



Vibrant NEO 2040 Vision Policy Framework
December 6, 2013

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I. Introduction

As part of the Vibrant NEO 2040 initiative, Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC) developed action products that focus on implementing, supporting, and highlighting current best practices and creating new tools, policy recommendations, and pilot projects that turn the Vibrant NEO vision into reality through the implementation phase of the project and beyond. These products are stand alone but reinforce the Vibrant NEO 2040 Vision document. This document focuses on the ***Policy Recommendations*** of the product suite.

This document gives an in-depth presentation on what policies will support the nine Vibrant NEO2040 Vision overarching recommendations and gives guidance to local, county and state entities on how to implement them. These policies are a product of comprehensive research done by NEOSCC staff as well as guidance and input from the Policy Working Group.

The Policy Working Group is comprised of previous topical (Connections, Housing & Communities, Environment, Economic Development and Quality Connected Places) workstream members that were brought together to identify policies and practices that are impediments as well as identifying supportive actions that should be left in place or strengthened to achieve the regional vision.

1. Goals and Outcomes for Working Group

Enabling process that:

- a. Articulate a vision
- b. Identify strong existing policies, practices and identify needed changes (in conjunction with the Tools and Best Practices working group)
- c. Highlight high priority common ground issues/desired condition
- d. Embed best practices
- e. Develop policy change recommendations with high impact for sustainability
- f. Align policies with principles and goals to implement the Vibrant NEO 2040 Vision

2. Guiding Principles for Working Group

- a. Cultivate Collaboration
 - b. Encourage Improvement
 - c. Redefine progress
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II. Data Collection & Methodology

After 2 years of regional data collection, the following sub-sections 1-6 in addition to Sections III and IV were used as a baseline to inform the recommendations and policies described in Section VI.

1. Data Sources

- a. Research of studies and/or reports on NEO's existing conditions
- b. Conditions and Trends Platform - <http://cat.neoscc.org/>

2. Public Engagement and Input

Scenario Planning Process - <http://vibrantneo.org/what-is-scenario-planning/>

- a. Business as Usual Scenario - <http://vibrantneo.org/phase-one-workshop-results/>
- b. Alternative Scenarios - <http://vibrantneo.org/openhouses/engage-online/>

3. Policy Call (1a. What is working? 2a. What is needed?) - There was an open call to practitioners and Board members of Northeast Ohio to give NEOSCC feedback on what policies were working well and those that could use improvement. <http://vibrantneo.org/products-what-is-workingwhat-is-needed/>

4. Imagine My Neo – Online Game

- a. Use online data to inform policy recommendations

5. Regional Planning Priorities Survey - <http://vibrantneo.org/public-opinion-polling/>

- a. Use survey results to inform policy recommendations

6. The “Bridge” – HUD Concept

After engaging on the Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA) findings, grantees should determine how those findings will inform the regional planning effort and decisions that flow from it. This linkage from analysis to engagement to decision-making is referred to, in the August 2011 guidance webinar, as the “bridge.” To maximize the effect of the FHEA, its implications must be seen in decision-making, prioritization, and/or investment. Grantees may clarify guiding principles and/or commitments that emerge from the FHEA findings and engagement. Grantees should emphasize principles/commitments that would be clearly measurable so as to create the right conditions for accountability with the FHEA. For example, given the FHEA data findings, grantees could determine that preferences for affordable housing production be allocated to “high opportunity areas.” Similarly, grantees could make commitments. The key is to have the FHEA findings inform decisions that are made in regional planning.¹

¹ <http://search.usa.gov/search?affiliate=housingandurbandevelopment&query=fhea+guidance+webinar>

III. Why Work Together?

People travel and make decisions about where to live, shop and work at a regional scale. Building a regional network of communities gives more people access to the jobs, housing, education, shopping and entertainment, amplifying the potential for each place to thrive.

When neighboring jurisdictions compete for jobs and development, or plan transportation systems that aren't complementary, they perpetuate a cycle of regional traffic congestion and wasteful spending. Similarly, local land use policies can't exist in isolation in metropolitan regions. For example, if only one community has a policy that requires private developers to provide certain community amenities like sidewalks, then some developers may move their projects to neighboring communities where those regulations are not in place. Working across jurisdictional boundaries and coordinating plans at the regional scale is critical to avoid a piecemeal investment approach.

Sustainable regional development requires a great deal of coordination between many state, city, county and other governmental agencies whose work impacts the region with an array of citizens, elected leaders, business, developers and non-profit organizations and between plans for growth, transit, housing and economic development. Although challenging, this level of coordination is critical as no single city or county alone can secure the long-term prosperity of the region's communities and economy.

NEOSCC has developed a coordinated and integrated approach to planning efforts for its twelve county footprint. One of the first steps in this process was to develop a set of goals to help guide the process.

Vibrant NEO 2040 Goals

*Vibrant NEO 2040*² is a regional visioning and decision-making process that marks a shift in the way Northeast Ohio will do business. It is premised on the idea that a shared vision for the future, developed through a robust community and stakeholder engagement process, will result in aligned planning processes and resource allocation, resulting in a healthier, more economically and socially equitable future for the region.

Vibrant NEO 2040 framework for the future will be comprised of interactive platforms, documents, and tools that can be adopted by metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and other jurisdictions to guide their decision-making and ensure that land use, transportation, and environmental considerations are simultaneously addressed by their processes of land use and environmental planning and economic development. The process is designed to achieve the following goals and outcomes:

Enable Inclusive & Transparent Public Planning

Reflect Shared Values

Respect Choice

Promote Informed Decision-Making

Coordinate Efforts & Investments

Enable & Promote Action

Improve Quality of Life

² Vibrant NEO 2040 Work Plan, <http://vibrantneo.org/vibrantneo-2040/initiative-goals/>

IV. Analysis of Existing Conditions and Findings

In preparation for this regional conversation, NEOSCC staff and workstream members distilled information from public policy plans, planning initiatives and other resources from across the region into a comprehensive set of findings about our region.

1. Conditions and Trends Platform³

a. Themes and Findings

Theme: Assets and Resources - Northeast Ohio has significant regional assets and resources

Findings:

- Northeast Ohio is Home to natural and built assets that have significant regional and local impact.
- While the effects of flooding vary significantly across the region, data suggests that it remains a persistent and costly problem in Northeast Ohio.
- Forest land acreage in Northeast Ohio has increased, but the number of rare species sighted in Northeast Ohio has decreased. While more forest land acres is positive for the region, most of the increase is due to abandonment of former farmland, leading to fragmented or “patchy” young forests that may not be able to support a wide range of species.
- Northeast Ohio has substantial road, rail and port infrastructure supporting freight transportation that is crucial to Northeast Ohio’s economy.
- The Northeast Ohio Ambient Groundwater Quality Assessment shows the highest contamination threats from arsenic, a primary contaminant, and secondary contaminants iron, manganese, sulfate, and total dissolved solids. Secondary contaminants pose no threat to human health.
- Over the last 50 years, the number of Northeast Ohio farms and their total acreage has declined.
- Most of the Region’s Population Lives within a Mile of Parks and Protected Spaces.

Theme: Population Decline - Northeast Ohio has built out into the region even as its population has slightly declined

Findings:

- Northeast Ohio’s population peaked in 1970 and in the decades since has fluctuated up and down. By 2010, Northeast Ohio’s population was 7% smaller than it was in 1970.
- Northeast Ohio’s population has been spreading out.
- Land-cover data suggests that approximately 4-5% more acreage in Northeast Ohio was converted from “undeveloped” to “developed” between 1979 and 2006.
- Economic development incentives have often been used to assist companies that moved out of the central cities.

³ Conditions and Trends Platform, <http://cat.neoscc.org/>

Theme: Spreading Out- The spreading out of Northeast Ohio's population has had a significant impact on the region

Findings:

- As Northeast Ohio's population spread out, so did its jobs, creating new centers of jobs further away across the region.
- Abandoned, environmentally degraded industrial sites (brownfields) pose challenges throughout Northeast Ohio.
- The uncertainty of what may be found on abandoned industrial and commercial land and the unknown cost of remediating what is found make Northeast Ohio's brownfield and grayfield locations difficult to develop.
- The spreading out of Northeast Ohio's population has affected its housing markets.
- Finding: Present policies result in economic gains accruing primarily to local jurisdictions, even if there is no net job growth to the region, such as when a company moves from one jurisdiction to another.
- As the region's four central cities have lost population, Northeast Ohio's poorer residents have tended to be left behind because they could not afford to move.
- Many Northeast Ohio households are "overburdened" by their combined housing and transportation costs because their H+T costs exceed this emerging national benchmark.
- The spreading out of Northeast Ohio's population and the greater distance between where people work and live have created challenges for providing transit service to Northeast Ohio commuters.
- Greater dependence on cars has placed a greater travel cost burden on many Northeast Ohio residents.

Theme: Evolving Understanding - Northeast Ohio's understanding of the region and its needs continues to evolve

Findings:

- The region has not reached a consensus on how to assess the long-term, regional costs and impacts of development.
 - There is a lack of coordination and connectivity among the different jurisdictions responsible for installing, maintaining and managing Northeast Ohio's transportation and transit systems.
 - The limited data that is available suggests that Lake Erie continues to require remediation. Additional data about the longer-term trends of a number of indicators are needed to better understand Lake Erie's health and needs.
 - Additional data is needed to understand the impact of storm water runoff and the cost of its mitigation on Northeast Ohio communities.
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Theme: Continuing Challenges - Northeast Ohio has work to finish and emerging challenges to meet

Findings:

- The number of jobs in Northeast Ohio has been declining, but appears to be stabilizing recently within some key driver industries.
- The funds available for transportation infrastructure construction and maintenance are declining. Northeast Ohio is unlikely to see additional freeway or rail transit network development in the foreseeable future and will need to maintain the infrastructure it has in place.
- Northeast Ohio has experienced some improvement in surface water quality in specific areas, but data suggests that other water sources throughout the region continue to need remediation.
- Most Northeast Ohio counties fail to meet National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ground-level ozone and fine particulates.
- While the region has made progress in addressing systemic issues of race, at the county level, the National Segregation Dissimilarity Index indicates that certain areas of Northeast Ohio remain highly segregated.
- Northeast Ohio residents in select urban and exurban communities have shorter overall life expectancies and suffer disproportionately from chronic illness than their suburban and exurban counterparts.
- Northeast Ohio has a relatively high level of carbon emissions.

2. Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice Findings⁴

The Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (Regional AI) is one component of the NEOSCC's planning efforts to create a shared vision for a more vibrant, resilient, and sustainable Northeast Ohio for all of its residents. The 13 public forums held across the region in March 2012 and June 2013, allowed citizens and agencies to voice concerns about barriers to fair housing choice. Comments received at these forums focused on lack of transportation options for some populations as well as predatory lending, primarily toward racial and ethnic minorities.

2a. Private Sector Impediments

Impediments:

- **Denial of available housing units in the rental markets:**
The review of fair housing cases and results of the fair housing survey both supported denial of available housing units in the rental market as an impediment to fair housing choice in the Region. Denial of housing in the rental markets was found to be most frequently based on race, disability, and familial status.

