Community COMPASS

Countywide Town Meeting
Participant Guide

January 12, 2002
Cincinnati Music Hall Ballroom
To the Reader:

On Saturday, January 12th, 2002, at Cincinnati’s historic Music Hall, you will take part in a very special forum: the Countywide Town Meeting of Community COMPASS, the Comprehensive Master Plan and Strategies for Hamilton County. As you will see, putting together wireless technology with the traditional town hall meeting for 1,000 of your fellow citizens will make this a fun, exciting and productive day. We are delighted that you will be joining us in working with your fellow citizens to help make Hamilton County a place that our children and grandchildren are proud to call home.

The united response of the nation to the tragic events of September 2001 has helped to show the power of people working together. It is in this spirit and the spirit of a nation built on democracy that we will come together to share our ideas with one another to create a vision for Hamilton County we all can embrace.

At this meeting we will sit at tables in groupings that reflect the diversity of Hamilton County – people of different races and nations of origin, different ages, city-dwellers, suburbanites and rural residents, some who have lived here all their lives and some who have just recently arrived – but we will also be united at these tables. We will all be engaged in working toward a brighter future.

Community COMPASS is a planning process begun by the Planning Partnership – a ground-breaking alliance of governments and planning commissions in Hamilton County, as well as civic and private sector organizations engaged in planning for the future of our County. In October 2001 the Partnership collected 2,800 ideas from citizens like you. Out of these ideas, the COMPASS Steering Team developed 12 broad goals for the County and four interconnected core issues related to Hamilton County’s vision.

Through your participation we will find solutions to the tough, complicated issues that stand in the way of making these goals a reality. And finally, at the end of the Countywide Town Meeting, COMPASS Action Teams (CATs) will be formed to carry your recommendations forward through concrete, measurable action steps.

This Participant Guide provides background information to assist you in your deliberations and in making your best contributions to planning the future of our County.

On January 12th, please come prepared to roll up your sleeves and join your fellow citizens in the work of democracy – let’s map out a course for Hamilton County’s future!

Sincerely,

The Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission
The Planning Partnership
The Community COMPASS Steering Team
What is COMPASS?

Community COMPASS is the Comprehensive Master Plan and Strategies for Hamilton County. A comprehensive plan looks at all aspects of an area at the same time.

Comprehensive plans are important because sometimes when we look at just one specific part of a community – perhaps roads or sewers – we fail to look at the impacts on other aspects such as schools and parks.

Many states require communities to develop and update a comprehensive plan to help guide government decisions. In Ohio, such planning is voluntary. Many businesses and other organizations use a type of comprehensive plan called a strategic plan to help guide their decisions and reach their goals.

What’s Been Done so Far?

COMPASS, like many plans, uses data about existing conditions and citizen input about a desired future to develop a “to-do” list of how to improve the County.

Broad citizen input was collected through a Values Survey and the Community Forum process. Existing plans have been assembled to assess conditions in Hamilton County and to identify existing conditions that need to be incorporated into Community COMPASS.

Values Survey

The Community COMPASS planning process officially started in November of 2000 when the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission sent a mail survey to 4,500 County residents.

The survey was the first of many efforts COMPASS has used to ensure that the plan is based on the values of the citizens of Hamilton County. The Community Values Survey was designed to gauge the public’s opinion on development and other issues in the County.

Through the survey results, we heard that most of you who are Hamilton County residents are happy with where you live. However, the survey also showed that many people were considering moving out of Hamilton County to find new housing. Poorly-performing public schools were also cited as a reason why some people are moving out of the County.

Review of Existing Plans

COMPASS is committed to efficiency and linking many aspects of the County together. The Community COMPASS Steering Team (a committee that oversees the comprehensive plan and is comprised of 70 representatives from the civic, public and private sectors) realizes that a tremendous amount of good planning work has already been completed.

Rather than “reinventing the wheel,” COMPASS has collected over 100 completed studies and plans from communities and organizations in the County. Be it the Metromoves plan, or the Hamilton County Environmental Priorities Project, or the Metropolitan Sewer District’s Quality Upgrades for Effective Sewage Treatment (QUEST) plan, the research and citizen input that went into these plans must not be ignored.

