



EcoCity Cleveland

IDEAS AND TOOLS FOR A SUSTAINABLE BIOREGION

\$2

Volume 7, Numbers 8-9 Sept/Oct 2000

Editor: David Beach

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First annual
Bioregional Hero Awards



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Americans want smart growth



Open space on the ballot



Good words

I am convinced that just beneath the surface of our national psyche lies a grassroots movement as potentially powerful as the environmental movement of the last several decades.

Whether you call this the "anti-sprawl," the "smart growth," or "livable communities" movement, it reflects a growing public awareness that communities have choices in how they grow and develop.

They don't have to accept the nondescript and dysfunctional sprawl that has dominated the dockets of local planning commissions for the last 50 years.

—Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation

If you think you're too small to make a difference, you've never been in bed with a mosquito.

— Activist in Seattle

Help us discover design principles for the region. Don't miss our "Images of the Western Reserve" events on Nov. 11 and 14!! See p. 11 for details.

SATURATED WITH STORES



Sprawling retail development is transforming the character of communities throughout Northeast Ohio. While the region experienced a slight loss of population over the past 30 years, it became over-saturated with retail and is continuing to add new developments in outlying suburbs and rural areas. Current zoning could allow three times the amount of existing retail to be built in this already over-saturated market. The economic and environmental costs to the region are enormous.

See pages 8-9

***Backyard techniques for protecting urban streams:
Special insert included with this issue***

Transitions

Several months ago we regretfully said goodbye to our project manager, Brad Flamm, who moved on to seek a Ph.D. in city and regional planning at the University of California at Berkeley. During the past three years Brad played a big role in the success of EcoCity Cleveland. As our transportation planning expert, he was an important civic watchdog over the activities of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, ODOT, the Greater Cleveland RTA, and other agencies. He also managed our *Citizens' Bioregional Plan* project and was a voice for sustainability on numerous community task forces and committees. His thoughtful voice and many skills will be missed in Northeast Ohio.

While we were sorry to lose Brad, we were delighted at the high caliber of candidates who applied to fill his position. We finally hired Ryan McKenzie, who for the past several years has been a leading transportation activist in the region, focusing on improving transit use and facilities for bicycling. He has been a leader in the "Rack & Roll" project to get bike racks on buses, and he played a key role in the development of the *Car-Free in Cleveland* guidebook, which EcoCity Cleveland helped publish. Ryan has a masters degree in urban studies from the Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University. He is a member of RTA's Citizens Advisory Board and the NOACA Bicycle Advisory Subcommittee, and he is a trustee of the Cleveland Waterfront Coalition and the Northeast Ohio Regional Alliance. With all of his experience, we are looking forward to having him on our team.



Thanks

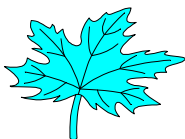
We'd like to thank the following foundations for recent grants: The Cleveland Foundation for support of our communications and networking activities, the Raymond John Wean Foundation for operating support, and the George W. Codrington Foundation for support of our "Images of the Western Reserve" project.

We'd also like to thank the following design and engineering firms for supporting a second printing of our popular *Citizens' Bioregional Plan* publication: Behnke Associates, City Architecture, CT Consultants, Davey Resource Group, D.B. Hartt Inc., Montgomery Watson Americas, PKG Consultants, Sandvick Architects Inc., Schmidt Copeland Parker Stevens, Urban Conservation & Design, and URS Corporation. Special thanks to Tom Zarfoss of Behnke Associates for helping to organize the fundraising.

— David Beach
Editor

P.S. Sorry if you received multiple copies of our recent postcard about the "Images of the Western Reserve" events coming up on November 11 and 14. In an effort to spread the word as widely as possible, we mailed to the lists of a number of co-sponsoring organizations. Although we did

our best to weed out duplicate names, many people were on several lists in different formats. If you did get an extra postcard, we hope you were able to pass it on to a friend who might be interested in our programs.



Mission

EcoCity Cleveland is a nonprofit, tax-exempt, educational organization.

Through the publication of the *EcoCity Cleveland Journal* and other programs, it will stimulate ecological thinking about the Northeast Ohio region (Cuyahoga Bioregion), nurture an EcoCity Network among local groups working on urban and environmental issues, and promote sustainable ways to meet basic human needs for food, shelter, productive work and stable communities.

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Published monthly, except for occasional special issues. Unless otherwise noted, all articles and photographs are by David Beach. Submissions from others are welcome, but please call first. We cannot be responsible for unsolicited materials.

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Supported by foundation grants, subscriptions and individual donations.

Printed at Orange Blossom Press in Cleveland on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper using soy-based inks.

ISSN 1084-0885

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"Bioregional Heroes" recognized at first annual member party

More than 250 friends and supporters packed the *Steamship William G. Mather* on August 3 for EcoCity Cleveland's first annual Member Party and Bioregional Hero Awards Celebration.

"The evening gave our members a chance to meet and share ideas with each other, our trustees and staff," said Phil Star, president of EcoCity Cleveland's board of trustees. "And it was an opportunity to celebrate not just EcoCity Cleveland but also the many other people and organizations doing great work in the region."

The program included remarks by EcoCity trustee and Shaker Heights mayor Judy Rawson on the growing influence EcoCity Cleveland is having in planning and political circles throughout the region. EcoCity director David Beach described how the organization has evolved from a newsletter in 1993 into an organization that now has a range of projects related to planning for open space preservation in the region, urban design, transportation alternatives, and neighborhood redevelopment using environmental thinking.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of Bioregional Hero Awards to outstanding individuals and organizations who have improved the long-term quality of life in Northeast Ohio by balancing environmental integrity, social justice and economic prosperity.