⁴ Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice Report, <http://vibrantneo.org/regional-aifhea-draft-report/>

- **Discriminatory terms, conditions, privileges, or facilities relating to rental:**
The inclusion of discriminatory terms, conditions, privileges, or facilities relating to rental as an impediment to fair housing choice within the Region was predominantly supported by fair housing complaint data and was shown to mostly affect the classes of familial status, race, and disability.
 - **Failure to make reasonable accommodations or modifications:**
Failure to make reasonable accommodation or modification, which was found to most commonly affect persons with both physical and mental disabilities, was supported by findings from analysis of fair housing complaint data as well as from input from the fair housing forum and fair housing surveys.
 - **Steering activities in the rental markets:**
Steering activities by rental housing entities was cited primarily in the fair housing survey and was shown to be based on race and national origin.
 - **Preferences stated in advertisements for rental housing:**
Evidence of statement of preferences in advertisements for rental housing as an impediment to fair housing choice within the Region was found in review of fair housing complaint.
 - **Denial of availability of housing in the home purchase markets:**
Denial of the availability of housing in the real estate markets, predominantly based on national origin and race, was supported by review of housing complaint data and the results of the fair housing survey.
 - **Steering activities in home sales markets:**
In the Region, steering activities in the home purchase markets was found to be an impediment to fair housing choice based on findings from review of past fair housing studies and cases and results of the fair housing survey. Classes found to be commonly affected included national origin and race.
 - **Denial of home purchase loans:**
Denial of home purchase loans was supported as an impediment to fair housing choice in the Region through examination of Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data as well as results of the fair housing survey. Denial was found to be predominantly based on race, national origin, and gender.
 - **Predatory lending in the home purchase market:**
Many sources, including past fair housing studies and cases, Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data, and results of the fair housing survey identified predatory lending in the lending market as an impediment to fair housing choice within the Region. The classes of race and national origin were most frequently linked to this impediment.
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- **Failure to comply with accessibility requirements in construction of housing units:**
Disabled persons were found to be affected by the impediment of failure to comply with accessibility requirements in construction of housing units. This impediment was supported by findings of the fair housing survey.
- **Inequitable investment of Community Reinvestment Act resources:**
Review of Community Reinvestment Act data showed that community lending is inequitable within the Region and some areas may not receive even investment activity which may affect fair housing choice for several classes. This also tends to limit opportunities in areas that are lacking in investment.

2b. Public Sector Impediments

Impediments:

- **Failure to have sufficient fair housing policies or practices by several units of local government:**
Results of the Fair Housing Survey, as well as those respondents to the local government survey, indicate that a number of local communities lack or do not have sufficient policies or practices that adequately address the duty to affirmatively further fair housing.
 - **Ineffective fair housing outreach and education efforts**
While Northeast Ohio tends to have a strong fair housing advocacy base, there still seems to be an ineffective fair housing outreach and education component to the advocacy efforts. This was supported by input received in the fair housing survey as well as in the fair housing forums.
 - **Land use and planning decisions and operational practices resulting in unequal access to government services such as transportation**
Unequal access to government services, such as transportation, due to land use and planning decisions as well as operational practices was documented in a review of Census Bureau data and the fair housing survey. The classes noted to be most frequently affected are disability, familial status, race, and national origin.
 - **Historical establishment of policies and practices resulting in segregation of minority populations**
Fair housing choice in the Region is today affected by historical policies and practices that have resulted in segregation of minority populations. This impediment may restrict housing choice based on race, national origin, and disability.
 - **Implementation of exclusionary policies**
The fair housing survey revealed instances of policies that may restrict housing development, such as limiting lot size, dwelling type, and related locational issues. Therefore housing choice for certain groups, including families and persons with disabilities, is constrained. This is sometimes considered NIMBYism.
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3. HUD Flagship Indicators Report Findings⁵

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Flagship Indicators provide a snapshot of Northeast Ohio's commuter habits, housing affordability, access to food, access to parks and protected spaces, economic diversification, municipal economic health and land use efficiency. The region is large and diverse, with four metropolitan areas, 12 counties and more than 3.8 million people; a challenging place to "measure." However, HUD hopes to provide some means of comparison between complex regions across the United States using a standard set of performance indicators. This report describes how Northeast Ohio rates on HUD's Flagship Indicators and contributes to the ongoing regional conversation about the region's future. According to the flagship indicators measured for Northeast Ohio:

- 12.2% of commuters reach work via walking, biking, public transit, or carpooling in 2011. This number has decreased from 12.8% reported in 2008.
- 62% of renter-occupied housing units are affordable to low-moderate income households, while only 20% of owner-occupied housing units are affordable to low-moderate income households
- Among all households in the region: 53.5% of household income is spent on housing and transportation costs. Among all households within Low-Moderate Income Census Tracts: 43.7% of household income is spent on housing and transportation costs.
- 8% of the region's population (305,032 people) is defined as urban, low-income and without good access to a supermarket or grocery store.
- 54% of the total population and 78% of the low-moderate income population have good access to parks and protected spaces.
- The 2011 Economic Diversification Index for Northeast Ohio is 0.1911. Since this value is much closer to 0 than it is to 1, it suggests that Northeast Ohio's economy was more reflective of the United States economy as a whole. The greatest differences between Northeast Ohio and the United States are manufacturing and health care.
- The 2002 cumulative debt-to-revenue ratio for Northeast Ohio is 0.79, but individual county ratios in Northeast Ohio vary considerably.
- Between 2001 and 2006, urban land cover increased 37,450 acres. However, during the same period, population decreased 30,801. Therefore, the region experienced less efficient land cover change than if population increased or urban land cover decreased.

These numbers provide a snapshot of Northeast Ohio. The picture is mixed: On the downside, there is more urban land cover for less people, a decline in sustainable commute modes and low affordability for home ownership among low-moderate income households. However, the regional also exhibits lower housing and transportation costs and better access to parks for low-moderate income households.

⁵ HUD Flagship Indicators Report June 2013 – Joseph MacDonald and Grant Taylor

V. Emerging Policy Themes/Areas

The following themes began to emerge from data collection, the Existing Conditions and Trends platform, Regional AI, HUD Flagship Indicators report, and input from the public from various meetings and surveys. These themes in conjunction with the Scenario planning process informed the outcomes presented in the next section.

1. Transportation

- a. Access to Jobs – With jobs moving further away from the core cities, qualified residents without a car have a difficult time accessing these jobs with public transit.
- b. Better Regional Connectivity (inter county) – There are many connectivity gaps that exist within the NEOSCC footprint between county transit systems.
- c. Transportation Choice (multi-modal) – Northeast Ohio is limited in what it provides to transverse the region other than automobiles.
- d. Cost of maintaining infrastructure - Northeast Ohio has built an abundance of infrastructure to support a declining population which in turn will be costly to maintain.

2. Housing

- a. Proximity to Jobs – With jobs moving further away from the core cities and densely populated neighborhoods, qualified residents without a car have a difficult time accessing these jobs with public transit.
- b. Abandonment – Most of Northeast Ohio's legacy cities i.e. Cleveland and Youngstown suffer from a high percentage of housing abandonment.
- c. Equity Issues – The access to quality housing is not available to all income levels of the region's population as referenced in the Regional AI Study.

3. Public Health

- a. Food Deserts (locational issues) – The access to food i.e. grocery stores and markets are not available to all income levels of the region's population.
- b. Access to healthy food – The access to healthy food options is not available to all income levels of the regions population.

4. Jobs and Industry

- a. Spreading out from core and away from households - With jobs moving further away from the core cities and densely populated neighborhoods, qualified residents without a car have a difficult time accessing these jobs.
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VI. Regional Vision Objectives, Recommendations & Policies

The Vibrant NEO 2040 process has come along way. We have studied the region, identified its conditions and trends, modeled both trend and alternative scenarios, and most importantly, continuously asked the public about its values, priorities, and aspirations.

The region is multi-scale and multi-faceted, and therefore, so is the vision. This section begins with a list of objectives from the Vibrant NEO2040 Vision document (1) that apply to the region as a whole. It is followed by recommendations supplemented by policies (2) to help the region meet and achieve its objectives.

1. Objectives

The objectives are the driving principles of the vision. They are regional in nature, though several of them also apply locally. To achieve them is to achieve the vision.

Overarching Theme of Vibrant NEO 2040:

“Promote investment in our established communities”

by

- 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 out parks and open space network
- Preserve out prime farmland

2. Recommendations & Policies

This section provides the Vibrant NEO 2040 vision recommendations, derived from the regional report, and proactive measures we can undertake to help us achieve our regional objectives. Measures include supportive policies and potential initiatives based on best practices and case studies from communities that have achieved some success. There may be some duplication because policies and initiatives may be supportive of multiple recommendations.

Recommendation ONE: Focus new residential and commercial development on sites within established communities

Healthy cities and towns anchor a region's economy and civic identity by providing a place for economic and social interaction. This is true of any urban region, at any time in history. And yet for the past fifty years, the notion of what constitutes the space for economic and social interaction has shifted substantially, caused by changing preferences enabled by technology and policy.

In Northeast Ohio, as elsewhere, this shift manifested itself in a "hollowing out" of the region's city and town centers, with the pace of growth in new outlying areas interfering in the ability of established places to grow.

To revitalize our town centers, we should encourage development that (1) is located near existing development and infrastructure, (2) provides a range of housing options, (3) protects open space, farmland, and critical environmental areas, (4) has a mix of uses, (5) provides choices for getting around, (6) is walkable and designed for personal interaction, and (7) is respectful of community character and design.

Supportive policies:

- ***Policy: Support redevelopment of vacant and abandoned properties where infrastructure and services are already in place:*** Local and county governments should prioritize redevelopment of vacant and abandoned properties over development of greenfields. Local governments should also incentivize development of vacant land-or rehabilitation of existing structures-in areas where infrastructure and services are already in place. The incentives should focus on substantial rehabilitation/improvement abandoned properties. Prime locations for infill development include downtowns, transit corridors and locations near employment, shopping, and recreational and cultural amenities. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county governments and land bank authorities.
 - **BEST PRACTICE:** Re-Imagining Cleveland: Alternative land use strategies used in this initiative to return vacant land to productive use in ways that complement the City of Cleveland's long-term development objectives and empowers residents to reclaim their neighborhood. <http://www.npi-cle.org/places/urban-greening/about-reimagining-cleveland/>
 - **BEST PRACTICE:** Regenerating Youngstown and Mahoning County through Vacant Property Reclamation: Reforming Systems and Right-Sizing Markets- In partnership with the Youngstown-Mahoning County Vacant Properties Initiative, the National Vacant Properties Campaign designed a work plan and proposal for a regional assessment of vacant properties in the City of Youngstown and Mahoning County, in Ohio. <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/research/policy-analysis-vacant-properties/>

- ❖ **TOOL:** Vacant Property Registry -Safeguard Properties maintains a registry of communities dealing with abandoned bank-owned properties, often referred to as REO (Real Estate Owned) properties.
http://www.safeguardproperties.com/Resources/Vacant_Property_Registration/OH.aspx?filter=vpr&page=5
- ✓ **Vibrant 2040 Initiative:** Improve the ability of municipalities and townships to analyze the long-term impacts of new development and better manage their own development.
- **Policy: Rebuild the central core of the regions legacy cities:** Rebuilding the central core of legacy cities often constitutes the first step in the regeneration of a city and subsequently the region. If the physical fabric of the area is largely intact, the combination of density and a walkable, urban texture with proximity to major institutions and employers creates significant opportunities for regeneration driven by residential development. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county governments and land bank authorities.
- **Policy: Incorporate "Fix –It-First" as the central principle guiding transportation investment decisions:** A fix-it-first strategy prioritizes infrastructure spending to support the maintenance and upgrading of existing structures and facilities, instead of incurring the cost of constructing or installing new infrastructure. It also maximizes the value of past investments, minimizes the use of state funds on new projects, stretches limited resources and reinvests in revitalizes existing communities. ⁶**Implementation Actor(s):** MPO's, ODOT, and local and county governments.
 - **BEST PRACTICE:** Michigan "Preserve First Program" - In April 2003, the Michigan DOT established the Preserve First program. This program set goals of having 95 percent of freeways and 85 percent of non-freeways in "good" condition to increase the life of roads to 50 years. http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9620_11057-65530--,00.html
- **Policy: Promote greyfield redevelopment:** The availability of existing infrastructure, convenient location, and land area of greyfields offers the opportunity to create mixed-use developments with diverse housing options. Local governments can play an important role in redeveloping greyfields by removing regulatory barriers, such as rigid zoning codes, and providing incentives for development. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county departments of housing, zoning and economic development.
 - **CASE STUDY:** Park Forest, Illinois (Malls to Mainstreet): A suburban mall revitalization project in Chicago's southern metropolitan area where a public agency, the Village of Park Forest, is owner and master developer. Downtown Park Forest is a 48-acre project with Village Hall, independent- and assisted-living facilities, retail, office, and cultural center that

⁶ <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/policy-guide.pdf>

create a central downtown. This site was once an abandoned greyfield.

