



EcoCity CLEVELAND

IDEAS AND TOOLS FOR A SUSTAINABLE BIOREGION

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Good words

And you may ask yourself,

"What is that beautiful house?"

And you may ask yourself,

"Where does that highway go to?"

And you may ask yourself,

"Am I right? Am I wrong?"

And you may ask yourself,

"My God, what have I done?"

—from the *Stop Making Sense* album

by the Talking Heads

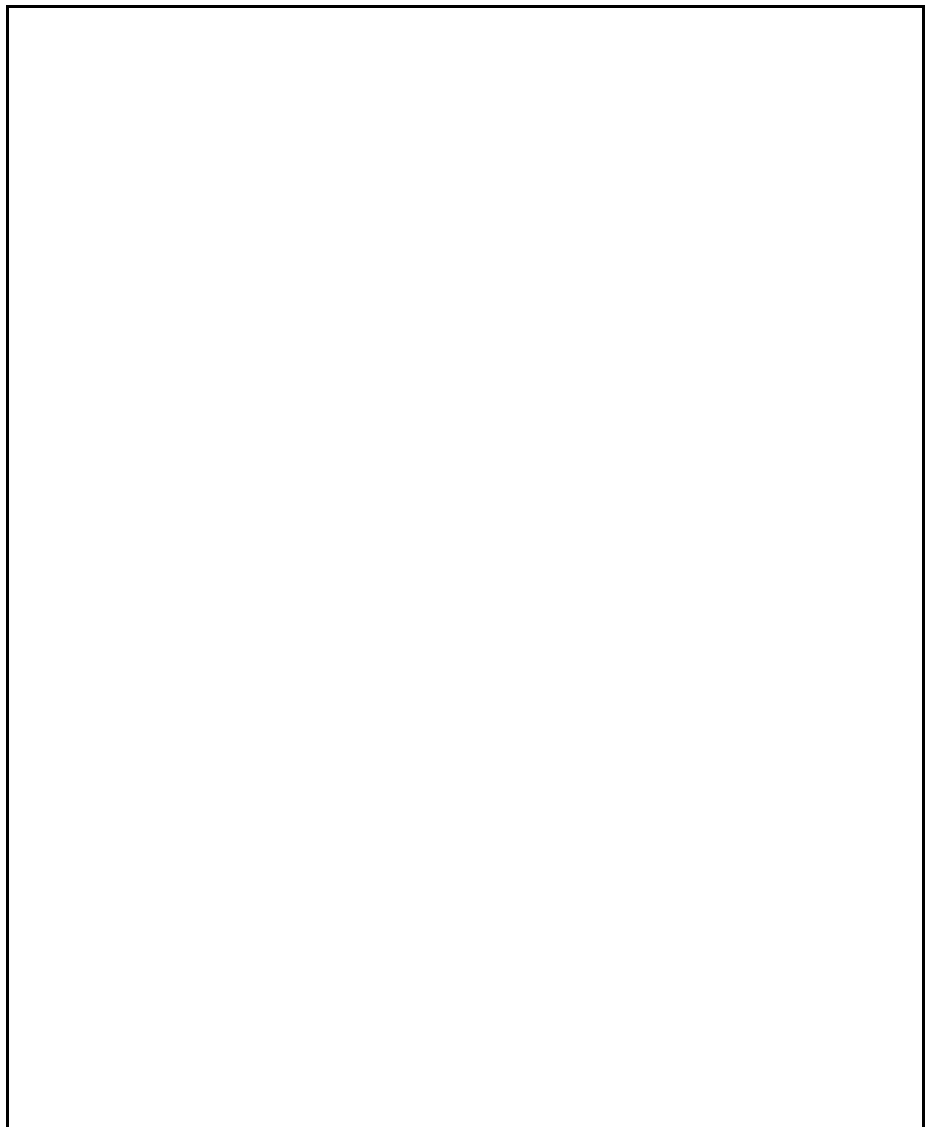
Americans will get it right,

but only after they have exhausted

every other option.

—Winston Churchill

SAVING FARMS BY SAVING CITIES



**Farmland Task Force debates
the stewardship of Ohio's 26 million acres**

See pages 3-9

Backward Ohio

Sometimes it's embarrassing to be from Ohio—a state behind the times on many environmental issues. It's like living in a 1950s time warp.

Just recently, Governor George Voinovich and other state officials denounced U.S. EPA's proposal to strengthen standards for smog and soot, a stand by Ohio which drew an angry response from eastern states downwind of our air pollution. And state officials are not being a progressive force in the reauthorization of the major federal transportation bill, ISTEA.

Ohio also is way behind other states with respect to land use planning. The development strategy in Ohio is to spread out available jobs and population to every acre of the state. Regional planning and growth management are still seen as Communist plots.

Why the antipathy toward rational land use planning? One factor, of course, is the strong home-rule tradition of a "small box" state with many political jurisdictions.

In addition, Ohio has a complex mixture of agriculture and heavy industry, a relatively large population and small land area, and lots of developing edges around the state's many metropolitan areas. There's also a lingering rust-belt mentality, which prompts public officials to court growth at any cost. And, sadly, so much of the state's natural beauty has been destroyed that people have a hard time imagining what's left to save.

This issue of *EcoCity Cleveland* focuses on the need for Ohio to come to grips with its land use problems—the need to plan wisely and create sustainable patterns of settlement. Without changes, Ohio will likely slip behind other states in the race to achieve economic efficiencies and a superior quality of life in the 21st century.

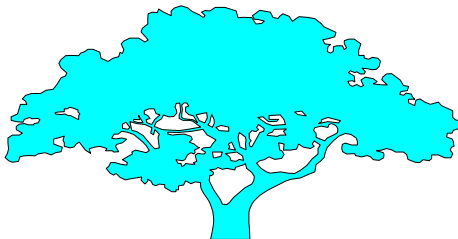
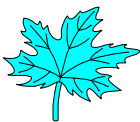
Thanks

Thanks to the Katherine and Lee Chilcote Foundation for a grant to support continued planning of our Cleveland EcoVillage project. Thanks to The Nord Family Foundation for a recent grant for operating support. And thanks to The George Gund Foundation for continued operating support and funds to pay for a second printing of our popular publication, *Moving to Corn Fields: A reader on urban sprawl and the regional future of Northeast Ohio*.

Note on timing

In the past few months we have been spending a lot of time getting some new projects off the ground, so the publication of this journal continues to be behind schedule. We still hope to catch up in the coming months. Subscribers will get all the issues coming to them.

—David Beach
Editor



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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Saving farms by saving cities

As we described in our September-October 1996 issue on sustainable food systems, Governor George Voinovich has appointed the Ohio Farmland Preservation Task Force to identify voluntary methods and incentives for preserving and maintaining land for agricultural production. The task force has become a lightning rod for concerns about land use and urban sprawl in Ohio (probably much more of a lightning rod than the Voinovich administration ever intended). On May 5, 1997, the task force will have its final meeting to decide what recommendations to make to the governor. The final report is due June 1. It will be interesting to see if the task force makes strong recommendations or compromises on what is "politically acceptable" to the governor.

Extraordinary hearing

On pages 3-9, we have collected some of the testimony delivered to the task force at a public hearing February 19. The hearing at the Portage Lakes offices of the Ohio Division of Wildlife was an extraordinary event. So many people packed the room that the afternoon session had to be continued into the night. And the overwhelming majority of those testifying expressed a common theme: To save farmland, reinvest in Ohio's cities and prevent urban sprawl.

Most extraordinary was the presence of many elected officials from urban areas—officials who would not ordinarily be expected to be concerned about farm issues. Representatives from the City of Cleveland and its inner suburbs showed up to denounce state policies which now promote sprawl and the development of farmland. It was an encouraging display of cooperation among older communities with common interests—an example of the new regional coalitions now forming to address land use issues which transcend municipal boundaries. □

Resolution for farmland and cities

The following resolution was passed by the City of Cleveland and members of the First Suburbs Consortium—Euclid, Cleveland Heights, Shaker Heights, Lakewood, Garfield Heights and South Euclid—and presented to the Ohio Farmland Preservation Task Force on February 19, 1997.

