NORTHEAST OHIO REGIONAL TOWN MEETING

November 12, 2005

www.voiceschoices.org

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Working Together for Northeast Ohio's Economic Competitiveness
The Fund for Our Economic Future

The Fund is an unprecedented collaboration among nearly 70 philanthropic organizations from across Northeast Ohio. Its goal is to encourage and advance an agenda for regional economic transformation. The three-year initiative has raised nearly $30 million to further its objectives. (www.futurefundneo.org)

AmericaSpeaks

AmericaSpeaks is a nonprofit organization that engages citizens in the most important public decisions that impact their lives. Since 1997, AmericaSpeaks has conducted 21st Century Town Meetings across the country and around the world on such subjects as the redevelopment of the World Trade Center after 9/11, the creation of Washington, D.C.’s municipal budget, and the development of global priorities at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. (www.americaspeaks.org)

The Universities Collaborative

The Universities Collaborative is a coalition of local institutions of higher learning that is serving as a key partner in the implementation of Voices & Choices and the Dashboard of Regional Economic Indicators. The Collaborative will play a significant role in strengthening the region’s civic infrastructure and capacity through Voices & Choices.
Get Involved with Voices & Choices

Voices & Choices will engage tens of thousands of people in the largest public deliberation ever convened by working with hundreds of volunteer “Ambassadors” across the region. Ambassadors will work with Voices & Choices to recruit others to participate in the process, convene discussions, and advance the agenda that emerges from the process.

Below are just a few ways that you can be involved with Voices & Choices as an Ambassador.

**Spread The Word!**
- Talk to your friends and neighbors about Voices & Choices and help spread the word about the good things happening in Northeast Ohio
- Make presentations to groups in your community about Voices & Choices
- Submit articles to community and organizational newsletters or web sites
- Write a letter to the editor or call in to a radio show to talk about Voices & Choices
- Identify community events or meetings for us to publicize the work of Voices & Choices

**Recruit Others To Get Involved!**
- Encourage friends & family to join Voices & Choices or become an Ambassador
  - Recruit others to take part in a Citizen Interview or to participate in a Voices & Choices Town Meeting or Forum
  - Identify skilled facilitators to help facilitate a discussion at a forum

**Facilitate the Discussion!**
- Conduct a Citizen Interview to help identify the region’s assets and strengths
- Volunteer to be a table facilitator at a Leadership Workshop or Town Meeting
- Organize your own Community Forum with the help of a discussion leader kit

**Support Voices & Choices!**
- Work with other volunteers to support the Voices & Choices Ambassadors program
  - Help to raise funds for Voices & Choices by recruiting corporate sponsors
  - Volunteer to work in the Voices & Choices office or offer a special skill that you have to help strengthen the team

To sign up to be an Ambassador or to learn more, go to: www.voiceschoices.org
November 2005

Dear Northeast Ohio Neighbor,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Voices & Choices Regional Town Meeting. Northeast Ohio’s greatest assets include citizens like you. Each of you has experienced living, working, and playing in this region and we believe positive change cannot take place without you. Your insights, concerns, opinions, and support are all needed to secure a strong future for our region.

The Regional Town Meeting is a vital part of a larger initiative which began last year. The Fund for our Economic Future was launched in February of 2004 as the philanthropic sector’s response to the many pressing economic challenges facing Northeast Ohio. The Fund created Voices & Choices because we realized we could not accomplish our goals alone. Through a series of public discussions and deliberations, like this Regional Town Meeting, the people of Northeast Ohio will have the opportunity to listen to each other, to have their voices heard, and to develop a vision for creating jobs and economic opportunity for families and businesses.

The goal of Voices & Choices is to talk with tens of thousands of area residents from all walks of life to identify the strengths of Northeast Ohio and make choices about what we as a region need to do to transform our economy. Only by listening to everyone’s concerns can we gain everyone’s support. We have already talked with many area leaders and heard what they had to say. We will share their thoughts with you and give you a chance to decide what you think is most important. Once we have met and talked with thousands of other citizens over the next year, we will produce a blueprint to revitalize the region, making it a great place to live, work, and raise a family for years to come.

Thank you for joining us on this important journey. Together, we will create a better future for our region.

Sincerely,

Robert Briggs
GAR Foundation

David T. Abbott
George Gund Foundation

Deborah Vesey
Deaconess Community Foundation
Why Are We Giving You This Information?

This document has important information for you to read before you come to Northeast Ohio’s Regional Town Meeting. It tells you:

- What Voices & Choices and this Town Meeting are all about and why we want to find out what people think
- How we define Northeast Ohio
- How the regional economy works and why it is important
- What the experts say will help us improve the economy of Northeast Ohio so that all people have good jobs and better economic security
- Where we currently stand in Northeast Ohio in the world-wide competition for businesses and jobs
- What citizens and leaders across the region have told us thus far that they like about living and working in Northeast Ohio and what they believe are our greatest challenges to transforming our economy
- What is currently happening in Northeast Ohio to help us win the global competition

What Is Voices & Choices?

