

# **Changing State Policies to Achieve Real Growth for Ohio in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

## **I. About the OFSC**

The Ohio First Suburbs Consortium (OFSC) is a growing organization of older, established communities located near Ohio's largest cities in the major metropolitan areas. First Suburbs Consortia are established in Cuyahoga, Franklin and Hamilton Counties, and organizing in Montgomery County and exploring organization in Lucas County.

Each member-community is represented by its chief executive official (mayor and/or city manager). In the aggregate, the OFSC communities are home to about one million residents - - nearly 9% of Ohio's population, as reflected in Appendix A - - as well as private sector businesses and public infrastructure representing countless billions of dollars' investments.

Our First Suburbs also are home to other irreplaceable state assets: livable, walkable neighborhoods, good housing, connected commercial districts, community recreational facilities, vital schools and tangible community spirit. These assets are necessary to attract and retain businesses, encourage more economic development and contribute to Ohio's tax base. We also are the connecting tissue in the state's major urban counties, which produce the greatest state tax revenues on a per capital basis and, overall, account for nearly half of such tax revenues ("Cities, Tax Revenues, and Ohio's Future: The Value of Major Urban Centers", Dr. William Bowen, Marie Ellen Haynes, Dr. Mark S. Rosentraub; The Ohio Urban University Program, 2005).

Although the OFSC member-communities are diverse in character, most are built-out or approaching that condition and virtually all are facing severe economic and fiscal stress. The First Suburbs are working, both individually and collectively, to reduce expenses while maintaining needed services and continuing vital redevelopment initiatives. However, to meet these challenges our communities require informed support by state government.

# Changing State Policies to Achieve Real Growth for Ohio in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:

## II. OFSC POSITION STATEMENT

For generations, Ohio offered a strong balance of productive, livable and cohesive communities surrounded by equally bountiful farmland. However during recent decades, new housing developments, highways, and commercial hubs have mushroomed throughout former rural areas. These new developments typically have been supported by public policies and subsidized with taxpayer dollars, while comparable public sector reinvestment has not been provided in our older, developed communities.

As a consequence, we are steadily disinvesting in our older communities, our shared cultural heritage and our social fabric. Ohio's intimate and liveable First Suburbs neighborhoods now face a shrinking economic base and seriously eroded infrastructure, while new developments continue to sprawl across Ohio's precious farmland and open space. It is already expensive to maintain existing schools, water systems, roads and bridges. Unchecked sprawling development means the next generation will have to find enough public funds to maintain duplicative infrastructure and services.

In April, 2005, officials from First Suburbs communities in the State's major metropolitan areas convened an Ohio First Suburbs Consortium (OFSC) Forum, committed to preserve and protect mature communities across the state and to "level the playing field" in order to achieve balanced development. The OFSC believes that state government must change course to partner with First Suburbs, scrutinize public policies and public dollars, and redirect resources to promote the following goals:

- Reinvest in Ohio's older, built-out communities and their infrastructure (schools, bridges, sewers and roads);
- Revitalize traditional neighborhoods and their tax bases;
- Enhance quality of life and economic stability in our mature communities;
- Preserve farmland and open space; and
- Protect the environment

If Ohio is to be a strong competitor in the global economy, it must achieve real growth rather than simply relocating existing businesses and duplicating expensive infrastructure. It's time for leadership across Ohio to encourage thoughtful, coordinated development aimed at sustainable growth by ensuring that:

- State policies are redirected toward preserving livable, sustainable communities and providing a level playing field for all regions of Ohio;
- The State becomes a lead partner in encouraging long-term regional planning and significant reinvestment in existing communities;
- Ohio builds only as much infrastructure as future generations can afford to maintain; and
- Rural areas are viewed as much more than available land for development.

