*
- *Initiative 4.2: Include traditional small-lot, compact single-family and townhouse residential designations in zoning codes throughout the region.*
- *Initiative 4.3: Offer financial incentives to developers that incorporate affordable housing units into their projects and implement inclusionary zoning in markets with widespread affordability gaps.*
- *Initiative 4.4: Offer financial literacy and housing education programs for tenants and homeowners. Focus on areas in established communities where investments in housing are underway.*

### **5. Enhance and coordinate the region's rail and bus services**

- *Initiative 5.1: Invest in a regional network of bi-directional public transit connections between Northeast Ohio's major job centers.*
- *Initiative 5.2: Create a network of high-frequency express and local transit routes connecting the region's job centers. Prioritize infill development in the corridors served by these routes. In the short and medium terms, upgrade high-*

*performing existing bus routes and create new bus routes in designated corridors. In the long term, upgrade the highest-demand routes into commuter rail service or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).*

- *Initiative 5.3: Coordinate the region's transit systems for joint marketing, information technology, and fare media, including information regarding private transit resources such as university/health system shuttles, private bus services, airport transportation, etc.*
- *Initiative 5.4: Evaluate the condition of all existing rail trackage and rail crossings to determine what investments would be necessary to bring substandard infrastructure up to standard for freight and passenger service.*

## **6. Enhance walking and cycling as transportation options to increase regional mobility and improve public health**

- *Initiative 6.1: Expand the existing bicycle lane and trail system and connect it to regional transit hubs via on-and-off street facilities.*
- *Initiative 6.2: Repair existing sidewalks and crosswalks and add new ones as needed wherever a fixed-route bus service is in operation.*
- *Initiative 6.3: Promote "Complete Streets" through regional policy and the identification of local champions.*
- *Initiative 6.4: Collaborate with school districts and local communities to further develop safe routes to school, encouraging walking and biking, and site new schools in walkable locations.*

## **7. Preserve our natural areas for future generations, provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and develop a regional approach to protecting air, water, and soil quality**

- *Initiative 7.1: Expand and connect the existing network of parks, trails, rivers, lakes, and natural areas through continued partnerships with private land owners, land conservancies, land trusts, community members, and local governments.*
- *Initiative 7.2: Support and expand green infrastructure options for flood control and general water management, both at the local level with projects like green alleys and bioswales, and at the regional level with a network of large, upstream water retention areas.*
- *Initiative 7.3: Improve regional quality of life and health by focusing on the interface between natural and human systems in the areas of flood mitigation, storm water run-off, and clean beaches and the water quality of our lakes, rivers, and streams.*
- *Initiative 7.4: Strengthen and expand watershed partnerships that foster communication and collaboration between upstream and downstream communities across all 15 Northeast Ohio watershed geographies.*
- *Initiative 7.5: Expand collaboration between existing natural resource districts and consider the creation of new districts where appropriate.*
- *Initiative 7.6: Develop and maintain a natural resources inventory of the region.*

## **8. Support sustainable agriculture and the local food system in Northeast Ohio**

- *Initiative 8.1: Support the expansion of community supported agriculture (CSAs), farmer cooperatives, farm-to-school programs, and other existing mechanisms that support sustainable agriculture and enhance food access.*
- *Initiative 8.2: Partner with individual landowners, the food processing industry, and local organizations to protect agriculturally valuable land for future generations.*
- *Initiative 8.3: Review and amend local ordinances to allow for small- and moderate-scale urban farming on occupied and vacant parcels that are environmentally safe for growing food.*
- *Initiative 8.4: Support the work of local food initiatives to share best practices and identify policies of regional significance.*

## **9. Increase collaboration among the region's government agencies to expand information sharing and find more cost-effective means of providing essential services**

- *Initiative 9.1: Study privatization and public-private partnerships as means to fund critical infrastructure projects that cannot be funded solely through public dollars.*
- *Initiative 9.2: Utilize joint procurement strategies and the sharing of facilities, staff, and other resources wherever possible to save money on the provision of public services.*
- *Initiative 9.3: Identify one or more organizations that will host and maintain the technical resources created by NEOSCC so that they will remain current, accurate, and available for future regional visioning and planning.*

- *Initiative 9.4: Align MPO/COG/ODOT transportation model inputs and continue to collaborate, share information, and align policy objectives across the multiple regional planning agencies of Northeast Ohio.*
- *Initiative 9.5: Foster greater engagement between MPOs/COGs and organizations/initiatives that address natural resources, parks, sewer, public health, housing, education, private business investment, and economic development.*
- *Initiative 9.6: Sustain the momentum of NEOSCC by continuing to convene stakeholders to identify and address regional issues and to advance the region's collaborative capacity.*

### **REPORT AND ACTION PRODUCTS STATUS**

The Board will make a final vote on approval during the month of February 2014.



Besides the Vibrant NEO 2040 Vision and Framework report, NEOSCC recognizes that vision alone is not enough to effect change. We will also be publishing a set of actions products to encourage, equip, and support Northeast Ohioans to learn, share, create, and act together to create a more vibrant future. The vision and these products will hopefully inspire and guide decision-making at the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Councils of Governments (COG), and local level to ensure that land use, transportation, and environmental considerations are simultaneously addressed by their processes.

- **Tool Kit & Best Practices:** Assembled to empower the local and regional actions essential to transformation. Included are a Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice/Fair Housing Equity Assessment, and the first-ever 12-county region general land-use and zoning maps that were developed during the first phase of the project.
- **Policy Recommendations:** Vibrant NEO 2040 recommended policy changes that will have high impact on regional sustainability.
- **Pilots:** A listing of current and future pilot projects for innovative, real-world solutions reflective of the goals and objectives of the regional vision that have the potential for long-term impact and that will be replicable across the region was developed to illustrate how implementation could begin.
- **Dashboard:** A quick reference guide to keep the region moving in the right direction. The draft dashboard includes indicators and measures for the highest impact issue areas, prioritized by the public and Consortium members, in land use, transportation, environmental protection, the economy, health, and quality of life.

More information is available at:

**VIBRANTNEO**.ORG