Voices & Choices is a campaign to involve tens of thousands of people across Northeast Ohio in setting a course for our region’s future that will produce more jobs and create a better future for our families and businesses. It also will educate hundreds of thousands about the regional economy and the challenges facing Northeast Ohio. Through a series of workshops and town meetings like the Regional Town Meeting, people from every walk of life will come together to decide what we must do to create a better and brighter economic future. Voices & Choices is designed to challenge you to think differently about the regional economy and to act in ways that may be different from what you have done in the past in order to set a new direction for the future. You, along with other citizens and leaders from across the 15 county region, are being called upon to make tough choices about where Northeast Ohio should focus its energy, what is most important, and what should be done first. Our hope is that you will also commit to becoming part of the solution.

By participating in the Regional Town Meeting you have joined the largest public discussion ever conducted in the United States! The ultimate outcome of these discussions is identifying a direction brought about by input from all types of area residents that both individual citizens and leaders can use to shape their economic plans in order to make Northeast Ohio a vital player in a world-wide economy and ultimately improve the quality of life for all residents within the region.
Notes
What Steps Are Involved?

The process began in the summer of 2005 and will continue over the next year:

Phase I has been focused on identifying the region’s strengths and the challenges facing the region by talking to leaders and citizens in a series of discussions.

Phase II will be devoted to getting a clearer picture of what we need to focus on and determine where we should spend our energy.

Phase III will provide us with a clear economic action agenda for Northeast Ohio based on the region’s highest priorities.

What Has Voices & Choices Accomplished So Far?

During Phase I, many volunteers and citizens have become actively involved with Voices & Choices. Nearly 1,500 volunteers joined the Voices & Choices team to help connect other people in the Northeast Ohio region to this effort.

More than 1,000 area leaders from business, government, non-profits, labor, faith-based, and education have been involved in forums to begin creating a vision of success for Northeast Ohio, identifying the region’s greatest assets and strengths, and to identify the greatest challenges to transforming our regional economy.
Thousands of one-on-one citizen interviews are completed or underway to identify the region’s strengths.

The Regional Town Meeting is being held to identify those issues that are the most important for us to address as we begin to develop an economic agenda for the region.

What Will Happen Today?

The Regional Town Meeting will focus on discussion among citizens rather than speeches, question-and-answer sessions, or panel presentations. Each person here today represents, and is drawn from, the diversity of the Northeast Ohio region. You will participate in roundtable discussions (10-12 people per table), deliberating in depth about your vision for a better place, what regionalism means to you, and what you perceive as the greatest challenges we face in Northeast Ohio. You will have an easy-to-use voting keypad and each table discussion will be supported by a trained volunteer facilitator to guide your discussions. The ideas that come from your table’s discussions will be submitted to a central area where a team will work to compile results for the entire room.

Before the end of the day, results from the meeting will be compiled into a report, which will be distributed to participants as they leave. Decision makers will actively participate in the meeting by taking part in table discussions, observing the process, and responding to citizen input at the end of the meeting.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The region’s strengths and challenges identified by people like yourself, will be shared back with others through the media, more group discussions with other citizens and leaders, and via the Voices & Choices website. We want as many people as possible to have the opportunity to weigh-in on how we chart our future.
What Is Happening Across Northeast Ohio To Make Us More Competitive?

Northeast Ohio Sourcing Office

A group called the Northeast Ohio Sourcing Office (NEOSO) has formed for the sole purpose of improving government efficiency and better using tax payer dollars. Any “unit of local government” (including municipalities, counties, special districts, school systems, and publicly funded higher education institutions) in Northeast Ohio can join NEOSO. The organization works with members and experts to capture opportunities for more efficient purchasing of goods and services, all with the goal of stretching all that we can out of our tax payer dollars.

NEOSO tested and evaluated a number of offerings during the pilot project in 2004. Some of the savings to participating units of government that it achieved include:

- 35% savings on diesel fuel and gasoline for government vehicles and school buses
- 30% savings on auto parts for public vehicles
- Up to 84% savings on group coverage for workers' compensation insurance
- Up to 2% savings for each member through a collaborative approach to meeting technology/information services needs.
local, parochial space (Cuyahoga County leaders)

- **Creating a framework of regional** governance that benefits all (Lake & Geauga County leaders)

- **Parochial leadership** and overcoming territorialism; the difficulty of establishing new visionary leadership and stewardship for the region (Summit & Portage County leaders)

### How Competitive is Northeast Ohio?

#### Political Jurisdictions in the Region

- **Northeast Ohio is home to more than 500 political jurisdictions.**

- Combined, local governments (in a 13 county region) spend more than $10 billion in taxpayer dollars each year, largely in isolation from one another.

- **The cost of government in Northeast Ohio, as a percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is more expensive than anywhere else in the country.** Government here costs taxpayers 21% of GDP. Nationwide the cost is 17% of GDP.

#### Regional Cooperation

- **Many sectors are working collaboratively across Northeast Ohio to improve regional cooperation and overall competitiveness.**

Some of these include:

- Team NEO is a unique regional organization founded by several larger chambers of commerce across the region to support and stimulate higher levels of business attraction, expansion, and retention.

- The Fund for Our Economic Future is a collaboration of nearly 70 foundations who have come together to advance an agenda for regional economic transformation.

- The Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education represents 23 public and private colleges and universities across a 13 county region of Northeast Ohio.

