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INTRODUCTION
WHERE COULD OUR REGION AND ASHTABULA COUNTY GO?
WHAT ARE OUR OPTIONS, CHOICES, AND KEY TRADE-OFFS?

This county report is an extract of the Vibrant NEO 2040 – A Vision, Framework, and Action Products for Our Future report that was published by the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC) in February 2014. All data was collected between 2010 and 2014. This county excerpt reflects data collected and analyzed by NEOSCC at that time. The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) reassembled the data presented by NEOSCC to focus on Ashtabula County. Details on the methodology used to develop the scenarios can be found in the NEOSCC technical appendix available online at http://vibrantneo.org.

NEOSCC was started in 2010 when leaders who represented a 12-county region of Northeast Ohio launched the Vibrant NEO 2040 initiative to provide Northeast Ohio with three things: an analysis of possible future scenarios, an aspirational Vision for the future, and a set of tools to make it happen.

The scenarios show a range of possible futures for the region, which helps us understand key choices, trade-offs, and outcomes. The purposes of the scenarios are to learn about the range of options and spark reflection and discussion. This report highlights what the scenarios mean for Ashtabula County and the region.

Summary of Scenario Modeling Process

**Quantitative projections:** If current trends continue, how many people, jobs, and acres of conservation will the region have in 2040?

**Development mix and land uses:** How many businesses and population will be lost if current trends continue? How many homes, businesses, and other structures will be needed to accommodate the new people and jobs in other scenarios? What style of development will these new buildings have? Will they be suburban subdivisions or more compact neighborhoods? How many more homes will be abandoned if current trends continue?

**Geographic allocation of new development:** Where in the region will new construction occur? What areas are likely to lose population?

**Analysis:** What are the fiscal, environmental, and quality-of-life impacts of these changes?

The Four Scenarios

- **“GROW THE SAME”**
  What if we grow and don’t do things differently?

- **“GROW DIFFERENTLY”**
  What if we grow and do things differently?

- **“TREND”**
  What if our growth and approach stay the same?

- **“DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY”**
  What if we do things differently and our growth stays the same?
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: IMPLICATIONS OF SCENARIOS

A significant difference among the scenarios is the location of new development. Like the Trend Scenario, Grow the Same continues the region's current pattern of putting new development on previously undeveloped farmland or in natural areas at the edges of established communities. Grow Differently and Do Things Differently emphasize reinvestment and infill in established communities.

TREND SCENARIO

The Trend Scenario asks this question: what is likely to happen if the region's rate of population and employment growth continue to be modest AND the region’s communities choose to continue using the land and infrastructure development policies of the past 20 years (1990-2010)?

**Policy Actions**
- There are no changes in the region’s current land use and infrastructure development policies.

**Development Implications**
- Ashtabula County experiences modest growth in jobs and population.
- Ashtabula County experience high loss of farmland and environmentally sensitive areas as well as significant abandonment of existing residential, commercial and industrial properties due to new construction outside of places with existing infrastructure.
- Ashtabula County’s communities experience growing imbalance between their costs and revenues resulting in diminished ability to provide basic public services.

see pages 8 to 27 for details

GROW THE SAME SCENARIO

The Grow the Same Scenario asks this question: what is likely to happen if the region’s jobs and population grow at a rate equivalent to the nation’s rates AND the region’s communities choose to continue using the land and infrastructure development policies of the past 20 years (1990-2010)?

**Policy Actions**
- No changes in the region’s current land use and infrastructure development policies.

**Development Implications**
- Ashtabula County experiences high growth of jobs and population.
- Ashtabula County experience significant loss of farmland and environmentally sensitive areas due to new construction inside and outside of places with existing infrastructure.
- Ashtabula County experiences a quintupling of new residential construction and a reduction in rates of residential, commercial and industrial abandonment.
- Ashtabula County communities experience a growing imbalance between their costs and revenues due to significant cost increases.

see pages 18 to 27 for details
**DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY SCENARIO**

The Do Things Differently Scenario asks this question: what is likely to happen if the region’s population and employment growth continue to be modest AND the region’s communities make different choices about using land and developing infrastructure?

**Policy Actions**
- New investment is focused in established communities with already-developed infrastructure.
- Infill development and compact mixed-use land development are encouraged.
- Priority is given to maintaining and improving existing infrastructure systems rather than extending and expanding them.
- Priority is given to providing a wider range of transportation choices.

**Development Implications**
- Ashtabula County experiences modest growth in jobs and population.
- Ashtabula County is able to preserve farm land and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Infill development revitalizes existing communities.
- Ashtabula County’s communities are able to balance their budgets.

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**GROW DIFFERENTLY SCENARIO**

The Grow Differently Scenario asks this question: what is likely to happen if the region’s jobs and population grow at a rate equivalent to the nation’s rates AND the region’s communities make different choices about using land and developing infrastructure?

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**Development Implications**
- Ashtabula County experiences high growth of jobs and population.
- Ashtabula County is able to preserve farm land and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Infill development revitalizes existing communities.
- Ashtabula County communities experience a growing imbalance between their costs and revenues due to significant cost increases.
SUMMARY OF QUANTITATIVE TRENDS: POPULATION, EMPLOYMENT AND LAND USE

The foundation of the trend scenario is a series of projections that estimate how many people, jobs, households, housing units and acres of conservation will be in the region by 2040 if current trends continue. The 2040 projections are based on county-level trends over the past two decades. This time period was selected as the best representation of the region as “stabilized yet challenged” and was long enough to capture several market cycles, a critical factor for long-range estimates. For each county, annual rates of change from 1990 to 2010 were extrapolated through 2040. For a more detailed discussion about the process of calculating these numbers, please refer to the NEOSCC Technical Appendix on the Vibrant NEO 2040 website at http://vibrantneo.org.

Region-wide, population and employment growth have been virtually flat. Population is on track to increase by slightly less than 100,000 across the region, from 3.82 million in 2010 to 3.91 million in 2040. Employment is also on track to increase by about 100,000 region-wide, from 1.56 million in 2010 to 1.65 million in 2040. These increases translate to annual regional growth rates of 0.08 percent for population and 0.25 percent for employment.

At first, these flat region-wide totals may suggest that the region will not see much change over the next few decades. A closer look at the county-wide numbers, however, provides a more complete story. Some counties are growing rapidly while others are shrinking. The new residents are largely moving from Cuyahoga, Mahoning, and Trumbull counties. The growth of some counties in the region is linked to, and a result of, decline in others, as people and jobs move away from legacy cities. The following pages illustrate the outward migration (Trend 1), abandonment (Trend 2), and fiscal impact (Trend 3) for Ashtabula County.
TREND 1—OUTWARD MIGRATION

Under the Trend Scenario, “growth” in some parts of the region is largely a result of movement from elsewhere in the region. The movement tends to be away from legacy cities and some first-ring suburbs and toward developing communities on the fringes of existing urbanized areas. This trend of “outward migration” has significant impacts on the region.

New development outside already established communities requires new infrastructure, including roads, sewers, and other utilities. Building and maintaining this infrastructure creates significant additional costs for local and county governments, which must then maintain more infrastructure to support the same population.

Trend 1: Outward Migration 2010-2040

[Map showing change in housing unit density for Ashtabula County]
Abandonment is one of the most significant effects of outward migration. Outward migration coupled with low regional population and employment growth results in abandonment. If current residents and jobs move away from established communities to new homes, shopping centers, office buildings, hospitals, and places of worship, and if no one moves in to occupy the houses, stores, and businesses they leave behind, abandonment occurs. Abandonment tends to be highest in older neighborhoods in legacy cities and some first-ring suburbs and established towns.\(^1\) Small-lot single-family and multifamily structures are the most common types of housing abandoned.