Without a broad vision for Hamilton County, priorities shift in the wind. Where will the next multi-million dollar investment be targeted – will it be solving the Mill Creek flooding problem? Fixing the existing County sewer system? Building light rail along I-71? Building new sewers where septic tanks are failing? Redeveloping old industrial properties? Building city schools - or developing Over-the-Rhine?

Without a plan that’s current and has broad support, we may never solve these problems, while allowing new problems to develop and continue.
How Did We Arrive at the Core Issues?

The four Core Issues for Hamilton County to be discussed at the Countywide Town Meeting are:

- Economic Prosperity
- Building Collaborative Decision-making
- Embracing Diversity and Equity
- Balancing Development and the Environment

These interconnecting issues were identified through the lens of broad public involvement. First, volunteers and members of the Community COMPASS Steering Team classified the 2,800 citizen ideas gathered at the 11 Community Forums and the Youth Forum into twelve categories. These categories are traditionally found in most comprehensive plans and include topics like housing, economic development, education, and natural resources. The Steering Team identified common themes among the ideas in each category to develop a goal for that particular category.

Remembering that comprehensive plans need to examine all aspects of the County at one time, the Community COMPASS steering team identified trade-offs, linkages and common themes within the 12 goals, as well as common obstacles to achieving each goal.

It is these trade-offs, linkages, themes and obstacles that led to the formulation of the four Core Issues that you will deliberate on January 12th, 2002.

What We Will Accomplish on January 12th

The Countywide Town Meeting will be an exciting event that allows all of us to enjoy lively interaction with other members of the Hamilton County community. It is an opportunity to hear and respect other voices. But this is not just a "feel-good" meeting.

We will dig deep to find out how we can overcome the obstacles to accomplishing the goals embedded in the four core issues. Together, we will find the common ground that will allow us to move forward. There is an old saying that "Two heads are better than one." On January 12th we will have the benefit of up to a thousand people’s intelligence and experience working on behalf of Hamilton County.

What Happens Next?

After this Town Meeting, working groups called COMPASS Action Teams (or CATs) will be formed around the four issue areas.

The CATs will build upon the results of the Countywide Town Meeting. They will further identify and refine problems, generate solutions, and suggest ways to address and implement the COMPASS recommendations. Their work will be based on each of the 4 issue areas and will use the results of the Values Survey conducted in November 2000, the 12 goals, and 2,800 ideas generated from the Community Forums, as well as the results of the Countywide Town Meeting.

The CATs will include any citizens interested in further exploring one of the issue areas, as well as persons with technical expertise or particular experience in that area. It is anticipated that the CATs will meet from February through August 2002. You can sign up to become a CAT member at the end of the Countywide Town Meeting, if you wish.

The CATs will review relevant studies, data and statistics, and identify any important areas that have not yet been covered by the Community COMPASS planning process. The COMPASS Steering Team will periodically review the CAT's work to provide directional feedback.

Once approved by the COMPASS Steering Team, the recommendations from the CATs will be reviewed in public forums and approved by the Planning Partnership, the Regional Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners.

Ultimately, the Planning Partnership will coordinate solutions and assure that the Plan remains up-to-date.

Community COMPASS Goals

1. Mobility: Accessible, efficient, and economical regional travel. Clean, safe, multi-modal transportation choices including mass transit (regional rail and buses), bike lanes, pedestrian walkways, and vehicular travel to reduce traffic congestion.

2. Natural Resources: Natural resources including air, greenspace, rivers, hillsides, and wildlife are preserved, restored and managed to enhance the unique character of the County.

3. Economic Development: A globally competitive and diverse economy that provides job opportunities for all county residents, attractions for visitors, and makes the most of our existing communities and resources.

4. Education: High quality, equitable educational opportunities throughout the County, in learning environments that are safe, secure and provide a diverse curriculum in cross-cultural training opportunities to ensure vocational and academic success.

