Why Ohio stoops to garage-sale planning

The Baby Boomers' retirement may depend on the health of cities

Cuyahoga County: Worrying about sprawl since the 1940s

A modest proposal for a Habitat

The organization of Ohio EPA

Good words

Peace smells like a flower.
Peace smells like baby shampoo.
Peace smells like hot chocolate.
Peace smells like the fresh ocean.
Peace smells like Valentine candy.
Peace smells like freshly mowed grass.
Peace smells like a hot bubble bath.
Peace smells like a morning in Florida.
Peace smells like strawberries.
Peace smells like the earth after it rains.
Peace smells like clean sheets on my bed.
Peace smells like home-made applesauce.

-- Paul Ruffin, Grade 2
Roxboro Elementary School, Cleveland Heights

The failure of land use reform

If it wasn't a lynch mob, it was darn close. At least that's how it seemed to State Rep. Arthur Brooks of Cleveland Heights.

It was 1976, and Brooks was in southern Ohio to lead a public hearing about strengthening land use controls and planning. The audience of rural residents reacted to the idea like it was a Communist plot.

"They threatened to hang us up from the nearest light pole," says Brooks, who is now an attorney in Cleveland. "They didn't want anyone telling them what to do with their land."

The hearing was part of a two-year study by the Ohio Land Use Review Committee, which was established by the General Assembly to "review present land use laws, programs and systems of land use controls at the state, regional, county and local levels..." and to recommend improvements.

The big questions: How to simplify and coordinate planning for the sensible use of Ohio's 26 million acres? How should citizens and their elected representatives decide what places to develop and what places to protect? How should they balance local and regional impacts of developments? How should they balance current and future needs?

After two years of work, public hearings around the state, and the expenditure of several hundred thousand dollars, the review committee produced a glossy report with sound recommendations. Unfortunately, the
It matters where you live

I fired my insurance agent recently. There was nothing wrong with her service, nothing wrong with her as a person. But, from my perspective, she did a terrible thing. She moved.

I first signed up with her because her office was at the end of my street in Cleveland Heights. I could walk there in a minute. Then, after eight uneventful years, I received a letter announcing that she was moving her office out to the Solon/Orange area -- joining the East Side sprawl along Route 422. No doubt the move was a smart business decision. She could keep her existing clients and attract new ones in a rapidly developing area of bigger homes and costlier cars.

When she called for our annual "insurance check-up," however, I told her I was finding another agent.

"What?" she exclaimed. "Why?"

I tried to explain that I didn't want to patronize someone who had moved out to the fringe of the metropolitan area. I didn't want to support new development that saps population and tax base from the core of the region. I didn't want to contribute to the suburban sprawl that makes everyone drive more, pollute more, waste more energy.

"But it won't be any inconvenience," she insisted, not quite getting my point. "You won't have to come out here. I'll drive in to meet you."

In the end, though, she gave in graciously. She thanked me for my business and recommended another agent in Cleveland Heights.

For me, it was a small (trivial?) gesture, but I was glad I made a fuss. We often criticize people for smoking in public places, using pesticides on their lawns, or failing to recycle, but we seldom criticize them for one of the most important environmental choices -- where they choose to live and locate their businesses.

For the health of the region, we need to make this an issue. When your friends proudly announce that they're moving out to a new development in Bainbridge, Hudson, Brunswick or Westlake (out beyond the urbanized area reasonably required to meet the housing needs of the region's population), don't offer congratulations. Tell them they have no business consuming farm land and clogging up the highways.


We've moved, too

EcoCity Cleveland has moved a few blocks closer to the urban core of the region. Our new address is 2841 Scarborough Road, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118. Our new telephone and fax number is (216) 932-3007.

-- David Beach
Editor
Can the Baby Boomers ever retire?

By Robert Jaquay

Can suburban Baby Boomers ever retire? Much depends on what happens in the inner city.

For those born between 1946 and 1964 the American Dream of owning a nice home in a safe neighborhood with good schools remains a most worthy goal. Yet, paying off the mortgage on a suburban home will not assure financial freedom in old age.

The Baby Boom generation is 30% of the population. Their collective movements, purchases and habits have already vastly influenced this nation -- and will for decades to come. Two Boom trends affect us all -- suburban sprawl and onset of retirement. They are related; the financial security of Baby Boomers depends on the communities built today. Whether these communities can support us in the future is a vital political issue.

First, consider that the Baby Boom generation loves suburban living even more than their parents; their choices have fueled sprawl. Couple this with the Boomers' impending retirements. In 2011 the first Boomers reach retirement age, with the entire age group turning 65 at the end of the 2020s.

Financing retirement benefits for the Baby Boom generation is a major challenge for the federal government. The nation will produce retirees faster than taxpaying workers for many years to come. The financing of retirement is made worse by the fiscal curse of better health. The longevity of the Baby Boomers is expected to increase, with lives spanning 100 years or more not uncommon. (Willard Scott will be extremely busy.)

Consequently, a steadily increasing percentage of each worker's paycheck will be taken in taxes to pay for Social Security and Medicare. The 1992 Annual Report of the Social Security Trust Funds projects that by the year 2040 taxes for these programs will soar to consume between 38% to 53% of wages earned!

Numerous ideas, ranging from lowering immigration barriers for young, foreign workers to pushing back the age of retirement at full benefits from 65 to 67 years or older, have been offered to deal with the situation. Throughout the debate over Social Security one thing is clear: more Americans need to be productively employed to support retiring Boomers. This is where the suburbs come in.

Suburban sprawl is a real impediment to creating the work force of the future. Since the end of World War II, government investment in highways and other types of radial infrastructure, such as sewers, water lines and transit routes, has opened up for development vast tracts of land on the outskirts of cities. From coast to coast, developers seized these opportunities to build residential neighborhoods and commercial facilities to attract families away from the city, but within easy commute of it. Educated, well-employed Baby Boomers have been buying. Employment is following.

