

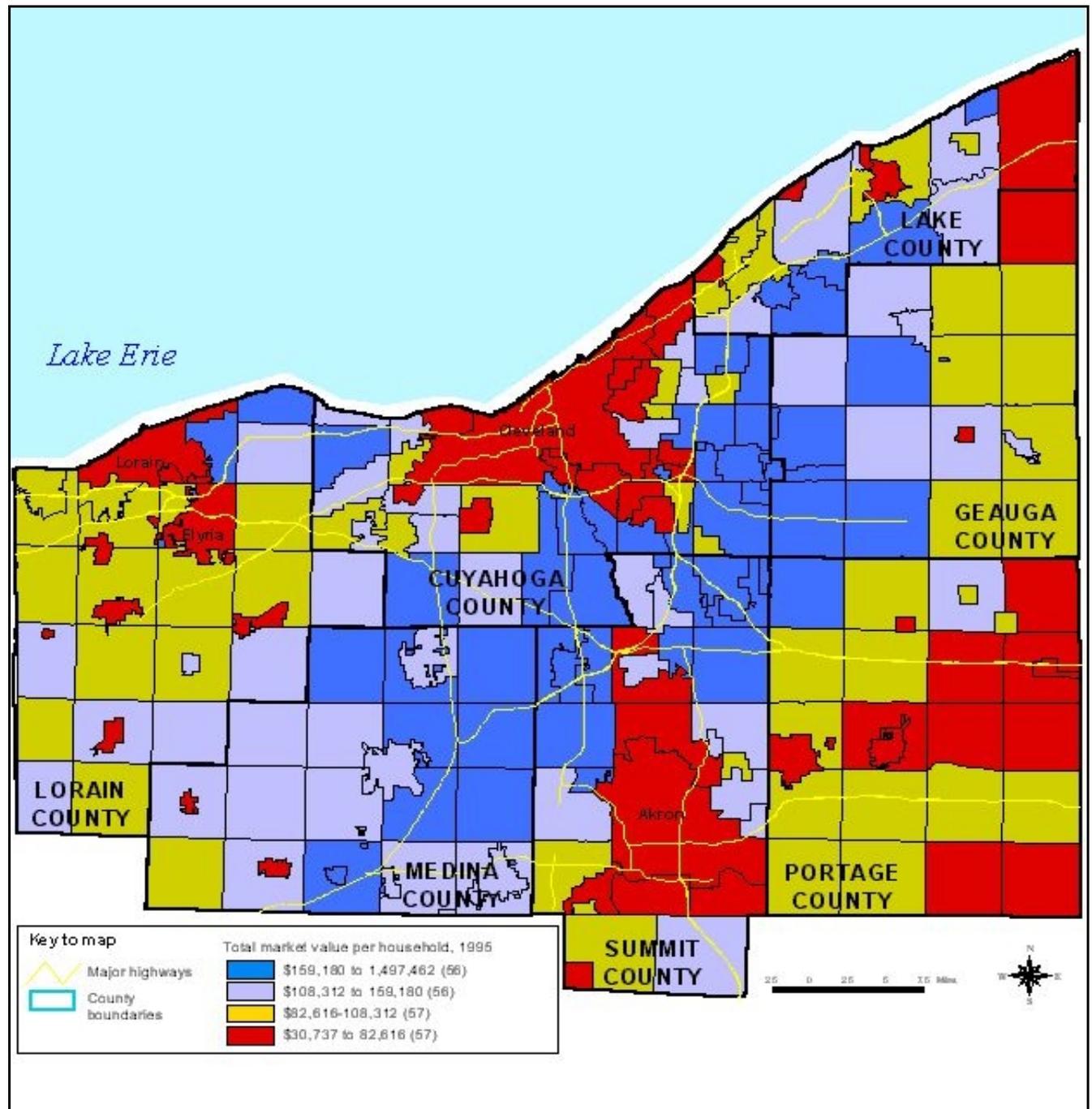
# Shifting wealth

**What:** Map showing that the outmigration patterns in the region are also patterns of social stratification, as certain exclusive suburbs capture a greater proportion of the region's tax base and wealthy households.

**Why:** Inequities in tax base make it more difficult for older communities to maintain themselves. As decline spreads, wealthier households move farther out from the urban cores of the region, leaving behind increasing concentrations of poverty. Reversing these trends will require stronger efforts to redevelop older communities.