5. Environmental and Social Justice: Clean, safe communities that are diverse, integrated, with inclusive populations, economic opportunities, and open communication.

6. Health and Human Services: Affordable, quality, community based services and facilities that address the needs of all residents especially youth, the elderly, homeless, and immigrants with improved day care centers, community centers, nursing homes, medical and dental care, and mental health services.

7. Governance: Effective and efficient government that works proactively and cooperatively across political boundaries with elected, appointed and community leaders responsive to and accessible by all citizens.

8. Community Facilities: Quality of life improvements through improved safety services, community beautification, and well planned and maintained comprehensive infrastructure with consideration of the impact on the built and natural environments.

9. Development Framework: Well-planned, controlled growth that, in the context of the greater region, balances downtown, neighborhood and community development with open space and natural areas to limit sprawl, encourage revitalization of existing communities, and aid in economic and racial integration.

10. Civic Engagement and Social Capital: A strong sense of community (within a county-wide framework) with increased public involvement and influence in local and County decision making, participation by young people in community building, where diversity is embraced and volunteerism is encouraged.

11. Culture and Recreation: More, improved and accessible recreational, cultural and entertainment activities and facilities (including parks and greenspace) that open opportunities for people of varying ethnicities and ages throughout the County (urban, suburban, rural) to improve the quality of life.

12. Housing: A mix of residential choices that provides an opportunity for home ownership across all economic levels including all lifestyles and age groups, that serves to preserve architecturally and significant areas throughout the County including revitalized communities.
Hamilton County: Where Are We Now? How Are We Changing?

Hamilton County has a wealth of strength and opportunities. We must sustain and further develop these unique and desirable features and trends.

Some Strengths and Advantages of Hamilton County
- A well-diversified economy with a competitive wage structure.
- A moderate cost of living, with home prices below the US average.
- A central location in the US, served by 3 Interstate Highways.
- Close proximity to a national and international airline hub.
- An attractive environment, with wooded hillsides, an extensive public park system and several large and scenic rivers.
- A rich history, with distinct, historic architecture displayed in a variety of communities and neighborhoods.
- A mix of cultural amenities, including libraries, theatres, museums, arts, entertainment, and one of the best Zoological Gardens in the country.
- Professional sports teams and new sports facilities.
- A big city with a comfortable, small town feeling.
- Twenty-two colleges, universities and professional schools, including the University of Cincinnati - one of the 20 largest universities in the nation.
- An extensive healthcare network, with 14 general medical and surgical hospitals.

Source: Based on comments at Community COMPASS Forums

Hamilton County has a variety of challenges, as shown in the following charts and graphs. These critical trends are being provided to assist you in your understanding and deliberation of Core Issues related to Hamilton County's vision for the future.

Critical Trends

1. People are Leaving the County
   In the United States today, we are going through a period of intense geographic decentralization – jobs, industries and people are moving outwards from central cities and counties at an ever faster rate. Hamilton County has not escaped this trend. By far the biggest part of this loss of population is caused by more people leaving the county than people coming into the county. This has resulted in a loss of 71,000 residents during the period 1990-2000 alone (Figure 1).

   While the total population in Hamilton County has declined over the past 30 years, the minority population has grown. The African American population has increased by 36%, and the Asian population has increased by 772% (from 1,560 persons in 1970 to 13,602 in 2000). By contrast, the white population has shrunk by about 21%.

2. Fewer Children are Being Born
   People moving into and out of the County are not the only possible causes of population change, however. The numbers of births and deaths that take place also change the picture.

   In 1990 there were over 14,000 births per year. By 1999 that number had declined to 12,000 per year (Figure 2). The trend shows that as births continue to decrease, the number of deaths will rise slowly. The net gain from births over deaths is not enough to cancel out the effect of losing people to migration.

3. Population is Spreading out to the Suburbs
   The decrease in the number of births together with out-migration from Hamilton County has altered the population distribution in southwestern Ohio during the past thirty years. Most of the people who moved out of Hamilton County went to the surrounding Ohio counties – Butler, Warren and Clermont.