This year's winners were:

- **Lifetime achievement:** Jim Bissell, curator of botany at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, for many years of work discovering the biological diversity of Northeast Ohio and establishing a system of nature preserves to protect the region's endangered habitats.

- **Visionary:** Ohio Canal Corridor founders and director (Tom Yablonsky, Jeff Lennartz, and Tim Donovan), for pioneering work to envision the Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor and the Cleveland Metroparks Canal Reservation.

- **Public official:** Kenneth Montlack, vice mayor of Cleveland Heights and chair of the First Suburbs Consortium, for his work to organize the First Suburbs and to speak for the needs of older communities in Greater Cleveland.

- **Development project of the year:**



Meeting in the hold: Members and friends gathered in the *Steamship Mather* for EcoCity Cleveland's first annual member party on August 3.

- Adam J. Lewis Center for Environmental Studies at Oberlin College, for demonstrating cutting-edge green design and making ecology a living part of the curriculum.

- **Alternative transportation:** The Bicycle Advisory Subcommittee of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (Robert Parry, committee chair, and Sally Hanley, staff), for making bicycles an integral part of transportation planning in the region.

- **Messenger:** Steven Litt, art and architecture critic of *The Plain Dealer*, for helping to raise the standards of urban design in Northeast Ohio.

- **Community activist:** Laurel Hopwood, for countless hours of volunteer work with the Sierra Club on the issues of pesticide use and bioengineering.

- **Best new organization or program:** Cleveland Green Building Coalition and the Redesigning Cleveland for the 21st Century Speakers Series, for raising awareness of the potential for green development to reduce

human impact on the planet while being economically successful.

- **Newcomer:** David Abbott, president of University Circle Inc., for advancing a new urban design aesthetic for the Circle that seeks to reverse years of domination by the automobile and create great places for people.

Each award recipient received a framed print of an original painting by local artist Kate Pilacky. Her work focuses on the Northeast Ohio bioregion – evoking both its beauty and its environmental problems.

We plan to make the Bioregional Awards an annual event, and we are already starting to collect nominees for next year. Please think about who is making a difference in the region, and send us your suggestions (for both people to honor and award categories).

Thanks to Firststar Bank and Dollar Bank for their support of this year's event. And special thanks to the staff of the *Steamship Mather* for hosting us in their awe-inspiring ship. □

Big-ticket projects nominated for state funding

Each year the board of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) puts together a wish list of new transportation projects to submit for state funding. The process is a major opportunity to bring funds to the region for important transportation work.

This year's top regional priority is the SR 237/Hopkins Airport access project, which includes improved access for both passenger and freight movements. Most of the other projects, aside from GCRTA transit centers, are designed to temporarily alleviate traffic congestion in growing areas of the region. The Industrial Parkway project in Lorain County is a long-planned access road that would open up land (and many wetlands) for industrial development on the west side of Elyria.

The full list of recommended projects follows:

1. SR 237/Hopkins Airport Access, Cuyahoga (\$16.5 million)
2. Bagley-Pleasant Valley, Cuyahoga (\$12.2 million)
3. GCRTA Transit Centers, Cuyahoga (\$18.7 million)
4. Snow-Rockside, Cuyahoga (\$9 million)
5. SR 84/Bishop Road, Lake (\$5.8 million)
6. SR 18, Medina (\$9.2 million)
7. Industrial Parkway, Lorain (\$5.9 million)
8. Tower Boulevard, Lorain (\$2.5 million)
9. US 322/ Mayfield Rd, Cuyahoga (\$9 million)
10. SR 237/ Front Street, Cuyahoga (\$6.1 million)
11. Crocker/Stearns Roads, Cuyahoga (\$22.4 million)

Budget limitations of the Ohio Department of Transportation will likely mean that only the top few projects will be approved for funding this year. For more information, contact NOACA at 216-241-2414, or see www.dot.state.oh.us/TRAC.

RTA:

More rides, less funding?

Northeast Ohioans have taken 500,000 more rides on the Greater Cleveland Regional



Outrage of the month

Inaccessible malls: Many local shopping malls, such as the new SouthPark Mall in Strongsville, refuse to allow buses to drop riders at the mall entrance. Here the stop is along busy SR 82, and transit riders must cross acres of pedestrian-unfriendly parking lots to reach the mall. Even though malls are major public destinations, they are private property and mall owners say they can exclude whomever they want.

Transit Authority (GCRTA) in the first three quarters of 2000 than in the same period of 1999 – an increase of 1.1 percent. The increase has been led by an expanding number of community circulators, whose ridership is up more than 50 percent for the year. The American Public Transit Association reports a nationwide increase of more than 4 percent this year, with overall ridership up 19 percent since 1995.

Despite the increase in customers, GCRTA is worried about its budget, with rising fuel costs a particular source of concern. Officials say that revenues are not keeping up with projected expenses, while a half-dozen communities are demanding their own community circulators. In response, the agency has incrementally cut service on some of its most popular routes, and it is cutting frequencies on many circulator routes in order to reallocate limited equipment to new ones.

This bridge is made for walking and biking?

More than 3,000 people took advantage of Cuyahoga County Engineer Robert Klaiber's tours of the Veterans Memorial Bridge lower level during several October weekends. The lower deck, closed since 1954, once carried streetcars over the Cuyahoga River between downtown's Superior Avenue and Ohio

City's Detroit Avenue. Many people have noted its potential as a world-class bicycle and pedestrian link.

Meanwhile, Cleveland Public Art (formerly the Committee for Public Art) is gearing up for a design project that will explore turning the bridge's outer traffic lanes into exclusive pedestrian/bike/art space. When the lanes were added in the late 1960s, beautiful promenade sidewalks were chopped from 15 feet to only five. Traffic demand was later shifted to I-90, but the underutilized outer lanes remain a barrier to safe walking and biking.

