

SOME YEAR-BY-YEAR HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SHORT HISTORY OF THE NORTHEAST OHIO FIRST SUBURBS CONSORTIUM (FSC)

1996

Elected officials and staff:

- ♦ from 3 inner ring suburbs in the Greater Cleveland area met to discuss mutual challenges to their communities; the meetings and discussions expanded to include representatives of 7 communities and other regional leaders, who formed a consortium of older, built-out suburbs;
- ♦ adopted an agenda identifying federal, state and regional governmental practices that promote disinvestment in, and outmigration from, older suburbs.

1997

With its membership increasing to 8 cities, the Consortium:

- ♦ adopted a mission statement, budget and dues structure;
- ♦ began ongoing outreach to foundations, USEPA, Commission on Catholic Action, Cuyahoga County Mayors and Managers Association, other communities in Franklin and Lake counties, Cleveland Mayor and Council Members, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, the print media, local State Representatives and leadership of other organizations concerned about urban sprawl;
- ♦ initiated a series of meetings with Congressman Louis Stokes and representatives of HUD and CMHA regarding blighted HUD housing and harmful Section 8 housing policies; these efforts eventually resulted in some limited changes;
- ♦ presented its statement to the Ohio Farmland Preservation Task Force, observing that revitalization of older communities and preservation of farmland are two sides of the same coin and urging the State to address both objectives;
- ♦ opposed ill-planned expansions of interstate highways in Northeast Ohio and ODOT's policies favoring new highway construction over maintenance of existing infrastructure; testified before the Ohio House of Representatives' Local Government and Townships Committee on causes and effects of urban sprawl;
- ♦ supported Cuyahoga County Commissioners' efforts to create a Brownfields Redevelopment Fund providing grants and loans to older communities.

1998

Now growing to 10 member-cities, the FSC:

- ♦ participated in regional coalitions that successfully modified other proposed highway widenings and reversed ODOT's announced policy of reduced funding for maintenance of State routes within municipalities.
- ♦ convened a Forum for the Future of Ohio's Mature Suburbs, in which 85 representatives of 23 Ohio cities, 8 universities, State Representatives and foundations examined State policies impacting older communities;
- ♦ supported and participated in an Ohio Smart Growth Agenda conference,

joining with Cleveland and other Ohio cities to endorse smart growth principles;

- ♦ began planning a local cooperative FSC economic initiative.

1999

The Consortium:

- ♦ met with the member-cities' State legislators, then combined with representatives of other older Ohio suburbs for an "Advocacy Day" dialogue with the Governor's staff and legislators at the Statehouse;
- ♦ supported by the George Gund Foundation, worked with the Cuyahoga County Treasurer and Commissioners to establish HELP, a linked deposit program offering low interest loans to improve residential property in older communities;
- ♦ met with the Ohio DOD staff, then communicated FSC's Statement in Support of Governor Taft's Urban Revitalization Task Force, urging comprehensive State action to address both preservation of rural areas and urban redevelopment needs;
- ♦ with assistance from the Cleveland Foundation, Cuyahoga County Commissioners and several banks, and contributors from its member-cities, undertook an Economic Development initiative resulting in recommendations to revitalize 26 selected commercial districts and promote cooperative capacity-building, development financing and marketing among the FSC communities.

2000

Increasing its membership to 12 cities, the Consortium:

- ♦ communicated its concerns to area candidates for the General Assembly and retained a lobbyist for political action;
- ♦ officially organized itself as a Council of Governments, under the Ohio Revised Code;
- ♦ held an informational reception/meeting with members of the FSC city councils;
- ♦ embarked on preparation of a Housing Initiative focusing on redevelopment of two-family dwellings and bungalows, and assisted in planning and presenting to the Sustainable Communities Symposium held in Cleveland;
- ♦ met and established ongoing relationships with the Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy and the Urban Land Institute;
- ♦ actively supported the Governor's Issue 1 ballot proposal to provide \$400 million in State bonds for preservation of open space and redevelopment of brownfields.

2001

The FSC:

- ♦ met with the Plain Dealer Editorial Board in a productive discussion;
- ♦ convened member-cities' economic development staff and engaged the services of a consultant to facilitate creation of an FSC Development Council, consistent with recommendations arising out of the Economic Development Initiative;
- ♦ dialogued with Cleveland's administrative and council leadership

regarding Chagrin Highlands' development issues, then transmitted the FSC's concerns to interested parties;

- ♦ testified before the Ohio House Energy and Environment Committee regarding proposed legislation for disbursement of Issue 1 funds;
- ♦ met with Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones and her Cleveland/Washington D.C. staff, and joined with the Brookings Institution to participate in, and present to a conference of, governmental representatives from across the Midwest convening in Cleveland;
- ♦ actively assisted in planning a Cuyahoga County Retail Conference (scheduled for 2002) oriented to development and retail opportunities in Cleveland neighborhoods and FSC communities;
- ♦ dialogued with the Northeast Ohio Homebuilders Association's Coalition Building Committee and inner ring school superintendents regarding mutual concerns;
- ♦ continued intensive planning to implement Housing Initiative;
- ♦ urged U.S. Senators and Representatives to increase federal support for the NASA Glenn Research Center.