   Population in the suburban counties has grown, while Hamilton County’s population has shrunk (Figure 3).

- Hamilton County has lost 78,714 people (8.5% of its population) since its high point in 1970.
- The City of Cincinnati has lost 172,713 persons (34.3% of its population) since its high point in 1950.

Source: US Census Bureau

Figure 1: More people are moving out than in

Figure 2: Annual Births have Declined

Figure 3: Population in the suburban counties has grown, while Hamilton County's population has shrunk
4. Sprawling, Low-Density Development Discourages use of Public Transportation

Passenger vehicles registered in Hamilton County increased by 30% between 1981 and 2000, while ridership on Metro has declined by 33% since 1980 (Figure 4). As population and employment become less concentrated, more people drive to work alone. The use of public transportation and carpooling may also have decreased due to low fuel prices, while growing incomes have enabled the purchase of more automobiles.

5. The Population is Aging, and the Younger Workforce is Shrinking

Consistent with national trends, the population of Hamilton County is getting older – the median age has increased from 30 in 1980 to 35.5 in 2000. This is almost exactly the same as the median age in the US as a whole (30 and 35.3).

The “bulge” of people aged 15 to 34 that we see in the 1980 population pyramid is the Baby Boom generation passing through. When we look at this generation again (now aged 35 to 54) in the 2000 population pyramid, we can see that it has shrunk a lot (Figure 5). This is not because more “Boomers” have died – it is because they have moved out, taking their income with them. The trends also indicate that we need to prepare to take care of a bigger group of seniors.

Perhaps even more alarming is the fact that the number of people in the 20-34 age range is now much smaller than it was in 1980. People in these age groups are critical for developing a competitive workforce.

6. Government Revenues are Declining

The “spreading out” of the population is having an effect on the tax revenues of central cities and counties, such as Cincinnati and Hamilton County. Hamilton County is facing a budget crunch due at least in part to loss of expected sales tax revenue. The County has had to propose tax increases in order to maintain needed services.

County increased greatly during the 1990s, showing mainly that existing businesses were expanding their workforces. Unemployment rates were below those of the nation, falling from just over 4% to just below 3% from 1996 through the beginning of 2001. In October 2001 the unemployment rate had risen to 3.8% (Ohio Department of Job and Family Services).

7. Like the Population, Business and Industry are Spreading Out to the Suburbs

Figure 6 below shows a downturn in the total number of business establishments located in Hamilton County, beginning around 1996. While the trend line is upward, it is likely to change if the number of new business formations falls and relocations increase.

The number of jobs in Hamilton County increased greatly during the 1990s, showing mainly that existing businesses were expanding their workforces. Unemployment rates were below those of the nation, falling from just over 4% to just below 3% from 1996 through the beginning of 2001. In October 2001 the unemployment rate had risen to 3.8% (Ohio Department of Job and Family Services).

Hamilton County loses $228 of undesignated sales tax revenue for every person who moves outside the county.

When tax revenues decrease, cities and counties have a harder time providing essential services. There also may not be enough money to pay for "quality of life" services, such as funding for the arts, for parks and bike trails and so on, that are needed to attract new residents, businesses and industries.
The composition of Hamilton County’s economy has been changing too. The biggest change in Hamilton County’s economy has been the strong growth of employment in the service sector over the last decade. Service jobs grew by over 60,000, while manufacturing jobs dropped by over 20,000. Butler, Warren and Clermont Counties all gained manufacturing and service jobs during the 1990s.

Planning for future prosperity in Hamilton County will need to take careful account of the types of jobs we try to attract. To succeed in obtaining businesses and industries that provide good-paying jobs, we will need a well-educated workforce, trained in the skills needed for today’s economy.

8. Education plays an important role
An excellent education system plays a big part in attracting and retaining population. School performance is an important influence on peoples’ decisions on where to live. Therefore, it is alarming to see the steep decline in high school graduation rates in the City of Cincinnati public school system over the last five years. Hamilton County’s overall high school graduation rates have also dropped (Figure 8).