Abandonment is occurring in places with significant infrastructure investments. This leaves behind not only homes and other buildings but also roads, sewers, and utilities that could still provide valuable service and that taxpayers must pay to maintain, regardless of whether they are being used to capacity.

\(^1\) Predominately pre-1960 housing stock
**TREND 3—FISCAL IMPACTS**

The Fiscal Impact Tool measures the fiscal outcomes of the scenarios and helps us understand the impacts of today’s development on the long-term fiscal health of our communities. Development affects local budgets by generating both new costs and new revenues. On the cost side, supporting development in communities requires constructing new infrastructure (roads, water and sewage pipes, and other utilities) if it does not already exist. In addition to these one-time capital outlays, communities must pay to maintain infrastructure and provide services. The ongoing operating and maintenance costs tracked in the scenarios include education, hospitals, police, fire, parks, roads, sewerage, solid waste, and other utilities. On the revenue side, new development generates income from property, income, and sales taxes, as well as utility fees.

In the Trend Scenario, development exceeds regional demand; outlying communities grow, while legacy communities shrink. The fiscal impacts of this trend are significant. Region-wide, the revenue-to-cost ratio is projected to fall to -33.7 percent in 2040, reflecting high levels of spending with insufficient revenue to support it. Ashtabula County will experience a 24.8 percent budget deficit. Furthermore, it’s not just a few counties that will perform poorly over the next three decades that pull down the regional balance sheet; all counties will experience declining revenues compared to costs.

Factors Considered:
- Number of residents and housing units
- Mix of building types and uses
- Number and density of jobs per sector
- Real estate value
- Linear feet of roads, water, sewer, and utility lines
- Tax rates
- Construction costs
- Cost-share between public and private entities
- Regional levels of service and costs for education, hospitals, police, community facilities, and parks

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**Trend 3: Revenue to Spending Ratio**

- Revenue exceeds spending
- Spending exceeds revenue

![Graph showing Local Government Revenue to Spending Ratio by County](image)

- Ashtabula County: -24.8%
- Region: -33.7%

- Regional total: [Graph element]
- County total: [Graph element]
CURRENT LAND USE IN ASHTABULA COUNTY

NOACA makes no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy and/or completeness of the map.

Data Sources:
NOACA, NEOSCC
CURRENT ZONING IN ASHTABULA COUNTY

- Residential Rural 3.1 acres or greater
- Residential, Low Density 1.51-3 acres
- Residential, Medium Density 0.26-1.5 acres
- Residential, High Density 0-0.25 acres
- Residential, Multifamily
- Agriculture
- Commercial/Business
- Industrial
- Public Service
- Development Overlay
- No Zoning

NOACA makes no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy and/or completeness of the map.

Data Sources:
NOACA, NEOSCC
CURRENT TRAJECTORY OF ASHTABULA COUNTY

Northeast Ohio is changing. Central cities that were historically the centers of the region are experiencing abandonment. Once-dense urban neighborhoods now struggle with high rates of vacancy. Outside the cities, working farmland and undeveloped landscapes are being converted to new subdivisions, office parks, and shopping centers as people and jobs move to expanding and newly created suburbs. The distances between jobs, schools, homes, stores, and parks are increasing, and transportation options are increasingly limited to personal vehicles. What will the region be like in 2040 if these trends continue?

What does Sewered Urbanized Area Mean?

The yellow region on the map is labeled as the “Sewered Urbanized Area.” It is “sewered” because the area within this boundary is served by sewer lines. It is “urban” because it is defined as such by the U.S. Census Bureau. The Census Bureau definition does not mean that places within the boundary are urban in the sense that they have tall buildings, feel like cities, or even that they are heavily developed; it is a technical definition that means places with a minimum of 2,500 residents and their surrounding territories.¹

¹ The full definition can be found at http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/usa/urban-rural-2010.html
The first series of scenario planning public engagement sessions was a set of workshops framed around exploring regional trends. Six Trend Scenario Workshops were held throughout the region and attended by 589 people. Workshops were held in: Cleveland East, Warrensville Heights, Oberlin, Warren, Akron, and Canton. The first engagement meeting for the Eastgate metro-area was held in Warren and attracted participants from the three counties.

Workshops started with an introduction at which multiple choice questions were posed intermittently to gauge participants’ opinions about topics such as outward migration, abandonment, and desirable neighborhood amenities.

### Workshop in Warren for Eastgate Region: Polling Questions

**How concerned are you about the level of abandonment seen in the Trend Scenario?**

- **Significantly concerned**: 64%
- **Moderately concerned**: 21%
- **Not concerned**: 7%
- **I don’t think this trend will continue**: 8%
- **I have no opinion**: 1%

**How much do you agree or disagree?**

We should reinvest in existing communities to create new jobs and housing.

- **Agree**: 80%
- **Somewhat agree**: 12%
- **Neutral**: 2%
- **Somewhat disagree**: 2%
- **Disagree**: 3%

**How much do you agree or disagree?**

We should continue to grow outward to create new jobs and housing.

- **Agree**: 12%
- **Somewhat agree**: 12%
- **Neutral**: 6%
- **Somewhat disagree**: 24%
- **Disagree**: 46%
Participants worked in groups at tables during the six Trend Scenario Workshops to create 73 maps. Several common themes emerged out of these maps. Many tables were dissatisfied with the increasingly dispersed development in outlying areas and significant new abandonment in urban areas. Groups frequently chose to trade game pieces that represented dispersed development for additional compact development, reinvestment, and reinforcement game pieces. These trades reflect dissatisfaction with the trend development mix and a desire for reinvestment in and adjacent to legacy communities. The majority of groups did not trade all their dispersed development pieces, however, reflecting the importance of a diverse range of housing options and balancing auto-oriented development with communities with densities that support walking, biking, and public transportation. Many tables sketched additional public transit and greenway connections between communities or to link communities with parks, natural resources, and Lake Erie. Protecting agriculture and natural resources was also important to the majority of tables. Most tables distinguished between areas that should be protected as farmland versus areas that should be protected for other conservation purposes.

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1 Map images are available online at http://vibrantneo.org/.

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TREND WORKSHOP GAME PIECES

**Dispersed Development:** Low-density mix of single-family homes on larger lots, shopping centers, and office parks. Uses are typically separate from one another and require a car to travel between destinations.

**Compact Development:** Development of moderate density, including a mix of housing types and job locations.

**Reinvestment:** Investing in areas with existing high-vacancy rates and moderate density. The mix of housing types and jobs is similar to compact growth pieces.

**Reinforcement:** Investment in areas threatened with increasing vacancy and moderate density. The mix of housing types and jobs is similar to compact development pieces.
A composite of all 73 table maps from the Trend Scenario Workshops.

- Dispersed Development
- Compact Development
- Reinvestment
- Reinforcement
- Agricultural Conservation
- Other Conservation
- Bicycle/Pedestrian
- Public Transportation
- Road Investment
- Area with no game pieces or sketches
INTRODUCING THE ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS

The alternative scenarios show a range of plausible futures for the region to help us understand how key choices and trade-offs affect outcomes. The purposes of the scenarios are to learn about the range of options and spark reflection and discussion. Feedback and lessons learned from the alternatives directly shaped the regional vision.

