

# Rebuilding Blocks

## Efforts to Revive Cleveland Must Start by Treating What Ails Neighborhoods

Many Cleveland neighborhoods have fallen victim to a virulent consumptive disease. The national, and even international, media and politicians have largely misdiagnosed the illness, seeing the outward symptoms of blocks pockmarked by empty, decaying houses and pronouncing Cleveland a tragic victim – one of many – of the foreclosure crisis. In reality, the acute housing crisis has been an opportunistic infection that has ravaged an already weakened host. Less visible than the subprime scars, the more long-term symptoms of low educational attainment, high joblessness and pervasive poverty have left too many of Cleveland’s neighborhoods with a bleak outlook for recovery, or even survival, without radical, rational intervention.

Some neighborhoods may respond to experimental treatment or a well-timed lifesaving jolt. For others, cutting out deadly pockets of disease may provide a cure. A few – a very few – remain relatively healthy but need inoculation against further spread of disease. Still others linger on life support, draining limited resources despite little hope of real recovery.

The health analogy employed here is purposeful. State and local political leaders have already embraced Cleveland’s demonstrated strength in the medical industry as a best bet for reviving a sputtering regional and state economic engine. Cleveland’s hospitals have built a world-class reputation as centers of excellence in treating illness and disease. Yet these medical establishments have potential recuperative properties beyond individual patient care. They, along with the city’s educational establishments, its considerable arts and cultural institutions, and even its industrial centers are key partners in combatting the chronic wasting disease that has sapped the vitality of far too many Cleveland neighborhoods.

Healthy neighborhoods are the foundation for a healthy Cleveland, which is the cornerstone of a healthy surrounding region. But it’s clear that these core building blocks of community are crumbling. Many of Cleveland’s neighborhoods have reached a tipping point.

“We need to support and expand areas where we see signs of life,” says Vickie Eaton Johnson, executive director of Fairfax Renaissance Development Corporation. Although many political and community leaders insist that redevelopment efforts should be spread around in an attempt to save all suffering blocks and neighborhoods, Johnson questions the practicality of investing in neighborhoods where only 30 percent of streets and blocks

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are occupied. “There’s no way we can do that,” she says.

Interviews with political, community, philanthropic and academic leaders reveal a shared view that Cleveland lacks the resources necessary to revive every neighborhood. Faced with limited reinvestment dollars and daunting economic and societal challenges, it’s appropriate to have a discussion about rationed care. Cleveland must make strategic choices about rebuilding its neighborhoods, making tough decisions about investing aggressively in some while scaling back investments in others. We have to, in essence, pick our winners and losers.

Such tough choices can’t be based on nostalgia for the past. Instead, they must flow from a thorough examination of assets. First and foremost, investment dollars must be used to build on strengths where they exist and then deliberately, aggressively address weaknesses. Cleveland has enviable strengths on which to build, namely its medical, education, cultural and industrial hubs. There’s also that great, largely undervalued natural resource to the north – Lake Erie.

What we have lacked is the political will to target intervention efforts where they have the best chance of making a real difference in restoring health and vitality. Cleveland and individual neighborhoods, in particular, have been in decline since the 1950s. Yet, political calculations have stood – and continue to stand – in the way of embracing Cleveland’s future as a smaller – but healthier – city. Decisions to redraw wards to better match population density, to limit resources and services to sparsely populated areas, and to offer isolated residents the choice of relocating to healthier neighborhoods, or even suburbs, come with potentially negative political ramifications.

“Ultimately politicians have to buy it,” says Norm Krumholz, professor of urban studies at Cleveland State University’s Levin College of Urban Affairs and Cleveland’s city planner through the 1970s. “The American psyche is sold on growth. Politicians in particular want to focus on growth.”

Managed, healthy reduction, as any dieter or nutritionist can attest, is a much tougher proposition than growth, requiring commitment to a plan, good choices and realistic goals. Deconstructing a city is “a planning issue to the 10<sup>th</sup> power,” Krumholz says. “Planners are not deconstructionists. We don’t really have a good model.”

Perhaps this is where the health industry can provide some guidance. When faced with a devastating, spreading disease, treatment regimens include:

- Assessing the full extent of disease through thorough examination.
- Choosing interventions deliberately based on efficacy in treating specific types and locations of disease.
- Inoculating the healthy against further spread.
- Conducting clinical trials of experimental treatments, shutting down those that fail and expanding those that show promise of a cure.
- Cutting out diseased tissue before it has a chance to spread to healthier locations.
- And, when infection has spread to such a broad population that it taxes the abilities of responders, triaging treatment so that limited resources are put to use where they can do the most good. Those deemed terminal, past the point of saving, receive care to alleviate suffering but no extraordinary intervention to prolong life.

That, in a nutshell, should be our treatment plan for our weakened, “shrinking” city. Another important lesson of medical emergencies is the urgency of the response. To borrow a line from those TV health dramas: Cleveland neighborhoods need a remedy for what ails them – *stat*.

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**PolicyBridge is a non-partisan public policy think tank founded in 2005 to monitor urban policy issues affecting the quality of life for minorities in Northeast Ohio and inform regional public policy debates by framing issues of relevance to the minority community. PolicyBridge would like to acknowledge the insights of Terri Hamilton-Brown and thank all of those who provided guidance for this report. For more information, visit PolicyBridge’s Web site at [www.policy-bridge.org](http://www.policy-bridge.org).**

## HALLMARKS OF HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS

In its attempt to nurture a “city of choice and of choices,” the *Connecting Cleveland 2020 Citywide Plan* focuses on restoring each of Cleveland’s 36 neighborhoods as a safe and vibrant community. So what makes for a vibrant, safe and healthy neighborhood? Helpful neighbors? Good schools? Adequate shopping? Stable housing values? Employment opportunities? Desirable amenities? City services? Does the healthy urban neighborhood of today and tomorrow have the same characteristics as those of the past?

An informal, unscientific survey of Clevelanders – black and white – found a shared nostalgia for the neighborhoods of the 1950s. Not to suggest that everyone thrived in this pre-Civil Rights era, but to those polled, the 1950s represented an idyllic view of the 20<sup>th</sup> century neighborhood: good schools, safe streets, two-parent families, decent-paying work, involved neighbors. Since 1950, the city, state and nation have experienced breathtaking change.

“In communities of the ’50s, what you saw on the street was reinforcing what happened in church and at school. These were all pieces of community. That was very important and is very rare today,” Krumholz says. Cleveland’s neighborhoods were made up of people who had similar experiences and backgrounds, who socialized together, and who frequented shops, playgrounds, churches and whatever other amenities the neighborhood offered in a shared, convivial. “In some neighborhoods of Cleveland today, we still have that kind of commitment, but in others we don’t.”

If the 1950s serve as an idyllic vision of the 20<sup>th</sup> century neighborhood, what is the idyllic vision for urban life of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Interviews with local leaders who have been active in attempting to reshape Cleveland’s neighborhoods through community, political, philanthropic and academic avenues share a vision for viability: To thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Cleveland’s neighborhoods need to be smaller, greener and anchored by a physical, economic or unique strength.

“In theory, I know what a neighborhood is” – a certain density, a rail line, the ability to walk to schools and work, says Cuyahoga County Treasurer Jim Rokakis, a leader in the effort to obtain legislative approval for a countywide land bank. “It does not match the reality here. ... Instead, we need to focus on fewer stronger neighborhoods with a lot of green space in between.”

Cleveland’s land-use planning needs to be rethought, Krumholz says. “The 21<sup>st</sup> century neighborhood is going to be smaller and greener. That’s the wave of the future.”

Beyond being smaller and greener, today’s healthy urban neighborhoods offer quality of place in terms of infrastructure and amenities. They also serve to connect residents to opportunity. The *Connecting Cleveland 2020 Citywide Plan* states as its goals linking vibrant, urban neighborhoods to world-class innovators, such as the Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals and NASA; connecting local businesses to new technologies; connecting residents to good jobs and to education and training demanded by those jobs; and connecting neighborhoods to the lakefront and unique recreational opportunities. Achieving these connections will require unprecedented collaboration and buy-in from a broad range of stakeholders and a willing acceptance to approach the challenging issue of revitalization in new ways.