<http://www.cnu.org/sites/files/mallsintomainstreets.pdf>

- **Policy: Reshape disinvested areas into green space:** The last element by which urban revitalization takes place is through reshaping areas where housing market demand no longer exists into green space integrated into the city's fabric, from community gardens and mini-parks to urban farms or natural stream corridors.⁷ **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county departments of housing, zoning and state of Ohio department of agriculture.

Recommendation TWO: Develop a robust network of regional centers connected by multimodal transportation corridors within and between the counties

Northeast Ohio features multiple employment centers and an extensive transportation network connecting them. This helped to build the industrial economy of the region in the 20th century and provided a strong foundation for years of dynamic growth. To continue to support the region's economy, the transportation system must evolve into one featuring increased modal choice in order to promote greater efficiency and affordability in moving people and goods. The key corridors connecting the major centers of the region should form the basis of a transit network integrating the current systems of individual transit providers. The network should concurrently feature safe accommodations for bicycles and pedestrians, especially near major centers, to allow for a more balanced transportation system in which a trip's purpose can be matched more optimally with a means of making the trip.

Supportive policies:

- **Policy: Nurture the Region's Industry Clusters:** Organizing the region strategically around clusters of regional specialization can help target investment decisions and reduce duplication of effort. These efforts should focus on how to make the region's successful clusters grow and prosper and enable the region to be proactive in terms of funding and other opportunities.⁸ **Implementation Actor(s):** Team NEO, and local and county government economic development departments.
- ✓ **Vibrant 2040 Initiative:** 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.
- **Policy: Support targeted investments in transportation infrastructure and services designed to connect clusters, improve workforce mobility, and promote vibrant communities.** How we plan our transportation networks, and allocate resources within them, plays a large role in making our economy more diversified and resilient. Targeted investments will improve the region's economic competitiveness in the global economy and foster greater economic resilience. Job creation and

⁷ http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2010/5/18%20ohio%20cities%20mallach%20brachman/0518_ohio_cities_mallach_brachman.pdf

⁸ <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/20583/0920b2ca-fca9-4c7a-9fe5-23301f4b4fff>

retention are major challenges facing much of the country, as well as northeast Ohio. Transportation planning can play a key role in shaping the regions' economy and also has the ability to shape our communities into vibrant places that attract and retain high-wage workers who can choose where they live and work, particularly next generation workers. **Implementation Actor(s):** MPO's, public transit agencies, ODOT, and local and county economic development and planning departments.

- **BEST PRACTICE:** The Northeast Florida Regional Transportation Study Funnel Diagram - The diagram is designed to ensure that only projects that can demonstrate a regional benefit in terms of facilitating mobility and most importantly, support access to labor markets and jobs will be eligible.

http://www.northfloridartsc.com/Draft%20Recommendations/Final_122012.pdf

- **Policy: Emphasize a planning framework that is centered upon a regional corridor and network approach versus individual facilities and projects:** Maintaining focus on the corridors and the regional transportation network allows for better coordination of planning and implementation at a regional scale, championing regionally significant projects and seeking implementation funding for regional priorities. **Implementation Actor(s):** MPO's, public transit agencies, ODOT, and local and county economic development and planning departments.

- **BEST PRACTICE:** College Town Kent: College Town Kent is a \$30 million dollar mixed-use district that leverages pedestrian scale urban design to connect and enhance the relationship between Kent State University and its historic downtown environment. It contains 32 residential units and 150,000 sq. ft. of office/retail.

<http://collegetownkent.com/>

- **Policy: Develop a regional multimodal system plan:** A Multimodal System Plan is a comprehensive look at all the modal transportation networks in an area, whether auto, transit, bicycle or pedestrian, along with the key land use destinations and centers that they are connecting. **Implementation Actor(s):** MPO's and public transit agencies.

- **CASE STUDY:** Indianapolis MPO Multimodal Systems - March 2009. An example of the networks in a large region that shows the network connectivity for each travel mode derived from the Regional Pedestrian Plan.

Image source: Storrow Kinsella Associates

<http://www.indympo.org/Plans/MultiModalPlanning/Pages/Multi-Modal-Home.aspx>

- **Policy: Create a comprehensive regional transit plan that crosses county boundaries:** Regional public transportation coordination focuses on maximizing the benefits of the public transportation investment through the coordination of services. Currently, there is no overall regional transit plan for northeast Ohio.



Recommendation THREE: Pursue the remediation, assembly, marketing, and redevelopment of abandoned properties at both the local and regional levels

Northeast Ohio's regional economy has long been defined by industry, and thus was especially susceptible to the economic restructuring of American manufacturing. Vacant and contaminated industrial land dot Northeast Ohio's landscape, and the question of these lands' remediation and reuse is intimately related to how the region will strengthen its core cities and towns, a central objective of the Vibrant NEO 2040 vision.

Fortunately, the region has several sources of inspiration on which to draw, both internally and from peer regions. Some areas have enjoyed success in reinvigorating their manufacturing base with a 21st century, bespoke, and high-tech edge. Others have focused on rehabilitating salvable buildings as residential and commercial space. A smaller but significant number have opted to reposition abandoned and polluted industrial land as a landscape of ecological tourism.

Northeast Ohio must develop a regional approach to dealing with its industrial heritage, in a way that positions its communities for success in the future. It can incorporate all of the strategies other places have employed, but it will require cooperation and trust, good and constantly maintained information, and investment. The region should consider the following policies related to reusing vacant former industrial land:

Supportive policies:

- **Policy: Develop and promote innovative clean up strategies:** Developing and promoting innovative cleanup strategies that restore contaminated sites to productive use, promote environmental stewardship, and reduce associated costs while minimizing ancillary environmental impacts from these cleanups. Consider cleanups in the context of the larger environment and consistently and pro-actively apply more sustainable methods to remediate the site while still protecting public health and the environment and striving to achieve the established cleanup goals. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county governments, EPA, Clean Ohio/Jobs Ohio.
 - **BEST PRACTICE:** Clean Ohio Projects – There are many Clean Ohio projects across the region and state that have local and county coordination.
<http://development.ohio.gov/cleanohio/>
- ✓ **Vibrant 2040 Initiative:** Develop and maintain a regional vacant and industrial commercial properties database and criteria for determining the most appropriate successive use, whether for redevelopment, green infrastructure, food production, parks, or natural areas.
- **Policy: Create eco-industrial parks on brownfields.** Cities can bring together local businesses and manufacturers to share services, transportation infrastructure, energy, and waste streams in order to enhance environmental and economic performance via collaboration in resource management. One company's waste can be another company's productive input.

- **Policy: Create and apply green remediation concepts:** Such as maximizing the reuse of land and the recycling of materials, and conserving natural resources such as soil, water and habitat helps to achieve that objective. **Implementation Actor(s):** Federal EPA, Clean Ohio/Jobs Ohio, Local and county governments.
 - **BEST PRACTICE:** 9 month Green Jobs Training Program for at-risk youth adds deconstruction curriculum in Youngstown: Students learn the basics of building deconstruction and building material salvage. Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation partners with the Youngstown Metropolitan Housing Authority, Reuse Consulting, Landscapers, Mahoning County One Stop, Western Reserve Building Trade Council, churches and others. <http://www.yndc.org/news-media/green-jobs-training-program-continues-deconstruction-training>

Recommendation FOUR: Encourage a higher frequency of mixed-use development and a range of diverse, affordable housing options

With shifting preferences and stressed municipal budgets, municipalities are now finding benefit from encouraging small-lot residential development and co-location of uses in single developments. This equates to more revenue for cities and towns, and thus a more favorable fiscal balance with the demands imposed by infrastructure investment and maintenance and the ever-shrinking transfer payments from Federal and state governments. Municipalities in Northeast Ohio should consider initiatives related to encouraging mixed use and compact development.

Supportive policies:

- **Policy: Ensure zoning regulations allow housing type diversity:** Many communities within northeast Ohio have zoning policies that make it difficult or impossible to develop multifamily or other types of housing. Restrictive zoning policies also limit the ability to accommodate the needs and preferences of a community's changing demographics. Through a comprehensive revision of zoning policies, communities can expand and diversify the local supply of homes to meet the needs of a changing population. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county government zoning boards, planning commissions, and departments of housing
- **Policy: Create incentives and develop funding mechanisms and regulations to promote the rehabilitation and reuse of transit accessible locations connecting workers to the region's town and employment centers:** Focus efforts to preserve and expand compact residential development on locations near public transit stops (Transit Oriented Development) and essential destinations such as employment and retail centers. ⁹ **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county planning and economic development departments, MPO's and transit agencies

⁹ http://www.city.cleveland.oh.us/clnd_images/mayor/initiatives/DevelopmentStrategy.pdf

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- **BEST PRACTICE:** New Jersey Urban Transit Hub Tax Credit -Offered by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, this program offers tax credit to developers, landowners or tenants to encourage private capital investment around rail transit stations. To qualify for the tax credit, the capital investment must be at least \$50 million in a single business facility that employs at least 250 people.
http://www.njeda.com/web/Aspx_pg/Templates/Npic_Text.aspx?Doc_Id=888&menuid=1295&topid=718&levelid=6&midid=1175
 - **BEST PRACTICE:** Illinois Business Location Efficiency Act -The Illinois Department of Commerce provides 10% tax credits to business selecting sites within one mile of affordable housing and public transportation. The incentives are part of a larger economic development program that provides tax incentives for businesses to locate in Illinois when they are actively considering a competing location in another state.
<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=094-0966>
 - **Policy: Provide incentives to encourage people to live near work or transit:** Encourage people to live in walkable communities by providing targeted incentives to those who chose to live “location-efficient neighborhoods.” Located in proximity to existing transit routes or within walking distance of services and entertainment, infill development can reduce auto use and accompanying congestion and pollution. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county planning and economic development departments, MPO’s and transit agencies.
 - **NEO PILOT:** Greater Circle Living Program: Housing assistance program for employees in the Greater University area and is designed as an incentive for people to live near work.
 Source:<http://www.fairfaxrenaissance.org/greater-circle-living.html>
 - **Policy: Incentivize neighborhood investments to promote various types of infill development:** Local governments should use infill incentives to promote the development of vacant land-or rehabilitation of existing structures-in already urbanized areas where infrastructure and services are in place. The incentives should focus on substantial rehabilitation/improvement rather than new construction. Prime locations for infill development include downtowns, transit corridors and locations near employment, shopping, and recreational and cultural amenities. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local governments and land bank authorities, zoning boards
 - **CASE STUDY:** Park Forest, Illinois (Malls to Mainstreet): A suburban mall revitalization project in Chicago’s southern metropolitan area where a public agency, the Village of Park Forest, is owner and master developer. Downtown Park Forest is a 48-acre project with Village Hall, independent- and assisted-living facilities, retail, office, and cultural center that create a central downtown. This site was once an abandoned greyfield.
<http://www.cnu.org/sites/files/mallsintomainstreets.pdf>
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- **Policy: Adopt Expedited Permitting and Review Policies for compact development and location-efficient homes and businesses:** While permitting and review processes play an important role in ensuring newly built or renovated homes and apartments meet health, safety, environmental, and other standards, a lengthy or complex approvals process also can lead to unnecessary delays and increased expenses. Policies that expedite the permitting and review process reduce the time, cost, and risk of development. These policies can streamline the overall development approvals process for all homes.¹⁰ **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county government zoning boards, planning commissions, and departments of housing and code enforcement
- ✓ **Vibrant 2040 Initiative:** Include small-lot, compact single-family and townhouse residential designations in zoning codes throughout the region.