**How:** The 226 cities, villages and townships of the seven-county region depend on growing tax bases to finance public services, schools and infrastructure. A study by researchers at Cleveland State University's Housing Policy Research Program mapped the status of tax bases across the region and related change in tax base to real estate development, population movement and public policy.

Analysis conducted and map prepared by the Housing Policy Research Program  
 The Urban Center -- Ohio GIS-Network  
 Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs  
 Cleveland State University, 1997  
 (reformatted by EcoCity Cleveland, 1999)



## Divided society

Greater Cleveland is famous for its Emerald Necklace, the wonderful network of parks encircling the area. But another necklace—one with troubling implications—has developed in recent years. This is a necklace of suburbs that is capturing much of the regional growth in tax base and is leaving behind increasingly impoverished urban core and rural areas. This band of migrating wealth shows up on the maps in deep blue. Researchers at Cleveland State University have dubbed it the "Sapphire Necklace."

The Sapphire Necklace is a band of high tax base cities, villages and townships that extends northeast-southwest between Lake and Medina counties. In contrast, tax bases are weakest in fully developed communities and in rural districts where little development has occurred. Thirty-two percent of the region's residents live in communities with the strongest tax bases, and 68 percent live in communities with the weakest tax bases.

Among the troubling implications of this map:

- The future of Cuyahoga County is at risk, as erosion of tax base moves from the inner city and increasingly affects inner-ring suburbs.
- Long-established public policies and practices (especially the construction of new highways) have favored the development of new communities at the outer edges of urban areas over maintenance and redevelopment of established, older communities. Unless these public policies change, the region faces a future of spreading decline, environmental degradation, and loss of farmland and natural areas.
- The fragmented political structure of Northeast Ohio, which pits communities against one another in the competition for tax base, prevents cooperation for balanced development.



More of the region's wealth is moving out to the cornfields



Jobs and tax base along I-271

Support for the maintenance and redevelopment of central cities, and now inner-ring suburbs, has simply not been comparable to the underwriting of sprawl. Unbalanced investment promoted housing and economic growth in outlying areas to the detriment of older urban neighborhoods. That kind of unbalanced investment did not provide people with fair choices if they wanted to remain in more established neighborhoods. That pattern of unbalanced investment has brought us to an anomalous situation in Northeast Ohio—we basically have flat regional population growth yet we spread out over more and more land. We have sprawl without growth.

Does this well-established trend represent good stewardship of our valuable agricultural lands? Does it lead to a cleaner environment? Does it strengthen the social fabric of our communities? Does it make cohesive, vibrant family life easier? Does it foster greater civic participation? Does it wisely utilize our fiscal resources? Does it increase our economic competitiveness? Does it further a healthy appreciation of multicultural diversity? Does it better ground our young people in a rooted, meaningful sense of identity marked by solid values? Does it help break down the isolation of people by race, income and culture? Does it help bridge the widening gaps that separate rich, poor and middle class? Does it advance social justice and the common good? I don't think so.

