

Community Revitalization Initiative Strategic Plan

Hamilton County, Ohio



March 2004



Planning Partnership

HAMILTON COUNTY
Regional Planning Commission

The **Planning Partnership** is the long-range collaborative planning and coordinating committee of the HCRPC. Its mission is to bring together public, private and civic sector organizations engaged in community planning in Hamilton County so that mutual goals related to physical, economic and social issues can be planned for comprehensively and achieved collaboratively. For more information on the Planning Partnership, please visit the website: www.planningpartnership.org.



Community COMPASS

HAMILTON COUNTY
Regional Planning Commission

Community COMPASS is the Comprehensive Master Plan and Strategies for Hamilton County, Ohio. It is a major initiative of the Planning Partnership. For more information on Community COMPASS please visit the website: www.communitycompass.org.

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ABSTRACT

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Community COMPASS Report No. 19-1

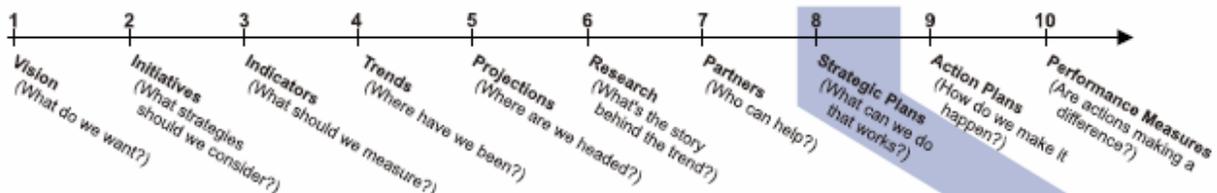
Subject: Strategic plan for redevelopment and reinvestment in Hamilton County's older suburban communities

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Synopsis: In order to address the opportunities and challenges facing our older suburban communities, the Hamilton County Planning Partnership and Regional Planning Commission launched the Community Revitalization Initiative. This is an effort to bring together policymakers, community leaders, and administrative professionals from 25 of Hamilton County's jurisdictions to develop a strategic plan for our First Suburbs. The plan describes an overall vision and six goals for revitalizing older communities, fourteen redevelopment strategies, and eight objective data indicators for measuring progress and achievement.

Community COMPASS Components



 This report.

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE
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Introduction

Older suburban communities—or “First Suburbs”—in Hamilton County are dealing with significant problems of population loss, economic decline, housing deterioration, and declining school quality. On the other hand, First Suburbs still have convenient locations, historic character, and amenities that attract new residents. The challenge before them is to address problems and opportunities collaboratively, while at the same time raising their profile at higher levels of government for more equal policy consideration relative to large urban centers.

Several factors are combining to push the need for inner suburb revitalization. Over the last twenty years, vibrant growth and development in the Cincinnati metropolitan area has affected Hamilton County in both positive and negative ways. Most significant among these impacts is population loss in Cincinnati and Hamilton County. After peaking at 924,000 in 1970, the County’s population has declined ever since. The 2000 Census population of 845,303 is slightly less than the population in 1960, and almost 79,000 fewer people live in Hamilton County today than lived here in 1970. Booming suburban communities outside the county are a powerful draw for residents, business, and industrial development.

Development patterns in the Cincinnati metropolitan area are producing a few winning communities that boast high quality of life and ample resources to care for their populations. Along with the winners are many more communities with declining quality of life and few resources to face challenges. Older suburban communities are among those which are losing out.

The *Community Revitalization Initiative Strategic Plan* is an effort to bring Hamilton County’s independent suburban communities together with the City of Cincinnati in order to address problems of urban area decline and disinvestment. As comprehensive as this plan is, it is not the end of the work that needs to be done. Implementing the many ideas and strategies contained in the plan is the next task before the community. At our final CRI Strategic Plan meeting on January 21, we will explain our ideas for creating action plans and building partnerships with various organizations in order to carry this plan forward.

OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

Planning Partnership

The Hamilton County Planning Partnership (“Partnership”) is a collaborative planning and coordinating committee of the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) for conducting long range plans. The Partnership operates through voluntary membership among Hamilton County’s municipalities, townships, planning commissions, and various civic organizations. Initiatives and activities of the Planning Partnership are carried out by advisory recommendations to RPC. Twenty-seven of Hamilton County’s jurisdictions are members of the Planning Partnership. These member jurisdictions represent approximately 80% of Hamilton County’s population and 90% of its geographic area.

The Planning Partnership formed to address the need for coordinated planning between Hamilton County’s numerous jurisdictions. Its mission is to bring together public, private, and civic organizations engaged in community planning to collaborate on mutual goals. As growth continues throughout the Cincinnati metropolitan area, Hamilton County is losing population and investment to outlying counties. Effectively dealing with population loss, declining communities, fiscal and social stress, and sprawl requires that Hamilton County communities work together more closely than in the past. The Planning Partnership is this forum for working together.

The Planning Partnership completed the following projects since forming in 2000:

- ⌘ Convened the first Countywide Town Meeting, engaging over 1,200 participants in discussing the future for Hamilton County
- ⌘ Initiated Community COMPASS (Comprehensive Master Plan and Strategies for Hamilton County)
- ⌘ Completed *A Vision for the Future of Hamilton County* which is a report of the goals, objectives, and strategies for future planning efforts developed from the Countywide Town Meeting
- ⌘ Developed the Stormwater Management Education Program
- ⌘ Convenes an annual Introductory Workshop for Newly Elected Officials to orient new office holders to Hamilton County government
- ⌘ Launched the annual Certified Planning Commissioners’ Program which provides basic training in land use planning law, zoning regulations, hearing procedures, and other information necessary for new planning commissioners to carry out their duties
- ⌘ Convened the Capital Improvement Priorities (CIP) Steering Team
- ⌘ Initiated the Cost of Government Services Study
- ⌘ Compiled the Community Revitalization Toolkit reference manual

As it carries out various projects, the Planning Partnership along with RPC staff coordinates activities and shares information among member organizations. By recognizing the value of collaborative planning for the entire region, the Planning Partnership strives to produce the most relevant and high-quality work for its members.

OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

Community COMPASS

Community COMPASS is the comprehensive planning effort begun by the Planning Partnership in 2000. It is the first comprehensive plan in Hamilton County since 1964. COMPASS is a unique and ambitious effort in that it truly invites engagement by all jurisdictions, planning commissions, civic organizations and the general public. This level of public involvement helps assure that COMPASS is a plan which deals with the most pressing and relevant issues of the community. Each of the thousands of participants in COMPASS has a stake in the process and its outcome. These citizen participants form a constituency which will ensure that the plan's recommendations are implemented.

The Community COMPASS planning process started in November 2000 when the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission sent a mail survey to 4,500 county residents. The survey asked participants for their opinion on what the future of Hamilton County should be. This survey was the first of many efforts COMPASS used to ensure that the plan is based on the values of the citizens of Hamilton County.

Public input and involvement continued through a series of Community Forums held at locations throughout the county. Eight hundred citizens contributed 2,800 ideas on how to improve Hamilton County through a Youth Forum, 11 Community Forums, and an Internet Forum. Twelve comprehensive plan goals and related strategies resulted from this process, along with four interconnecting core planning issues. These goals and issues were discussed and expanded by over 1,000 participants at the Countywide Town Meeting on January 12, 2002. Participants discussed challenges to each Core Goal that hinder Hamilton County's current and future success and progress. At the end of the Countywide Town Meeting, nearly 600 people volunteered to serve on action teams to develop implementable strategies to realize Hamilton County's vision for the future.

COMPASS Action Teams (CATs) formed after the Countywide Town Meeting. These groups produced a complete draft of Initiatives and Strategies which was next reviewed and refined by the COMPASS Steering Team. After much review, discussion, and work by RPC staff and citizen volunteers, a Vision for Hamilton County's Future and a set of Initiatives and Strategies were completed. This Vision document and the Initiatives and Strategies were either adopted or otherwise endorsed by the Planning Partnership, the Regional Planning Commission, and the Board of County Commissioners in 2003.

Each of the initiatives described in these documents will require a strategic planning initiative for implementation. The initiatives will bring together planners, citizen groups, and partners necessary to implement COMPASS strategies and achieve its goals. The Planning Partnership decided to begin work first on revitalizing older suburban communities in Hamilton County. This decision created the Community Revitalization Initiative. The COMPASS goal and strategies for older suburban communities are described in the following Initiative 27:

COMMUNITY COMPASS INITIATIVE 27: REVITALIZATION INCLUDING FIRST SUBURBS

- 27.1 Encourage incentives for redevelopment
 - ⌘ Identify areas that need particular investment (land uses or transportation),
 - ⌘ prioritize, and establish county funding mechanism to implement projects
 - ⌘ Develop local funding sources to provide local match for State and Federal
 - ⌘ dollars allocated to brownfield cleanup and redevelopment
 - ⌘ Establish policies and programs for countywide investment, focusing on older communities before less developed areas
- 27.2 Promote changes in state and county funding criteria that will establish priority in funding for upgrading existing infrastructure.
- 27.3 Examine governmental policies and programs, and propose modifications where appropriate to support neighborhood business districts.
- 27.4 Emphasize revitalization in economic development efforts.
- 27.5 Encourage lobbying efforts that promote neighborhood revitalization.
 - ⌘ First Suburbs
 - ⌘ State funding for infrastructure
 - ⌘ Community Development Block Grants
 - ⌘ Community Policing
- 27.6 Evaluate and modify where necessary current investment programs for commercial revitalization (e.g., business district incentives, façade grants, small business loans) and for residential reinvestment (e.g. homeownership, land reutilization, home improvement), incorporating a reward system for successful projects.

The strategies described in Initiative 27 form the basis for the Community Revitalization Initiative Strategic Plan. This plan expands greatly on this foundation with new strategies and specific problem areas to address.

GENERAL PROCESS OVERVIEW

The first meeting of the CRI in March, 2003 was primarily an opportunity for the different participants to meet and become oriented to the challenge of redeveloping Hamilton County's older suburban communities. During subsequent meetings through the spring and summer, the CRI developed six different goals for the plan, strategies to achieve these goals, and objective data indicators to track progress toward the goals.

Throughout the CRI process, the planning team emphasized the need to engage different partner agencies to develop strategies and eventually carry them out. This plan cannot rely solely on the capacity of the Regional Planning Commission to carry it out, or be limited to what RPC staff can realistically accomplish. Broad participation by government agencies, private sector organizations and businesses, and civic groups will be necessary for successful implementation of this plan. The Greater Cincinnati First Suburbs Consortium prepared the way by completing an earlier strategic plan which was referenced throughout the planning process by the CRI.

Organization Alignment

The Community Revitalization Initiative is by no means the first organization to examine issues of older suburban communities and neighborhoods. The importance of these areas to the health of metropolitan areas is apparent to many state, local, and national organizations. In Cleveland, the First Suburbs Consortium and EcoCity Cleveland accomplished a tremendous amount of work and raised the profile of First Suburban issues nationwide. In Columbus, the Mid Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is coordinating similar initiatives. MORPC staff also participated in studies dealing with First Suburbs across the Midwest through the Brookings Institution. Ohio, historically a leader in urban planning, is leading the way once again with its attention to First Suburban issues.

The term “First Suburbs” was coined by older communities around Cleveland when they organized to collaborate on common issues and increase lobbying strength with the Ohio General Assembly. It was in large part due to the work done by the First Suburbs Consortium that decline of older suburbs has gone from a little-known problem to an important economic and land use planning topic discussed by urban planners, non-profit groups, government agencies, and academics.

SOUTHWEST OHIO FIRST SUBURBS CONSORTIUM

The Southwest Ohio First Suburbs Consortium is an association of government elected and appointed officials representing mature built-out communities in the Cincinnati-Dayton Metropolitan Area. The mission of this Consortium is to initiate and promote public policies that maintain the vitality of our communities. The Consortium advocates:

- ⌘ Public policies that do not create disposable communities.
- ⌘ Balanced investments in new and existing infrastructure.
- ⌘ Maintenance and enhancement of the tax base.
- ⌘ Creation of redevelopment opportunities.

Since forming, the Consortium secured a Regional Initiatives Fund grant to create a strategic plan, develop a public education and outreach strategy, identify opportunities for sharing resources, and form a legislative agenda. Southwest Ohio First Suburbs Consortium has also entered into a collaborative agreement with the Planning Partnership and CRI

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

The Brookings Institution is an independent, nonpartisan organization devoted to research, analysis, education, and publication focused on public policy issues in the areas of economics, foreign policy, and governance. The goal of Brookings activities is to improve the performance of American institutions and the quality of public policy by using social science to analyze emerging issues and to offer practical approaches to those issues in language aimed at the general public.

Among the many works published by The Brookings Institution regarding older suburban communities are *Valuing America’s First Suburbs: A Policy Agenda for Older Suburbs in the Midwest*, and *Half Way From Everywhere: A Portrait of America’s First Tier Suburbs*.

THE OHIO URBAN UNIVERSITY PROGRAM

The Urban University Program (UUP) consists of eight public universities working together to serve the needs of Ohio's urban residents. UUP member schools conduct research and provide hands-on management and technical assistance in search of solutions to such challenges as Ohio's aging housing stock and reducing housing shortages; repairing an aging infrastructure (roads, bridges, sewers); helping local government officials manage better; stimulating an often fluctuating economy; reducing environmental pollution; and seeking innovative teaching methods for urban education.

CRI STAKEHOLDERS LIST

Participants at the initial Community Revitalization Initiative meetings identified a variety of local individuals and organizations interested in this project and the results they would like to achieve. These groups need to be engaged because of their expertise and interest in reversing the decline of older suburbs. They are the constituency that this plan serves.

Individuals (Taxpayers, Residents, Property Owners, Consumers)

- Better community services
- Stable/increasing property values
- Stable/increasing housing values
- Choice in housing
- Choice in retail/shopping availability
- High quality of life
- Convenience
- Safety

Nonprofit and Civic Organizations (Community Leaders, Neighborhood Associations, Community Development Groups)

- Active, supportive membership in their organizations
- Equitable, fair process for gaining access to funding, resources
- Better access to funding and resources for their projects
- Real results in their communities
- Influence in their communities

Businesses / Private Sector (Developers, Banks/Lenders, Business Leaders, Retailers)

- Master plans (creating more predictable and less risky investment environment)
- Consensus by elected officials
- Minimal risk
- Easy permitting
- Uniformity of regulations
- Strong local economy
- Good labor force
- Access to consumers
- Good infrastructure (roads, utilities, parking, lighting, etc)

Government / Public Sector (Elected Officials School Districts Public Officials/Administrators)

- Strong tax base
- Steady revenue streams
- Predictable enrollment
- Identity/image for the community
- More equitable funding from State and Federal government
- More equitable legislation for First Suburbs

The UUP produced a comprehensive overview called State of Ohio's Urban Regions in 2000. It describes comprehensively for all of Ohio's urban areas trends in demographics, economy, education, crime, and transportation.