A high school diploma is a necessity for entering college. In today’s economy, more and more jobs demand at least a college degree, while a graduate or professional degree produces even greater advantages.

In Hamilton County, the percentage of persons aged 25 and over who have gained a bachelor’s degree has increased, but the percentage of persons with graduate or professional degrees has remained nearly constant over the last 20 years (Figure 9).

9. Income and Poverty
The Census Bureau estimates the median household income in Hamilton County at $39,427 for 2000. In the City of Cincinnati, the median household income was estimated at $27,781.

The average household income for the County was estimated at $55,785. The large difference between the median and the average means that there is a big gap between incomes at the low and high ends in Hamilton County.

The County poverty rate was estimated at 10.7%, in 2000, while the City of Cincinnati’s poverty rate was estimated at 21.3%. In the City of Cincinnati, nearly one in four households receives public assistance whereas in the County outside of Cincinnati is 8.4% receive public assistance (Figure 10).

10. Fewer People are Turning out to Vote
Voting is a reasonably good indicator of citizen interest and participation in government. But recently, fewer people have been coming out to vote in both Presidential and off-year elections in Hamilton County (Figure 11).
Hamilton County, Ohio
CORE ISSUE #1
Economic Prosperity

The Context
It is often said that the Greater Cincinnati economy is “diversified” (that is, it has a good mix of businesses and industries). This helps the area to avoid the worst effects of economic downturns, as well as avoiding over-dependency on one industry or another. Overall, the Greater Cincinnati area’s economy has been strong and resilient.

The businesses and industries located in Hamilton County provide almost 60% of all the jobs in the 13 County region.
In 1999, those 540,671 jobs generated an $18.34 billion payroll for people working in Hamilton County.

Hamilton County, including the City of Cincinnati, is still the foundation of our regional economy. The regional economy is heavily dependent on businesses within Hamilton County. In 1999, Hamilton County housed over half of the 46,760 business and industry establishments in the 13 County region.

But things have been changing. Businesses and industries have begun to move to the suburban counties, just like the population. Only a decade ago, Hamilton County provided almost 68% of all the jobs in the region. Today the County’s share is less than 60%!

The basic structure and composition of our County’s economy has been changing too. In the 1960s, manufacturing industries used to provide around 35% of all jobs and service industries supplied about 17%. Now manufacturing supplies about 14% of all employment, while service jobs have come to dominate, supplying 34% of jobs.

While the same trend can be seen in the US as a whole, Hamilton County has made a faster and more complete transition to a service economy. Unfortunately, in 1999, service jobs in Hamilton County paid an average of about $12,200 a year less than manufacturing jobs.

How can we act to ensure that Hamilton County’s economy stays healthy and provides citizens with opportunities to earn a good living? How can we ensure a prosperous future for families and businesses?

The Vision
- A quality of life that attracts and retains the young, the skilled and entrepreneurial people, including a “24-Hour Downtown Cincinnati” where people can live, work and play.
- A strong cluster of diverse attractions in arts, culture, sports, & entertainment for residents and visitors of all backgrounds.
- A globally competitive and diversified economy that is on the cutting edge of emerging technologies, that supports emerging industries and encourages entrepreneurial activities, while maintaining and strengthening existing business and industry.
- Attraction and retention of business and industries that provide good-paying jobs for all County residents.
- Increased emphasis on university research that can lead to the formation of spin-off businesses and industries.
- A strong linkage between higher education and workforce needs.

The Challenges
To maintain and improve the quality of life that we expect and wish for in Hamilton County, we need to continue to create wealth. In order to do this, we need to stop the loss of population and businesses. We need to ensure that our population is well-educated and trained in skills that match today’s economy.

We need to expand the workforce, and must not continue to waste the human potential of the unemployed and underemployed in our community.

Collaboration is needed between all sectors – public, private, institutional and residents – to ensure that our future is what we want it to be. Above all, we need a strongly functioning central city to anchor the prosperity of the County and the region. Some of the primary challenges to achieving these aims are listed below.