New office towers and manufacturing plants are now located at interchanges along highways miles away from traditional downtowns. These "edge cities" hold jobs that a generation ago would have been located in a traditional downtown. For those employed in an edge city, it is possible to live even farther from the old central cities and maintain a reasonable commute from home to work.

Those remaining in the core cities are increasingly poor and separated from work (and their children are excluded from our best funded schools). Education, housing and work are the real opportunities we have to offer, and the poor in the old neighborhoods have been left behind. The very title of Jonathan Kozol's book makes this point -- "Savage Inequalities."

Can we really expect children educated in ill-equipped city schools and separated by many miles from the location of our economy's newest opportunities to be fully productive in the decades to come? And to support middle-class Boomers in their dotage?

Self-interest requires members of the Baby Boom generation to be deeply concerned about the growing isolation of poor children in the inner cities of America. For Boomers, the strength of their retirement safety net -- Social Security and Medicare -- depends as much upon the future prospects of poor urban children as the opportunities available to their kids and the kids they know growing up next door.

Direct efforts to improve inner city schools and to improve opportunities for their students are essential, yet not enough. We must think about how all parts of the metropolitan area fit together.

Do we have any practical ideas to bridge both geography and age groups? Recent efforts to merge the common interests of suburbs and cities hold promise for binding American generations. "Urban growth boundaries" of Portland, OR, for example, have had considerable success in maintaining development within specified areas, curbing haphazard sprawl and strengthening housing demand downtown. The Minneapolis-St. Paul area has initiated a pioneering "tax-base sharing" arrangement among local governments in a seven-county area, helping to create an even playing field in attracting industries and providing public service throughout its region. Environmental cleanup and reuse of "brownfield" sites in Cleveland is viewed as one important strategy to slow urban abandonment. "Public-private partnerships" have financed rebuilding Baltimore's Inner Harbor. Such experiments have heightened awareness of connections between city and suburb.

If we redouble our efforts to build communities providing opportunity for all our young, we also assure future tax base so vital to support our aged. We must remember that our future depends on all children -- whether they attend a school in an upscale suburb or a school in a poor urban district.

Robert Jaquay is a lawyer on the staff of the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, a member of the EcoCity Cleveland Advisory Board and, incidentally, a Baby Boomer.
**Ohio for sale**

From p. 1 report was placed on a shelf and forgotten. Only one of the recommendations -- to allow the formation of agricultural districts -- was ever enacted.

**Genesis of the study**

Actually, it was surprising that the land use review committee was authorized in the first place. But, according to Brooks, a number of factors prompted the General Assembly to accept at least a study of land use:

- Other states, such as Florida, Oregon and Vermont were developing state-wide land use planning tools. And the federal government was talking about a national program.
- Ohio was changing in ways that concerned many citizens. Between 1900 and 1970, the amount of land devoted to urban uses increased from about 1% of the state to 11%. Meanwhile, urban population density was decreasing because new development was occurring primarily in sprawling suburbs.
- Larger developments -- shopping malls, power plants, highways -- were having regional impacts far beyond the local municipality in which they were located, but surrounding communities often had little or no say in the decisions which permitted these developments. A tiny municipality like North Randall, for example, could reap tax benefits from the construction of Randall Park Mall, while its neighbors had to suffer with the resulting traffic congestion, alteration of stormwater drainage and other changes.
- Larger units of government could make development decisions that affected local communities. For example, the state could entice Honda to plop an automotive assembly complex in the farm fields of Marysville, a decision that completely transformed the local community.
- Areas of the state -- many rural townships -- had no controls over growth at all, not even zoning.
- Government authority and responsibility for land use decisions in Ohio were fragmented. State agencies administered 50 separate programs directly or indirectly affecting land use. Federal and local agencies administered many other programs. The state land use statutes were complicated and open to erratic interpretation by the courts. In short, the whole system was uncoordinated and needlessly complex -- for citizens and developers and public officials alike.

**Exercise in futility**

Based on the above concerns, the Ohio Land Use Review Committee was formed in 1975. From the start, it wrestled with how to protect communities from unchecked development while protecting individual property rights and local control (home rule) over land use decisions.

The committee's recommendations were never adopted. In the end, however, the status quo won out. There were too many red flags in the committee's recommendations -- township zoning, planning for low- and moderate-income housing, tax-base sharing between municipalities -- and little support for change.

A major obstacle was Ohio's strong home rule tradition, according to Peter Henderson, who staffed the land use committee and now directs the Cuyahoga Valley Communities Council.

"Home rule is almost a religion here," he says. Henderson adds that the committee
Still on the shelf

Here are the major findings and recommendations of the Ohio Land Use Review Committee reported to the state legislature in 1977. Except for the provision for agricultural districts, none of the recommendations have been adopted. Most are still good ideas which would help Ohio manage development in a more rational, coordinated way.

**Strengthening the role of municipalities**
- The planning commission of each municipality should prepare a comprehensive municipal development plan -- a detailed description of the desired land use patterns and development policy of the municipality. It would address the type, location, timing, and intensity of development as well as the public improvements needed to support such development. It would be adopted by the legislative body, and thus provide a legal basis for land use regulation.
- Municipal development regulations and capital improvements programs should conform to the adopted development plan.
- Municipalities should be enabled to combine regulatory measures (e.g., zoning, subdivision regulations, housing and building codes) in a single development code.

**Enlarging the role of townships**
- Since land use regulatory measures are nonexistent or inadequate in many townships in Ohio, townships should be enabled to create a township planning commission and adopt a comprehensive township development plan, which would then provide the basis for a township zoning code.
- The township development plan should be consistent with the provisions of an adopted countywide plan.

**Achieving regional coordination**
- In each county there should be a countywide planning commission whose membership represents local governments and reflects the population distribution in the county. Currently, county or regional planning commissions are optional, as is the participation on them by local governments. Thus their plans may never be implemented.
- A countywide general plan should be prepared, adopted, and periodically updated by the county planning commission. The plan would provide a framework for coordinating the more detailed plans by local governments and guide the capital expenditures of county government.
- The county plan would map future development patterns, the location of major transportation facilities, open space and recreation areas, and critical resource areas such as prime agricultural land and scenic river corridors. It also would delineate urban service areas beyond which services such as city water and sewer would not be extended. And the plan would estimate future housing needs in the county.