Whereas, Governor George V. Voinovich has established the Ohio Farmland Preservation Task Force for the purposes of studying the loss of farmland and making recommendations on methods for preserving land for agricultural production; and

Whereas, the policies, programs and practices of the State of Ohio have encouraged development of farmland at the outer edges of the Greater Cleveland region over redevelopment and maintenance of built communities such as Cleveland and its First Suburbs; and

Whereas, these policies and practices have undermined the economic strength and attractiveness of Cleveland and its First Suburbs, and put them at a competitive disadvantage to newer and developing communities; and

Whereas, conditions have been created that entice and push citizens and employers to locate in newer and developing communities; and

Whereas, growth in public funds required to service sprawling exurban development coupled with erosion of economic strength in Cleveland and its First Suburbs jeopardizes economic performance of the Greater Cleveland region; and

Whereas, the preservation of farmland at the outer edges of the metropolitan region depends on the creation of more opportunities for citizens and employers to remain or locate in Cleveland and its First Suburbs.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Ohio Farmland Preservation Task Force include the following in its recommendations to the Governor:

1) State of Ohio policies, programs and activities should be modified so as to favor redevelopment and maintenance of built communities over development of new communities.

2) The State should set objectives for the metropolitan regions concerning preservation of farmland and open spaces, and redevelopment and maintenance of built communities.

3) The State should require that the counties that comprise each metropolitan region jointly and cooperatively devise a plan for meeting the State's objectives and establish mechanisms for implementing the plan.

"Let them eat asphalt"

Paul Oyaski
Mayor of Euclid

(speaking at the Ohio Farmland Preservation Task Force hearing on February 19 on behalf of the First Suburbs Consortium, which includes the cities of Euclid, Cleveland Heights, Shaker Heights, Lakewood, Garfield Heights and South Euclid)

If Marie Antoinette were alive today and looked upon urban sprawl invading farming communities, she might say, "Let them eat asphalt." But, alas, we humans have culinary tastes that run to the reds, greens and yellows of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Euclid is about 200 years old just east of Cleveland on the shores of Lake Erie. At one time, our city had acres and acres of vineyards, but no significant farming has taken place in more than 60 years.

Why, then, am I here?

Greater Cleveland is a wonderful place to live and do business, and Euclid, my home town, is a great place to raise a family. But these places, they are a-changing.

The metropolitan Cleveland area, or Cuyahoga County proper, is static in population and wealth. The population and wealth are being spread over a larger and larger area thanks to urban sprawl or what I call "economic erosion."

Previously undeveloped areas in Lake, Geauga and Medina counties are importing the people, property values and wealth of Cuyahoga County. Farms and forests are imperiled by the glut of subdivisions built farther and farther away from the central city.

Natural allies

Therefore, I support the preservation of farmland as a means to preserve older, existing areas of Greater Cleveland. There is or should be a natural coalition between farmers, environmentalists, property owners in older areas, and long-time residents of previously rural areas.

Urban sprawl is a direct threat to several areas of 20th century Ohio as we know it.

Farmland is destroyed, and our state's agricultural base is weakened. Food will be imported longer distances at higher prices.

The environment cannot possibly benefit from the latest trend to develop new communities in outerbelt areas. Wetlands are endangered, commuting and gas usage increase, storm and sanitary sewer demands are increased in areas without facilities, brownfields in older areas are forgotten and bypassed, trees disappear and older neighborhoods are overlooked.

If we want to preserve older neighborhoods, preserve farmland.

If we want to preserve the central city, preserve farmland.

If we want to conserve gasoline, preserve farmland.

If we want to protect the environment, preserve farmland.

Last month, I spoke in Columbus at the Transportation Policy Conference where ODOT officials said they did not have enough money to maintain existing roads but meanwhile were hard at work trying to develop a system to decide where to build major new construction projects. Why build more new when we can't take care of the old?

There was much talk of developing a consensus and building a coalition. While these would be helpful in a bureaucratic attempt to stall meaningful action, I am here to advocate specific acts to curb urban sprawl, protect existing property values and preserve farmland.

Zero tolerance

The state should use its spending authority

to good measure by directing its assistance and subsidies for infrastructure to existing areas, where population and wealth are most dense. A zero-tolerance for state spending for new infrastructure in undeveloped areas, except in times of catastrophe, should be adopted.

If the state is compelled to continue funding urban sprawl and the deterioration of existing areas, then it should also require as a condition that the community receiving the subsidy adopt and implement non-exclusionary zoning.

In addition, either all tax abatement programs should be abolished (except for attracting out-of-state investment) or the criteria should be revised to the pre-1987 bastardization of the Enterprise Zone Program [which originally was designed to promote development in depressed urban areas]. The General Assembly in 1987 amended the program to include any large undeveloped tracts of land while removing any distress criteria. This

created an incentive that obviously did not help to preserve farmland.

The public sector is harmed when tax abatement is so loosely available. Today, tax abatement is a windfall for investors and the private sector with little, if any, impact on locational decisions. It reduces public sector revenue and increases the tax burden on residents and long-time businesses that have not received any abatement benefits.

Resolutions for change

Euclid City Council last night passed a

There is or should be a natural coalition between farmers, environmentalists, property owners in older areas, and long-time residents of previously rural

resolution which in pertinent part recommended:

- State of Ohio policies, programs and activities should be modified so as to favor redevelopment and maintenance of built communities over development of new communities.
- The state should set objectives for the metropolitan regions concerning preservation of farmland and open spaces, and redevelopment and maintenance of built communities.
- The state should require that the counties that comprise each metropolitan region jointly and cooperatively devise a plan for meeting the state's objectives and establish mechanisms for implementing the plan.
- The planning and selection process used by the state for major new highway projects should include consideration of the loss of farmland, as well as the disinvestment in existing neighborhoods, caused directly or indirectly by the highway construction.

Six other cities—Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, Shaker Heights, South Euclid, Garfield Heights, Lakewood—passed similar resolutions.

To help rebuild existing areas while lessening the pressure for further farmland development, the state should authorize tax expenditures in older urban areas for certain types of investment. Last night, Euclid City Council endorsed my request to the General Assembly to adopt tax credits for investments made in residential property more than 40 years in age.

There is no such thing as regional zoning, but the state should either employ zoning power directly or indirectly to preserve agricultural zoning. At the least, the state should not reward communities with financial assistance when they haphazardly use their zoning authority to create traffic or sewer or water problems. The state should adopt a policy that would encourage local communities to assess private property owners for major new infrastructure improvements, including new freeway interchanges. I also suggest that the state allow the owners of working farms to defer any increase in real estate taxes caused by surrounding development until the farm is converted to a non-farm use.

I fully appreciate the historic freedom of movement enjoyed by American citizens, and we in Euclid are unafraid to compete with other cities for jobs and residents. But I do not

believe the state should systematically undermine the economics of older areas by subsidizing new development. Developers and speculators may benefit, but the public at large is harmed. There is undeniably a cause-and-effect relationship between state spending in the outerbelt and disinvestment in the inner-ring suburbs and central city. That can be deduced from several statistical surveys, such as the "Poverty Indicators" study prepared by the Council for Economic Opportunities which reported that 20 percent of Cuyahoga County residents were living in poverty in 1995. Euclid's total assessed valuation increased 1.5 percent annually between 1983 and 1996, well below inflation. The work of Tom Bier at Cleveland State University can document the phenomenon many different ways. The Bishop of Cleveland noted the governmental policies which are contributing to the outmigration of

I do not believe the state should systematically undermine the economics of older areas by subsidizing new development. Developers and speculators may benefit, but the public at large is

residents, and a county commissioner in the outerbelt, Medina County, noted that infrastructure drives development. Therefore, I believe the quickest way to begin rebuilding older areas and preserving farmland is to change state infrastructure spending practices. The state must be cognizant of the detrimental effects it can help cause to existing property values. In closing, the need to preserve farmland and combat urban sprawl is clear. The benefits are many. To keep spending and subsidizing as in the past by building up new areas at the expense of the old, and then spending and abating some more to help older areas, is a much more expensive public policy than merely directing state spending to older areas first and foremost. We must improve upon the status quo by reinvesting in older urban areas rather than treating neighborhoods as disposable commodities and farmland as nothing more than prime subdivision and office park opportunities. □

Ohio farm facts

- States with more than half of land area in prime soils: Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa.

- Farmland losses (1954-92): Michigan 39%, Ohio 24%, Wisconsin 24%, Indiana 17%, Illinois 7%.