On the regional scale, the projections for the Trend and Do Things Differently Scenarios use the same values, while the projections for the Grow the Same and Grow Differently Scenarios use higher values, however, outcomes at the county level vary significantly across scenarios, as growth is projected to occur in either existing or newly created communities.

The GROW THE SAME Scenario predicts the impacts of additional population and employment growth in the region if Northeast Ohio grew at the same rate as the nation and no changes in policies or funding priorities take place. Since the policies and funding priorities are the same as in the Trend Scenario, the additional homes and businesses are predominately in the form of dispersed development in emerging and newly created communities.

The DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY Scenario forecasts the impacts of changing the policies and priorities that occur in the Trend Scenario. These include focusing on reinvestment in established communities, limiting development in environmentally sensitive areas, using existing infrastructure wherever possible, increasing the proportion of mixed-use and walkable development, expanding public transportation and bicycle/pedestrian trail networks, and prioritizing growth near established communities.

The GROW DIFFERENTLY Scenario calculates the impacts of combining growth at the national rate with different local and regional policies and funding priorities. This scenario sees the same number of new residents and jobs as Grow the Same, but emphasizes redevelopment, infill, and compact development (as they are in Do Things Differently).

Employment and Population Projections for Ashtabula County and the Region
LAND-USE CHANGES IN ASHTABULA COUNTY IN 2040

A significant difference among the scenarios is the location of new development. Like the Trend Scenario, Grow the Same continues the region’s current pattern of putting new development on previously undeveloped farmland or in natural areas at the edges of established communities. Grow Differently and Do Things Differently emphasize reinvestment and infill in established communities.
LAND USES 2040: TREND SCENARIO

TREND: What might the region be like in 2040 if current development rates, patterns, and policies continue?

Having trouble spotting the differences?

The differences between these maps may be hard to see, but even small changes have big impacts. Each pixel of color represents an area slightly larger than two football fields. Add up all the small changes, and the impacts to quality of life, local budgets, and the environment are quite significant.
LAND USES 2040: GROW THE SAME

GROW THE SAME: How would Northeast Ohio’s future be different if population and jobs in Northeast Ohio grew from 2013-2040 at the same rate as the rest of the country?
DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY: How would Northeast Ohio’s future be different if we pursued the different policies and funding priorities that Vibrant NEO 2040 participants identified at the Trend Scenario Workshops?
LAND USES 2040: GROW DIFFERENTLY

GROW DIFFERENTLY: How would Northeast Ohio’s future be different if population and jobs in Northeast Ohio grew from 2013-2040 at the same rate as the rest of the country and we pursued the different policies and funding priorities that Vibrant NEO 2040 participants identified at the Trend Scenario Workshops?
The different development patterns and infrastructure investments shown in the four scenarios produce significantly different outcomes for public budgets and ultimately the taxpayers. Key driving factors for fiscal impacts are abandonment, infrastructure costs (capital expenditures and operations/maintenance spending), and tax revenue.

**FISCAL HEALTH**

The Four Scenarios

- **“GROW THE SAME”**
  - What if we grow and do things differently?

- **“GROW DIFFERENTLY”**
  - What if we grow and do things differently?

- **“TREND”**
  - What if our growth and approach stay the same?

- **“DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY”**
  - What if we do things differently and our growth stays the same?

**Trend Scenario**

- Green = Fiscally Strong
  - Values greater than 0 mean that the government is bringing in more revenue than it is spending.
  - These budget surpluses indicate more money is available to finance new infrastructure projects, fund school systems, and maintain existing infrastructure.

- Red = Fiscally Weak
  - Values less than 0 mean that the government is spending more money than it is collecting.
  - These budget deficits could mean higher taxes or decreased levels of service.

**Grow the Same Scenario**

What is driving these changes?

- More people and jobs add revenue, but this change alone doesn’t solve all of the county’s fiscal challenges.

- Some of the additional residential growth, particularly the dispersed, auto-oriented development, creates long-term costs that outweigh the revenue generated.

- Sheer numbers help fill in the gaps created by outward migration and result in lower abandonment and improved fiscal outcomes for the legacy industrial cities.
What is driving these changes?

- Takes advantage of infrastructure that has already been built.
- Capitalizes on legacy industrial sites as unique assets for future industry job growth.
- More compact options with improved transit access; revenue exceeds costs.
- Minimal increase in abandonment.

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**Do Things Differently Scenario**

![Graph showing Local Government Revenue to Spending Ratio by County for the Do Things Differently Scenario.]

**Grow Differently Scenario**

![Graph showing Local Government Revenue to Spending Ratio by County for the Grow Differently Scenario.]

What is driving these changes?

- This scenario takes advantage of the same system efficiencies as “Do Things Differently” but to a higher degree.
- Even though this scenario has the best overall fiscal outcome, some counties remain “in the red.” These tend to be counties that are rural today but are growing rapidly relative to their existing population. For those communities, this scenario doesn’t mean that a balanced budget is out of reach; it means that it will be difficult for them to add population, maintain the same tax structures and development patterns as today, and balance their budgets.
## Scenario Summary: Ashtabula County

### The Four Scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Change</th>
<th>Growth Trend</th>
<th>Grow the Same</th>
<th>Do Things Differently</th>
<th>Grow Differently</th>
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### Trend: What if our growth and approach stay the same?

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<td>1,839,800</td>
<td>93,430</td>
<td>108,100</td>
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<td>Ashtabula County</td>
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### Grow the Same: What if we grow at the same rate as the nation and don’t do things differently?

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<td>875,000</td>
<td>501,000</td>
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<td>10,765</td>
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### Do Things Differently: What if we do things differently and our growth stays the same?

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<td>91,017</td>
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<td>Ashtabula County</td>
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<td>33,925</td>
<td>2,480</td>
<td>1,995</td>
<td>2,300</td>
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### Grow Differently: What if we grow at the same rate as the nation and do things differently?

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<td>Ashtabula County</td>
<td>124,745</td>
<td>41,170</td>
<td>23,245</td>
<td>9,240</td>
<td>10,660</td>
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- ~ 10,000 residents
- ~ 5,000 jobs
- ~ 1,000 new residents
- ~ 5,000 new jobs
- ~ 2,000 new households
## Trends

### What if our growth and approach stay the same?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Building Permits by 2040</th>
<th>New Abandoned Homes by 2040</th>
<th>Lane Miles of New Roads by 2040</th>
<th>New Parks and Conservation Land by 2040</th>
<th>Cost-to-Revenue Ratio by 2040</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>292,150 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>4,650 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>3,100 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>121,500 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>-33.7% Ashtabula County</td>
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<td>174,900 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>1,935 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>60 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>14,645 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>-24.8% Ashtabula County</td>
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</table>

### Grow the Same

### What if we grow at the same rate as the nation and don’t do things differently?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Building Permits by 2040</th>
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<th>Cost-to-Revenue Ratio by 2040</th>
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<tr>
<td>554,214 Region</td>
<td>11,845 Region</td>
<td>6,000 Region</td>
<td>121,500 Region</td>
<td>-6.4% Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>93,100 Region</td>
<td>250 Region</td>
<td>185 Region</td>
<td>14,645 Region</td>
<td>-22.3% Ashtabula County</td>
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### Do Things Differently

### What if we do things differently and our growth stays the same?

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<td>700 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>288,500 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>+10.4% Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>19,800 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>480 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>15 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>34,460 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>-0.8% Ashtabula County</td>
</tr>
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### Grow Differently

### What if we grow at the same rate as the nation and do things differently?

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<th>Cost-to-Revenue Ratio by 2040</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>430,132 Region</td>
<td>7,410 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>2,400 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>205,600 Region</td>
<td>+13.8% Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,400 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>-3,765 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>60 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>24,550 Ashtabula County</td>
<td>-3.9% Ashtabula County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 2,000 new housing units
- 100 new abandoned housing units
- 30 lane miles of new roads
- 10,000 new acres of parks and conserved land
The different scenarios show that Northeast Ohio has multiple choices to make about its future, and its decisions will significantly impact quality of life, fiscal health, neighborhood character, and environmental quality over the long run.

