



Message from the President

Greetings to you and SPRING! With any luck, by the time we hold our April 22nd Forum, the weather will be suitably seasonal and we will be invigorated and eager as bunnies to hear our presenters.

I must apologize for two unintentional misstatements in the January newsletter. In my zeal to "institutionalize" a format for our meeting dates I said: "Mark your calendars now and save the last Thursday in April, July and October." I ought to have qualified that by saving the FOURTH Thursday of those months, as in the case of April 2004, there are five Thursdays. We will meet on the fourth Thursday of April, the 22nd.

Meantime, our intention to use the City Club met with the obstacle of unavailability on our chosen date. Board member, Rocky River Councilwoman Pamela Bobst has graciously arranged for our forum to be held in her city's Civic Center. Hopefully, we will be successful for the remaining summer and fall forums and hold them at the Embassy Suites in July and the City Club in October.

Our member directory will be mailed to every council member this month. With the focus on regional initiatives and solution seeking evidenced daily in our news media, please determine if your neighboring community is a NOCCA member. If they are not, please make an effort to help us recruit them into the membership and the camaraderie that exists within the organization.

The coming forum topic is HOT! We are indeed fortunate to have such a distinguished panel speaking to us given the number of programs underway to address this subject. Most events are being held at times difficult for many of us to attend. The newspaper writers, the television and radio news commentators, business leaders, civic leaders, all are interested in discussing the several proposals being considered for the fall election.

As policy influencers, our charge to be well informed and articulate about the subject is extremely clear. Our opportunity to be voices in this county wide debate has never been greater. Certainly, our Mayors have a leading role in defining the debate, in the meantime, we are the financial guardians of our communities' resources, and collectively, we have a bigger voice. How easy will it be to sway opinions toward a better outcome for all of the residents in all of our communities without first convincing us, their council leaders.

A March 30th Plain Dealer article illustrated several southern and western suburbs discussions of combining services. The imperative of challenging financial times will lead us all to this type of discussion. NOCCA has a distinct advantage in the well developed, respectful, non-partisan relationships that have been built between its members over our nearly fifteen year history. We excel at sharing best practices, innovative ideas, and mutual concerns. Clearly as council persons, we have compelling reasons as good stewards to be change seekers when change benefits the residents we serve.

With that in mind, I encourage you to make a commitment to attend this very informative program and determine for yourself if change is needed.

Kathryn E. Gambatese
 President, N.O.C.C.A., Inc.

PLAN TO ATTEND THE APRIL FORUM

**THURSDAY,
 April 22, 2004**

**Don Umerley Civic Center
 Memorial Hall
 21016 Hilliard Boulevard
 Rocky River**

**"Back to the Future: A Plan
 for Cuyahoga County
 Government - Do We Need
 the Change?"**

GUEST SPEAKERS:

STEVEN KAUFMAN, Thompson Hine LLP, President, Cleveland Bar Association

MARK S. ROSENTRUB, Professor and Dean, Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs, Cleveland State University

MICHAEL J. THOMAS, Citizen's League of Greater Cleveland

Registration, Meet & Greet	6:00 pm
Welcome	6:45 pm
Program, followed by Q & A's	7:00 pm
Program Concludes	9:00 pm

Forum is FREE OF CHARGE for paid members. Non-members and non-member guests are \$10 each. Individuals unable to attend who fail to give a 24-hour notice of cancellation will be billed.

Please make your reservations by
 Monday, April 19, 2004
 to Cheryl McNulty
 Phone: 216-382-3456 Fax: 216-382-5105



JANUARY FORUM HIGHLIGHTS: "MOVING FROM DEVELOPMENT TO REDEVELOPMENT"

In the last two years, Cuyahoga County has lost about 1% of its population, or about 15,000 people. Some suburbs in the county lost population, while some gained. The years 2000-2002 showed gains in outlying counties: Geauga 2%; Lake 1%; Medina 5%; Portage 1%; and Summit 1%. Greater Clevelanders are moving to the outlying counties, and growth and wealth seem to be moving to the counties around us. **How healthy is Cuyahoga County? How do fully developed counties grow while maintaining a strong tax base? What can we do about it?** These and other issues were addressed at the January forum.