ECOCITY CLEVELAND

Allied with First Suburbs Consortium, EcoCity Cleveland is a nonprofit organization that promotes ecological design, smart growth, and transportation choices in Northeast Ohio. EcoCity Cleveland works in city neighborhoods to promote environmentally-friendly redevelopment that improves quality of life and makes cities more sustainable.

DOWNTOWN OHIO, INC.

Downtown, Ohio, Inc. (DOI) together with Heritage Ohio addresses community redevelopment from a historic preservation perspective. This is done by expanding the scope of typical historic preservation to an entire neighborhood, business district, or other place. Downtown Ohio, Inc. uses the nationally acclaimed Main Street Program approach to successfully revitalize smaller communities across Ohio. This same method is now being adopted by several city neighborhoods across the state as well.

OTHER GROUPS

In addition to large state or national organizations which have added to the First Suburbs discussion, there is a wide variety of local organizations whose mission overlaps with the goals of CRI. Some of these groups are listed below.

- ☞ #Citizens for Civic Renewal
- ☞# #Metropatterns: a Regional Agenda for Community and Stability in the Cincinnati Region
- ☞# #Mill Creek Watershed Council
- ☞# #United Way – Vibrant Neighborhoods and Communities Vision Council
- ☞# #Alliance for Building Communities

-
- # Neighborhood Support Organization Program
 - # Xavier University Community Building Institute
 - # Catholic Social Action Commission, Ecology Project Team
 - # Smart Growth Ohio: A Campaign for Ohio's Cities, Towns, and Countryside
 - # Smart Growth Coalition
 - # Sustainable Cincinnati
 - # Regional Indicators Project

CRI IMPLEMENTATION TEAMS

As CRI progresses through the strategic planning phase, various ideas for projects and programs will be developed in order to achieve the goal of revitalizing older communities in Hamilton County. Carrying out these ideas will depend on continuing the partnership between various government agencies, commissions, civic organizations, and the private sector which has been established both in Community COMPASS and the CRI strategic planning process. In other words, no individual organization, agency, or jurisdiction will have sole responsibility for implementing the strategies that are developed. However, the Planning Partnership and First Suburbs alliance will engage various partner agencies from both the private and public sectors to carry out action plans.

Many of the agencies likely to be involved with implementation are already involved in the strategic plan process. What CRI is finding is that many programs and projects already exist which can achieve the various goals of the initiative. Instead of creating new programs, the emphasis will be on coordinating and leveraging as many existing efforts as possible, and engaging as many different groups as possible.

OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

Geography of First Suburbs

“First Suburbs”, “greyfields”, or “inner ring suburbs”, are all terms which describe generally the older, built out communities immediately adjacent to the urban core in Hamilton County. These are areas which, according to the Brookings Institution, are caught in a “policy blind spot” because while economic and social problems similar to those in urban areas are impacting these communities, state and federal aid is not available as it is for urban areas. First Suburbs are not experiencing new growth and investment like newer suburban communities, nor are they experiencing revitalization and gentrification as are some inner city neighborhoods.

When it began, the Cleveland First Suburbs Consortium limited itself to several large, well established suburban municipalities immediately surrounding the city of Cleveland. The approach proved very successful. Columbus and the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission developed a First Suburbs Consortium using a similar framework of larger, incorporated suburban communities. In Cleveland and Columbus, creating a cooperative arrangement between suburban jurisdictions was relatively easy because there were fewer communities to coordinate, and they shared many of the same interests and challenges. Collaborating to improve their communities and raise their profile with the Ohio General Assembly was obviously a better option to the leaders of these communities than continuing to operate independently of one another.

Hamilton County has a more complicated political environment than Columbus or Cleveland. Instead of several large, well-established municipal suburbs, Hamilton County has a plethora of cities, villages, urban townships, and rural townships that developed along transportation corridors instead of in rings around the urban core. This complex urban framework makes collaborative planning more challenging. Therefore, CRI adjusted the First Suburbs Consortium model to accommodate these various jurisdictions, especially townships. A significant portion of the county’s population resides in unincorporated townships, and the problems faced by older, declining communities exist regardless of whether the community is incorporated or not. Most townships are large enough to include both growing and struggling areas that share characteristics with incorporated First Suburbs.

The Brookings Institution in a recent report, *Valuing America’s First Suburbs*, has this to say about the challenge of defining these communities.

Finding a common characteristic to define an “older suburb” or “inner ring suburb” is not simple...Focusing only on suburbs immediately adjacent to the center city leaves out other struggling jurisdictions that may be just a few miles away. Age of suburbs is difficult to measure and may actually be too precise for our purposes. Age of housing within suburbs is a plausible measure but only captures on characteristic of these communities.

All first suburbs, whether in decline or not, generally suffer because policies do not seem to recognize the unique challenges presented by their older infrastructure and housing stock which may not be competitive in today’s market. Compared to center cities and outer suburbs, first suburbs generally have small populations and limited governmental capacity. They are also “built out” meaning there is little vacant land for development, and often depend heavily on residential taxes to fund basic services. (Brookings, 5)

PARTICIPATING FIRST SUBURBS

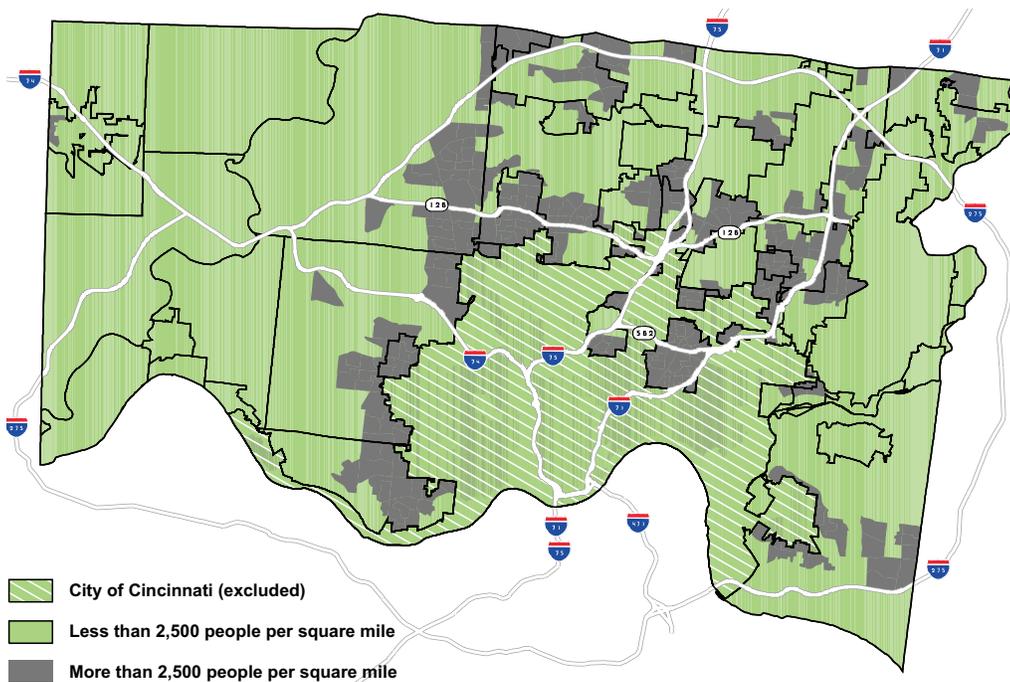
1. Amberly Village
 2. Cheviot
 3. Colerain Township
 4. Columbia Township
 5. Deer Park
 6. Delhi Township
 7. Evendale
 8. Fairfax
 9. Forest Park
 10. Green Township
 11. Greenhills
 12. Lincoln Heights
 13. Madeira
 14. Mariemont
 15. Montgomery
 16. Mt. Healthy
 17. North College Hill
 18. Norwood
 19. Reading
 20. Sharonville
 21. Silverton
 22. Springdale
 23. Wyoming
-

Regardless of whether they are incorporated or unincorporated, Hamilton County's First Suburbs share these following general characteristics:

- ⌘ Built out or mostly built-out before 1960 (neighborhoods are now between 40 and 80 years old)
- ⌘ Most often originally built as bedroom communities to Cincinnati, and were the first suburbs people "moved out" to
- ⌘ Located near or adjacent to Cincinnati
- ⌘ Beginning to experience what had been exclusively central city challenges, including deteriorating or obsolete buildings, problems with sewer and water systems, general disinvestment, and population loss (especially residents with above average incomes)
- ⌘ Experiencing declining property tax base

More specifically, the following series of maps illustrate four physical and demographic characteristics of Hamilton County's First Suburbs.

Figure 1
MORE THAN 2,500 PEOPLE PER SQUARE MILE BY BLOCK GROUP



Source: US Census Bureau

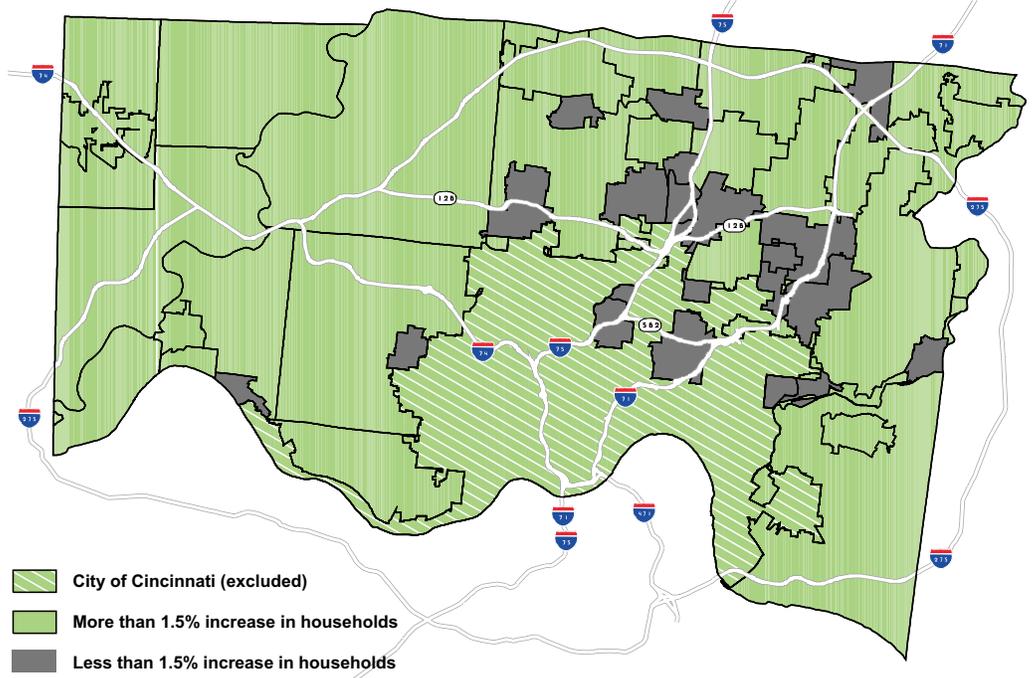
1. More than 2,500 people per square mile.

This characteristic indicates a more densely developed area than newer outlying suburbs. Older suburban communities typically have smaller lots for houses, gridded streets, a pedestrian-oriented commercial district, and community facilities such as churches, schools, and parks integrated within the community fabric.

2. Less than 1.5% increase in households from 1990–2000

Hamilton County has lost population since 1970. However, some communities in the county have gained new residents even though overall population is dropping. First suburbs in general are not population growth centers and have experienced little or no population gain in the last ten years.

**Figure 2
LESS THAN 1.5% INCREASE IN HOUSEHOLDS FROM 1990-2000 BY JURISDICTION**

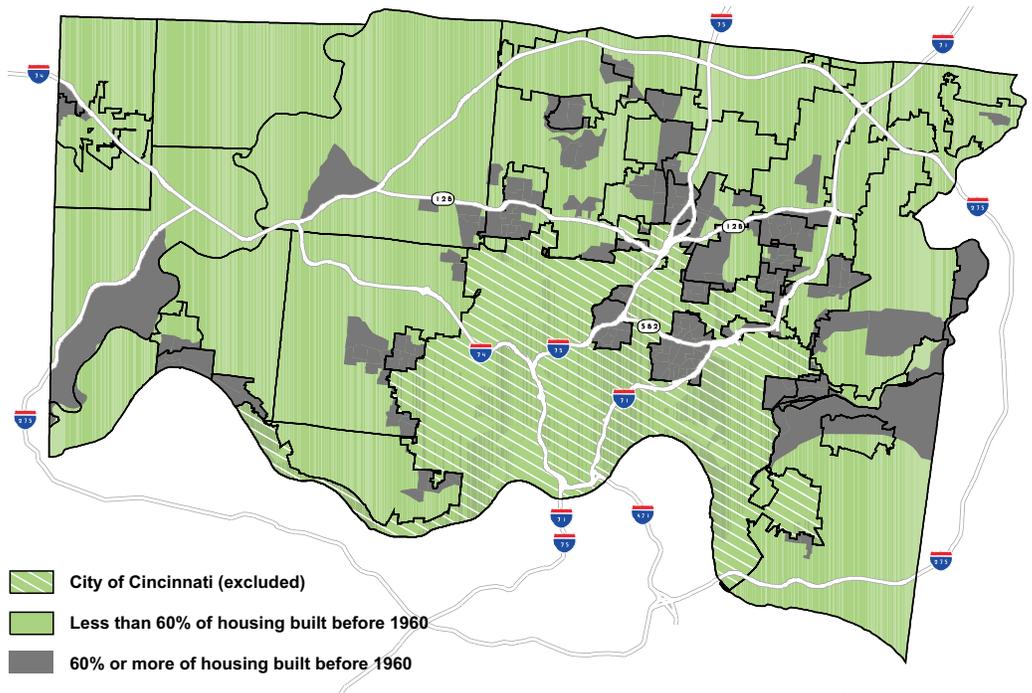


Source: US Census Bureau

3. 60% or more of housing built before 1960

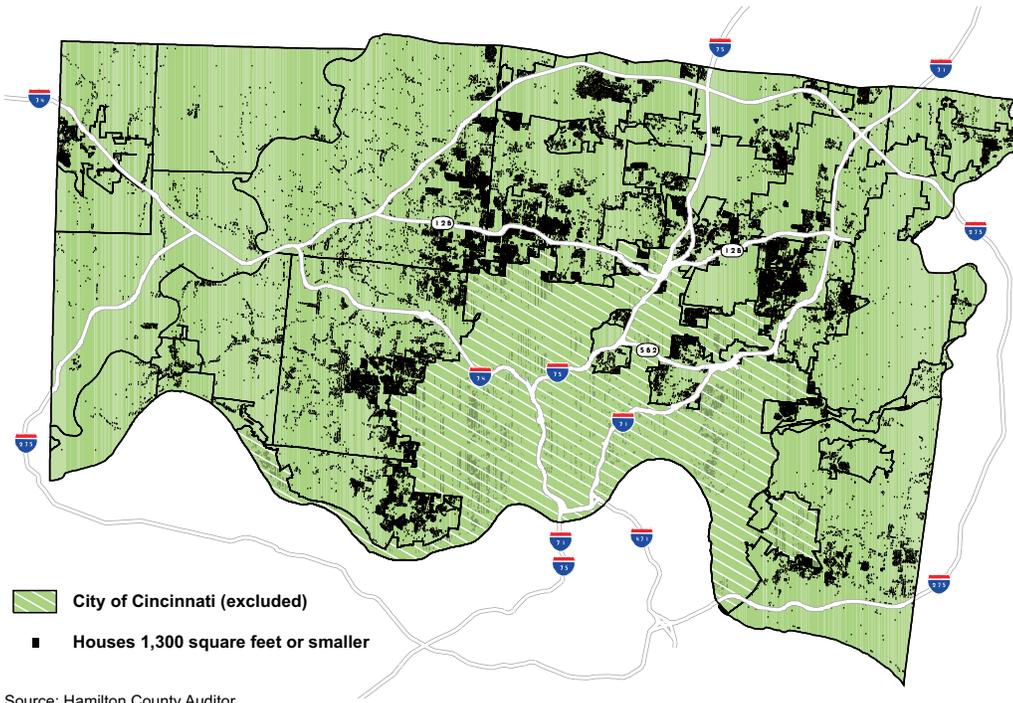
Older housing stock is an important characteristic of first suburbs and can be both an asset and a challenge to redevelopment. Older homes can have architectural character and construction quality that is not available in similarly-priced houses in newer suburbs. They also may need repair and restoration in order to be attractive to new buyers.