**Improving land use regulation**
- State enabling laws for zoning and subdivision regulation should be revised to permit flexible standards which will allow preservation of unique natural features through creative site and building design. Statutes also should be revised to foster meaningful public participation in the regulatory process.

**Coordinating state agencies**
- So that the programs, regulations and projects of state agencies are consistent with the land use plans of local governments, the Governor should be given the authority and responsibility to coordinate state agencies. The General Assembly also should clarify the agencies' roles regarding land use.
- A state-local government commission should oversee state recognition of countywide plans.

**Reducing fiscal disparities**
- The state should reduce fiscal disparities among local taxing districts, perhaps with a tax-base sharing formula like the one in the Twin Cities area. Such sharing would reduce incentives for communities to raid one another for industry.

**Preserving agricultural land**
- Individual landowners should be authorized to create agricultural districts voluntarily. These would reduce governmental pressures which discourage a landowner's long-term commitment to farming.
- The state should adopt a policy which encourages agricultural land use and prevents the state's capital investments from adversely affecting productive agricultural areas.

**Regulating large-scale development**
- Major developments may affect land use patterns, traffic congestion and public investments of whole regions, yet a single community can allow them to be built. Therefore, a single, uniform regulatory process for large developments should be created by the state. The standard application would include an estimate of the multi-jurisdictional effects of the project, including the costs and sources of revenue for any public improvements. Responsibility for evaluating these impacts would rest with the area-wide or county planning agency.

**Protecting critical resource areas**
- Each of Ohio's counties contains critical resource areas -- such as aquifer recharge areas, flood hazard areas, geologic hazard areas, mineral resource areas, significant natural areas, scenic river corridors and wetlands -- which are environmentally significant to the future of the state. A cooperative process is needed between state and local governments to identify these areas, evaluate their unique features and select protection techniques to be implemented by local governments.
Garage-sale planning in Ohio

In the 1920s, Ohio was a national leader in urban planning. But no more. Today, Ohio lags far behind other states.

The following speech by Stuart Meck, a past president of the American Planning Association and the former planning director of Oxford, Ohio, discusses why the state has fallen behind and why efforts to reform land use planning have failed. The speech was presented at a conference on Growth and Redevelopment Issues and Strategies for the '90s, which was sponsored by the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission and the Cleveland Area Board of Realtors in 1991.

By Stuart Meck

It is not without some measure of irony that I speak to you today. I fall into that somewhat grumpy, heterogeneous mass of individuals called "former Clevelanders." Some 20 years ago, as a young graduate in city planning from Ohio State University, I left the Cleveland area frustrated, unable to find the kind of job that would enable me to practice the type of planning that I was trained to do and which I believed needed to be done.

Northeast Ohio's communities, it seemed to me, were clearly unresponsive, even hostile, to addressing long-range issues affecting their growth and development through the planning process. The fact that you are holding this conference today (and sitting here listening to me) is a measure of how much things have changed.

Ohio: An early leader in planning

Ohio, in the 1920s, was perhaps America's leader in city planning. In the Cincinnati area, we had Alfred Bettman, a brilliant attorney, the city's law director, and later the chair of its planning commission. Bettman was the principal draftsman of the Standard City Planning and Zoning Enabling Acts, published and promulgated by the U.S. Department of Commerce. These model acts created the American system of planning and land use control and still, some 65 years later, you can find their basic structure embedded in the planning enabling legislation of most states.

The 1926 U.S. Supreme Court case, Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co., which established the constitutionality of zoning, came from Ohio. The case was argued by two Clevelanders, James Metzenbaum, for the village of Euclid, and Newton D. Baker, for Ambler Realty. Alfred Bettman filed a friend-of-the-court brief which many credit as changing the minds of the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, persuading them to uphold this newfangled thing called zoning.

National experimentation with growth management

Up until the 1970s, land use planning and regulatory systems in the U.S. were primarily concerned with putting the right things in the right places. But, as environmental degradation, congested highways, affordable housing, and growth and how to deal with it became hot local political issues in our country, many rapidly urbanizing communities in the U.S. began to experiment with growth management systems, land use and public facilities systems that direct not only the type and location of development but also the rate at which it occurred.

Dominant among them were development timing or adequate public facilities ordinances, like those of Ramapo, New York. These allowed development to occur only when specified public facilities were shown either to be available to serve the development or instead provided by a developer at his cost ahead of the long-range schedule, the capital improvement program, adopted by the local government. Florida has a concurrency provision in its state planning laws: local governments cannot approve a development permit unless it can be shown that the necessary supporting infrastructure and related community facilities either exist at the time the permit is issued or are committed for construction concurrent with the impact of development. The infrastructure and facilities must at least meet state level-of-service standards.

Other communities like Petaluma, California, established building permit allocation systems in which only a certain number of building permits would be awarded in a city for a given year through a sophisticated permit award competition.

Some established urban service areas -- boundaries beyond which water, sewer and other urban services would not be extended and beyond which urban-level development would not be allowed.

Impact fee ordinances are currently popular, as communities, particularly those without local income taxes, look for additional sources of revenue. They ask that a developer pay a fee to cover the proportional costs, both direct and indirect, for community facilities required for new development. Using devices called linkage fees, some communities are requiring developers of market rate housing, and office, industrial and commercial space, to contribute funds to build or help rehabilitate affordable housing where such housing is in short supply.

Thus, there is tremendous ferment and experimentation going on in planning throughout the United States, all of it the result of a
more balanced, comprehensive vision of what it takes to produce good communities, the delicate combination of attention to the environment, good design, adequate infrastructure, jobs, and the provision of housing for all income levels and life styles.