—Cleveland Catholic Bishop Anthony Pilla

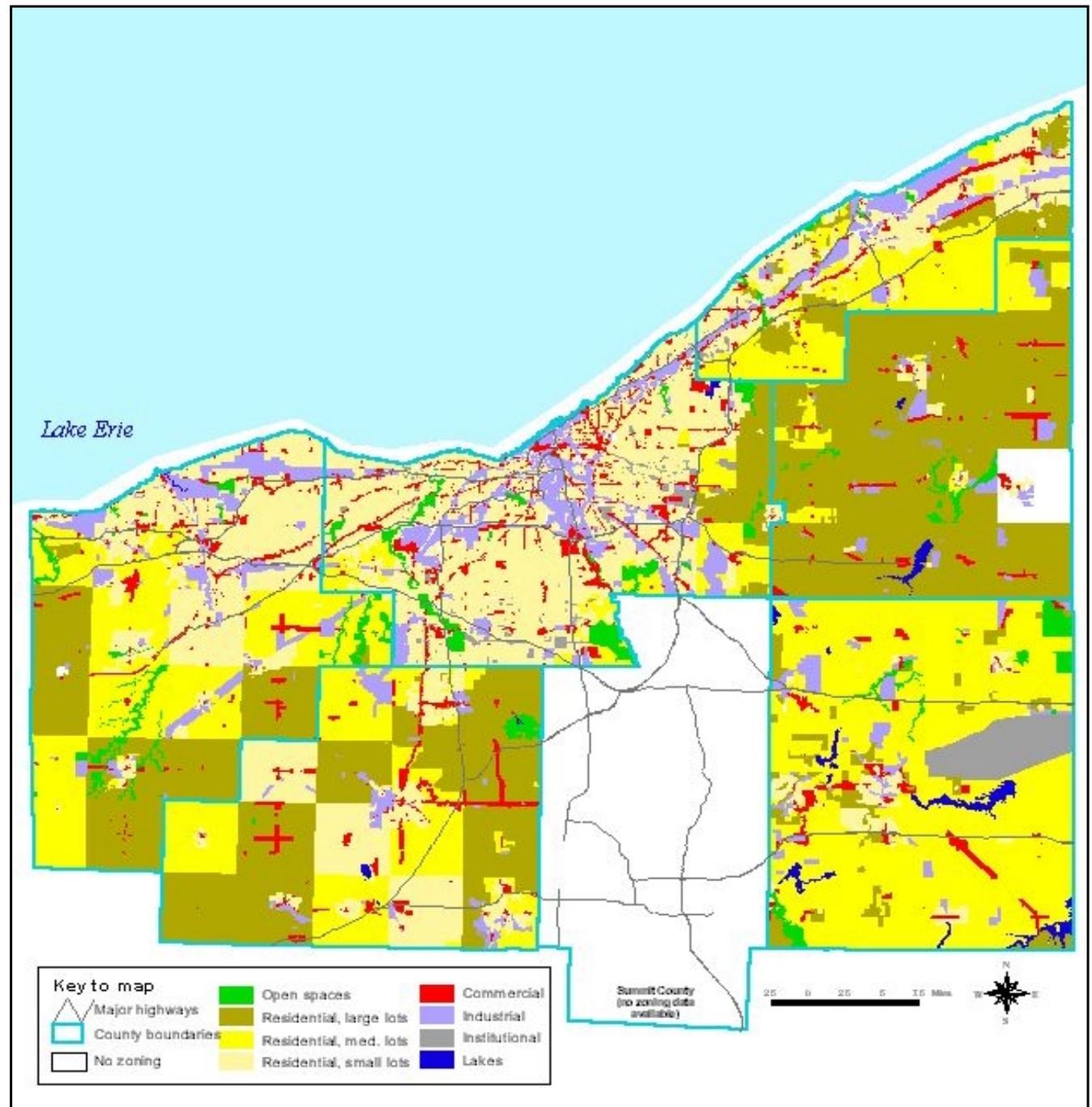
# Zoned for development

**What:** Current zoning patterns throughout Northeast Ohio (except Summit County, where a single county-wide map is not available). The map shows that, apart from a few protected open spaces in the seven counties, essentially the entire region is zoned for development, regardless of whether land is highly productive farmland or harbors unique ecosystems.

**Why:** This pattern of zoning was established by individual cities, villages and townships without much regard to the regional implications. Nevertheless, this is the de facto development plan for the region.

**How:** The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) compiled the zoning maps of all communities throughout Lake, Geauga, Medina, Lorain and Cuyahoga counties, and the Portage County Regional Planning Commission did the same for Portage County. Though zoning categories and terminology vary widely from place to place, the map to the right generalizes those categories into the seven seen here.

Map prepared by EcoCity Cleveland, 1999  
 Data sources: Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), Northern Ohio Data and Information Service (NODIS), Portage County Regional Planning Commission, U.S. Census Bureau TIGER files



## Waiting for houses

People who move out to a new subdivision "in the country" are often surprised and angry when the woods and fields behind their new house becomes yet another subdivision. They don't realize that practically all of the countryside of Northeast Ohio is zoned to allow development.

Much of this zoning was created in an ad hoc manner by individual communities who never thought about whether the region as a whole really needs all that residential land or another industrial park out in the middle of Amish farm country.

It's pretty amazing to calculate what would happen if some of these places fully developed according to their present zoning. In Medina County, for example, all of the vacant land in townships (165,000 acres now used mostly for agriculture) is zoned for development. If the current pace of building continues, all of this land will be completely developed by 2045. That would bring 47,000 new homes and would eliminate farming in the county. The county's population would double, and the number of students in the Buckeye, Black River, Cloverleaf, and Highland school districts would increase 300 percent (projections from a study by the Housing Policy Research Center at Cleveland State University). Such growth would create tremendous pressures for costly new roads, schools, sewer systems and other services. And it's not clear whether residents really want their county to change so drastically.