Edward W. “Ned” Hill, dean of CSU’s Levin College, envisions a “New City Beautiful,” referring to the reform movement of a century ago that sought to encourage moral and civic virtue among urban populations through grand architecture and beautification efforts. However, according to Hill, “the New City Beautiful has to be less about grand buildings in grand settings and more about public spaces that work for people. The New City Beautiful should be about building neighborhoods, especially every region’s most important neighborhood – its downtown. Downtowns need to be revitalized as premier live-work neighborhoods of regions.”

People are increasingly receptive to returning to urban areas, says Hill, who in February 2009 contributed a chapter calling for a “city-focused economic development agenda” as part of a document targeted toward *Retooling HUD*. Rising gas prices, which are likely to climb as the recession recedes and production picks up, and growing

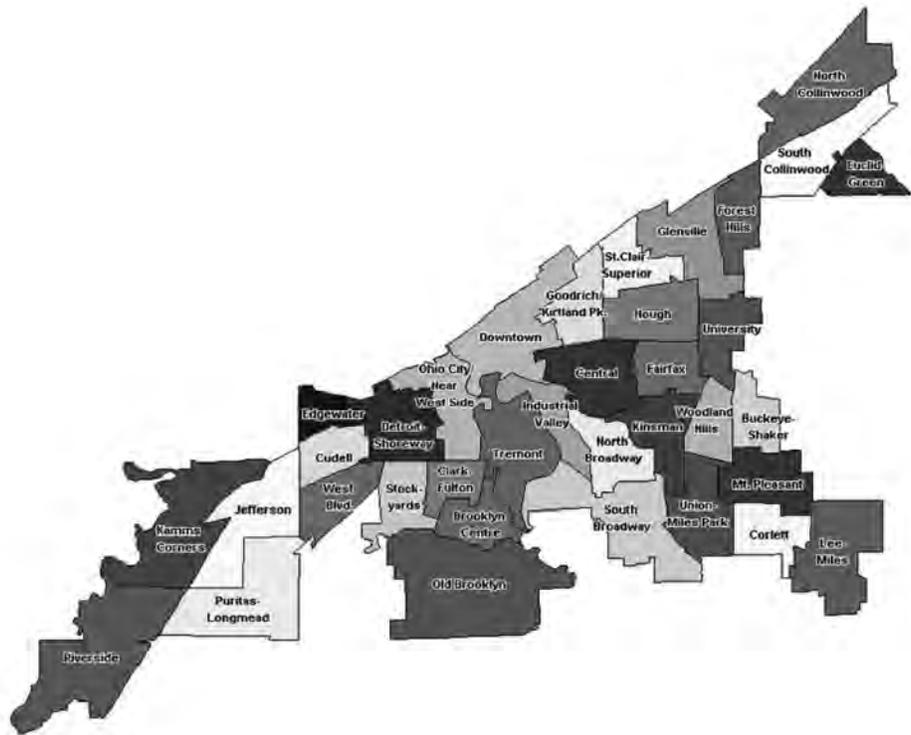
**“The 21<sup>st</sup> century neighborhood is going to be smaller and greener. That’s the wave of the future.”**

**Norm Krumholz,  
urban planning professor**

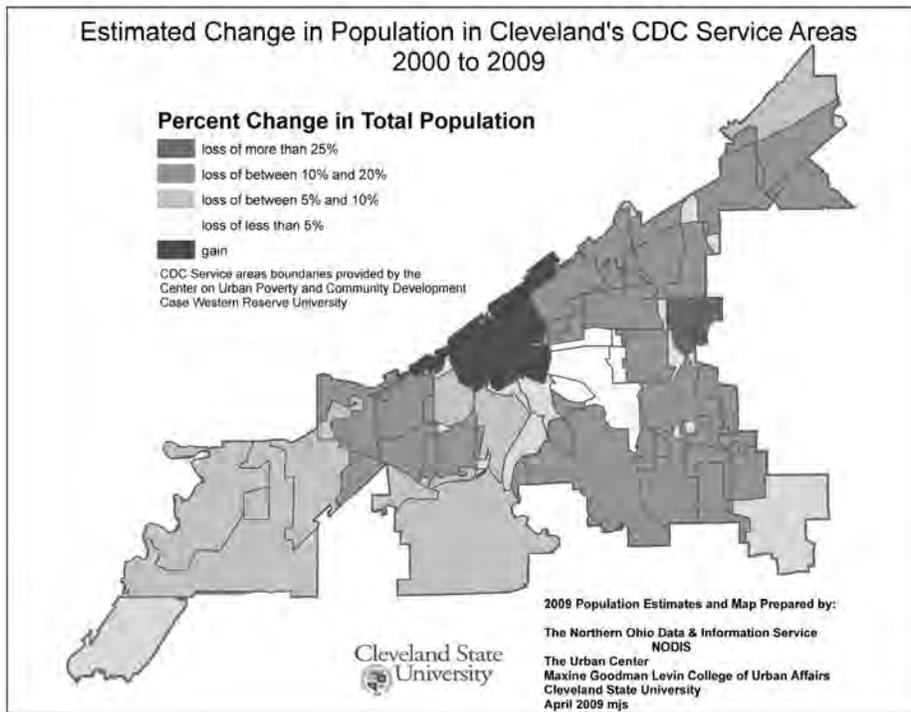
environmental concerns will increasingly influence location choices. Focusing development efforts on the intersection of business, art and culture appears to offer the most promising model for revitalizing neighborhoods and attracting people back to urban areas. “The cities that will emerge as winners will be those that offer a rich, diverse environment in which to work, live, play, and build community.”

What makes neighborhoods vibrant in cities such as New York, Chicago and Atlanta is density, in addition to walkability, city services and unique amenities. These cities that serve as the very definition of hip, urban areas are celebrated for the quality of place they have nurtured, but they also illustrate the challenge of revitalizing cities so that *all* residents benefit. Poverty indicators frequently list these same cities among the nation’s poorest. How could such vitality and misery coexist? Perhaps, the population who most benefits from bustling downtown districts, who partakes of gleaming sports arenas and enviable arts and cultural institutions, who inhabits apartments and condominiums in downtown Chicago and Manhattan are, for the most part, affluent professionals. The poor and working poor of New York and Chicago, particularly those of color,

## CLEVELAND’S NEIGHBORHOODS



Source: NeighborhoodLink



tend not to be in the position to leverage the employment opportunities that extend out from these magnet amenities. That suggests a particular challenge in rebuilding Cleveland's neighborhoods as communities of opportunity for all residents. Healthy, thriving 21<sup>st</sup> century communities cannot be built on compromised foundations. The only "cure" for Cleveland's neighborhoods is one that combines economic development and community-building into a holistic strategy for renewed health.

## HOW ILL ARE CLEVELAND'S NEIGHBORHOODS?

Signs of a chronic wasting disease are easy to spot in Cleveland's neighborhoods: pockmarked features, feelings of intense isolation, loss of vitality, stunted growth, decreased capacity, poor outcome. Not all neighborhoods suffer equally, but all have seen their overall health compromised by the debilitating effects of low educational attainment, high joblessness and pervasive poverty. The temptation is to diagnose the acute foreclosure crisis as the root cause of disease. Only by overlaying the housing crisis on protracted social and economic problems does the true challenge to Cleveland's neighborhoods come into focus. In this section, we examine each neighborhood for key indicators of compromised health.

