

# State of the County Report: Education

COMMUNITY COMPASS REPORT NO. 16-5

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*Hamilton County, Ohio*

Community  
COMPASS



HAMILTON COUNTY  
Regional  
Planning  
Commission

November 2004



**The Planning Partnership** is a collaborative initiative of the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission. The Partnership – open to all political jurisdictions in the county and to affiliate members in the public, private and civic sectors – is an advisory board that works to harness the collective energy and vision of its members to effectively plan for the future of our county. Rather than engaging in the Planning Commission’s short-range functions such as zoning reviews, the Planning Partnership takes a long-range, comprehensive approach to planning, working to build a community that works for families, for businesses and for the region. The Partnership firmly believes that collaboration is the key to a positive, competitive and successful future for Hamilton County.

Visit [planningpartnership.org](http://planningpartnership.org) and [communitycompass.org](http://communitycompass.org) for more information.

**Community COMPASS** (Hamilton County’s Comprehensive Master Plan and Strategies) is a long-range plan that seeks to address mutual goals related to physical, economic, and social issues among the 49 communities within Hamilton County. Through a collective shared vision for the future based on the wishes and dreams of thousands of citizens, Hamilton County now has direction to chart its course into the 21 century.

In developing a broad vision with broad support, Community COMPASS will help ensure that trends are anticipated, challenges are addressed, priorities are focused, and our collective future is planned and achieved strategically over the next 20 to 30 years. Through an in-depth analysis of all aspects of the County, the multi-year process will result in a comprehensive plan.

**The State of the County** report series outlines conditions, trends, opportunities, and key measures related to improving and sustaining quality of life in twelve major systems in our community. The individual reports lay the groundwork for an overall State of the County analysis or report card, and provide support for refining action strategies.

## Abstract

### Title:

State of the County Report:  
Education  
Community COMPASS  
Report No. 16-5

### Subject:

Current conditions and trends regarding education in Hamilton County

### Date:

November 2004

### Synopsis:

This report presents existing conditions and trends in Hamilton County related to our education system. The report identifies five important findings as well as the importance of trends associated with each finding, and provides key indicators for measuring progress toward the Vision for Hamilton County’s Future.

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## Context

### COMMUNITY COMPASS COMPONENTS

- 1 **Vision**  
(What do we want?)
- 2 **Initiatives**  
(What strategies should we consider?)
- 3 **Indicators**  
(What should we measure?)
- 4 **Trends**  
(Where have we been?)
- 5 **Projections**  
(Where are we headed?)
- 6 **Research**  
(What's the story behind the trend?)
- 7 **Partners**  
(Who can help?)
- 8 **Strategic Plans**  
(What can we do that works?)
- 9 **Action Plans**  
(How do we make it happen?)
- 10 **Performance Measures**  
(Are actions making a difference?)

This Report

### OTHER STATE OF THE COUNTY REPORTS

- Civic Engagement and Social Capital
- Community Services
- Culture and Recreation
- Economy and Labor Market
- Education
- Environment
- Environmental and Social Justice
- Governance
- Health and Human Services
- Housing
- Land Use and Development Framework
- Mobility

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# STATE OF THE COUNTY REPORT: EDUCATION

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## STATE OF THE COUNTY REPORT: EDUCATION

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## STATE OF THE COUNTY REPORT: EDUCATION

# Executive Summary

### FINDING 1

#### **Outmigration and resulting declines in school enrollment, community investment, and property values are causing many Hamilton County school districts to plan for higher tax levies or reductions in staff and programs.**

- The system of funding local school districts is a complex equation of municipal and township taxes, property and income taxes levied directly by school districts, funds distributed from the State education budget, and federal funding. Because of changed development patterns and population loss across Hamilton County, many school districts in older communities are faced with an unstable tax base from which to draw revenue.
- Continuing population loss and socio-economic separation have serious implications for Hamilton County's public school districts. Many districts lost students between 1998 and 2003, in some cases up to 30 percent of their total student body. Only nine out of the twenty-two districts gained students.
- The ability of schools to raise money from property tax levies depends on the district's tax base and willingness of the community to approve additional taxes. Some school levies are issued for special projects like new buildings or additional services for students. Most levies are used for basic operation costs to run a district.
- Failed local school levies combined with an \$82.7 million cut in 2003 from the State education budget have left many Hamilton County school districts scrambling for funds.

### FINDING 2

#### **Our region's lower income and minority populations are increasingly concentrated in Hamilton County school districts with low overall student academic achievement.**

- One-quarter of all students in Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) attend all Black schools. Two-thirds of the schools in Cincinnati are either 90 percent Black or 90 percent White. Black students made up 23 percent of the CPS student body in the 1950s when *Brown v. Board of Education* was ruled

on. In the 2002-2003 school year, Black students accounted for 70 percent of the 37,700 students in CPS.

- As more affluent communities and school districts draw middle-class families from urban districts, they leave lower-income, higher-need populations behind. Similar to how minority populations are concentrated in CPS and several other districts, lower income households are also confined to many of these same districts.
- According to data from the Ohio Department of Education, the odds are against a Hamilton County student attending a highly-ranked public school district if they are from a lower income household, if they are Black, and especially if they are both.

### FINDING 3

#### **Charter schools provide greater education choice for children in low income families, but have not yet lived up to their promise of providing a better education.**

- School voucher programs such as the ones attempted in Cleveland and promoted in the federal No Child Left Behind Act are an alternative to give children a chance to go to a school with higher overall academic achievement. However, such approaches leave the underlying problems of concentrated poverty behind, along with struggling schools and students who do not or cannot take advantage of transfer options.
- Operating semi-independently of local school corporations, charter schools have the opportunity and flexibility to try new administrative and teaching techniques that may not be possible in a traditional public school.
- Ohio is not the first state to adopt charter school legislation, but it is one of the leading states in number of schools currently operating. Charter school growth in Ohio occurred

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rapidly after enabling legislation passed in 1997. Today there are 15 charter schools serving approximately 5,000 students in Hamilton County.

- According to charter school supporters, local tax revenue is not used to fund charter school operations. However, public money is used to fund charter schools out of the State's education budget - money that goes to charter schools would otherwise be distributed to traditional public school districts. Furthermore, according to CPS local tax money approved by voters for use in public schools is being diverted to support charter schools. CPS forecasts that payments from the district to local charter schools will reach \$26.8 million in the 2004-2005 school year.
- Many charter schools in Cincinnati simply have not performed any better academically than Cincinnati Public Schools. In other words, up to \$23 million dollars of local school funding is being spent on charter schools with no appreciable gains in student performance, when compared to similar public schools.

#### FINDING 4

### **The physical and social integration of schools into neighborhoods is now recognized as a core component of community building and neighborhood revitalization.**

- Across the country, communities are facing an unexpected adversary in battles against sprawl and community deterioration - their own public school districts. Older school buildings that provide a cornerstone to neighborhood activities and civic engagement are regularly abandoned and demolished in favor of new buildings on suburban-style campuses.
- Many school boards do not see older buildings as assets to be preserved, but as obsolete building stock to be replaced. Recommended land areas for new school sites range from 10 acres for an elementary school up to 30 acres for a new high school.
- Cincinnati Public Schools is leveraging the potential for schools to help revitalize neighborhoods through two current programs. The Facilities Master Plan is a comprehensive effort to upgrade the districts schools. After inventorying each building and site, the district decided on a \$985 million construction program. In May, 2003 district voters approved a 4.6 mill levy to partially fund construction.

#### FINDING 5

### **Local school district performance and State funding for education constrain Hamilton County's competitiveness and potential for success in the knowledge based economy.**

- Today in Ohio and the U. S., high-tech, skilled manufacturing, and the service sectors are where job growth is occurring. Collectively termed the "knowledge economy," workers in these jobs need a higher education - a bachelors degree at a minimum - in order to succeed.
- Higher education is more important than ever before for individual career success and continued economic development. It is also more expensive and receives less state funding than ever before.
- In 1979, 17.7 percent of the State's budget went to higher education, compared to only 12.8 percent in 2002. During times of low funding amounts from the state, tuition increases have made up the difference at colleges and universities across the State. In 2003, student tuition and fees made up the largest portion of the University of Cincinnati's general operating budget for the first time in the school's history.
- Tuition increases in Ohio have made it much more difficult for most students and families to afford a college education. Financial aid has not kept pace with higher education budget cuts and resultant tuition increases, so students and families at all income levels are borrowing more than ever before to pay for higher education. Upon graduating, these students face sometimes staggering amounts of debt that will take years to pay off.

# STATE OF THE COUNTY REPORT:

# Education

## THE VISION FOR HAMILTON COUNTY'S FUTURE:

*Quality educational opportunities throughout the County in learning environments that are safe, secure, and provide diverse curriculum and cross-cultural learning opportunities to promote vocational and academic successes for all ages.*

## INTRODUCTION

This report presents existing conditions and trends in Hamilton County related to our education system. The report identifies five important findings as well as the importance of trends associated with each finding, and provides key indicators for measuring progress toward the Vision for Hamilton County's Future.

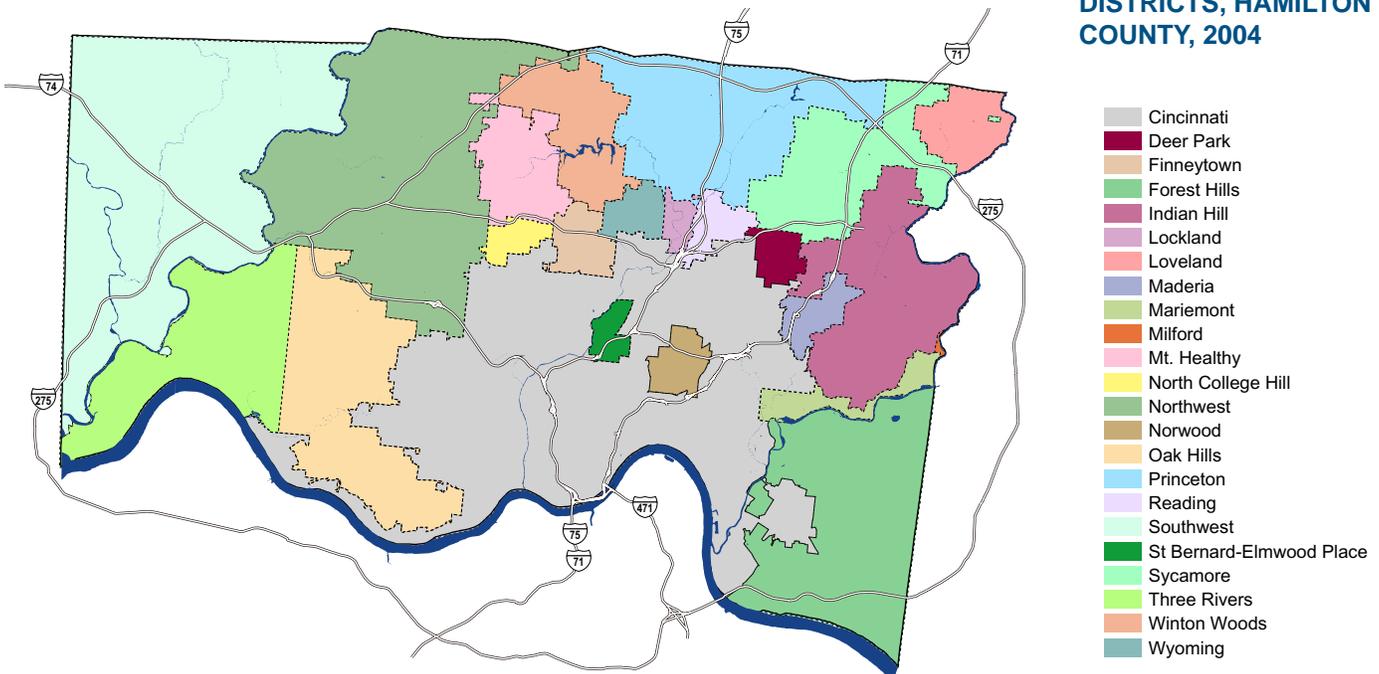
While technically there are 23 school districts in Hamilton County, Milford has only six residents and no schools in Hamilton County, so will not be further discussed in this report. During the 2002-2003 school year, over \$1 billion was spent collectively among Hamilton County's 22 public school districts educating approximately 110,000 students in 205 different schools. About 6,500 of these students (over 80 percent of seniors) graduated from

The Vision Statement for Education, a component of *The Vision for Hamilton County's Future*, is based on recommendations from 12 Community Forums in the Fall of 2001 and the Countywide Town Meeting held January 12, 2002.