**States revamp planning legislation**
Much of this experimentation has been fueled by the efforts of the various states. Since the mid-1980s, states like Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, Maine, Delaware, New Hampshire, Georgia, and Florida (which is, far and away, the most advanced) have revamped their state planning and land use enabling legislation. Currently, nearby states like Michigan and Pennsylvania are considering major changes to theirs. Virtually all of these changes reflect the importance of a strong, even mandatory, planning process underpinning land use regulation and program of public expenditures, with a heightened degree of state-level policy review.

While I'd like to say that the state of Ohio has matched the ground-breaking, visionary efforts of other states, it hasn't. In fact, it has consistently and shamefully fumbled on issues of planning and growth management, dragging its feet behind those of the other states.

**Ohio land use review committee**
Nearly 20 years ago, Ohio took a stab at land use reform. The Ohio General Assembly created a bipartisan group in 1975 to review land use laws, programs and systems of land use control at the state, regional, county, and local levels and to make recommendations to the state legislature. The committee was chaired by former State Senator Kenneth Cox, with then Representative Arthur Brooks, from Cleveland, as vice-chair. It held two sets of public hearings and published two reports; the final report was issued in 1977.

Among its recommendations:

- The planning commission of each municipality should prepare a comprehensive plan for adoption by the legislative body.
- Municipal development regulations and their administration should conform to the adopted municipal comprehensive plan.
- Each municipality should prepare and adopt a capital improvement program which conforms to the adopted municipal plan.
- A single uniform procedure for large-scale development review -- review of shopping centers, sports complexes, second home developments, industrial parks -- should be enacted by the General Assembly to address projects with regional and statewide impacts.
- A countywide planning commission should be established to oversee the preparation of a countywide general plan and set up a process for designating environmentally sensitive areas.
- Regional tax-base sharing should be studied to eliminate beggar-thy-neighbor/winner-take-all local government competition for commercial and industrial property tax base.

While the report did not anticipate the need for growth management techniques of the type I mentioned earlier, its recommendations would have produced a number of needed and long-overdue reforms in the state's planning laws, arising from a view that the Ohio of the 1970s was not the Ohio of the 1920s.

**Fate of land use reform in Ohio**
Senator Cox introduced an omnibus bill incorporating the committee's recommendations in 1978. It sank like a stone.

Some reasons:

- Opposition of agricultural interests in Ohio: They were worried that the legislation would place limitations on farmers to have their cake and eat it, too -- to get tax breaks for preferential agricultural use valuation (the valuation of property at its farm, rather its speculative use) and still be able to sell it for development whenever they wanted to with no or minimal penalty.
- Opposition of some local government associations. They were against the bill because it limited local government discretion, curtailed arbitrariness, seemed to require a "reason" for governmental actions, required consistency, and called for expenditure of funds for planning prior to regulation.
- A four-track system in Ohio with vigorously competing interests -- counties, townships, statutory plan municipalities, home-rule municipalities -- with no incentive to work together for a single system or across local government boundaries to minimize adverse impacts of development and spread around its benefits.
- A highly dispersed urban state with each urban area seeing issues in a different way -- the due process you get in Cleveland is different than the due process you get in Cincinnati.
- Lack of support by a small, narrowly-focused environmental movement, now mostly concerned with landfills and groundwater rather than broader issues of land management which animate environmentalists elsewhere.
- No growth management movement or impetus to start one -- no perceived mismatch between rapid development and lack of supporting infrastructure. Planning legislation was viewed as anti-economic development. Ohio was trying to hold onto what growth it had rather than try to slow it down.
- A state government that had no activist tradition either at the executive or legislative levels in the areas of housing, infrastructure or the environment, much less in the provision of local government assistance.
- Finally, the impact of what I call the "garage-sale school" of land use regulation, the still-prevalent philosophy here in Ohio that local government planning operations can be run sloppily (like a garage sale), with little attention to detail, because there were no terrible (meaning monetary) consequences for screwing up or endlessly jacking around developers and home builders with procedural delays.

**That was then. This is now.**
I think it is time we unearth that old report of the Ohio Land Use Review Committee and see what wisdom it has to offer. This conference today suggests to me that, as we move into the '90s, there is a compelling recognition that we will need the best planning tools available to continue make our towns livable. I think we have long moved past the point where Ohioans will tolerate their communities, and, indeed their state, run like a garage sale and looking that way, too.

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While I'd like to say that the state of Ohio has matched the ground-breaking, visionary efforts of other states, it hasn't. In fact, it has consistently and shamefully fumbled on issues of planning and growth management.

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**EcoCity Cleveland © May 1994**
Concern about suburban sprawl in the region goes back at least to the 1940s. One study by the Cuyahoga County Regional Planning Commission estimated that we could meet the needs of a growing population and still allow a quarter of the county to remain rural by the year 2000, as shown on the map below. It could have happened that way, but it didn’t. Instead, we have spread development thinly over the entire county and now into adjoining counties.

**Possible Family Distribution and Densities: 1948 - 1998**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>Occupied Family Units</th>
<th>Acres of Land Not in Use - 1948</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Urban</td>
<td>165,000</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer Urban</td>
<td>159,000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>61,500</td>
<td>5 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>2 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Total</td>
<td>485,000</td>
<td>9 1/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** "Our Citified County: A Study of Cuyahoga County and Its Land Use, Now and For the Future," Cuyahoga County Regional Planning Commission, c. 1948.

EcoCity Cleveland © May 1994
Can we afford all this sprawl?

- To waste all this land?
- To spend extra millions on sewer and water supply?
- To raise the cost: of policing, of schooling, of fire protection, of transportation?

Some of it for rural living.

**Space enough**

The following is from "Our Cittified County: A Study of Cuyahoga County and Its Land Use, Now and For the Future," Cuyahoga County Regional Planning Commission, c.1948.

Cuyahoga County, as a whole... has the space to solve its land use problems successfully...

Almost every estimate of growth for the county has predicted less than 635,000 families, even by the year 2000. The map and table on [this page] show what the county might be like then. They show that we could leave 82,000 acres, almost a quarter of the county, for rural living, for farming and forests.