2002

Increasing its membership to 14 cities, with a combined population of 445,000+, the FSC:

- ♦ posted and enhanced its web site;
- ♦ addressed the Legislator Informational Hearing at Cleveland State University, the Ohio House-Senate Conference Committee in Columbus regarding proposed Local Government Funds reductions in HB 405, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Housing Conference, Ohio House-Senate Predatory Lending Study Commission, and Land Use Forum at The City Club of Cleveland;
- ♦ established, appointed board members, and hired an executive director and aggressively began operation of the First Suburbs Development Council ("FSDC");
- ♦ continued working relationships with the inner ring school superintendents' group, foundations, Central Ohio FSC, Northeast Ohio Homebuilders Association Coalition Building Committee and others;
- ♦ dialogued with the Cuyahoga County Development Department and County Treasurer regarding targeted development programs and expanded HELP criteria, respectively;
- ♦ drafted and approved FSC position papers dealing with selected government policies and practices, and undertook planning to revise FSC advocacy efforts;
- ♦ implemented its Housing Initiative through FSDC - administered development and presentation of marketing data and design concepts to improve bungalows and two-family dwellings;
- ♦ dialogued with Tim Hagan, Democratic gubernatorial candidate, and representatives of Governor Bob Taft, Republican candidate for re-election.

2003

Increasing FSC membership to 15 municipalities, the FSC and FSDC:

- ♦ adopted formal membership criteria and procedures;
- ♦ worked with Cuyahoga County Commissioners, County Department of Development and Cleveland AIA Chapter to improve the focus of County's Storefront Renovation and Mixed Use Rental Assistance Loan Programs and create complimentary Architects Design Assistance Program;
- ♦ also worked with the same County officials, staff and Brownfield Redevelopment Fund Review Committee to retain and strengthen that Fund, and to seek additional funding from the EPA;
- ♦ financed and acquired property for a Housing Initiative demonstration project;
- ♦ presented First Suburbs perspectives at the "Redeveloping Cleveland" program at the City Club of Cleveland, Inner Ring School Superintendents meeting, "Rethinking Investment Strategies For Ohio" program at Bexley, MORPC-sponsored Transportation Summit in Columbus, dialogue with Greater Cleveland Faith Leaders regarding land stewardship responsibilities and Northeast Ohio Homebuilders Association's Smart Growth Education Foundation program at Shaker Heights;
- ♦ also presented First Suburbs perspectives regarding proposed public funding of a Convention Center , and other county redevelopment issues in meetings with and communications with Cuyahoga County Commissioners, Cleveland City Council, and County Mayors and Managers Association and others;
- ♦ received honors from the Catholic Community Action Commission ("Special Church in the City Recognition Award") and Cleveland AIA Chapter ("Award For Excellence in Urban Design and Bettering the Built Environment");
- ♦ began construction of two-family Housing Initiative demonstration project;
- ♦ collaborated with other civic leaders to conduct tour and present testimony to General Assembly "Land Use and Growth" subcommittee, chaired by Representative Larry Wolpert;
- ♦ engaged consultant services to enhance FSC public information capabilities and began implementing his recommendations;
- ♦ participated on "Greater Ohio" steering committee to create first statewide, grassroots organization advocating sustainability policies in Ohio.

2004

The Consortium-FSDC partnership:

- ♦ constructed and began marketing the two-family Housing Initiative demonstration project (FSDC);
- ♦ communicated statements to Cuyahoga County officials and the media supporting a long-range County redevelopment plan, designation of public funds to address gap financing development needs, County ballot Issue 31 regarding redevelopment and expansion of the County's Storefront Renovation Program;
- ♦ published and disseminated informational inserts for Cleveland Magazine and Crain's Cleveland Business promoting development in the First Suburbs (FSDC);
- ♦ participated as members of two County committees created to review economic development and plan financing for revitalization initiatives;

- ♦ began planning a regional purchasing network pilot program for municipalities (FSDC);
- ♦ met with, and presented to, the Northeast Ohio Economic Development Network, Sun Newspapers editors, Hamilton County officials organizing the Southwest Ohio First Suburbs Consortium, CSU-Urban Affairs College's Eminent Domain discussion, and the National League of Cities' First Tier Suburbs Council in Indianapolis;
- ♦ partnered with the Urban Land Institute to seek funding for a financial intermediary to provide gap financing (FSDC);
- ♦ hosted informational meetings with TeamNEO and Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority, and held a recognition breakfast honoring public and private sector supporters of FSC initiatives;
- ♦ expanded the FSDC website featuring developable properties in member-communities (FSDC);
- ♦ continued active participation on Greater Ohio's Steering Committee;
- ♦ amended FSC's bylaws to facilitate more rapid FSC communication and action;
- ♦ partnered with Neighborhood Housing Services to provide credit counseling to current and prospective property owners (FSDC);
- ♦ conducted informational conferences regarding Ohio's "broken" public schools funding system.