Our first featured speaker, Dr. Thomas Bier, Executive in Residence at the Center for Housing, Research and Policy at the



Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University, has been speaking on these issues for some time. Dr. Bier talked about the impact of how the dwindling vacant housing stock has affected our communities by not being able to add any real estate, and thus not being able to grow our tax base. This is the hard reality of becoming a fully developed community and not being able to add new development. Real estate development enables the tax base of a community to grow and expand. This is true at the local and county levels. Where we are today is roughly where we were in the 1930's, we've just extended the territory farther out. Now, Cuyahoga County accommodates about 1/3 of the new housing stock and 2/3 is out in the other counties, which

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**BACK TO THE FUTURE:
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CUYAHOGA COUNTY GOVERNMENTAL BLUEPRINT?**

From all corners of Cuyahoga County and beyond, there is a realization that it is time for a change from independent action to regional action. Revitalization of northeast Ohio's economy is the whirlwind that is stirring the air to move towards a regional development strategy to stop the "brain drain", attract new business to the county and raise the quality of life. Part of that strategy includes a renewed interest in streamlining county government from its present elected Board of three Commissioners, Prosecutor, Coroner, Sheriff, Clerk of Courts, Engineer, Treasurer, Auditor and Recorder. This interest is not new. The most recent past interest occurred in February 1995 when then Commissioners Boyle, Hagan and Weingart appointed the **Citizens Committee for County Government Reform**,



headed by Kathleen L. Barber. The Committee's mission was "To initiate

discussion, direct research and recommend actions for county-wide governing that will promote

accountability and enable county government to deliver high quality public service in the most efficient, cost effective and equitable manner." The committee issued a final report on April 30, 1996 recommending a council-executive form of government for the county. The recommendation was never put on the ballot for a vote of the people.

Today, there are not one but three plans in the making to put a change in county government structure on the ballot this November. One is from the private sector, another is from a coalition of a citizen's action group and a political party, and another is to be from the current County Commissioners. If a plan's initiators are not the current County Commissioners, its proponents must gather over 38,000 valid voter signatures on a petition by midsummer to place the plan on the ballot in November. The current County Commissioners can simply place a plan on the ballot without a petition.

It is said that the removal of offices from direct vote to appointment as recommended by the 1996 Plan and

others involves a loss of patronage for a political party in power and a possible gain by the party not in power. It



is also said that a more efficient county government with a regional outlook requires that all cities and townships give on specific issues on occasion for the common good. For the foreseeable future, though, it is doubtful that "for the common good" will evolve in Cuyahoga County to only a county government such as happened in Louisville, Kentucky recently. Above all, it is said that a more streamlined county government structure will be better suited to handle our metropolitan problems. What do you say?

Come to the NOCCA forum on April 22nd to hear the talks on change, to share your opinions, and to be better informed on changing the structure of Cuyahoga County government.

*Submitted by
Steven Bennett
City of University Heights*

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JANUARY FORUM

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is why they are growing. This is driven by where there is vacant land on which to build. Cuyahoga County is at the point where there is very little land left to build on. The only way this county has a future is to find new places to build real estate. The only place where there is substantial amounts of space is in the City of Cleveland, approximately 77 square miles. Euclid, for example, has land to redevelop, but it is a problem to wipe out what is already there. What has to occur, in order to keep this county moving in a positive direction, is a progressive recycling of old, obsolete real estate.



From the left: Steve Bennett, University Heights; Mary Ann Drobnick, Valley View Village; Brian Parker, Shaker Heights; Mike Gallagher, Strongsville; Michelle Stys, Parma; Danita Love, Highland Hills Village; Don Saunders, Bedford; Dorise Thompson, Warrensville Heights; Cleve Svetlik, Pepper Pike; and Kathryn Gambatese, Richmond Heights

The second speaker, Chris Ronayne, City of Cleveland Planning Director, spoke about the state of the City of Cleveland. He shared the city's real issue of the \$22 million in taxes lost and how it nets out to the \$1 billion in family income lost in the first years of the next century. The City of Cleveland is the place where suburbanites bring family and friends from out of town. Since 1999, half the population lost has been due to urban sprawl. Cleveland is not competing with Chicago, New York or San Francisco. It's time to figure out how to compete in the State of Ohio and in the Midwest for population. Mr. Ronayne stated that economic diversity in a city that was once an industrial manufacturing town is a key. This diversity can be achieved by offering a variety of sectors of the service economy, cultivating the arts and entertainment economies, bringing high technology firms into the city, and building off the assets of University Circle and Cleveland Clinic. For example, The Clinic brings approximately \$360 million in annual payroll and 1,500 job opportunities to one location with annual salaries averaging \$70,000. And in 2002-2003, some \$25 million in revenue was generated from entertainment events held in Cleveland. Planning opportunities are abundant and are being explored with various options, so keep your eyes open to the changes happening in Cleveland. "Competitive places" need to focus on localism and they need to forge ties with their schools and they need to be sustainable and diverse. They

need to be "places" that are recognizable. Restoring and reshaping is about selling our identity to a global audience. We are forced as a region/group of municipalities to compete, and one of the ways in which to compete is to build "PLACE". It is not just a location. Places are special "places" people remember, migrate to and want to live near and spend time near. Cleveland is working to build competitive "places" as an antidote to urban sprawl, to bring their share of population back to the "Center City", which they hope will be the suburban communities' second home.

*Submitted by
Danita Love
Village of Highland Hills*



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*Compiled By
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