There is more than enough room for everyone! Space for work and play. Space to grow food for some of our market baskets. Space for woods to preserve our water and climate and to furnish outdoor recreation.

We want to eliminate those sprawling "spotty residential developments," their waste of land, their waste of municipal service. We want to go on farming our agricultural land. We want to return our dead [undeveloped] subdivision land to usefulness.

To do this we have to change our land policy as well as our land planning. We must:

- Revise land valuation to encourage agricultural uses.
- Preserve good sites for industrial growth.
- Discourage the selling of land in wasteful "bowling-alley" lots [long, narrow lots off a main road].
- Provide zoning and subdivision regulations which will help good land practices and discourage bad ones.
- Reassemble the badly laid out, badly located subdivisions which are still undeveloped.

... There is more than enough space and no need to overcrowd anywhere, if we don't waste the land.
SAVING WHAT'S LEFT

A modest proposal for a Habitax

Even with the best planning and growth management controls, it's hard to protect significant natural areas in the face of strong economic forces. One solution advanced by John Katko, president of the Elyria-based Friends of Wetlands, is to make developing natural areas relatively more expensive than developing in existing urban areas. He proposes to do this by imposing a "habitax" on developments that destroy ecological functions. Such a tax would pose interesting questions about how to put a value on nature (a task for the new field of ecological economics). For example, how much is it worth to society for a wetland to prevent flooding, purify stormwater, recharge groundwater and provide wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities?

By John Katko

The United States has very little left of several types of natural habitat. Only about 5% of the original forest ecosystems that covered our land still remains. Nationally, well over half of our wetlands have been destroyed by agriculture and development, and in many places the loss has been much higher. California and Ohio lead the nation in wetland loss, with only 5-10% of the original wetland habitat remaining.

Most people have become aware of the terrible effects of unregulated urban sprawl on the last vestiges of our natural habitats. The destruction of wetlands in particular damages the public's quality of life because the functions and values of these areas are lost -- their ability to improve groundwater quality, reduce erosion, abate flood effects, and mitigate droughts, not to mention provide critical habitat for a wide array of plants and animals, many of which are rare or endangered.

Because America is so large and bountiful, in the past the supply of wild areas and their functions and values seemed inexhaustible. This perception has strongly influenced our national character and our way of doing business. The argument, right or wrong, has been that developers could always destroy these areas and their functions and values without undue loss to the public welfare.

But now that situation has passed. We are very concerned about the further destruction of natural areas because of flooding problems, pollution of our air and water, a growing, alarming scarcity of many critical resources, and the rapid rate of species loss around the world and in our own back yards. Thus we are witnessing a growing discussion about how we can conserve our remaining natural habitat by redeveloping abandoned or under-used areas in urban settings which have already been denatured (often called "brownfields") rather than destroying more natural areas or restorable sites such as some farmlands ("greenfields").

Performing ecological functions for the public good: Wet woods in Lorain County.

Brownfields/greenfields

Developers have accurately pointed out that the destruction of greenfields is driven by market forces in that it is more expensive to redevelop brownfields than it is to develop greenfields. Much of the reason for this lies in the difficulty in dealing with current environmental protection regulations, including Superfund cleanup costs and permissible levels of toxins at development sites. The suggestion made by developers is to find ways to ease the administrative, regulatory, and financial burdens on them that are associated with environmental protection, so that redevelopment of brownfields would become more attractive. An example of this strategy is a bill currently in the Ohio legislature, SB 221, which would provide streamlined regulatory processing that many environmentalists fear would lead to the reduction of environmental standards. But there is an alternative to encouraging redevelopment of brownfields by making this cheaper. We could also make destruction of natural and restorable areas more expensive by imposing a tax -- a habitax, if you will -- on any development on greenfields. Remember, the functions and values of these natural areas are critical to the public good, and the public has a right to be reimbursed for their loss.

Levying a habitax on these functions and values would be a way of structuring them into the market system, something that we have never really done.

To be effective, the habitax would have to be quite substantial -- high enough to render brownfields relatively financially unencumbered. The rate of the tax could be structured according to such criteria as ecological value, biodiversity, genetic importance, and restoration potential (for instance, a farmed wetland might have great value if its restoration were to provide critical breeding habitat for a local population of salamanders in a nearby woodland). These criteria could be established via comprehensive surveys of extant and restorable habitat in the state.
The goal of the habitat tax should be to render destruction of additional habitat so prohibitively expensive that the tax would generate very little income. However, whatever income was generated should be devoted to administering the tax and to identifying, acquiring, restoring, and managing lands whose functions and values as natural habitat would increase the public welfare. No income should go to such ends as reducing the deficit or funding education, worthy as these ends might be. And care would have to be taken that the tax doesn't simply end up creating and enriching additional government bureaucracy.

The point at which the tax should be administered is an interesting question. It could be applied as a sales tax, but there are obvious problems with that strategy. It could be applied whenever a development permit was applied for; an approach that would be direct and comprehensive but complicated and costly to administer. A simpler but less direct approach might be to apply it when zoning is changed. A habitat tax could also be assessed as Section 401 (Ohio EPA water quality damage) or Section 404 (Army Corps wetlands destruction) permits are granted. This, however, would not address the destruction of non-wetland habitats.

Speaking of Section 404 permits, wouldn't a habitat be double jeopardy? After all, the Corps currently can require a developer to reduce the loss of wetland functions and values through mitigation -- the replacement of this loss through the creation, enhancement or restoration of these functions and values elsewhere. So, in a sense, a habitat tax would ease the mitigation burden on the developer and have him or her simply pay for the state or another agency to protect the public good instead.

One problem, however, with mitigation has been that many projects are poorly designed and ill-executed by developers, whose specialty is destroying habitat, not creating or restoring it. As a consequence, many of these mitigation projects have failed, and the public has lost out. Thus a habitat tax in addition to mitigation requirements could be justified on the ground that these mitigation efforts do not guarantee the prevention of function and value loss.