Ten public open houses held across the region provided opportunities to gather public feedback on the scenarios and the trade-offs they represented. Maps, tables, and interpretive graphics that summarized the four alternative scenarios were printed on boards and arranged in a series of themes. This report summarizes the 23 public responses from Ashtabula County residents who attended open house at Kent State University’s Ashtabula Campus.

Theme 1: Outward Migration
Theme 2: Place Types and Community Character
Theme 3: Transportation
Theme 4: Open Space—Environment and Agriculture

The arrangement of the boards was similar in each location. This photo is from the open house in Lorain County.
THEME 1: OUTWARD MIGRATION

A significant difference between the scenarios is the location of new development. Like the Trend Scenario, Grow the Same continues the region’s current pattern of putting new development on previously undeveloped farmland or in natural areas at the edges of established communities. Grow Differently and Do Things Differently emphasize reinvestment and infill in established communities. The overall magnitude of new development is greater in the growth scenarios.

These differences lead to dramatically different outcomes. Abandonment varies significantly across the scenarios, from a high of 175,000 newly abandoned units in Trend to a low of 2,400 abandoned homes in Grow Differently. For Ashtabula County, the scenarios range from a high of 1,935 newly abandoned units in the Trend to no abandonment in the Grow Differently scenario. The combination of growth and new policies that emphasize reinvestment reduces abandonment.

Open House Board: How should we develop?

- **Outward** = New development away from already established communities
- **Creates homes with large lots:** Outward development creates a supply of suburban and rural houses with large lots
- **Provides opportunities for nonurban lifestyle:** The new communities created offer opportunities for a “fresh start” away from the denser urban areas
- **Requires investment in new infrastructure:** New construction outside established communities requires building and maintaining new infrastructure—roads, sewers, and utilities
- **Presents abandonment risk:** As residents leave old communities for new ones, vacancy and abandonment occur if no one moves in to take their place
- **Impacts rural character and agricultural land:** Outward migration puts increased development pressures on agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas

- **Inward** = New development in already established communities
- **Reuses existing infrastructure:** Inward growth can take advantage of existing utilities, sewers, and transportation networks to save taxpayers money
- **Reversees abandonment:** New construction and rehabs within established communities reverse abandonment and stabilize neighborhoods
- **Protects rural land:** Farms, open space, and small towns see less development pressure if development is focused in existing, more urban communities
- **Increases populations in urban areas:** Land values rise with inward growth, making it more expensive to afford large lots and yards. There would be more people living near each other

Outward migration requires new infrastructure and results in abandonment. Inward investment reuses existing infrastructure and reduces abandonment.
SHOULD WE DEVELOP INWARDLY OR OUTWARDLY?

At the open houses, participants were asked to what extent future development should be outward-focused versus inward-focused. The scenarios show some of the impacts and trade-offs of this decision. Another board presented the pros and cons of each viewpoint. Attendees were asked to sketch on a dial on a community investment feedback card to show how they think the region should develop. 21 completed cards were submitted by residents of Ashtabula County at a variety of open house meetings.

The results were in favor of an approach that prioritizes inward development. The average response was that inward development should be slightly more of a priority than it had been in Do Things Differently and Grow Differently. Summaries of feedback are shown below. For more details about the feedback, visit http://vibrantneo.org.

How to read the dials:
The dials represent a spectrum of positions on a certain topic. The ends of the dials represent the extremes. The dashed lines on the dials show where the four scenarios fall along the spectrum of positions. Trend and Grow the Same share the same position, since they have the same policies, and likewise for Do Things Differently and Grow Differently.

Open house attendees were asked to draw their own arrows on the cards to reflect their personal view about the topic. The heavy arrow shows the average regional response.

Open House Dials:
Outward Versus Inward Community Investment

Community Investment Feedback Card

Sample Comments

Let the free market decide. Capitalism should prevail.
Can't sustain outward development.
Invest in inner city areas and inner ring suburbs. Develop policies to promote and preserve rural areas.
Infill with dollars toward infrastructure improvements not outward built.
Reduce subsidies for outward growth & support targeted infill development (not just infill generically).
**THEME 2: PLACE TYPES AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER**

Development styles have shifted in the region away from smaller-lot, compact, mixed-use urban neighborhoods to more dispersed, auto-oriented subdivisions that are separated from office parks and shopping centers. The character of communities has a significant impact on quality of life for residents. The scenarios demonstrate a range of alternatives for how future development could look. Should the predominant style of development continue the dispersed pattern of recent decades (like Trend and Grow the Same)? Or should new development include a higher percentage of compact options and focus on reinvesting in established communities (like Do Things Differently and Grow Differently)? 17 completed community preference feedback cards were received from Ashtabula County residents.

Sample Comment

Rural is better
I do not see any reduction in vehicles. But more bike lanes, sidewalks, bus circulators, would help. Reduction in some care volume.
More walkable communities, build on existing investment. Protect environment.
I think you also need to consider negative impacts on existing communities when compact development takes place.
Place Types with Highest Public Investment Priority in the Region

The project team categorized the communities of Northeast Ohio according to six place types based on the mean age of housing stock in the community (see map). These place types let us see how similar communities fare in the scenarios and provide a framework for implementation. Boards presented images of the six place types and asked participants to identify which place types they use, value, and enjoy, and which place types the region should invest in. The green boxes below indicate the investment priorities of Ashtabula County Participants. The top three place types in which the participating public felt the region should invest were legacy cities, first-ring suburbs, and established cities and towns. These preferences are consistent with desires for investing in established communities expressed by participants during the Trend Scenario Workshops.

Legacy Cities (Pre-1910) City Architecture

First-Ring Suburbs (1910–1959) City Architecture

Second-Ring Suburbs (1950–1969) City Architecture

Outer-Ring Suburbs (1970–present) City Architecture

Established Cities and Towns (varies) Sasaki Associates

Rural Townships (varies) http://www.flickr.com/photos/kenlund/7984528214/
THEME 3: TRANSPORTATION

HOW SHOULD THE REGION INVEST IN TRANSPORTATION IN THE FUTURE?

We asked participants at the open houses whether the region should continue to prioritize auto-oriented infrastructure, or whether it should expand transportation options for multiple modes. Participants were asked to sketch on a dial to show their transportation investment preference: more auto-oriented focus versus multiple modes of transportation including walking, bicycling, and public transit. Out of 23 completed cards from Ashtabula County residents, the results overall tended toward expanding transportation options to include alternative modes.

Some participants felt that public transit may not be appropriate everywhere in the region and noted that rural areas would be less likely to have frequent transit service. Many comments emphasized the importance of distinguishing between investments needed to maintain existing road infrastructure and those needed to add new road infrastructure. Comments showed strong support for maintaining existing roads (and bridges) and less support for roadway infrastructure expansion. Comments reflected the participating public’s desires for a balanced approach to transportation that expands options for public transit, walking, and bicycling while maintaining existing roadway infrastructure.