- **Citizens of Northeast Ohio strongly support cooperation across the Northeast Ohio region.** When asked if they would like to see counties working together or each county working on its own for things like job creation, a plan for economic growth, attracting international business, training workers and promoting tourism, people were overwhelmingly in favor of cooperation.
What Do We Consider To Be Northeast Ohio?

Situated on the shores of Lake Erie, Northeast Ohio is comprised of 15 counties stretching from the northwest in Lorain County to the Pennsylvania border on the east, and as far south as Ashland, Wayne, Carroll, and Columbiana counties - the more rural areas of the region. Included within this region are four separate sub-regions or what are called metropolitan statistical areas (MSA’s). These include the Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor MSA, the Akron MSA, the Canton-Massillon MSA, and the Youngstown-Warren-Boardman MSA.

Northeast Ohio is home to over 4 million people making it larger in population than 23 states in the entire nation. In fact, Cuyahoga County alone - the most densely populated county and home to the city of Cleveland - is about the size of Rhode Island. In addition to its significant population size, the 1.8 million workers in Northeast Ohio represents one-third of all employment in the entire state of Ohio.

About 100 years ago, Northeast Ohio was built on a wave of people coming from around the globe to work in our railroads, shipyards, steel mills, factories, and farms. It is our broad diversity of people and the industrial heritage that has helped shape what Northeast Ohio is today. For many years, the factories and mills were enough to provide a decent living for people who lived and worked in our region. But, the world has changed dramatically and Northeast Ohio, like many other places, is currently experiencing growing pains. These pains are caused by a shift in emphasis from raw materials of the past like coal, steel or iron ore to new materials that emphasize human ideas and innovation. This new mind-based economy brings with it new expectations and demands. Most important, throughout the industrial age people moved to where the jobs were. Today, jobs move to where there are the most talented people who put their skills to the most productive use.

A Look at Our Past: City officers once trolled train depots, looking for new arrivals and directing them toward their ethnic enclaves and settlement houses. They were handed an “immigrants guide” published in 9 languages with information on health care, laws, and where to find English classes. People were coming from all corners of the country and the globe for jobs in the railroads, steel mills, factories and farms of Northeast Ohio.

Excerpt from Cleveland Magazine, April 2005
Northeast Ohio still boasts a greater share of manufacturing jobs than the rest of the nation which contributes to a great sense of pride in the region. At the same time, the dramatic loss of manufacturing jobs in recent decades has been painful for the region and its people, contributing to feelings of hopelessness and low expectations about what the future holds. But there is hope.

The 15 county region of Northeast Ohio is growing new strengths in service-related areas like insurance and health care. And, there are many new technologies that have roots in the region like polymers, fuel cells, liquid crystals, bio-technology research, and advanced manufacturing practices. These new areas of economic strength can provide job opportunities and economic security for our residents but our ability to build on these new strengths will depend on whether or not Northeast Ohio and its people are willing to create a place that is supportive of change and that is pro-active in carrying out a focused agenda to ensure our economic competitiveness.

What Makes Us A Region?

There are many things that make Northeast Ohio a region. We share the same strengths and we have many of the same challenges. What happens in one part of our region usually affects the rest of the region.

Some shared assets include:
- We are interconnected by growing transportation systems. In fact, people can reach most all areas of the region within about 45 minutes drive time.
- Northeast Ohio shares a common workforce. About one-quarter of all people live in one county but drive to another county for work.
- We share a world class health care systems that provides over one-quarter of a million jobs for people in our region, regardless of where they live.
- The region has a strong system of colleges and universities. In fact, all people in the 15 county region live within 30 miles of a state-sponsored college or university.

Some shared challenges include:
- All of Northeast Ohio has experienced job loss in recent decades. The Akron area has lost many jobs at large employers like Goodyear, Goodrich, and Rubbermaid. Canton has lost jobs at Hoover. Lorain lost its largest Ford plant this year. Cleveland has lost TRW, LTV, and B.P., among others.
- There has been a consistent movement of people and businesses out of all the region’s major cities - Akron, Canton, Cleveland, Lorain, and Youngstown. This isn’t something unique to one area.
- While our cities lose population, other areas of the region struggle to keep up with growth in population and the resources needed to accommodate that growth like water, sewer, and roads.

NORTHEAST OHIO FACTS

Total NEO Employment (2003): 1.8 million
NEO Annual Average Wage (2000): $33,700
Major Industries: Metalworking; plastic products and chemicals; motor vehicles and equipment; insurance; biomedical; instrumentation; controls and electronics.
Largest Cities: Cleveland (478,403); Akron (217,074); Parma (85,655); Youngstown (82,026); Canton (80,806); Lorain (68,652).


What Sets Thriving Regions Apart?