- Creating a positive, exciting image about our quality of life and comparative advantages so as to attract people and industries to the area, and creating the conditions that support the image.
- Finding a unique niche for downtown Cincinnati to attract residents and visitors, while overcoming “barriers” to coming downtown such as difficult access, parking problems, and concerns over safety.
- Increasing the level of educational attainment, (including postgraduate, professional and vocational), retaining graduates, and increasing State support for higher education.
- Improving the physical condition, facilities and performance of all public schools, but particularly Cincinnati Public Schools.
- Overcoming public reluctance to support government initiatives requiring increased taxes.

Change in Percent Share of Employment for Manufacturing and Service Industries in Hamilton County, 1940-1999:

Service Industry jobs are replacing manufacturing jobs.

Source: County Business Patterns
CORE ISSUE #2
Building Collaborative Decision-making

The Context

Hamilton County is divided into 49 separate townships, towns, villages and cities. Under “Home Rule” legislation, each of these places tends to make its own decisions independently without much reference to its neighbors. That’s the way it has been done for many years.

Yet, lack of communication across jurisdictions can lead to unwanted impacts and wasted time and money.

For example, if one community decides to locate an industrial complex close to a residential development in the community next door, there may be an increase in truck traffic that is not wanted by the residents because of danger to the children or even because of possible lowered property values. A simple solution to a problem like this is for each community to coordinate their land use and zoning along their boundary lines.

At times, places within the County compete with each other for new development, business and residents. Or, they go ahead with a project or decision that might benefit themselves but have an undesirable effect on their neighbors. This leads to distrust.

But unwillingness or inability to cooperate across jurisdictions puts us at a disadvantage in the long run, as we try to make our way in an increasingly competitive world. The greatest competition faced by Hamilton County comes from our neighboring counties, and from other regions in the US and overseas, not from within.

Obtaining ongoing citizen involvement in public decision making is also an issue. Because of commitments to family and work, most people tend to come out to engage in civic activities only when they see a threat to their own situation, or get concerned over a local issue. This leads to the public getting involved when the decisions have already been made. This can create lost opportunities for valuable citizen input.

The Vision

- Effective and efficient government that works pro-actively and cooperatively across political boundaries with elected, appointed, and community leaders responsive to all citizens and accessible by all citizens.
- Effective collaboration between the private, public, and institutional sectors, and citizens in developing effective strategies for managing and guiding the future of the County and region.

The Challenges

Challenges and obstacles must be recognized and overcome if aspirations and goals are to be fulfilled. The challenges to obtaining a commitment to collaborative, cooperative and coordinated decision-making fall mainly into two categories: gaining civic engagement in local and County government and maintaining local control while practicing regional collaboration. Among our major challenges are the following:

- Obtaining ongoing citizen involvement - civic involvement that is focused on broad cross-cutting issues that reflect needs, and that brings everyone to the table – including youth and minorities.
- Developing the will, skills, and know-how for organizing citizen input and participation in implementation decisions. We need local education programs that prepare citizens to be active, skilled collaborators with government.
- Balancing collaboration across jurisdictions while preserving local control and identity, and maintaining the responsiveness and accountability of officials at the local level.
- Creating an agreed-upon structure and process for linking local governments together with each other and the County in collaborative decision-making and implementation activities.

Why Should We Collaborate?

We need to recognize that individual, incremental decisions we make independently in each community have a long-term cumulative effect on the entire County.

The impact of floods on Hamilton County communities is one of the clearest examples of why our jurisdictions need to collaborate to solve issues facing the county.

Creeks and streams, like many natural systems, don't pay attention to boundaries between different cities, villages, and townships. Development in one jurisdiction can affect the frequency and ferocity of flooding in a down-stream community. When jurisdictions do not plan together on how to manage storm water and floodplains, property damage and even loss of life can result.