*The Vision for Hamilton County's Future* was reviewed and approved by:

- Community COMPASS Steering Team, July 30, 2002
- Hamilton County Planning Partnership, Dec. 3, 2002
- Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission, Feb. 6, 2003
- Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners, Nov. 26, 2003

## PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS, HAMILTON COUNTY, 2004



Source: Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission

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high school at the end of the school year ready to begin higher education, enter the workforce, or pursue other activities.

The education system in Hamilton County has effects far beyond those 110,000 students and their families. The economic competitiveness of our County and our region depends on how well our schools work. The success of these students in higher education or their chosen careers after high school depends on how well our schools work. The ability to strengthen civic engagement and understanding between people of different races and backgrounds in our communities depends on how well our schools work. Building our quality of life to reverse population loss in our communities depends on how well our schools work. Whether or not Hamilton County and the Cincinnati region will continue to prosper with a vibrant economy and future-oriented leadership depends on how well our schools work. In short, everybody who lives, visits, or does business in Hamilton County has a stake in how well our schools work.

As a whole, Hamilton County's public school districts provide good opportunities for students to receive an education and prepare for college or careers. By many measures,

Hamilton County schools operate on par with school districts in Ohio's other large urban counties. Significant challenges emerging from countywide population loss, socioeconomic and demographic changes, mandates from state and federal government, and the need for schools to increasingly become an active partner in community-building need to be successfully overcome in order for our schools to continue to prosper. Policymakers and education professionals have to deal with a complex mixture of race, socio-economics, academic performance, and community development trends when trying to design a school district and curriculum that can provide an education to all students.

FINDING 1

**OUTMIGRATION AND RESULTING DECLINES IN SCHOOL ENROLLMENT, COMMUNITY INVESTMENT, AND PROPERTY VALUES ARE CAUSING MANY HAMILTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO PLAN FOR HIGHER TAX LEVIES OR REDUCTIONS IN STAFF AND PROGRAMS.**

The system of funding local school districts is a complex equation of municipal and township taxes, property and income taxes levied directly by school districts, funds distributed from the State education budget, and fed-

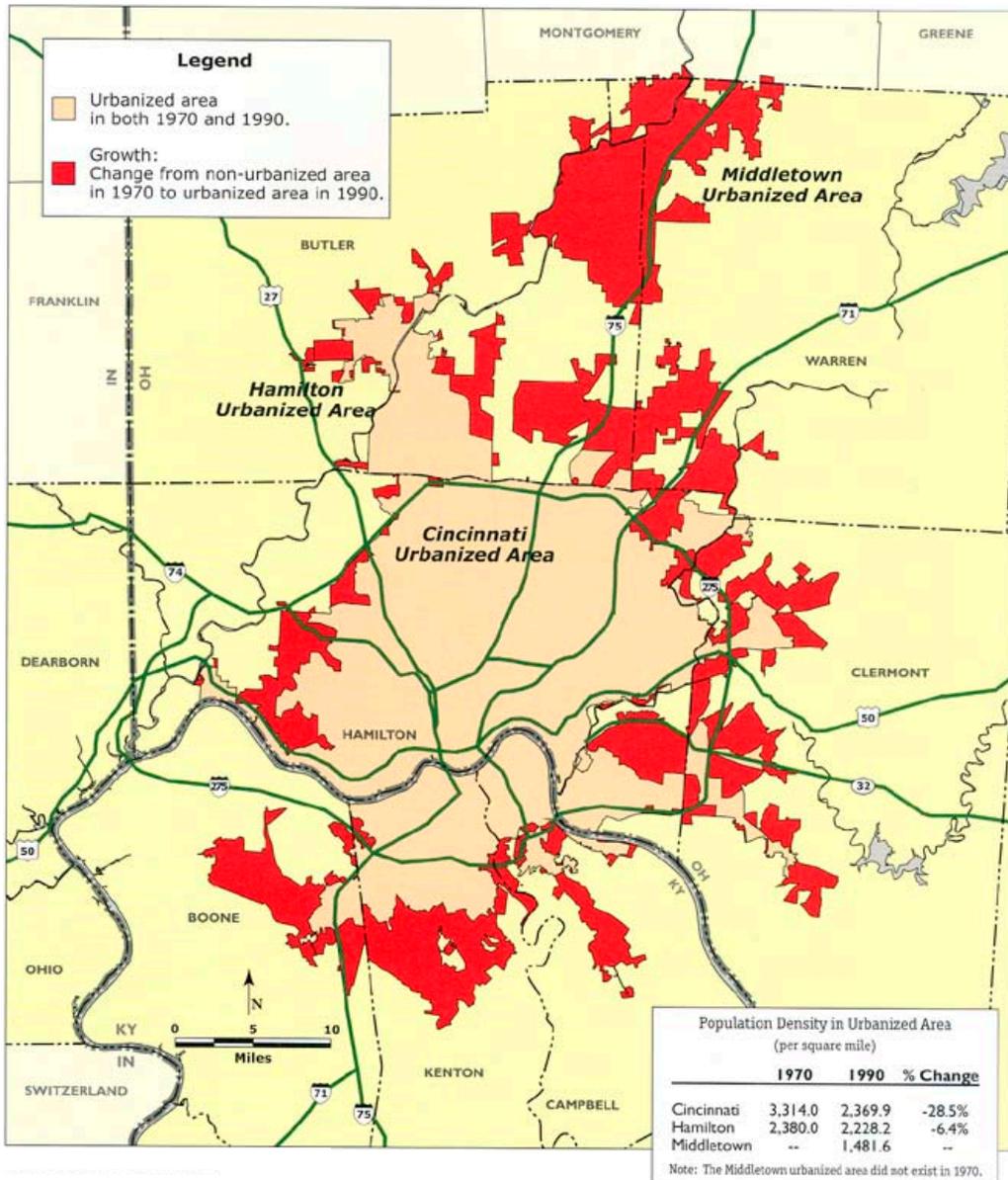


Figure 1  
**EXPANSION OF CINCINNATI UBRANIZED AREA, 1970-1990**

Note: Map Courtesy of Cincinnati Metropatterns, 2001

Source: US Census Bureau

eral funding. This system is constantly shifting as it is affected by population and demographic changes within districts, fluctuations in local property values, the strength of the local and State economy, and State tax policies.

Because of changed development patterns and population loss across the County, many school districts in older communities are faced with an unstable tax base from which to draw revenue. An analysis of Hamilton County's 22 public school districts by Metropolitan Area Research Corporation indicates that 10 districts have ample funding capacity for schools and relatively low educational costs. The remaining 12 districts are not as affluent and may struggle to finance

their schools. Residents of these districts may be less able to afford additional levies for schools and may encounter resistance to new school taxes. Even if levies pass in poorer districts, the revenue generated is less than a comparable levy in a wealthier district.

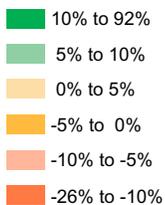
### Development Patterns

Thirty years ago Hamilton County's population was 924,000 people with business, recreation, and industry concentrated around the City of Cincinnati and its "first ring" suburbs. Today, while Cincinnati remains the largest urban center in the County, its dominance is reduced by other growth centers along interstate corridors and in suburban communities. These suburban centers have become the focus of

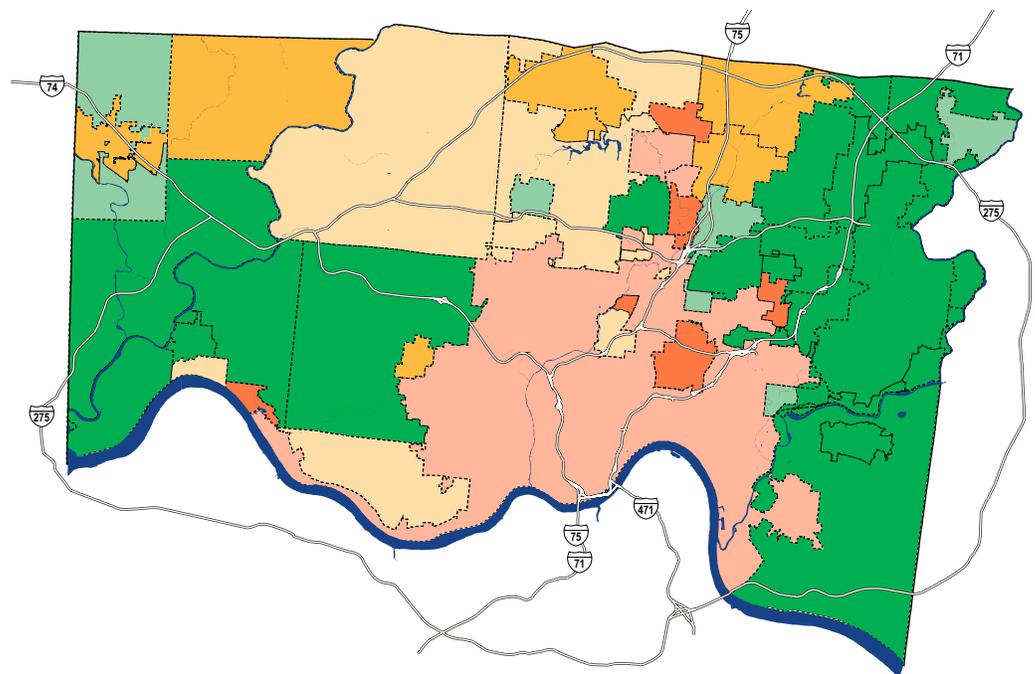
new growth and development over the last decade, drawing population and investment from Cincinnati and Hamilton County (Figure 1).

The effects of suburban growth outside of Hamilton County are easy to see in population loss. After peaking in 1970, Hamilton County's population has declined ever since. The 2000 Census population of 845,303 is slightly less than the population in 1960, and the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the population in 2003 fell to 823,472. In other words, about 100,000 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.