The national and local economists working with the Fund for Our Economic Future to study our economy found that having many fragmented governments at the regional level can hurt overall economic competitiveness. While government is a good source of jobs for many people in Northeast Ohio, tax payers carry a much heavier tax burden and are less able to finance important public services in regions with too many governments. According to the economists, Northeast Ohio should:

**Understand the high costs associated with its many fragmented government structures and determine whether there are better ways to use our tax dollars**

High growth regions have:

- Fewer political jurisdictions per population size
- Lower costs associated with maintenance and replacement of old housing and crumbling infrastructure like roads and sewers
- A tax base that can support demand for social and public services without raising taxes

**What Do Northeast Ohio Leaders Believe Are Our Greatest Challenges?**

This fall, Voices & Choices engaged 1,100 Northeast Ohio leaders in forums to identify the region’s greatest challenges. The challenges identified as most important included:

- **Lack of Cooperation across boundaries, turf issues** (Mahoning Valley & Ashtabula County leaders)

- **A fear of “getting lost” in region-wide planning efforts**: leaders struggling with how they can merge competing agendas and overcome individual identity and power bases. Not all people see regional strategies as being in their self interest (Medina, Lorain, Stark, & Carroll County leaders)

- **Strong culture of local control**: The mentality that we “want to cooperate but not give up control” (Wayne & Ashland County leaders)

- **500 political jurisdictions**, weak political leadership, and getting people to think outside their
What Is Happening Across Northeast Ohio To Make Us More Competitive?

While there are limited region-wide efforts across Northeast Ohio to improve equity and fairness for all people, many efforts are underway at the community level. Attempts to foster collaboration among Fair Housing Boards experienced limited success due to concerns about federal funding structures. Case studies on "best" performers in growth and equity were shared by the economists working with the Fund for Our Economic Future to study our economy. These case studies included the Boston region and the Charlotte region. The economists found that:

• In recent decades, planners and politicians in Boston did not assume that economic growth would be enough to reduce poverty. They took a more proactive approach, forming "linkage" policies that helped to ensure that poorer communities would share in the housing and employment expansion of the 1990s. In addition, heavy emphasis was placed on integrating Community Development Corporations into their economic development process so that neighborhood-level community concerns were considered at all planning levels.

• Charlotte, North Carolina undertook an innovative anti-poverty effort designed to concentrate development efforts on the oldest and poorest neighborhoods in the city. They also adopted a county-wide “scattered-site” strategy to distribute public housing and the poor more evenly across the region. Charlotte’s innovative approach to poverty reduction is viewed by urban expert Neal Pierce as "equaled in few cities around the nation."

In summary, from these models we can see that Boston focused on using social equity measures during a high growth period and Charlotte linked cities, suburbs and the county to anti-poverty efforts.
What Do We Mean By A Regional Economy?

A regional economy and our competition in the global economy is something that is a reality, not a choice or option that any of us has. It is no secret that the world has changed and today we are competing against places like San Diego and even Shanghai for businesses and jobs. More important, economists recognize that it is regions that are economic drivers in global competition - not cities or counties. A competitive regional economy requires that we work together as an entire region to ensure good jobs and economic security for our people.

Consider your favorite sports team. If a sports team wants to be competitive it must truly work as a team with all the players supporting one another. If the players on the team do not work together, the chances of winning are less likely. In a world-wide economy, if Northeast Ohio wants to be competitive against other high growth and prosperous regions, it too must bind together as a regional team to win the world-wide competition for jobs. Our goal is to create a game plan that tens of thousands of people in Northeast Ohio have helped shape so the region has a focused strategy to win.

Voices & Choices acknowledges that our lives and our economy - like all economies in the world - operate at the regional level. As a regional economy, we have two options in Northeast Ohio. We can continue to operate without strong regional coordination, competing against our own regional teammates. Or, we can take a hard look at the strengths and challenges of our team and create a solid game plan that allows our region to compete at the highest possible level in the new global marketplace.
What Do Citizens Like Most About Northeast Ohio?

The following information comes from interviews conducted with citizens of Northeast Ohio to identify the region’s greatest assets and strengths. As our economic development agenda is built and we make choices about how to improve the region’s future, it will be important to ensure that the things people value most are preserved for all.

It's All About the People: Family, roots, home, and heritage are the four words people use first to describe what is special about Northeast Ohio. Relationships, whether with family, friends, co-workers, or even bosses, are a primary focus of people’s lives. Residents believe Northeast Ohio is a great place to raise a family. People say they count on their neighbors for help at a moment’s notice and are ready to lend a helping hand themselves. Many indicated they would miss the community spirit and companionship of their neighbors if they had to move away.

In some ways, Northeast Ohioans deserve their reputation for being hardworking and tough given the industrial legacy and strong work ethic that characterizes the people of this region. Noticeable throughout the citizen interviews was a real sense of being an American, of the importance of our heritage and freedom. But our reputation for friendliness is just as deserved. Strong family ties, self-reliance coupled with strong community support, and a desire for fairness for all are a few of the values held by many.

It's the Look & Feel of the Place: The combination of affordability, unique lifestyles (like short commutes and an overall slower pace of life), access to arts/culture/entertainment, and the range of opportunities for self-expression in learning, play and giving were strengths of Northeast Ohio as described by citizens. People like the large number of local, regional and internationally renowned arts and cultural centers. And they like being surrounded by opportunities for recreation, entertainment and congregating. Northeast Ohio is described as a place where young people can afford to buy a house and retirees can afford to live comfortably.
“We need to provide true opportunities for interaction between cultural and racial groups. We need to work on diversity issues in this region.”

“We need more high quality jobs that allow our residents to meet their basic needs. We have to create career opportunities, not just jobs.”