**Figure 3
60% OR MORE OF HOUSING BUILT BEFORE 1960 BY BLOCK GROUP**



Source: US Census Bureau

Figure 4
CONCENTRATIONS OF HOUSES 1,300 SQUARE FEET OR SMALLER

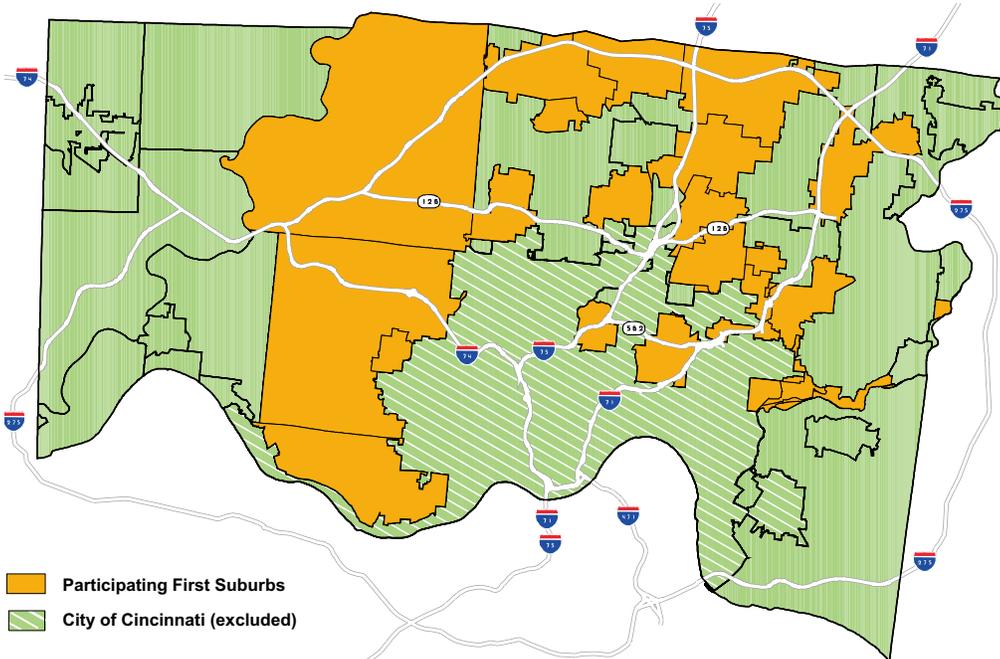


Source: Hamilton County Auditor

4. Concentrations of houses 1,300 square feet or smaller

The average size of new houses has increased steadily with new suburban development. Homebuyers today expect the house they purchase to include ample room for their families and belongings, multiple bathrooms, an attached garage, and other amenities that are less available in older housing stock.

Figure 5
PARTICIPATING FIRST SUBURBS



Source: Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission

This map illustrates the First Suburbs that are members in the Greater Cincinnati First Suburbs Consortium and participated in the Community Revitalization Initiative planning process. As implementation of this plan moves forward, other First Suburbs are welcome to join the effort to improve older communities across the county.

Challenges and Opportunities

Several factors are combining to push the need for inner suburb revitalization. Over the last ten or even twenty years, the vibrant growth and development in the Cincinnati metro region has affected Hamilton County in both positive and negative ways. Most significant among these impacts is the population loss in Cincinnati and Hamilton County. After peaking at 924,000 in 1970, the County's population has declined ever since. The 2000 Census population of 845,303 is slightly less than the population in 1960. Almost 79,000 fewer people live in Hamilton County today than lived here in 1970. Booming suburban communities outside the county are a powerful draw for residents, business, and industrial development. The effects of population loss are felt across the entire county, but perhaps most acutely in those older suburbs and neighborhoods that have seen their population levels plummet, their tax bases erode, their social problems increase, and their service quality decrease.

As mentioned previously, the success of the First Suburbs Consortium in Cleveland and Columbus has gained not only national attention but also the attention of planners in Hamilton County. The Southwest Ohio First Suburbs Consortium is one of the only formal organizations dealing specifically with issues in older suburbs in the region. Their success in achieving grant funding and completing a strategic plan process was instrumental in raising the profile of these issues in our area.

Along with these other factors, various groups in Hamilton County commissioned two high-profile research projects which examined the region, its economy, development patterns, social facets, and environmental issues.

The *Greater Cincinnati Metro Region Resource Book*, prepared by Michael Gallis Associates in 1999 presents an "opportunity analysis" of the community and recommends a new conceptual framework for organizing economic development and planning. Currently, the framework for the region is based on a myriad of political jurisdictions, special districts, and service areas. The *Resource Book* strongly advocates scrapping that system and instead using transportation corridors, functional relationships among different activity centers, and ties with other nearby metropolitan areas as a functional framework. The premise of the *Resource Book* is that in a global economy driven by high speed telecommunications technology, the region supplants the city as the basic economic unit.

From this perspective, Hamilton County communities—indeed communities across the entire tri-state area—must collaborate if they are to thrive in the global economy.

Cincinnati Metropatterns, a report prepared by Myron Orfield and the Metropolitan Area Research Corporation in 2001, examines various trends of Cincinnati's social makeup, economy, development, and population growth. This report pays special attention to the issues facing inner-ring suburban communities, and the economic and social stress resulting from loss of population and investment. Newer communities face the opposite problem—explosive population growth and new development severely strain the ability of local services.

As summed up in the Orfield report:

Wasteful development patterns in the Cincinnati metropolitan area are producing a few winning communities that boast high quality of life and ample resources to care for their populations. Along with the winners are many more communities with declining quality of life and few resources to face challenges. Older suburban communities are among those which are losing out.

Lacking Cincinnati's central business district, older neighborhoods with strong housing stock capable of gentrification, arts, culture and amenities, inner suburbs can be more vulnerable than the central city. For this reason, as poverty and social instability cross the city/suburban border the problems often accelerate and intensify. Increasing social stresses in schools and neighborhoods, comparatively less valuable homes, the loss of local businesses and jobs, and the erosion of slower than average growth of the local tax base are symptoms of this decline.

CRI Mission and Vision

MISSION

During initial meetings of the CRI, participants identified the mission and goals of the organization. As discussed previously, the geographic and political situation in Hamilton County is different than in Cleveland and Columbus. CRI could draw ideas from First Suburbs Consortium and Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, but could not mirror those efforts in Hamilton County. Doing so would remove important constituents and partners from the process—in particular the older, developed areas of townships.

CRI engaged its members and went through several versions of its mission statement and goals before arriving at the final versions. The group even tried three different names before agreeing on Community Revitalization Initiative. The focus on "community" seems straightforward but it reflects a commitment to including all older suburban communities in the project—be they separate municipalities, unincorporated areas, or Cincinnati neighborhoods. This inclusiveness and engagement across a wide spectrum of participants is key to the success of CRI, and is the framework upon which the entire Community COMPASS project is built. Planning for and improving our communities in Hamilton County is a voluntary effort which respects, accommodates, and builds upon the independence of various jurisdictions. Implementation of various strategies relies almost entirely on the cooperation of partner organizations.

Mission Statement

The Community Revitalization Initiative promotes revitalization of mature, built-out communities and neighborhoods in Hamilton County. This mission applies to all older suburban communities including separate cities and villages, unincorporated areas, and large outer Cincinnati neighborhoods.

VISION

The CRI Strategic Plan is structured around a vision for the future that includes six goal areas. The vision was developed by CRI participants and the Steering Committee, and addresses various factors of older suburban decline. They state in general terms what results CRI participants want for their communities in the next five years, and provide guidance for strategy development.

Older suburban communities in Hamilton County will:

- ⌘ **preserve buildings and neighborhood districts to create clean, safe, and walkable communities,**
- ⌘ **attract many new residents with a variety of new and renovated housing, accessible neighborhood parks, and excellent schools,**
- ⌘ **build a new sense of prestige and identity by capitalizing on the con-**

venient locations, historic buildings, vibrant neighborhood business districts, and cultural amenities,

€# make investment in older communities easier by streamlining the development/redevelopment process and coordinating with financial institutions,

€# provide transportation alternatives which connect neighborhood business districts, local attractions, residents, and visitors, and

€# have 21st Century infrastructure in place which allows business development on formerly vacant commercial and industrial sites, fostering creation of local jobs and promoting a vibrant economy.

Strategy Summary

Taking its direction from the Vision Statement, the CRI developed a series of strategies to deal with the challenges facing older suburban communities, take advantage of opportunities for revitalization, and to reverse the decline of First Suburbs. Ideas for strategies come from programs operating successfully across the country as well in Hamilton County. The broad knowledge and experience of CRI participants was also a rich source of information and strategy possibilities.

In total, 14 strategies were generated. They are presented here arranged by the six goal areas— Physical Appearance, Housing, Culture and Quality of Life, Administration and Organization, Transportation, and Economy—with accompanying action plan tasks. Successfully implementing these strategies and reversing the decline of Hamilton County’s older suburbs will rely on participation of various partner organizations. These groups, some of which were described earlier, have the expertise and capacity to carry out the action plans required of this plan. Actively engaging these organizations will be essential as CRI moves ahead and creates action plans for carrying out these 14 strategies.

The following chart summarizes the fourteen adopted CRI strategy recommendations and potential implementation partners. The first column simply lists the strategies. The numbers do not indicate any priority or ranking. The second column, "Goal Areas", illustrates which of the six CRI goal areas a particular strategy applies to. A shaded box indicates that a strategy is primarily dealing with that goal area. For instance, Strategy #1 is a Culture and Quality of Life initiative so that box is shaded. Unshaded boxes illustrate other goal areas that a strategy applies to in addition to their primary goal area. Strategy #1 can impact on the Economy goal area as well as Culture and Quality of Life.

The third column, "Scale", describes what level of government or cooperation among different jurisdictions is most appropriate to implement a particular strategy. "Local" means a strategy can or should be carried out by individual jurisdictions. "Collaborative" means that a strategy may be most effectively carried out by a group of communities working together. "County" means that a strategy may need to be implemented by county government across all communities.

The last column lists different public, private, and civic organizations that could become partners in strategy implementation. This list is not exhaustive. It is to be used as a starting point for building partnerships as CRI moves into creating action plans and implementation.

STRATEGIES	GOAL AREAS					SCALE		POTENTIAL PARTNERS					
	Physical		Cultural		Admin & Org	Transport	Economy		Local	Collaborative	County		
	Residential	Cultural	Admin & Org	Transport	Economy	Local	Collaborative		County				
1 Establish partnerships with local businesses, arts organizations and civic groups to support and encourage a connection of suburbanites to the cultural amenities of the urban core.												Cincinnati Preservation Association, Downtown Ohio Inc., Hamilton County Department of Community Development, Ohio Department of Natural Resources	
2 Establish and/or enhance neighborhood associations that work to identify and promote their strengths (i.e. character and charm) and identify and solve their weaknesses (i.e. litter, crime and general appearance).													
3 Incorporate physical design elements into the transportation infrastructure to promote community revitalization													Hamilton County Engineer, Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio Greenways
4 Revise federal, state and local transportation funding programs to require a greater portion of spending on existing infrastructure, while incorporating explicit commitments to a balanced approach to transportation alternatives to ensure that all segments of the population have real choices.													
5 Assemble and provide to communities a database of proven redevelopment resources that can facilitate marketing, financing and development processes vital to the assessment and implementation of Economic Development plans.													
6 Obtain and distribute funds to communities for preserving and assisting neighborhood business districts based upon demonstrated need, business and strategic plans, community commitment and viability.													City of Cincinnati, Downtown Ohio Inc., Environmental Protection Agency, Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, Greater Cincinnati Microenterprise Institute, Hamilton County Development Company, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Ohio Department of Development, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Small Business Resource Directory, US Department of Housing and Urban Development
7 Increase community leaders' awareness of existing programs and funding sources that encourage redevelopment of obsolete sites and buildings to enhance the physical appearance of the community.													Community Design and Development Center, Cincinnati Preservation Association, Downtown Ohio Inc, Environmental Protection Agency, Hamilton County Department of Community Development, Hamilton County Engineer, Ohio Department of Development, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio Greenways
8 Develop guidelines and regulations that incorporate design features in streetscapes to define the "sense of place", the overall appearance of, and the safety of corridors, streets and business districts.													
9 Build an effective lobbying effort with the First Suburbs Consortium and other urban areas across Ohio to promote Smart Growth policies in state and local government which will foster revitalization of older suburbs.													First Suburbs Consortium, American Planning Association Neighborhood Collaborative Planning Project, FutureHeights, City of Cincinnati, Downtown Ohio Inc., Environmental Protection Agency, Fannie Mae and Fannie Mae Foundation, Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, Hamilton County Department of Community Development, Hamilton County Engineer, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Ohio Department of Development, Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority, US Department of Housing and Urban Development
10 Build stronger regional collaboration between political jurisdictions so costs and benefits of economic development are shared more equally among different communities													
11 Encourage review of local ordinances, policies, and administrative functions in order to remove roadblocks to redevelopment and invite new investment into older suburban communities													
12 Mobilize city and county jurisdictions to lobby State legislators for equity in allocation of housing development funds for first ring suburbs, promote cooperation among county jurisdictions in order for all municipalities to thrive, and assure that Hamilton County residents are familiar with existing programs to encourage home and neighborhood improvement.													Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority, City of Cincinnati, Fannie Mae and Fannie Mae Foundation, Hamilton County Department of Community Development, Home Ownership Center of Greater Cincinnati, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Ohio Department of Development, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Greenways
13 Aggressively promote efforts that will result in upgrading existing residential areas and providing incentives to attract developers of new housing.													
14 Maintain high-quality, desirable neighborhoods that assure housing opportunity for all residents.													