### Population

Cleveland has been shrinking for decades, since its population reached a peak of roughly 915,000 residents in the 1950s. Today, with an estimated population of 430,000, the city is a shell of its former self. Behind the scenes, city insiders predict that Cleveland's population may be as low as 360,000 when the 2010 Census count is taken. In some Cleveland neighborhoods, this dramatic decline has been even more pronounced. In 1950, the Fairfax neighborhood had a population of 39,380. By 2000, only 7,352 residents inhabited the

## CLEVELAND POPULATION DECLINE, 1950-2000

Neighborhood	1950	2000	% Decline
Brooklyn Centre	16,549	9,180	-44.5%
Buckeye-Shaker	20,684	16,063	-22.3%
Central	69,665	12,107	-82.6%
Clark-Fulton	21,118	13,363	-36.7%
Corlett	18,591	15,384	-17.3%
Cudell	17,325	10,761	-37.9%
Detroit-Shoreway	38,939	17,382	-55.4%
Downtown	12,068	5,960	-50.6%
Edgewater	11,107	8,571	-22.8%
Euclid-Green	6,164	6,413	4.0%
Fairfax	39,380	7,352	-81.3%
Forest Hills	29,496	15,723	-46.7%
Glenville	54,594	23,559	-56.9%
Goodrich-Kirtland Park	17,082	4,295	-74.9%
Hough	65,694	16,359	-75.1%
Industrial Valley	3,416	1,116	-67.3%
Jefferson	23,698	19,949	-15.8%
Kamm's Corners	20,445	19,545	-4.4%
Kinsman	22,109	5,842	-73.6%
Lee-Miles	14,190	15,866	11.8%
Mount Pleasant	38,247	23,197	-39.4%
North Broadway	19,601	9,049	-53.8%
North Collinwood	27,181	19,828	-27.1%
Ohio City	26,360	9,308	-64.7%
Old Brooklyn	39,841	34,169	-14.2%
Puritas-Longmead	13,744	15,200	10.6%
Riverside	4,678	4,982	6.5%
South Broadway	42,726	21,475	-49.7%
South Collinwood	26,802	14,392	-46.3%
St. Clair-Superior	28,080	11,410	-59.4%
Stockyards	12,789	8,616	-32.6%
Tremont	27,162	8,163	-70.0%
Union-Miles	24,948	15,464	-38.0%
University	18,278	9,469	-48.2%
West Boulevard	22,169	17,317	-21.9%
Woodland Hills	19,888	11,574	-41.8%

**Source:** Cleveland Planning Commission Neighborhood Fact Sheets; retrieved from Census data

**Note:** Cleveland and many neighborhoods experienced their greatest populations in 1950; however, population peaks for some neighborhoods occurred before 1950 and after 1950 for others.



same 1.8 square miles. That represents an exodus of 81 percent of its population. Hough had a population of 65,694 residents in 1950; in 2000, only 16,359 people considered the neighborhood home. In 50 years, the Lower Kinsman neighborhood has shrunk from 22,109 residents to 5,842, a 74 percent decline in population. By comparison, Mount Pleasant did not see as dramatic an outflow of residents during those 50 years; from a population of 38,247, the neighborhood declined by 39 percent to 23,197. That was a rate of decline less than the city overall (-52%).

The table on Page 5 doesn't even capture the full extent of decline in some neighborhoods, where population peaked after 1950. Nor does it reflect the devastation that has occurred since 2000. Mount Pleasant, for example, has been particularly hard-hit by the foreclosure crisis, and the 2010 Census will likely reveal significant population decline. Analysis by Cleveland State University's Northern Ohio Data & Information Service has determined that all of the city's neighborhoods, with the exception of downtown, have seen significant population declines since 2000 in the areas they serve. Much of the city has experienced population losses of 10 percent or greater. Neighborhoods of color have experienced some of the greatest population losses and, as will be seen, are suffering some of the most severe economic pain.

## Housing

Many Cleveland neighborhoods today defy the very definition of neighborhood: There are entire blocks that have more vacant homes than neighbors. "Outmigration has emptied out much of the East Side," Rokakis says. "Greenlining [giving home loans to people who really couldn't afford them] has been more destructive than redlining," when banks used a bright red line to mark areas, often inner-city black neighborhoods, in which they would not provide loans.

In the neighborhoods of Fairfax, Forest Hills and Glenville, more than 20 percent of residential addresses were vacant in the second quarter of 2009. Mount Pleasant, South Collinwood, St. Clair-Superior and Woodland Hills weren't far behind, with more than 16 percent of U.S. Postal Service residential addresses vacant, according to data compiled by the NEO CANDO system of Case Western Reserve University's Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development. Neighborhoods of Cudell, Detroit Shoreway, Edgewater, Euclid-Green, Forest Hills, West Boulevard and

## LONG-TERM RESIDENTIAL VACANCIES

Neighborhood	% of Vacancies Empty for 36 Months or More
Brooklyn Centre	26.3%
Buckeye-Shaker	41.7%
Central	51.9%
Clark-Fulton	30.7%
Corlett	28.5%
Cudell	38.1%
Detroit-Shoreway	43.4%
Downtown	51.2%
Edgewater	32.9%
Euclid-Green	17.3%
Fairfax	43.2%
Forest Hills	35.5%
Glenville	36.8%
Goodrich-Kirtland Park	51.7%
Hough	41.1%
Industrial Valley	12.5%
Jefferson	29.6%
Kamm's Corners	32.6%
Kinsman	51.5%
Lee-Miles	26.7%
Mount Pleasant	47.7%
North Broadway	41.0%
North Collinwood	25.9%
Ohio City	66.4%
Old Brooklyn	28.2%
Puritas-Longmead	22.8%
Riverside	26.2%
South Broadway	17.1%
South Collinwood	35.4%
St. Clair-Superior	38.0%
Stockyards	32.8%
Tremont	53.2%
Union-Miles	26.7%
University	31.8%
West Boulevard	30.9%
Woodland Hills	44.9%

**Source:** NEO CANDO compilation of USPS data

## MEDIAN SINGLE-FAMILY HOME SALES IN CLEVELAND

Neighborhoods	2004	2008	% Change
Brooklyn Centre	\$69,000	\$36,667	-47.0%
Buckeye-Shaker	\$85,000	\$46,667	-45.1%
Central	\$127,900	\$94,400	-26.2%
Clark-Fulton	\$53,000	\$33,334	-37.1%
Corlett	\$69,950	\$34,334	-50.9%
Cudell	\$64,000	\$40,000	-37.5%
Detroit-Shoreway	\$59,000	\$42,000	-28.8%
Downtown	\$395,000	\$342,393	-13.3%
Edgewater	\$138,250	\$55,000	-60.2%
Euclid-Green	\$65,700	\$37,500	-42.9%
Fairfax	\$31,000	\$20,000	-35.5%
Forest Hills	\$77,500	\$33,334	-57.0%
Glenville	\$70,000	\$34,784	-50.3%
Goodrich-Kirtland Park	\$49,000	\$42,000	-14.3%
Hough	\$72,450	\$26,750	-63.1%
Industrial Valley	\$37,450	\$25,600	-31.6%
Jefferson	\$84,000	\$60,000	-28.6%
Kamm's Corners	\$125,000	\$108,500	-13.2%
Kinsman	\$65,000	\$21,334	-67.2%
Lee-Miles	\$85,000	\$44,000	-48.2%
Mount Pleasant	\$82,000	\$33,334	-59.3%
North Broadway	\$59,000	\$21,600	-63.4%
North Collinwood	\$90,125	\$56,667	-37.1%
Ohio City	\$54,100	\$40,000	-26.1%
Old Brooklyn	\$100,000	\$71,025	-29.0%
Puritas-Longmead	\$77,000	\$44,950	-41.6%
Riverside	\$97,000	\$93,000	-4.1%
South Broadway	\$66,650	\$30,000	-55.0%
South Collinwood	\$65,000	\$32,000	-50.8%
St. Clair-Superior	\$55,000	\$22,500	-59.1%
Stockyards	\$50,000	\$30,000	-40.0%
Tremont	\$81,950	\$48,200	-41.2%
Union-Miles	\$75,000	\$30,000	-60.0%
University	\$90,000	\$93,550	3.9%
West Boulevard	\$80,250	\$51,000	-36.4%
Woodland Hills	\$65,000	\$26,667	-59.0%

**Source:** Cuyahoga County Auditor, 2008 data; extracted by Center for Housing Research and Policy

Woodland Hills had more than 19 percent of their business addresses vacant during the same period, with Cudell topping the list at 23.5 percent. Roughly 800 residences in the Glenville and Mount Pleasant areas have been vacant for *three years* or longer. Throughout the city, 36.6 percent of all vacant residential addresses have been empty for three years or more. The table on Page 6 shows the percentage of residential vacancies in each neighborhood that have been empty long-term.

In 13 Cleveland neighborhoods, median single-family home sales in 2008 represented a loss of 50 percent or more over the median value for 2004. Those neighborhoods are: Corlett, Edgewater, Forest Hills, Glenville, Hough, Kinsman, Mount Pleasant, North Broadway, South Broadway, South Collinwood, St. Clair-Superior, Union-Miles and Woodland Hills. These percentages don't even capture the full extent of the loss for a few neighborhoods, where prices peaked in 2005 or 2006. Conversely, the dramatic drop in price in Edgewater is misleading. Since 1999, median prices in Edgewater have been above \$100,000, peaking at \$138,250 in 2004; the \$55,000 median price in 2008 on sales volume less than half of what has been typical seems to have been an aberration.