• **Creating ambition and giving voice to the next generation** of leaders so they are involved in decision making (Lorain & Cuyahoga County leaders)

• **Ending welfare dependency** (Stark & Carroll County leaders)

• **Fixing the inequity in public school funding and the unequal access to higher education** (Wayne & Ashland leaders)

• **Eliminating unequal access to education, healthcare, and jobs** for people (Cuyahoga County leaders)

• **Acknowledging and dealing with issues of race** (Cuyahoga County leaders)

• **Getting past turf issues** - “how can we think about 15 counties if we can't cross the river?” (Cuyahoga County leaders)

• **Providing quality jobs for all** and enhancing the workforce (Lake & Geauga County leaders)

• **Learning to think beyond our own community** (Summit & Portage County leaders)

**How Competitive is Northeast Ohio?**

• **Northeast Ohio's African American and Latino residents reside primarily in or around the region’s core cities.** This means these ethnic populations are segregated from majority populations which tend to locate outside of core cities. In fact, the Cleveland-Lorain-Elyria sub-region ranked as the 6th most segregated area among the 100 largest regions in the United States according to a study by Cleveland State University.

• **On average, people living in our urban centers and rural areas earned lower incomes, while residents elsewhere in the region earned some of the highest incomes in the state.** The average income of individuals in the City of Akron, Canton, Cleveland, Lorain, and Youngstown were much lower than per capita income in Geauga, Medina, Lake, and Summit counties overall.

• **Poverty is an issue in both urban and rural areas of Northeast Ohio.** It has also spread to the suburbs at alarming rates in recent years.

• **Northeast Ohio has a lower percentage of households with health insurance** compared to 11 other metropolitan regions in the study conducted by Cleveland State University.

• **While housing in Northeast Ohio is very affordable compared to the rest of the country home ownership across the region varied widely.** In the urban areas, home ownership rates were the lowest. The rate was less than 50% for Cleveland and it was less than 60% in Akron and Canton.
What Sets Thriving Regions Apart?

The national and local economists working with the Fund for Our Economic Future to study our economy found that poverty levels, income levels, and racial segregation can impact our economic growth and competitiveness. This research revealed that regions are more likely to have employment and population growth when income levels are more evenly distributed across the communities. Similarly, regions tend to be more competitive, when they are less racially segregated.

According to the Fund-selected economists, Northeast Ohio should:

Address income inequality and racial segregation

High growth regions have:

- African American populations that are less isolated and have better access to jobs, quality schools, and other opportunities
- Greater income equality among people (less distinction between “haves and have nots”)
- Lower concentration of poverty in core cities
- Fewer children living in high poverty neighborhoods

What Do Northeast Ohio Leaders Believe Are Our Greatest Challenges?

This fall, Voices & Choices engaged 1,100 Northeast Ohio leaders in forums to identify the region’s greatest challenges. The challenges identified as most important included:

- Eliminating separation by race, class, gender, and persons with disabilities
  (Mahoning Valley leaders)
People like the range of options for places to live from rural to urban. Those who live in the city often mention the value they have for the small, rural communities and vice versa. Location and access are other particular advantages that allow people to move about the region with ease, whether for work or for leisure activities. People are tied to a sense of place and all that it has to offer.

**It is About the Natural Surroundings:** People of Northeast Ohio appreciate and deeply value the natural surroundings, particularly the waterways like Lake Erie, the Cuyahoga River, the Black River and others. People believe in preservation of these and other natural resources for the common good. Lake Erie is 241 miles wide and contains 132 trillion gallons of water. It is the 4th largest lake in the U.S. and 12th largest in the world. Lake Erie’s size provides Northeast Ohio with abundant water for residential, recreational, and industrial purposes. As the shallowest Great Lake, Lake Erie warms more quickly than do the other Great Lakes. The lake’s warmer waters take longer to freeze, thereby extending the shipping and recreational seasons.

In addition to water, land is highly valued. Parks, farms, rolling hills, and covered bridges are vividly described as some of the region’s greatest assets. The 20,000 acre Cleveland Metroparks system, often referred to as ‘The Emerald Necklace’ maintains six golf courses; more than 70 picnic areas; four swimming areas; numerous fishing areas; and the Chalet Recreation Area that operates the only public toboggan chutes in Ohio. In addition, hundreds of miles of hiking trails are located throughout the system and trails exist in every reservation with a variety of vistas and terrains.

No one is neutral about the weather in Northeast Ohio, but overwhelmingly people say the weather is an important factor in their high quality of life. Beauty in all seasons, as well as the variety of recreation that is seasonal (like boating or snow skiing) are mentioned often.

“Northeast Ohio can have a big city feel or a rural feel depending on where you would like to travel. The big city of Cleveland or the rural community of Amish country is all in driving distance.”

“I like living in a diverse, walkable neighborhood where people recognize each other. I like the opportunity to live near the city rather than in a suburb that’s further out and still have the nearness to the Metroparks, University Circle, locally grown produce, the airport, local arts, and ethnic restaurants.”

“I would miss Lake Erie most. It’s a unique experience. I like to stand on the beach to watch the storm roll in.”

“The climate, The Lake, beautiful autumns, lovely deep winters with lots of snow.”