Figure 2  
**PERCENT SCHOOL AGE (5-18) POPULATION CHANGE, 1990-2000**

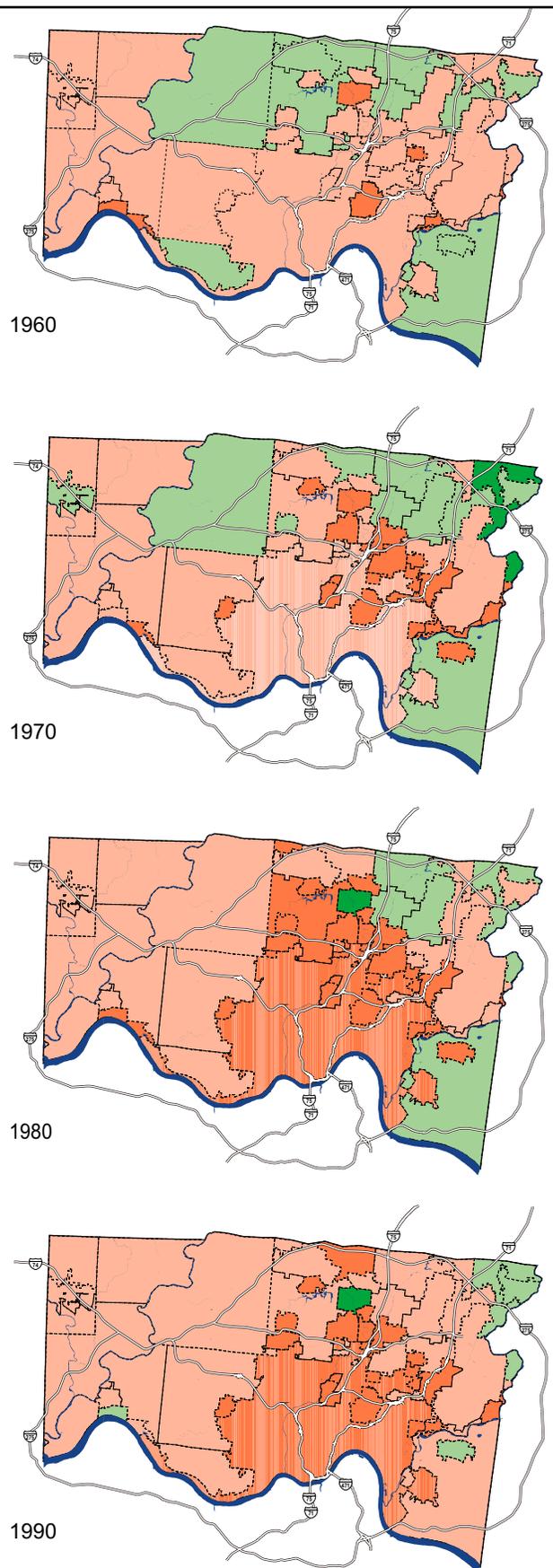


Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Hamilton County's population loss is not evenly spread across all communities. Some areas gained both total population and school age population (ages 5 to 18) between 1990 and 2000 (Figure 2). However, because of overall population loss, 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.

Although total population is decreasing, Hamilton County continues to develop land, and housing construction is evident in many outlying suburbs. Between 1990 and 2000 the County added almost 12,000 new housing units. This is a significant amount of new construction, but it only amounts to 12 percent of the total housing increase during the decade across the metropolitan area. During the 1960s and 1970s, residential construction was much greater overall than in more recent years (Figure 3). As communities were built out and housing markets shifted to developing communities outside of the County, new home construction dropped off during the 1980s. By the 1990s, housing construction rebounded somewhat, but by this time most new



**Figure 3**  
**NUMBER OF NEW**  
**RESIDENTIAL UNITS**  
**PER 1,000 RESIDENTS**  
**BY DECADE, 1960-2000**

- 0 to 24
- 25 to 84
- 85 to 184
- 185 to 335

Note: For purposes of comparison, major highways today are shown for all maps.

Source: Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission

*“Ohio school districts typically get more than 50 percent of their funding from local property taxes. Unlike in many states, voters in Ohio must approve those property tax increases. The rest of a district’s money comes from the state and other sources.”<sup>2</sup>*

CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

subdivisions in the Cincinnati metropolitan region were developing outside of Hamilton County, drawing population and investment to those communities and school districts.

This story of suburban growth and urban area decline is repeated in almost every large city across the country. What is unique to the Cincinnati region is the extent to which outward growth has impacted the social and economic balance of the region. *Cincinnati Metropatterns* identifies this region as one of the country’s most polarized in terms of race and economics - the haves and have-nots in this region are more separated geo-

graphically than in most other metropolitan areas.<sup>1</sup> Suburban growth centers around Hamilton County are booming with new investment, development, and population growth while core urban areas are left behind with declining tax bases, concentrated poverty, population loss, and high vacancy rates.

### Financial Impact on School Districts

Continuing population loss and socio-economic separation have serious implications for Hamilton County’s public school districts. Many districts lost students between 1998 and 2003, in some cases up to 30 percent of their total student body (Figure 4). Only

nine out of the twenty-two districts gained students.

Public school districts in Hamilton County are allocated a certain percentage of a community’s base property tax revenue referred to as “inside millage.” The amount of money received from inside millage varies across different communities and school districts depending on a community’s larger financial picture. Districts with a larger property tax base generate more revenue through inside millage. Although it is an important component of school finances, inside millage does not come close to providing all the funds a school district needs. Therefore, every school district must charge additional taxes to their communities in order to operate. These additional taxes, or school levies, must be approved by voters in the district through a local election. The ability of schools to raise money from these property tax levies depends on the district’s tax base and willingness of the community to approve additional taxes.

Figure 4  
**PERCENT CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT BY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT, HAMILTON COUNTY, 1993-2003**

Source: Ohio Department of Education

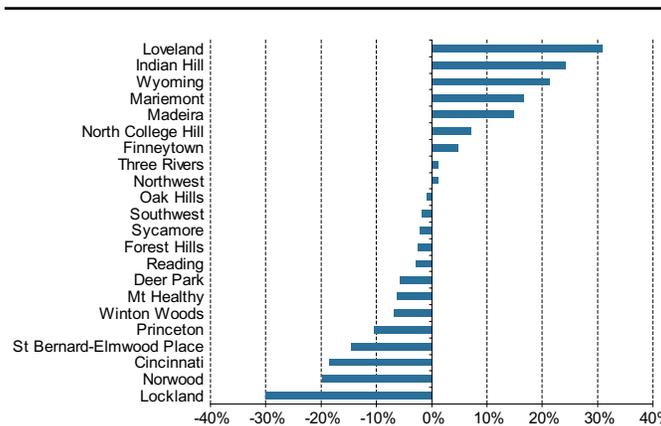
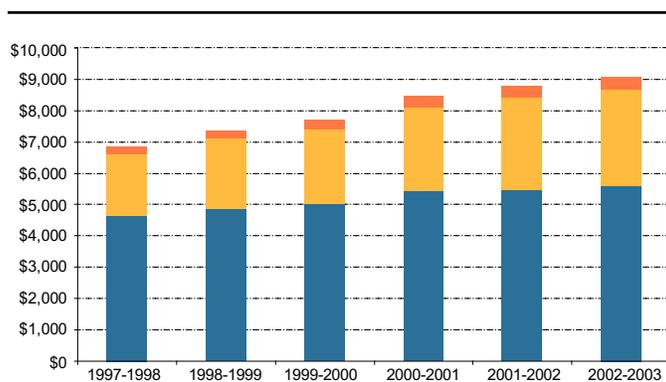


Figure 5  
**AVERAGE REVENUE PER PUPIL FOR ALL, HAMILTON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS BY SOURCE, 1997-2003**

Legend:  
■ Federal Revenue  
■ State Revenue  
■ Local Revenue

Source: Ohio Department of Education



Some school levies are issued for special projects like new buildings or additional services for students. Most levies are used for basic operation costs to run a district. In this respect, levies are the basic source of funding in every public school district across the State. Without this revenue,

schools would simply cease to operate. And yet, this basic revenue source that schools depend on has to be re-approved by district voters every few years.

According to the Ohio Department of Education, between 1997 and 2003, average revenue obtained per pupil by Hamilton County school districts increased from \$6,869 to \$9,075, or approximately 32 percent. This revenue includes funds from local sources, state sources, and federal funding. While there has been a gradual increase over the last several years in the share of education funds paid for by state and federal sources, the majority of school funding remains with local property taxes (Figure 5). However, there are large disparities between what poor communities and affluent communities can afford in school taxes, and how much revenue school districts can generate from local property taxes.

Between 1997 and 2003, smaller school districts experiencing population loss and disinvestment were not able to raise the same amount of money from local property taxes as more affluent, growing communities. The Cincinnati Public School District, because of its size, is an exception to this observation, but it has similar problems of population loss and disinvestment.

After local property tax revenue, funds distributed from the Ohio Department of Education make up the next important source of revenue for local school districts. State education funds are allocated on a progressive basis among school districts - more state funding is allocated to districts that cannot raise enough local funding. In several districts, State per pupil funding is higher than local per pupil funding.

A relatively small amount of federal funding is also allocated among the different school districts. However, even with state and federal allocations,

poorer school districts are not able to achieve parity in per pupil revenue with wealthier districts. The top five revenue generating districts were able to collect an average of over \$10,000 per pupil between 1997 and 2003. The bottom five districts collected between \$6,000 and \$6,500 per pupil (Figure 6).

That said, the ability to generate greater amounts of per pupil revenue does not necessarily mean a school district will be successful. Many other factors play into overall student achievement other than revenue, including the total number of students, quality

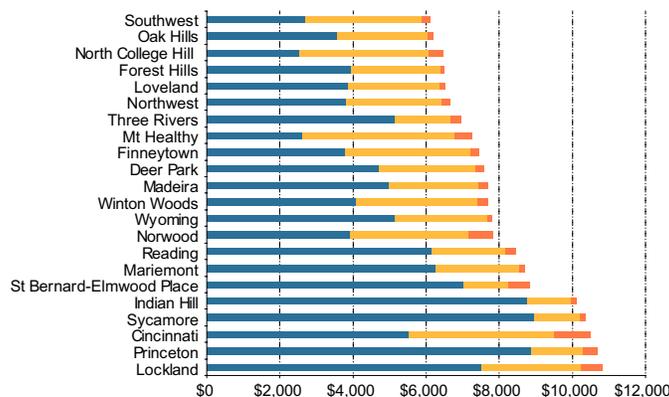


Figure 6  
**AVERAGE REVENUE PER PUPIL GENERATED FROM LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL SOURCES BY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT, HAMILTON COUNTY, 1997-2003**

Legend:  
■ Federal Funds  
■ State Funds  
■ Local Funds

Source: Ohio Department of Education

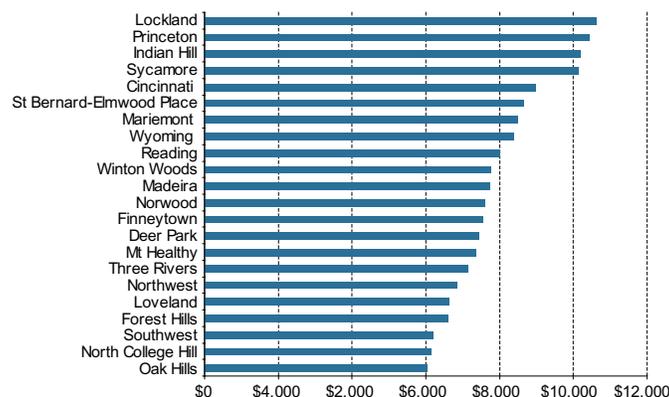


Figure 7  
**AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER PUPIL BY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT, HAMILTON COUNTY, 1997-2003**

Source: Ohio Department of Education

of teachers, district demographics, parent involvement in education, and students' family structure which cannot be controlled by the school district.

In some districts, higher per pupil spending does correspond with higher overall student achievement, but in many districts it does not. Indian Hill and Forest Park School Districts are both rated Excellent by the Ohio Department of Education, yet Indian Hill generated an average of \$10,112 per pupil compared with Forest Park's \$6,509 per pupil. Cincinnati Public School District is among the top three revenue generators in the County (\$10,502 per pupil), receives generous state and federal funding, and is rated Academic Watch by the Ohio Department of Education. Mount Healthy School District is also rated Academic Watch and collects on average only \$7,428 per pupil (Figure 7).

This wide disparity between districts' ability to fund their schools and the lack of parity in state and federal funding is at the heart of *DeRolph v. State of Ohio* (Ohio Supreme Court 1999 - 0576) which resulted in Ohio's school funding system being declared unconstitutional by the Ohio Supreme Court in four separate rulings since 1997. Since then, the General Assembly and Administration have

struggled with various approaches to the State's school funding crisis. The most recent Revenue and Taxation Committee (the "Blue Ribbon Task Force") created by Governor Taft is completing a proposal that will:

1. Provide funding for school districts that is stable and grows appropriately;
2. Is predictable, not just within any particular biennial period, but sufficiently into the future to allow districts to make medium-term planning decisions;
3. Ensures that all students have the opportunity to succeed regardless of the property wealth of the school district; and
4. Is affordable within the context of the State's economy.<sup>3</sup>

### Why Is This Important?

Because of school districts' reliance on local property taxes for funding, school revenue is vulnerable to any changes in the property tax base. Population loss in a community generally results in decreased property values because of less demand for houses, commercial buildings, and industrial space. School budgets take a direct hit from this reduction in property values and must either raise

additional funds through new levies or cut back on their spending by reducing staff and programs.