■ Primary Goal □ Secondary Goal

Culture and Quality of Life

GOAL

First Suburban communities in Hamilton County have a new sense of prestige and identity by capitalizing on their convenient locations, historic buildings, vibrant neighborhood business districts, and cultural amenities.

STRATEGIES

Community Involvement

1. Establish partnerships with local businesses, arts organizations and civic groups to support and encourage a connection of suburbanites to the cultural amenities of the urban core.
 - 1.1. Encourage closer ties between suburban dwellers and core city cultural and arts assets.
 - 1.2. Encourage a connection of suburbanites to the cultural amenities of the urban core.
 - 1.3. Sponsor neighborhood cleanup days and/or community landscaping days.
 - 1.4. Promote creation of community improvement groups—community redevelopment corporations, gardener groups, etc.
 - 1.5. Encourage safety improvements through block watch programs, citizens on patrol, neighborhood cleanup, and beautification.

Community Identity

2. Establish and/or enhance neighborhood associations that work to 1. identify and promote their strengths (i.e. character and charm) and 2. identify and solve their weaknesses (i.e. litter, crime and general appearance).
 - 2.1. Enhance neighborhood pride and make people feel connected to community and their neighbors.
 - 2.2. Identify and promote each community's unique character and charm.
 - 2.3. Encourage efforts to reduce tension between people of differing race, age, or life-style.
 - 2.4. Promote use of community newsletters with promotions and stories on local events.
 - 2.5. Enhance community history and character by nominating buildings to the National Historic Register and identifying opportunities for unique community events or festivals.

STRATEGIES AND TASKS

Transportation

GOAL

First Suburban communities in Hamilton County provide transportation alternatives which connect neighborhood business districts, local attractions, residents, and visitors.

STRATEGIES

Linking Transportation To Revitalization

3. Incorporate physical design elements into the transportation infrastructure to promote community revitalization:
 - 3.1. Review site design regulations, where appropriate, to insure that developments provide ample interconnections between old and new street networks, and that they are safe for multi-modal transportation.
 - 3.2. Promote improving public transportation stops with good pedestrian access and appropriate pedestrian shelters and storage facilities for bicycles.
 - 3.3. Encourage the use, where practical, of traffic calming treatments to help control vehicle speeds, especially in residential, school, park and shopping areas.
 - 3.4. Review and assess local roadways to determine where there are barriers to pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

Balanced Funding

4. Revise federal, state and local transportation funding programs to require a greater portion of spending on existing infrastructure, and require explicit commitments to a balanced approach to transportation alternatives which ensures that all segments of the population have real choices.
 - 4.1. Lobby state government to equalize spending of highway trust funds among urban counties, as has been done at the federal level among urban and rural states.
 - 4.2. Lobby state government to allow funds from the Auto Fuel Tax to be spent on mobility projects/initiatives other than roads.
 - 4.3. Change emphasis at OKI to maintain existing road system (i.e. award more “points” for projects in urban neighborhoods).
 - 4.4. Change federal policy to eliminate the requirement for a local 25% match for transit projects.
 - 4.5. Promote company and/or joint venture employment center transportation for workers.
 - 4.6. Form a sub-committee to formally participate in the “Regional and Multi-Modal Transportation System” debates so as to insure that the impact on community revitalization is included and represented. Support and coordinate with Community COMPASS Initiative #28 and any other Initiative that has a significant impact on community revitalization.
 - 4.7. Support OKI I-75 improvement plan for multi-modal transportation and transit systems.

Economy

GOAL

First Suburban communities in Hamilton County have 21st Century infrastructure in place which allows business development on formerly vacant commercial and industrial sites, fostering creation of local jobs and promoting a vibrant economy.

STRATEGIES

Redevelopment Resource Database

5. Assemble and provide to communities a database of proven redevelopment resources that can facilitate marketing, financing and development processes vital to the assessment and implementation of Economic Development plans.
 - 5.1. Compile a set of development tools including people, knowledge, and resources that can help put redevelopment deals and funding together.
 - 5.2. Collaborate with commercial developers in order to identify incentives which will bring new investment in commercial projects to older suburban business districts.
 - 5.3. Emphasize local, sustainable funding sources for redevelopment efforts

Funding

6. Obtain and distribute funds to communities for preserving and assisting neighborhood business districts based upon demonstrated need, business and strategic plans, community commitment and viability.
 - 6.1. Encourage neighborhood business district programs to funnel assistance into preserving and assisting local business creation and growth.
 - 6.2. Implement county-level Main Street Program.
 - 6.3. Pursue funding for brownfield remediation in order to improve the environment and appearance of older suburban communities, and to provide land suitable for redevelopment.

STRATEGIES AND TASKS

Physical Appearance

GOAL

First Suburban communities in Hamilton County preserve buildings and neighborhood districts to create clean, safe, and walkable communities.

STRATEGIES

Building Stock

7. Increase community leaders' awareness of existing programs and funding sources that encourage redevelopment of obsolete sites and buildings to enhance the physical appearance of the community.
 - 7.1. Pursue funding for brownfield remediation in order to improve the environment and appearance of older suburban communities, and to provide land suitable for redevelopment.
 - 7.2. Use existing economic development tools such as TIF and Community Reinvestment Areas for financing improvements.
 - 7.3. Review and enforce existing building codes, property maintenance codes, and anti-litter/trash ordinances.
 - 7.4. Encourage use of urban design review guidelines to facilitate context sensitive design and other community beautification efforts.
 - 7.5. Promote use of historic preservation and façade improvement tax credits

Streetscape

8. Develop local design guidelines and regulations to define the “sense of place”, the overall appearance of, and the safety of corridors, streets and business districts.
 - 8.1. Ensure sidewalks are safe and accessible for pedestrians of all ages and abilities with access to public transportation and convenient parking for cars as well as bikes.
 - 8.2. Incorporate signage, markers, and plantings to identify neighborhood business districts.

Administration and Organization

GOAL

First Suburban communities in Hamilton County make investment in older communities easier by streamlining the development/redevelopment process and coordinating with financial institutions.

STRATEGIES

State

9. Build an effective lobbying effort with the First Suburbs Consortium and other urban areas across Ohio to promote Smart Growth policies in state and local government which will foster revitalization of older suburbs.
 - 9.1. Build political coalitions to encourage lobbying that promotes First Suburbs' interests and challenges and brings about legislative solutions.
 - 9.2. Encourage lobbying efforts at the state and local level that promote neighborhood revitalization.
 - 9.3. Build political coalitions for state reform that reflect First Suburbs unique challenges.

Regional

10. Build stronger regional collaboration between political jurisdictions so costs and benefits of economic development are shared more equally among different communities.
 - 10.1. Increase accountability and effectiveness of OKI, so that transportation investments are coordinated with land use and economic development, by changing its structure to a fairly apportioned and directly elected regional body.
 - 10.2. Reduce disparities that exist in the ability of local governments to generate revenue by creating a more equitable distribution of the cost and benefits of growth.
 - 10.3. Establish coalitions with university, non-profit, private, and public sector organizations to examine issues facing older suburban communities in order to develop solutions.

Local

11. Encourage review of local ordinances, policies, and administrative functions in order to remove roadblocks to redevelopment and invite new investment into older suburban communities.
 - 11.1. Streamline community permitting processes, where appropriate.
 - 11.2. Develop and keep zoning codes current to require high quality and attractive development.

-
- 11.3. Pursue funding for brownfield remediation in order to improve the environment and appearance of older suburban communities, and to provide land suitable for redevelopment.
 - 11.4. Use the National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Program for neighborhood business district revitalization.

Residential

GOAL

First Suburban communities in Hamilton County attract many new residents with a variety of new and rehabilitated housing, accessible neighborhood parks, quality public services, and excellent schools.

STRATEGIES

Funding, Lobbying, Organizing

12. Mobilize city and county jurisdictions to lobby State legislators for equity in allocation of housing development funds for first ring suburbs, promote cooperation among county jurisdictions in order for all municipalities to thrive, and assure that Hamilton County residents are familiar with existing programs which encourage home and neighborhood improvement.
 - 12.1. Build political coalitions between city and county jurisdictions and encourage lobbying that promotes First Suburb's interests.
 - 12.2. Lobby legislators to revise state policies to curb sprawl, promote reinvestment, and provide incentives for housing renovation and community revitalization.
 - 12.3. Lobby to revise state policies to create tax credit for rehabilitation of homes over forty years old.
 - 12.4. Identify and build connections with existing organizations, agencies, and non-profits that can help streamline development.
 - 12.5. Identify and categorize areas that would benefit most from public and/or private investment.
 - 12.6. Where appropriate, emphasize residential revitalization as part of economic development plans.
 - 12.7. Prioritize residential market segments and apply economic development models to the residential sector.
 - 12.8. Evaluate and improve investment programs for commercial and residential reinvestment, and incorporate a reward system for successful projects.

Development And Redevelopment Of Residential Areas

13. Aggressively promote efforts that will result in upgrading existing residential areas and providing incentives to attract developers of new housing.
 - 13.1. Pursue funding for brownfield remediation to improve the environment and appearance of older suburban communities, and to provide land suitable for redevelopment.
 - 13.2. Encourage public acquisition of blighted areas for private residential redevelopment.
 - 13.3. Designate Community Reinvestment Areas (CRAs) for tax incentives/abatement related to property improvements.
 - 13.4. Involve developers in public redevelopment planning in order to benefit from their experience.
 - 13.5. Examine options for providing mortgage packages with lower interest rates and

-
- flexible requirements for qualified buyers in targeted redevelopment areas.
 - 13.6. Revise state and local regulations to allow for fast and efficient foreclosure proceedings on abandoned properties in order to make them available for new development.
 - 13.7. Obtain the services of a specialty Realtor with expertise in working with older suburban communities.
 - 13.8. Collaborate with residential developers in order to identify what incentives would spur renovation in specific areas.
 - 13.9. Design new incentives to support homeowner rehab.
 - 13.10. Promote the use of the HIP program for housing rehabilitation
 - 13.11. Reduce utility tap fees for new construction in designated development areas as an incentive for new construction.
 - 13.12. Require building inspections for potential code violations before approving a home for re-occupancy.
 - 13.13. Encourage redevelopment that replaces obsolete homes with new ones, sensitive to the surrounding area and containing modern amenities.

Equity And Diversity

- 14. Maintain high-quality, desirable neighborhoods that assure housing opportunity for all residents.
 - 14.1. Encourage residential development projects that include a percentage of affordable units.
 - 14.2. Upgrade amenities and environment to provide incentives for development of higher income housing into existing lower income neighborhoods.
 - 14.3. Examine options for providing public down payment assistance for qualified buyers in targeted redevelopment areas.
 - 14.4. Examine options for providing equity insurance packages in targeted redevelopment areas to entice higher-income buyers into weaker real estate markets.
 - 14.5. Promote participation in existing home ownership education programs covering topics such as home maintenance, repair, budgeting, safety, energy savings, consumer issues, mortgage loan qualification and options, legal aspects of buying and owning a home, appraisal, credit reports, homeowner's insurance, and home inspection.

INDICATORS

Indicator Summary

Throughout the planning process the CRI Steering Committee emphasized the need to create a plan that will make a real difference in Hamilton County's older suburban communities. Within a year of adopting this plan, changes should be evident in our first suburbs.

Statistical data shows trends that correlate and explain the current situation in First Suburbs. To measure the progress and achievements of this plan, CRI identified eight indicators to follow over time. These indicators are objective data sets chosen for a combination of factors: their relevance to the goals of this plan, because data is readily available, and for ease of creating timely updates and progress reports.

Taken in isolation, each individual indicator does not tell much about the situation in Hamilton County's older suburbs. All of these individual data trends should be considered part of a larger story made up of all the indicators along with the various social, economic, and policy influences on first suburbs.

INDICATORS

1. **Building Vacancy**
2. **Crime Rates**
3. **Demographic Change**
4. **Income Tax Collections**
5. **Property Assessed Value Change**
6. **Property Sale Price Change**
7. **Residential Construction Permits**
8. **School District Ratings**

In some of the indicator explanations, data from Hamilton County's participating First Suburbs is aggregated and compared with data from the county as a whole. This analysis method allows for a quick understanding of where older suburban communities stand in relation to other areas of the county.

PARTICIPATING FIRST SUBURBS

1. Amberly Village
 2. Cheviot
 3. Colerain Township
 4. Columbia Township
 5. Deer Park
 6. Delhi Township
 7. Evendale
 8. Fairfax
 9. Forest Park
 10. Green Township
 11. Greenhills
 12. Lincoln Heights
 13. Madeira
 14. Mariemont
 15. Montgomery
 16. Mt. Healthy
 17. North College Hill
 18. Norwood
 19. Reading
 20. Sharonville
 21. Silverton
 22. Springdale
 23. Wyoming
-



Data Trends

BUILDING VACANCY

Definition

The number of vacant buildings in a community can be estimated by identifying which water meters are “annual billed” from Cincinnati Water Works (CWW) data and other municipal water departments. These meters are located where a water service account is available but the building is not using any water. CWW can also provide data on which buildings have had water service shut off for an extended period of time, also indicating a vacancy. Residential, commercial, and industrial buildings are included in the data. Further analysis will allow for breakdowns of individual building types.

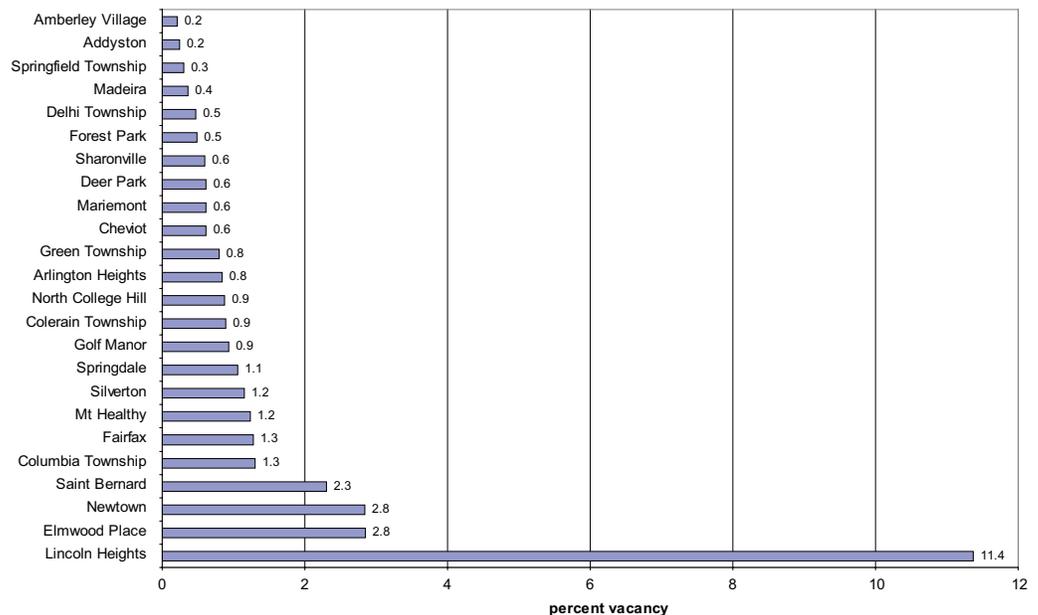
CWW provided billing data for all structures in their service area where service has been available but inactive for a year or more. It is assumed that a building is vacant if no water is used for twelve months or longer. The CWW vacant building data is then compared to the total number of buildings in an area to calculate the percent of vacant buildings. Similar information is available from the City of Wyoming and Village of Lockland water utilities. According to the City of Wyoming, only four “annual billed” meters exist on their water system.