“I like the family atmosphere and the changing of the seasons. In the winter months there is activity and during the summer months there are activities associated with Lake Erie such as boating, skiing and swimming. The abundance of land and trees is very comforting and peaceful.”

“The Cleveland skyline, overall quality of life, open space, quite, rolling hills, the beautiful churches are all the things that make life worthwhile.”
What is the Discussion Framework?

The first step in developing an agenda to revitalize Northeast Ohio’s economy will be to create a shared vision for the future. We must then identify the most important challenges that need to be addressed in order to reach that vision. Once we have identified these challenges, we can consider our options for overcoming them and we can prioritize actions to move forward. An important first step for this discussion will be to look at the current conditions of the region. Voices & Choices has divided the issues facing Northeast Ohio into the following framework.

- Economic Growth & Employment
- Education & Skills
- Quality of Life & Place
- Equity & Fairness
- Cooperation & Governance

These categories are not meant to be exhaustive or to suggest that we ignore how issues are related to one another across categories. Rather, they are intended to encourage us to think about the broad diversity of issues that should be considered in setting an economic agenda for the future. The following pages of this discussion guide provide basic information on each of the five categories to inform our discussions.
Environment and Lifestyle

- **The robustness of greater Cleveland's arts and recreation amenities ranked at the middle of the pack of the 12 benchmarked metropolitan areas** when measured according to employment in arts and recreation per 100,000 people. Out of twelve benchmarked metro areas, Cleveland ranked 6th, with 676 employees. San Diego led the list with 997. Canton had 589; Akron 585 and Youngstown 361, which is relatively high given their smaller populations.

- **Northeast Ohio's drivers experienced relatively little traffic congestion** compared to other drivers across the country. Cleveland and Pittsburgh tied for first among the 12 benchmarked metro areas with the freest flowing traffic. Akron was found to have even less congestion than Cleveland and Pittsburgh.

Source: “Regional and Economic Indicators: Affordability and Quality of Life,” Center for Economic Development, Cleveland State University, 2005
“Sustainability is important. Comprehensive green space and limits to sprawl should be areas of focus for the region. Transportation systems that allow people to get out of their cars and people to get jobs outside of their neighborhoods are all important to pulling people together rather than isolating them.”

“We envision a region where all of our children have moved back to Northeast Ohio after graduating from college to live and build their careers because this is a vibrant, diverse, international, happening, and cool place to be.”

• **Poor image of our region:** getting our story out to market and promote the region in a positive way (Stark & Carroll, Summit & Portage, and Cuyahoga County leaders)

• **How we fund education and its impact on business growth** (Ashland & Wayne County leaders)

• **Reaching consensus about what’s bad** (Ashtabula County leaders)

• **Getting enough job growth to improve quality of life** (Cuyahoga County leaders)

• **Addressing issues of race and class** (Cuyahoga County leaders)

• **Poor quality of schools in Cleveland** (Lake & Geauga County leaders)

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**Where Do We Stand In Northeast Ohio?**

Researchers at Cleveland State University used quality of life indicators to compare the Cleveland-Lorain-Elyria metropolitan area with 32 comparable metropolitan areas across the country. Greater Akron, Canton and Youngstown were also included in the study. The following summarizes how Northeast Ohio compared to 11 of these benchmarked metropolitan areas: Austin, Cincinnati, Columbus, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Portland, San Diego, and St. Louis.

**Cost of Living**

• **The average cost of living in Northeast Ohio was moderate to low** as measured by the Cost of Living Index that is annually calculated by Economy.com. The national median score on the Cost of Living Index was 100 and the most expensive in 2002 was San Diego (122.1). Pittsburgh, at 91.6, was least expensive. Greater Cleveland, at 97.7, was tied for 6th of the 12 benchmarked metro areas. Other Northeast Ohio metropolitan areas were even less expensive - Akron (93.0); Canton (92.1); and Youngstown (87.9).

**Housing Affordability**

• **Housing in Northeast Ohio was very affordable** relative to the rest of the country. Among the twelve benchmarked metropolitan areas, housing costs in greater Cleveland, as measured by the Housing Price Index, were the third least expensive (145.2) Housing costs were only slightly higher in Akron (145.9), Canton (151) and Youngstown (146.61).
What Sets Thriving Regions Apart?

The national and local economists working with the Fund for Our Economic Future to study our economy found that our region is too dependent on industries that are past their prime. As recently as 1980, our economy was grounded in heavy manufacturing industries like steel, automobiles, automotive parts, and production equipment and these older industries grew slower nationally than others like computers and electronics.

To be more competitive, the economists recommend that Northeast Ohio focus on creating a better mix of business and industry. This does not mean abandoning manufacturing completely, but focusing on manufacturing that is more competitive and has a brighter future. Economists further recommend that our region do everything it can to support small business start-ups. They also showed that U.S. regions that are more competitive than Northeast Ohio have done a better job attracting immigrants who are more likely to start new businesses. If we do these things we are likely to see increases in jobs, better earnings for workers, and population growth. According to the economists, Northeast Ohio should:

Encourage and support a dynamic business environment with a lot of business openings as well as closures so that new ideas and innovations replace old, unproductive ones

High growth regions have:
- More small sized businesses (with fewer than 20 employees)
- High levels of business start-ups and expansions as well as contractions and closings of less competitive firms
- Less dependency on manufacturing; a more diversified mix of businesses and jobs

Welcome and support immigrant populations that settle and open their own businesses in urban areas

High growth regions have:
- Higher percentage of foreign born persons living in their core cities
- Higher percentage of minority owned businesses

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<th>Dynamic Business Environment</th>
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NEO Rankings of 157 U.S. Regions

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<th>Attract Immigrant Populations</th>
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NEO Rankings of 157 U.S.