While declining enrollment could appear to be a benefit to school districts strapped for cash because it means fewer students to teach, it is also a harbinger of population loss, community disinvestment, and declining property values that can devastate school districts in the long run.

In any given election cycle, there will be a certain number of school levies up for approval. In March 2004 a record number of school districts across the State placed levies on the ballot. Nineteen separate issues were up for decision in Hamilton, Warren, Butler, and Clermont Counties. Only eight of the 19 levies were approved. The amount of money at stake ranged from \$85 million for an operating levy and bond for Lakota Schools in Butler County to \$1.7 million for an emergency operating renewal for St. Bernard-Elmwood schools in Hamilton County. Districts whose levies fail face difficult choices of how to make up budget shortfalls including staff and curriculum cuts, ending extracurricular activities, postponing building construction or renovation, and delaying equipment purchases.

Many voters frustrated with multiple levy issues

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*"Administrators say many taxpayers don't understand the chief reason schools frequently ask for money - because the districts are shortchanged by an inequitable school funding system, one so complex that explaining it to voters may be the biggest hurdle of all."*<sup>4</sup>

CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

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may think schools should be more frugal with their money. Extra funding through levies may be seen as an extravagance for new buildings, equipment, and salary increases. School districts have a hard time convincing skeptical voters otherwise. Failed local school levies combined with an \$82.7 million cut in 2003 from

the state education budget can leave Hamilton County school districts scrambling for funds. Some districts are able to weather funding shortages better than others. Financially, they may have more resources available, and residents of the community may be supportive of additional school levies. Other districts are not so fortunate and are

devastated by failed levies and decreasing funding from the State.

### Key Indicators:

- *Percent change in enrollment by district (Figure 4)*
- *Average per pupil revenue generated by source (Figure 6)*

#### FINDING 2

## OUR REGION'S LOWER INCOME AND MINORITY POPULATIONS ARE INCREASINGLY CONCENTRATED IN HAMILTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS WITH LOW OVERALL STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.

An examination of area school district demographics on the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*<sup>5</sup> shows some startling racial trends. One-quarter of all students in Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) attend all-Black schools. Two-thirds of the schools in Cincinnati are either 90 percent Black or 90 percent White.<sup>6</sup> Black students made up 23 percent of the CPS student body in the 1950s when *Brown v. Board of Education* was ruled on. In the 2002-2003 school year, Black students accounted for 70 percent of the 37,700 students in CPS.<sup>7</sup>

### Racial Makeup of School Districts

Figure 8 illustrates districts with high concentrations

of Black students including CPS, Winton Woods, Mount Healthy, Princeton, North College Hill, and

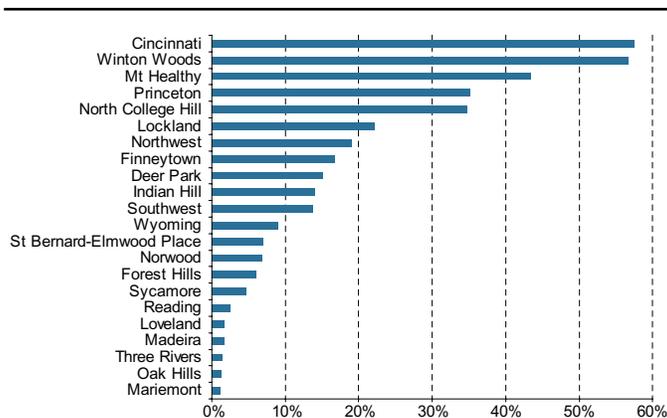


Figure 8  
**AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF BLACK STUDENTS BY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT, HAMILTON COUNTY, 1993-2003**

Source: Ohio Department of Education

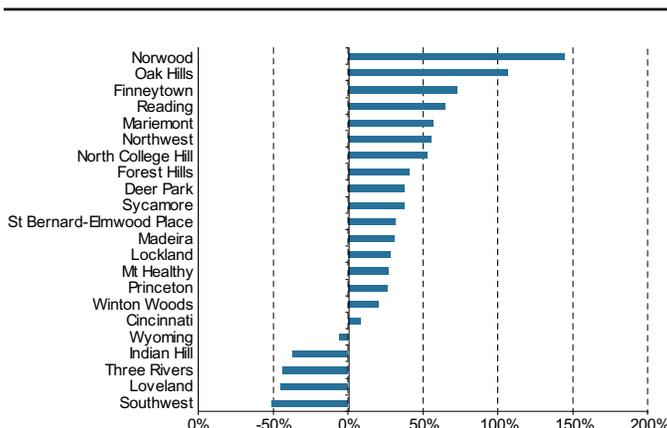


Figure 9  
**CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE OF BLACK STUDENTS BY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT, HAMILTON COUNTY, 1993-2003**

Source: Ohio Department of Education

Lockland. In terms of actual numbers of students, CPS contains by far the largest amount of minority students. Figure 9 illustrates the trend toward increasing concentrations of Black students in all but five of Hamilton County's 22 school districts.

This lack of racial diversity among different school districts persists in part because of simple demographics. Students of all races are leaving CPS. According to Ohio Department of Education data,

over 8,800 fewer students attended CPS in 2002-2003 than did in 1992-1993. The students that remain represent a greater percentage of minorities than the overall County population. As Figure 8 shows, in the last ten years, Black students made up an average of 57.4 percent of CPS students. According to 2000 Census data, only 44 percent of Cincinnati's population and 23.4 percent of Hamilton County's population was Black. In other words, CPS' proportion of Black

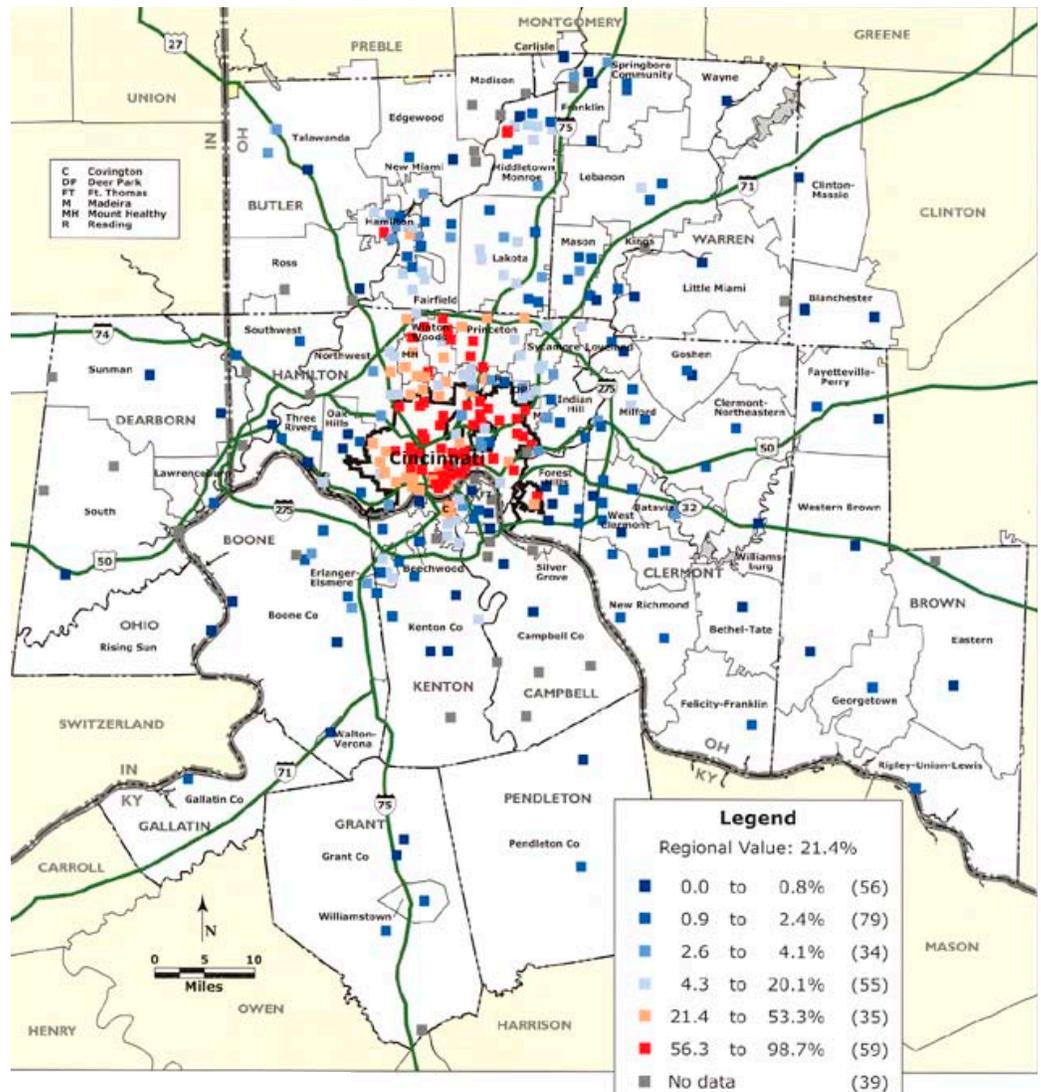
students is much higher than the proportion of Blacks in Cincinnati or Hamilton County.

When looked at from a regional perspective, the concentration of minorities becomes even more evident. Hamilton County school districts carry most of the minority students within the four neighboring Ohio counties. This regional pattern of concentrated minorities in Hamilton County is also evident from maps provided by Metropolitan Area

Figure 10  
**CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE OF NON-ASIAN MINORITY ELEMENTARY STUDENTS BY PUBLIC SCHOOL, CINCINNATI METRO REGION, 1992-1997**

Note: Map Courtesy of Cincinnati Meropatterns, 2001

Source: National Center for Education Statistics



Research Corporation in *Cincinnati Metropatterns* (Figures 10 and 12). The greatest growth in minority population between 1992 and 1997 took place in Cincinnati and immediately adjacent suburbs to the north between I-74 and I-71. All surrounding counties in the metropolitan region experienced far lower growth in minority population (Figure 10).