Furthermore, current mitigation practice aims at replacing functions and values on a one-for-one basis or slightly more, but a habitat tax could allow the state to replace them on a ratio which could better serve the public. In addition, a habitat's dampening effect on greenfield development would give the public time to identify and acquire critical habitat and remove it from the pool of developable land. The existence of a habitat also would tend to depress the value of land for development purposes, making it more affordable to protection agencies, public or private.

An effective habitat would end life as they know it for developers, and the chances are good that they would not be pleased with the idea. But the public not only has the right to protect itself against losses caused by private interests, it has the responsibility to do so -- if not for the present then for future generations.

For more information about Friends of Wetlands, write to P.O. Box 2016, Elyria, OH 44036. Memberships are $5, more if largesse permits.

### Wetland losses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Province</th>
<th>Percent lost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entire Great Lakes Basin</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Sensitive areas to protect

- **River corridors.** Natural rivers, streams, or creeks and adjacent land that possess important water conservation, flood prevention, scenic, biologic, historic, or outdoor recreation value.
- **Natural areas.** Undeveloped stretches of natural land (including steep slopes and erodible soils) or water that because of their values and functions should be preserved in the public interest and therefore protected from development.
- **Groundwater.** Subsurface waters in rock, sand, or gravel which are the present or future sources of public or private water supplies. The holding area, or aquifer (water-bearing) is recharged from precipitating rain and snow. Recharge land may become contaminated, which could pollute the aquifer or, it might be covered over when buildings, roads and parking areas are constructed, thereby reducing the amount which could be withdrawn.
- **Geologic areas.** Land forms subject to hazardous downward movement of soil and/or rock masses, slope failure, or landslides because of unique geologic, hydrologic, or topographic conditions.
- **Flood zones.** Areas of past or planned development where life and property are threatened by documented flood damage, as in 100-year flood zones.
- **Wetlands.** Marshes, swamps, bogs, fens, and other wetlands with characteristic wet soil and vegetation which aid in flood protection and pollution abatement and which provide critical nursery areas and primary habitat for a variety of plants and animals.
- **Coastal zones.** Limited and irreplaceable stretches along freshwater and saltwater bodies that are rich in natural, commercial, recreational, industrial, and aesthetic resources and opportunities.

*From Common Groundwork: A Practical Handbook for Preserving Rural and Urban Land, available from the Institute for Environmental Education, 18354 Haskins Road, Chagrin Falls, OH 44022 (543-7303).*

**EcoCity Cleveland • May 1994**
Hagan vows no NOACA games

Last month we pointed out that George Hadden of the private engineering firm, CT Consultants, was an alternate for Lake County Engineer Thomas Gilles on the board of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA). Well, somebody must have been listening because at this month's NOACA meeting, board president Timothy Hagan lectured his colleagues on the ethics of serving on the NOACA board.

"If your alternate has business connections, you could put this board and yourself in one hell of an embarrassing situation," said Hagan, a Cuyahoga County Commissioner. "From now on the staff should tell me immediately if they think there's any potential for conflicts of interest... No one's going to have a ball game going on here at all."

At press time there was no word yet on whether Hadden had been replaced.

Regional traffic survey:
Counting cars, not bikes?

Ironically, the home of EcoCity Cleveland was one of 1,600 lucky households in the region selected at random to participate in a "Household Travel Survey" being conducted by the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency and RTA. Travel information collected by the survey will become the basis for transportation planning in the future. The last update occurred way back in the 1960s, so for many years local transportation planners have been using outdated information.

Anyway, one of the first questions the telephone pollster asked us was how many "vehicles" we have in our household. We responded by asking whether they included bicycles as vehicles.

"Well, no," she said. "It includes cars and trucks."

"But we consider bikes to be vehicles, too."

There was a puzzled silence. The most efficient form of transportation didn't seem to fit on her questionnaire.

Mary, Mary promotes sprawl

Thanks to developers like the Wolstein Group, Plain Dealer society columnist Mary Strassmeyer is having to travel farther and farther to cover Cleveland's elite. She recently journeyed out to Aurora in Portage County to write a gushing piece on the opening of the Barrington Country Club, the centerpiece of the Wolstein's exclusive new golf and tennis community.

The Wolsteins are making it a habit to bulldoze wetlands and farmland for new country clubs. They have offered to buy out the Oakwood Club in Cleveland Heights and South Euclid and relocate it farther east so they can build a commercial development. They want to do the same with the Acacia Country Club in Lyndhurst.

Not country for long

It's amusing to read the real estate ads for new subdivisions on the edge of the metropolitan area. Listen to this sales pitch for the Derbyshire Estates in Auburn Township: "Nestled in a scenic corner of southern Geauga County. Surrounded by rolling terrain untouched by shopping malls and busy street corners. Yet a stone's throw from a new major thoroughfare [SR 422] that brings all of Northeast Ohio into your reach."

In reality, such developments quickly destroy the country life they pretend to embrace. In the case of Derbyshire Estates, which is located on SR 44, the peaceful isolation won't last long. With a new interchange at SR 422 and another interchange planned at the Turnpike, SR 44 could soon be wall-to-wall retail stores and fast food joints.

There oughta be a law

Bay Village residents were shocked recently when a developer tore down a century-old house on the lakefront just west of Bradley Road and then proceeded to cut down more than 20 large trees and completely alter the slope of the land with a bulldozer -- all to clear the site so he can build a large, new home.

Neighboring residents found that Bay apparently has no laws to prevent such demolition. So now they are researching tree protection ordinances, hillside and slope protection ordinances, architectural review boards and historic district designation for older homes.
No RTA on Earth Day?

Thousands of people, perhaps tens of thousands, never made it to the EarthFest celebration April 24 at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. In rather un­ecological fashion, they were jammed on the highways leading to the zoo and were turned away by police.

The crush of cars demonstrated the need for expanded public transportation to and from EarthFest, says Scott Sanders, co-director of the sponsoring Earth Day Coalition. "We definitely want to have an alternative next year."