Sample Comments

Personal freedom outweighs government transportation.
Let the free market decide.
I think we have far, far too much investment in and subsidies for cars. I prefer focus on safe, healthy cities, with equitable funding for safe streets, bike & bike trails & public transit.

Open House Dials: Transportation Choice

Transportation Dial: Average Regional Response

Transportation Dial Responses by Segment
THEME 4: OPEN SPACE - ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE

SHOULD WE RELAX, STRENGTHEN, OR MAINTAIN CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS ON DEVELOPMENT?

Discussions about development regulations are often contentious, so the project team sought public input to guide the eventual recommendations in the Vision. Northeast Ohio has a sufficient supply of developable land that is already served by infrastructure to accommodate the regional growth anticipated in any of the four scenarios without affecting sensitive ecological land or high-value farmland. We asked open house attendees how they felt about this question: “Should we relax or strengthen environmental regulations on development?” We received 19 completed feedback cards from Ashtabula County residents.

Comments by participants who voted in favor of no development regulations cited private property concerns and a view that regulation is not the best way to achieve environmental goals. Participants who voted in favor of a middle approach felt that location is not the only factor that matters for environmental impacts and that there should be a balance. Participants who voted in favor of restricting development in environmentally sensitive areas gave a variety of reasons: to mitigate flooding and flood damage, improve environmental health, protect watersheds, and conserve open space and agricultural land. Citing the available land in established communities, comments also touched on the link between inward/outward development and environmental resources.
CONSERVATION, PARKS, AND GREENWAY NETWORKS IN THE SCENARIOS

Trend Scenario

Do Things Differently Scenario

Grow the Same Scenario

Grow Differently Scenario

Ashtabula
CROWDSOURCED PRIORITIES: IMAGINEMYNEO
WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

HOW DOES IMAGINE MY NEO WORK?
As another way to explore the topics and trade-offs discussed at the open houses, the project team created an online platform called ImagineMyNEO. The tool was designed to elicit priorities, communicate the impacts of policies and investments on those priorities, and gather feedback about preferred future directions for the region. The tool debuted for public use in June 2013, and the project team presented the initial results at the open houses. These results included 1,458 unique respondents, 1,365 of whom were Northeast Ohio residents, including 63 Ashtabula County residents, at the time of completion. The following pages show the ranked priorities, projects and policies of Ashtabula County residents.
**STEP 1: PRIORITIZATION OF VALUES**

ImagineMyNEO first asked users to identify their priorities for the future. Priorities were described in the form of a list of present-tense statements that described attributes of a community. This enabled users to consider each statement from the perspective of either wishing to preserve a current attribute of the community/region or describing an ideal future condition of the community. Users gave anywhere from zero to five stars to the priorities they valued most. The ranked list of priorities belows created a total number of star votes based on the individual rankings. A dynamic display of icons shifted with the user’s scoring of each statement, yielding a composite, icon-based visualization of their individual priorities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranked Priorities of Ashtabula County Participants</th>
<th>TOTAL STAR VOTES</th>
<th>COMPOSITE STARS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have clean air, water, and land</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents can find good jobs and share in the region’s financial success</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have well-maintained infrastructure</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are recreational opportunities and parks nearby</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We preserve our open spaces and natural resources</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children can safely walk or bike to neighborhood schools</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My community has a rural character</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My taxes are low</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can experience great arts, culture, sports, and entertainment</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can easily stay in my community after I retire</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can get to places without a car</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We preserve and invest in our central cities</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My community has an urban character</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are fewer local development and zoning regulations</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My community has a suburban character</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STEP 2: EXPLORING IMPACTS

After marking priorities with a star, users could then learn how different planning policies and projects impact each of their priorities. “Policies” were actions taken by local governments to shape outcomes in the built environment, whereas “projects” were direct actions with a specific, material outcome (see next page). Clicking on the priority icon revealed a written explanation of how the project or policy impacts that specific priority, providing an opportunity for the user to learn about the consequence of a choice to “invest” in a particular policy or project.

Policy Responses of Ashtabula County Participants

- Locate new jobs, major developments, and key services near transit stops: 38
- Require developers to pay for their own infrastructure: 36
- Regionalize or encourage interlocal provision of some services: 34
- Share local tax revenues regionally: 33
- Enact stronger local pollution regulations: 33
- Encourage mixed use development: 32
- Encourage a greater variety of housing types in my community: 31
- Enable townships to manage their growth: 30
- Relax government regulations on development: 29
- Allow higher residential densities in my community: 28
- Reduce the size and reach of local government: 27
STEP 3: PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUSE IS

In the final stage of the tool, users chose specific projects and policies in a budget-constrained environment. Similar to the second screen, the color of the priority icons changed to reflect their relationships with the selected project. The budget-constrained environment was simulated by allowing participants to assign an overall limited number of total coins to different projects. As participants assigned coins to projects, the color of icons shifted with the intensity of color indicating a positive, neutral, or negative impact of a project on the full set of “priorities.” Aggregating the total number of coins assigned to each project by individual participants from Ashtabula County, created the ranked priority project list below.

Once complete, users could share their selections via social media and compare their answers with those of other residents of the region using a map viewer.

Ranked Projects of Ashtabula County Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Coins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean up vacant and abandoned properties, including brownfields</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide incentives for job creation</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand and connect network of open, green, and natural spaces</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritize maintenance of existing infrastructure</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower local taxes</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest in pedestrian, bicycling, and public transit services</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest in job training</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build more community parks</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest in creating vibrant public spaces</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritize investment in new infrastructure</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish land trusts to protect the region’s farms</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW WAS THE REGIONAL VISION CREATED?

All of the learning that took place during the Vibrant NEO 2040 process ultimately fed into the regional vision. The vision-creation process used two kinds of inputs: objective findings and community values. Much of the three years of Vibrant NEO 2040 was spent collecting and analyzing data, modeling trends and alternatives, and interviewing experts across the region. This information provided the factual basis for the Vision.

In addition to facts and data, the Vision also requires a normative direction. Compared to the scenarios, which were based on data and assumptions, the Vision is aspirational. It is a statement of where we would like to go in the future. To understand the region’s values and aspirations, the project team invested significant resources into outreach and engagement. The team conducted surveys, mapping workshops, digital outreach, open houses, and ongoing, small-group engagement. The team also released a draft of the vision months before the project’s conclusion and received feedback on it through a series of public Vision sessions, expert review caucuses, and comments from NEOSCC’s many partners.

This review process resulted in several refinements to the draft regional vision. These changes notwithstanding, a critical outcome of the Vision sessions was learning that, on the whole, the majority of the attendees supported the Vision.