Klaiber is open to working with all ideas but cautions that the County Commissioners own the bridge and have the final word on any change.

Blaming the pedestrian

Several pedestrians have been killed by motorists in downtown Cleveland this year, and the city recently responded by announcing a high-profile crackdown on jaywalking. Meanwhile, no plans have surfaced yet to slow traffic, better define crosswalks, or give walkers more time to cross streets safely.

Nationally, more than five percent of trips are made on foot and 13 percent of all traffic fatalities are pedestrians, yet states spend less than one percent of their federal funds on pedestrian safety projects.

Between cities

■ **Intercity rail gaining momentum in Congress:** The Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers reports that Congress is considering the High-Speed Rail Investment Act. The bill would authorize Amtrak to sell \$10 billion in high-speed rail bonds over the next 10 years and dramatically upgrade passenger rail service.

■ **Ohio embraces passenger rail:** In May of this year, we reported on the Ohio Rail Development Commission's (ORDC) recommendation that the Ohio Department of Transportation not invest in Cleveland-Columbus rail service. Since then, it seems that the state has had a change of heart. ORDC recently applied to the Federal Railroad Administration for a high-speed corridor designation for the 3-C corridor (Cleveland - Columbus - Dayton - Cincinnati). If approved, this designation will make the corridor eligible for federal funds (such as the bond funds noted above). Ohio and Amtrak are also discussing a new passenger rail service between Boston and St. Louis that would serve the corridor. Ohio would finance a fleet of rail cars to carry time-sensitive freight shipments, whose revenues would cover Amtrak's cost of providing passenger rail service at competitive prices. Service would begin in late 2002.

■ **Ohio embraces more highways:** The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), in cooperation with the Indiana Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is considering the construction of the US 24 bypass – an 80-mile, interstate-grade highway between Toledo and Fort Wayne, Indiana. Thousands of acres of farmland and habitat would be paved under the proposal. Activists with the Western Lake Erie Group of the Sierra Club are instead asking the agencies to enhance the safety and traffic efficiency features of the existing two-lane highway. FHWA and ODOT are accepting public comments through November 12, 2000. For more information, contact Shannon Harps of the Sierra Club Ohio Chapter at ohsc@igc.org or 614-461-0734.



Rack & Roll

Transit agencies for Toledo, Columbus and Cincinnati pledged this summer to join more than 200 agencies in 40 states that offer bike racks on buses. In northeast Ohio, Lorain County Transit began offering the racks on nine buses in August, Greater Cleveland RTA has successfully completed a road test with one bus, and the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) is coordinating the purchase of 265 racks for all six transit agencies in its five-county territory.

GCRTA has committed to offering the new service next spring on nearly a quarter of its buses, but the agency has yet to designate an official project manager. Activists from Alt-Trans Cleveland are calling for GCRTA to follow industry leaders by appointing an agency-wide Bike & Ride coordinator. The coordinator would oversee implementation of the Rack & Roll program, explore a bikes-on-rail pilot project, and otherwise enhance the integration of transit and bicycle services.

Cleveland planning for livability

The Cleveland City Planning Commission kicked off efforts to update the city's *Civic Vision Citywide Plan* with several October public meetings. The plan, whose theme is "improving the quality of life in Cleveland's neighborhoods," will help guide neighborhood development and revitalization in the city for the next ten years. The need to connect neighborhoods with safe bicycle infrastructure seems to be a strong theme among city staff.

NOACA's volunteer Bicycle Advisory Subcommittee continues to review all road projects for ways to make them safer for bicycling. Though the once-per-month meetings have made a positive contribution, the region needs at least one full-time engineer in a public agency to design safe bike and pedestrian improvements.

Is sprawl making us sick?

The American Medical Association is calling obesity "an epidemic," noting that more than half of adult Americans are overweight or obese. In an editorial in its journal, the AMA noted that car trips have replaced trips that used to be made on foot or by bicycle, and it says helping people get back to walking or bicycling should be a first target in combating the obesity epidemic. But it also noted, "Reliance on physical activity as an alternative to car use is less likely to occur in many cities and towns unless they are designed or retro-fitted to permit walking or bicycling."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has concurrently launched an initiative in support of Active Community Environments (ACEs). "Most communities are designed to favor one mode of travel – the automobile – and usually do not have many sidewalks or bicycle trails. Building roads, schools, shopping centers, and other places of interest only for the convenient use of cars often keeps people from being able to safely walk around town, ride bicycles, or play outdoors. This is one important reason why people in the United States are not as active as they used to be."

For more information, go to www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/ace.htm.



Americans are realizing that walkable streets and transportation choices can improve quality of life.

Americans want smarter growth

Fed up with traffic congestion and haphazard growth, Americans favor “smart growth” to reduce traffic congestion, preserve existing communities and protect the environment and open space, according to a new national poll.

Commissioned by Smart Growth America, a new nationwide coalition of over 60 public interest groups, the poll shows that 78 percent of Americans support policies to curb sprawl, the uncontrolled and wasteful development that is damaging the environment and draining resources from established communities. Over 80 percent of respondents think government should give priority to maintaining services and infrastructure in established communities before subsidizing new sprawl. Over 80 percent also favors more cooperation on growth management among local governments, creating zones for green space and farmland, and tax incentives to renovate older houses and revitalize economically depressed neighborhoods.

The study also cites other evidence that Americans’ attitudes towards growth are changing: rapid increase in the use of public transportation, strong voter support for smart growth ballot measures, and increased demand for housing in cities and close-in suburbs.

In addition, the poll shows Americans support the policies that can curb sprawl: 66 percent of respondents said they support requiring all new residential developments to have at least 15 percent affordable homes. And 60 percent of respondents favor investing more in public transit even if it reduces funding available for highway construction. Seventy-seven percent support making neighborhoods more pedestrian-friendly instead of building new highways.