Just in the past year, floods along the Mill Creek and Duck Creek have shown how critical this issue is to county residents. The impacts to the businesses in Evendale and Sharonville, and the loss of life in Fairfax, underscore the need for cooperation to solve common problems.
CORE ISSUE #3
Embracing Diversity and Equity

The Context

As most people in the Cincinnati area are aware, discrimination and inequitable treatment of minorities and poor people are a subject of much concern after the civil unrest in April 2001.

There are many conversations currently going on about ways to reduce poverty, decrease residential segregation and change the ways people of different cultures, labor and income levels interact with each other. These conversations also discuss the need to be more inclusive in the process of public planning and decision-making.

The whole community is anxious to hear the results of these conversations – to hear the recommendations from groups and organizations about what concrete actions can be taken to solve the problems and issues that have been raised.

In this setting, the role of home, the school system, and of education at all levels (elementary, high school, vocational, college, and beyond) take on a particular importance. Schools, colleges and the home are the principal places where we learn how to interact with others.

As well as being an issue with moral significance, poverty, racism, and isolation have powerful social and economic impacts on the County as a whole. For example, the combined forces of discrimination, poverty, lack of workforce skills and education waste the potential contributions of a significant part of our workforce.

Civil unrest, crime and lack of racial harmony traumatize individuals, families and communities, and cause long-term damage to neighborhoods and to the economy as new residents and businesses decide not to move into the affected areas, or “flee” to the suburbs.

The Vision

- **Clean, safe, integrated communities** with diverse and inclusive populations, economic opportunities and open communication
- **High quality, equitable educational opportunities** in safe learning environments, and opportunities for students to gain cross-cultural experience and knowledge at school and college.
- **Affordable housing** with a mix of residential choices that provides an opportunity for home ownership and rentals across all economic levels, lifestyles, and age groups.
- A high quality of life for all residents of the County, with improved health and community services, recreation and cultural opportunities and facilities, and a multi-modal transportation system that will enable access by a diverse population.
- **Acceptance of regional responsibility for regional issues** such as affordable housing and social services, public transportation and mobility.

Who’s Talking? Who’s Planning?

The efforts and organizations described below are the newest in the initiatives to address problems of racism in the Greater Cincinnati region. Many other groups and organizations are pursuing similar tasks.

1. Cincinnati CAN, Community Action Now. This task force is charged by the Mayor of Cincinnati to identify and drive actions that will provide greater equity, opportunity, and inclusion for everyone. Cincinnati CAN will help achieve these goals by addressing the disparities and access to opportunities that impact people in need, particularly in the African-American community. Work will be focused on making a substantial and sustainable difference in the targeted areas of Education and Youth Development, Economic Inclusion, Police-Community Relations and the Justice System, Housing and Neighborhood Development, Health Care and Human Services, and Communication and Cultural Change.

2. Neighbor to Neighbor, Community Conversations on Race. Initiated by the Cincinnati Enquirer, this program engages citizens across the region in a solutions-oriented conversation on the issue of racial tensions, providing an opportunity to let them say what the problem is, what should be done about it, and to help them find the potential for action. So far about 80 conversations have been held all around the County, with an intent to hold a total of about 140 meetings.

3. The Cincinnati Collaborative. Cincinnati’s Racial Profiling Mediation Process, led by the Area Group, addresses police-community relations in the City of Cincinnati. The intent of the process is to begin transforming the crisis of police-community relations into an opportunity for positive change and improved relationships. The Collaborative’s process will combine citizen input and expert analysis to help Cincinnati understand and constructively address the issues we face in police-community relations. The City of Cincinnati has been sued by two civil rights organizations alleging race discrimination by the Cincinnati Police. The Collaborative will help put this allegation in a context in which the issues can be addressed comprehensively.

4. Greater Cincinnati Study Circles on Police / Community Relations, Cincinnati Human Relations Commission. The Study Circles bring diverse groups together to talk about issues. By building trust, sharing ideas and experiences with others without fear of reproach and working together to affect long-term change, they hope to develop solutions to the problems highlighted by the April civil unrest in Cincinnati and then hand over their findings to Cincinnati CAN for review and implementation.