- Ohio counties experiencing more than 50% farmland losses due to urban influences (1954-92): Ashtabula, Clermont, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Geauga, Hamilton, Lake, Mahoning, Medina, Portage and Summit.

- For every 1% increase in population, urban land use in Ohio increased 4.7% during 1960-90. This compares with a U.S. average of 2.3% and is measure of low-density development.

Source: Ohio Farmland Preservation Task Force

Local farmland preservation initiatives

- The **Lake County** Farmland Task Force has produced a nine-minute video on farmland preservation called, "An Industry in Distress: Agriculture in Lake County." To obtain a copy, call the Lake Soil and Water Conservation District at 216-350-2730.

- **Geauga County** residents are also forming a farmland preservation task force. For information, call the Geauga Soil and Water District at 216-834-1122.

- Groups in **Lorain County**—such as the County Health District and the Lorain County Community Alliance—are talking about how to develop a comprehensive land use plan for the county.

- In **Medina County**, development of a program to purchase development rights from farmers is progressing.

- Sprawl and development pressures from Cuyahoga County are now being felt beyond Medina County all the way to **Wayne County**. In response, Wayne County planners are proposing a comprehensive land use plan which includes growth boundaries.

"Bring some rationality to county and regional development"

Sara Pavlovicz
Medina County Commissioner and board member of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency

I speak to you today as both an official of the Board of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) and an elected member of the Board of Commissioners of Medina County. From these dual roles, I feel I can address the issue of farmland loss from both an urban perspective and a rural understanding.

From my experience with NOACA, it has become clear to me that conversion of farmland to residential and commercial uses has severe consequences for urban areas. Addressing the agricultural land problem will be a step toward solving those urban problems that seem to be exacerbated by sprawling development. The solution will not be found solely in the central cities. Some part of the solution must come from the rural response to the development trends that threaten to overwhelm us.

In my county

In this light, let me first tell you about my county. Between 1970 and 1995, Medina County has grown by over 56,000 people and 23,000 housing units. This has occurred during a time when Northeast Ohio has lost over 10 percent of its population. Our average population density has increased from 196 persons per square mile to 331. The Ohio

Department of Development projects an additional 36,000 people will enter the county in the next 20 years. These new residents will require an additional 12-13,000 new housing units.

There is a clear relationship between these trends and farmland loss. Between 1982 and 1992, farmland in Medina County declined 19 percent while population increased 11 percent. If this relationship holds and if the state's population

projections are correct, the county will lose an additional 50,000 acres of farm land and over 400 farms in the next 20 years.

As agricultural land is converted to other uses, the spreading development means that tax base has been transferred from urban areas to rural lands. Some studies have shown the increased tax base rural areas receive from new development is insufficient to offset the increased costs which accompany that development. The cost of new roads, additional safety forces and schools and other services tends to exceed any additional revenues. Our county, for example, has had to construct a new jail and create a transit authority in response to what are obviously widely divergent demands that have accompanied our growth.

Further, and perhaps more importantly, as new development randomly scatters through rural areas, the opportunity for building in a more thoughtful manner is lost. The result is even more inefficiency from a public perspective. That is to say, infrastructure must be extended over ever farther reaches, safety forces must monitor a larger area, and costs must inevitably be higher.

The Northeast Ohio region is perhaps the best in Ohio to examine. The region's population reached a peak in 1970 and has declined over 10 percent since.

Concurrently, developed land has increased over five percent. In 1970, 74 percent of the region's

population and 84 percent of its jobs were in Cuyahoga County. By 1990, those figures had fallen to 67 and 70 percent, respectively. The number of work trips into Cuyahoga from the surrounding six counties increased 56 percent over this time.

Thus from a metropolitan perspective you must understand the growth I referenced in Medina County is, in reality, a redistribution of jobs and people from other

parts of the region—primarily Cuyahoga and Summit Counties. The region has experienced little real growth. In 1970, Medina County contained 3.5 percent of the five-county region's population. By 1990, we had six percent. In 1970, we had less than two percent of the region's jobs; we now have almost four percent. While these numbers may not appear large, the increase can be overwhelming for a rural county.

NOACA has recently initiated a project that will offer assistance to counties and local officials who are attempting to examine land use. The agency is compiling county-level generalized zoning maps that will delineate existing local zoning codes and facilitate identification of growth potential and analysis of the costs of this potential growth. Although the project is far from completion, some startling findings are beginning to emerge. We have found, for example, that the existing zoning in Medina County would allow for a population of approximately 500,000 people (we now have approximately 135,000). In Geauga County the comparable figure is 350,000 (it now has approximately 85,000). Obviously not all jurisdictions will develop to these limits, but the fact that present zoning permits such growth means that further significant population shifts can occur within the region, probably to the detriment of the core areas and possibly largely unwanted in the recipient areas. Such shifts will almost certainly mean further loss of desirable agricultural land.

The state's role

So then, what is the state's role? The state needs to provide planning support for both counties and regional bodies. A state mandate that counties have land use plans, updated periodically, would be a major step in resolving the problem. As noted above, present zoning codes (which are de facto land use plans) must be tightened in ways that will enable local and county officials to guide growth and thus help preserve farmlands. State mandated, county-level land use planning would be a major step in this direction. Requiring each county to prepare a land use plan would bring the problem of agricultural uses explicitly into public discussion where public resolution

The solution will not be found solely in the central cities. Some part of the solution must come from the rural response to the development trends that threaten to overwhelm us.

can be achieved.

In addition, the state must explicitly acknowledge the impact of regional dynamics. A symbiotic relationship exists between urban centers and their rural neighbors. This has recently been documented most eloquently by Bishop Anthony Pilla in his "Church and the City" statement. In my view, a second step in resolving problems of agricultural land use and change, while also supporting urban centers, would be support of regional planning bodies. The economic competition of the 21st century will be region versus region, not based on counties or states. To that end, the state should provide some recognition and support for regional strategic planning for economic development. A component of this would be coordinated regional/county land use planning.

There is a real need for the state to reassess its role in development. At present, it appears quite willing to fund infrastructure in areas where the long-term impact will be to encourage the conversion of farmland to other uses. For example, ODOT's Interstate widening program has been conducted with no regard to land use implications. In point of fact, an ODOT representative told a committee of the NOACA Governing Board that land use was a local problem, not one ODOT should be concerned about. I am sure you will agree it makes no sense for a state-appointed task force to question the loss of agricultural land while other branches of that same government implement policies that encourage the destruction of such lands.

I would also like to make a few suggestions of tools and strategies that this task force should look into for farmland preservation. First of all, it is important to recognize that there must be a variety of strategies available to suit different needs. For example, strategies that are necessary to preserve prime farmland at the edge of developing urban fringes may not be the best for areas which are still largely unaffected by sprawling or leapfrogging development. The developing urban fringe areas will be preserved only at a much higher cost due to immediate or near future demands for development. Attempts to rezone or place these areas in protective districts will meet a lot of resistance from developers and owners whose expectations have become very high for monetary rewards. For such areas, conservation

easement programs and purchase of development rights programs are probably good strategies. I won't go into detail on these because I know there are others who will, and that a number of very able people are working on the concept of PDRs.

However, for those areas which are not as yet under development pressure, the creation of true agricultural zoning can really carry out a township's desire to encourage farming over the long term. This

tool does not exist in Ohio at this time, but has been successfully implemented in Lancaster County, PA, and provides a base for comprehensive planning by requiring minimum 25-acre parcels, with clearly spelled-out regulations regarding non-agricultural uses.

A related issue to these programs, and to this whole question of farmland preservation and land use planning in general, has to do with the larger question of zoning. State statutes pertaining to zoning should be examined to identify impediments to comprehensive planning. In the five-county NOACA region, except for one township which has minimum ten-acre lots and one township which has no zoning, *all* land, including farmland, is zoned at five acres and less. Five-acre minimum lots will not save farms. The ways the state statutes encourage this smaller-lot zoning must be examined. Also, there is a huge amount of recent litigation where local zoning codes are under attack, and jurisdictions are constantly battling, often without adequate resources, to maintain control of their land use. A couple of examples that come immediately to mind are Hudson's battle to maintain growth limits and Hinckley's battle to keep its two-acre lot limits in the face of someone who wants to develop at smaller lot sizes. A community's right to determine the type of future it envisions for itself is a very

important piece of the question of farmland preservation, and the task force should look into what is happening in the courts to see how it affects the farmland preservation question, and what needs to be done at the state level to counteract it.