Recommendation FIVE: Enhance and coordinate the region's rail and bus services

Transit is a critical layer of infrastructure and community services in urban areas because it carries a large number of people in a small amount of travel space. This allows dense concentrations of employment—a hallmark of a vibrant economy—to be accessible to a larger workforce without an accompanying expansion to the road network. In Northeast Ohio, taxes raised at the county level support transit service within that county. With notable exceptions, there is limited inter-jurisdictional crossover or coordination of service between counties. Strategic coordination and connection of these different transit systems can offer one of the prime assets of any region: connecting people to jobs across county and municipal lines. This would allow the region to take advantage of its multiple employment and activity centers and position itself as a dynamic, integrated regional economy.

This kind of coordination happens at multiple scales: it involves regional route planning to coordinate and enhance services along important regional corridors, but it also involves inter-jurisdictional coordination of service schedules, stop locations, and other more detailed factors of transit service to ensure that different transit agencies' local systems work together to provide high quality region-wide service. At its heart, though, this recommendation is intended to take advantage of the ongoing commitment of Northeast Ohio communities to public transit, find greater strength in this service through strategic coordination, and enhance the existing transit services to become more than the sum of their parts.

Supportive policies:

- **Policy: Create a comprehensive regional transit plan that crosses county boundaries:** Regional public transportation coordination focuses on maximizing the benefits of the public transportation investments through the coordination of services. Currently, there is no overall regional transit plan for northeast Ohio. **Implementation Actor(s):** Transit agencies, MPO's, and ODOT.
- ✓ **Vibrant 2040 Initiative:** Invest in a regional network of bi-directional public transit connections between Northeast Ohio's major job centers

¹⁰ http://www.housingpolicy.org/toolbox/strategy/policies/expedite_permitting.html

- **Policy: Establish a Regional Planning and Public Transportation Study Group:** The mission of the Study Group would be to review current public transportation planning and programming practices within metropolitan, suburban, and rural areas of northeast Ohio and to enhance service delivery, customer satisfaction, efficiency and effectiveness. **Implementation Actor(s):** Transit agencies, MPO's, and ODOT

- **Policy: Support an increased emphasis on public transportation, including buses, passenger rail, and other modes as a principal way to meet the mobility and access needs of Northeast Ohio:** Transportation planning should seek opportunities to provide safe, secure modal choices that contribute to healthy lifestyle choices and an accommodating environment for transit users from the beginning to the end of the trip. Transit facilities and services have the potential to guide compact, mixed-use, walkable development patterns that can lower housing and transportation costs, while providing choices to people of all ages and abilities to improve mobility and access.¹¹ **Implementation Actor(s):** Transit agencies, MPO's, and ODOT
 - ❖ **TOOL:** AMATS Public Transportation Needs Assessment - <http://www.amatsplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Public-Transportation-Needs-Report.pdf>

- **Policy: Support an integrated, multimodal approach to transportation planning that links land use and transportation decision making to create sustainable communities of lasting value:** Our regions and our communities benefit when transportation planning takes place within a broad context and where it can be integrated with local comprehensive plans, environmental stewardship, socio-cultural awareness, economic opportunity, and resource conservation.¹² **Implementation Actor(s):** Transit agencies, MPO's, and ODOT, local, county, and state governments.
 - **BEST PRACTICE:** Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) (Greater Cleveland RTA (Health Line/Euclid Ave): The GCRTA refurbished 8.3 miles of historic Euclid Avenue as part of the Euclid Corridor Transportation Project. The transit project has helped catalyze \$4.7 billion in spin-off investment and 11.4 million square feet of new and planned development, offering a successful example of the economic leverage potential for BRT.

Recommendation SIX: Enhance walking and cycling as transportation options to increase regional mobility and improve public health

Walking, biking, and transit use often provide the most desirable means for making short trips, but across entire regions it can be harder to define a meaningful and significant role for them—especially when policy and funding decisions are being made. However, with the increases in housing and transportation costs in the last three decades, more and more attention has been given to affordability and how transportation is a

¹¹ http://www.amatsplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Transportation-Outlook-2035_FINAL.pdf

¹² <https://www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/surfacetransportation.htm>

part of that. These two factors are interrelated: the affordability of transportation cannot be fully separated from overall affordability of housing and household cost of living. This suggests that true affordability in transportation and housing relies on choices being provided for both, including available choices of housing close to employment and other basic services and available choices of transportation modes that do not mandate the high costs of automobile ownership and maintenance.

To allow transportation choice to support dynamic economic growth, Northeast Ohio can begin focusing throughout the region on improving the quality and accessibility of its alternatives to driving alone. When compared to the costs of car ownership, walking, bicycling and public transit are considerably more affordable commuting options, allowing household income to be conserved for other needs and priorities such as housing and savings as well as contributing to overall public health. However, these means of travel are not available or attractive to a broad section of Northeast Ohio's population if the region's transportation system is not equipped to carry them safely and conveniently. Regional efforts should focus on how to extend transit's service offerings so that it is convenient and direct, how to integrate local and regional travel options seamlessly, and how to ensure that the longer distance connections made possible through better transit are accessible to riders—especially those reaching transit on foot or by bicycle.

Cities and metropolitan regions best positioned to attract the emerging high-skilled industries of the 21st century are those that offer high quality of life and public amenities. Although walking, biking, and transit use are inherently options for transportation, they can also facilitate connections to recreation; cultural, sporting, and entertainment events; and other such attractions that Northeast Ohio already has in abundance. The low cost of these travel options and relatively low cost of adding transit service and bicycle and pedestrian networks to these infrastructure projects suggest that these forms of travel can be effective ways for the region to take advantage of more of its assets—and in so doing position itself as a more affordable and attractive place to live—without taking on major public expense to do so.

Supportive policies:

- **Policy: Promote healthy communities through access to healthy foods, recreational opportunities and safe housing:** A healthy community promotes healthy food options, including fresh produce stores and farmers markets, physical activity and contact with natural areas, adequate jobs that pay living wages and opportunities for building equity through the design of its built environment. Lack of adequate and safe affordable housing may force families to seek any form of shelter, compromising their health and well-being. This can result in overcrowding, substandard housing, longer work commutes and other deficiencies.¹³ **Implementation Actor(s) –** Local and county public health, planning, housing and economic development departments
- **Policy: Adopt a Complete Streets policy:** Local governments should integrate a “complete streets” approach into their transportation planning and funding decisions. These policies require agencies to balance the needs of all users in the planning, design and construction of all transportation projects. This allows users of all ages and abilities including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists,

¹³ <http://www.healthycommunitiesbydesign.org/Content/10010/HealthImpacts.html>

transit riders, older people, children and those with disabilities – to move safely along and across a network of complete streets. Good multi-modal facilities along major roads can reduce congestion by providing an alternative to short-distance car trips. ¹⁴ **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county governments, elected officials

- **BEST PRACTICE:** City of Cleveland Complete and Green Streets Ordinance - The City of Cleveland passed a Complete and Green Streets ordinance in September 2011. In effect as of January 2012, the ordinance requires implementation of sustainable policies and guidelines in all construction projects within the public right of way. This ordinance will create a walking, biking and public transportation-friendly city while reducing environmental impact by incorporating green infrastructure.

<http://www.gcbl.org/files/resources/ordinance798-11completeandgreenstreets.pdf>

- **Policy: Increase state funding for public transit and other alternative modes of transportation.** Ohio should set aside at least \$75 million each year in funding into a designated fund used to expand Ohio's transportation choices, and ramp up "transportation choices" funding to 10 percent of the state's transportation budget by 2025.
- **Policy: Encourage connected street networks:** Localities should aim to develop connected street networks. Often the development streets will usually be disconnected from each other. Providing multiple routes for regional and neighborhood traffic creates a more flexible system and a safer ride for other modes of transportation. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local governments and MPO's unless it is a state route then ODOT.
- **Policy: Support bicycling as a viable transportation mode that includes development of connected on-road and off-road facilities designed to accommodate all types of users, as well as program elements that promote bicycle safety, encourage people of all ages to ride, provide education for better awareness, foster partnerships with law enforcement, and evaluate implementation efforts.** Bicycles provide an extremely efficient means of transportation, requiring less right-of-way space than vehicles. Bicycles also extend the reach of the non-motorized network to maximize geographic coverage without emitting greenhouse gases. ¹⁵ **Implementation Actor(s):** local and county governments, MPO's, ODOT, bike advocate groups.
- **Best Practice:** AMATS Bicycle and Pedestrian Needs Report - The purpose of this report is to identify and evaluate the bikeway and pedestrian needs of the region between now and 2030. The intent is to develop a regional network of interconnected bikeway and pedestrian facilities in order to connect communities and residential areas with jobs, shopping, schools, and other services. This regional bikeway and pedestrian network will also complement and connect to improvements planned at the local level.

¹⁴ <http://www.govinstitute.org/policyguide/pdfs/transportation.pdf>

¹⁵ <http://www.planning.org/policy/guides/pdf/surfacetransportation.pdf>

<http://www.amatsplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Bicycle-and-Pedestrian-Needs-Report1.pdf>

- ✓ **Vibrant 2040 Initiative:** Expand the existing bicycle lane and trail system and connect it to regional transit hubs via on-and-off street facilities.

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

Conservation is an arduous – and necessary – enterprise. According to a recently released report sponsored by the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, approximately 7 percent of the land area of Northeast Ohio is preserved. The study noted that this figure is considerably less than the 10-15 percent recommended by landscape ecologists familiar with the region.¹ The question of how and where this gap is filled is of critical importance to the region's future.

The region is uniquely positioned to leverage its hard-earned knowledge and capacity in natural resources management to tackle the challenges facing it. Organizing a collaboration of the various organizations and jurisdictions involved in management of the region's natural resources is the next critical task. This would gauge the level of interest and capacity of the region to entertain broader institutional restructurings around natural resource management.

Supportive policies:

- **Policy: Encourage and help local governments set and achieve land conservation goals:** Local land preservation efforts are critical to meeting statewide land preservation goals, but they can benefit from the State's technical and financial support. The State can support local efforts by inventorying open space and natural areas, as well as providing mapping support, technical information and assistance, training and matching funds that are contingent on demonstrated local leadership and a commitment to land conservation. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local governments.
- ❖ **TOOL:** Agricultural Easement Purchase Program - A permanent deed restriction, placed on a parcel or several parcels of active agricultural land. The deed restricts that "use" of the land for agriculture only, in perpetuity. <http://www.cvcountryside.org/farmland/neo-farmland-preservation-land-preservation.php>
- **Policy: Support legislation that incorporates agricultural land preservation into long range planning:** Two primary planning goals are to provide locations for necessary urban development and to protect natural resources. If growth is properly directed, the two should not come into conflict. Therefore, agricultural land preservation programs should not be independent of more general growth management programs. Agricultural land preservation is necessary to curb urban/suburban sprawl and re-focus development into existing downtowns and areas with

appropriate infrastructure.¹⁶ **Implementation Actor(s):** Local, county, and state of Ohio governments