I went back to Ohio  
But my pretty countryside  
Had been paved down the middle  
By a government that had no pride.  
The farms of Ohio  
Had been replaced by shopping malls  
And Muzak filled the air  
From Seneca to Cuyahoga Falls.

— "My City was Gone"  
from the Pretenders' *Learning to Crawl* album



One-acre lot zoning



Two-acre lot zoning



Five-acre lot zoning

# Transportation projects

**What:** The location of over \$2 billion in highway capacity additions planned or proposed to be constructed in Northeast Ohio during the next two decades. The map shows that most such additions are located in suburban and rural locations where they would increase accessibility, encouraging a new wave of low-density, auto-dependent land use. Commuter rail lines currently under study could play a more beneficial role, if designed to connect town centers.

**Why:** It's difficult to plan for reinvesting in core urban communities and protecting valuable farmland and open spaces if transportation infrastructure investments encourage land speculation and sprawling development at the edges of the metropolitan area. The impact of two billion dollars in transportation investments will be felt for decades to come.

**How:** Transportation planning agencies for the seven-county region (NOACA and AMATS) have recently completed long-range plan updates in which most of the projects on the map are described. In addition, other projects have been included because significant attention has been paid to them in the press: for example, proposals for new interchanges at I-90 and Lear/Nagle Road in Avon (Lorain County), US 422 and Munn Road in Auburn Township (Geauga County), I-71 and Boston Road (on the Cuyahoga/Medina County line) and on I-480 in Independence (Cuyahoga County).

Map prepared by EcoCity Cleveland, 1999  
 Data sources: Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS), U.S. Census Bureau TIGER files





## Transportation for people or cars?

In the past 50 years most development in the United States has been oriented to the automobile. It's been a spread-out, low-density form of development that has largely ignored other forms of transportation, such as transit, biking and walking. As a result, our society has become increasingly dependent on the automobile—and we're suffering from greater traffic congestion, air pollution and reliance on foreign oil. In addition, many people are realizing that they don't like the "feel" of auto-oriented development. The ring road around the mall just doesn't give them the inviting, human-scale experience of a traditional Main Street.

The alternative to this automobile sprawl is transit-oriented development, which clusters a mix of residential, retail, office, open space, and public uses in a walkable environment, making it convenient for residents and employees to travel by transit, bicycle, foot, or car. Transit-oriented development follows a few basic principles:

- Areas within walking distance of light rail or high frequency bus transit contain a mix of moderate- to high-density residential, commercial and employment uses that create a place with a high degree of pedestrian activity and a focal point for transit trips.
- Commercial and civic uses are placed next to transit stops so that a number of errands can be done with only one stop.
- Multiple street connections from neighborhoods to transit stops and local

commercial destinations are provided.

- Design is for pedestrians and transit, without excluding the auto.
- Natural features are brought into the urban area and connected to regional green spaces.

These principles can be applied both to existing urban areas and to newly developing areas. Across the country, communities are realizing that they bring many benefits:

- Increased transportation choices and access, especially for those without cars (children, the elderly, people with disabilities).
- Reduction of traffic congestion, air pollution, and energy consumption.
- Reduced need for costly road widenings.
- Revitalization of compact urban communities and reduction of sprawl development.
- Increased ability to manage growth by planning land use in relation to transit.

In the next 20 years Northeast Ohio is planning to spend \$2 billion on new highway capacity, much of which will facilitate continued low-density development and outmigration. How could we spend that money in the region's existing town centers to promote redevelopment and a more balanced transportation system?



Rapid transit is a focal point for...



stylish, high-density housing...