Regional solutions

From my regional and rural perspectives, I want to suggest to you the issue of farmland loss has implications for both

rural counties and metropolitan regions. As I noted, virtually all the new development I have discussed with you has come from Cuyahoga County. Cuyahoga is attempting to stem the problem of outmigration, but it cannot do it alone, especially when the county's continuing loss of tax base robs it of the resources needed to address problems.

Our county is attempting to guide new development, but is overwhelmed by its size and speed. There is a role here for the state, and that role would help preserve farmland and bring some rationality to county and regional development. Your committee should seriously examine some level of required

county-level planning supported, at least in part, by the state. Rational planning, required of all counties, would allow us to guide development in a way that makes sense locally. It would allow us to examine alternatives to the present scatter-shot transfer of farmland into housing or commercial developments. Please bear in mind that this must be a requirement of all counties. Our county is presently preparing a development guide, and I have little doubt that if it is perceived as too restrictive, development will simply leapfrog to the next county.

In addition to county planning, the state must consider and support regional planning. Medina County does not exist in a vacuum. As noted, much of what is occurring here is a function of in-migration. Our region, Northeast Ohio, must develop a strategic guide for the future, and in developing that guide we will better understand the role of Medina County. □

"The pain does not stop at municipal boundaries"

Chris Warren

**Director of Economic Development
City of Cleveland**

First, I pass along Mayor Michael R. White's appreciation for the work being done by this Task Force and for the Voinovich administration's resolve to address the issue of farmland preservation.

And, the City of Cleveland, through its Mayor and its City Council, are in complete accord with the positions taken by the First Suburbs, as ably articulated by Mayor Oyaski and others today. The pain caused by exurban sprawl is suffered by both the suburbanite and the city-dweller within Cuyahoga County. Unbridled outmigration of people, industry, and commerce, within a region that is not experiencing corresponding growth, inevitably means disinvestment and abandonment at the core. The pain does not stop at municipal boundaries.

In this spirit, Cleveland wholeheartedly endorses the resolution adopted by the First Suburbs, especially the portion that reads, "State of Ohio policies, programs and activities should be modified so as to favor redevelopment and maintenance of built communities over development of new communities," and "The State should require that the counties that comprise each metropolitan region jointly and cooperatively devise a plan for meeting the State's objectives and establish mechanisms for implementing a plan to preserve farmland and open spaces."

The City of Cleveland pledges to be an active partner with our suburban neighbors in the creation of such a plan.

More pointedly, we have two short and direct policy suggestions to offer for your deliberations:

1. Ask the Ohio Department of Transportation to change project selection practices that now favor the addition of new or widened roadways to the detriment of investments in the repair and maintenance of existing state routes.

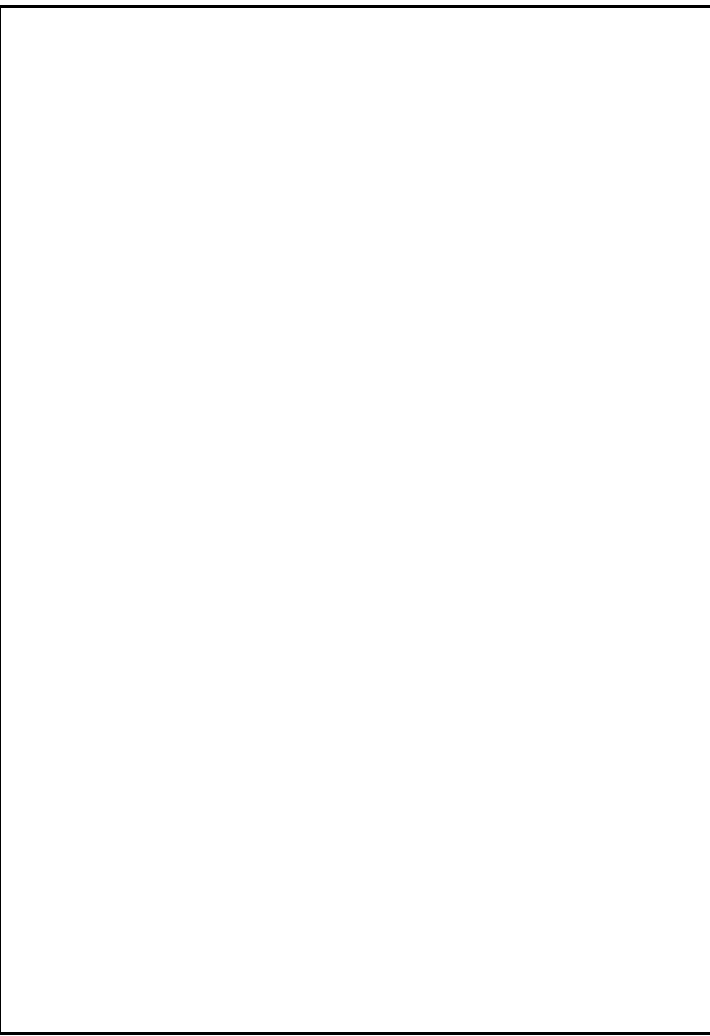
The extensions to Route 422, the ever-increasing widths and access points to I-77, I-71, I-90, and I-271, and other major ODOT-funded projects have contributed greatly to the redistribution of people, industry, and commerce and, with it, to the loss of farmlands and open space. At the same time, hundreds of state roads in Cuyahoga County, all essential to the well-being of our residents, erode away as we wait in line for ODOT's attention.

The thrust of ODOT's rankings should be: reconstruction and repair first, new capacity last. We cannot afford both.

2. We urge you to recommend changes in state law that would place constraints on where and under what circumstances state below-market loans, grants, tax abatements, and tax credits may be used to encourage new development.

Most Ohio Department of Development loan, grant, and tax incentives are available without regard to the effect the desired development may have on farmlands or, for that matter, the economic stability of Ohio communities from which assisted companies leave.

Recently, I had a sobering experience while traveling to visit a



friend in Geauga County. I passed miles and miles of beautiful countryside interrupted only by occasional huge brightly-lettered signs telling the world:

PRIME INDUSTRIAL SPACE FOR SALE
BUILD TO SUIT
CALL SO-AND-SO BROKER
(and in the brightest letters of all)
TAX ABATEMENT AVAILABLE

My friend, a long-time Geauga County resident, said matter-of-factly, "Oh yes, we (meaning his family and neighbors) will be gone soon. The bulldozer is on its way."

Very simply, the state should enact rules prohibiting the use of economic development incentives to assist developments that cause the loss or destruction of farmlands.

To adopt these two straightforward measures—the reform of ODOT's major project criteria and the ban of state subsidies for developments that result in the loss of farmlands—would broadcast an important signal, a signal welcomed, I believe, in towns, suburbs, and cities throughout Northeast Ohio. The message would be: "Your government will not abet private real estate and development practices that diminish the quality of your lives, violate your environment, increase future public infrastructure expenses beyond your means, and steal away your heritage." □

"Do we believe in Ohio as a special place?"

David Beach EcoCity Cleveland

Thank you for the opportunity to comment about these important land use issues which are shaping the future of our state.

The farmland task force has a challenging task—a task that is made even more difficult by three things in your charge from the governor. First, the problem was defined too narrowly. Second, the tools you have been asked to think about are not sufficient. And third, the state and the governor himself are undermining your efforts in countless ways.

The problem

We don't just have a farmland preservation problem in Ohio. We have an *urban sprawl* problem. We're losing prime farmland because our cities are bleeding over the countryside.

Therefore, the best way to save farmland is to redevelop the cities of Ohio by promoting compact development patterns. We need to invest in our existing communities, increase development opportunities in the cities, make them wonderful places in which to live—then we will reduce the *demand* for new subdivisions out in the countryside.

By doing this, we will also get at the root of many other serious problems. We will save money on infrastructure, protect the environment, and begin to address the social and economic problems of the cities.

The tools

Voluntary efforts to save farmland, such as the purchase of development rights, aren't going to do the job. You might nibble around the edges, but in the end the forces of sprawl will overwhelm you.

We need strong land use tools that will enable every community in Ohio to control its destiny. We need tools that will help citizens evaluate the long-term consequences of growth. We need tools that will help the metropolitan regions of Ohio to plan in a rational manner.