- **Policy: Require development on properties with lake frontage to be designed and built to maximize visual and public access to and along the shore as well as require public amenities on site:** Northeast Ohio generally lacks overall development of its lake frontages and access to Lake Erie. There has been recent interest in engaging in more waterfront development, and with this interest policies need to be in place to manage how it gets done.¹⁷ **Implementation Actor(s):** Local, county and state departments of economic development, planning, and port authorities.
 - **PILOT:** Lakewood Lakefront Open Space Project - The project consists of the acquisition of approximately one acre of beach area on Lake Erie. In addition to public access the project provides for the introduction of appropriate native plantings; creates habitat; prevents erosion; and completes an aesthetically pleasing resource. <http://development.ohio.gov/cleanohio/>
- **Policy: Adopt a green infrastructure approach to open space, habitat and water resources:** The region can benefit in multiple ways by aligning open space, habitat and water resource programs to serve, where effective, as green infrastructure. Green infrastructure allows the integration of inter-related programs such as natural resources management, mapping, parks conservation, floodplain management and planning. It also requires an assessment of the full range of economic value and costs related to land conservation. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and County governments, and Ohio EPA.
 - **BEST PRACTICE:** Combined Sewer Overflow mitigation -The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District plans to spend \$42 million over the next several years on neighborhood "green infrastructure" projects aimed at reducing flooding and the discharge of untreated waste. <http://www.neorsd.org/cso.php>
 - ✓ **Vibrant 2040 Initiative:** 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.
- **Policy: Incorporate use of natural drainage systems to support water and sewer infrastructure.** Natural drainage systems, such as parking gardens and median strip landscaping, filter sediments and pollutants from water before they enter streams. They enhance the aesthetic and also save large amounts of energy and money that would otherwise be needed to pump the storm-water into a treatment facility.
 - **PILOT:** Green Street Project - Project that aims to beautify residential neighborhoods while reducing run-off from storm water; program also incentivizes residents to utilize sustainable solutions as residents who adapt the practices receive a discount on their NEORS D stormwater

¹⁶ <https://www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/agricultural.htm?print=true>

¹⁷ <http://www.cityofchicago.org/dam/city/depts/cdot/StreetandSitePlanDesignStandards407.pdf>

utility fee.

http://www.cleveland.com/insideout/index.ssf/2013/07/free_rain_barrels_gardens_prog.html#incart_river#incart_m-rpt-2

- **Policy:** *Support action to manage stormwater runoff and water pollution risks by encouraging appropriate land uses in areas of sensitive water resources, and supporting the establishment of local development standards that incorporate better site design and best management practices for managing impacts on surface- and ground-water resource:* Stormwater management has surfaced as a priority issue in northeast Ohio mainly due to the increasing of flooding. Stormwater should be considered a water resource instead of a waste product, with natural attenuation, infiltration, and recharge promoted over collection, transport, storage, treatment and discharge.¹⁸
Implementation Actor(s): Local and county sewer districts.

- **BEST PRACTICE:** Stark County Storm Water Management Program: A consortium established by the Stark County Regional Planning Commission was created to map storm water features in the urbanized area in Stark County, Ohio. This concept was mandated by the Ohio EPA and falls under the NPDES Phase II regulations.
<http://www.co.stark.oh.us/internet/docs/rpc/Storm%20Water%2009-14.pdf>

Recommendation EIGHT: Support sustainable agriculture and the local food system in Northeast Ohio

Urban agriculture has enjoyed insurgent popularity in recent years, as restaurateurs, public policy experts, and designers alike have become aware of the transformative potential and value of local food systems to community development. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated that local food systems accounted for over \$1.2 billion in direct-to-consumer sales of agricultural produce in 2007 alone, with ample room for growth¹. While this is a fraction of overall agricultural sales, the Federal government and numerous state and local governments see a host of benefits in encouraging urban agriculture and local food systems, from increased food security to reduced transportation costs and emissions and opportunities for community-building.

Cleveland and Northeast Ohio were early adopters of the urban agriculture movement and the importance of investing in a local food system. A host of organizations developed around this mission, filling multiple links in the food supply chain. The region should support the movement through amendments to zoning codes, procurement policies, and direct and indirect financial incentives. Initiatives focused on the reuse of vacant land should actively incorporate urban agriculture and local foods in the conversation.

Below are some recommended policies for the region to consider in its effort to strengthen and expand the region's vibrant local foods movement.

Supportive policies:

¹⁸ http://www.americanrivers.org/assets/pdfs/reports-and-publications/appendix_c2724.pdf

- **Policy: Encourage mixed-use neighborhood design and redevelopment to include small and mid-size grocery stores, seasonal farmers markets, community-based nutrition programs, and open space and related infrastructure for community vegetable gardens to allow residents to grow their own food:** On publicly owned lands, such as schoolyards, parks and greenways, and tax-foreclosed properties, support the development of vegetable gardens, edible landscaping, and related infrastructure, and the formation of partnerships with community-based nonprofits serving low-income residents for garden related programs.¹⁹ **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county governments and land bank authorities, local and regional farmers groups and associations and CDC's

 - **BEST PRACTICE:** Local Roots Market & Café – Local Roots is a market that provides a year-round outlet where shoppers can conveniently browse a variety of products from over 100 local producers. In addition to the market, Local Roots serves as an informal community center, hosting meetings of local organizations and presenting classes on topics such as gardening, healthy cooking, and crafts. <http://localrootswooster.com/>
- **Policy: Support and help develop policies, plans, and regulations in land use, transportation, economic development, and urban design so as to increase access to food sources that offer affordable and culturally appropriate healthful foods:** Research suggests that households' proximity to supermarkets is correlated with positive dietary health. Planning can facilitate the availability of and convenient access to retail grocery outlets. Besides grocery stores, mom-and-pop corner stores, farmers markets, farm stands, ethnic markets, and community vegetable gardens can offer access to healthful foods at low-cost to low-income and ethnic and racial minority households.²⁰ **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county governments and land bank authorities, Department of Agriculture, urban farming groups and associations.

 - **BEST PRACTICE:** Iron Roots Farm, Youngstown, OH - An urban market farm occupying 1.5 vacant acres of abandoned land. A vacant house on the property has been turned into a training center to encourage residents to farm vacant lots in the city. Youngstown has been investing in its local food economy as a part of an economic revitalization strategy following decades of loss in steel and manufacturing. <http://www.yndc.org/programs/iron-roots-urban-farm>
- **Policy: Support integrating food system elements into urban, rural, and regional economic development plans:** Incorporating food issues into economic development analyses and plans assures that the important economic contributions that the food sector makes to communities and regions are preserved and enhanced. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and County governments department of economic development, department of agriculture land bank authorities, zoning boards.

¹⁹ <http://www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/food.htm>

²⁰ <http://www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/food.htm>

- **BEST PRACTICE:** The Oberlin Project" local food system strategy –The growth of local food systems includes a comprehensive plan to increase local food processing and distribution, utilize waste as an input to local agriculture and promote urban agriculture. In the past year, the Oberlin Project has organized a network of local farmers who are exploring new production techniques that store large amounts of carbon in soil and plant biomass. This provides a promising solution to climate change, offsetting the carbon releases of the community through investments in farms in the surrounding area.
<http://www.oberlinproject.org/local-foods>

- ✓ **Vibrant 2040 Initiative:** Review and amend municipal ordinances to allow for small- and moderate-scale urban farming on occupied and vacant parcels.

- **PILOT:** Cleveland Urban Agriculture Incubator Pilot Project - Six acres of land at East 83rd and Gill, donated from the City Land Bank, will be turned into a farm, due to \$100,000 grants from the Ohio Department of Agriculture and the City of Cleveland, and \$740,000 from the Ohio State University Extension, via the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The goals of the incubator are to promote entrepreneurship and access to fresh produce in an area that sorely needs both. If successful, the model will be replicated in other neighborhoods.
http://blog.cleveland.com/metro/2010/10/new_program_to_create.html

Recommendation NINE: Increase collaboration among the region’s government agencies to expand information sharing and find more cost-effective means of providing essential services

Local governments throughout the United States are facing unprecedented fiscal pressure. The housing crisis and recession of 2006-2012 negatively impacted municipal revenue, leading in many cases to a downward cycle of cut services and increased debt. Federal and state governments, a hitherto reliable source of financial aid to budget-strapped municipalities, were unable to fill the gap to the degree needed.

This condition shows no sign of abatement in the foreseeable future. Most analysts forecast ever-shrinking discretionary Federal spending, meaning that Federal funding for urban infrastructure and service projects will be tied increasingly to performance and scale of impact. The State of Ohio likewise has reduced its contribution to the operating budgets of the state’s local communities. At every level of local government, Northeast Ohio communities must evaluate ways in which they can increase the efficiency with which public services and goods are delivered.

Northeast Ohio is well-positioned to develop and scale such practices. Already, some local governments in the region have become state and national practice leaders in consolidating and sharing services. The region should continue on this path.

Supportive policies:

- **Policy: Encourage shared services, inter-municipal and regional planning, joint taxation districts, and under some circumstances, where appropriate, local government consolidation:** Successful strategies to create stronger cities will require inter-municipal cooperation, in the sense of joint planning and activities by cities as their adjacent communities; and city county cooperation around key issues. ²¹ **Implementation Actor(s):** local and county governments.
 - **BEST PRACTICE:** Summit County Intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding for Job Creation and Retention and Tax Revenue Sharing: The Summit County Intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding for Job Creation and Retention and Tax Revenue Sharing (IMOU) is an agreement designed to encourage local subdivisions to cooperate on a regional basis and to refrain from “poaching” businesses from nearby subdivisions—that is, to refrain from offering economic incentives to induce employers to relocate. <http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/OhioAttorneyGeneral/files/82/82e99c3b-ade7-4574-8425-dd32017ffb5e.pdf>
 - **PILOT:** Four east-side Cuyahoga County communities – the Village of Moreland Hills, Orange Village, the City of Pepper Pike and the Village of Woodmere - are cooperatively participating in a Shared Services/Merger Study that will identify the range of options to reduce costs and enhance efficiency in the provision of local government services. <http://mergerstudy.cuyahogacounty.us/>
 - ✓ **Vibrant 2040 Initiative:** Utilize joint procurement strategies and the sharing of facilities, staff, and other resources wherever possible to save money on the provision of public services.
- **Policy: Prioritize state funding to cities that adopt comprehensive plans that address the realities of population loss and the need for land reconfiguration.** ²² **Implementation Actor(s):** State of Ohio Departments of Transportation and Development Services agency
- **Policy: Build stronger local governance and partnerships:** While the growth of new economic sectors and stronger markets will ultimately transform cities, those changes may not take place unless the cities themselves build new and stronger local governance structures, reorganize operations, and build greater capacity. Partnerships must be created to bridge the public, nonprofit, and private sectors. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and County governments, private sectors, and various other regional entities.

²¹http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2010/5/18%20ohio%20cities%20mallach%20brachman/0518_ohio_cities_mallach_brachman.pdf

²²http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2010/5/18%20ohio%20cities%20mallach%20brachman/0518_ohio_cities_mallach_brachman.pdf

- ✓ **Vibrant 2040 Initiative:** Foster greater engagement between MPOs/COGs and organizations/initiatives that address natural resources, parks, sewer, public health, housing, education, private business, and economic development.
- **Policy: Encourage City-County Reorganization:** Reorganization of city and county functions offers the most dramatic change in the form of regional governance. It creates a more efficient governmental structure where the central city and county either merge entirely or combine certain services, such as planning or public utilities.²³ **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and County governments, and elected officials.
 - **BEST PRACTICE:** The Consolidation of the Health Departments in Summit County - In January 2011, the merger of the Summit County, Akron, and Barberton health districts took effect and became "Summit County Public Health".
<http://www.kent.edu/cpph/research/upload/final-scph-report.pdf>

²³

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2010/5/18%20ohio%20cities%20mallach%20brachman/0518_ohio_cities_mallach_brachman.pdf

VII. Policy Recommendations Implementation Timeline

The purpose here is to identify the optimal time needed with finite resources to fully explore and implement each supportive policy outlined in Section VI. Some of these policies are capable of being executed in the Short-term (A) approximately 1-5 years; or the Long-term (B) approximately 5 years and beyond.