As more affluent communities and school districts draw middle-class fami-

lies from urban districts, they leave lower-income, higher-need populations behind. Similar to how minority populations are

concentrated in CPS and several other districts, lower-income households are also confined to many of these same districts

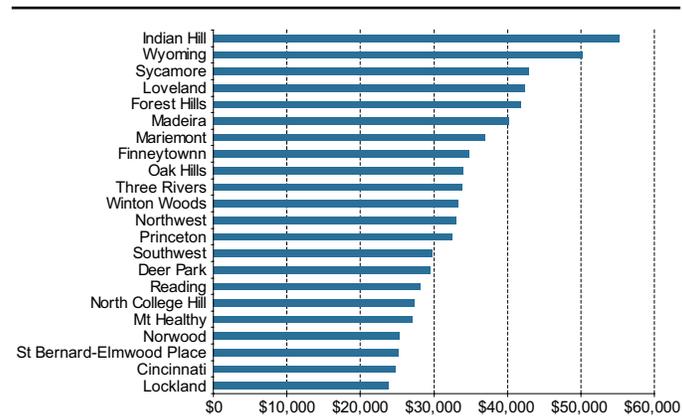


Figure 11  
**AVERAGE MEDIAN INCOME BY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT, HAMILTON COUNTY, 1997-2003**

Note: Adjusted to 2000 dollars  
Source: Ohio Department of Education

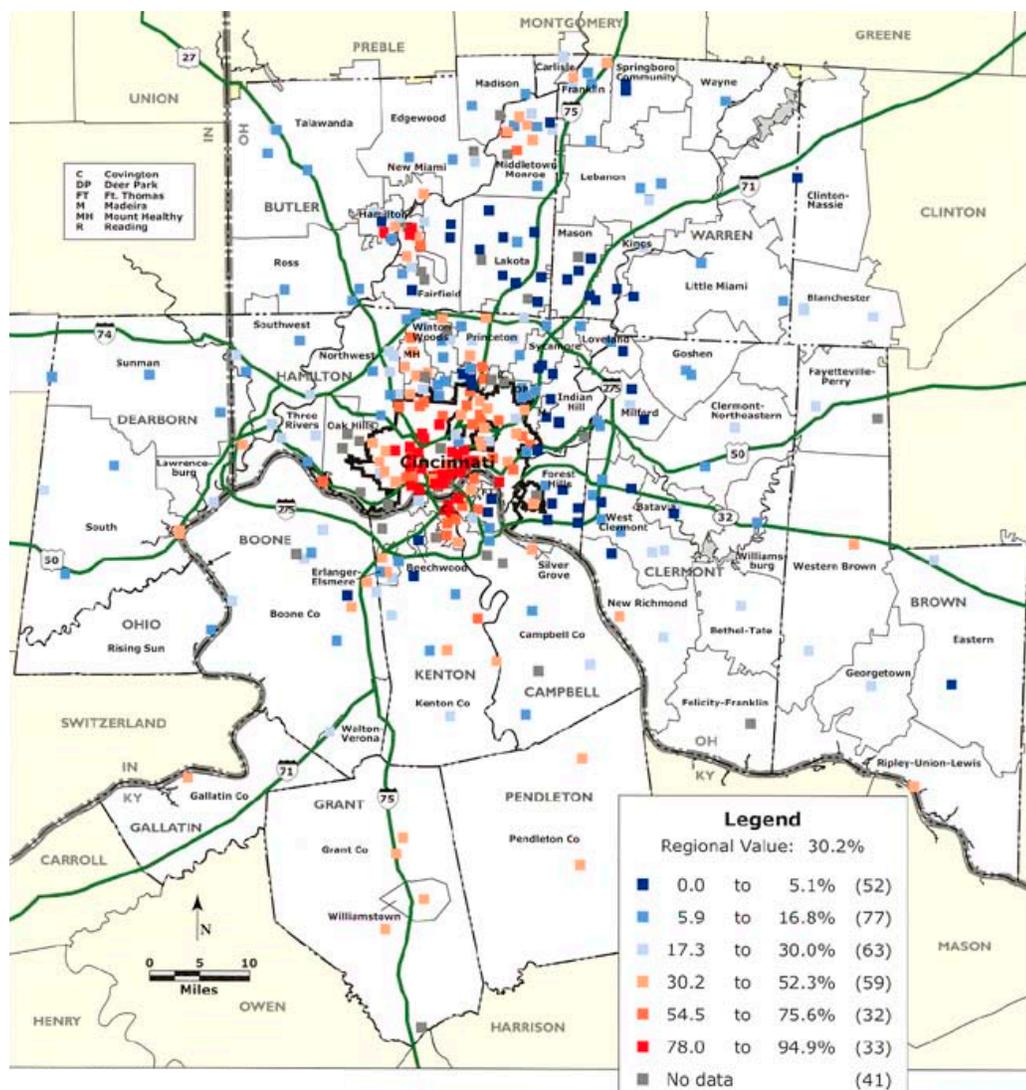


Figure 12  
**CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE LUNCH BY PUBLIC SCHOOL, CINCINNATI METRO REGION, 1992-1997**

Note: Map Courtesy of *Cincinnati Metropatterns*, 2001  
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Kentucky Department of Education

(Figure 11). Between 1997 and 2003, households in CPS had an average median income of \$24,718 (adjusted for inflation to 2000 dollars). Cincinnati's overall median income in 2000 was \$29,493, and Hamilton County's was \$40,964.

Metropolitan Area Research Corporation data also illustrates the income separation throughout the metropolitan area. Using the number of elementary students eligible for free lunch programs as a

measure of low-income households, the trend between 1992 and 1997 was an increase in low-income households in Cincinnati and adjacent suburbs. Unlike minority population, growth in the number of low-income households is spreading more widely throughout Hamilton County (Figure 12).

### School Performance Evaluations

In order to measure school and school district achievement, the Ohio Department of Education administers

annual academic proficiency tests. The results, illustrated in Figures 13 and 14, are compiled into an overall district rating based on the number of academic standards achieved. Figure 13 illustrates the average number of standards met by Hamilton County school districts. From 1998 to 2001 the maximum score a district could earn was 27. From 2001 to 2003 it was 22. Beginning with the 2003-2004 school year, the maximum number of standards is 18. Thirteen out of the 22 districts were ranked "excellent" or "effective" for the 2003-2004 school year.

While these statistics are vital to track, in many cases moderate gains in test scores mask the monumental achievements in student performance in individual schools relative to where they started. CPS's advancement from Academic Emergency to Academic Watch in the 2003-2004 school year is a tremendous achievement by the students, teachers, and staff that test scores do not do justice to.

### Why Is This Important?

The premise of the 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* was that segregated school districts did not provide equal access to quality education for children of all races. The doctrine of "separate but

Figure 13  
**AVERAGE NUMBER OF STATE ACADEMIC STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT, HAMILTON COUNTY, 1998-2004**

Source: Ohio Department of Education

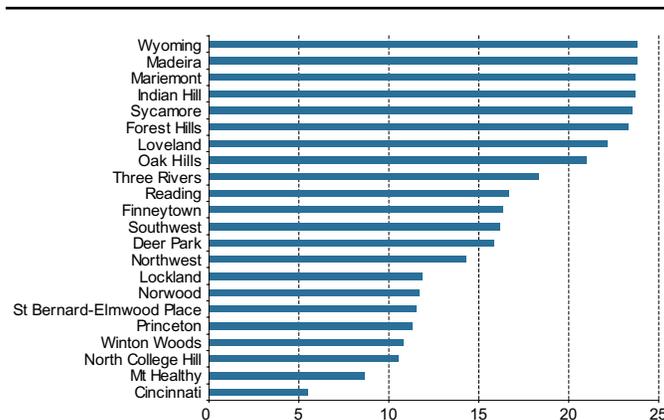


Figure 14  
**ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS, HAMILTON COUNTY, 2003-2004**

Source: Ohio Department of Education

District	2003-2004 Rating
Wyoming	Excellent
Madeira	Excellent
Mariemont	Excellent
Indian Hill	Excellent
Sycamore	Excellent
Forest Hills	Excellent
Loveland	Excellent
Oak Hills	Excellent
Three Rivers	Effective
Reading	Excellent
Finneytown	Effective
Southwest	Effective
Deer Park	Effective
Northwest	Continuous Improvement
Lockland	Continuous Improvement
Norwood	Continuous Improvement
St Bernard-Elmwood Place	Continuous Improvement
Princeton	Continuous Improvement
Winton Woods	Continuous Improvement
North College Hill	Continuous Improvement
Mt Healthy	Academic Watch
Cincinnati	Academic Watch

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equal” which was the legal justification prior to 1954 for maintaining segregated schools resulted in Black children attending all-Black schools which often were inferior to schools attended by White children.

Today, purposeful racial segregation of schools is no longer legal, but racial diversity still does not exist in many Hamilton County schools. According to data from the Ohio Department of Education, the odds are against a Hamilton County student attending a highly-ranked public school district if they are from a lower-income household if they are Black, and especially if they are both. Economically disadvantaged populations are concentrated within school districts with low overall student performance and especially within CPS. These groups do not have the mobility that middle- and upper-income households have and often cannot simply move to another school district. They also lack financial resources to support tax levies and other projects which could improve their schools.

This situation is one argument for school voucher programs or other student transfer programs such as the ones attempted in Cleveland and promoted in the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Giving parents the option and assistance to

send their children to districts with higher overall student achievement is one way out of the problem. However, such approaches leave the underlying problems of concentrated poverty behind, along with struggling schools and students who do not or cannot take advantage of transfer options. Voucher or transfer programs also do little to improve or elevate a school district’s image in the public eye and will not help attract new families, businesses, and investment to a community.

### Key Indicators:

- *Average percentage of Black students by school district (Figure 8)*
- *Average median income by school district (Figure 11)*
- *Average number of state academic standards achieved by school district (Figure 13)*

FINDING 3

## CHARTER SCHOOLS PROVIDE GREATER EDUCATION CHOICE FOR CHILDREN IN LOW INCOME FAMILIES, BUT HAVE NOT YET LIVED UP TO THEIR PROMISE OF PROVIDING A BETTER EDUCATION.

Across Ohio in school year 2003–2004 there were four public school districts rated “Academic Emergency” and another 34 rated “Academic Watch” by the Ohio Department of Education. These ratings are determined by evaluating standardized test scores across different grade levels and district progress toward specific education goals. The districts at the bottom of the rating scale struggle to improve their operations and score, but often are faced with circumstances that result in low achievement year after year.

Faced with the low overall academic achievement in these school districts, many legislators believe that the problem is inherent to the bureaucratic framework of traditional public schools. According to this argument, teachers, administrators, superintendents, and state education officials are simply too entrenched in their roles to better educate these students, improve test scores, and break the cycle of failure.

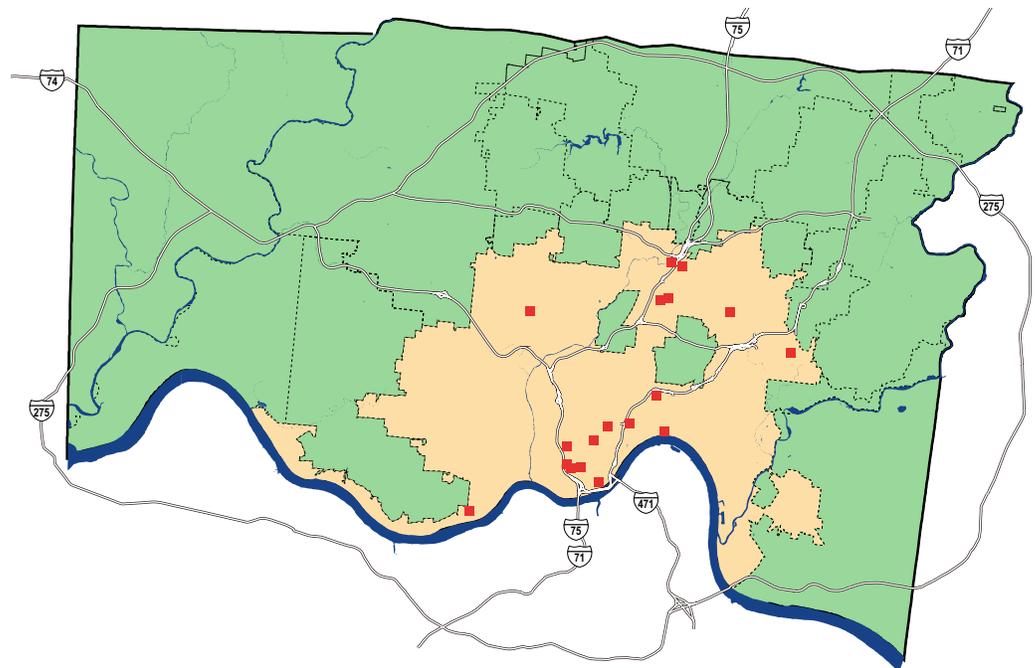
Charter schools aim to break this pattern. Operating semi-independently of

local school corporations, charter schools have the opportunity and flexibility to try new administrative and teaching techniques that may not be possible in a traditional public school. Proponents of charter schools point to this flexibility and innovation as the reason why charters can better serve troubled students who are not successful in traditional public schools. If a particular method or curriculum does not work well, it can be changed more quickly and easily than in a traditional public school. Also,

Figure 15  
**LOCATION OF  
CHARTER SCHOOLS  
IN HAMILTON COUNTY,  
2004**

- Charter Schools
- Cincinnati Public School District
- Other School Districts

Source: Ohio Department of Education,  
Hamilton County Regional Planning  
Commission



charter schools have a specific mandate through their sponsoring organization and the Department of Education to improve student performance, increase test scores, and meet stated education targets. Failure to achieve these goals means the school can be closed.

