



Energizing Our Economy – White Paper

Introduction

Our success as a county will depend on how well we can meet the challenges of competing in a global, 21st century economy.

Cuyahoga County has much to offer to this new economy. Our diverse communities provide a good quality of life at a more affordable cost-of-living than elsewhere in the country. We are a county of experienced and hard working people. Our geography offers many advantages—our location positions us as an ideal hub for the Great Lakes region, and the lakefront offers great promise for recreational, residential and commercial development. Inland, the Emerald Necklace of parks stretching through the county is second-to-none. We are a world-leader in the health-care field, thanks to top-notch institutions such as University Hospitals and the Cleveland Clinic; the development of the Medical Mart provides a chance for us to heighten that profile further. We are poised for success. However, that success is not guaranteed. It requires innovative leadership, smart-decision-making, and a real commitment to the success of the county—and the region—as a whole.

To be more competitive, and to make this success a reality, we need to use our land effectively, attract businesses and investment, and prepare our residents to compete in the labor market of the future. By being smart about how we engage these issues, we can energize Cuyahoga County and strengthen our global economic stature.

Land Use

As the largest and most densely populated county in Ohio, Cuyahoga County is in a unique position to lead the state in promoting land use reform. Additionally, there is a real opportunity to work with our neighboring counties to promote smarter land use policies. The Greater Cleveland area now covers approximately twice the land it did 50 years ago, but remains home to about the same number of residents. This expansion created large swaths of vacant land in and around the Cleveland city center; suburban cities are beginning to see the same phenomenon. The blight created by these vacancies has real consequences for county residents—financial, aesthetic, and safety-related.

As a councilperson, Phil will advocate for policies to curtail sprawl and its effects. We must encourage businesses and people to redevelop our brownfields and move into our vacant buildings. Phil will support the county in continuing to issue bonds for the Brownfield Redevelopment Loan Program, which assists in the assessment, remediation and acquisition of contaminated sites.

Specifically, Phil is interested in creating an incentive-based system for would-be developers. Those choosing to develop land within the county would have the opportunity to qualify for funding and financing opportunities. For example, Phil will support continuing the Vacant Property Redevelopment Strategy, which provides assistance in returning vacant properties to viable economic assets. Also, Phil will promote issuing bonds to continue the Commercial Redevelopment Loan Program. This program will further help developers overcome barriers to full reuse of abandoned, idled, or underutilized commercial, industrial, and institutional properties. This program is a great asset for directing primary focus toward urban areas and first-ring suburbs, such as the cities in District 11.

Such a policy, and others like it, will:

- create population density;
- promote transit;
- increase demand for property;
- put more county residents to work;
- make our neighborhoods safer; and
- increase property values for all county residents.

Development Fund

Currently Cuyahoga County allocates \$41.7 million, or a little over 3 percent of its 2010 budget, towards economic development. The majority of these funds focus on providing financial and technical assistance to businesses for start-up and expansion. A strong economic development plan helps increase the tax base and to enhance a region's economic vitality.

We can augment our competitive position within the global economy by becoming a place where start-up companies can come to grow. Fortunately, the county has an excellent model for what a development fund should look like in the Economic Development Loan Fund program. Phil will support continuing and expanding this program, which helps businesses to expand and create jobs by leveraging private investment into the community. By providing funding through a competitive application process we can become home to the next generation of industries and products.

To fund such an effort, Phil will propose investing a portion of the funds the county currently allocates towards economic development, as well as the dollars saved through the county's efforts to become more operationally and financially efficient. By having county dollars invested, we'll be better positioned to work with the business community to gain their support and investment in the fund as well. Phil will work with the new administration to encourage this support from the business community.

Developing a comprehensive plan that spans both arenas of county responsibility—economic development

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and service delivery—will allow us to use our overall budget more effectively.

Workforce Development

Cuyahoga County's current unemployment rate of 8.9 percent is unacceptably high. We can only truly energize our county if residents have access to good, well-paying jobs. For many households, access to employment is their single greatest need. However, as we create jobs within the county, we must provide access not only to the jobs of today, but also those of tomorrow. Through effective workforce development programs, we can achieve this goal.

To truly prepare residents for 21st century work, we need to fundamentally rethink how we create and fund workforce development programs. One example is further promoting such efforts as the Tri-C Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering program as a model for what we can provide. Also, Phil will support the Employment Connection (a collaborative workforce system of the county and Cleveland's Department of Workforce Development), which helps bring qualified job seekers together with area employers.

Overall, these workforce development programs must:

- work collaboratively with employers hiring newly trained workers;
- train people for today's jobs; and
- receive funding based on results, not just enrollment.

As a councilperson, Phil will advocate for the types of workforce development policies that embody collaboration, relevance, and accountability.

By focusing our efforts on better land use, nurturing new and small businesses, and preparing our residents for 21st century jobs, we'll effectively energize our economy in Cuyahoga County.

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