In the five years from 2004 to 2008, 6,033 Cleveland homes have sold at sheriff sale, according to Cuyahoga County Auditor data extracted by CSU's Center for Housing Research and Policy. **Shockingly, 49 percent of all single-family homes sold in Cleveland in 2007 were at sheriff sale (2,361 of 4,833).** The following year, which corresponded with



the bursting of the housing bubble, saw a dramatic drop in the number of houses sold in Cleveland (2,845), but a full 45 percent of those that did sell were at sheriff sale. Median price that year was \$46,667, compared to \$80,500 in 2004.

The table at right shows that not all neighborhoods have suffered equally. Half of all Cleveland’s neighborhoods saw half or more of their single-family housing stock sold off at sheriff sale. In nine neighborhoods – Fairfax, Forest Hills, Glenville, Hough, Mount Pleasant, North Broadway, St. Clair-Superior, Union-Miles and Woodland Hills – sheriff sales accounted for roughly two-thirds or more of all single-family home sales in 2007 and 2008. In Kinsman, nearly all were sheriff sales.

### Joblessness

The unemployment rate in Cleveland stood at 11.2 percent in 2000, according to data from CWRU’s Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development. Joblessness in the city was nearly double the county unemployment rate of 6.2 percent. Within Cleveland, neighborhoods were facing dramatically different employment fates. Residents of Edgewater, Jefferson, Kamm’s Corners, Old Brooklyn, Puritas and Riverside who wanted jobs tended to have them. These six neighborhoods had a local unemployment rate lower than the county average. On the other end of the spectrum were Central, Downtown, Kinsman, St. Clair-Superior, University Circle and Woodland Hills, where roughly 20 percent or more of workers were unemployed. In the Central neighborhood, 1 in every 3 was unemployed. The unemployment rate for male workers, the traditional provider for families, exceeded 20 percent in nine neighborhoods of Cleveland: Central, Downtown, Fairfax, Kinsman, Ohio City, St. Clair-Superior, Union-Miles, University Circle-Little Italy and Woodland Hills. Hough (19.3%), Forest Hills (18.5%) and North Broadway (18.1%) weren’t far behind. Unemployment for female workers topped 20 percent in two neighborhoods: Central and Kinsman.

As shockingly high as those numbers are, they will likely be worse when the 2010 Census is taken. The U.S. unemployment rate has more than doubled since July 2000, when it stood at just 4 percent, according to figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. As of July 2009, the unemployment rate nationwide was 9.4 percent and was expected to continue to push higher well into 2010. Ohio’s unemployment rate stood at 11.2 percent in July 2009, compared to just 4.1 percent in July 2000.

Nationwide, the labor market participation rate stood at 65.5 percent in July 2009, down slightly from 66.9 percent in July 2000. However, in many Cleveland neighborhoods only about

### PERCENTAGE OF SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES SOLD AT SHERIFF SALE

Neighborhood	2007	2008
Brooklyn Centre	47.9%	53.2%
Buckeye-Shaker	62.8%	62.7%
Central	15.4%	0
Clark-Fulton	52.9%	49.3%
Corlett	61.6%	65.6%
Cudell	45.6%	42.7%
Detroit-Shoreway	44.4%	40.8%
Downtown	0	0
Edgewater	20.0%	30.0%
Euclid-Green	56.0%	53.7%
Fairfax	76.7%	52.4%
Forest Hills	65.3%	70.7%
Glenville	68.2%	68.3%
Goodrich-Kirtland Park	25%	11.1%
Hough	70.1%	76.5%
Industrial Valley	55.6%	40.0%
Jefferson	29.9%	25.5%
Kamm’s Corners	7.5%	13.1%
Kinsman	90.0%	100%
Lee-Miles	50.8%	49.2%
Mount Pleasant	72.9%	72.5%
North Broadway	72.2%	76.5%
North Collinwood	49.1%	48.8%
Ohio City	45.7%	30.0%
Old Brooklyn	20.6%	24.7%
Puritas-Longmead	37.4%	36.7%
Riverside	16.2%	17.2%
South Broadway	59.9%	61.5%
South Collinwood	57.8%	64.4%
St. Clair-Superior	76.6%	72.2%
Stockyards	64.3%	52.5%
Tremont	14.9%	26.3%
Union-Miles	71.8%	81.7%
University	61.5%	33.3%
West Boulevard	41.7%	34.6%
Woodland Hills	79.0%	65.2%

**Source:** Cuyahoga County Auditor, 2008 data; extracted by Center for Housing Research and Policy

half of residents age 16 and over were engaged in the labor force. In fact, more than half of men in some neighborhoods were completely disconnected from the labor force in 2000. In Fairfax, for example, 53.5 percent of men *did not* participate in the labor force. In other words, more than half of adult males in the community were neither working in the mainstream economy nor looking for work.

What does this mean for neighborhoods? Unemployment eats away at the very vitality of neighborhoods. Fewer people working means less money circulating in the neighborhood and fewer customers to attract and retain local businesses. “The core problem in this town is jobs,” Rokakis says. “If everyone had a job, we wouldn’t be having this discussion.”

### Poverty

Since 2000, the nation has witnessed a jobless recovery and the most punishing economic environment in decades. Cleveland’s population has declined and poverty rates have risen. Given the high rate of unemployment within Cleveland neighborhoods in 2000, high rates of poverty within the city should come as little surprise. The 2008 American Community Survey found that 30.5 percent of Clevelanders had income levels below the poverty line. In families where children were present and women were the sole head of household, nearly 54 percent lived in poverty. More than half (55.4%) of Cleveland families with children at home are headed by women. Again, some Cleveland neighborhoods have fared better than others. In Central, more than 61 percent of residents were living in poverty, while 55 percent of Kinsman residents were, according to 2000 Census data. All told, 10 neighborhoods had more than one-third of their residents living in poverty in 2000.

“People in Cleveland’s neighborhoods in the 1950s were getting a foot up on society,” Krumholz says. They came from the South or from Central and Eastern Europe and found jobs at Republic Steel coking coal or Richmond Brothers making men’s suits. They got these jobs on the bottom rung of the economic ladder because someone in their extended family vouched for them. “They didn’t have to do anything but shovel coal or sew clothes. They didn’t have to speak English,” he says. “Today, people who want to get on the bottom rung of the ladder find that it’s been cut off and shipped to China.”

### Crime

Despite the harsh economic environment, violent crime rates nationwide were down in 2008, according to the FBI’s

### CLEVELAND’S POVERTY RATE, 2000

Neighborhood	% in Poverty
Brooklyn Centre	24.5%
Buckeye-Shaker	26.4%
Central	61.3%
Clark-Fulton	28.5%
Corlett	19.3%
Cudell	28.9%
Detroit-Shoreway	35.4%
Downtown	22.4%
Edgewater	17.5%
Euclid-Green	22.3%
Fairfax	31.6%
Forest Hills	29.7%
Glenville	31.1%
Goodrich-Kirtland Park	29.3%
Hough	39.9%
Industrial Valley	11.7%
Jefferson	10.3%
Kamm’s Corners	5.6%
Kinsman	55.4%
Lee-Miles	10.9%
Mount Pleasant	24.3%
North Broadway	37.0%
North Collinwood	17.4%
Ohio City	36.5%
Old Brooklyn	11.0%
Puritas-Longmead	13.8%
Riverside	16.4%
South Broadway	23.3%
South Collinwood	27.9%
St. Clair-Superior	40.4%
Stockyards	35.6%
Tremont	37.1%
Union-Miles	31.4%
University	28.7%
West Boulevard	18.2%
Woodland Hills	42.8%

**Source:** Cleveland Planning Commission Neighborhood Fact Sheets; retrieved from Census data



Preliminary Annual Uniform Crime Report. After edging upward in 2005 and 2006, violent crime dipped slightly in 2007 and declined by 2.5 percent in 2008. In Cleveland, violent crime decreased at a rate nearly three times that of the average nationwide. Preliminary crime statistics for January to June 2008 compiled by Ohio's Office of Criminal Justice Services show that violent crime decreased by 7.1 percent in Cleveland. From 1999 to 2004, the number of murders in Cleveland ranged from 71 to 80 annually. In 2005, homicides spiked to 109, returned to more typical levels in 2006, and hit 90 in 2007. The Plain Dealer has been mapping Northeast Ohio homicides for 2009. As of August 30, 60 percent of the 120 homicides committed in Northeast Ohio occurred in Cleveland. The Plain Dealer's mapping project also reveals that certain neighborhoods have seen clusters of homicides. For example, six occurred in the area bounded by Lee Road, Harvard Avenue, East 116<sup>th</sup> Street and Kinsman Road. Several others were in blocks nearby. Another five murders were clustered around East 105<sup>th</sup> Street between St. Clair and Superior. Five murders occurred in the Clark-Fulton neighborhood, with others nearby. These three areas account for more than one-fifth of all murders occurring in Cleveland through August 30, 2009.