- Cleveland-Lorain-Elyria (76th)
- Youngstown-Warren (109th)
- Akron (111th)
- Canton-Massillon (136th)
What Do Northeast Ohio Leaders Believe Are Our Greatest Economic And Employment Challenges?

This fall, Voices & Choices engaged 1,100 Northeast Ohio leaders in forums to identify the region’s greatest challenges. The challenges identified as most important included:

• **Unfavorable Business Climate** with high energy costs, unfavorable tax policies, labor costs, and government obstacles (Ashland, Wayne, Ashtabula, Stark, Carroll, Lake, Geauga County leaders)

• **Attitudes of Leaders**: Old-fashioned mindset and local or parochial vision across the region (Lorain & Cuyahoga County leaders)

• **Internal Competition** between communities of Northeast Ohio for the same business (Medina County leaders)

• **Lack of Regional Focus on Education & Training**: No solid regional approach to public schooling and job training (Cuyahoga, Summit, Portage County leaders)

• **Poor Labor-Management Relations** (Mahoning Valley leaders)

• **Lack of Understanding** about critical issues among the general public (Cuyahoga County leaders)

How Competitive Is Northeast Ohio?

**New Business Starts**

• **New business openings in Northeast Ohio have been comparable to other metropolitan areas in the Great Lakes region but below regions in other parts of the nation**: For every 1,000 people in the labor force in the Cleveland metropolitan area, 4.6 establishments were opened between 2001 and 2002. Akron and Youngstown opening rates were 4.4 and 4.0, respectively. Additionally, 1,685 patents were granted to individuals or firms in Northeast Ohio in 2003 compared to 2,833 in Minneapolis, 2,623 in San Diego, and 645 in Indianapolis.

**Minority Business Development**

While limited data is available on the status of minority businesses across the 15-county region, a recent study of minority businesses in Cuyahoga County found that:

• The number of minority firms nationally and in our region grew considerably in the 1990s and continues to grow. In 1992 there were approximately 2,800 minority business enterprises in the city of Cleveland; by 1997 the census showed 4,361 such businesses.

• **Cleveland ranked 18th of 20 large cities in its number of African-
What Sets Thriving Regions Apart?

People of Northeast Ohio are here, and stay here, for many reasons other than economic ones. Family ties, friends, and the quality of life they enjoy keep them here. However, for people to stay in this region, the economy must perform better than it has. If the local economy cannot meet the expectations of residents, many will seek better jobs elsewhere. Economists working with the Fund for Our Economic Future to study our economy found that quality of life (like availability of arts, recreation, universities, and transportation systems) has only a small affect on overall economic competitiveness. But, because many are tied to this place and its’ attractions, the economists recommend that Northeast Ohio:

**Sustain and enhance higher education, arts and cultural institutions, transportation infrastructure, recreation opportunities, and health facilities.**

**Local Amenities**

Highest Performing U.S. Regions

- Salt Lake City-Ogden, UT
- Las Vegas, NV-AZ
- Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN-WI
- San Diego, CA
- Orlando, FL

**NEO Rankings of 157 U.S. Regions**

- Cleveland-Lorain-Elyria (17th)
- Akron (65th)
- Youngstown-Warren (107th)
- Canton-Massillon (109th)

What Do Northeast Ohio Leaders Believe Are Our Greatest Challenges Related To Overall Quality Of Life?

This fall, Voices & Choices engaged 1,100 leaders in forums to identify the region’s greatest challenges. The challenges identified as most important included:

- **Concentrated poverty/blight in inner cities**  (Mahoning Valley leaders)
- **Balancing economic development with preservation of the environment** (Medina County leaders)
**What Is Happening Across Northeast Ohio To Make Us More Competitive?**

**Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education College 360° Campaign**

The Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education (NOCHE) is an organization representing the 25 universities and colleges located in Northeast Ohio. NOCHE advocates for higher education and helps to build links between colleges and the workforce.

NOCHE recently launched a campaign called College 360°. College 360° is designed to portray Northeast Ohio as a destination for world-class higher education. The campaign has three key goals:

- **To enroll** greater number of students from across Ohio and out of state to the area’s colleges and universities

- **To engage** students while they are here, exposing them to the area’s rich resources so that they come to know Northeast Ohio as a great place to live, work and play

- **To employ** college students in internship positions so that they are more likely to start their post-education career in the region.
American-owned firms per thousand residents, according to a 2000 index of cities.

Attracting immigrants to our core cities
• Cleveland’s percentage of immigrants is lower than most other large cities. This is a dramatic change from the early 20th century when the city’s share of immigrants was sixth in the nation.