Frankly, we need to start talking about far more controversial tools than we've talked about before in Ohio—mandated regional planning, urban growth boundaries like they have in Oregon, regional tax base sharing like they have in Minnesota.

The state and its development policies

While we are here talking about saving farmland, the state is actively promoting urban sprawl—through its development policies, transportation policies, tax policies, education financing, and countless other ways. The sprawling way we develop isn't just the private marketplace at work. It's the result of massive government intervention.

The de facto state policy is to open up every acre of the state for development, spread it all out, take our fixed population and employment base and smear it over the state in a thin film—ignoring the devastation left behind in older communities, ignoring the infrastructure costs we are passing on to our children, ignoring the environmental damage.

So the whole structure of state policy needs to be changed. Again, this is far more than a farmland preservation issue.

Unless the state is willing to change all its policies and programs which now actively promote sprawl, we're not going to get anywhere. The state can be an ally—or it can keep on causing the problem.

We have a choice

We can let things continue as they are—leading to more sprawl, more destruction of farmland and open space, more shoddy strip malls, spiraling infrastructure costs, the loss of our cities, and increasing economic and racial polarization. Or we can focus our resources, our incentives and our policies to promote development where it will be an enduring asset for *all* Ohioans.

Let's be honest, sprawl only benefits a few speculators, a few communities around the edges of our metropolitan areas. Most of us are losers. Our communities and our property values are being undermined by outmigration.

My message is not anti-growth. We want development in Ohio. My message is that it matters *where* the development occurs. The state must help channel growth into more sustainable forms. It's a matter of fiscal responsibility, good stewardship, environmental quality, and fairness to the majority of property owners in the state.

We need to ask ourselves, are we serious about this? Do we have the guts to take a stand for the future of Ohio? Do we believe in Ohio as a special place? Or will we continue to let sprawl undermine our quality of life and our sense of place.

In closing, I urge the governor to think about his legacy—what he will leave Ohio. If he does the right thing, the bold thing, he may be remembered as Tom McCall is fondly remembered in Oregon, as the father of state land use planning, a governor who helped create the framework that has enabled Oregon to grow and prosper while maintaining a high quality of life.

We need such leadership in Ohio. □



My message is not anti-growth. We want development in Ohio. My message is that it matters *where* the development occurs. The state must help channel growth into more sustainable forms. It's a matter of fiscal responsibility, good stewardship, environmental quality, and fairness to the majority of property owners in the state.

The failure of land use reform in the '70s: Lessons for the '90s

It's not hard to understand why air quality and water quality are environmental issues. Air and water are obviously shared resources that need to be protected for everyone's benefit. But land gives us more trouble. Land is property. It comes bundled with a number of personal rights, and Americans (particularly Ohioans) are often uncomfortable about regulating land use for the common good.

We need to come to grips, however, with how land use sets the stage for everything else—the character of our communities, the health of our rivers, the amount we drive our cars and pollute the air, the possibility of preserving valuable farmlands and wetlands, the survival of other species.

Back in the 1970s, there *was* an attempt to come to grips with land use in Ohio. The state legislature appointed an Ohio Land Use Review Committee, which made excellent recommendations for managing growth in a more rational, coordinated way. Unfortunately, nearly all of the recommendations were ignored, and for many years land use issues disappeared from Statehouse politics. While other states took a proactive approach to managing growth, Ohio stuck its head in the sand.

Today, however, land use is back on the agenda. Urban sprawl is a hot topic around the state. The governor's Ohio Farmland Preservation Task Force will soon be issuing recommendations for saving farmland. And the Ohio State University Extension, along with a host of other groups, sponsored a major land use conference in Columbus at the end of March 1997.

In recognition of the renewed interest in land use issues, we called up three men who participated in or observed the Land Use Review Committee in the '70s—Arthur Brooks, who was a state representative from Cleveland Heights and co-chair of the committee; Peter Henderson, who was the staff director of the committee; and Stuart Meck, an expert on Ohio planning and zoning law. We asked them for their reflections on why the land use reform effort failed in the '70s and how we can do a better job in the '90s.

Indeed, how can we come together and plan a sustainable future for Ohio's 26 million acres?

Greenbelt Alliance

Rethinking planning and zoning reform in Ohio

By Stuart Meck

Two decades ago, the Ohio General Assembly created a land use study commission to review state land use laws, programs, and systems of land-use control and make recommendations to the state legislature. The committee was chaired by former State Sen. Kenneth Cox, with then Rep. Arthur Brooks, from Cleveland Heights, as vice chair. It held two sets of public hearings and published its final report in 1977.

The report's recommendations [see EcoCity Cleveland's *Moving to Corn Fields* reader on urban sprawl for a summary] were eminently sensible then—and still are. In 1978, Cox introduced an omnibus bill incorporating the committee's recommendations. But due to opposition by agricultural interests and some local government groups, as well as lack of support by the fledgling environmental community and some of the planning professionals in the state, the bill went nowhere.

What went wrong?

From a technical perspective, many of the committee's recommendations reflected modern trends in planning statute reform. They included an emphasis on planning underlying and guiding regulation and public investment, a recognition of state interests in land-use control such as protecting environmentally sensitive areas and preserving agriculture, and an acknowledgment of the intergovernmental context of contemporary planning. The recommendations were hard to fault.

However, the committee itself never emerged as a champion for its own recommendations or helped lead a statewide coalition for change. Neither did the then-Governor James Rhodes, who instead saw economic development in the state as his priority, not new approaches to planning. I do not recall much press

attention to the committee report. I attended some of the public hearings held by the committee and, quite frankly, I always thought that the committee members seemed diffident about the project (or perhaps puzzled as to what to do). Some appeared genuinely uncomfortable with being there.

What should be done now?

As a native Ohioan and a co-author of a comprehensive treatise on Ohio planning and zoning law, I am passionately interested in the topic of reform in the state. But I am skeptical about the prospects for its success. Here are some ingredients of a successful reform program for Ohio (I am stressing "ingredients," and not the complete recipe):

- **Find champions.** The governor and the state legislature must put their shoulders behind the reform effort. Successful reforms over the past 25 years, in states such as Florida, Georgia, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Washington, have involved the governors and the state legislatures exercising leadership, agreeing on an approach, and then staying the course—not sticking their collective toes in the water to test the temperature, as was the Ohio case in the 1970s.

- **Do your homework.** A reform effort must very carefully evaluate what are the problems with the existing statutes *before* proposing solutions. That's hard work, sometime with no easy answers, I'll admit. For example, Ohio voters approved in 1973 an amendment to the Ohio constitution permitting use valuation of agricultural land. This amendment was touted as *the* solution to preserve agricultural land. Consequently, the General Assembly enacted Revised Code Sections 929.01 to 929.05 to allow owners of agricultural land to apply to the county auditor to place their land in agricultural districts for five years. Once placed in such a district, the land is taxed at its agricultural value rather than its

market value, theoretically removing or easing pressure on farmers to sell off the property for development. There are modest penalties for early withdrawal of land from the district and no connection to any type of plan that prioritizes the quality or viability of the district itself.

But is this agricultural use valuation law effective? In order to answer that, we need more than anecdotal evidence from public hearings and vague tales of woe. We need a good hard look, with supporting statistics collected over time and several detailed case studies, as to whether the law is in fact preserving prime agricultural land, or whether it is just another tax break for speculators at the urban fringe that delays, for a short while, what seems to be inevitable.

■ **Address procedural problems.** In the absence of support for comprehensive, sweeping changes, reform of planning statutes should have a procedural, rather than a substantive, emphasis. By this I mean focusing on the process by which local governments make decisions and whether those processes, as described in state legislation, are clearly written and fairly executed. For example, in the process of researching the Ohio planning law treatise several years ago, I discovered that two of the most litigated areas of land-use law are township zoning referenda (especially what constitutes a proper referendum petition and whether the procedures to be applied in approving them were indeed followed) and use variances, by which boards of zoning appeals effectively amend the zoning code through the back door. These are real problems that can be cured by better statutory language, rather than more litigation and uncertainty.

Related to this are problems of delay and overregulation—regulation that serves no real purpose other than to make change difficult, expensive, and complicated. Ask homebuilders or developers what they want and they will tell you it is predictability and simplicity. Applicants for development permission in many communities find that to get a decision on a development they need to run proposals through a variety of hurdles ranging from planning commissions, boards of zoning appeals, historic and architectural review boards, and environmental commissions. And that excludes approvals from state agencies, like the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, which is a whole separate layer of review. Isn't there a way to streamline development approvals?