The data produced by this survey is a reasonable indicator of where vacant buildings are located within Hamilton County. However, there are some limitations to this method. First, while CWW services the majority of the developed area in the county, several communities

are not served CWW or are only partially served. Therefore, some communities do not appear on the vacant building list because they are served by other water providers. Vacant buildings will be undercounted in jurisdictions that are only partially served by CWW.

Property vacancy is also an important component of a community’s land use pattern. However, building vacancy is used here for an indicator instead of property vacancy because it relates more directly to occupancy. Property vacancy refers to vacant parcels of land. First suburban communities often are almost completely built out, therefore the amount of vacant parcels is negligible.

Figure 6
2003 PERCENT BUILDING VACANCY

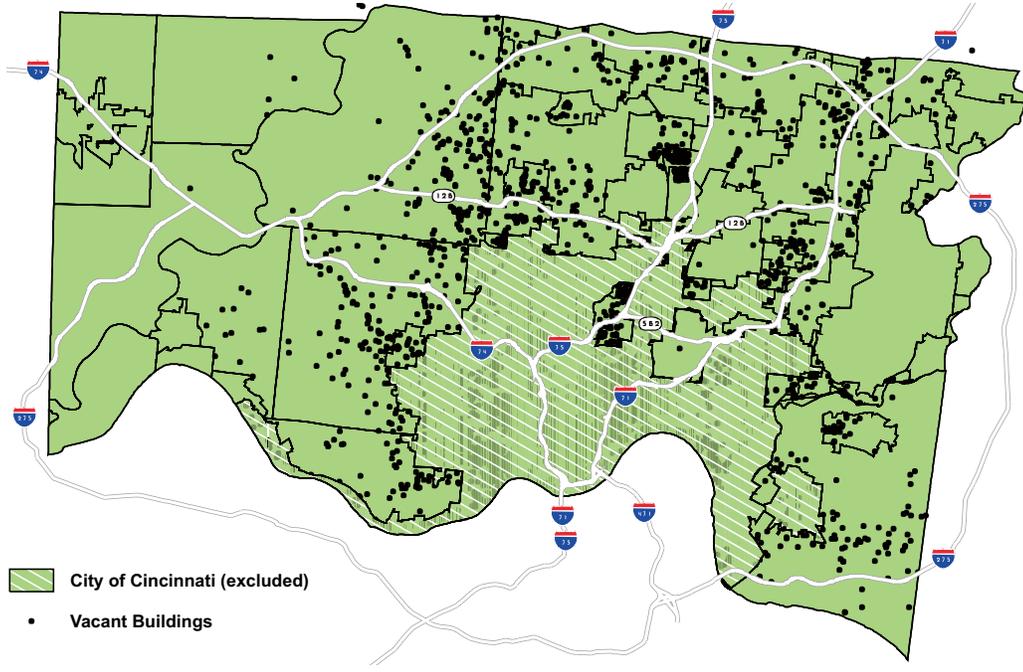


Sources: Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission, Cincinnati Water Works

Building vacancy, especially in neighborhood commercial districts, is a common sign of decline in first suburbs. Competition from new, franchise commercial development in outlying areas challenges the viability of older, independent businesses. If these businesses fail, the old buildings they occupied may not be easy to retrofit for new uses. This combined with other challenges to the neighborhood retail environment including lack of parking, crime or perception of crime, socioeconomic changes in the surrounding neighborhood which leaves less disposable income for shoppers, reduced pedestrian traffic on which local businesses survive, and delinquent building owners who do not maintain or improve their properties all contribute to business district decline and increased building vacancy.

As with vacant land, a certain number of vacant buildings will always exist in a community as businesses change and structures find new uses or are abandoned in favor of new buildings. However, higher percentages of vacant buildings are an indication of a struggling neighborhood. The blighting influences of large concentrations of vacant properties can be extremely difficult for communities to overcome. Patterns of vacant buildings on the map appear linear in some of the townships, likely following a major road corridor. In older municipalities, areas of vacant buildings are more concentrated together indicating perhaps a commercial district or industrial park with high vacancy rates, or a residential neighborhood with many empty houses.

Figure 7
LOCATIONS OF VACANT BUILDINGS
ACCORDING TO CINCINNATI WATER WORKS BILLING DATA



Source: Cincinnati Water Works

communities to overcome. Patterns of vacant buildings on the map appear linear in some of the townships, likely following a major road corridor. In older municipalities, areas of vacant buildings are more concentrated together indicating perhaps a commercial district or industrial park with high vacancy rates, or a residential neighborhood with many empty houses.

CRIME RATES

Definition

Crime reports are available for Hamilton County communities through the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Uniform Crime Reports. Total crime incidents (felonies, misdemeanors, etc.) are reported for each jurisdiction, and are normalized by the community's population. Normalizing the data by population allows for an accurate comparison of crime rates between larger and smaller communities.

For instance, Cincinnati has the largest population and number of businesses of any jurisdiction

in the county, and therefore can be expected to have more crime incidents than a smaller community like Harrison. By simply comparing the number of crime incidents between Cincinnati and Harrison, the amount of crime in Cincinnati appears staggering. But this doesn't account for the difference in population between Cincinnati and Harrison. However, by normalizing the data an accurate comparison of crime *rates* between the two jurisdictions is possible.

Crime data is normalized in this report by dividing the population of a community by 1,000. Then, the number of crime incidents is divided by that number, resulting in the number of crimes per 1,000 population for that community.

$$\text{Normalized Data} = \frac{\text{Crime Incidents}}{\text{Population}/1000}$$

The FBI Uniform Crime Reports are the best available source for consistently recorded crime information. However, accuracy of these reports is dependent on individual public safety agencies and how they record their crime data and report to the FBI. Discrepancies result from the lack of standardized recording and reporting procedures among different public safety agencies. Crime data in some cases is not available for all communities because of combined reporting, missing data, or overlapping jurisdictions.

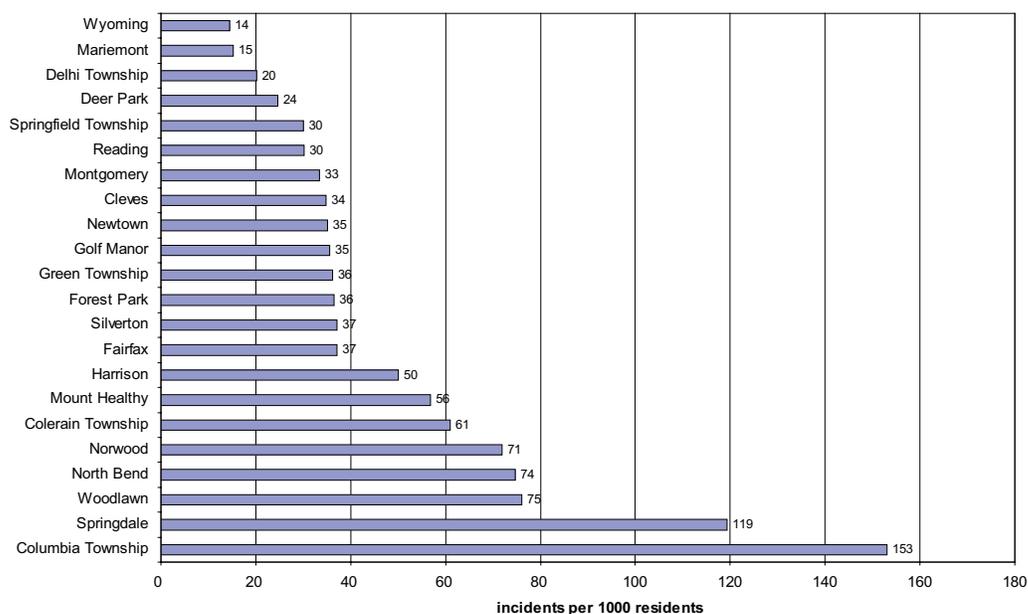
Crime rates, and more importantly the *perception* of crime activity in an area has a profound impact on whether people feel comfortable there. Perception becomes more important, because in areas where statistics demonstrate that crime is relatively low, residents and visitors will behave as if crime is much more of a problem if they believe it is relative to past experience.

Potential homebuyers are far less likely to purchase in a community with higher crime rates, or if the perception of safety is low. Likewise, people who already live in an area will withdraw from the community if they don't feel safe living there, and will move out of the area at the first opportunity.

From a commercial standpoint, an unsafe image in a business district will deter shoppers, hinder pedestrian traffic, and reduce the overall attractiveness of the area for business. Even vibrant, "destination" stores will be affected by an unsafe environment. Businesses that struggle to survive because of crime-related reductions in customers could close their doors and leave an empty building behind.

The City of Springdale and Columbia Township show crime rates much higher than other first suburbs. This can be explained by considering the difference between daytime and resident

Figure 8
2001 CRIME STATISTICS - INCIDENTS PER 1,000 RESIDENTS



Sources: FBI Uniform Crime Reports, Hamilton County Sheriff.
Note: Does not adjust for daytime population in Springfield and Columbia Townships.

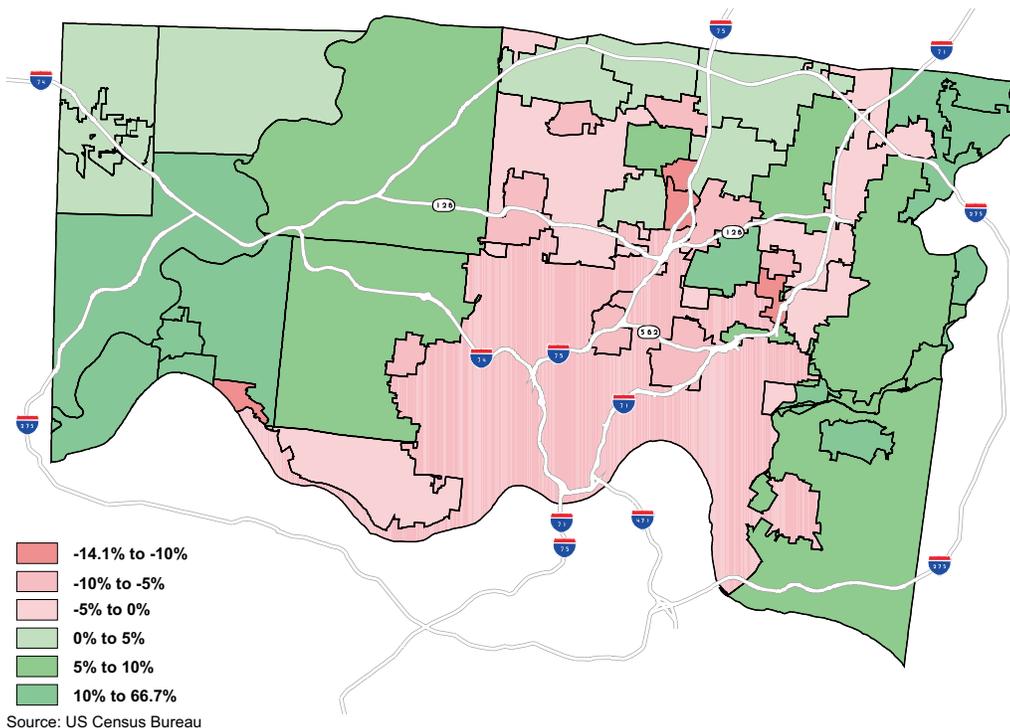
population in these communities. Both communities have concentrations of businesses which bring in many employees and customers on a daily basis. Therefore, the daytime population is fairly large compared to the permanent resident population, and is associated with higher crime incidents. This difference skews the crime statistics because they are normalized by the smaller permanent population.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Definition

Dozens of different population analyses of first suburban communities is possible with data from the US Census. Different data reports will likely be necessary to support initiatives that carry out different strategies recommended in this plan. Two population figures will be used to measure overall performance of the strategic plan. Total population trends for each community will measure overall growth or decline of an area. School age population trends can help illustrate the attractiveness of a community for families and the demands placed on the local school district. School age population includes people between five and seventeen years old.

Figure 9
PERCENT CHANGE IN TOTAL POPULATION BY JURISDICTION 1990 - 2000



The first thing often analyzed when examining the health of a community is the population. Whether the community is growing, stable, or declining can be quickly determined by examining population trends over time. A vibrant community usually means an increasing population. A declining community results in a stagnant or declining population. Population gains or losses are a consequence of all the other factors that act on a community—the economy, strength of schools and public services, transportation, available land, etc.

Overall, Hamilton County is losing population. After peaking at 924,000 in 1970, the County's population has declined ever since. The 2000 Census population of 845,303 is slightly less than the population in 1960, and the Census Bureau estimates that the population in 2002 fell to 833,731. About 90,000 fewer people live in Hamilton County today than lived here in 1970, which is slightly more people than the current population of Campbell County, Kentucky.

Population loss is not evenly spread across the county. Some areas have gained both total population and school age (ages 5 to 18 years) population. However, because the county as a whole is losing population, these gains in some areas come at the expense of others. In general, core urban areas and older suburban communities are losing population at a faster rate than other areas. At best, they are holding steady with negligible population change. With the exception of Amberly Village, none of the older suburban communities experienced any significant population increases over the last decade. Other population decreases occurred in areas typically thought of as attractive suburbs which draw people including Montgomery, Madeira, and Sycamore Township.