“We’ve definitely touched a nerve,” said Don Chen, the Washington, DC-based coalition’s director. “People believe that sprawl and traffic are out of control, and the vast majority want more open space, reliable public transit and neighborhood reinvestment. All the evidence shows that Americans support smarter growth, and our elected officials had better start paying attention.”

For a copy of the report and the poll results, go to www.smartgrowthamerica.com or call 202-974-5132. Other informative Web sites include the Sprawl Watch Clearinghouse at www.sprawlwatches.org and the Smart Growth Network at www.smartgrowth.org.

What is smart growth?

Smart growth can be defined by its outcomes—outcomes that mirror the basic values of most Americans. Smart growth is development that helps to achieve these six goals:

1. Neighborhood livability: The central goal of any smart growth plan is the quality of the neighborhoods where we live. They should be safe, convenient, attractive and affordable. Sprawl development too often forces trade-offs between these goals. Some neighborhoods are safe but not convenient. Others are convenient but not affordable. Too many affordable neighborhoods are not safe. Careful planning can help bring all these elements together.

2. Better access, less traffic: One of the major downfalls of sprawl is traffic. By putting jobs, homes and other destinations far apart and requiring a car for every trip, sprawl makes everyday tasks a chore. Smart growth’s emphasis on mixing land uses, clustering development, and providing multiple transportation choices helps us manage congestion, pollute less and save energy. Those who want to drive can, but people who would rather not drive everywhere or don’t own a car have other choices.

3. Thriving cities, suburbs and towns: Smart growth puts the needs of existing communities first. By guiding development to already built-up areas, money for investments in transportation, schools, libraries and other public services can go to the communities where people live today. This is especially important for neighborhoods that have inadequate public services and low levels of private investment. It is also critical for preserving what makes so many places special—attractive buildings, historic districts and cultural landmarks.

4. Shared benefits: Sprawl leaves too many people behind. Divisions by income and race have allowed some areas to prosper while others languish. As basic needs, such as jobs, education and health care, become less plentiful in some communities, residents have diminishing opportunities to participate in their regional economy. Smart growth enables all residents to be beneficiaries of prosperity.

5. Lower costs, lower taxes: Sprawl costs money. Opening up green space to new development means that the cost of new schools, roads, sewer lines, and water supplies will be borne by residents throughout metro areas. Sprawl also means families have to own more cars and drive them further. This has made transportation the second highest category of household spending, just behind shelter. Smart growth helps on both fronts. Taking advantage of existing infrastructure keeps taxes down. And where convenient transportation choices enable families to rely less on driving, there’s more money left over for other things, like buying a home or saving for college.

6. Keeping open space open: By focusing development in already built-up areas, smart growth preserves rapidly vanishing natural treasures. From forests and farms to wetlands and wildlife, smart growth lets us pass on to our children the landscapes we love. Communities are demanding more parks that are conveniently located and bring recreation within reach of more people. People are also beginning to realize that protecting natural resources will provide healthier air and cleaner drinking water.

Open space on the November ballot

Ohio conservation bond issue

State Issue 1 on the November ballot will give Ohio voters an opportunity to approve up to \$400 million in bonds for conservation and revitalization projects. As proposed, \$200 million will be allocated for cleanup of brownfield sites and other urban revitalization initiatives. The other \$200 million will be used to preserve greenspace and farmland, to protect rivers and streams, and to expand Ohio's system of recreational trails and greenways.

The issue has strong, bipartisan backing (Gov. Bob Taft and former Senator John Glenn are co-chairs of the campaign). And it is endorsed by most conservation groups, who hope that the funds will begin to improve the state's poor record of land protection. Currently, Ohio ranks 47th among states in the amount of public recreational land per capita.

Several environmental groups, however, have withheld support because of concerns that the brownfields funding would provide money for the cleanup of contaminated sites under Ohio's voluntary cleanup program, which the groups believe allows unsafe cleanup standards and lets polluters off the hook. Some also are concerned that the legislature will write implementation language that will allow the funds to be misspent for pork barrel development projects.

For more information, see www.cleanohio.com.

Portage Parks

Will Portage County decide it's time for a real park district? On November 7, residents will vote on a 1-mill property tax levy for the Portage Park District to support the creation and operation of a system of parks and trails. Unlike other park districts in the region, the Portage district has no dedicated funding. Two previous levy attempts have failed.

"This is a pivotal time for Portage County," says park director Christine Craycroft. "We are growing rapidly, and land prices are rising. Yet there is virtually no funding available for conservation. Growing communities treasure rural character, clean air and clean water, but we need to balance growth and conserve those resources now before opportunities are lost

forever."

For more information about the levy, call 330-678-4411.

Geauga Parks

Geauga County voters will decide on a 1-mill levy to increase funding for the Geauga Park District. The funds will allow the park district to preserve more land and increase park services and nature education opportunities.

"The face of Geauga County is changing," says park director Tom Curtin. "Forests, wetlands, farmlands and watersheds are being increasingly fragmented into residential and commercial lots. In the past 25 years nearly 57,000 acres of Geauga County's natural areas have been developed (see maps on back page). Compare this with the 4,878 acres the Geauga Park District has been able to preserve in the past 40 years. We must act now if we are to preserve the natural areas of Geauga County."



Edison Woods

Erie County voters will determine the fate of one of the largest remaining forests on the Ohio Lake Plain – the 1,400-acre Edison Woods. A small, 0.4-mill tax levy is on the ballot so that the Erie Metroparks can purchase the property from FirstEnergy, which had assembled the land years ago for a nuclear power plant. The state has already committed \$750,000 toward the \$4.5 million purchase price. If the tax levy fails, FirstEnergy will likely sell the ecologically significant land to developers. For more information, call Friends of Edison Woods at 419-625-7136.