Although crime rates have dropped statistically, the *perception* of crime in Cleveland neighborhoods has not followed suit. And this perception, which is enough to dissuade homebuyers from moving into certain neighborhoods and encourage residents to move out, stifles neighborhood growth and exacerbates decline. It also cripples business development and growth opportunities when customers think twice about frequenting an establishment where they see young men loitering outside. Loitering, littering, playing music too loud and other public nuisances do not garner the attention and concern that accompanies incidences of violent crime, but these "quality of life" offenses erode the fabric of communities. They are the visible, day-to-day misdeeds that plague urban neighborhoods and sap the resolve of residents.

## Schools

According to recent analysis by The Boston Consulting Group as part of a Cleveland Metropolitan School District Strategic Development Initiative, residents of Cleveland's East Side neighborhoods have little choice but to send their children to failing schools. Two-thirds of the schools serving eight of CMSD's "academic neighborhoods" were deemed to be in academic watch or emergency, based on the 2009 Ohio report card. Residents in CMSD's John Adams academic neighborhood – which serves students living in Mount Pleasant, Union-Miles and Corlett – have no adequate public school options nearby. All nine schools – John Adams High School and the eight elementary schools that feed into it – have been designated in academic emergency, the state's lowest ranking. In the neighboring South area, which serves parts of Union-Miles and South Broadway, South High School and four elementary schools were in academic emergency; another K-8 school was in academic watch. Glenville High School and four of its feeder elementary schools were in academic emergency; the other four elementary schools in the neighborhood were labeled academic watch.

"Cleveland has lost a lot of people, in part, because of the state of the municipal schools," says John Anoliefo, executive director of Famicos Foundation, one of Cleveland's oldest community development corporations. "It will take a lot for people to come back. Because you are able to move, you move to areas where you believe your child can get a good education."

Right now, that's not in most neighborhoods in Cleveland. And aside from a few of the district's innovative and charter options, Cleveland's schools aren't likely to attract families back to the city anytime soon.

At home, many Cleveland parents and grandparents tend to lack the educational background to help their children realize the level of academic attainment needed to succeed in today's knowledge economy. Citywide, only about 43 percent of residents 25 and older have any personal experience with college, according to the 2008 American Community Survey, with less than 20 percent holding a two-year college degree or higher. On the other end of the educational spectrum, roughly one quarter of Cleveland residents do not even have a high school diploma or GED. The change to a global, knowledge-based economy over the past decade has disproportionately punished the least-educated workers. When looked at individually, it is clear that some Cleveland neighborhoods are ill-prepared to thrive

in an economy that places so much value on knowledge. In the Clark-Fulton neighborhood, for example, nearly 16 percent of residents do not have even a ninth-grade education, according to 2000 Census data. In 10 neighborhoods, more than 40 percent of residents age 25 and over never completed high school, as the table at right shows.

No sleek, high-tech business attraction strategy will turn these neighborhoods around because residents lack the skills needed to access such jobs. Without systematically addressing the issue of low educational attainment, these neighborhoods – and the people who live there – will continue to lose ground. Low-skill jobs have gone to states or countries with cheaper low-skilled workers. Instead of such “build it and they will come” or “silver-bullet” strategies that seem to be at play with the Medical Mart and other endeavors, more fruitful job attraction strategies may be to target specific challenged neighborhoods to help high school dropouts earn their GED and to encourage residents who have some college credit already to complete an associate’s degree.

This lack of educational

## LOW EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY NEIGHBORHOOD

Neighborhood	<9th Grade	9th-12th Grade, No Diploma	Total With < High School Diploma
Brooklyn Centre	8.8%	27.1%	35.9%
Buckeye-Shaker	3.8%	16.7%	20.5%
Central	8.1%	37.1%	45.2%
Clark-Fulton	15.8%	32.9%	48.7%
Corlett	6.3%	24.6%	30.9%
Cudell	11.2%	26.3%	37.5%
Detroit-Shoreway	12.5%	31.1%	43.6%
Downtown	3.7%	12.1%	15.8%
Edgewater	6.1%	12.6%	18.7%
Euclid-Green	4.6%	19.2%	23.8%
Fairfax	9.7%	29.0%	38.7%
Forest Hills	7.1%	26.6%	33.7%
Glenville	8.7%	24.2%	32.9%
Goodrich-Kirtland Park	18.4%	30.9%	49.3%
Hough	10.0%	30.8%	40.8%
Industrial Valley	6.8%	30.6%	37.4%
Jefferson	5.9%	19.5%	25.4%
Kamm’s Corners	3.6%	8.8%	12.4%
Kinsman	10.8%	30.9%	41.7%
Lee-Miles	6.6%	20.2%	26.8%
Mount Pleasant	6.3%	25.0%	31.3%
North Broadway	12.6%	32.6%	45.2%
North Collinwood	6.6%	19.2%	25.8%
Ohio City	11.3%	26.4%	37.7%
Old Brooklyn	4.7%	16.5%	21.2%
Puritas-Longmead	6.0%	20.1%	26.1%
Riverside	3.1%	14.1%	17.2%
South Broadway	6.7%	27.2%	33.9%
South Collinwood	6.1%	23.6%	29.7%
St. Clair-Superior	7.7%	33.8%	41.5%
Stockyards	12.9%	32.9%	45.8%
Tremont	12.4%	27.1%	39.5%
Union-Miles	9.6%	30.6%	40.2%
University	6.5%	17.1%	23.6%
West Boulevard	7.2%	22.7%	29.9%
Woodland Hills	6.3%	32.2%	38.5%
<b>Cuyahoga County</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>13.9%</b>	<b>18.4%</b>

**Source:** NEO CANDO system, Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development

**Note:** Population is residents 25 and over, based on 2000 Census data.



attainment, combined with an urban culture that has turned away from education at the very time it is most important in the job market, illustrates the daunting – but imperative – challenge of turning around poor-performing schools. It is clear that the schools face a difficult environment for succeeding in educating students, but it is also clear that Cleveland neighborhoods cannot hope for better days if they continue to experience failure within their schools.

## **Disconnection**

Instead of communities where lasting bonds between neighbors are cultivated over many years, Cleveland's neighborhoods have become transient way stations, as residents move from place to place to find work, better schools or cheaper rent. According to the 2008 American Community Survey, nearly 40 percent of Cleveland households had moved into their current home or apartment since 2005. In fact, nearly 60 percent of the 168,628 occupied housing units in Cleveland were inhabited by people who had moved in since 2000. The ongoing housing crisis has likely made this percentage even higher, particularly in hard-hit neighborhoods.

At the same time that residents have become more peripatetic in their housing choices, urban residents have also become more and more isolated as jobs, shopping options and community institutions, such as the parish church and the neighborhood YMCA, have moved out or gone away for good. Roughly one-fourth of all Cleveland households have no vehicle available for use, the 2008 ACS showed. This means work, shopping and even worship options become limited to only those establishments served by public transportation lines.

On block after block and throughout entire neighborhoods in Cleveland, the very foundation of community has been shattered. The mass exodus of middle-income families out of the city to the suburbs and the sweeping economic changes that have closed off opportunity for low-skilled workers have been powerful destructive forces in urban neighborhoods. Add in other cultural and societal changes – a lack of respect among young people for elders and teachers, poor parenting skills, absence of fathers, decreasing civic engagement, refusal of adults to correct bad behavior and model good choices for youth – and it is clear that Cleveland's connective tissue of community has been torn.

## **SIGNS OF LIFE**

Cleveland is in need of a few bold, lifesaving jolts to the heart of its community and economic development efforts, followed up with the patience and perseverance to see the prescribed treatment through. A few promising recovery plans have already been put into action, assembling vacant land, encouraging workers to live near their jobs, rebuilding around anchoring amenities and creating a greener city. We detail four that hope to begin showing signs of renewed health.