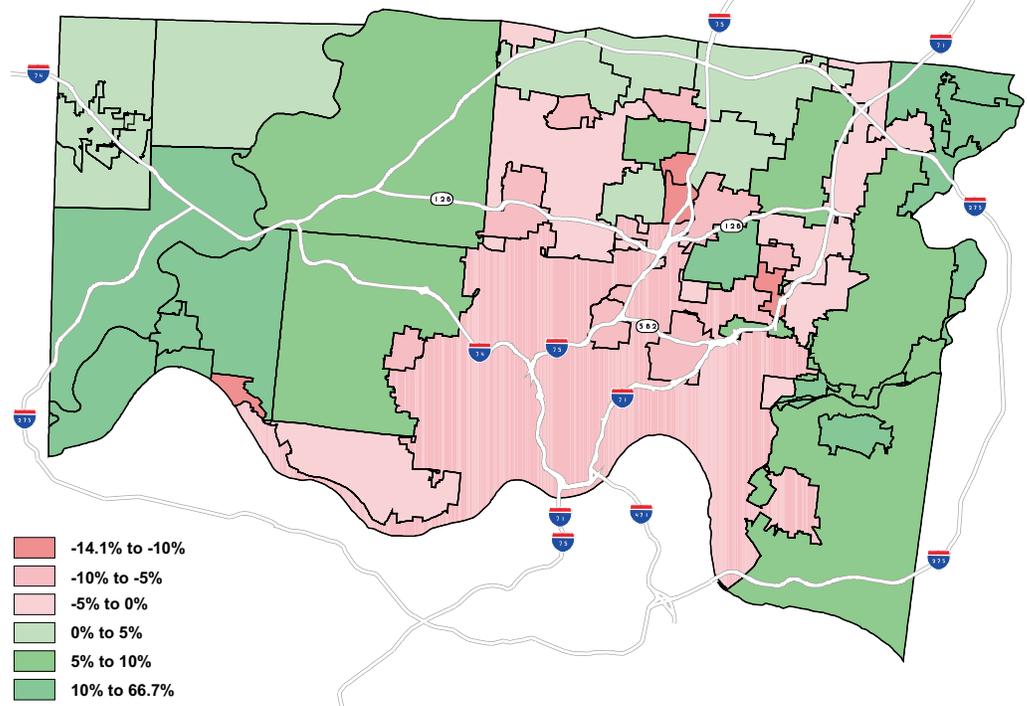
Most of the large population gains occurred in the southwestern townships, in Cleves, and in North Bend. Addyston experienced a significant decline in population even though it immediately abuts Cleves and North Bend.

In contrast to total population gains and losses, changes in school age population closely parallel the state ratings of public school districts. Some communities lost total population, but gained school age population. Montgomery, Madeira, and Sycamore Township which all experienced slight overall population loss experienced significant gains in school age population, which is likely because of their strong school districts.

However, strong school districts are not a guarantee of students and families moving to a community. Addyston experienced significant loss in school age population, even though it is in the Three Rivers School District which performed fairly well on state proficiency exams.

Wyoming had the largest increase in school age population among communities in the I-75 corridor north of Cincinnati, in keeping with its strong school district. Likewise, most communities on the east side of the county experienced large increases in school age population, following the pattern of school district rankings.

Figure 10
PERCENT CHANGE IN SCHOOL AGE POPULATION BY JURISDICTION
1990 - 2000



Source: US Census Bureau.

INCOME TAX COLLECTIONS

Definition

Ohio municipalities may levy income taxes on residents and employees within their jurisdiction. Measuring trends for income tax collection over time can help illustrate the strength of

the economy in a particular jurisdiction and the income level of people who live there. According to the Ohio Department of Taxation:

"Municipal income taxes are generally imposed on wages, salaries, and other compensation earned by residents and nonresidents who work in the municipality. The income tax is also applied to business net profits that are attributable to activities in the municipality. Most municipalities allow a partial or full credit to residents for municipal income taxes paid to another municipality where they are employed."

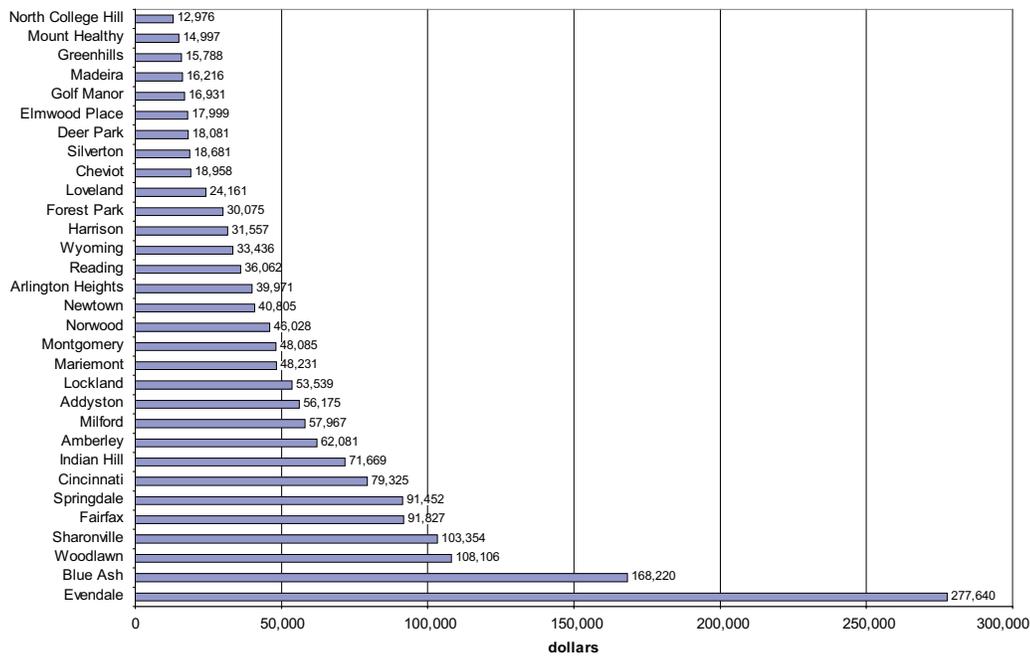
Along with property tax, income tax is one of the most important revenue sources for communities.

Funds generated through an income tax help pay for services and capital improvements which maintain and improve the quality of life in Hamilton County's cities and villages. On the other hand, income taxes can be a liability in that some homebuyers or new businesses may decide to locate elsewhere if income tax is perceived to be too burdensome.

Income tax revenue reported by each community is collected and presented as an overall percent change in revenue collected from 1998–2002. Income tax data is readily available through the Ohio Department of Taxation for the years 1997–2001. This report averages the five years of tax collections together, and normalizes them per 100 population in each municipality that levies an income tax (townships cannot collect income tax). Municipal population is used instead of number of employees because employment data is only available by ZIP code, not by jurisdiction.

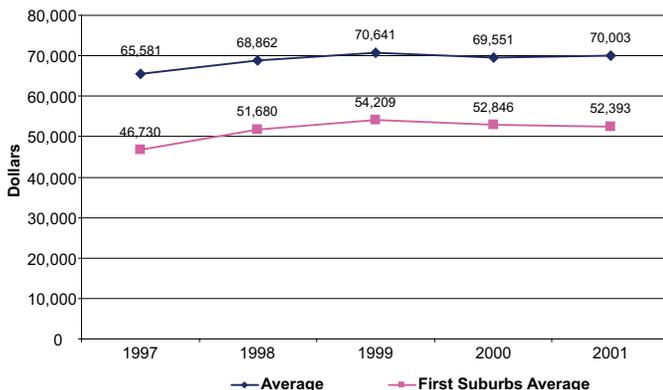
The average of all collections is approximately \$56,400 per 100 population. About two-thirds of the municipalities surveyed fall below this average amount. Most of the com-

Figure 11
AVERAGE INCOME TAX COLLECTED PER 100 RESIDENTS 1997 - 2001



Source: Ohio Department of Taxation.

Figure 12
AVERAGE INCOME TAX COLLECTIONS 1997 - 2001
PER 100 RESIDENTS

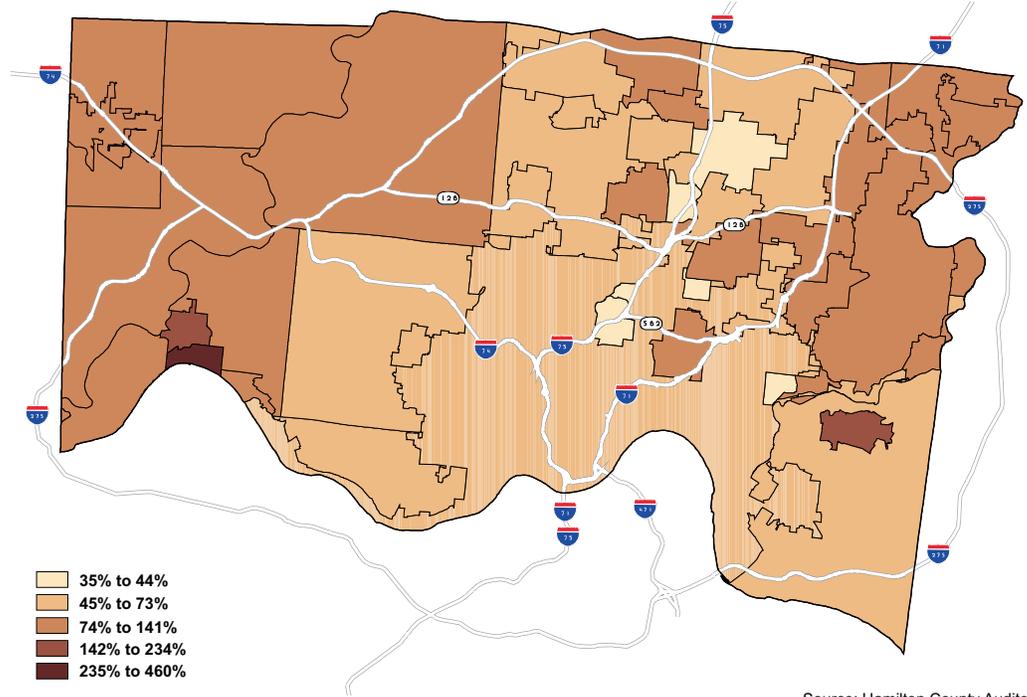


Source: Ohio Department of Taxation.

munities with below-average income tax collections are the same communities typically thought of as "first suburbs" in Hamilton County. Communities with higher-than-average income tax collections may have one or more factors present—a healthy local economy with a strong income base, higher income tax rates than other communities, or relatively small permanent populations when compared to the number of employees.

Figure 12 illustrates a general trend among first suburbs. The average annual income tax collected in these communities is consistently lower compared with all Hamilton County municipalities. Not only are first suburbs generating less revenue from income taxes, the difference appears to be widening from approximately \$20,000 in 1997–2000 to approximately \$22,000 in 2001.

Figure 13
PERCENT CHANGE IN TOTAL ASSESSED VALUE 1992 - 2002



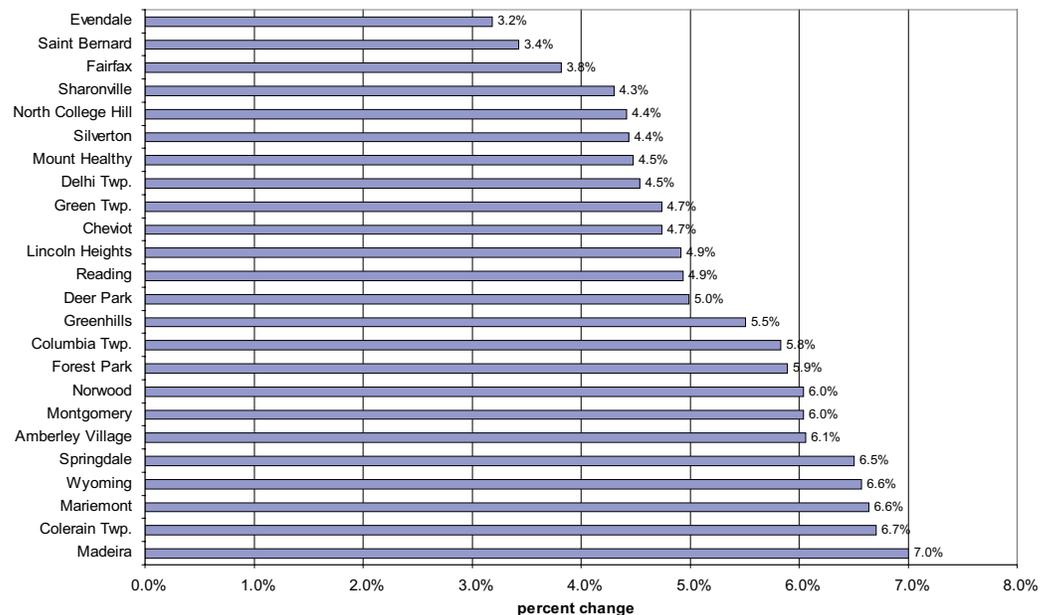
Source: Hamilton County Auditor.

PROPERTY ASSESSED VALUE CHANGE

Definition

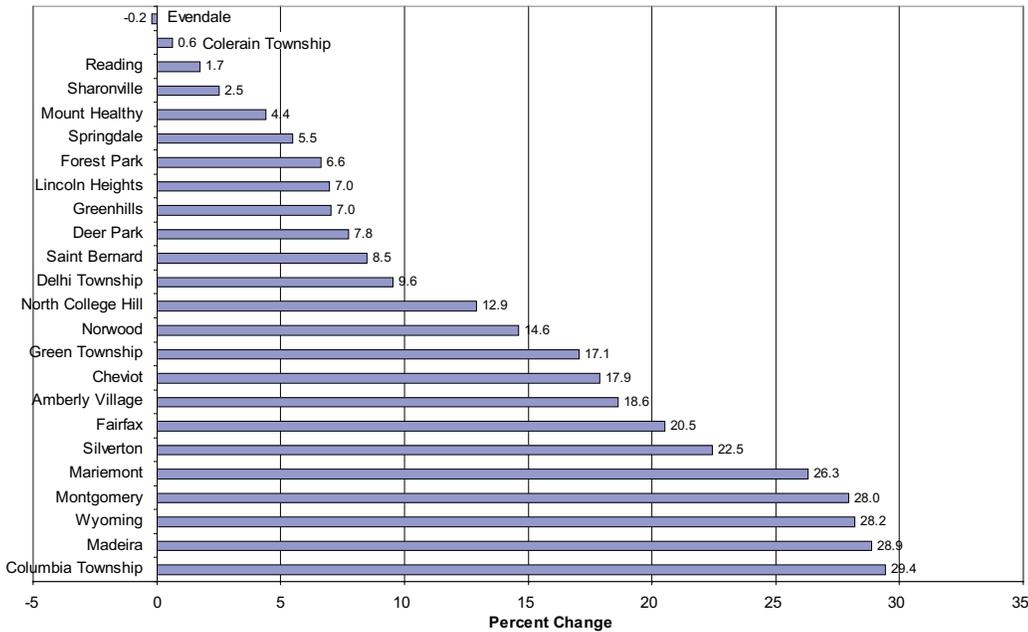
The Hamilton County Auditor's Office is responsible for assessing all real estate in the county for taxing purposes. Annual reports are published by the Auditor that describe the total assessed value for all property within each jurisdiction in the county. Examining these reports, and analyzing the changes in total assessed values over time can indicate the strength of the property tax base in a community, and how much value it gains over time.