The one area in which substantive guidance is definitely needed is amplification of the “in accordance with a comprehensive plan” language in the county and township enabling legislation (the phrase does not appear in the municipal statutes). My research indicates that the Ohio courts are befuddled by this phrase because the Revised Code doesn't define what a “comprehensive plan” is. Clear language on what constitutes a plan will eliminate any type of subsequent confusion over its scope and purpose. Detailing the types of analyses that must underpin plans and describing plan elements in statutes are two ways of ensuring that thorough, systematic, and useful documents will result from the planning process that will provide constitutional support for governmental decisions.

■ **Make planning work for all.** Planning statute reform must ensure a balancing of interests for all Ohioans. Issues like agricultural land preservation, suburban

transportation congestion, and “urban sprawl” are fueling the current round of concern. But what about affordable housing in the growing areas on the urban fringe, especially in areas where there is growth in moderate-income jobs? Preserving “rural character” cannot just be a code word for large-lot zoning and mini-mansions, as it is in some parts of the state. The authority to enact zoning and related regulations is delegated by statute and the state constitution to local governments in order to advance the general welfare—and that means everyone, not just people who can afford the tab on the big homes.

■ **Transcend political boundaries.** Planning statute reform must deal with the intergovernmental dimension. Counties, townships, and municipalities all have different authority to plan and regulate land use and follow different procedures. There is no powerful incentive to work together for a single system to achieve common objectives or across local government boundaries to minimize adverse impacts of development and spread around its benefits.

For Ohio, this may be the major obstacle to overcome, and it is here where the state may need to inject itself, rather than remaining passive. In Oregon, the success of the use of urban growth areas—clearly delineated areas in which compact development will occur that is supported by urban-level infrastructure and services, simultaneously protecting prime agricultural land from encroachment—has resulted from clear, consistent, thoughtful state guidance over time. While urban growth areas may be regarded as a tool in a planner's tool kit, they are also, at bottom, a device for intergovernmental cooperation—getting municipalities and counties, in the case of Oregon, to talk to one another and together decide where urban-level development is going to occur over the next 20 years.

Ohio's statutes must clearly acknowledge that planning and development decisions are affected by and affect a variety of governmental units. They include adjoining and nearby local governmental units, special districts (such as school, water and sewer, and conservancy districts), which plan, construct and operate facilities, and state agencies themselves. The planning system must contain mechanisms to ensure that plans and policies that have intergovernmental consequences are viewed and assessed in a manner that addresses their multijurisdictional impacts. □

A practicing planner, Stuart Meck, AICP, has co-authored, with Kenneth Pearlman, *Ohio Planning and Zoning Law*, a comprehensive treatise published by the Banks-Baldwin Law Publishing Company in Cleveland in soft-bound and CD-ROM editions. Meck is also principal investigator with the American Planning Association in Chicago for its Growing SmartSM project, a multiyear effort to develop the next generation of model planning and zoning legislation for the U.S. The first volume of the model statutes and commentary may be viewed and downloaded from the project's Web site: www.planning.org/plnginfo/growsmar/gsindex.html.

There is no powerful incentive to work together across local government boundaries to minimize adverse impacts of development and spread around its

Retracing the steps of the Ohio land use review committee

By Peter Henderson

Origins of land use debates in the '70s

The creation of the Ohio Land Use Review Committee (OLURC) had three immediate precedents. First, several land use bills were under consideration in the Congress in the early '70s (Rep. John Seiberling from Akron was a prime sponsor of one bill) of which none ultimately were enacted.

Second, a major conference, the Ohio Assembly on Land Use, was held at Kent State University in November 1974 (jointly sponsored by the KSU Center for Urban Regionalism and the Ohio Conservation Foundation, neither any longer in existence).

And, third, in December 1974 the Ohio Legislative Service Commission issued a report entitled, "A State Role in Land Use Management." The Ohio General Assembly then was persuaded to create the OLURC in August 1975.

The pending federal legislation was a principal motivating force in items two and three above, and, also, in creation of the OLURC. Among the land use problems debated at the federal level were:

- Areas of critical environmental concern, including fragile or historic lands (shorelands, wildlife habitats), natural hazard areas (flood plains, unstable geological formations), and renewable resource lands (watersheds, agricultural and forest lands).
- Areas impacted by key facilities (airports, highways).
- Areas subject to large-scale development (housing developments, shopping centers).

Generally, the various bills would have provided federal funds in support of eligible state land use management activities. Thus, there was an inducement to become eligible. And there was also a perception that some of the provisions would intrude upon states' rights unless a state first got its own house in order, and/or would also intrude upon local government home rule.

I have not retained a record of the 1974 Ohio Assembly on Land Use, in which I was not a participant, but my impression is that its participants were viewed as committed academic and professional individuals and civic activists, all or most of whom did not, however, represent broad constituencies.

The Legislative Service Commission report reviewed the current status of federal legislation, land use management activities in other states, and the current status of state and local government land use management activities. It then offered some policy

alternatives for state and regional land use planning, improving the land use planning data base, land use controls, and other methods for implementing land use management policy. It provided a useful resource for the OLURC staff and consultants, but was not evidently and independently a significant influence on the members of the committee.

It might be noted that in all of the above the problem of "urban sprawl" was not specifically identified, although some of the problems which were identified certainly are related to sprawl.

Charge given to the review committee

The OLURC was given a broad charge by the General Assembly:

"The committee's studies shall include but are not limited to the means of coordinating state agency decisions affecting land use patterns; the appropriate roles of local governments, regional agencies, and state agencies in regulating large-scale development activities and in managing and protecting agricultural and environmentally significant lands; the adequacy of existing enabling legislation through which local governments plan and exercise the

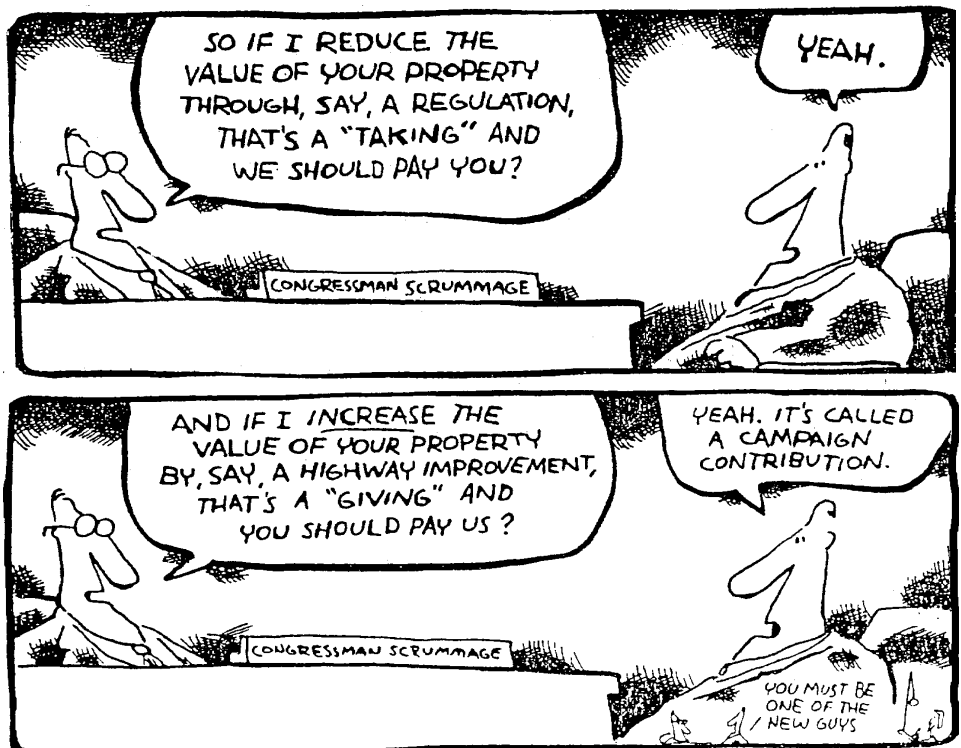
police power regulation of zoning and subdivision control; the effect of taxation on desirable land use patterns; and the most effective review procedures to assure that the views of citizens and government officials at all levels are adequately considered when decisions are made about major public capital investments and major private development proposals."