### **Cuyahoga County Land Bank – Battling Blight**

The Cuyahoga County Land Reutilization Corporation was authorized by the Ohio Legislature in April. In July, the land bank, in partnership with Cuyahoga County, Cleveland and the Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority, applied for \$74 million in federal funds to rehabilitate hundreds of residential properties in Cuyahoga County and to demolish 1,100 nuisance properties, which have been deemed beyond practical rehabilitation.

“I think our great-grandchildren will thrive because of what we're doing now with the land bank,” says Rokakis, a driving force behind the effort. “We could make this a laboratory” for reviving distressed urban areas. Selective demolition, he believes, will help stabilize neighborhoods and restore housing values.

The Cuyahoga County land bank is a novel approach to a dire problem. Other areas have mechanisms for taking over and banking vacant properties, but the CCLRC envisions a more proactive, all-encompassing approach to land-use redevelopment. The Cuyahoga County land bank has been structured as a quasi-government body administered by a separate nonprofit organization and funded by sources outside the county budget. The CCLRC plans to borrow \$55 million for property acquisition or demolition. Rokakis says 15,000 properties are currently

awaiting demolition in Cuyahoga County, with about 10,000 to 11,000 of those in Cleveland alone. Another 3,000 are in East Cleveland. The cost of demolishing these properties has been estimated at \$150 million although Rokakis believes it may take double that amount to deconstruct these blighted properties so that they again become assets to individual neighborhoods and to the county as a whole. “I think we can be the vehicle that drives 10,000 demolitions in five to seven years,” Rokakis says.

Banks are willing to turn over to the land bank properties that have little or no value yet continue to be liabilities because of property taxes and maintenance. The CCLRC has also reached out to the nation’s largest maintainer of foreclosed homes, a firm headquartered in Northeast Ohio, to get the banks and mortgage companies it works with to allow the land bank first choice on properties before “they are offered to house flippers on eBay,” Rokakis says. Some houses may have little value as they are and will be scheduled for demolition. But others have become victims of tough economic circumstances and may provide good return on investment after the housing market revives.

**“I think our great-grandchildren will thrive because of what we’re doing now with the land bank.”**

**Jim Rokakis,  
Cuyahoga County Treasurer**

The CCLRC will assess properties, selling those that can be sold at or near fair market value; renovating those in need of overhaul; and turning others over at a reduced price to qualified rehab contractors. The land bank also will take on the role of collecting delinquent property taxes. In exchange, CCLRC will receive the accrued interest and penalty. This combination of home sales and delinquent tax collections is expected to generate \$10 million to \$20 million annually for the CCLRC to apply toward its debt and to use to acquire and demolish other properties. In addition to ridding neighborhoods of decaying properties that drag down surrounding housing values and provide havens for criminal activity, the CCLRC has a strategic goal of assembling large urban parcels that may attract large-scale development and create jobs. Rokakis sees other employment opportunities through the land bank for individuals left in ailing neighborhoods. Demolishing, maintaining and “greening” properties that the CCLRC has acquired should create jobs for local residents.

## **Fairfax Renaissance – Anchored Growth**

Johnson has had reason to talk with Fairfax residents about making room for redevelopment. Her nonprofit Fairfax Renaissance Development Corporation has teamed with the Cleveland Clinic, Case Western Reserve University and a couple dozen other partnering organizations to develop a Global Cardiovascular Innovation Center. The GCIC plan won a \$60 million grant from the state’s Third Frontier program in 2006, which the Clinic has used to leverage another \$200 million in investments. Johnson says the Clinic reached out to the FRDC because it believed that a community component was missing from the plan it developed to compete for state funding. The FRDC owns the land and a percentage of the 50,000-square-foot building, which is set to open in May 2010. The top two floors of the building will be engaged in cardiovascular research, with bottom floors set aside as a commercial incubator for technology and techniques developed. The long-range goal is for the initial building to serve as a catalyst for future redevelopment on 30 acres of land near East 105<sup>th</sup> Street.

One component of the development project is a program to help provide jobs for Fairfax residents. “Our commitment is to take people from the neighborhood and sponsor them for apprenticeships,” Johnson says. “Our effort is to make sure minorities, women and small businesses know of opportunities. We don’t want to give anyone a job who is not qualified. ... We want quality work. We want people to finish on time and within budget.”

Johnson says the goal is long-term employment opportunities for local workers that extend beyond the current construction phase. The FRDC and the Clinic partnered with union apprenticeship programs to provide training for local residents. After completing eight weeks of training, graduates of the program would receive employment with local trade unions or within the Clinic. Of 12 original enrollees, five graduated from the program in May. The experience with this initial workforce development effort highlights the particular employment challenges



of inner-city neighborhoods. Although enrollees passed a background check for union employment, they did not pass background checks required for hospital employment. Convicted felons are legally precluded from working in certain professions, including education and health care. “We considered this to be successful,” Johnson says, despite the employment hurdles.

### **Greater University Circle Initiative – Walkable, Live/Work Neighborhoods**

Greater Circle Living is a forgivable loan program launched in May 2008 and targeted toward enticing employees of eligible institutions in the University Circle area to live near where they work. Part of the success of Greater Circle Living is simply reaching out to encompass the neighborhoods that surround University Circle – Fairfax, Buckeye-Shaker, Glenville, Hough, Little Italy and parts of East Cleveland. The University Circle area institutions partnered with the Cleveland Foundation to create a \$5 million pool to provide full-time employees of any nonprofit institution in Greater University Circle with \$5,000 toward down payment or closing costs on the purchase of an owner-occupied home. Loans are forgiven if the employee continues to work for a participating Greater University Circle institution and to occupy the residence for five years after the loan closes. Employees of Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland Museum of Art, Judson at University Circle and University Hospitals may be eligible for an additional \$10,000 forgivable loan toward purchase of a home. Employees are eligible if household income is less than \$150,000, although UH has no income restriction. So far, 14 employees have received GCL funds to purchase homes ranging in price from \$19,000 to \$280,000. Another 10 employees have completed prepurchase counseling, and 80 have attended a GCL orientation program.

Although the University Circle institutions have many well-paid professionals on staff, Johnson points out that the establishments also employ thousands of support and maintenance workers receiving more modest salaries. “We have been able to sell homes to folks who would not normally be able to afford them because of the foreclosure crisis,” she says. Program participants are encouraged to buy existing homes or ones being developed through efforts of the neighborhood community development corporations.

The Cleveland Foundation has also partnered with the Ohio Employee Ownership Center and ShoreBank to pursue a strategy of leveraging the procurement power of University Circle institutions to catalyze employee-owned businesses where opportunities exist. Businesses selected for seed funding must be for-profit cooperatives with solid business plans. Cultivating opportunity through employee ownership is merely one piece of a larger strategy for creating and enhancing community assets. The Greater University Circle Initiative has brought together various stakeholders – neighborhoods, foundations and institutions – to address issues of housing, retail, transportation and education in an effort to spark revitalization of the area. Key to the effort’s success will be convincing the various entities of University Circle that their futures are linked.

The Evergreen Cooperative Laundry, located on East 105<sup>th</sup> Street in Glenville, is set to launch in late October to seize on an opportunity that arose when an area hospital opted to stop doing laundry internally. The business, which will target area hospitals and nursing homes, will start with six employees but hopes to build to 50, providing low-skill jobs for the largely low-skilled workers in the community. Workers will receive above-industry-standard wages, about \$2 an hour more, and benefits. Employees will be required to invest a small portion of their pay in exchange for an equity stake in the business. An employee who starts in Year 1 of the enterprise and remains with Evergreen Laundry to Year 8 could expect to have as much as \$65,000 in equity.

When the laundry begins paying back the \$5.8 million startup funding in the form of grants and loans it received from the City of Cleveland, the federal government, the Cleveland Foundation and various banks and businesses, the proceeds will be used for other investments in “green” cooperatives. The goal is a fund of \$50 million to \$80 million to be used to create new employee-owned business enterprises, which should help root capital and equity in asset-poor neighborhoods.