Ohio's charter school legislation specifically targets troubled public school districts. Charter schools can only be established within a district ranked "academic emergency" or "academic watch" by the State Department of Education. All 15 of Hamilton County's charter schools are located within the Cincinnati Public Schools District (Figure 15).

One of the basic premises of charter schools is that they provide children from low-income families whose public schools are failing a free alternative to a better education opportunity. Middle- and upper-income families generally have more alternatives available for educating their children. If they are not happy with the local public schools, they can move into another district, take advantage of special programs like CPS' Schools of Choice programs (including magnet schools such as Montessori and foreign language schools), or place their children in private or parochial schools. These options for dealing with a failing public school

are not often available to lower-income families. Money for private or parochial school tuition may not be available, or there may not be the necessary money to move the family to a better school district.

When State law established charter schools in 1997, they could only be started under sponsorship of a local public school district. Subsequent amendments to charter school legislation now allow schools to be established by a variety of religious, community, and not-for-profit organizations. In order to create a school, the sponsoring group establishes a Governing Board which is responsible for drawing up education plans for students, obtaining funding from the State, hiring teachers and staff, and running all aspects of the school - in effect, acting as the administrative body of the school as a public school board does. A charter school Governing Board can run the functional aspects of a school or they can hire a private manage-

ment company to take care of daily operations.

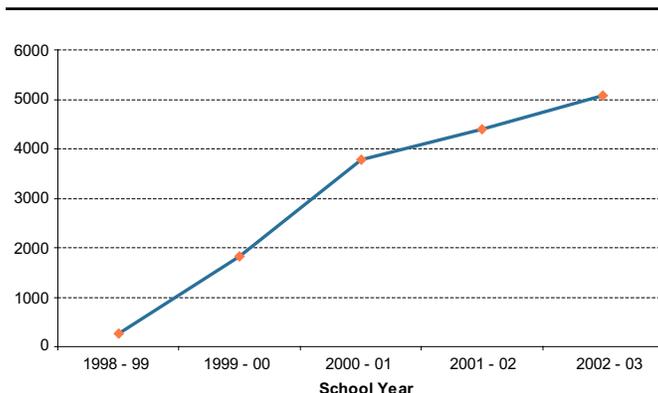
Ohio is not the first state to adopt charter school legislation, but it is one of the leading states in number of schools currently operating. According to the U.S. Charter Schools Association, Ohio is seventh out of the 41 states with charter school legislation in total number of operating charter schools. Charter school growth in Ohio occurred rapidly after enabling legislation passed in 1997. By the end of 1998, there were 15 charter schools serving 2,245 students in Ohio. Just five years later in 2003, there were 175 schools with 45,000 students. In Hamilton County, there are currently 15 charter schools serving approximately 5,000 students (Figure 16).

The Ohio General Assembly and Board of Education support charter schools through increased funding and revisions to the enabling legislation that allow additional charter schools to form. Through funding and administrative pro-

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*Although typically called "charter schools," Ohio's legislation and the State Department of Education refer to them as "community schools." This report uses the term "charter schools" or "charters" to avoid confusion with the Community School development concept being implemented by the Cincinnati Public School District.*

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**Figure 16**  
**NUMBER OF STUDENTS**  
**ATTENDING CHARTER**  
**SCHOOLS IN HAMILTON**  
**COUNTY, 1998-2003**

Source: Ohio Department of Education

grams, the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) also supports charters as an alternative for lower-income families. Ohio was recently awarded a \$16.5 million federal grant through NCLB to continue developing charter schools across the state.

### Why Is This Important?

Supporters and opponents of charter schools in Ohio can be passionate about their positions. Arguments for and against charter schools are often inseparable from larger political ideologies over education funding and methods, the role government should play in education, race relations, and tax policy. Sorting out the interests from positions regarding this issue is difficult. However, data collected by the Ohio Department of Education does illustrate charter school performance so far (Figure 17). The premise behind providing alternatives to failing schools and a better education for chil-

dren from lower-income families is arguably sound, but critics charge that charter schools fail to live up to their promise of providing a better education and harm traditional public schools in the process.

Charter schools are nominally funded directly from the Ohio Department of Education. According to charter school supporters and literature, local tax revenue is not used to fund charter school operations. However, public money is used to fund charter schools out of the State's education budget - money that goes to charter schools would otherwise be distributed to traditional public school districts. Furthermore, according to CPS, a great deal of local tax money approved by voters for use in public schools is being diverted to support charter schools. CPS forecasts that payments from the district to local charter schools will reach \$26.8 million in the 2004-2005 school year.<sup>8</sup> A lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court of Ohio

against the Ohio Department of Education in 2004 (Case Number; 3: 04CV 0 197) details how local tax funds are allegedly diverted into charter schools, and challenges Ohio's charter school legislation based on the equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution.

Beyond funding arguments, many charter schools in Cincinnati simply have not performed any better academically than Cincinnati Public Schools. In other words, up to \$23 million dollars of local school funding is being spent on charter schools with no appreciable gains to date in student performance, when compared to similar public schools. Socioeconomic factors that contribute to poor student performance in the public schools are also affecting academic achievement in charter schools, despite the premise of charters being able to serve this student population better through innovative teaching techniques. According to the Ohio Department of Education, in 2002-2003 seven out of the 15 charter schools in Hamilton County were rated "Academic Emergency." Two schools were rated "Continuous Improvement," and the remaining six have no rating because of lack of testing data (Figure 17).

Nationwide, charter schools are not doing much better than in Ham-

Figure 17  
**ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS, HAMILTON COUNTY, 2002-2003**

Note: Schools with "No Rating" lack testing data.

Source: Ohio Department of Education

Charter School	2002-2003 Rating
A.B. Miree Fundamental Academy	Academic Emergency
Cincinnati College Prep Acad	Academic Emergency
East End Comm. Heritage School	Academic Emergency
Greater Cincinnati Community	Academic Emergency
Life Skills Center/Cincinnati	Academic Emergency
Phoenix Community Learning Ctr	Academic Emergency
Riverside Academy	Academic Emergency
T.C.P. World Academy	Continuous Improvement
W.E.B. DuBois	Continuous Improvement
Dohn Community	No Rating
Hamilton Cnty Math & Science	No Rating
Harmony Community School	No Rating
Lighthouse Community Sch Inc	No Rating
M Booth Academy	No Rating
Oak Tree Montessori	No Rating

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ilton County. According to a 2003 national study by the American Federation of Teachers, students in charter schools all over the country are scoring lower in math and reading tests than fourth-graders attending traditional public schools. Lack of accountability and inconsistent teaching quality at charter schools are speculated to be factors leading to poor achievement, according to charter school critics.<sup>9</sup> Op-

ponents of charter schools note that, since academic performance has not improved over public schools, the argument has been re-framed by supporters as one of “choice.” Choice in where a family can send their children to school is the preferred solution to public education for ideological supporters of the charter school movement.

### Key Indicators:

- *Number of Hamilton County students attending charter schools (Figure 16)*
- *Amount of funding for charter schools*
- *Academic performance of charter schools (Figure 17)*

#### FINDING 4

## THE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF SCHOOLS INTO NEIGHBORHOODS IS NOW RECOGNIZED AS A CORE COMPONENT OF COMMUNITY BUILDING AND NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION.

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Across the country, communities are facing an unexpected adversary in battles against sprawl and community deterioration - their own public school districts. Older school buildings which were built within established neighborhoods as symbols of community pride and provide a cornerstone to neighborhood activities and civic engagement are regularly abandoned in favor of new buildings on suburban-style campuses. In Ohio alone, 790 old schools will be replaced with new buildings in the latest statewide school construction program. In many

cases, replacing old schools is warranted because of building deterioration or lack of modern amenities. In other cases, closing a historic school can be a severe blow to a community. The proposed closing of a high school and middle school in Galion, Ohio created controversy because the historic buildings are centerpieces of the community. Four neighborhood elementary schools are also to be closed.<sup>10</sup>

New school construction in many ways is a continuation of patterns of suburban growth and sprawl in the region. As new suburban

neighborhoods develop and families move out of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, school districts in these growing areas must build schools to accommodate their expanding student body. In order to anticipate growth and provide classrooms for students moving into the district, school boards keep tabs on new development proposals and coordinate population growth with long-range financial planning to pay for new construction.

In established communities with stable populations, the same reasoning for new

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*“...the migration of schools from settled neighborhoods to middle-of-nowhere locations is one more factor weakening the ties that once brought people together.”<sup>11</sup>*

ROB GURWITT - GOVERNING  
MAGAZINE

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school construction is not there. Older schools are often social and physical amenities to the neighborhoods in which they are located, providing a physical reminder of shared history and experiences among past and present students. Schools can be a vital anchor to neighborhoods, and an important ingredient to community revitalization.

“Smart Growth” often advocates a “fix-it-first” approach to community planning, emphasizing revitalization of existing neighborhoods and making best use of existing physical and social infrastructure rather than abandoning old areas in favor of new areas. This approach can make better financial sense for communities in that it maximizes the return from existing investments in in-

frastructure (roads, sewer, and water systems) and buildings (schools, residential areas, and business districts) rather than paying for new.

Historic preservation centers on restoring and celebrating what is unique in a community. Many older suburbs and neighborhoods across the region have fallen into decay and struggle to turn their fortunes around. One thing these areas have that outlying suburbs can not claim is their unique history and heritage contained in their buildings, institutions, and current and past residents. An historic local school, when it is possible to be renovated and upgraded, can be an important local asset and a rallying point for greater civic engagement in a community.

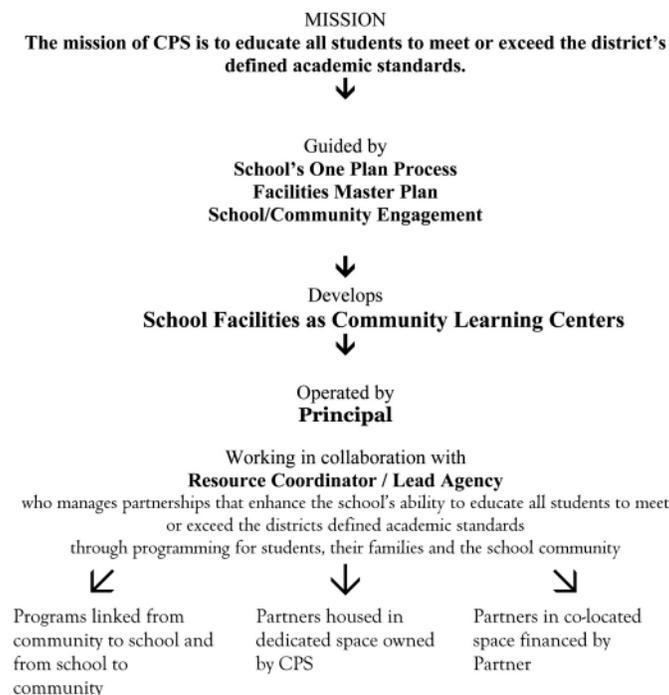
Unfortunately, many local school boards do not see older buildings as assets to be preserved, but as obsolete building stock to be replaced. In this, they are often supported by the State Board of Education and school construction standards established by the Council of Education Facilities International. Recommended land areas for new school sites range from 10 acres for an elementary school up to 30 acres for a new high school. Requiring sites this large removes schools from the fabric of a neighborhood and effectively isolates them in “campus” settings. This amount of open land may not be easily available in older, established communities, therefore making it difficult to build new schools anywhere except on the outskirts of town where land is more available.