The Challenges

Projects that seek to change peoples’ hearts and minds are amongst the most difficult to carry out. In many cases, actions speak louder than words, so that while talking and communication are very important, it is essential to back up such activities with concrete actions affirming that the efforts underway are being taken seriously. The challenges below clearly reflect the tension between attitudes and action.

- **Overcoming attitudes** that cause social separation, such as fear of being unwelcome at events held by differing ethnic groups, or fear of moving into “black” or “white” neighborhoods.
- **Finding common ground** in different perspectives on the role and responsibilities of government.
- **Finding ways** to provide and finance equitable educational opportunities that create ambition, a desire to succeed and a sense of possibilities (along with the means to achieve them) amongst our youth and young adults.
- **Changing the way** the market provides housing – for example, providing residential developments containing a mix of housing at a mix of prices.
- **Understanding how much** racial issues and segregation impact the economy and other sectors of society.
The Context

Suburban “sprawl” is a topic that has been drawing a lot of discussion over the past few years. There are many ways to define sprawl, but in general people mean the haphazard growth of low-density, automobile-dependent development on the fringes of existing communities, that consumes agricultural and environmentally sensitive land as well as other limited resources.

One difficulty in dealing with “sprawl” is that - for a variety of reasons - many families and households seek out and seem content with this kind of development pattern.

In Hamilton County, there are relatively few farms left, but there are still large amounts of hillside, forest and green areas, especially on the west side of the County. The County also has many rivers and streams, and a very large aquifer system (underground water that can be tapped for household and industrial use).

There is tension between the desire to develop properties so that they produce private profits and public revenues, and the desire to preserve the natural beauty of the environment. The ecosystems that living creatures depend upon, as well as air and water quality, can easily be degraded by expansion of the built environment.

Some states and counties have developed growth control regulations that limit the kinds of development that can take place in environmentally sensitive locations. Some place a “growth boundary” around their cities and towns, beyond which they will not extend infrastructure such as roads and public sewers. These policies often have tradeoffs that must be considered, such as sharp increases in property prices and loss of affordable housing.

Still others seek to develop and use “design guidelines” so that whatever development does take place is in harmony with, or enhances, the existing environment.

Designing buildings and other constructed developments (such as roads and streets) intelligently, in an environment-friendly way, and with an eye to visual appeal and user comfort can improve our quality of life and lead to long-term sustainability.

The Vision

- Preservation, restoration, and management of natural resources so as to enhance the unique character of the County.
- Well-planned, controlled growth in a development framework that limits sprawl, preserves open space, fosters neighborhood-focused development and encourages revitalization of existing neighborhoods.
- Balanced investment and reinvestment in downtown, suburbs, and rural areas, using existing infrastructure to reduce costs.
- A transportation system that is efficient and economical, taking account of population densities, consistent with the development we want, and that increases accessibility of jobs, services, natural and cultural resources to all.
- Well-planned and maintained comprehensive infrastructure, that is coordinated with development, constructed with consideration of the impact on the built and natural environments, and that supports neighborhood centers.

The Challenges

Money is needed to carry out projects such as redeveloping and revitalizing older properties, or building a light rail or “transit” system, or to purchase land that will be retained as open space. And revenues that come from economic activity and development are needed to help pay for community services. Many times, we find that we have to deal with a “trade-off” situation when finding a balance between development and the environment, as can be seen in some of the challenges listed below.

- Reconciling the apparent preference of many households for the large yards, homes, and space that they find in suburbia, with the density of population and buildings that is needed to justify reinvestment in older communities, and the construction of cost-effective public transit.
- Determining the true costs of new development on undeveloped land (greenfields) versus redeveloping older properties (brownfields) in older communities
- Balancing market forces with community goals.
- Identifying and acknowledging the impacts of uncontrolled growth.
- Assigning value to commonly held resources, such as hillsides and waterways.
- Making decisions on tradeoffs such as air quality versus a decentralized development that results in increased traffic congestion and air pollution.

Design guidelines are needed here!
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