West Creek

On November 7 Parma voters will decide on a \$3 million bond issue for purchase of 100 acres of woodlands in the West Creek Area. The land at Broadview and Ridgewood roads is now owned by Gannett Communications. The grassroots West Creek Preservation Committee has been working hard to preserve land in the long-neglected West Creek valley. It also has raised funds for the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission to conduct a watershed master plan for park and trail development.

Winners

■ The American Public Transit Association recently named **Laketran**, the public transit agency for Lake County, the best transit system of its size in the country. The award recognizes systems for demonstrated achievements in efficiency and effectiveness. Laketran has increased ridership 73 percent over the past five years.

■ It looks like **Mill Creek** won't have to be destroyed in order to be saved. The Ohio EPA ruled recently that the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District can't dump shale from a sewer tunneling project on a floodplain forest along the creek in Cuyahoga Heights. EPA staff recognized that it was ludicrous to improve water quality with the sewer project and then harm water quality and stream habitat with the dumping. The dumping also would have affected plans for a recreational trail connecting the Mill Creek waterfall with the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail.

■ The Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area celebrated its 25th anniversary this summer, and now it has a new name to celebrate – the **Cuyahoga Valley National Park**. Although the new federal designation won't change the park's management or funding, it will increase the park's prestige and eliminate confusion about what the heck is a national recreation area.

■ The **Cascade Locks Bikeway**, an important link in the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, received a big boost recently with a \$500,000 grant for design and construction from the Knight Foundation. The 2.5-mile section of trail is challenging because it rises several hundred feet in elevation to the summit of the canal in downtown Akron. Other trail and greenway planning also is progressing in Summit County. For more information, see the Web site of the Metro Parks Serving Summit County at www.neo.rr.com/MetroParks/greenway/index.html.

■ The Ohio Chapter of the American Institute of Landscape Architects has given an award of merit for stream restoration work on **Furnace Run**. The project involved the Metro Parks Serving Summit County and Environmental Design Group Inc. of Akron.

■ **Bald eagles** continue to make a comeback in Northern Ohio, a signal that the birds' reproduction is being affected less by toxic chemicals. A record 62 active nests produced 89 eaglets this year, according to the Ohio Division of Wildlife. Most nests are in the marshlands of the western Lake Erie area, but this year's count also included two eaglets near Lake Rockwell in Portage County, one along Tinkers Creek in Summit County, and two in Killbuck Marsh State Wildlife Area in Wayne County.

Saturated with stores

Modern retailing is a cutthroat game of real estate speculation among national chains. Typically the winner is the chain that moves quickest to monopolize prime locations and flood the market with its stores. And the rules of the game are set by national marketing plans and the short-term demands of Wall Street for rapid growth.

Where does this leave local communities? In many cases, it leaves them out of control. They are buffeted by changing retail trends that have little to do with long-term quality of life – trends that may impose long-term costs that outweigh the tax benefits of new development.

In an effort to understand how haphazard retail development is shaping Northeast Ohio, local planning agencies recently completed a regional retail study that documents impacts on land use, transportation, tax base and the environment. The study area included Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Medina and Portage counties, as well as the northern portion of Summit County.

Here are some of the disturbing findings.

Land use

- New types of retail enterprises have significantly accelerated the pace of change in retail patterns. These new types require larger stores with more diverse merchandise lines, including “category killers,” warehouse clubs and supercenters. These retailing forms require larger tracts of land for both store structures and parking.

- The seven-county region already has more than 37 square feet of convenience and shopping floor space per capita, which is more than the typical 20-30 square feet range in other metropolitan areas. It’s estimated that the amount of space devoted to convenience and shopping goods and services in the region exceeds the demand



Big boxes: New retail chains have greatly expanded the amount of land consumed by commercial uses in Northeast Ohio.

by more than 6 million square feet.

- While there are more than 10 million square feet of vacant retail space in Northeast Ohio (a vacancy rate of 7.4 percent), a total of 10.1 million square feet has been recently constructed or proposed for the region.

- There is an overwhelming amount of undeveloped land – 77 square miles, or an area the size of the City of Cleveland – zoned for more retail in the region. If all of this were developed, more than three times the amount of existing retail space could be built in an already saturated market. Rural counties, such as Medina, Geauga and Portage, could experience increases of 860 percent to 1,500 percent.

- Locations with large amounts of commercially zoned land at the edges of the region’s urbanized area include State Routes 8, 82 and 14 in northern Summit County; Routes 18, 42 and 94 in northern Medina County; Route 43 in Geauga and Portage County; and Routes 10, 254 and U.S. 20 in eastern Lorain County. Locations with commercial land in more rural areas include Route 83 in Eaton and Grafton Townships in Lorain County and Routes 83 and 162 in Chatham Township in Medina County. Much of Route 20 in eastern Lake County and Route 14 in southeastern Portage County are also zoned for retail use.

Competition within the region

- There is a spatial mismatch between the location of proposed development and areas that are underserved. Many of the underserved areas have traffic access, infrastructure and population densities to support additional retail but are bypassed in favor of more easily developable locations.

- Currently, Lake County and the Chagrin-Southeast portion of Cuyahoga County have the largest surpluses of retail space relative to their populations, while the City of Cleveland has the largest deficit. Lorain County and the Westshore and Southwest portions of Cuyahoga County have the next largest surpluses, while Geauga County and the Heights area of Cuyahoga County have the next largest deficits. Medina and Portage counties have the best balance of retail space relative to their populations.