In the past, RTA has provided loop buses from Cleveland Public Square to the zoo, but RTA dropped its sponsorship two years ago. This year, Earth Day had to hire its own buses to take marchers to Public Square.

EarthFest attendance was estimated at 70,000 people (the zoo stopped counting at 51,000). It was the biggest crowd in the zoo's history, according to Sanders.

A green judge?

One of the "Tremont 7," who were defendants in the SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) brought by the Osterland asphalt company, wrote to us with praise for Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Judge Daniel Gaul:

"At the last pre-trial hearing (which was held in open court, a highly unusual approach), Judge Gaul told the Osterland attorneys, our attorneys, the Plain Dealer, the Sun Press, and all of the defendants: 'In the past, corporations have used the law to rape the environment. It appears that now community groups are using the law to protect it.' I think this is an extraordinary statement from a very green judge. His attitude will be significant, I believe, when we and other environmentally-oriented litigants eventually take these polluters to court. If there is anything you can do to spread the good word about Judge Gaul, please do so."

Differing priorities

The "experts" and the general public often have different ideas about what are the most serious environmental problems. Ohio EPA's Comparative Risk Project asked participants at its recent kick off event (which included many environmental professionals) to list the problems they feel pose the most serious threats to human health and the environment in Ohio. The top three issues were lack of land use planning, wildlife habitat loss, and point source pollution. When the same question was asked of people at an Earth Day celebration on the Statehouse lawn, the top three issues were air pollution, water pollution, and lack of environmental education.

The state's Comparative Risk Project, as well as the Environmental Priorities Project for Northeast Ohio, seek to reach consensus on the most serious threats.

Barrens watcher earns award

The Cleveland Museum of Natural History recently presented its annual Conservation Award to Terry Adams of Ashtabula County. Adams is a founding member of the stewardship committee for the North Kingsville Sand Barrens, one of the museum's natural areas and the only sand barren and oak savannah in Northeast Ohio set aside for conservation.

Adams monitors the sand barrens daily, acting as the equivalent of a reserve manager. Recently, she convinced railroad workers to halt spraying herbicide along the reserve boundary that borders the Conrail tracks. Many rare plants occur there, including native lupine and racemized milkwort. Later, she and other volunteers cleared debris from the track margin so that it could be mowed instead of sprayed.

Bioregional competition

More than 90 teams of high school students from around Northeast Ohio competed in Envirothon '94 at the Lake County Metroparks' Penitentiary Glen Reservation on May 9. Envirothon is a national program that tests students' knowledge of soils, forestry, wildlife, aquatic ecology and environmental issues.

The top four teams from Northeast Ohio -- Keystone FFA, Badger, Loudonville High School FFA and Medina County Career Center -- will go on to the state competition in June.

Eco-videos

A local filmmaker, Peter Griesinger of Gates Mills, has released three videos that explore how economics can take the environment into account -- An Introduction to Ecological Economics, Investing in Natural Capital, and Conversations for a Sustainable Society. For ordering information, contact Griesinger Films, 7300 Old Mill Road, Gates Mills, OH 44040, tel. 423-1601.

Stockpiles along the Cuyahoga.

Pulling back from the brink

A giant eyesore along the banks of the Cuyahoga River may soon be moved. The Ohio EPA is requiring that Aluminum Waste Technology Inc., 4181 Bradley Rd. in Cleveland, remove and/or relocate its storage pile, which currently is spilling into the river. As part of a new water pollution permit, the company also will have to restore and revegetate the riparian corridor along its facility.

Ohio EPA staff members believe it's the first time in Ohio that a water pollution permit has included a clause requiring stream bank restoration.
From torpedoes to scooters
A prime example of economic conversion from military to civilian production can be found right here in Cleveland. Westinghouse's Naval Systems Division, which produced torpedoes for 30 years, has designed and is now manufacturing an electric motor-driven scooter called the EVader. The company was able to adapt an existing assembly line facility, as well as utilize its experience with advanced batteries and painting technologies.

The EVader is advertised as easy to operate with a top speed of 30 miles an hour and a recharge time of six to eight hours. With a range of up to 50 miles, it could be ideal for short, environmentally-correct commutes for people who can't muster enough of their own energy to ride bikes.

More endangered species
The Ohio Rare Plants Advisory Committee met in January and added 12 species to (and deleted seven species from) the state's list of rare native plants. Five of the added plants are in northern Ohio:

- **Ovate Spikerush** (*Eleocharis ovata*) -- Known from only a couple of sites along Lake Erie.
- **Least Spikerush** (*Eleocharis parvula*) -- Only one site is known, from Lake County along Lake Erie.
- **Coarse Smartweed** (*Polygonum robustius*) -- Only a few sites known, in Northeast Ohio.
- **Coastal Little Bluestem** (*Schizachyrium scoparium var. littorale*) -- This grass is known only from a few Lake Erie beaches in Northeast Ohio.
- **Two-scaped Bladderwort** (*Utricularia geminiscapa*) -- Two populations known, both in Portage County.

The Ohio rare plants list is compiled by the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Permits to pollute
Here are some Ohio EPA actions of interest from recent weeks. For complete and up-to-date lists of permit activities in your county, watch for weekly legal notices in your local newspaper. For more detailed information, call the Ohio EPA Northeast District Office in Twinsburg, 425-9171.

P.S. Thanks to *The Plain Dealer* for starting to classify legal notices with the rest of the classifieds. The notices are much easier to find when they're not scattered randomly through the paper.

**Settlements**
- Elyria Foundry, Elyria, failed to submit a timely Toxic Release Inventory report, fined $34,000.

**Confidentiality claims**
- North East Chemical, Cleveland, waste generator identification data from 1992 not subject to public disclosure.