Only by planning and working together can we set the table for real growth and position Ohio as a global competitor – offering liveable and sustainable communities for all citizens. That kind of leadership will strengthen Ohio in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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**III. OFSC STATE AGENDA**

- “Fix-it-First”: Allocate state infrastructure funding to support and improve existing local investments:
  - T Provide State funding to maintain existing local infrastructure.
  - T Require that state and regional decisions on new highways, widenings and interchanges be preceded by, and be consistent with, studies identifying any potential impact on infrastructure of existing communities.
  - T Direct ODOT to support greater balance of transportation modes (transit, bike, pedestrian).
  - T Renew Issue 2 bond authorization at the highest level for public infrastructure, with all proceeds given to the Ohio Public Works Commission.
  
- Commit to adequate, shared state-local revenues:
  - T Restore previously reduced revenues shared with municipalities from Local Government Fund, Local Government Assistance Fund, and estate taxes.
  - T Oppose “TEL” constitutional amendment, which would paralyze state/local ability to meet critical needs and shift greater tax burdens to local governments.
  - T Support regional tax sharing programs for the purpose of achieving balanced growth.
  
- Support economic redevelopment of established communities:
  - T Set Ohio Department of Development criteria to reflect positive impact of job retention, recognizing that ODOD’s present emphasis on job creation limits established communities’ ability to compete for project funding.
  - T Modify Clean-Ohio Program to expedite the application process, increase overall funding and expand funding eligibility to include otherwise qualified projects that do not yet have an “end user.”
  - T Provide state historic tax credits for rehabilitation of older homes and commercial structures.
  - T Modify State Building Codes to facilitate redevelopment and adaptive reuses.
  - T Provide longer tax exemptions and more accessible financing for rehab, mixed use and infill redevelopment of deteriorated or functionally obsolescent properties (“grayfields”) in built-out areas.
  
- Protect neighborhoods and residents:
  - T Support efforts to control corrosive predatory lending and property flipping, by reasonable means such as implementing effective standards for property appraisers.

**APPENDIX A**  
**Ohio First Suburbs Consortium - Populations**  
**(2000 Census)**  
(subject to revision, as reported by regional FSCs)

Central Ohio FSC

• Bexley	13,203
• Grandview Heights	6,695
• Upper Arlington	33,686
• Whitehall	19,201
• Worthington	14,125
	86,910

Northeast Ohio FSC

• Bedford	14,214
• Bedford Heights	11,375
• Brook Park	21,218
• Cleveland Heights	50,769
• Village of Cuyahoga Hts.	599
• East Cleveland	27,217
• Euclid	52,717
• Fairview Park	17,572
• Garfield Heights	30,734
• Lakewood	56,646
• Maple Heights	26,156
• Parma	85,655
• Shaker Heights	29,405
• South Euclid	23,537
• University Heights	14,146
• Warrensville Heights	15,109
	477,069

Southwest Ohio FSC

• Amberly Village	3,425
• Deer Park	5,982
• Forest Park	19,463
• Madeira	8,923
• Milford	6,286
• Montgomery	10,163
• Mount Healthy	7,149
• Silverton	5,178
• Springdale	10,563
• Springfield Twp.	37,587
• Saint Bernard	4,924
• Wyoming	8,261
• Village of Evendale	3,090

Southwest Ohio FSC (cont'd)

- Village of Glendale 2,188
- Village of Golf Manor 3,999
- Village of Lincoln Heights 4,113
- Village of Lockland 3,707

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149,102

Montgomery County First Suburbs\*

- Centerville 23,024
- Clayton 13,347
- Huber Heights 38,212
- Kettering 57,502
- Moraine 6,897
- Oakwood 9,215
- Riverside 27,040
- Trottwood 27,420
- West Carrollton 13,818
- Vandalia 14,603

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231,078

Lucas County First Suburbs\*

1. Maumee 15,237
2. Oregon City 19,355
3. Ottawa Hills 4,564
4. Sylvania 18,670

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57,826

\* Organizing or exploring organization.