...and a pedestrian-friendly shopping area at Cleveland's Shaker Square

# Lands at risk

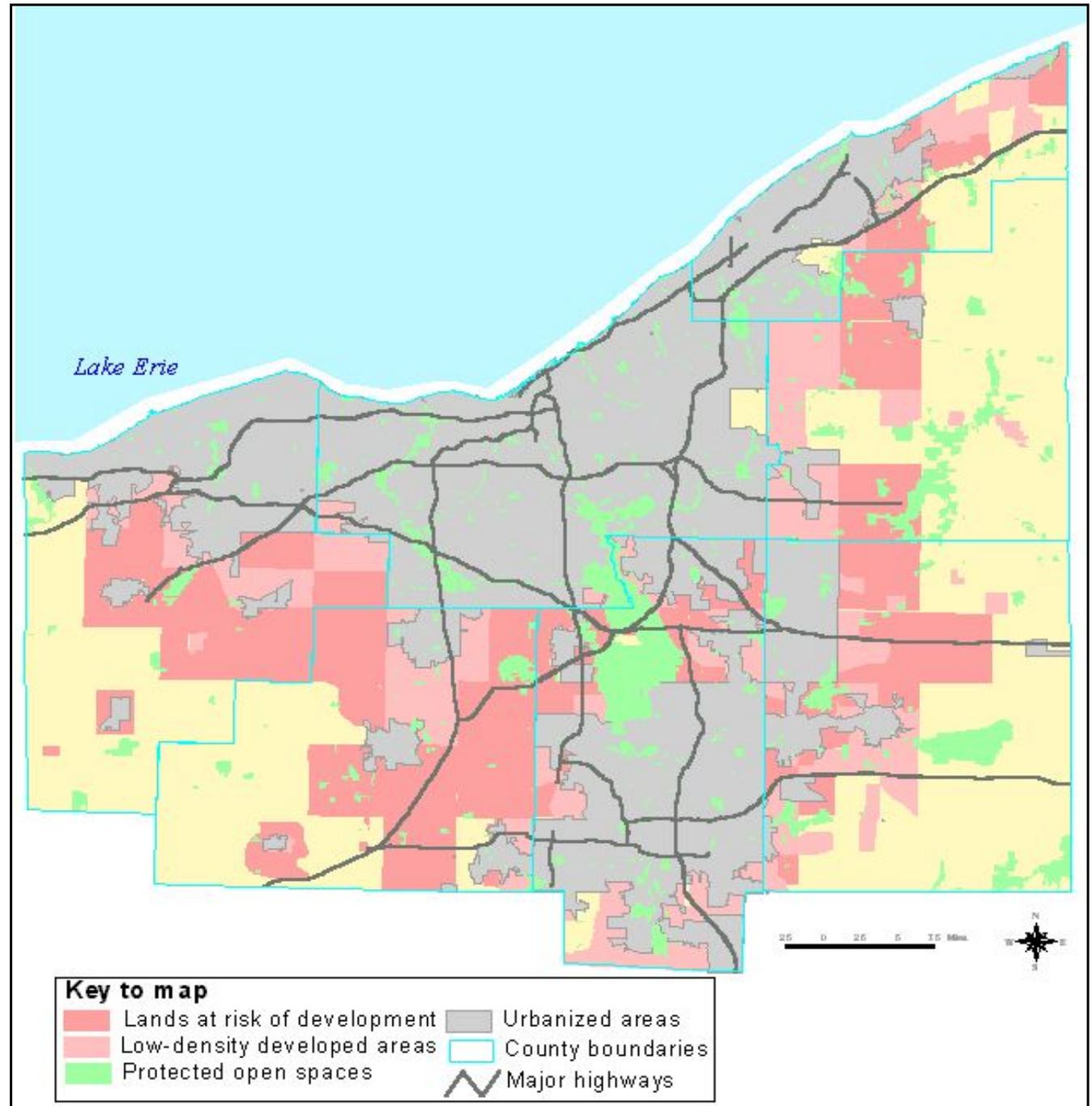
**What:** The map depicts areas already urbanized (according to U.S. Census Bureau criteria), suburban and rural areas that are developed at low densities, and areas that today are still largely rural, but are likely to become low-density suburbs by 2020.

**Why:** To see where our current policies and investment patterns are taking us. Understanding where low-density growth is likely to occur during the next 21 years is important as a wake-up call not only for urban and suburban residents whose communities are threatened with continued disinvestment, but for rural residents too who stand to see the rural character and natural resources of their communities diminished or destroyed.

**How:** Using population projections, proposals for extensions of sewer lines, zoning information, and planned and proposed highway capacity additions for the period 1999 to 2020, EcoCity Cleveland identified areas where development is not only possible, but likely to occur.

Analysis conducted and map prepared by EcoCity Cleveland, with technical assistance from the Northern Ohio Data and Information Service (NODIS), 1999.