INPUTS TO THE REGIONAL VISION

- Statistically Valid Surveys
- Workshops
- ImagineMyNeo
- Open Houses
- Vision Sessions
- Expert Caucuses
- Ongoing Outreach

OBJECTIVE FINDINGS

- Workstreams
- Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice & Fair Housing and Equity Assessment Conditions & Trends Scenarios Research and analysis

VALUES

Vision Themes

1) Strengthen Established Communities
2) Increase Transportation Choice
3) Preserve and Protect Natural Resources
4) Promote Collaboration and Efficiency
VISION OBJECTIVES: ASHTABULA COUNTY

Overarching objective and priorities identified by Ashtabula County Residents

- Protect our soil, water, air, and ecologically sensitive areas
- Cultivate and celebrate our local assets and places of public value
- Promote investment in our established communities
- Develop our regional economy with accessible employment opportunities
- Preserve and value our prime farmland as a regional economic asset
- Improve our regional fiscal health
- Enhance our regional transportation network
- Expand our parks and open space network
The overarching objective of the Vision is to “promote investment in our established communities,” and likewise, its primary theme is to “strengthen established communities.” What are “established communities”? They are cities, towns, townships, or neighborhoods that have matured over time into places with defining characteristics such as local traditions, major commercial activity, valued institutions, prized architecture, and great public places such as parks, public squares, and main streets. They could be urban, suburban, or rural. They have an identity of place that their residents understand and value.

**REGIONAL MOSAIC OF COMMUNITIES**

Investment means many different things depending on the place in question. The Regional Mosaic of Communities map depicts a regional mosaic of communities categorized by current trajectories, each of which requires a different Vision investment strategy.

**STRATEGIC INVESTMENT AREAS:** Places that have a stable or growing population and a high density of community assets and existing infrastructure that supports current and likely future development. This makes them ideal candidates for investment.

**ASSET RISK AREAS:** Places that face declining population and employment, yet they also have a high density of community assets and existing infrastructure that would support reinvestment and future population growth.

**COST RISK AREAS:** Places that have experienced rapid population growth but lack existing infrastructure to support that growth. As a result, additional development in these communities requires investment in new infrastructure and community facilities. Any new development must be carefully planned to ensure long-term financial stability.

These categories reference current trajectories relative to the Regional Vision, but they are not seen to be static. In the same way that place types can change (e.g., a rural township can become a small town, which can later become a city), a community’s investment categorization can also change. For example, through good policy and citizen initiative, asset risk areas and cost risk areas can become strategic investment areas.

**STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLACES**

In addition to investment strategies articulated at the community level, the Vision also includes an inventory of several strategic regional sites. The Strategic Investment Places map shows an overview of these sites.

- **WESTERN RESERVE TOWN:** Historical town centers that can provide an anchor for new mixed-use development
- **INNOVATION ZONES:** Universities and adjacent mixed-use commercial districts that have the potential to catalyze new business investment in the innovation economy
- **EMERGING CULTURAL DISTRICT:** Districts that have a high density of cultural assets that represent tourism opportunities and can serve as the nuclei for redevelopment
- **INDUSTRIAL WATERFRONT:** Deep-water, industrial ports along the Lake Erie waterfront that also have regional recreational opportunities
- **NEW INDUSTRIAL OPPORTUNITY SITE:** Large abandoned or partially vacant industrial parcels that are suitable for reuse given their proximity to transportation infrastructure and the presence of preexisting high-capacity utility connections

These sites offer strategic opportunities for future investment. They each represent, to varying degrees, unique assets that would be difficult or impossible to replicate elsewhere and should be recognized and leveraged to the greatest extent possible. This theme is about investing and reinvesting in our communities to strengthen them. The investment comes from all sources: government, private sector, nonprofit organizations, and individual citizens. All parties will need to forge partnerships together to produce the best outcome.
Strategic Investment Places - Strengthen Established Communities

Strategic Investment Places Mosaic of Communities

- Western Reserve Town
- Innovation Zone
- Emerging Cultural District
- Industrial Waterfront
- New Industrial Opportunity Site

- Strategic Investment Area
- Asset Risk Area
- Cost Risk Area
- Sewered Urbanized Area
VISION THEME 2 - INCREASE TRANSPORTATION CHOICE AND EMPLOYMENT CENTERS

A central aspect of the Vision is to improve the way that we move around the region and to support development through transportation infrastructure. Choice means increasing both the number of destinations that are easily accessible as well as the variety of means to get to them.

The following maps show a detailed picture of the transportation network, with the Vision’s proposed public transportation network identified by mode.

This transportation system would create a T-shaped network along Lake Erie and from Cleveland south to Canton, as well as a link between Akron and Youngstown. Within each of the major metropolitan areas, express and local bus services would expand coverage and make connections between some of the smaller towns and cities within the region.

At the neighborhood scale, the Vision aims to make it easier to get around using nonmotorized methods of transportation. This involves investments in infrastructure such as sidewalks, crosswalks, trails, and bicycle lanes. These forms of mobility are not just meant for leisure; with good planning, walking and bicycling can serve as primary commuting options.

Cars and trucks will continue to be primary modes of transportation for a significant number of Northeast Ohioans, and ensuring that the road system is maintained in a state of good repair is central to the Vision. As a top-level priority, this means fixing existing roads before building new ones.

Enhancements to the transportation system need not involve major new additions to the network. In many cases, a linkage between existing routes or a change in route management procedures can be the most strategic option. This can mean adding physical connections, changes in transit routes, schedule adjustments, or making it easier for riders to use the system.

Finally, it is important that transportation planning be integrated with other kinds of planning. Land-use and transportation decisions should be closely coordinated. Major new developments are significantly enhanced through colocation with transportation infrastructure; likewise, new transit routes achieve their highest value when they link nodes of high-activity density (jobs, residents, or both).
NEO Transit Network, Employment Centers and Poverty

VISION TRANSPORTATION LINKAGES

LEGEND

Concentration of Employees, Public Transit Routes, and Poverty Rates
2006–2010 Average Poverty Rate Among All Census Tracts in the NEOSCC Region = 13.2%

Census Tract Boundaries
Entitlement City Boundaries
Housing Market Boundaries
Public Transit Routes
NEOSCC Boundary

NOTE: The Counties of Cuyahoga, Lake, Stark, and Summit are also entitlement areas.

Data Source: 2010 LEHD, NEOSCC, 2006–2010 ACS

Poverty Rate
Tracts with 3,000 - 49,381 Employees

0.0 - 13.2
13.3 - 23.2
23.4 - 40.0
40.1 - 60.0
60.1 - 81.2

0
10
10 Miles

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**Proposed New Rail**
**Proposed New Bus Rapid Transit**
**Proposed New Express Bus**
**Existing Rail or Bus Rapid Transit**
**Existing Bus**
**Existing Interstate or Major Highway**
**Metropolitan Areas**

* a commuter bus with limited stops that drives in normal traffic

** a high-speed bus with its own dedicated lane or roadway that makes limited stops

---

**Bus Rapid Transit (BRT):** The buses in a BRT system spend the majority of their trips in their own dedicated lanes or roadways, make fewer stops than a local bus, sometimes have traffic signal priority at intersections, and let people pay before they board to shorten the time buses are not moving. BRT functions like a streetcar or light rail.

**Express Bus:** An express bus makes even fewer stops than a local bus or a BRT, since its primary function is to carry passengers over long distances, often using highways rather than local streets. It provides an alternative to rail-based commuting between major towns and cities.
How does conservation work?

For land that is currently owned by private individuals, the decision to conserve is entirely voluntary. The land owner may outright sell the property to the public sector or a nonprofit organization, or he/she may sell only the option to develop the land, ensuring that it remains undeveloped in perpetuity while staying in private hands. Some land already belongs to nonprofits or the public sector but is not being used for conservation today, in which case those entities can choose to switch the use of the land in the future.