Ohio Cooperative Solar, which is expected to launch later this fall, plans to install solar panels it owns on the roofs of University Circle-area institutions. These institutions will lease their roofs to OCS for renewable energy

collection and, in turn, will buy their electricity from the cooperative. The goal is to expand the enterprise statewide and develop the largest collection of installed solar panels in the Midwest.

Evergreen City Growers hopes to seed opportunity while at the same time feeding needs through a year-round hydroponic greenhouse on East 55<sup>th</sup> Street near I-490. The venture into urban agribusiness is projected to produce up to 8 million heads of lettuce and nearly 1 million pounds of basil per year and is expected to employ up to 50 local residents. Although the 8- to 10-acre facility is receiving startup funding of \$2 million in grants and \$8 million in loans, the goal of the business-seed fund is that none of the cooperatives, once launched, will continue to be subsidized.

## Re-imagining a More Sustainable Cleveland: A Greener Future

Re-imagining a More Sustainable Cleveland was a yearlong collaboration between Neighborhood Progress Inc., the City of Cleveland, Kent State University's Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative and other community participants to develop a strategy for reusing Cleveland's excess vacant land to spark economic recovery, while at the same time realizing a cleaner, healthier, more beautiful city. Stated goals of the effort are to:

- advance a larger, comprehensive sustainability strategy for the city.
- benefit low-income and underemployed residents.
- enhance the quality of neighborhood life.
- create prosperity in the city.
- help address climate change.

Land-use strategies for meeting those goals include banking vacant lots to stabilize neighborhoods; expanding green space to provide more recreational opportunities and improve the urban ecosystem through flood protection, air purification, climate regulation, erosion control, and biological habitat; and putting vacant properties into productive use through agriculture and energy generation. The effort included watershed and soil analysis to determine areas where wetlands could be supported and where high lead concentrations exist. The 40-page report proposes the development of community gardens and urban farms to provide affordable, locally grown produce in the city's "food deserts," areas where fast food is plentiful and groceries are few. Beyond food production, a re-imagined, sustainable Cleveland might encompass tree nurseries, chicken farms, beehives and other commercial agriculture enterprises. There's plenty of available land that needs to be put to innovative use. Currently, the Cleveland land bank has more than 6,000 parcels. Vacant land unsuitable for redevelopment or for agricultural purposes is envisioned as being put to productive use generating alternative energies through solar, wind, geothermal and biofuel technologies. Depending on population density and the size of available tracts, energy production may take the form of small-scale, individual efforts or commercial enterprises. Policy recommendations include establishing a goal that every Cleveland resident be within a half-mile radius of a community garden or market garden "to increase local food security, reinforce neighborhood relationships, beautify vacant lots and promote local entrepreneurship." Recommendations also include encouraging remaining homeowners to purchase, at nominal cost, adjacent vacant properties to enlarge their lot size. A "Mow-to-Own" program would allow residents to earn ownership of a neighboring or nearby property in exchange for maintaining the property according to city standards.

## THREATS TO RECOVERY

The initiatives described here will no doubt show some benefit and progress. Investing millions of dollars in attacking blight and incubating a few new business enterprises should, at the very least, improve aesthetics and give a limited number of idled workers access to employment and renewed hope. However, these initiatives and others are not likely to succeed in restoring health to Cleveland's neighborhoods as long as key stakeholders remain absent from the table. In particular, Anoliefo, of the Famicos Foundation, sees difficulties ahead for a re-imagined Cleveland if it doesn't first address the thorny issues of schools and safety. "There are people who don't come outside their homes," he says. "They look outside their screen doors. That has to change."

A few hundred yards north of his Ansel Road offices, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District is pushing forward with its plan to build a new K-8 school building between Kosciuszko and Pulaski avenues. In its July 2009 progress and master plan updates, the Bond Accountability Commission found the project to be months behind schedule and more than \$2.2 million over budget. The BAC reported that the district's Glenville academic neighborhood has seen enrollment decline by more than 52 percent since fall 1997; from January 2008 to February 2009 alone, 10 percent fewer students attended those schools. The East and John Adams academic neighborhoods also have seen enrollment losses of more than 50 percent in the past 11 years.

Anoliefo echoes the BAC's questioning of the district's wisdom in continuing to build in areas that have seen such drastic declines in student enrollment. This lack of collaboration and cooperation among the schools, the community development corporations and other entities engaged in building or rebuilding Cleveland's neighborhoods stands in the way of revitalization, he says.

Similarly, Krumholz points to a resistance among safety officials and political leaders to target enforcement efforts in areas that show the highest rates of criminal activity. Instead, there is a preference for spreading coverage more

**“When you have 80-year-olds in 4,000-square-foot homes that they can’t take care of, at what point do you convince them to give up and you bring in new people who can afford the bills?”**

**John Anoliefo,  
Famicos Foundation**

evenly throughout city wards. Collecting data to identify crime “hot spots” and using that information to help determine where to deploy officers may provide more effective distribution of safety resources and better deterrence of crime.

Such mismatch of resources and needs is a disservice to Cleveland neighborhoods and is a poor use of precious limited funds. Likewise, neighborhood redevelopment efforts that proceed without a firm grasp on current reality and careful understanding of future trends are also doomed to be less than effective.

Matching resources to where they can be used most effectively requires strong, vocal leaders with a realistic, thoughtful vision for the future. Leadership will be necessary in order to navigate around potentially controversial aspects of redevelopment: relocation and gentrification. One vision Rokakis has for the Cuyahoga County land bank is offering the few remaining homeowners on otherwise empty blocks the option of relocating to other Cleveland neighborhoods or even the suburbs. Because the land bank will purchase and receive vacant properties throughout the county, he hopes to be able to provide options to help isolated homeowners who have become innocent victims of the foreclosure crisis. Whole blocks in some Cleveland neighborhoods have emptied out due to foreclosure and general decline except for a handful of homeowners who are trapped because the decay around them has dragged down the value of their houses. They lack the opportunity to sell and the means to move. “I think we have an obligation to the people who are left,” Rokakis says. “We can be a release valve for hundreds who need to escape.”

Political leaders may balk at the notion of relocating potential voters out of their wards and even the city. Community activists and planners may worry about the potential to revisit the controversies and devastation of Urban Renewal, the post-World War II land redevelopment strategy criticized for leveling communities and forcing poor residents out. However, Johnson believes homeowners in her neighborhood of Fairfax who reside on desolate, empty blocks would welcome an opportunity for a fresh start.

“Experience tells me that 7 out of 10 times people would be willing to be relocated,” she says. “You can’t tell me people enjoy being one of 10 people on a street. They’re sitting targets for crime and vandalism. They’re isolated.” Instead, when she has raised the issue, the typical response has been: “Baby, what took you so long?”

Anoliefo compares efforts to relocate isolated homeowners to what families go through when they face the need to convince elderly relatives that they can no longer safely live alone. “The conversation has to happen over time,” he says. “You have to show people why that policy needs to be adopted. ... The community has to know why and the benefits of it.”

Questions of “Where can I go?” “What is my option?” need compassionate, straightforward answers. There also must be understanding that people dropped into unfamiliar, even potentially unaccepting surroundings, face isolation,

as well, Anoliefo says. “If we take Mrs. Jones from being isolated as the lone person on the street and then relocate her to Garfield Heights, where she has no clue who lives there, no history, for her, there is no neighborhood.”

No discussion of redeveloping blighted neighborhoods can avoid raising the potential negative consequences of gentrification to low-income residents. Johnson and Anoliefo take a pragmatic view: Healthy neighborhoods have economic diversity. No hope of long-term sustainability can take root in neighborhoods caught in the negative spiral of poverty and decline. “If we’re going to attract retailers, we’re going to need to have diversification and people with money,” Johnson says matter-of-factly. “Low-income people are not being displaced because of redevelopment opportunities.” In the seven cases in which FRDC has relocated families, those families were moved into homes less than 10 years old and located within three blocks of their former addresses. In one case, a homeowner was able to purchase a home on the same street, she says.

“I don’t worry about gentrification because we have housing types for every income level in our neighborhoods,” Anoliefo says. “Even if there is, it could be a good thing for the neighborhood. When you have 80-year-olds in 4,000-square-foot homes that they can’t take care of, at what point do you convince them to give up and you bring in new people who can afford the bills? That’s what will help maintain the housing stock and protect the value for those who are left.

“We need more people with means to live here again,” he says. “University Circle is seen as an economic engine. If we don’t support it with stable housing, we will continue to have a problem.”