A. Short Term Policies (Implementation is possible in approximately 1- 5 years)

- ***Nurture the Region's Industry Clusters:*** Organizing the region strategically around clusters of regional specialization can help target investment decisions and reduce duplication of effort. These efforts should focus on how to make the region's successful clusters grow and prosper and enable the region to be proactive in terms of funding and other opportunities.
 - ***Create a comprehensive regional transit plan that crosses county boundaries:*** Regional public transportation coordination focuses on maximizing the benefits of the public transportation investment through the coordination of services. Currently, there is no overall regional transit plan for northeast Ohio.
 - ***Emphasize a planning framework that is centered upon a regional corridor and network approach versus individual facilities and projects:*** Maintaining focus on the corridors and the regional transportation network allows for better coordination of planning and implementation at a regional scale, championing regionally significant projects and seeking implementation funding for regional priorities.
 - ***Develop a regional multimodal system plan:*** A Multimodal System Plan is a comprehensive look at all the modal transportation networks in an area, whether auto, transit, bicycle or pedestrian, along with the key land use destinations and centers that they are connecting.
 - ***Support redevelopment of vacant and abandoned properties where infrastructure and services are already in place:*** Local and county governments should prioritize redevelopment of vacant and abandoned properties over development of greenfields. Local governments should also incentivize development of vacant land-or rehabilitation of existing structures-in areas where infrastructure and services are already in place. The incentives should focus on substantial rehabilitation/improvement abandoned properties. Prime locations for infill development include downtowns, transit corridors and locations near employment, shopping, and recreational and cultural amenities.
 - ***Provide incentives to encourage people to live near work or transit:*** Encourage people to live in walkable communities by providing targeted incentives to those who chose to live "location-efficient neighborhoods". Located in proximity to existing transit routes or within walking distance of services and entertainment.
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- ***Reshape disinvested areas into green areas:*** The last element by which urban reconfiguration takes place is through reshaping areas where housing market demand no longer exists into green areas integrated into the city's fabric, from community gardens and mini-parks to urban farms or natural stream corridors.
 - ***Incorporate "Fix-It-First" as the central principle guiding transportation investment decisions:*** A fix-it-first strategy prioritizes infrastructure spending to support the maintenance and upgrading of existing structures and facilities, instead of incurring the cost of constructing or installing new infrastructure. It also maximizes the value of past investments, minimizes the use of state funds on new projects, stretches limited resources and reinvests in revitalizes existing communities.
 - ***Adopt Expedited Permitting and Review Policies for compact development and location-efficient homes and businesses:*** While permitting and review processes play an important role in ensuring newly built or renovated homes and apartments meet health, safety, environmental, and other standards, a lengthy or complex approvals process also can lead to unnecessary delays and increased expenses. Policies that expedite the permitting and review process reduce the time, cost, and risk of development. These policies can streamline the overall development approvals process for all homes.
 - ***Establish a Regional Planning and Public Transportation Study Group:*** The mission of the Study Group would be to review current public transportation planning and programming practices within metropolitan, suburban, and rural areas of northeast Ohio and to enhance service delivery, customer satisfaction, efficiency and effectiveness.
 - ***Support an increased emphasis on public transportation, including buses, passenger rail, and other modes as a principal way to meet the mobility and access needs of Northeast Ohio:*** Transportation planning should seek opportunities to provide safe, secure modal choices that contribute to healthy lifestyle choices and an accommodating environment for transit users from the beginning to the end of the trip. Transit facilities and services have the potential to guide compact, mixed-use, walkable development patterns that can lower housing and transportation costs, while providing choices to people of all ages and abilities to improve mobility and access.
 - ***Support bicycling as a viable transportation mode that includes development of connected on-road and off-road facilities designed to accommodate all types of users, as well as program elements that promote bicycle safety, encourage people of all ages to ride, provide education for better awareness, foster partnerships with law enforcement, and evaluate implementation efforts.*** Bicycles provide an extremely efficient means of transportation, requiring less right-of-way space than vehicles. Bicycles also extend the reach of the non-motorized network to maximize geographic coverage without emitting greenhouse gases.
 - ***Adopt a Complete Streets policy:*** Local governments should integrate a "complete streets" approach into their transportation planning and funding decisions. These policies require agencies to balance the needs of all users in the planning, design and construction of all transportation projects. This allows
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users of all ages and abilities including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, transit riders, older people, children and those with disabilities – to move safely along and across a network of complete streets. Good multi-modal facilities along major roads can reduce congestion by providing an alternative to short-distance car trips.

- **Create and apply green remediation concepts:** Such as maximizing the reuse of land and the recycling of materials, and conserving natural resources such as soil, water and habitat helps to achieve that objective.
- **Build stronger local governance and partnerships:** While the growth of new economic sectors and stronger markets will ultimately transform cities, those changes may not take place unless the cities themselves build new and stronger local governance structures, reorganize operations, and build greater capacity. Partnerships must be created to bridge the public, nonprofit, and private sectors.
- **Encourage mixed-use neighborhood design and redevelopment to include small and mid-size grocery stores, seasonal farmers markets, community-based nutrition programs, and open space and related infrastructure for community vegetable gardens to allow residents to grow their own food:** On publicly owned lands, such as schoolyards, parks and greenways, and tax-foreclosed properties, support the development of vegetable gardens, edible landscaping, and related infrastructure, and the formation of partnerships with community-based nonprofits serving low-income residents for garden related programs.
- **Support and help develop policies, plans, and regulations in land use, transportation, economic development, and urban design so as to increase access to food sources that offer affordable and culturally appropriate healthful foods:** Research suggests that households' proximity to supermarkets is correlated with positive dietary health. Planning can facilitate the availability of and convenient access to retail grocery outlets. Besides grocery stores, mom-and-pop corner stores, farmers markets, farm stands, ethnic markets, and community vegetable gardens can offer access to healthful foods at low-cost to low-income and ethnic and racial minority households.
- **Support integrating food system elements into urban, rural, and regional economic development plans:** Incorporating food issues into economic development analyses and plans assures that the important economic contributions that the food sector makes to communities and regions are preserved and enhanced.
- **Require development on properties with lake frontage to be designed and built to maximize visual and public access to and along the shore as well as require public amenities on site:** Northeast Ohio generally lacks overall development of its lake frontages and access to Lake Erie. There has been recent interest in engaging in more waterfront development, and with this interest policies need to be in place to manage how it gets done.

- ***Encourage and help local governments set and achieve land conservation goals:*** Local land preservation efforts are critical to meeting statewide land preservation goals, but they can benefit from the State's technical and financial support. The State can support local efforts by inventorying open space and natural areas, as well as providing mapping support, technical information and assistance, training and matching funds that are contingent on demonstrated local leadership and a commitment to land conservation.
 - ***Support action to manage stormwater runoff and its attendant water pollution risks by encouraging appropriate land uses in areas of sensitive water resources, and supporting the establishment of local development standards that incorporate better site design and best management practices for managing impacts on surface- and ground-water resource:*** Stormwater management has surfaced as a priority issue in northeast Ohio mainly due to the increasing of flooding. Stormwater should be considered a water resource instead of a waste product, with natural attenuation, infiltration, and recharge promoted over collection, transport, storage, treatment and discharge.
 - ***Incorporate use of natural drainage systems to support water and sewer infrastructure.*** Natural drainage systems, such as parking gardens and median strip landscaping, filter sediments and pollutants from water before they enter streams. They enhance the aesthetic and also save large amounts of energy and money that would otherwise be needed to pump the storm-water into a treatment facility.
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B. Long Term (Implementation is possible in approximately 5+ years)

- ***Support targeted investments in transportation infrastructure and services designed to connect clusters, improve workforce mobility, and promote vibrant communities.*** How we plan our transportation networks, and allocate resources within them, plays a large role in making our economy more diversified and resilient. Targeted investments will improve the region's economic competitiveness in the global economy and foster greater economic resilience. Job creation and retention are major challenges facing much of the country, as well as northeast Ohio. Transportation planning can play a key role in shaping the regions' economy and also has the ability to shape our communities into vibrant places that attract and retain high-wage workers who can choose where they live and work, particularly next generation workers.
 - ***Rebuild the central core of the regions legacy cities:*** Rebuilding the central core of legacy cities often constitutes the first step in the regeneration of a city and subsequently the region. If the physical fabric of the area is largely intact, the combination of density and a walkable, urban texture with proximity to major institutions and employers creates significant opportunities for regeneration driven by residential development.
 - ***Incentivize neighborhood investments to promote various types of infill development:*** Local governments should use infill incentives to promote the development of vacant land-or rehabilitation of existing structures-in already urbanized areas where infrastructure and services are in place. The incentives should focus on substantial rehabilitation/improvement and new construction. Prime locations for infill development include downtowns, transit corridors and locations near employment, shopping, and recreational and cultural amenities.
 - ***Increase state funding for public transit and other alternative modes of transportation.*** Ohio should set aside at least \$75 million each year in funding into a designated fund used to expand Ohio's transportation choices, and ramp up "transportation choices" funding to 10 percent of the state's transportation budget by 2025.
 - ***Promote greyfield redevelopment:*** The availability of existing infrastructure, convenient location, and land area of greyfields offers the opportunity to create mixed-use developments with diverse housing options. Local governments can play an important role in redeveloping greyfields by removing regulatory barriers, such as rigid zoning codes, and providing incentives for development.
 - ***Ensure zoning regulations allow housing type diversity:*** Many communities within northeast Ohio have zoning policies that make it difficult or impossible to develop multifamily or other types of housing. Restrictive zoning policies also limit the ability to accommodate the needs and preferences of a community's changing demographics. Through a comprehensive revision of zoning policies, communities can expand and diversify the local supply of homes to meet the needs of a changing population.
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- ***Create incentives and develop funding mechanisms and regulations to promote the rehabilitation, reuse, and maintenance of the region's cities:*** Focusing efforts to preserve and expand compact residential development on locations near public transit stops (Transit Oriented Development) and essential destinations such as employment and retail centers.
 - ***Support an integrated, multimodal approach to transportation planning that links land use and transportation decision making to create sustainable communities of lasting value:*** Our regions and our communities benefit when transportation planning takes place within a broad context and where it can be integrated with local comprehensive plans, environmental stewardship, socio-cultural awareness, economic opportunity, and resource conservation.
 - ***Encourage connected street networks:*** Localities should aim to develop connected street networks. Often the development streets will usually be disconnected from each other. Providing multiple routes for regional and neighborhood traffic creates a more flexible system and a safer ride for other modes of transportation.
 - ***Develop and promote innovative clean up strategies:*** Developing and promoting innovative cleanup strategies that restore contaminated sites to productive use, promote environmental stewardship, and reduce associated costs while minimizing ancillary environmental impacts from these cleanups. Consider cleanups in the context of the larger environment and consistently and pro-actively apply more sustainable methods to remediate the site while still protecting public health and the environment and striving to achieve the established cleanup goals.
 - ***Encourage shared services, inter-municipal and regional planning, joint taxation districts, and under some circumstances, where appropriate, local government consolidation:*** Successful strategies to create stronger cities will require inter-municipal cooperation, in the sense of joint planning and activities by cities as their adjacent communities; and city county cooperation around key issues.
 - ***Prioritize state funding to cities that adopt comprehensive plans that address the realities of population loss and the need for land reconfiguration.***
 - ***Support legislation that incorporates agricultural land preservation into long range planning:*** Two primary planning goals are to provide locations for necessary urban development and to protect natural resources. If growth is properly directed, the two should not come into conflict. Therefore, agricultural land preservation programs should not be independent of more general growth management programs. Agricultural land preservation is necessary to curb urban/suburban sprawl and re-focus development into existing downtowns and areas with appropriate infrastructure.
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- ***Encourage City-County Reorganization:*** Reorganization of city and county functions offers the most dramatic change in the form of regional governance. It creates a more efficient governmental structure where the central city and county either merge entirely or combine certain services, such as planning or public utilities.
 - ***Adopt a green infrastructure approach to open space, habitat and water resources:*** The region can benefit in multiple ways by aligning open space, habitat and water resource programs to serve, where effective, as green infrastructure. Green infrastructure allows the integration of inter-related programs such as natural resources management, mapping, parks conservation, floodplain management and planning. It also requires an assessment of the full range of economic value and costs related to land conservation.
 - ***Create eco-industrial parks on brownfields.*** Cities can bring together local businesses and manufacturers to share services, transportation infrastructure, energy, and waste streams in order to enhance environmental and economic performance via collaboration in resource management. One company's waste can be another company's productive input.
 - ***Promote healthy communities through access to healthy foods, recreational opportunities and safe housing:*** A healthy community promotes healthy food options, including fresh produce stores and farmers markets, physical activity and contact with natural areas, adequate jobs that pay living wages and opportunities for building equity through the design of its built environment. Lack of adequate and safe affordable housing may force families to seek any form of shelter, compromising their health and well-being. This can result in overcrowding, substandard housing, longer work commutes and other deficiencies.
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VIII. Top Ten Regional Priority Policies

After analysis of the goals and recommendations of the Vibrant NEO2040 Vision document; the following ten policies surfaced as the most essential and when implemented will help usher Northeast Ohio into a new vibrant and sustainable region. Each policy is nested under the applicable high-level THEME(S) and aforementioned RECOMMENDATION(S) originating from the Vibrant NEO 2040 Vision document.