This network includes:

- **Greenways**: Trails, paths, or natural areas that provide connections throughout the open-space system.
- **River Corridors**: The land immediately adjacent to rivers and streams. It is important to protect this land because it keeps water clean, provides critical habitat, and prevents erosion and sedimentation.
- **Parks and Conservation Opportunity Network**: Areas that present opportunities for medium- and large-scale natural-area protection. These areas could become parks, hunting areas, or wildlife refuges.
- **Scattered Conservation**: Smaller areas that provide local community recreation. These could be picnic sites, ball fields, playgrounds, etc.
- **Rural and Agriculture Landscapes**: Farmland and other undeveloped parts of the region. The Vision sets a target for conserving these important elements of the natural-areas network.

This theme goes beyond direct conservation; it also calls for changes in the region’s development patterns, which will improve the way in which human and natural systems interact. The Vision advocates for a reversal of outward migration, which would reduce development pressure on farms and other open space. Even within developed areas, nature persists in the form of parks, rivers, lakes, and wildlife. When these systems clash, events such as flooding occur. An integrated approach that enables human and natural systems mutually to coexist in the same spaces is not only practical but also ideal. This means recognizing and planning in accordance with natural, as opposed to political, boundaries. Watersheds, for example, have their own boundaries that do not align with jurisdictional boundaries. The actions of upstream communities directly affect the fate of downstream communities, so it is necessary for them to cooperate. In fact, the interjurisdictional qualities of natural systems provide one of the strongest arguments in support of regional planning.
Vision Natural Areas Network - Preserve and Protect Natural Resources

Sewered Urbanized Area
Greenway
Parks and Conservation Land
Rural and Agriculture Landscapes

Ashtabula County - Framework Report  51
THE REGIONAL VISION — ASHTABULA COUNTY

- Transit Connection
- Greenway

- Strategic Investment Area
- Asset Risk Area
- Cost Risk Area
- Sewered Urbanized Area

- Parks and Conservation Land
- Rural and Agriculture Landscapes
- Western Reserve Town
- Innovation Zone
- Emerging Cultural District
- Industrial Waterfront
- New Industrial Opportunity Site
Many communities and regions in post-recession America are required to do more with less and become increasingly resourceful in the face of shrinking federal and state support. Northeast Ohio is no exception. Vibrant NEO 2040 has dedicated substantial resources to understanding the real operating constraints facing the region’s communities today. These constraints can be overcome, but it will require collaboration and efficiency.

Strategic efficiencies involve getting the highest return for the investment of limited resources. Time is an important element for understanding payoff versus cost. One of the rare opportunities afforded by a project such as Vibrant NEO 2040 is to be able to step back from the usual time frames in which decisions are made—at most a few years into the future—and consider the long-term effects of choices we can make today. The fiscal impact analysis demonstrated that while some initiatives may be attractive in the short term, these same investments may end up being financial liabilities over the long term. The empty shopping malls of today are a reminder of the dangers of investing too heavily in a rigid style of development whose appeal is based on a moment in time. The Recommendations and Development Strategies offer numerous ways to create resilient communities that can accommodate changing demographics and generational preferences.

Efficiency can also be regional in scale. A tug-of-war between communities for a fixed number of jobs is not an efficient regional economic development strategy. Instead of cannibalizing its own resources, the Vision proposes that Northeast Ohio grows new jobs and attract others from outside the region or the country. The strategy is to grow the pie, not fight over the pieces.

An important step for achieving efficiency, both locally and regionally, is collaboration. Time and again, the project team has discovered an initiative in one part of the region that is unknown everywhere else. This means each community must “reinvent the wheel” rather than learn from the experience of its neighbors. The Vision encourages communities to identify common ground and to connect with existing regional initiatives. Many times, the solution is not to create a new organization or an initiative but it is to connect two or more existing organizations or initiatives. The Vision presents a number of ways that communities can self-identify and find counterparts: the rural townships of Stark can learn from the rural townships of Ashtabula, the asset-risk areas of Cuyahoga can learn from the asset-risk areas in Summit, and so on. Just like all the other Vision themes, efficiency and better governance are largely about making connections.

In addition to its many other roles, NEOSCC was intended to provide a platform precisely for this kind of collaboration and networking. Beyond Vibrant NEO 2040, it will greatly benefit the region to continue the momentum established by NEOSCC. This continuation could be formal or informal, centralized or dispersed, but the main priority is that it connects the themes, issues, opportunities, topics, and actors that are necessary to achieve the Vision.

Putting the Pieces Together: Composite Vision Map

The map on the back cover combines all of the major Vision themes into a single image.

Major spatial features of the Vision include:

- Communities grouped by investment strategy
- Location-based assets
- The envisioned edge of regional development
- Major transportation connections
- Greenways and large open space
- Key waterways
These recommendations, initiatives, and products are not one-size-fits all, and some aspects of the initiatives won’t be applicable everywhere in the 12-county region. Vibrant NEO 2040: A Vision, Framework, and Action Products for Our Future is intended to inspire and guide decision-making by various stakeholders to ensure that land use, transportation, and environmental considerations are simultaneously addressed by their processes.

Ultimately, the implementation of Vibrant NEO 2040 is up to Northeast Ohio’s communities and residents. But regardless of the applicability of each initiative to any particular part of the region, the goal for each community within the Vision is the same: stability, prosperity, and a high quality of life for all of its residents.

The Recommendations provide the framework, steps, and tools for making the Vision a reality. There are nine Recommendations total, each of which match up with several of the Vision Objectives and Indicators.

1. Focus new residential and commercial development on sites within established communities
2. Develop a robust network of regional job centers connected by multimodal transportation corridors between and within counties
3. Pursue the remediation, assembly, marketing, and redevelopment of abandoned properties at both the local and regional levels
4. Encourage a higher frequency of mixed-use development and a range of diverse, affordable housing options
5. Enhance and coordinate the region’s rail and bus services
6. Enhance walking and cycling as transportation options to increase regional mobility and improve public health
7. Preserve our natural areas for future generations, provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and develop a regional approach to protecting air, water, and soil quality
8. Support sustainable agriculture and the local food system in Northeast Ohio
9. Increase collaboration among the region’s government agencies to expand information sharing and find more cost-effective means of providing essential services
### RECOMMENDATIONS AND INITIATIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS AND INITIATIVES</th>
<th>AREA TYPE</th>
<th>IMPLEMENTATION COMPLEXITY</th>
<th>POTENTIAL LEADS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Focus new residential and commercial development on sites within established communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Encourage infill and redevelopment through the use of tax credits and other direct and indirect public incentives.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Improve the ability of municipalities and townships to analyze the long-term impacts of new development and better manage their own development.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Require the users of new sewer extensions that serve previously unsewered areas to pay the full cost of service.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Consider instituting a land value tax to replace existing improvement-based property assessment and taxation methods.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Develop a robust network of regional job centers connected by multimodal transportation corridors within and between counties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Use transit oriented development (TOD) to create stronger, more accessible, regional job centers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Implement a tiered approach to local parking requirements.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Pursue the remediation, assembly, marketing, and redevelopment of abandoned properties at both the local and regional levels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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, parks, or natural areas.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Expedite permitting and remove barriers for adaptive reuse of abandoned buildings and empty lots.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Expand and coordinate existing land bank efforts to acquire, assemble, manage, and dispose of vacant properties throughout the region.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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 marketing campaign.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# RECOMMENDATIONS AND INITIATIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Type Complexities</th>
<th>Strategic</th>
<th>Asset Risk</th>
<th>Cost Risk</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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

4.1 Include mixed-use designations and/or planned unit overlay districts in zoning codes throughout the region.

- **Potential Leads**: Municipalities, Townships, MPOs/COGs

4.2 Include traditional small-lot, compact single-family and townhouse residential designations in zoning codes throughout the region.