Cost of Doing Business
• Northeast Ohio’s high energy costs and taxes make the region a 'high cost' place to do business while office rent and labor costs are much lower than most other regions. The North American Business Cost Review rated Cleveland 30th of the 36 metro areas that were compared. Akron ranked 27th, Youngstown 26th and Canton 21st.

What Is Happening Across Northeast Ohio To Make Us More Competitive?

JumpStart Inc.
JumpStart Inc. is a regional organization that advises, assists, invests, and accelerates early-stage ideas and companies who have the potential to grow and become $30-50M companies within the next 5 to 7 years. JumpStart also works to build greater appreciation of the importance of entrepreneurship to our regional economy and support social networks of investors, advisors, and professional service firms to increase the number and success of high-potential entrepreneurial ventures in our region.

JumpStart is organized and operated exclusively for charitable and educational purposes to:

• Provide managerial and technical assistance for new ideas and business ventures.

• Assist area economic and job development programs.

• Provide education and information to individuals about the successful development and operation of small businesses.
What Sets Thriving Regions Apart?

Research recently completed by national and local economists on behalf of the Fund for Our Economic Future shows that regions with highly educated workers also experience growth in income levels for people in their region. According to the research, it is important for more of us to be willing to complete a college degree or to return to school for advanced education and training so that our skills match the needs of employers. It is also important for our colleges and universities to make their programs more accessible and affordable to people in Northeast Ohio.

In addition to higher education and skill attainment, our region needs to make sure there are enough jobs to support well-educated and highly skilled talent so that people don’t leave the area for better work elsewhere. Employers in our region have a role, too. As they improve productivity and become more successful, employers need to be willing to share increased revenues with their workers. Economists working with the Fund for Our Economic Future to study our economy recommend that Northeast Ohio:

Create a highly skilled workforce that can put their skills to productive use

High growth regions have:
• Higher percentage of persons with bachelor and graduate degrees
• More technical, professional, and management occupations for skilled workers
• A highly productive information technology sector
• Higher number of patents per employee in the region

Retain and attract working age populations (between the ages of 16-64)

High growth regions have:
• Larger proportion of people who fall within the age brackets in which people typically work
• Fewer people who do not work and who are dependent upon others for support

Highly Skilled Workforce
Highest Performing U.S. Regions

- Boulder-Longmont, CO
- San Jose, CA
- Gainesville, FL
- Raleigh-Durham-Chapel, Hill NC
- Middlesex-Somerset-Hunterdon, NJ

NEO Rankings of 157 U.S. Regions

- Cleveland-Lorain-Elyria (66th)
- Akron (68th)
- Canton-Massillon (127th)
- Youngstown-Warren (148th)

Worker Retention
Highest Performing U.S. Regions

- Newburgh, NYP A
- Brazoria, TX
- Anchorage, AK
- Fort-Worth-Arlington, TX
- Denver, CO

NEO Rankings of 157 U.S.

- Cleveland-Lorain-Elyria (54th)
- Canton-Massillon (84th)
- Akron (90th)
- Youngstown-Warren (119th)
What Do Northeast Ohio Leaders Believe Are Our Greatest Educational Challenges?

This Fall, Voices & Choices engaged 1,100 Northeast Ohio leaders in forums to identify the region’s greatest challenges. The challenges identified as most important included:

- **An unfair system of funding public schools;** we need to find a common taxing mechanism for all of Northeast Ohio so some school systems don’t suffer while others prosper (Mahoning Valley, Stark, Carroll, Ashland, Wayne, Cuyahoga, Lake, & Geauga County leaders)

- **Poor performance of schools in urban areas** (Medina County leaders)

- **Lack of parental and family involvement and support for education** (Lorain County & Cuyahoga County leaders)

- **Lack of affordability of higher education**, including a tax structure that does not adequately support higher education within the state of Ohio (Summit & Portage County leaders)

How Competitive is Northeast Ohio?

**Public Schooling**

- **Although the rapidly changing world economy raises questions about the adequacy of state educational standards, many of our public schools are performing well by those standards.** For example, out of 98 school districts in a seven county areas that includes Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Portage and Summit, 36% of public school districts received the highest rating of “excellent” and 32% received the second highest rating of “effective.” Geauga County had the highest graduation rate at 97%, and the lowest was Cuyahoga at 71%.

- **However, public schools in our central cities have not been doing as well and graduation rates fell short of state standards.** The school districts for Akron, Cleveland, Lorain and Youngstown were each rated as “Academic Watch.” This means that they met 5 or fewer of Ohio’s 18 standards during the 2003-04 school year. Lorain’s graduation rate in 2002-03 was 88% and Akron’s was 75%. Cleveland, at 41%, and Youngstown, at 54%, were further below the state standard and the state average of 90%.

**College Degree Attainment**

- **In Northeast Ohio, 27% of all adults over 25 (34% of persons between 25 and 34) have at least an associates degree, which compares with 27% for Ohio and 31% for the nation.** However these percentages are much lower for African Americans (16%) and persons of Hispanic origin (18%).

“Stop cutting funding for education. We need a regional public education system that is not based on a financial divide. We have to influence leadership at the state level to get it. We need a vision for education and students. Every student should have the same opportunities ... and the local communities should have a voice.”
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