### CPS Facilities Master Plan/Community Learning Centers

Cincinnati Public Schools is leveraging the potential for schools to help revitalize neighborhoods through two current programs. The Facilities Master Plan is a comprehensive effort to upgrade the district's schools. After inventorying each building and site, the district decided on a \$985 million construction program. In May, 2003 district voters approved a 4.6 mill levy to partially

Figure 18  
**COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER OVERVIEW**

Source: Cincinnati Public Schools



fund construction.

The second program is Community Learning Centers. Many of the new and renovated schools will operate as Community Learning Centers that emphasize physical reintegration of schools into neighborhoods through site design and planning, social reintegration of schools into neighborhoods, asset-based community design and engagement in future school programs, and multiple use of school facilities. Community Learning Centers assemble a variety of partners to offer academic programs, enrichment activities, and support to students, families and community members - before and after school, and during the evenings and on weekends. Building on increased involvement from families and students, Community Learning Centers can become a center of activity for the neighborhood in which they are located.

### Why Is This Important?

Community Learning Centers emerge through an asset-based planning process with local neighborhood residents. Essentially, the unique opportunities and needs of individual neighborhoods as expressed by the people who live there are accommodated into the Community Learning

Center Model. As Figure 18 illustrates, CPS engages in an active partnership with the community to develop a particular Learning Center program in a neighborhood, with commitments on both sides to work together for success. Some examples of Community Learning Center activities described by CPS include after school science programs, an on-site neighborhood health/wellness center, and continuing education classes for adults. It is easy to conceive of a variety of youth and adult-oriented sports programs, civic organizations, clubs, and after-school electives working into Community Learning Centers.

With this approach neighborhood schools become more than where children go during the day to attend classes. It becomes a vibrant part of the larger community, engaging a population larger than just the parents and students actively attending classes, and operating beyond the normal school schedule to provide a year-round amenity. Working in concert with the Facilities Master Plan which plans to renovate older neighborhood schools and replace inadequate buildings with modern facilities, Community Learning Centers will be a part of revitalizing neighborhoods across Cincinnati.

### Key Indicators:

- *Number of Community Learning Centers in operation*
- *Number of new or renovated schools completed under Cincinnati Public Schools Facilities Master Plan*

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### CPS Facilities Master Plan Summary

- *Rebuild or fully renovate school buildings for all students*
- *Provide buildings that meet or exceed high state standards*
- *Provide classrooms designed to support CPS' educational programs and teaching practices, including technology-ready classrooms equipped with voice, video and data access*
- *Provide school building capacities of 650, 550, 450 and 350 students for most schools*
- *Implement new classroom model with compact, self-contained groups of 4 classrooms for 4-5 teachers*
- *Provide extended-learning area and restrooms in each group under new classroom model*
- *Provide uniform lighting and environmental sound control in all school buildings*
- *Provide injury- and stain-resistant floor covering in all school buildings*

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FINDING 5

## LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT PERFORMANCE AND STATE FUNDING FOR EDUCATION CONSTRAIN HAMILTON COUNTY'S COMPETITIVENESS AND POTENTIAL FOR SUCCESS IN THE KNOWLEDGE BASED ECONOMY.

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For generations, Ohio's economy flourished on heavy industry and blue collar manufacturing jobs. In this, Ohio was not unlike the rest of the United States. Industry and manufacturing were the bedrock of the national economy. Coming out of World War II, America's industrial might was unmatched anywhere in the world. Jobs were plentiful, wages were good, and job security was assured within large manufacturing firms.

Today, in Ohio and the United States, high-tech and skilled manufacturing jobs, and the service sector are where job growth is occurring.<sup>13</sup> Collectively termed the "knowledge economy", workers in these jobs need a higher education—a bachelors degree at a minimum—in order to succeed.<sup>14</sup> Investing in an education is a higher priority for workers in today's knowledge economy, and so it must be for government to invest resources in providing the best and most accessible education opportunities possible. Ohio needs to do much better at educating its current and future workforce if

it wishes to enjoy the same success in the knowledge economy that it had in the industrial economy. Hamilton County needs to effectively compete with other metropolitan areas across the state in order to reap the benefits of Ohio's changing economic model.

### Shift from Manufacturing to Service Economy in Ohio and Hamilton County

In the 1960s, 35 percent of Hamilton County jobs were in manufacturing. This number declined to 20 percent in 1987, and 14 percent by 2000. Job growth and creation is taking place in the service sector, with 28 percent of Hamilton County jobs in 1987 and 34 percent in 2000. This general trend away from industrial or manufacturing jobs and toward service occupations is reflected across Ohio and the United States.<sup>15</sup>

Service jobs used to be considered low-paid, low-skilled occupations that were a necessary part of any local economy, but would not be considered a key ingredient to long-

term economic growth. However, today the service economy encompasses a wide range of occupations including lower paid support services (retail, food service, hospitality, etc.), and highly paid information and knowledge-based jobs (management, information technology, and professional services). Another past shortcoming of service jobs was that the goods they produced generally could not be exported to other markets - products produced by a service job in Hamilton County most often were consumed here. For instance, a worker at a hotel does not produce any goods that can be exported to other markets, compared to a worker at a manufacturing plant that makes transmissions for the auto industry.

However, some of the technology and knowledge-based jobs in the service economy can take advantage of communications technology to "export" services to other markets. Technology companies involved in web-based applications or projects use modern telecommunications to service different

clients in different places as a cornerstone of their business model. This same communications ability allows most any professional service firm to produce goods for clients across the region as easily as across the country.

### Graduation and College Attendance Rates

According to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), graduation rates from Ohio schools in the Cincinnati metropolitan area (Hamilton, Warren, Butler, and Clermont counties) increased almost 8 percent from 80.9 percent in 1999 to 88.1 percent in 2003. Hamilton County's share of graduates increased from 81.7 percent to 87.5 percent during the same period, a 5.8 percent increase. While these trends are encouraging, Hamilton County and the Cincinnati metropolitan area both lag behind the Cleveland and Columbus areas. The latter two metro regions consistently had higher graduation rates than Cincinnati for the last four years (Figure 19), but the gap began to close during the 2001–2002 school year.

Out of the 22 public school districts in Hamilton County, the majority of high school graduates come from just six districts (the Big Six): Cincinnati, Northwest,

Oak Hills, Forest Hills, Sycamore, and Princeton Public Schools. These districts graduated more than twice the students (4,294) in 2002 than the remaining sixteen districts combined (Figure 20). For purposes of this analysis, these six districts are considered the largest suppliers of future workers for our local labor force.

In general, high school success translates into college success. Students completing a more rigorous high school curriculum are much better prepared for the challenges of post-secondary education.<sup>16</sup> Looking at how well prepared these graduates are for higher

education and how well they advance in college indicates how Hamilton County may compete with other areas in strengthening its knowledge-based local economy. Graduates that succeed in college and go on to be productive in knowledge-based careers add value and strength to the labor force and local economy - assuming these workers remain in the Cincinnati region.

The Ohio Board of Regents recently published a study of 2002 high school graduates attending colleges and universities in Ohio. Although the study does not capture data on students who are attend-

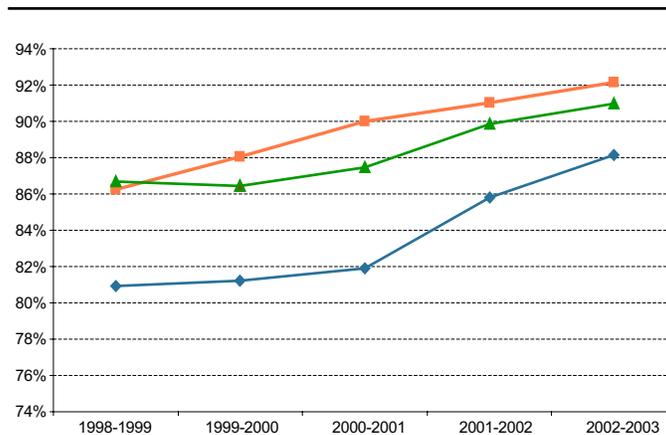


Figure 19  
**AVERAGE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES BY METRO REGION, 1998-2003**

—■— Cleveland  
—▲— Columbus  
—◆— Cincinnati

Source: Ohio Department of Education

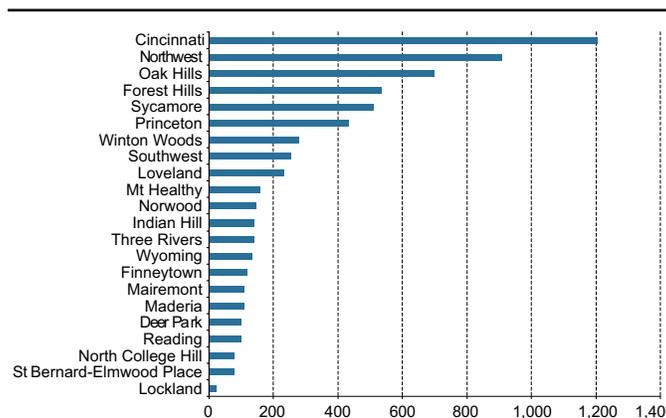


Figure 20  
**NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES BY DISTRICT, HAMILTON COUNTY, 2002**

Source: Ohio Board of Regents

ing out-of-state colleges, it provides information regarding how well-prepared and successful the majority of recent high school graduates are in college. Statewide, approximately 85 percent of high school graduates who went on to college attended schools in Ohio. About 11,000 students opted to attend an

out-of-state school.<sup>17</sup>

In Hamilton County, there is a wide spread among the Big Six districts in terms of percentage of graduates attending Ohio colleges. All six come out lower than the statewide average for college attendance (Figure 21). Four of the Big Six districts - Sycamore, Forest Hills, Oak Hills, and Princ-

eton - had college entrance exam scores higher than the state average score (Figure 22). The average state score was 22 on the ACT exam scale (36 is the top score). Northwest schools scored just under the state average with 21, and CPS scored an average of 20. Generally, the more affluent school districts posted higher entrance exam scores than less affluent districts.

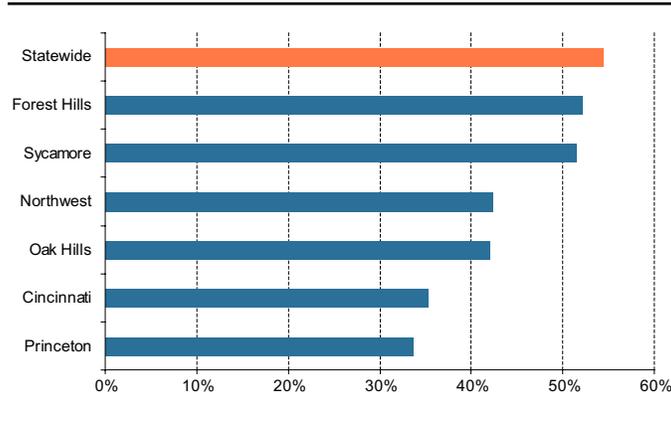
Once reaching college, many students have to take remedial courses to cover subjects that were, or were not included in their high school curriculum. This is an indicator of how well students are prepared for college upon graduating from high school (Figure 23). The State average for students taking remedial coursework was 39 percent. CPS was the only district out of the Big Six to have a higher percentage (47 percent) of students requiring additional preparatory courses upon starting college. The pattern of districts with students requiring remedial courses is similar to the pattern of entrance exam scores. More affluent and higher-ranked districts had far fewer students requiring additional prep courses than districts with lower overall student achievement.