- Overbuilding results in new retail space that competes with existing commercial districts in the region, often leading to lower rents, more marginal businesses, increased vacancies in older retail areas, and reduced tax revenues for school districts and communities.

- There is sales leakage from central cities and older suburbs, as consumers

For more information

The *Northeast Ohio Regional Retail Analysis* was prepared by the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission for the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency. The study is available on the Web sites of the planning commission (<http://planning.co.cuyahoga.oh.us/>) or NOACA (www.noaca.org). For more information, call the planning commission at 216-443-3700.

travel out to new areas to shop.

- The proliferation of national retailers threatens locally owned businesses that provide uniqueness and special character to retail districts.

Taxes and costs

- Most of the proposed, large-scale retail projects are planned in outlying communities of Cuyahoga County or in surrounding counties.

Considerable public subsidies in the form of transportation enhancements, infrastructure improvements and city services will likely be required. Funding for these public improvements is often limited and competes with other priorities.

- Community tax revenue that is generated by new retail development is often offset by the local government costs of providing additional infrastructure and public safety services, the softening of the revenue from existing businesses, and the costs of environmental mitigation.

Environmental impacts

- Retail land use is the source of a number of impacts on the environment. These include airborne pollutants from vehicular trips for shopping purposes, stormwater runoff quality and quantity, as well as noise, light pollution and degradation of community aesthetics. These impacts often extend well beyond the local jurisdiction in which they are located.



Polluting parking lots: Huge parking lots are seldom full of cars, but they pollute streams with stormwater runoff.

There is an overwhelming amount of undeveloped land – 77 square miles – zoned for more retail in the region.

- Excess parking capacity, common throughout many areas of Northeast Ohio, unnecessarily increases the amount of stormwater that washes directly into urban streams. This runoff carries with it significant levels of petroleum, nitrogen, heavy metals, and sediment, which contributes to the degradation of streams, rivers, and lakes.

- Land area developed for retail use in the study area increases stormwater surface runoff by 874 million cubic feet annually. If all vacant land in the region currently zoned for retail use was developed, surface runoff could increase by an additional 3 billion cubic feet per year. This would have serious impacts on the remaining high quality streams in the region.

- Retail establishments are significant generators of traffic. Traffic associated with a typical large super-regional shopping center (such as each of the eight largest shopping centers in the study area) generates quantities of air emissions causing the centers to rank among the top sources of carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons within the seven-county study area. In all, vehicular shopping trips in the region annually generate 19,100 tons of hydrocarbons, 10,250 tons of nitrogen oxides, 153,000 tons of carbon monoxide, and 2,691,500 tons of carbon monoxide.

Land use management

- Under Ohio law, proposed retail projects are subject only to local land use management authority, even though they may have regional implications with regard to traffic generation, environmental consequences, regional tax inequities and impact on other retail areas.

- Because many local government zoning codes do not provide for mixed uses and flexible zoning techniques, the development of continuous strips of shopping areas has occurred in many parts of the region.

- Large tracts of privately owned land in developed areas, including golf courses and environmentally sensitive areas, have been targeted for retail development.

The study concludes that communities in Northeast Ohio – and the region as a whole – need to pay more attention to the long-term implications of retail development. And it offers recommendations for adapting to ever-changing retail trends and creating shopping districts that will enhance quality of life in the long run.

In our next issue we will cover some of these recommendations, as well as efforts by older suburbs in Cuyahoga County to make their aging retail districts more competitive in today's marketplace. □

The importance of retail

The retail sector is a major focal point of any community. First, it is the most visible land use, and its physical configuration and condition are critical in projecting a city's image. Second, the economic health of a city is often associated with the ability of its business districts to thrive and remain prosperous. Finally, retail stores provide an important part of maintaining the social character of a community by creating a sense of place where residents can satisfy their consumer needs and encounter other neighborhood residents. This "marketplace" function is critically important to community vitality.

The changing nature of the retail industry is having profound implications on the land use patterns of Northeast Ohio. Older communities are experiencing under-utilization and vacancies in storefronts along major retail corridors, resulting in loss of local retail services, decreasing tax revenues and urban blight. At the same time, newer suburban and outlying areas continue to encounter retail development which has often led to substantial traffic congestion, the need for costly infrastructure improvements, and degradation of land, air and water quality.

— *Northeast Ohio Regional Retail Analysis, 2000*

Northeast Ohio Regional Issues Summit

Faith-Based Organizing for Northeast Ohio (including the groups United WE-CAN!, BOLD and SCCOPE) will sponsor a regional issues summit 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., November 16, at the Cleveland State University Convocation Center. The summit will feature a presentation by metropolitan planning and policy expert Myron Orfield about a new study of socioeconomic disparities and wasteful land use patterns in Northeast Ohio. For registration information, call 216-881-2344.

■

Cuyahoga River watershed workshops

Groups that helped win federal designation for the Cuyahoga River as a National Heritage River will be holding the following community workshops to gather ideas for improving water quality, river access, open space, recreational opportunities and community revitalization:

- November 8 at the Geauga Historical Society, 14653 E. Park St. in Burton.
- November 9 at the Cleveland Metroparks CanalWay Visitor Center, 4524 E. 49th St. in Cuyahoga Heights.
- November 14 at the Sand Run Metro Park Mingo Pavilion, Sand Run Parkway in Akron.

All meetings are at 7 p.m. For more information, call the Cuyahoga River Remedial Action Plan at 216-241-2414, ext. 253.

Vote environment

The Ohio League of Conservation Voters Education Fund is encouraging Ohio voters to visit the Web Site www.VoteEnvironment.org/OH.html to learn how environmental issues can be a factor in upcoming elections. Citizens can also sign up to receive periodic e-mail alerts about decisions affecting the environment. The LCV Education Fund is working in a nonpartisan way with other environmental groups in Ohio, including EcoCity Cleveland, to strengthen the constituency for the environment.