Theme: Strengthen Established Communities

Recommendation ONE: Focus new residential and commercial development on sites within established communities

- ***Policy: Rebuild the central core of the regions legacy cities:*** Rebuilding the central core of legacy cities often constitutes the first step in the regeneration of a city and subsequently the region. If the physical fabric of the area is largely intact, the combination of density and a walkable, urban texture with proximity to major institutions and employers creates significant opportunities for regeneration driven by residential development. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county governments and land bank authorities.
- ***Policy: Incorporate "Fix –It-First" as the central principle guiding transportation investment decisions:*** A fix-it-first strategy prioritizes infrastructure spending to support the maintenance and upgrading of existing structures and facilities, instead of incurring the cost of constructing or installing new infrastructure. It also maximizes the value of past investments, minimizes the use of state funds on new projects, stretches limited resources and reinvests in revitalizes existing communities. **Implementation Actor(s):** MPO's, ODOT, and local and county governments.

Recommendation TWO: Develop a robust network of regional job centers connected by multimodal transportation corridors within and between counties

- ***Policy: Support targeted investments in transportation infrastructure and services designed to connect clusters, improve workforce mobility, and promote vibrant communities.*** How we plan our transportation networks, and allocate resources within them, plays a large role in making our economy more diversified and resilient. Targeted investments will improve the region's economic competitiveness in the global economy and foster greater economic resilience. Job creation and retention are major challenges facing much of the country, as well as northeast Ohio. Transportation planning can play a key role in shaping the regions' economy and also has the ability to shape our communities into vibrant places that attract and retain high-wage workers who can choose where they live and work, particularly next generation workers. **Implementation Actor(s):** MPO's, public transit agencies, ODOT, and local and county economic development and planning departments.

Recommendation THREE: Pursue the remediation, assembly, marketing, and redevelopment of abandoned properties at both the local and regional levels

- **Policy: Develop and promote innovative clean up strategies:** Developing and promoting innovative cleanup strategies that restore contaminated sites to productive use, promote environmental stewardship, and reduce associated costs while minimizing ancillary environmental impacts from these cleanups. Consider cleanups in the context of the larger environment and consistently and pro-actively apply more sustainable methods to remediate the site while still protecting public health and the environment and striving to achieve the established cleanup goals. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county governments, EPA, Clean Ohio/Jobs Ohio

Recommendation FOUR: Encourage a higher frequency of mixed-use development and a range of diverse, affordable housing options

- **Policy: Incentivize neighborhood investments to promote various types of infill development:** Local governments should use infill incentives to promote the development of vacant land-or rehabilitation of existing structures-in already urbanized areas where infrastructure and services are in place. The incentives should focus on substantial rehabilitation/improvement and new construction. Prime locations for infill development include downtowns, transit corridors and locations near employment, shopping, and recreational and cultural amenities. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and county governments and land bank authorities.

Theme: Increase Transportation Choice**Recommendation FIVE: Enhance and coordinate the region's rail and bus services**

- **Policy: Create a comprehensive regional transit plan that crosses county boundaries:** Regional public transportation coordination focuses on maximizing the benefits of the public transportation investment through the coordination of services. Currently, there is no overall regional transit plan for northeast Ohio. **Implementation Actor(s):** MPO's, public transit agencies, and ODOT

Recommendation SIX: Enhance walking and cycling as transportation options to increase regional mobility and improve public health

- **Policy: Increase state funding for public transit and other alternative modes of transportation.** Ohio should set aside at least \$75 million each year in funding into a designated fund used to expand Ohio's transportation choices, and ramp up "transportation choices" funding to 10 percent of the state's transportation budget by 2025.

Theme: Preserve and Protect Natural Resources

Recommendation SEVEN: Preserve our natural areas for future generations, provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and develop a regional approach to protecting air, water, and soil

- ***Policy: Support legislation that incorporates agricultural land preservation into long range planning:*** Two primary planning goals are to provide locations for necessary urban development and to protect natural resources. If growth is properly directed, the two should not come into conflict. Therefore, agricultural land preservation programs should not be independent of more general growth management programs. Agricultural land preservation is necessary to curb urban/suburban sprawl and re-focus development into existing downtowns and areas with appropriate infrastructure.
Implementation Actor(s): Local, county, and state of Ohio governments.
 - ***Policy: Adopt a green infrastructure approach to open space, habitat and water resources:*** The region can benefit in multiple ways by aligning open space, habitat and water resource programs to serve, where effective, as green infrastructure. Green infrastructure allows the integration of inter-related programs such as natural resources management, mapping, parks conservation, floodplain management and planning. It also requires an assessment of the full range of economic value and costs related to land conservation. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local and County governments, and Ohio EPA
 - ***Policy: Help local governments set and achieve land conservation goals:*** Local land preservation efforts are critical to meeting statewide land preservation goals, but they can benefit from the State's technical and financial support. The State can support local efforts by inventorying open space and natural areas, as well as providing mapping support, technical information and assistance, training and matching funds that are contingent on demonstrated local leadership and a commitment to land conservation. **Implementation Actor(s):** Local governments
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IX. Key Strategies for Policy Implementation

This report offers four strategies that can help with implementation of the previously stated policies and recommendations. These steps are not meant to be linear: planning and implementing for a sustainable region is a continual process and some of these strategies, such as Education and Outreach, must be an ongoing part of the region's work. In many cases, there is already work underway in some of the region, but it needs to continue. These strategies are written as such so they are applicable to multiple communities within the NEO footprint.²⁴

1. Identify Champions and Key Stakeholders

In regions around the U.S., the combination of a catalytic issue and a key champion has created the synergy needed to meaningfully advance sustainable regional development. A catalytic issue might be transit construction, a funding crisis, or an influx or decrease of federal funding. A champion might be a mayor or team of mayors, a consortium of business leaders, or an influential community leader.

2. Conduct Education and Outreach

One of the biggest challenges to creating programs and implementing policies that encourage sustainability principles in Northeast Ohio is that area leaders and residents often do not understand why or how sustainable regional development can benefit their communities. Seminars and workshops can help stakeholders understand the potential benefits and can give them the vocabulary they need to make the case for sustainable regional development to their own constituents or communities.

3. Coordinate Planning Efforts

Often plans are created at different levels of government and in isolation from one another. The coordination of planning among governments is an important strategy for addressing many challenges that go beyond geographical or political jurisdictions such as those related to transportation, housing, economic development, and the environment.

4. Align Resources and Create a Financing Strategy

Identifying the necessary resources can be the most challenging step in implementing a regional vision. It is important to keep the big picture in mind when making investment and development decisions.

²⁴ <http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/CPEX-One-Great-Region.pdf>

X. Term Glossary

AMATS - Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study

BRT – Bus Rapid Transit

CDC – Community Development Corporation

COG – Council of Governments

EPA – Environmental Protection Agency

FHEA - Fair Housing Equity Assessment

FTA – Federal Transit Administration

GCRTA – Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority

HUD – US Department of Housing and Urban Development

MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization

NEFCO - Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization

NEO – Northeast Ohio

NEOSCC – Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium

NOACA – Northeast Area Wide Coordinating Agency

ODOT – Ohio Department of Transportation

SCATS – Stark County Area Transportation Study

TOD – Transit Oriented Development

XI. Vibrant 2040 Vision Products Integration Matrix

This matrix gives a summary of all the supportive policies, best practices, tools, pilots, and case studies as outlined in Section VI as well as linking these items to key regional indicators that are described in the Vibrant NEO 2040 Vision Document. The goal is to show the close relationship and linkage between each Vibrant NEO product and the comprehensive Vibrant NEO 2040 vision document.

	SUPPORTIVE POLICIES: LINKAGE TO VISION PRODUCTS			
Recommendation ONE: Focus new residential and commercial development on sites within established communities				
POLICIES	PILOTS	BEST PRACTICES	TOOLS	REGIONAL INDICATOR(S)
<i>Support redevelopment of vacant and abandoned properties where infrastructure and services are already in place</i>	Relmaging Cleveland: Alternative land use strategies used in this initiative to return vacant land to productive use in ways that complement the City of Cleveland's long-term development objectives and empowers residents to reclaim their neighborhood.	Regenerating Youngstown and Mahoning County Through Vacant Property Reclamation: Reforming Systems and Right-Sizing Markets- In partnership with the Youngstown-Mahoning County Vacant Properties Initiative, the National Vacant Properties Campaign designed a work plan and proposal for a regional assessment of vacant properties in the City of Youngstown and Mahoning County, in Ohio	Vacant Property Registry - Safeguard Properties maintains a registry of communities dealing with abandoned bank-owned properties, often referred to as REO (Real Estate Owned) properties	Housing Vacancy, Urban and mulit-family housing, Existing road infrastructure
<i>Rebuild the central core of the region's legacy cities</i>				Housing Vacancy, Development location % of development in urbanized and urbanizing area, Transit Proximity: jobs & people, Existing road infrastructure maintenance
<i>Incorporate "Fix-It-First" as the central principle guiding transportation investment decisions</i>		Michigan "Preserve First Program" - In April 2003, the Michigan DOT established the Preserve First program. This program set goals of having 95 percent of freeways and 85 percent of non-freeways in "good" condition to increase the life of roads to 50 years.		Existing road infrastructure maintenance, Roadway investment balance

<i>Promote greyfield redevelopment</i>		Park Forest, Illinois (Malls to Mainstreet): A suburban mall revitalization project in Chicago's southern metropolitan area where a public agency, the Village of Park Forest, is owner and master developer. Downtown Park Forest is a 48-acre project with Village Hall, independent- and assisted-living facilities, retail, office, and cultural center that create a central downtown. This site was once an abandoned greyfield.		Development location: % of development in urbanized and urbanizing area, Urban and multi-family housing
<i>Reshape disinvested areas into green space</i>		In March 2011, the Land Conservancy launched a region-wide effort to help revitalize urban centers. The Thriving Communities Institute was chosen because of all the connotations the word <i>thriving</i> holds for urban centers: flourishing, prospering, blossoming, and successful.		Housing Vacancy
Recommendation TWO: Develop a robust network of regional centers connected by multimodal transportation corridors within and between counties				
POLICIES	PILOTS	BEST PRACTICES	TOOLS	REGIONAL INDICATOR(S)
<i>Nurture the Region's Industry Clusters</i>				
<i>Support targeted investments in transportation infrastructure and services designed to connect clusters, improve workforce mobility, and promote vibrant communities</i>		The Northeast Florida Regional Transportation Study Funnel Diagram - The diagram is designed to ensure that only projects that can demonstrate a regional benefit in terms of facilitating mobility and most importantly, support access to labor markets and jobs will be eligible.		Transit proximity: jobs & people, roadway investment balance
<i>Emphasize a planning framework that is centered upon a regional corridor and network approach versus individual facilities and projects</i>		College Town Kent: College Town Kent is a \$30 million dollar mixed-use district that leverages pedestrian scale urban design to connect and enhance the relationship between Kent State University and its historic downtown environment. It contains 32 residential units and 150,000 sq. ft. of office/retail.		