Data sources: Cleveland Metroparks Open Space Inventory, from Ohio Capabilities Analysis Program (OCAP), ODNR; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER files; U.S. Census Bureau Population Statistics; Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA); Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS); Northern Ohio Data and Information Service (NODIS); Portage County Regional Planning Commission



## The transition from rural to developed

Do you ever get the feeling that whenever you drive out to the country the country is no longer there? Instead, you see the farms and open space being gobbled up in huge chunks of low-density subdivisions and commercial strips.

Many of these areas are not included in the official definition of the region's "urbanized areas" because they fall below the Census Bureau's threshold of 1,000 people per square mile. But these areas look and feel developed, and they create many of the same environmental problems, traffic congestion, and service demands as more densely populated areas.

So, for our lands at risk of development map we chose a lower threshold of 250 people per square mile (roughly the number of residents in an area with homes on five-acre lots). We projected what parts of the region would exceed this threshold by 2020 (or meet one of several other criteria related to the construction of sewers or highway interchanges). And we found it was a huge amount of land—874 square miles, or about 30 percent of the region. Of that, about one third is already over the 250-person density threshold.

Thus, our region's developed area is set to balloon outward in the next 20 years. It's going to be a dramatic change.

Given the magnitude of the impacts, we would be wise to ask about the long-term costs and the possible alternatives.



When the land is cleared...



...and paved over...



...water quality is one of the casualties

The mentality of people who think, "Let's move to this quaint, safe, small-town area and cut down its trees and farms to build our subdivisions" is appalling. Get a grip, folks! With all the new people coming in, the small town will no longer be small. What about working together in our cities and suburbs to make them wonderful and safe places in which to live? Then we won't destroy what little open space and small-town atmosphere we have left.

—Robin Coyer  
from Broadview Heights, Ohio,  
letter in the December 29, 1997,  
issue of *Time* magazine