Figure 14
AVERAGE PERCENT CHANGE IN ASSESSED VALUE 1992 - 2002



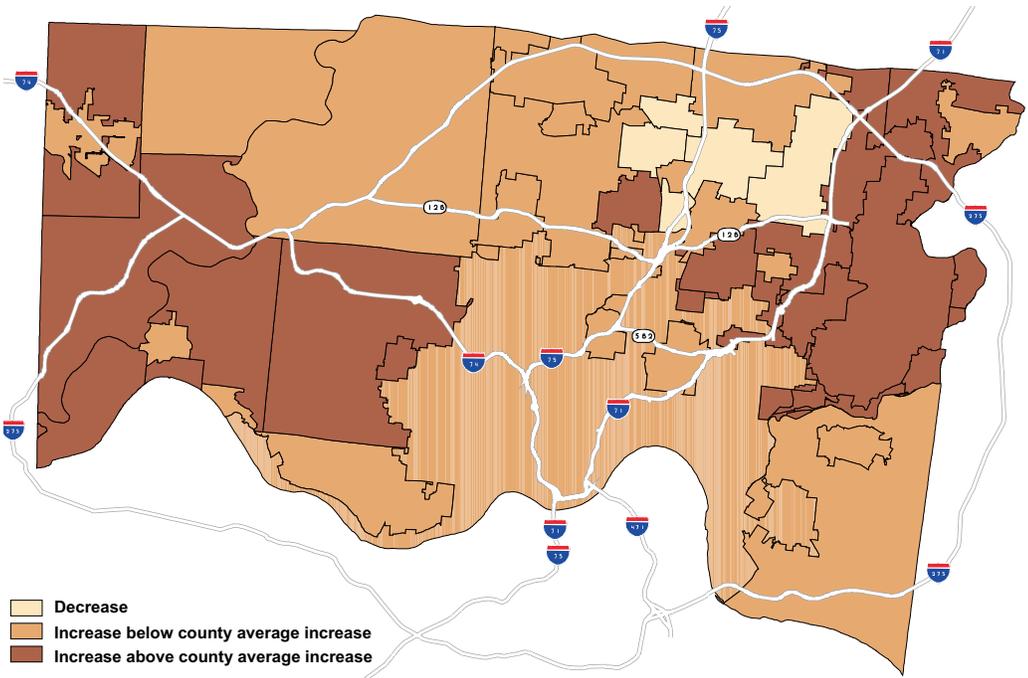
Source: Hamilton County Auditor.

Figure 15
FIRST SUBURBS AVERAGE PERCENT CHANGE IN SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL SALE PRICES 1998 - 2002



Source: Hamilton County Auditor.

Figure 16
AVERAGE PERCENT CHANGE IN SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL SALE PRICES 1992 - 2002



Source: Hamilton County Auditor.

PROPERTY SALE PRICE CHANGE

Sale prices between 1998 and 2002 for single family houses in each jurisdiction is available from the Hamilton County Auditor's Office. For purpose of this analysis, all prices are adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index and expressed in 2002 dollars.

Between 1998 and 2002, Hamilton County's average price for single family homes increased approximately 16 percent. However, as the following map and chart (Figures 15 and 16) illustrate, many communities did not enjoy such a strong growth in residential sale prices. Furthermore, average sale prices in older suburban communities are consistently much lower than the average county sale price in each of the five study years. The difference between older suburb sale prices and county average sale prices is increasing. The gap between the prices increased from \$11,625 in 1999 to \$27,141 in 2002, or about 113 percent. .

NEW RESIDENTIAL UNIT CONSTRUCTION

Residential areas in many first suburban communities fall into a market gap. They have a hard time attracting new home buyers interested in a newer house with few repair and upgrade needs, but also may not attract buyers interested in restoring a historic property. This

market gap combined with homebuyers' desire—fueled by the housing industry—to buy “up and out” with subsequent home purchases, sets up an enormous challenge in keeping first suburban residential districts fully occupied with homeowners.

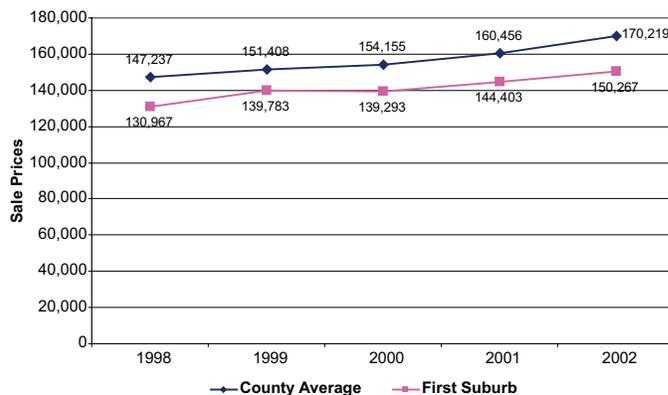
A defining characteristic of many first suburban communities is a lack of land available for new development. This means that even if strong demand for new housing existed from a growing population, there isn't adequate room in to accommodate new housing construction. Also, housing stock in first suburbs may need repair, refurbishing, and reinvestment, and may be less attractive to buyers than newer homes.

Even with money invested in renovation, most houses in older communities are smaller than newly constructed homes. The current median house size nationwide according to the US Census is nearly 2,000 square feet and includes an attached garage. One in five houses built today is 3,000 square feet or larger. In contrast, many first suburbs have houses averaging 1,400 square feet or smaller, assuming they have not had additions constructed. Along with their smaller size, these homes usually lack modern amenities including central air conditioning, energy efficient windows and insulation, multiple bathrooms, multi-function “great” rooms, large closets, and master bedroom suites.

However, older houses can be attractive to buyers because of the quality and character of the structures that often isn't available in new homes. Anyone walking through a grand Victorian home lovingly restored to its original splendor will experience what draws restoration experts to these buildings. However, not all old homes have the same character and appeal to buyers interested in restoration. According to the Brookings Institution, most homes in first suburbs were built between 1950 and 1970. This era of residential construction does not typically include the style and architectural significance that attracts adventurous renovators. Generally, public funding and private lending policies greatly favor new residential construction in outlying areas over restoration/redevelopment of older homes.

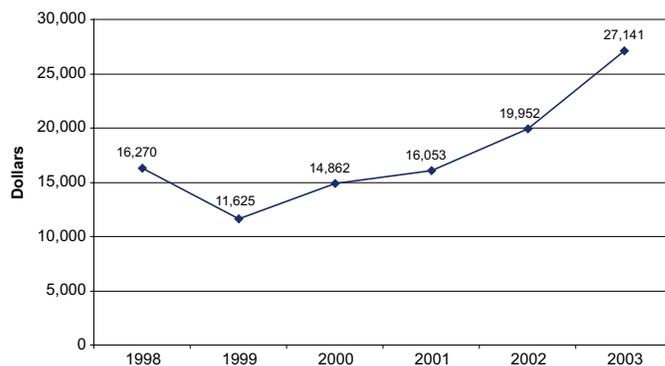
The following maps illustrate housing construction patterns in Hamilton County between 1960 and 2000. For each jurisdiction, the total number of new dwelling units by decade is normalized by population. This allows for a more accurate comparison of residential construction activity across the county.

Figure 17
AVERAGE SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL SALE PRICES 1992 - 2002



Source: Hamilton County Auditor, all prices adjusted to 2002 dollars.

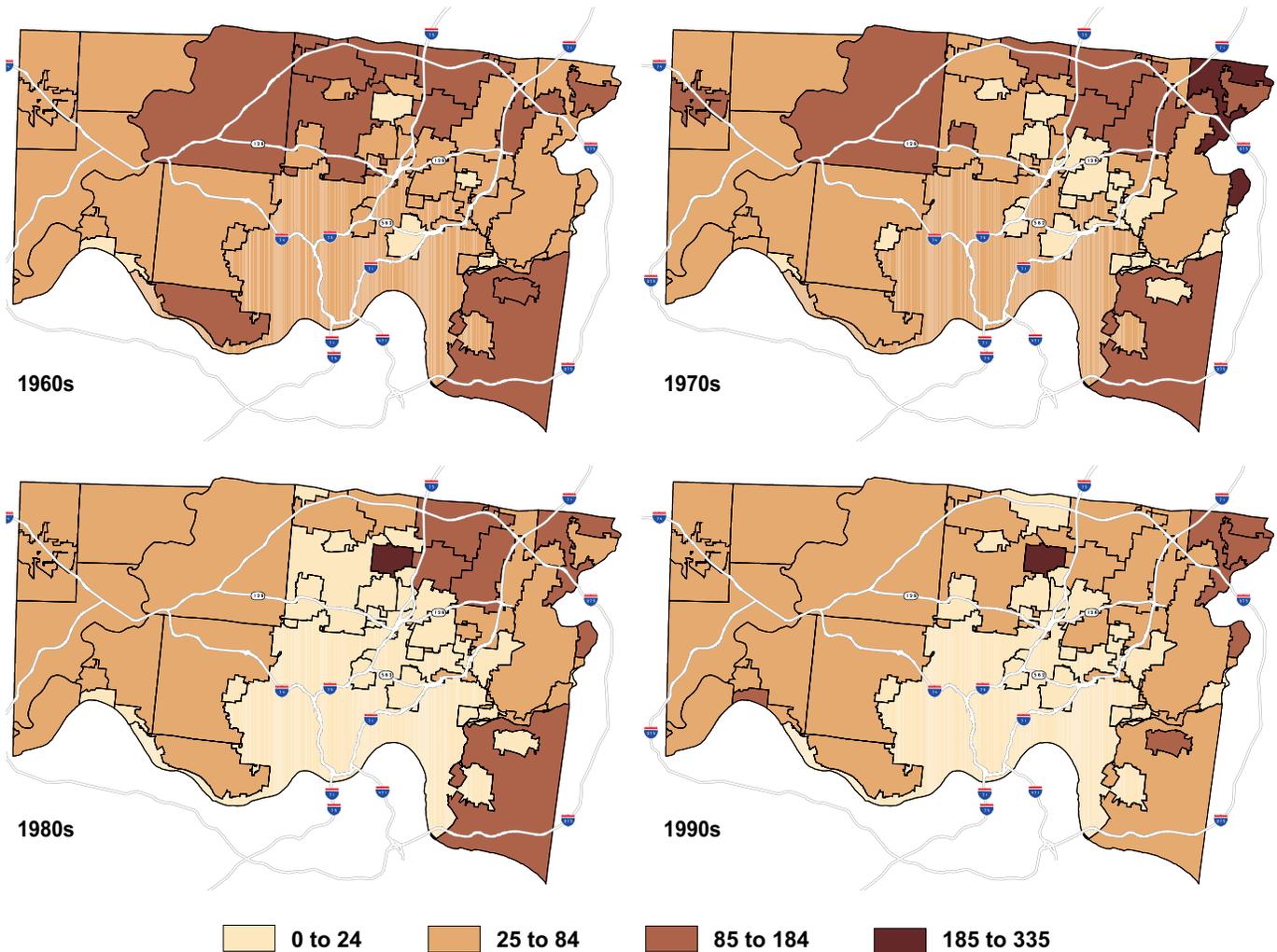
Figure 18
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAMILTON COUNTY AND FIRST SUBURB AVERAGE SFR SALE PRICES 1998 - 2002



Source: Hamilton County Auditor

During the 1960s and 1970s, residential construction was much greater overall than in more recent years both in Cincinnati and surrounding First Suburbs. As these communities were built out and housing markets shifted, construction activity dropped off in the 1980s. Some First Suburbs slowed their residential construction beginning in the 1970s to be joined later by many others with stalled housing starts in the 1980s. According to the 1980 map, Cincinnati and many of its northern suburbs are in this category. By the 1990s the housing markets rebounded somewhat but high levels of new dwelling construction are only seen in a handful of communities.

Figure 20
NUMBER OF NEW RESIDENTIAL UNITS PER 1,000 RESIDENTS BY DECADE, 1960-2000



Source: Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission.

SCHOOL DISTRICT RATINGS

“Perceived school quality is a key factor in attracting or retaining middle-class residents (and the businesses that cater to them), and thus in maintaining property values, which in turn create the tax base to fund schools. When the perception of a school declines, it can set in motion a potentially vicious cycle that ultimately affects the entire community.” (Orfield, 2)

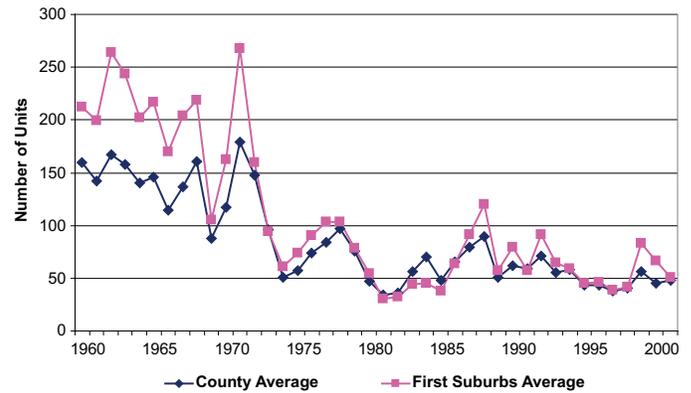
This statement in *Cincinnati Metropatterns* sums up the interdependence between school districts and residential neighborhoods in Cincinnati. When middle and upper income residents decide to move away from a particular area, local schools feel the effects very quickly. And, a primary factor in determining whether those residents will remain in an area is the quality of the schools. Many older suburban communities in Hamilton County are precariously balanced between these two factors. Unfortunately, the balance has shifted in some communities for the worse, and poor performing schools are yet another challenge faced when trying to attract new residents.

Socioeconomic shifts occurring in first suburbs affect schools in many ways. Shifts can concentrate poverty within certain school districts or school buildings, populate schools with a higher concentration of students at risk for poor academic performance, and reduce the tax base and other local resources that schools rely on. This situation is exacerbated in Ohio because state education funding does not effectively even out disparities between wealthy districts and those with fewer resources.

According to research completed by the Metropolitan Area Research Corporation, Ohio does have a program in place to help equalize spending per pupil between different school districts. However, this program has not increased its funding levels as much as similar programs in adjacent Kentucky and Indiana (*Metropatterns*, 8).

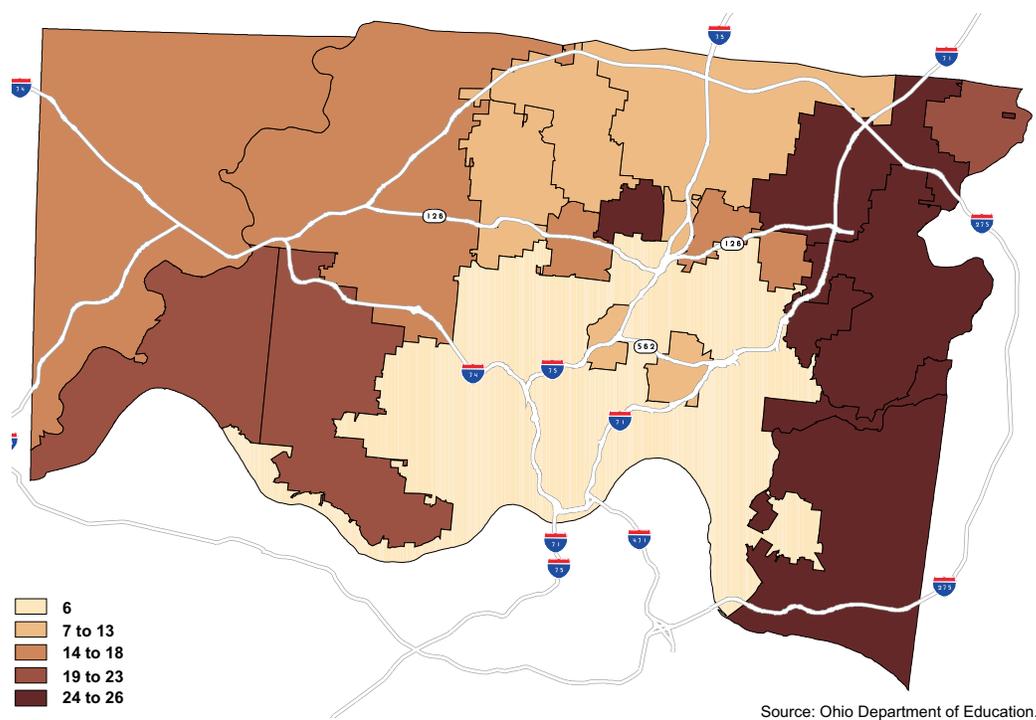
Smaller school districts typical in many of Hamilton County’s first suburbs don’t start out with a large surplus of resources to serve the student population in the first place. Adding additional challenges from socioeconomic change can quickly bring a district into a crisis.