**Water pollution permits**
- CIE Lakeshore, Avon Lake and Eastlake plants; cooling water additive for zebra mussel control.
- Akron wastewater treatment plant, permit renewal application for discharge to Cuyahoga River.
- Novacor Chemicals, Copley, discharge to Pigeon Creek.
- Unocal Chemicals, Schaumburg, discharge to tributary of Tinkers Creek.
- Engelhard/Harshaw Chemical, Cleveland, treatment of nickel-contaminated groundwater.
- BP Oil, Bainbridge, groundwater treatment system for hydrocarbon contamination.
- Amherst wastewater treatment plant, permit renewal application for discharge to Beaver Creek.

**Air pollution permits**
- Thermal-Tron, Cleveland, solid/infectious waste incinerator.
- Kilroy Steel, Cleveland, fugitive dust source -- sandblasting.
- Ford Motor, Cleveland Casting Plant, core line.
- Aztec Peroxides, Elyria, liquid organic peroxide process.
- Class A Coatings, Lorain, surface coating line.
- Blessing Funeral Home, Mentor, cremation of human remains.

**Water/sewer line extensions**
- Montville Lakes Subdivision Phase 1, Montville Twp.
- Water main extension in Lakewood Road, Ravenna.
- Lakeside Villages Subdivision 4B, North Olmsted.
- Hillary Place Condos, Richmond Heights.
- Terrace View Estates No. 2, Mentor.
- Deer Creek Estates Subdivision, Willoughby.
- Fairways Estates Subdivision No. 1, Avon.
- Marvyck Place Condominium, Northfield Center.
- Brainard Road sewers, Pepper Pike.
- Brecksville Pointe Subdivision Phase 4, Brecksville.
- Pine Lakes Village Subdivision Phase 5A and 5B, Strongsville.
- Garrett Cove Subdivision, Eastlake.
- Heatherstone Village Subdivision No. 2, Painesville.
- Shoreham Abbey Subdivision, Mentor.
- East Hampton Subdivision No. 3, Carlisle Twp.
- Reserve of Avon Lake Subdivision No. 2, Avon Lake.
- Summerhill Subdivision No. 1, Avon.
- Fields Subdivision Phase 1, Avon.
- Barrington Subdivision No. 2, Aurora.
- Oakpoint Commons, Hudson.
Sierra Club Annual Show June 18
"Land of Nine Dragons: Vietnam Today," a spectacular slide show by adventurer and award-winning photographer Nevada Wier. Two showings at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. See the healing of the land and 70 million people, who now live with their first semblance of peace in centuries. Tickets are $10 in advance and $12 day of show. Make checks payable to Sierra Club, specify early or late show, and mail to Sierra Club, 63 W. 5th Avenue, Berea, OH 44017.

June 4
Black River Rendezvous canoe race from the Lorain County Metro Parks Burr Oak Area to the mouth of the river. Sponsored by the Friends of the Black River, call 322-4187 for information.

June 4
Downtown Cleveland rocks, a tour of the stones the make Cleveland buildings, led by Joe Hannibal, curator of invertebrate paleontology at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. Call the museum at 231-4600 for registration information.

June 4 and 5
Citizens Forum on Lake Erie Ecology and Economy at the University of Windsor, Ontario. For more information, call the Citizens Environmental Alliance at (519) 973-1116.

June 6
Monthly meeting of the Northeast Ohio Greens, 7:30 p.m. at University Center 368 of Cleveland State University.

June 10
Sierra Club executive director Carl Pope will speak at noon at the City Club of Cleveland, 850 Euclid Ave. His subject will be "The Economics of the Global Environmental Crisis." Call 621-0082 for more information.

June 10
The Environment as a Public Health Issue: A Minority Environmental Issues Symposium sponsored by the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the William O. Walker Rehabilitation Center, 10524 Euclid Ave. in Cleveland. Suzanne Binder, chief of the Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, will be the keynote speaker. The symposium is free. Register by calling 443-3700.

June 12
"The Amazing and Little-Known History of the River at Cuyahoga Falls," a muddy hike led by Elaine Marsh of the Friends of the Crooked River. Depart at noon from the Cuyahoga Falls municipal parking lot on Front Street across from the Sheraton. Call 666-4026 for details.

June 18
Friends of the Black River annual picnic at the Lorain County Metro Parks Mill Hollow Reservation. Call 322-4187 for details.

June 19
Northeast Ohio Greens potluck/social gathering, 4 p.m. at Lynne Hannah's, 3536 Tolland Road, Apt. 11, Shaker Heights.

June 20
Environmental Workforce Symposium sponsored by the Environmental Careers Organization, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Sheraton City Centre Hotel in Cleveland. Registration fee is $80. Call 861-4545 for details.

June 21
Summer solstice, the longest day of the year.

Turtle Island Bioregional Gathering VI
Join bioregionalists from across Turtle Island (North America), August 14-21, on the bank of the Ohio River at the mouth of Otter Creek, near Louisville, KY. This is an opportunity for Ohioans to participate in a national bioregional gathering close to home. For information, contact Shepard Hendrickson, 341 N. Hamilton, Indianapolis, IN 46201, (317) 636-3977.

Board meetings of regional agencies
Here are the regular, monthly meeting times of agencies that are shaping our region. Call to confirm.
- Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority, 101 Erieside Ave. Cleveland, 241-8004. Friday of first full week at 10 a.m.
- Cleveland Metroparks, 4101 Fulton Parkway, Cleveland, 351-6300. Second and fourth Thursdays at 9 a.m.
- Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, 323 Lakeside Ave. West, Cleveland, 443-3700. Second Tuesday at 2 p.m.
- Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA), State Office Building, 615 Superior Ave. NW, Cleveland, 566-5100. First and third Tuesdays at 9 a.m.
- Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), 686 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, 241-2414. Board meeting second Friday at 9:30 a.m. Transportation Advisory Committee third Thursday at 10 a.m.
- Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, 3826 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, 881-6600. First and third Thursdays at 12:30 p.m.

Moving?
Please send your change of address at least four weeks in advance to make sure you don't miss any issues.
The organization of Ohio EPA

Unless otherwise noted, all area codes are 614.

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