- **Potential Leads**: Municipalities, Townships, Counties, COGs

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.

- **Potential Leads**: Public Housing Authorities, Municipalities, Townships, Counties, MPOs

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.

- **Potential Leads**: Public Housing Authorities, Municipalities, Universities, Nonprofit Organizations

## 5 Enhance and coordinate the region’s rail and bus services

5.1 Invest in a regional network of bi-directional public transit connections between Northeast Ohio’s major job centers.

- **Potential Leads**: Transit Operators, MPOs

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).

- **Potential Leads**: Transit Operators, MPOs, Municipalities, Counties

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.

- **Potential Leads**: Transit Operators, MPOs, Municipalities, Counties, Universities

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.

- **Potential Leads**: Ohio Rail Development Commission, MPOs

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

6.1 Expand the existing bicycle lane and trail system and connect it to regional transit hubs via on-and-off street facilities.

- **Potential Leads**: Nonprofit Organizations, MPOs, Metroparks Authorities, Municipalities, Counties

6.2 Repair existing sidewalks and crosswalks and add new ones as needed wherever a fixed-route bus service is in operation.

- **Potential Leads**: Municipalities, MPOs

6.3 Promote “Complete Streets” through regional policy and the identification of local champions.

- **Potential Leads**: Municipalities, Townships, Counties, MPOs

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.

- **Potential Leads**: Metropolitan Planning Organizations, School Districts, Municipalities, Townships

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

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.

- **Potential Leads**: Metroparks Authorities, Land Conservancies and Trusts, COGs, Municipalities, Townships, Counties

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.

- **Potential Leads**: Metroparks Authorities, Land Conservancies and Trusts, Municipalities, Townships, Counties, Soil and Water Conservation Districts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS AND INITIATIVES</th>
<th>AREA TYPE</th>
<th>COMPLEXITY</th>
<th>POTENTIAL LEADS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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, stormwater run-off, and clean beaches and the water quality of our lakes, rivers, and streams.</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Asset Risk</td>
<td>Cost Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4 Strengthen and expand watershed partnerships that foster communication and collaboration between upstream and downstream communities across all Northeast Ohio watershed geographies.</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Asset Risk</td>
<td>Cost Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5 Expand collaboration between existing natural resource districts and consider the creation of new districts where appropriate.</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Asset Risk</td>
<td>Cost Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6 Develop and maintain a natural resources inventory of the region.</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Asset Risk</td>
<td>Cost Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Support sustainable agriculture and the local food system in Northeast Ohio</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Asset Risk</td>
<td>Cost Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 Partner with local landowners, the food processing industry, and local organizations to protect agriculturally valuable land for future generations.</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Asset Risk</td>
<td>Cost Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Asset Risk</td>
<td>Cost Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4 Support the work of local food initiatives to share best practices and identify policies of regional significance</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Asset Risk</td>
<td>Cost Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Increase collaboration among the region’s government agencies to expand information sharing and find more cost-effective means of providing essential services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.1 Study privatization and public-private partnerships as means to fund critical infrastructure projects that cannot be funded solely through public dollars.</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Asset Risk</td>
<td>Cost Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Asset Risk</td>
<td>Cost Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Asset Risk</td>
<td>Cost Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Asset Risk</td>
<td>Cost Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Asset Risk</td>
<td>Cost Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Asset Risk</td>
<td>Cost Risk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As part of the Vibrant NEO 2040 process, NEOSSC has developed the design specifications to create a regional dashboard that will allow Northeast Ohioans to track how the region is performing according to a variety of metrics and gauge our progress toward the Vibrant NEO 2040 Vision. This dashboard would include both the “Vision Indicators” outlined with the Vision Objectives and a second set of indicators called “Context Indicators” that are meant to track topics outside the core thematic focus areas of Vibrant NEO 2040, such as macroeconomics, education, health, and demographics.
For the objectives, recommendations and initiatives to be meaningful, they have to be measurable, and they have to include targets that define success. NEOSCC has therefore identified key indicators and associated target metrics, which are outlined in the table below, that should be used to measure the region’s progress toward these objectives and determine if these objectives have been reached.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>REGIONAL TARGETS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development Location</strong></td>
<td>At least 81% of new housing development and 91% of new jobs should be located within urbanized and urbanizing areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT)</strong></td>
<td>New road infrastructure should be capped at 2.75 lane miles per projected 1,000 additional persons for a maximum of 2,400 lane miles throughout the region. Each lane mile of new road should be accompanied by investments in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. VMT per capita should decrease, even if population and employment increase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban &amp; Multifamily Housing</strong></td>
<td>The percentage of urban and multifamily homes in the region should remain at least 45% of the housing supply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing Vacancy</strong></td>
<td>No more than 7% of housing units should be vacant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing + Transportation Costs</strong></td>
<td>By 2040, all Northeast Ohio residents should spend less than 30% of their income on housing. By 2040, fewer than 65% of residents should spend more than 45% of their income on combined housing and transportation costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transit Proximity</strong></td>
<td>By 2020, at least 55% of jobs should be near transit. By 2030, at least 60% of jobs should be near transit. By 2040, at least 65% of jobs should be near transit. By 2020, at least 38% of residents should live near transit. By 2030, at least 44% of residents should live near transit. By 2040, at least 50% of residents should live near transit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roadway Investment Balance</strong></td>
<td>For every new vehicle lane mile built, there should be at least the same number of bicycle lane miles built.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commute – Mode Share</strong></td>
<td>By 2020, reduce region-wide drive alone commute trips to less than 79%. By 2040, reduce region-wide drive alone commute trips to less than 67%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Existing Road Infrastructure Maintenance</strong></td>
<td>All roads should achieve at least a “Good” rating on the Ohio Department of Public Works evaluation standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open Space Conservation</strong></td>
<td>Conserve at least 10,700 new acres per year, for a total of 15% of the 12-county region conserved by 2040.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Riparian Corridor Protection</strong></td>
<td>Conserve at least 1,100 new acres of riparian corridors each year, for a total of 30,300 new acres by 2040.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clean Water</strong></td>
<td><strong>Aquatic Life Use</strong> • 100% full aquatic life use attainment on all Ohio large rivers by 2020. • 80% full aquatic life use attainment on Ohio’s principal streams and small rivers by 2020. • Identify more high-quality waters. • Maintain adequate monitoring coverage on Ohio’s principal and small rivers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Human Health Use</strong> • More fish from Ohio’s waters should be safe to eat by 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Public Drinking Water Supply Use</strong> • All drinking water sources should obtain water quality standards by 2020. • All drinking water sources should be assessed (nitrate and atrazine) by 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Recreation Use</strong> • Ohio beaches and canoeing streams should be safe for swimming (meet WQS) by 2020. • Maintain adequate monitoring coverage on Ohio’s watersheds, large rivers and beaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clean Air</strong></td>
<td>By 2040, every county should achieve full attainment of National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for all pollutants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The purpose of the vision is to help Northeast Ohio identify and build the future it wants. 

Doug Franklin, Mayor, Warren

For more information on Vibrant NEO 2040, visit vibrantneo.org.

"Vibrant NEO 2040 is Northeast Ohio’s Vision for its future, plus the tools to create that future."

Peggy Carlo
Commissioner, Ashtabula County