This charge defined a scope of study which embraces almost all conceivable aspects of land use management. Only by implication were any problems or solutions identified and even then only in broad terms. There was no sense of any commanding and specific problems or solutions demanding attention.

Over the course of the committee's study, identification of problems and solutions were offered by the staff, various consultants, a few state and local officials, and some statewide organizations of interest groups. These sources contributed to much of the content of the committee's final report.

But the committee looked primarily to problems and solutions as identified by local governments, state and other public agencies, civic organizations, and citizens. To this end, the committee conducted hearings at 13 locations throughout rural and urban Ohio.

The hearings



Tom Toles/Bufalo News

The Ohio Conservation Foundation (OCF), which had led the lobbying for creation of the committee, assumed the task of fostering testimony from land use planners and other environmentalists. It was the hope of OCF and their allies that existence of the committee would both stimulate and coalesce interest in the subject.

The hearings were well attended and a vast amount of oral and written testimony was received. The result was disappointing, however.

A great amount of testimony was in defense of individual property rights and local government home rule.

Much of this testimony was from representatives of a conservative statewide organization which feared the committee was part of or at least influenced by an international Communist conspiracy and for whom "land use" and "regional" were buzzwords raising fear of the impending destruction of American values. But similar testimony also was presented by many moderate individuals and spokespersons for local governments, civic groups, and statewide organizations.

The most commonly expressed specific problem was loopholes in state law permitting avoidance of subdivision regulation. This problem was identified by representatives of some municipal and several county planning commissions. Presumably, this reflected the fact that in many suburban municipalities and "growth" counties, regulation of land subdivision is a principal function—together with zoning regulation, perhaps the only function.

Otherwise, there was little testimony of problems encountered by city and regional planners, especially not from the larger cities. This category of testimony was presented either indifferently, inconsistently or ineffectively. To paraphrase the comment of one of the more progressive members of the committee: "This is hardly a clarion call for the planning profession."

There was a good deal of testimony from environmentalists concerned with such issues as open space, scenic rivers, watersheds, etc., not, however, so much with "urban sprawl" per se. Some of this was repetitive inasmuch as it derived from or was simply a reading of a position paper developed by a statewide organization. However, it was not specific but rather was more in the nature of textbook generalities. It had the value of showing concern, at least by an educated constituency,

but not of identifying specific problems the committee could readily address or solutions which might be effected by legislative action.

Broader concerns

There were four topics on which testimony was more specific and demonstrated a broader constituency of concern:

- Coordination of state agency decisions affecting land development.
- The impact of large-scale developments on multiple local government jurisdictions.
- Preservation of prime agricultural lands.
- And the effect of taxation on land use decisions.

Citizen or professional activists, whether concerned with urban sprawl or other land use management issues, would do well to define and document a specific issue, frame a tangible solution, develop or recruit a broad constituency, and organize to promote their views before entering the

In the case of agricultural lands, the Ohio Farm Bureau was especially effective in identifying the problems and proposing a solution (what has become current agricultural use value assessment for property taxation). Their material was well documented and constructively presented. It was also evident that they represented a large constituency.

No problem?

At a meeting of the committee just following these hearings, one member expressed the view that no problems had

been identified and the committee might just as well dissolve. Others earlier had privately expressed similar views.

But the chairman, State Sen. Kenneth Fox, was determined to continue. It is a credit to his moderate, diplomatic, and non-partisan leadership qualities, as well as a similar commitment by the more active members, that he was supported in this view.

In June 1976, the committee published a report of its findings of problems and concerns. In March of 1977, it followed up with a document called "Tentative Recommendations of the Ohio Land Use Review Committee."

Public hearings on this document were conducted at six locations throughout the state, and each was preceded by a week or so at each location by a briefing by the staff at which copies of the document were distributed and explained. Much of the same kind of testimony was received at this second round of hearings as at the first; but, while much testimony ignored the document and simply expressed concerns about property rights and local government home rule, some of the testimony either sharpened or effected alterations in the committee's final recommendations.

Notable in these hearings, at least to me, was the objection of representatives of several single- or multiple-county planning

Advice from 20 years of experience with Ohio land use

By Arthur Brooks

What can we learn from the experience of the '70s?

- Develop local constituencies for support.
- Work within existing frameworks to achieve objectives (land trusts, soil and water districts, advocacy groups) before attempting large-scale, statewide reforms.
- Mobilize affected professional groups—planners, architects, "good government" groups, etc.
- Link to other "issue-oriented" groups, such as those working on environmental issues, transportation, and affordable housing.
- To gain support throughout the state, work with constituencies such as farm groups, hunters and outdoors groups, and business groups. And cultivate the support of local elected officials.

How is the current situation different from the '70s?

- Greater dissatisfaction with the status quo. Development patterns have proven the necessity for some controls.
- Growth of fiscal conservatism, tight public budgets, and problems with school funding.
- Greater understanding of the need for work places to be near homes, especially for entry-level workers and those coming off welfare.
- A general sense that this is a "new time."

Mistakes to avoid

- Thinking that "government" can solve the problem from the top. We must have "citizen-based" solutions.
- Not recognizing the uniqueness of Ohio. In much of the state we don't have growth; we have sprawl without growth.

Priorities for change

- Eliminate incentives for development in rural areas (such as state financing of new highways) and encourage redevelopment of existing urban areas.
- Promote a framework for regional cooperation, tax-base sharing within regions, and joint land use controls for major projects.

Art Brooks was a state representative from 1975 to 1979. He currently practices law in Cleveland.

commissions to recommendations which would enable (not mandate) an increase in their authority (and responsibility). None came to the defense of these provisions, either in general or as they might be modified.

Following review of five drafts, the work of the committee and staff came to an end with issuance of the committee's final report, "A Guide for Land Use Legislation," in June 1977.

Whatever may be said about the recommendations of the committee, and I think some deserve revisiting, the effort failed at least for lack of widespread support and owing to significant opposition. The opponents were well organized, or at least more vocal. Any proponents were not organized or otherwise effective.

Ultimately, the existence of the committee did not, as had been hoped by some, motivate organized support for changes in land use management in Ohio, or even much interest.

Lessons for activists of 1997

Upon reflection, we can learn several lessons from the experience of the '70s:

- Addressing in a single legislative effort such a broad and almost open-ended range of subjects as represented in the charge to the OLURC has some disadvantages. It arouses the concern of a wide variety of individuals who feel threatened by either the scale of the effort or any number of individual issues and are motivated to defend the *status quo*, but it fails to provide a clear focus around which those who would be constructively supportive can be rallied as a group or can individually feel their views are important to express. In addition, it presents an enormous challenge of comprehension and integration to a legislative body of which any one member is, at best, familiar with only some part of the total, and typically legislative bodies do not have the time, other resources, or patience for such accomplishment.

- Citizen or professional activists, whether concerned with urban sprawl or other land use management issues, would do well to define and document a specific issue, frame a tangible solution, develop or recruit a broad constituency, and organize to promote their views before entering the legislative arena. Defining the problem and framing a solution is the easy part: there is no lack of good ideas in circulation, examples in practice, or individuals with the requisite creative capability; the rest takes more time and probably different skills. During the debates in the '70s, the Ohio Farm Bureau performed these functions well. The city and regional planning profession and environmentalists did not.

- Measures of land use management reform must come to grips with local government home rule which in Ohio, while rooted in the state's constitution and a vast and complicated history of case law, is akin to a

secular religion. The same might also be said of individual property rights, except that this subject is more clearly defined and protected in law.

- Some measures of land use management might better be addressed within the context of other measures which have the support or concern of a larger constituency. For example, the OLURC accommodated the interests of the agricultural community as represented by the Ohio Farm Bureau in recommending designation of agricultural districts which also would serve to shape or restrain the growth of metropolitan areas. One of the promising ideas in which the OLURC was interested was tax base sharing, as had been enacted in the Twin Cities area, as a means of reducing the influence of taxation on land use decisions. But the committee concluded it would be better to address this measure in the context of a more comprehensive effort of tax reform.

Differences from the '70s

The situation is different with respect to concern for urban sprawl. It is a decades-old concern, although perhaps called different names, among urban geographers, planners, and other professionals and academicians. Today, it is much more broadly shared, even if still by a minority of the public. The single-family subdivision and highway-building mania of the '50s and '60s appears to have diminished somewhat; and growing pains have been experienced by suburbs. But the basic value of "newer is better" remains; so, also, do values of home rule and property rights.