## A REGIMEN FOR RENEWED VITALITY

The two most critical components of vibrant urban neighborhoods are **quality of place** and **jobs**. Neighborhoods that thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be those that can offer inviting opportunities to live, work and play. Cleveland’s neighborhoods that have managed to hold onto jobs and that have developed or maintained an attractive sense of place will most certainly have the best chance for growth and sustainability. Neighborhoods in distress will continue to suffer and decline without a comprehensive plan to leverage distinctive assets. The Greater University Circle Initiative offers significantly distressed surrounding neighborhoods such as Fairfax, Glenville and Hough the “last best chance” for turning the corner on urban decay by leveraging the considerable assets nearby. In addition to offering potential residents unique, engaging quality of place, University Circle’s cultural, medical and educational institutions represent the fastest-growing employment base in Northeast Ohio. University Circle institutions have shown themselves to be powerful economic engines with the potential to generate opportunity for all residents and jolt dying neighborhoods back to life. However, lack of trust, respect, collaboration and understanding can choke off even the most powerful economic generator.

Cleveland neighborhoods must also recognize that the road to recovery is a long one. Reforming education, replatting communities and building assets take time – and will require broad-scale support. “Everyone has a stake in this,” Johnson says. “It didn’t get bad overnight and it’s not going to get fixed overnight.”

Some institutions have already been at this work for a number of years. For example, the Saint Luke’s Foundation has invested heavily in the Mount Pleasant and Buckeye-Shaker neighborhoods, providing leadership and support to help improve the health and well-being of individuals and families. This ongoing neighborhood-based outreach program defines “healthy communities” as those that promote economic development, educational excellence and an attractive living environment. Such commitment on the part of key neighborhood stakeholders will be necessary to restore the vitality and social capital of distressed neighborhoods.

Although the revitalization efforts going on in University Circle may provide the best model for retooling Cleveland’s neighborhoods to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these efforts also demonstrate the considerable cost and effort necessary to connect long-distressed neighborhoods to renewed economic opportunity. Other pockets of

**“Everyone has a stake in this. It didn’t get bad overnight and it’s not going to get fixed overnight.”**

**Vickie Eaton Johnson,  
Fairfax Renaissance  
Development Corp.**

potential exist throughout the city: The Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood is building on the West 65<sup>th</sup> Street Arts District. Tremont has found a recipe for economic gain by courting the up-scale restaurant industry. The St. Clair-Superior neighborhood stands to capture significant employment opportunities and other benefits if the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority relocates to the East 55<sup>th</sup> Street Marina. Each of these illustrate that quality of place, or the potential for it, tends to be determined by a neighborhood's anchoring institutions or amenities. The grim reality for Cleveland is that neighborhoods lacking such amenities will continue to face serious survival challenges. In general, these weak neighborhoods that have no connection to Cleveland's powerful nodes of medical, educational, cultural and industrial establishments do not represent good prospects for reinvestment. The limited resources of Re-imagining Cleveland, the Cuyahoga County land bank and other renewal efforts would be better spent in neighborhoods with better odds for long-term survival, including job creation and economic impact.

There is no "miracle cure" for the chronic wasting disease threatening Cleveland and its neighborhoods. There is no quick fix. In fact, Krumholz, Rokakis and Anoliefo see improving the public schools as the only real cure for ending the city's ongoing decline. "If I were king, my answer to Cleveland's problem would be education," Krumholz says. "I wouldn't spend any money on a Med Mart, sports arenas, moving the port, I would try to get the people of the city educated. I would ... treat education as economic development, which it is."

Beyond this generational goal of a better-educated workforce, there are exercises city and community leaders can begin today for a healthier tomorrow:

- Analyze each neighborhood, block by block, and make the necessary tough choices about where investment dollars are warranted and where they would likely be wasted. Identify assets within neighborhoods that can be built on and channel resources toward developing a unique sense of place and catalyzing work opportunities in support of those anchoring assets.
- Initiate a pilot program to explore a modern version of the Homestead Act. Properties that have limited value and that are unsuitable for future development could be offered up to potential homeowners free of charge. "Urban homesteaders" would be required to live on the property, make improvements and pay assessed taxes. After a period of time, homesteaders would receive title to their properties.
- Expand neighborhood strategies such as Greater University Circle Initiative to include employment incentives that would encourage large, magnet institutions to hire from within the surrounding community.
- Facilitate cooperation among city and state transportation officials to evaluate infrastructure and transportation patterns and trends that complement and enhance the urban living experience. Create policies that spur investment in public transportation and road improvements that improve neighborhoods and support economic development opportunities.
- Direct federal, state and local resources, such as Community Development Block Grant and Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds, in a fashion that is partial to communities that demonstrate coordination across boundaries, sectors and other parochial lines. These would include schools, community development corporations, churches, businesses and nonprofit agencies. Make funding contingent on joint planning and coordination among these neighborhood stakeholders.
- Embrace the sustainability movement and the "greening" of Cleveland neighborhoods. Seek federal intervention for massive demolition of homes and development of green space and urban gardens. Connect all such activities to real employment opportunities or "green jobs" that will give residents the resources and tools to personally invest in the rebuilding and ongoing health and vitality of their communities.

- Analyze crime data to determine whether patterns exist in terms of where and when violent crimes occur. Target more safety resources toward those places and times of increased criminal activity. Invest in block-watch training and community-focused safety and security measures.
- Provide incentives to banks and the Small Business Administration to invest in small to medium-sized neighborhood businesses. In addition to providing access to capital and supplying technical assistance, help local businesses understand how they can position themselves for growth and prosperity in 21<sup>st</sup> century neighborhoods.
- Reduce the number of Community Development Corporations and give neighborhoods incentive to share resources and work together. Facilitate or broker mergers, partnerships and dissolutions among these agencies.
- Expand promising programs that can show quantifiable results in addressing the low educational attainment that is corroding neighborhoods. Also, offer "community visioning" experiences for youth to make them aware of their neighborhood's history and help them understand the significant role they play in its future.
- Learn from national models of innovation, such as The Reinvestment Fund of Philadelphia. With a mission of building "wealth and opportunity for low-wealth people and places through the promotion of socially and environmentally responsible development," TRF has financed 2,400 homes, schools, businesses and clean energy initiatives with \$842 million in investments. TRF's success over the past 25 years has made it a national leader in financing neighborhood revitalization.

Cleveland must embrace a new vision of neighborhood that better reflects 21<sup>st</sup> century realities. We cannot change the economic and social circumstances that have brought us to this grim tipping point, but we can change how we respond to them and how we view our future. As noted earlier, Cleveland's 21<sup>st</sup> century urban neighborhoods will be, by necessity, smaller and greener. We will have fewer schools, but those that remain can be retooled to become more specialized, innovative centers of learning. Anchoring medical, educational, cultural and industrial hubs will generate and maintain pockets of employment, but there will likely be fewer jobs away from these institutions and activities. The focus must be on connecting Cleveland residents to these centers of opportunity and helping them develop the skills they need to access available jobs. Necessary ward redistricting to better reflect population shifts will present an opportunity for community organizing across traditional neighborhood lines and definitions. Crisis has already brought together interest groups that in the past may have worked at cross purposes. Ridding neighborhoods of blighted properties will eliminate havens for criminal activity and allow safety officials to better deploy their resources. Community-based social services will need to be expanded to provide for higher poverty and unemployment rates, but a more compact city and more interconnected neighborhoods will allow these services to be more effectively targeted and managed. The goal should be to ensure that *all* residents benefit from policies targeted toward revitalizing Cleveland neighborhoods. Cleveland needs to lure affluent professionals and middle-income workers back into the city, but redevelopment efforts cannot be at the expense of the poor and people of color. Urban neighborhoods that thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be those that manage to attract a diverse racial, ethnic and economic mix by providing an inviting place to live, work and play.

Far too many of Cleveland's neighborhoods have been suffering the ill effects of a chronic wasting disease. The economic cancers of unemployment, low educational attainment and poverty have left neighborhoods vulnerable to a virulent, opportunistic foreclosure infection. In this weakened state, Cleveland is not the robust city it once was. Nevertheless, it can once again be a vibrant, healthy city. We can emerge from this large-scale devastation stronger, but smaller. What it takes is the right treatment plan and the will to see it through. We need an aggressive but rational plan for recovery, and we need it stat.



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