



Promoting Regional Land-Use Planning in Northeast Ohio

Final report to the Lake Erie Protection Fund
Small Grant 369-09
September 2010

Submitted by
David Beach
GreenCityBlueLake Institute
Cleveland Museum of Natural History
1 Wade Oval Dr., Cleveland, OH 44106
216-231-4600, x3366
dbeach@cmnh.org

This project was funded in part through the Lake Erie Protection Fund. The LEPF is supported by the voluntary contributions of Ohioans who purchase the *Erie...Our Great Lake* license plate featuring the Marblehead lighthouse.

Summary

The Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI), initiated originally by the Northeast Ohio Mayors and City Managers Association, is promoting regional collaboration and sustainable economic development in the 16-county region of Northeast Ohio (much of which lies within the Lake Erie Basin). Leaders of the RPI have realized that meeting their regional goals will require a more coordinated approach to land-use and infrastructure planning.

This project enabled the GreenCityBlueLake Institute (GCBL) to provide expert staff assistance and research to RPI work groups from July 2009 through June 2010, as they thought through the complex issues of creating a recommended framework for coordinated, regional land-use planning. The final recommendation, released in June 2010, was based largely on materials developed by project staff.

The RPI is now working to implement the recommendation with further studies, public education, and promotion of state enabling legislation that will make it easier for communities to collaborate at the regional scale. The initiative builds on planning model of the Lake Erie Balanced Growth Program. More information and documents are posted on the GreenCityBlueLake website at www.gcbl.org/land/regional-agenda/regional-tax-sharing.

Activities and deliverables

In support of the Northeast Ohio Regional Prosperity Initiative's work to envision a framework for regional land-use planning, the project undertook the following work activities:

- GreenCityBlueLake staff attended 21 land-use work group and subcommittee meetings to help shape the discussion, clarify issues, and contribute information. Staff also promoted discussions and distributed information by email and phone outside of meetings.
- Staff provided information about the Ohio Lake Erie Balanced Growth Program and the lessons learned from its development about the possibilities to think regionally about land use in Ohio.
- To help frame the issues, staff wrote "Potential research questions related to regional land-use planning" (document in Appendices).
- To help the work group think about the link between land use and infrastructure costs, GCBL staff compiled background information on "Infrastructure costs and growth patterns in metro regions" (document in Appendices). Staff also provided information on potential methodologies for calculating how much infrastructure costs have increased in Northeast Ohio as developed areas have spread outward from urban cores in low-density patterns of growth.
- To distill the RPI land-use work group's thinking, GCBL staff wrote "Maximizing assets, minimizing costs: A framework for coordinated land-use planning in Northeast Ohio." This document became the basis for the RPI land-use work

- group's interim report, "Planning and Sharing for Regional Growth" (document in Appendices).
- Project staff assisted discussions about hiring consultants to begin developing scenarios of land-use futures in Northeast Ohio.
 - Staff drafted text for the land-use portion of the RPI's June 2010 report, which recommended how to proceed with coordinated land-use planning (document in Appendices).
 - Project documents were posted on a special RPI page on the GreenCityBlueLake website, www.gcbl.org/land/regional-agenda/regional-tax-sharing (copy of web page in the Appendices).

Results

The project had a significant impact on the work of the RPI land-use work group. The group was chaired by Richfield Village Mayor Michael Lyons and was composed mostly of volunteers from planning agencies, infrastructure agencies, businesses, and other local governments. Thus, the research capacity, knowledge, and editorial assistance provided by this project were much appreciated.

The project staff member was able to take on research assignments and draft documents to keep the process moving along. This involved listening well to the work group discussions, distilling the consensus direction of the group, and drafting documents for discussion. Ultimately, the documents developed by the project formed the basis of the group's recommendations for implementing coordinated land-use planning in the region.

Now the RPI is moving into the implementation stage. The work will continue to be challenging and will require a great deal of political salesmanship. The leaders of the RPI will need to persuade more of their fellow local elected officials that the long-term benefits of regional collaboration outweigh the short-term political risks.

But there are hopeful signs of progress. For instance, the RPI's work on regional land-use planning helped to lay the groundwork for Northeast Ohio's August 2010 funding application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Sustainable Communities grant program. If the region receives this funding, the work of regional planning will take another big step forward.

Whatever the future brings, the GreenCityBlueLake Institute staff will remain engaged to support the work of sustainable land use in the region.

Outreach

To disseminate the results, documents from the project have been posted on the GreenCityBlueLake website at www.gcbl.org/land/regional-agenda/regional-tax-sharing.

Background on the GreenCityBlueLake Institute

The GreenCityBlueLake Institute of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History educates the public about the design of ecological cities and how human beings can live sustainably on Earth in the 21st century. It works in the areas of sustainable land use, watershed planning, climate change planning, transportation, building design, and green infrastructure. The Institute works with many partners on projects. As a service to the local sustainability community, it also maintains the interactive GreenCityBlueLake.org website, which tracks the projects and events that are making Northeast Ohio more sustainable. In 2008, the Institute won an Ohio Lake Erie Award for its many years of work on Lake Erie issues under its director, David Beach.

Appendices

“Regional Prosperity Initiative” page from the GreenCityBlueLake website with summary of project and links to documents

“Planning and Sharing for Regional Growth: Land Use Planning Drill Down Team Interim Report” by the Regional Prosperity Initiative

“Growing Our Region’s Future: Regional Coordinated Planning and New Growth Tax Base Revenue Sharing,” by the Regional Prosperity Initiative

“Potential research questions related to regional land-use planning”

“Infrastructure costs and growth patterns in metro regions: Summary of the literature”