November 4
Hike CanalWay Ohio through the **Mill Creek neighborhood** and tour one of the most popular Towpath connection trails and Cleveland's highest waterfall. Begins at 9 a.m. at the Garfield Park Nature Center.

November 4
Fall meeting in Dayton of the **Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers**, featuring a 3-C Corridor Summit on plans for passenger rail service between Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati. For registration information, call 614-470-0334.

November 4-5
Old paint and pesticide collection for Cuyahoga County residents, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the County Fairgrounds in Berea. For more information, call 216-443-3749.

November 5
The Red Flannel Metric Century **bicycle tour in Oberlin** along routes of 62 or 32 miles. For more information call 440-235-0117 or see www.eriecoast.com/~lorainwheelmen.

November 7
Monthly meeting of the **Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society** with Jim McCormac of the Ohio Division of Natural Areas and Preserves talking about the grassland breeding bird project, 7:30 p.m. at the Cleveland Metroparks Rocky River Nature Center. Call 440-734-6660.

November 8
Instrumental Evening for the Earth to benefit the Earth Day Coalition, 6:30 p.m. at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Lakewood with the Cleveland Orchestra and acclaimed artists. For ticket information call 216-281-6468.

November 9
Workshop on changing **regulations for wetlands** and riparian protection sponsored by the Summit Soil & Water Conservation District. Call 330-929-2871 for registration information.

November 10
Lunchtime lecture on **safe street design** for public spaces. For more information, call the Cleveland Neighborhood Development Corporation at 216-928-8100.

November 10
Presentation of **2000 Design Awards** by the Cleveland Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and lecture by Robert Ivy, editor of Architectural Record, 6 p.m. at the Allen Theater in Playhouse Square. Call 216-771-1240 for reservations.

November 10-11
Workshop on "**Globalization: Moving from Greed to Need**" First Congregational Church in Akron. For more information or to register call 330-535-2787.

November 11
Birdwatching hike to observe seasonal transitions, 8 a.m. at Horseshoe Pond of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Major Road west of Riverview Road.

November 11
Hike CanalWay Ohio through the **Tremont neighborhood** and learn of its interesting history. Begins at 9 a.m. from the Lincoln Park Gazebo at I-71 and W. 14th Streets.

November 11
Monthly potluck and discussion of the **Small Farm Research and Education Center**, 6 p.m. at Silver Creek Farm near Hiram. For more information, call 330-569-3487.

November 14
The Cleveland Green Building Coalition is sponsoring a professional workshop on **building commissioning** with instructor Karl Stum, 9 a.m. to noon. To register, call 216-732-3385 or see www.clevelandgbc.org.

November 14
Lunch forum on **Natural Capitalism** at WIRE-Net from 11:30 to 1:30, fee. For more information contact Holly Harlan at 216-631-7330.

November 15
The ReDeveloping Cleveland luncheon series at the City Club of Cleveland presents a variety of panelists to discuss "**A New Convention Center: If We Build It, Will They Come?**" Lunch begins at 11:45 followed by a panel discussion and questions. For information or reservations call 216-621-0082.

November 15
Workshop of the region's **Commuter Rail** Advisory Committee to make recommendations about the potential for commuter rail service. For details, call the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency at 216-241-2414.

November 15
Workshop on **voluntary simplicity**, 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Common Ground, 14240 Baird Rd., Oberlin. For registration information call 440-965-5551.

November 16
The Cleveland Green Building Coalition presents the second speaker in year two of the **Redesigning Cleveland for the 21st Century**. Gunter Pauli, founder of the Switzerland-based Zero Emissions Research and Initiatives (ZERI) will speak on sustainable industry at the Cleveland Public Library, Louis Stokes Wing, at 5:30 p.m.

November 18
Hike through remote woodland of the Cleveland Metroparks **Bedford Reservation**, 10 a.m. at the reservation's Girl Scout Cabin off Button Road.

November 18
Annual membership meeting of the **Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association**, 10 a.m. at the Stratford Ecological Center in Delaware. For details, call 614-421-2022.

November 19
Hiking along the **Buckeye Trail**, 2 p.m. from the Indian Mound Trailhead in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Riverview Road south of Bath Road.



November 20

Hike to explore **old canal structures** along the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, 7 p.m. at the Lock 29 Trailhead in Peninsula.

November 21

Cleveland Restoration Society annual community luncheon with keynote address by *PD* architecture critic Steven Litt. Call 216-426-1000 for reservations.

November 25

Hike to see **Lake Erie shore birds**, 9 a.m. at Cleveland Metroparks Huntington Reservation beach parking lot in Bay Village.

November 26

Birdwatching for **swans and loons** at the Geauga Park District's Burton Wetlands, 9 a.m. Call 440-285-2222, ext. 5420 for more information.

November 26

Hike to see the **big trees** of the Cleveland Metroparks North Chagrin Reservation, 1 p.m. at the Strawberry Picnic Area.

November 26

Join a park ranger to examine **sacred sites** of Native Americans in the national parks, 2 p.m. at the Cuyahoga Valley National Park Happy Days Visitor Center on SR 303. For more information call 800-257-9477.

December 4-6

Partners for Smart Growth Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. For more information contact the Urban Land Institute at 800-321-5011 or see www.uli.org.

December 8

Workshop on **The Natural Step** process for sustainability sponsored by Imago in Cincinnati. For registration information, call 513-921-5124.

December 13

The ReDeveloping Cleveland lunch series at the City Club of Cleveland presents a variety of panelists to discuss **"The Hopkins Airport Expansion: Will It Fly?"** Lunch begins at 11:45 followed by a panel discussion and questions. For information or reservations call 216-621-0082.