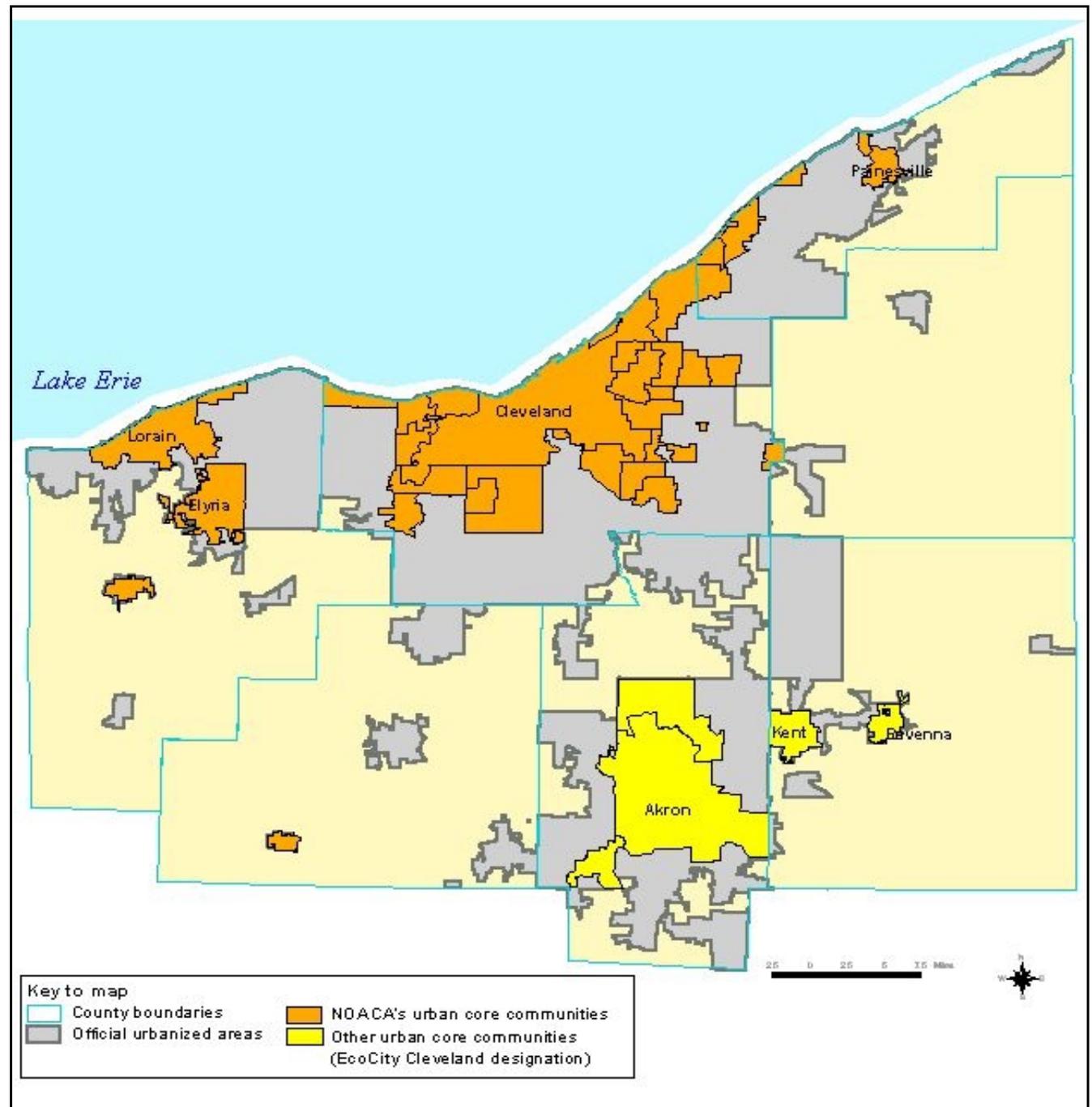
# Urban cores of the region

**What:** Older cities and suburbs in Northeast Ohio—that reflect more compact and efficient patterns of land use. Most of the urban core communities identified on this map were founded before the era of widespread automobile use. They offer a mix of land uses (residential, commercial, and work places) and a variety of housing types. They offer easy access to destinations by transit, bike, or foot. And they make cost-effective use of infrastructure. Smaller historic village centers in the region also share these characteristics.

**Why:** These areas are the urban centers of the region. If maintained and redeveloped, they can offer attractive places to live for a growing proportion of the households in the region.

**How:** The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency identified the core urban communities in Lake, Geauga, Medina, Lorain and Cuyahoga counties using five criteria: peak Census year for population, population density, age of housing stock, density of street networks, and assessed real property value per capita. EcoCity Cleveland identified core urban communities in Summit and Portage counties using similar criteria.

Map prepared by EcoCity Cleveland, 1999  
 Data sources: Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), U.S. Census Bureau Population Statistics





Creative infill development in Cleveland



Conservation subdivision at edge of the metro area

## Where to put 210,000 homes?

According to Census projections, the seven-county region is expected to add about 75,000 households between 2000 and 2020. At the same time, the homebuilding industry will build about 210,000 new housing units if current rates continue. Most of those houses will be built on farmland in rural areas. Can we consider where else they might go?

Let's start by pointing out that there will be 135,000 more new houses than new households, meaning that a number of older homes could be abandoned in the region. What if we did a better job maintaining those older homes and communities or rebuilding on the sites of obsolete housing? We might find that most of those 135,000 housing units could be located where housing already exists. With aggressive redevelopment strategies, let's say that 100,000 units could be located in this way.

That leaves 35,000 plus the 75,000 new housing units needed by the new households, a total of 110,000. To find new sites for these houses, we could again look at the infill development potential of existing urban areas—creative ways to add attractive new housing to existing communities. For example, the City of Cleveland alone could take 500 new units a year for total of 10,000 over 20 years. If other core urban areas on the map at left absorbed a proportional amount, we might find room for 50,000

units. Done with good design and a mix of housing styles (single-family detached, condos, row houses, apartments), these units could contribute to the quality and diversity of core communities.

Out of the remaining 60,000 units, 30,000 might be distributed in newer suburbs. The emphasis might be to integrate housing in "edge city" employment centers as part of a retrofit program to turn them into denser, mixed-use centers.

That would leave 30,000 houses to be built in the country. Smart development would cluster the units in "conservation subdivisions" near existing towns. That would require the development of less than half of the land of conventional subdivisions.

If we could do all this, we could meet the future housing needs of our population with a diverse and affordable supply of homes. We could keep builders busy constructing new homes and rehabbing existing ones. And we could do nearly all of it within the existing developed area of the region.

We don't have to bulldoze hundreds of thousands of acres of countryside!