Figure 23
AVERAGE NUMBER OF NEW RESIDENTIAL UNITS
1960 - 2001



Source: Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission.
Includes both single and multi-family.

Figure 24
AVERAGE NUMBER OF STATE STANDARDS MET BY SCHOOL DISTRICT
1998 - 2003



Source: Ohio Department of Education.

Cincinnati Metropatterns documents the education disparities which exist in Hamilton County and which will continue to push population out of some areas and into others. This will continue unless a comprehensive approach to building school quality is achieved.

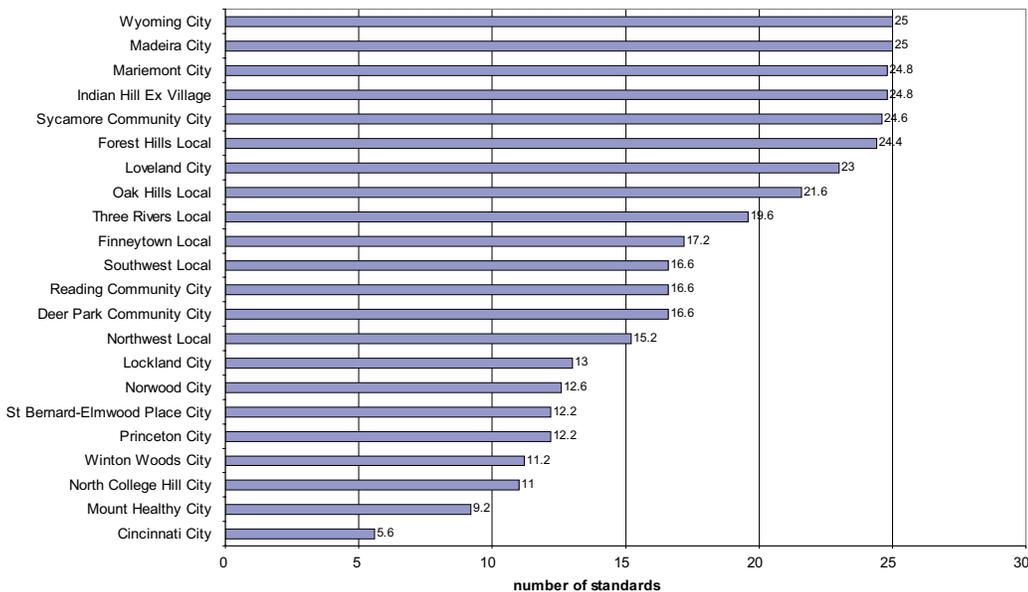
The Ohio Department of Education administers academic proficiency tests for every school district in the state. Tests are given to students annually and the results compiled into a school district rating. The rating of a school district is based on how many standards (27 or 22 depending on the year) a district met through academic achievement test scores. This information is available for every school district and every school building in the state. For this analysis, school district rating data was analyzed for the last five years.

In Hamilton County, Cincinnati Public Schools met the fewest state education standards on average as measured by Ohio Department of Education proficiency exams. CPS covers not only the City of Cincinnati but several adjacent first suburbs or portions thereof. This trend has been steady over the last several years, and is similar to other large urban school districts in the state.

Several school districts serving older suburban communities north of the city along the I-75 corridor also fared poorly, or are showing moderate improvement according to state proficiency standards. A notable exception to this is Wyoming City Schools, which consistently achieved top proficiency scores.

With the exception of Wyoming, the top performing school districts according to state proficiency exams are on the east side of the county. The four large school districts in western Hamilton County also scored respectably but not as high as east side districts.

Figure 25
AVERAGE NUMBER OF STATE STANDARDS MET BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS
1998 - 2003



Source: Ohio Department of Education.

Action Plans and Partners

AGREEMENT WITH FIRST SUBURBS CONSORTIUM

The Ohio First Suburbs Consortium has accomplished vital work in bringing the problems and opportunities of older suburban communities to the attention of state elected officials. Communities in Columbus and Cleveland organized in the late 1990s and have successfully collaborated on a variety of projects. In Cincinnati, First Suburbs contributed to the *CRI Strategic Plan* through their support and ideas generated from their earlier strategy plan. The Regional Planning Commission and Planning Partnership entered into a cooperative agreement with the Greater Cincinnati First Suburbs Consortium to promote the *Strategic Plan* to elected officials across the county and to begin the action plan process. A copy of the agreement is included at the end of this report.

ACTION PLAN PROCESS

The underpinning philosophy behind Community COMPASS has been active engagement across the public, private, and civic sectors in Hamilton County. Participation of and endorsement by thousands of private citizens, business leaders, administrative and elected officials, and civic activists is the key to the success of this planning process. Continuing this rich involvement will also be key to implementing the ideas contained in Community COMPASS.

As mentioned earlier in this report, successful implementation of the plan will rely on teams made up of various participants in the planning process. No individual organization or jurisdiction has the necessary resources or expertise to carry out all of the strategies contained in this plan. The following implementation process is a suggestion for how CRI Action Plans can be prepared and implemented. An alternative process may be followed, but should include steps equivalent to those suggested in this process.

Completing the *CRI Strategic Plan* accomplished steps 1 through 3 of the following action plan process. Beginning with Steps 4 and 5 of the action plan process, potential partners with CRI need to commit themselves to whatever strategy they choose to implement. Step Two is to identify what tasks are necessary to carry out that strategy. Several supporting tasks are included with each of the 14 CRI strategies, but additional tasks or different tasks may be necessary. Mirroring the process used in the overall *CRI Strategic Plan*, performance indicators should be determined for each strategy in order to evaluate progress. As tasks are identified, responsibility for doing them and a schedule for getting them done is essential. Determining a budget and funding sources finishes off the Action Plan process. As projects and strategies are carried out, an evaluation process to track accomplishments should follow.



**COOPERATION AGREEMENT
BETWEEN HAMILTON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING
COMMISSION / PLANNING PARTNERSHIP AND THE GREATER
CINCINNATI FIRST SUBURBS CONSORTIUM**

THIS AGREEMENT is made and executed on this 5th day of JUNE, 2003 by and between the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission ("HCRPC") and the Greater Cincinnati First Suburbs Consortium ("GCFSC");

WITNESSETH THAT:

WHEREAS, it is recognized that mature, built-out communities and neighborhoods in Hamilton County municipalities and townships are faced with major challenges such as: inadequate housing stock, aging infrastructure, shrinking tax bases, obsolete commercial and industrial properties and increasing social service costs; and

WHEREAS, the GCFSC, an association of government elected and appointed officials representing mature built-out communities in the Greater Cincinnati area, advocates:

- Public polices that do not create disposable communities,
- Balanced investments in new and existing infrastructure,
- Maintenance and enhancement of the tax base,
- Creation of redevelopment opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the HCRPC through its Planning Partnership has launched the Community Revitalization Initiative, an implementation component of the countywide comprehensive plan (Community COMPASS),

WHEREAS, the Planning Partnership Community Revitalization Initiative will result in an aligned set of strategies and action plans focusing on revitalization of First Suburbs and other mature, built-out communities and neighborhoods in Hamilton County municipalities and townships; and

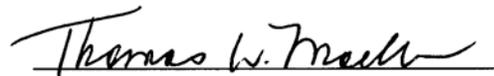
WHEREAS, the GCFSC and the Community Revitalization Initiative share a common goal of promoting revitalization of communities and neighborhoods in Hamilton County and desire to leverage their respective resources and expertise in the pursuit of mutual goals;

NOW THEREFORE, the HCRPC and GCFSC do hereby agree as follows:

- 1) Within the limitations of authorities, resources and established policies THE HCRPC WILL:
 - Provide staff support to the GCFSC for administration, planning and research related to mutual goals.

- 2) Within the limitations of authorities, resources and established policies GCFSC members WILL:
 - Serve on the Steering Team for the Planning Partnership Community Revitalization Initiative to provide guidance and support for implementation of selected strategies.
- 3) Within the limitations of authorities, resources and established policies BOTH PARTIES (HCRPC & GCFSC) WILL:
 - Assist in creating and implementing action strategies, funding plans and grant applications in support of the Planning Partnership Community Revitalization Initiative.
 - Assist in communicating with elected and appointed officials, and endorsing and ratifying collaborative actions.
- 4) Duration of agreement: The agreement will last as long as desirable by both parties and can be terminated in writing by either party.
- 5) Coordination: All requests for HCRPC staff support shall be directed to the HCRPC Executive Director through the GCFSC Chairperson.

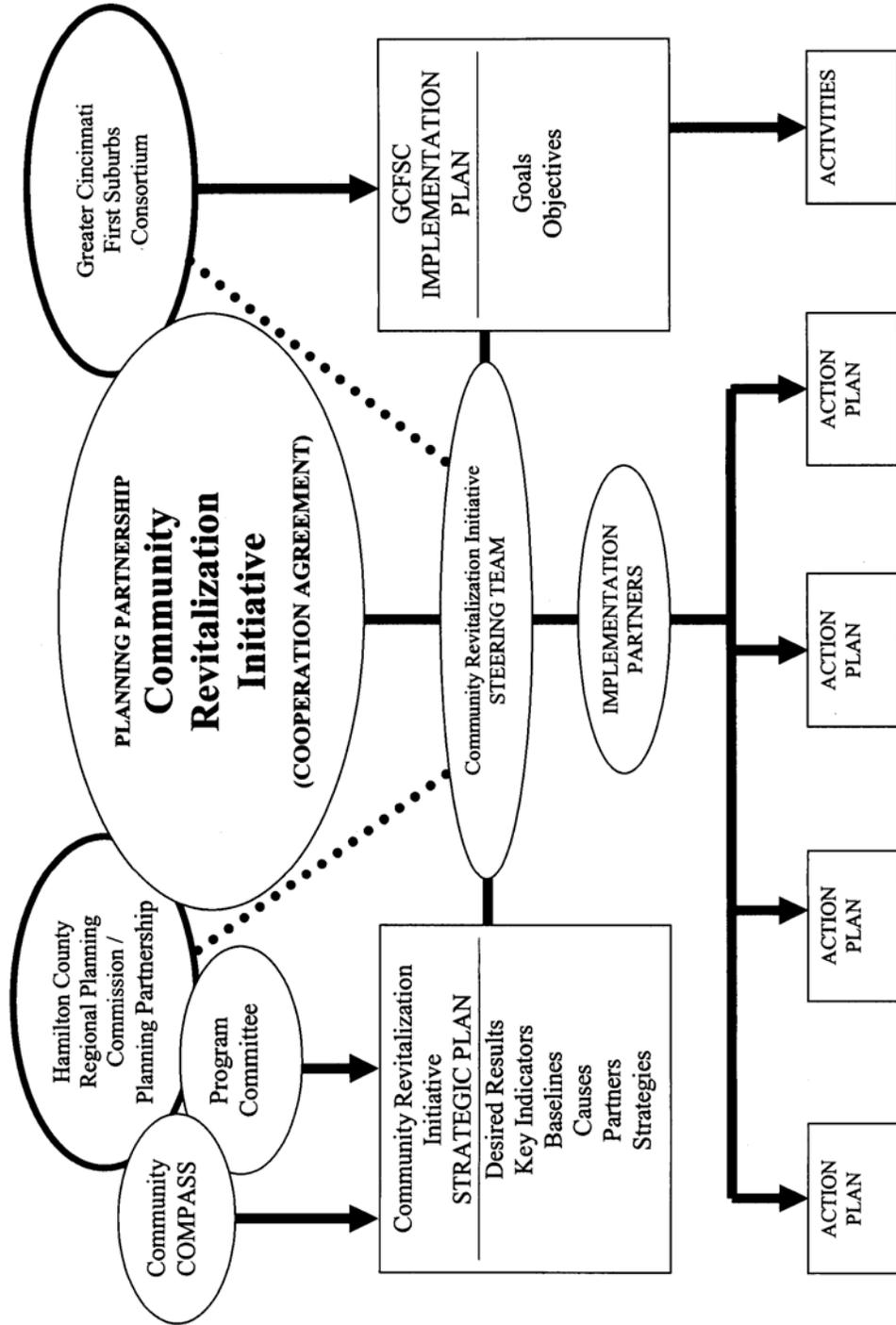

Executive Director, HCRPC


Chairman, GCFSC

JUNE 5, 2003
Date

JANUARY 21, 2004
Date

Planning and Implementation Concept



Action Plan = Tasks, Responsibility, Schedule, Budget, and Performance Measures

PLANNING PARTNERSHIP / FIRST SUBURBS CONSORTIUM
COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE

Planning and Implementation Process

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1) Vision (Desired Community Results) | | <i>The CRI Strategic Plan
(Completed on 1/21/04)</i> |
| 2) Indicators of Community Results | | |
| 3) Strategy Alternatives | | |
| 4) Strategy Selection | | <i>Action Plans

(To be initiated
through the
Planning Partnership /
First Suburbs Consortium
Cooperation Agreement)</i> |
| 5) Partners
(agreements and commitments) | | |
| 6) Strategy Clarification
(Specific Project / Program Proposal)
Overview (problem / opportunity / system / context)
Existing situation, consequences (where are we) | | |
| 7) Customers / Stakeholders | | |
| 8) Desired Results
(what will success of the strategy look like) | | |
| 9) Performance Measures
(for programs or projects) | | |
| 10) Baseline | | |
| 11) Story behind Baseline | | |
| 12) Tasks
(what, when, where, who, how) | | |
| 13) Funding Plan
(cost / revenue) | | |
| 14) Implement | | <i>Implement</i> |
| 15) Evaluate / Modify | | |
| 16) Report Card | | |

**Hamilton County Regional
Planning Commission**

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Cincinnati, OH 45202
(513) 946-4500
www.planningpartnership.org

**Planning
Partnership**



HAMILTON COUNTY
Regional
Planning
Commission