Persistence rate refers to the number of students who continue with their college education after their first

**Figure 21**  
**PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ATTENDING COLLEGE IN OHIO, 2002**

LARGE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN HAMILTON COUNTY

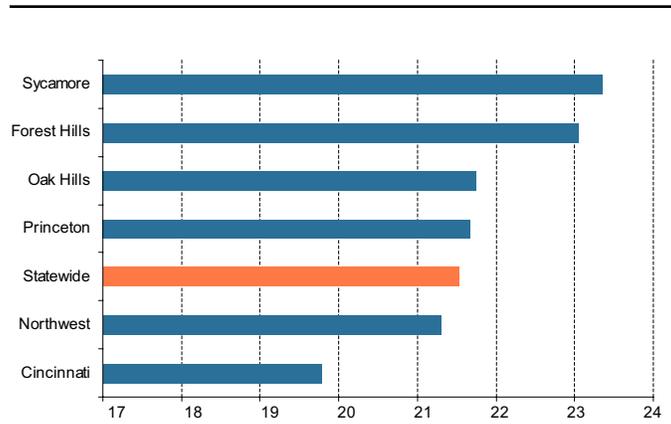
Source: Ohio Board of Regents



**Figure 22**  
**AVERAGE ENTRANCE EXAM SCORES (ACT SCALE) FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ATTENDING OHIO COLLEGES, 2002**

LARGE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN HAMILTON COUNTY

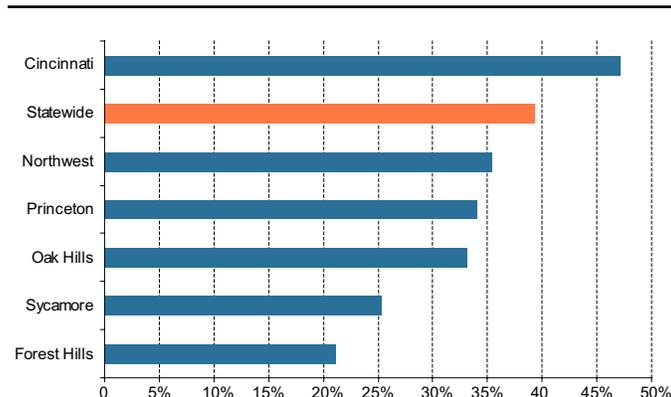
Source: Ohio Board of Regents



**Figure 23**  
**PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES TAKING REMEDIAL COURSES DURING FRESHMAN YEAR AT OHIO COLLEGES, 2002**

LARGE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN HAMILTON COUNTY

Source: Ohio Board of Regents



year (Figure 24). Two of the six largest districts - Sycamore and Forest Hills - have persistence rates higher than the State average of 81 percent. The other four large districts have persistence rates lower than the state average. Students can leave college for different reasons not tracked by the Board of Regents study. Some decide to attend school out-of-state and are considered “dropped” by this data. Other students decide not to pursue a college education and instead enter the workforce. Affordability is a key factor in how many students are able to continue post-secondary education. Skyrocketing tuition rates often force high-school graduates to drop out or postpone their college education.

### Cost of Higher Education in Ohio

Higher education is more important than ever before for individual career success and continued economic development. It is also more expensive and receives less state funding than ever before. *Losing Ground*, a report published by the National Center for Higher Education in 2002, describes five national higher education trends that affect Ohio:

1. Increases in tuition have made colleges and universities less affordable for most American families.

2. Federal and state financial aid to students has not kept pace with increases in tuition (and does not adapt to part-time students).
3. More students and families at all income levels are borrowing more than ever before to pay for college.
4. The steepest increases in public college tuition have been imposed during times of greatest economic hardship.
5. State financial support of public higher education has increased (in total dollars, not as a percent of total spending), but college tuition has increased more.

All of these trends play out one way or another in Ohio except for the fifth one. College tuition increased in Ohio over the past several years - sometimes at an alarming rate for students and families. However, as Figure 25 illustrates, State financial support for public colleges as a percent of total spending decreased from 1975 to 2002. While the amount of the State’s budget allotted for higher education during this period generally follows the ups and downs of the nation’s larger economic cycle, the overall trend since the high point in 1979 has been downward. During times of low funding amounts from the State, tuition increases have made

*“For the country and the states, as well as individuals, barriers that make higher education unaffordable serve to erode our economic well-being, our civic values, and our democratic ideals.”<sup>18</sup>*

LOSING GROUND

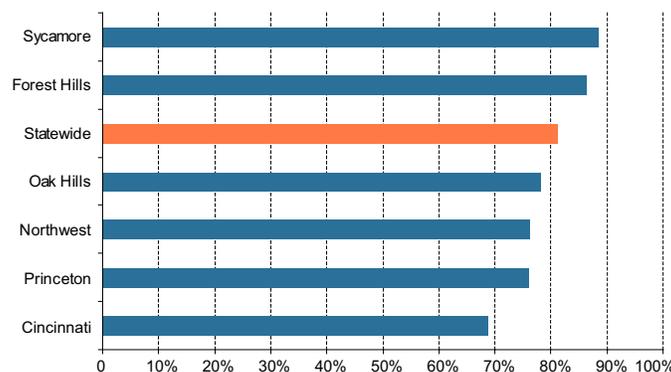


Figure 24  
**PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES REMAINING IN OHIO COLLEGES AFTER FRESHMAN YEAR BY DISTRICT, 2002**

LARGE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN HAMILTON COUNTY

Source: Ohio Board of Regents

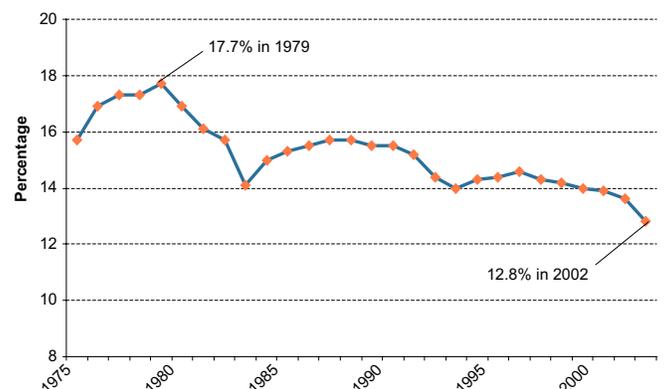


Figure 25  
**OHIO EDUCATION BUDGET AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STATE BUDGET, 1975-2002**

Source: Ohio Legislative Service Commission

up the difference at colleges and universities across the State. In 2002 alone, Ohio State University proposed a 35 percent increase and the University of Cincinnati a 14 percent tuition raise. In 2003, student tuition and fees made up the largest portion of the University of Cincinnati's general operating budget for the first time in the school's history.<sup>19</sup>

Other higher education trends described in *Losing Ground* over the last ten years in Ohio are:

1. Tuition at public two-year institutions increased 4 percent (\$2,204 to \$2,300).
2. Tuition at public four-year institutions increased 32 percent (\$3,845 to \$5,058).
3. Tuition at private four-year institutions increased 26 percent (\$12,667 to \$15,915).
4. Median family income increased 17 percent (\$54,874 to \$64,022).
5. Appropriations per student increased 33 percent (\$4,198 to \$5,590).
6. State grant aid per student increased 62 percent (\$257 to \$415).

Reductions in State funding and tuition increases, coming as they often do during a larger economic recession, hit students especially hard because they and their

families are least able to afford extra costs when they are being financially squeezed by a recession. State tuition policies rarely consider what portion of a family's household income should be spent for higher education. In 1980, a low-income family sending a child to college spent about 13 percent of their household income on higher education at a public 4-year university. In 2000, it was 25 percent. Federal Pell grants available to low-income families on average paid 98 percent of college costs in 1986, but only 57 percent in 1999.<sup>20</sup>

### Why Is This Important?

By some measures, Hamilton County's public school districts are not providing an adequate number of students with the skills they need to get into college, obtain a higher education, and achieve success in the knowledge-based economy. There is always room for improvement, and every school district in the County strives to provide the best possible education to their students. Regardless, every spring in Hamilton County approximately 6,500 students graduate from high school and are ready to move on to college. Providing every opportunity for them to do so should be a priority for county and state economic development programs.

However, that does not appear to be the case.

Tuition increases in Ohio have made it much more difficult for most students and families to afford a college education. Financial aid has not kept pace with higher education budget cuts and resultant tuition increases. Accordingly students and families at all income levels are borrowing more than ever before to pay for higher education. Upon graduating, these students face sometimes staggering amounts of debt that will take years to pay off. The prospect of having to service large student loans for a long time after graduating from college can lead students to choose career paths based on high earning power rather than going for less highly paid but necessary professions.<sup>22</sup>

Education budgets tend to be an easy target for budget cuts during recessions, and in the short run a compelling fiscal case can be made for taking such a regrettable action. In the long run, when the new paradigm of knowledge-based jobs and global competition for educated workers is considered, continued weak support for higher education may have disastrous consequences.

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*"The evidence is clear that the states with the best educated citizens have the highest incomes. Ohio is in economic decline because it is undereducated."*<sup>21</sup>

KNOWLEDGEWORKS FOUNDATION

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## Key Indicators:

- *Number of Hamilton County high school graduates attending college in Ohio (Figure 21)*
- *State budget allocated for higher education spending (Figure 25)*
- *Growth in knowledge-based jobs in Hamilton County*



# Appendix A

## Endnotes

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# Appendix B

## Community COMPASS Publications

The following Community COMPASS reports are components of Hamilton County's Comprehensive Master Plan and Strategies. The reports are available at the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission and can be downloaded at [www.communitycompass.org](http://www.communitycompass.org).

1. Project Design -- Scope and Process (Oct. 2001)
2. The Community Values Survey (Jan. 2001)
3. Special Research Reports
  - 3-1. Inventory of Research (2002)
  - 3-2. Conflicting Views on Suburbanization (Sept. 1999)
  - 3-3. Spreading Out: The March to the Suburbs (Oct. 1999; revised 2003)
  - 3-4. Summary Report -- Spreading Out: The March to the Suburbs (Oct. 1999; revised 2003)
  - 3-5. The Use of Public Deliberation Techniques for Building Consensus on Community Plans: Hamilton County Perspectives on Governance (A Guide for Public Deliberation) (Dec. 2002)
  - 3-6. Hamilton County's Comparative and Competitive Advantages: Business and Industry Clusters (Oct. 2003)
  - 3-7. Census 2000 Community Profiles: Political Jurisdictions of Hamilton County
  - 3-8. Community Revitalization Initiative Strategic Plan (Aug. 2003)
4. The Report of the Community Forums --Ideas, Treasures, and Challenges (Nov. 2001)
5. The Report of the Goal Writing Workshop (2001)
6. The Countywide Town Meeting Participant Guide (Jan. 2002)
7. Hamilton County Data Book (Feb. 2002)
8. A Vision for Hamilton County's Future --The Report of the Countywide Town Meeting (Jan. 2002)
9. The CAT's Tale: The Report of the Community COMPASS Action Teams (June 2002)
10. Steering Team Recommendations on The Vision for Hamilton County's Future (Jan. 2002)
11. Planning Partnership Recommendations on The Vision for Hamilton County's Future (Jan. 2003)
12. The Vision for Hamilton County's Future (Brochure) (Feb. 2003)
13. Initiatives and Strategies
  - 13-1. Steering Team Recommendations on Community COMPASS Initiatives and Strategies (2002)
  - 13-2. Steering Team Prioritization of Initiatives – Methodology and Recommendations (Aug. 2002)
  - 13-3. Planning Partnership Recommendations on Community COMPASS Initiatives and Strategies (revisions, findings and reservations) (Dec. 2002)
  - 13-4. Community COMPASS Initiatives and Strategies -- Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission Recommendations (Jul. 2003)
14. External Influences: The Impact of National Trends on Hamilton County's Future (Mar. 2003)
15. Population
  - 15-1 Summary Report (Nov. 2004)
  - 15-2 Atlas / comprehensive report (2005)
16. State of the County Reports (Key trends, Issues, and Community Indicators) (Nov. 2004)
  - 16-1 Civic Engagement and Social Capital
  - 16-2 Community Services
  - 16-3 Culture and Recreation
  - 16-4 Economy and Labor Market
  - 16-5 Education
  - 16-6 Environment
  - 16-7 Environmental and Social Justice
  - 16-8 Governance
  - 16-9 Health and Human Services
  - 16-10 Housing
  - 16-11 Land Use and Development Framework
  - 16-12 Mobility
  - 16-13 Executive Summary
17. 2030 Plan and Implementation Framework (Nov. 2004)





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