<i>Develop a regional multimodal system plan</i>		Indianapolis MPO Multimodal Systems - March 2009. An example of the networks in a large region that shows the network connectivity for each travel mode derived from the Regional Pedestrian Plan.		Roadway investment balance, Commute - mode share, VMT per capita
<i>Create a comprehensive regional transit plan that crosses county boundaries</i>				Roadway investment balance, Commute - mode share, Transit proximity: jobs & people, VMT per capita
Recommendation THREE: Pursue the remediation, assembly, marketing, and redevelopment of abandoned properties at both the local and regional levels				
POLICIES	PILOTS	BEST PRACTICES	TOOLS	REGIONAL INDICATOR(S)
<i>Develop and promote innovative clean up strategies</i>		Clean Ohio Projects – There are many Clean Ohio projects across the region and state that have local and county coordination.		
<i>Create eco-industrial parks on brownfields</i>				
<i>Create and apply green remediation concepts</i>		9 month Green Jobs Training Program for at-risk youth adds deconstruction curriculum in Youngstown: Students learn the basics of building deconstruction and building material salvage. Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation partners with the Youngstown Metropolitan Housing Authority, Reuse Consulting, Landscapers, Mahoning County One Stop, Western Reserve Building Trade Council, churches and others		
Recommendation FOUR: Encourage a higher frequency of mixed-use development and a range of diverse, affordable housing options				
POLICIES	PILOTS	BEST PRACTICES	TOOLS	REGIONAL INDICATOR(S)
<i>Ensure zoning regulations allow housing type diversity</i>				Urban and multifamily housing

<i>Create incentives and develop funding mechanisms and regulations to promote the rehabilitation and reuse of transit accessible locations connecting workers to the region's town and employment centers</i>		New Jersey Urban Transit Hub Tax Credit -Offered by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, this program offers tax credit to developers, landowners or tenants to encourage private capital investment around rail transit stations. To qualify for the tax credit, the capital investment must be at least \$50 million in a single business facility that employs at least 250 people		Commute - mode share, Transit proximity: jobs & people, VMT per capita
		Illinois Business Location Efficiency Act -The Illinois Department of Commerce provides 10% tax credits to business selecting sites within one mile of affordable housing and public transportation. The incentives are part of a larger economic development program that provides tax incentives for businesses to locate in Illinois when they are actively considering a competing location in another state		
<i>Provide incentives to encourage people to live near work or transit</i>	Greater Circle Living Program: Housing assistance program for employees in the Greater University area and is designed as an incentive for people to live near work.			Urban and multifamily housing, Housing + Transportation costs, Commute - mode share, Transit proximity: jobs & people, VMT per capita
<i>Incentivize neighborhood investments to promote various types of infill development</i>				Housing vacancy, Urban and multifamily housing, Housing + Transportation costs, VMT per capita
<i>Adopt Expedited Permitting and Review Policies for compact development and location-efficient homes and businesses</i>				Urban and multifamily housing, Housing + Transportation costs, Commute - mode share, VMT per capita
Recommendation FIVE: Enhance and coordinate the region's rail and bus services				
POLICIES	PILOTS	BEST PRACTICES	TOOLS	REGIONAL INDICATOR(S)
<i>Create a comprehensive regional transit plan that crosses county boundaries</i>				Roadway investment balance, Commute - mode share, Transit proximity: jobs & people, VMT per capita

<i>Establish a Regional Planning and Public Transportation Study Group</i>				
<i>Support an increased emphasis on public transportation, including buses, passenger rail, and other modes as a principal way to meet the mobility and access needs of Northeast Ohio</i>			AMATS Public Transportation Needs Assessment	Roadway investment balance, Commute - mode share, Transit proximity: jobs & people, VMT per capita
<i>Support an integrated, multimodal approach to transportation planning that links land use and transportation decision making to create sustainable communities of lasting value</i>		Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) (Greater Cleveland RTA (Health Line/Euclid Ave): The GCRTA refurbished 8.3 miles of historic Euclid Avenue as part of the Euclid Corridor Transportation Project. The transit project has helped catalyze \$4.7 billion in spin-off investment and 11.4 million square feet of new and planned development, offering a successful example of the economic leverage potential for BRT.		Roadway investment balance, Commute - mode share, Transit proximity: jobs & people, VMT per capita
Recommendation SIX: Enhance walking and cycling as transportation options to increase regional mobility and improve public health				
POLICIES	PILOTS	BEST PRACTICES	TOOLS	REGIONAL INDICATOR(S)
<i>Adopt a Complete Streets policy</i>		City of Cleveland Complete and Green Streets Ordinance - The ordinance requires implementation of sustainable policies and guidelines in all construction projects within the public right of way and create a walking, biking and public transportation-friendly city while reducing environmental impact by incorporating green infrastructure		Roadway investment balance, Commute - mode share, VMT per capita
<i>Increase state funding for public transit and other alternative modes of transportation</i>				Roadway investment balance, Commute - mode share, Transit proximity: jobs & people, VMT per capita
<i>Promote healthy communities through access to healthy foods, recreational opportunities and safe housing</i>				
<i>Encourage connected street networks</i>				Roadway investment balance, Commute - mode share

<i>Support bicycling as a viable transportation mode that includes development of connected on-road and off-road facilities designed to accommodate all types of users, as well as program elements that promote bicycle safety, encourage people of all ages to ride, provide education for better awareness, foster partnerships with law enforcement, and evaluate implementation efforts</i>		AMATS Bicycle and Pedestrian Needs Report - The purpose of this report is to identify and evaluate the bikeway and pedestrian needs of the region between now and 2030. The intent is to develop a regional network of interconnected bikeway and pedestrian facilities in order to connect communities and residential areas with jobs, shopping, schools, and other services. This regional bikeway and pedestrian network will also complement and connect to improvements planned at the local level.		Roadway investment balance, Commute - mode share, VMT per capita
Recommendation SEVEN: Preserve our natural areas for future generations, provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and develop a regional approach to protecting air, water, and soil quality				
POLICIES	PILOTS	BEST PRACTICES	TOOLS	REGIONAL INDICATOR(S)
<i>Encourage and help local governments set and achieve land conservation goals</i>			Agricultural Easement Purchase Program - A permanent deed restriction, placed on a parcel or several parcels of active agricultural land. The deed restricts that "use" of the land for agriculture only, in perpetuity.	Open Space conservation: acres of parks and protected land
<i>Support legislation that incorporates agricultural land preservation into long range planning</i>				Open Space conservation: acres of parks and protected land
<i>Require development on properties with lake frontage to be designed and built to maximize visual and public access to and along the shore as well as require public amenities on site</i>	Lakewood Lakefront Open Space Project - The project consists of the acquisition of approximately one acre of beach area on Lake Erie. In addition to public access the project provides for the introduction of appropriate native plantings; creates habitat; prevents erosion; and completes an aesthetically pleasing resource			
<i>Adopt a green infrastructure approach to open space, habitat and water resources</i>		Combined Sewer Overflow mitigation -The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District plans to spend \$42 million over the next several years on neighborhood "green infrastructure" projects aimed at reducing flooding and the discharge of untreated waste		Open space conservation: acres of parks and protected land, clean water

<i>Incorporate use of natural drainage systems to support water and sewer infrastructure</i>	Green Street Project - Project that aims to beautify residential neighborhoods while reducing run-off from storm water; program also incentivizes residents to utilize sustainable solutions as residents who adapt the practices receive a discount on their NEORS D stormwater utility fee.			
<i>Support action to manage stormwater runoff and water pollution risks by encouraging appropriate land uses in areas of sensitive water resources, and supporting the establishment of local development standards that incorporate better site design and best management practices for managing impacts on surface- and ground-water resource</i>		Stark County Storm Water Management Program: A consortium established by the Stark County Regional Planning Commission was created to map storm water features in the urbanized area in Stark County, Ohio. This concept was mandated by the Ohio EPA and falls under the NPDES Phase II regulations.		Clean water
Recommendation EIGHT: Support sustainable agriculture and the local food system in Northeast Ohio				
POLICIES	PILOTS	BEST PRACTICES	TOOLS	REGIONAL INDICATOR(S)
<i>Encourage mixed-use neighborhood design and redevelopment to include small and mid-size grocery stores, seasonal farmers markets, community-based nutrition programs, and open space and related infrastructure for community vegetable gardens to allow residents to grow their own food</i>		Local Roots Market & Café – Local Roots is a market that provides a year-round outlet where shoppers can conveniently browse a variety of products from over 100 local producers. In addition to the market, Local Roots serves as an informal community center, hosting meetings of local organizations and presenting classes on topics such as gardening, healthy cooking, and crafts.		

<p><i>Support and help develop policies, plans, and regulations in land use, transportation, economic development, and urban design so as to increase access to food sources that offer affordable and culturally appropriate healthful foods</i></p>			<p>Iron Roots Farm, Youngstown, OH - An urban market farm occupying 1.5 vacant acres of abandoned land. A vacant house on the property has been turned into a training center to encourage residents to farm vacant lots in the city. Youngstown has been investing in its local food economy as a part of an economic revitalization strategy following decades of loss in steel and manufacturing</p>	
<p><i>Support integrating food system elements into urban, rural, and regional economic development plans</i></p>	<p>Cleveland Urban Agriculture Incubator Pilot Project - Six acres of land at East 83rd and Gill, donated from the City Land Bank, will be turned into a farm, due to \$100,000 grants from the Ohio Department of Agriculture and the City of Cleveland, and \$740,000 from the Ohio State University Extension, via the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The goals of the incubator are to promote entrepreneurship and access to fresh produce in an area that sorely needs both. If successful, the model will be replicated in other neighborhoods.</p>	<p>The Oberlin Project" local food system strategy –The growth of local food systems includes a comprehensive plan to increase local food processing and distribution, utilize waste as an input to local agriculture and promote urban agriculture. In the past year, the Oberlin Project has organized a network of local farmers who are exploring new production techniques that store large amounts of carbon in soil and plant biomass. This provides a promising solution to climate change, offsetting the carbon releases of the community through investments in farms in the surrounding area</p>		
<p>Recommendation NINE: Increase collaboration among the region's government agencies to expand information sharing and find more cost-effective means of providing essential services</p>				
POLICIES	PILOTS	BEST PRACTICES	TOOLS	REGIONAL INDICATOR(S)

<i>Encourage shared services, inter-municipal and regional planning, joint taxation districts, and under some circumstances, where appropriate, local government consolidation</i>	Four east-side Cuyahoga County communities – the Village of Moreland Hills, Orange Village, the City of Pepper Pike and the Village of Woodmere - are cooperatively participating in a Shared Services/Merger Study that will identify the range of options to reduce costs and enhance efficiency in the provision of local government services.	Summit County Intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding for Job Creation and Retention and Tax Revenue Sharing: The Summit County Intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding for Job Creation and Retention and Tax Revenue Sharing (IMOU) is an agreement designed to encourage local subdivisions to cooperate on a regional basis and to refrain from “poaching” businesses from nearby subdivisions—that is, to refrain from offering economic incentives to induce employers to relocate.		
<i>Prioritize state funding to cities that adopt comprehensive plans that address the realities of population loss and the need for land reconfiguration</i>				Development location: % of development in urbanized and in urbanizing area, Housing vacancy rate, Existing road infrastructure
<i>Build stronger local governance and partnerships</i>				
<i>Encourage City-County Reorganization</i>		The Consolidation of the Health Departments in Summit County - In January 2011, the merger of the Summit County, Akron, and Barberton health districts took effect and became “Summit County Public Health”.		