In addition, we still have in most metropolitan areas a fragmentation of local governments each looking primarily to their own interests, and have yet to overcome such parochial views in efforts at areawide growth coordination. Compounding this are single-purpose public agencies (highways, sewers, etc.) who either are not professionally inclined or lack the mandate to take into account the broader implications of their activities. It is trite to identify these conditions; I mention them only to indicate I see no change since the '70s.

Priorities for change

The creation of agricultural districts as recommended by the OLURC, or some mutations thereof, can be an effective way of checking urban sprawl, at least in some metropolitan areas. It deserves priority, not only for its own merit, but particularly because of the current efforts of the governor's task force and, also, because the agricultural community already is well represented by the Ohio Farm Bureau, which could be a powerful ally.

Tax base sharing, also considered by the OLURC, deserves priority investigation especially in the context of current efforts to reform public school financing. Not all possible solutions to reducing the disparity of

school district resources would necessarily further the interests of urban sprawl activists, but some could. Again, the priority derives from current activities and the possible support of such broad-based constituencies as are well represented by the Ohio School Board Association and teachers' organizations.

A local priority for me would be harnessing the influence of the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area (CVNRA) and, also, the Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor, which recently was designated by the Congress. Creation of the CVNRA was motivated to a considerable degree by activists for checking urban growth along the valley. And there remains the objective of protecting this resource from intrusive, large-scale developments along its perimeter, which, in turn, might stimulate urban sprawl. □

Pete Henderson was staff director of the Ohio Land Use Review Committee (OLURC) in 1976-77. He currently is executive director of the Cuyahoga Valley Communities Council.

Transforming Ohio

Exploitation of natural resources was clearly part of the price of development and the accommodation of the vast human population that now inhabits Ohio. In less than 200 years the Ohio Country was transformed from a land of magnificent forests and clean waters, occupied by no more than a few thousand Indians clearly in balance with the available wildlife resources, to a land occupied by 11 million people whose living requirements not only exceed the natural carrying capacity of Ohio, but drain heavily on national and world resources. In light of pollution in its many forms, the social deterioration besetting cities, and the growing scarcities of essential resources, our civilization would clearly have benefitted by an attempt to keep population growth and development in some logical relationship with natural systems.

—Edward F. Hutchins
Ohio's Natural Heritage

**Ohio Greenways Conference
May 16-18**

The second annual Ohio Trails & Rivers Conference will take place May 16-18 at Akron's Ramada Plaza Hotel—in the heart of the Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor. The conference will cover the status of greenways in Ohio and map out a vision for a statewide greenways program. Local and regional success stories will highlight the social, economic and environmental benefits of greenway development.

Sponsors include Rivers Unlimited, Rails to Trails Conservancy, the Ohio to Erie Trail Fund, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, National Park Service, and the Conservation Fund. For registration information, call 216-657-2055 or 614-487-7511.

April 23

Meeting of the Northeast Ohio Group of the Sierra Club, featuring a talk on the **evangelical heritage of John Muir** and Sierra Club activism, 7:30 p.m. at the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, 2600 South Park Blvd. in Shaker Heights. A similar talk about Muir, nature and Christian spirituality will be presented the following evening at 7:30 p.m. in the John Carroll University Lombardo Student Center.

April 26

Grassroots Organizing Forum sponsored by the Ohio Environmental Council, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Stratford Ecological Center in Delaware, OH. For registration information, call 614-487-7506.

April 26

Earth Day cleanup of the Lorain County Metro Parks **Black River Reservation**, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

April 26-27

Holden Arboretum annual **plant sale** featuring many hard-to-find wildflowers, 9500 Sperry Rd. in Kirtland. Call 216-946-4400 for details.

April 27

Spring bird walks

On Sunday mornings from April 13 through May 18 local park districts and birding clubs in Northeast Ohio offer guided walks to observe the spring bird migration. It's a good opportunity to see spectacular displays of birds with experienced birders. For more information:

- Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland, 216-861-5093.
- Cleveland Museum of Natural History, 216-231-4600.
- Lake County Metroparks, 216-256-1404.
- Geauga Park District, 216-286-9504.
- The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, 216-321-5935.

Wildflower walk on Old Mill Trail in Furnace Run Metro Park, 2 p.m. Meet at the Brushwood area off Townsend Road in Richfield.

April 27

Thinking bioregionally in Northeast Ohio, a talk by EcoCity Cleveland director David Beach, 2 p.m. at the Geauga Park District's Meyer Center, 9160 Robinson Rd, Chardon.

April 29

Meeting on urban sprawl for local religious congregations sponsored by WE-CAN! and BOLD and featuring tax-base sharing expert Myron Orfield from Minnesota, 7 p.m. at Berea United Methodist Church, 170 Seminary St. in Berea. Call 216-881-2344 for more information.

April 30

General membership meeting of the **Cleveland Waterfront Coalition** to discuss plans for the lakefront, 5:30 p.m. at Cleveland State University's Mather Mansion, 2605 Euclid Ave. Call 216-371-4024.

May 2-3

Dusk to Dawn Diversion celebration of spring nights, 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. at the Bonnie Park Picnic Area of Cleveland Metroparks Mill Stream Run Reservation. Call 216-526-1012 for details.

May 2

Family Fun Maypole event with storytelling and campfire, 7 p.m. at the Crown Point Ecology Learning Center, 3220 Ira Rd. in Bath. \$15/family. Call 330-666-9200 to register.

May 3

Forest Hill Park cleanup, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Meet at the tennis courts off Lee Rd.

May 3

Living in rural Geauga County day, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Geauga Park District's Big Creek Park, 9160 Robinson Rd, Chardon. Seminars include chainsaw safety, woodlot and wildlife management and sharing the road with Amish buggies.

May 3

Workshop on the **art of simple living** sponsored by the Men's Resource Center at Lakeland Community College in Kirtland. \$15. Call 216-975-4747 for registration information.

May 6

Organizing meeting for a **statewide land use** advocacy group at Otterbein College near Columbus. Call 614-882-9122 for details.

May 10

RiverDay celebration of the Cuyahoga River featuring hikes, river cleanup projects and educational events, sponsored by the Friends of the Crooked River. Call 800-491-0316 for event information.

May 10

RiverDay concert featuring Magpie, 7:30 p.m. at the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area Happy Days Visitor Center on SR 303. Sponsored by the park and the Crown Point Ecology Learning Center. For information, call 216-524-1497.

May 10

**Oberlin symposium on sustainable development
April 25-26**



Communities throughout America are realizing the benefits of sustainable development for local economic stability, environmental quality and community well-being. This

symposium in Oberlin will focus on three facets of sustainable development: energy, land-use, and economic renewal. Nationally renown speakers will complement discussions focused on issues significant to Northeast Ohio.

In addition to the speakers, there will be five work sessions during Saturday afternoon to discuss community-wide issues including: open space in Oberlin, energy conservation and renewable energy development, sustainable housing options, township and city cooperation, and sustainable agriculture in Lorain County.

Sponsored by the City of Oberlin and the Environmental Studies Program at Oberlin College. For more information, call 216-775-8409 or 216-775-1531, or check out the environmental studies program Web site at www.oberlin.edu/~envs.

International Migratory Bird Day and the height of the spring warbler migration. Special birding activities at the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, 7:30 a.m. to noon. Call 216-321-5935.

May 10

Spring bird census in the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area. Meet at the park headquarters on Vaughn Road at 7 a.m.

May 10

Plant sale by the Ohio City Near West Development Corp. and Cleveland Botanical Garden to benefit the renovation of Market Square Park. Call 781-3222 for ordering information.

May 10

Monthly meeting of **SEED Ohio**, featuring a presentation on natural building techniques. Call 216-321-4325 for details.

May 10

Potluck/meeting of **Cuyahoga Hours** barter exchange program, 6 p.m. at the Friends Meeting House, 10916 Magnolia Dr. in University Circle. Call 216-236-5801.

Population density in Northeast Ohio

1990 Census data for Cuyahoga, Lorain, Medina, Summit, Stark, Portage, Geauga and Lake counties.

From *The Face of Northeast Ohio in 2010* prepared by the Center for Urban Studies, University of Akron

"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

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