* "(FSDC)" denotes activities by/for the First Suburbs Development Council

2005

Expanding to 16 member-municipalities with 477,000 residents, the Consortium, with its FSDC partner:

- ♦ entered into several regional purchasing network projects (FSDC);
- ♦ enlisted Congresswoman Tubbs Jones to facilitate meetings involving the FSC mayors, their staff and Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) to discuss Housing Choice Voucher Program problems, resulting in a memorandum of understanding with CMHA addressing such problems;
- ♦ organized and presented at First Suburbs Developers Forum that featured presentations by, and one-to-one discussions with, member-cities' economic development staff (FSDC);
- ♦ communicated FSC concerns as to potential funding, through Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency, of proposed new Avon/I-90 Interchange;
- ♦ completed strategic planning for FSDC and worked towards its reorganization to enhance the FSC members' redevelopment capacities (FSDC);
- ♦ communicated with Cuyahoga County officials regarding County response to increased foreclosures and participated in meeting facilitated by Commissioner Hagan and actively involving the FSC mayors, which resulted in commitment to remedy the FSC concerns;
- ♦ presented at the Ohio Vacant Properties Forum and the Ohio Municipal League/First Tier Suburbs Workshop, both in Columbus;
- ♦ conducted mass distribution of members' developable properties listings to developers, retailers and brokers (FSDC);
- ♦ endorsed The Greater Ohio Amendment, addressing public schools

- ♦ funding in Ohio and the Greater Ohio Principles;
- ♦ worked with other regional First Suburbs organizations to establish the Ohio First Suburbs Consortium, conduct its Spring, 2005 Forum, adopt the OFSC's "Changing State Policies to Achieve Real Growth For Ohio in the 21st Century", present the OFSC State Agenda at a Statehouse Press Conference and plan a dialogue with gubernatorial candidates.

2006

- Expanding to 17 member-municipalities with 488,000 residents, the Consortium and its FSDC partner:
- ♦ completed FSDC reorganization, appointed FSDC Board Members (including all member-municipalities' economic development directors), received operational funding from The Cleveland Foundation and George Gund Foundation and conducted wide-ranging Executive Director search resulting in engagement of Luke Frazier for that position (FSDC);
 - ♦ continued communication with the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court regarding its substantial efforts and progress in reducing the backlog of foreclosure cases; communicated with State officials endorsing HB 294 and SB 185, both later enacted, to expedite tax foreclosures and begin addressing predatory lending practices, respectively;
 - ♦ through mutually cooperative efforts of Congresswoman Tubbs-Jones, FSC mayors/staff and CMHA, negotiated and entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CMHA, then began implementing it to monitor property conditions, other landlord responsibilities and tenant conduct in the Housing Choice Voucher Program;
 - ♦ participated in ULI study on First Suburbs' multi-family housing (FSDC), surveyed candidates for the General Assembly regarding selected issues and hosted a reception for the candidates;
 - ♦ convened ongoing, staff-driven, FSC Housing Subcommittee that exchanged information between housing personnel, met with County officials and recommended policies/practices regarding enforcement of anti-predatory lending laws, County filing and data systems impacting property conditions, MOU compliance, reduction of foreclosed, vacant and abandoned housing, etc.;
 - ♦ through the efforts of Mayor Dan Pocek, as President of the NLC's First Tier Suburbs Council, sponsored a breakfast meeting during the Council's conference in Bedford; through Mayor Tom George's services as Council Vice President, FSC mayors continued leadership in the NLC;
 - ♦ planned and participated in the Ohio First Suburbs Consortium's (OFSC's) conference in Columbus, where attendees from the Southwest Ohio, Dayton area, Central Ohio and our Northeast Ohio FSCs explored actions needed in three State policy areas, preparatory to adopting formal recommendations in those areas (see 2007);
 - ♦ organized and convened collaborative meetings of the FSC-Juvenile Court Task Force, through which FSC mayors, managers and police chiefs joined with Court judges and executive staff in addressing youth offender issues impacting FSC neighborhoods.

2007

The Consortium, with its FSDC partner:

- ♦ through the FSC-Juvenile Court Task Force, facilitated Court participation in the Cuyahoga County Regional Information System to provide timely information for police departments on case status, outstanding warrants, etc.; expedited procedures for execution of warrants; expanded criteria for admission of violent offenders to the Detention Center; eliminated unnecessary case filing requirements; and communicated with County officials regarding needed additional capacity to accommodate youth referrals;
- ♦ drafted and presented to regional FSCs the OFSC's three proposed Policy Statements recommending State action: "A Plan for Fix It First in Ohio", "Addressing The Crises of Foreclosed, Vacant and Abandoned Properties" and "Regional Development Without Job Poaching"; also presented the proposed Policy Statements at the Ohio Urban University Program in Columbus;
- ♦ conducted the FSDC Opportunities Showcase in Warrensville Heights, featuring discussions of successful collaboration with FSDC members by business leaders and small group interactions involving private sector brokers, developers and FSDC economic development staff (FSDC);
- ♦ completed sales of rehabbed units in Two-Family Housing Initiative; and began exploring FSDC development fund program (FSDC);