WHAT WE LOVE...AND WHAT WE DON'T: IMAGES OF THE WESTERN RESERVE

A public education project by EcoCity Cleveland to give citizens the language and principles they need to be more sophisticated advocates of good design and smart growth — for great buildings, streets, neighborhoods, and rural landscapes in Northeast Ohio.



EcoCity Cleveland, the nonprofit environmental planning organization for Northeast Ohio, invites you to two exciting events that will build awareness of what people love about the built and natural environments of the region — and how the places we love are threatened. Using photographs of the region's buildings, streets, neighborhoods and landscapes, we will develop design principles for a more desirable and sustainable future. These events are for everyone who cares about the quality of development in our cities and towns.

Visual preference workshop

9 a.m. to noon, Saturday, November 11

Visiting Nurse Association Community Room, 2500 E. 22nd St.

(just south of St. Vincent Charity Hospital).

Intensive workshop in which participants will conduct a Built Environment Rating and score visual images from the region in order to develop planning and design principles appropriate for guiding the area's future growth. Space is limited; call 216-932-3007 to register.

Public show and lecture

5:30 p.m., Tuesday, November 14

(please note that the time is 5:30 p.m. and not 7 p.m. as was announced in our last issue)

Waetjen Auditorium,

Cleveland State University Music and Communications Building, 2001 Euclid Ave.

(between the CSU Law School and E. 21st).

Interactive show featuring fascinating photographs of the region. Audience members will vote on what they like about the region, as well as develop a deeper understanding of why they like certain places. CSU is well served by RTA buses; meter parking on streets is available around CSU; some parking spaces for this event will be available in the CSU visitor lot A on Euclid Avenue next to the Innerbelt (not in lot PF as previously announced).

Both events are free and should be a lot of fun.

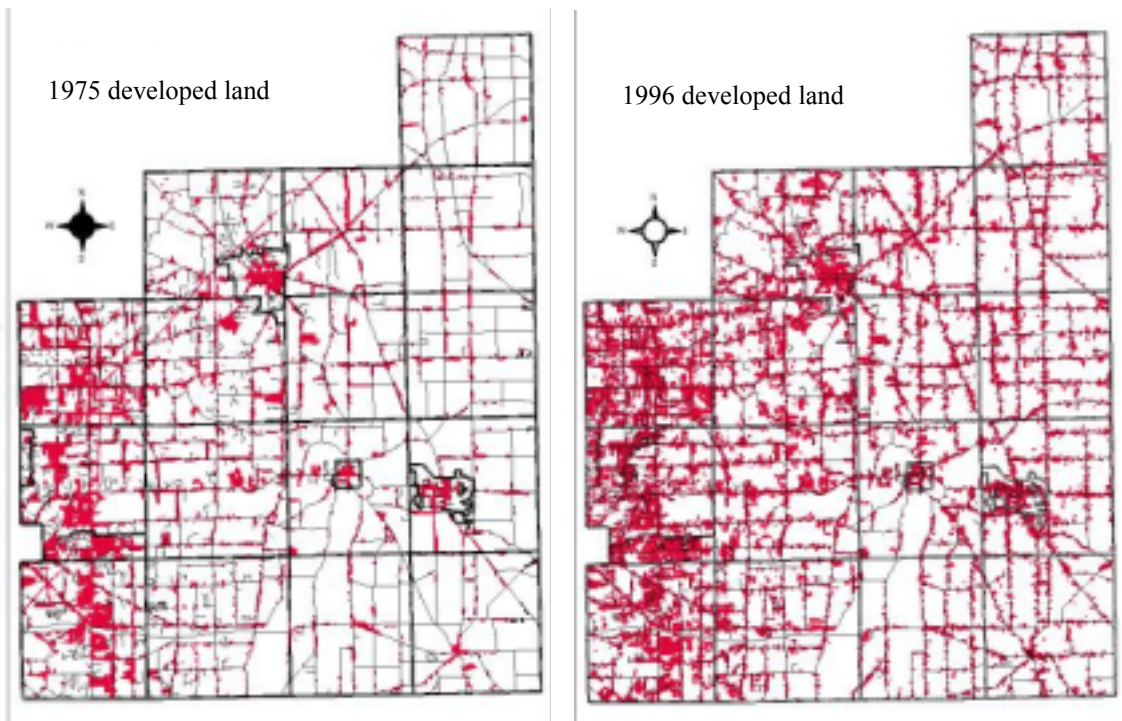
For more information, call 216-932-3007.

Funding provided by The George W. Codrington Charitable Foundation.

Co-sponsored by American Institute of Architects Cleveland Chapter, Build Up Greater Cleveland, Center for Neighborhood Development at Cleveland State University, Chagrin River Land Conservancy, Cleveland Neighborhood Development Corporation, Cleveland Restoration Society, Cleveland Green Building Coalition, Cuyahoga County League of Women Voters, Earth Day Coalition, Land Use Task Force of the Cleveland Catholic Diocese, Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University, Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, Northeast Ohio Regional Alliance, Ohio Canal Corridor, Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor Coalition, Seventh Generation, Smart Growth Education Foundation, Sustainable Communities Symposium 2000, Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio.

Development in Geauga County

Gauga County's forests, wetlands, farmlands and river systems are being increasingly fragmented into residential and commercial lots. From 1975 to 1996, nearly 54,000 acres were developed — about 21 percent of the county land area.



Source: Geauga People for Parks

"Indispensable reading for those who want to know what's really going on in the region or what the headlines may be a decade from now."

—David Orr, Oberlin College Environmental Studies Program

Subscribe now! Each month, *EcoCity Cleveland* will bring you the ideas and information you need to create a more sustainable bioregion.

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