

## **Outmigration and the First Suburbs Coalition**

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The Western Reserve has a rich history — linked through the years by riverboats, industrial innovation, ethnic diversity, and now medical and service industries. Until recently, our economic base was centered within the city, with small, manageable communities scattered nearby and linked to the city by the accessibility of jobs. As Bishop Pilla points out, “suburbs and city are linked in a single economy.”

Today, that history of healthy balanced growth is in serious jeopardy. After “40 years of building new suburbs while abandoning old cities,” our region now faces “serious obstacles to economic growth” (Bishop Pilla). Indeed, the tax base in Cuyahoga County is in particular jeopardy:

- The residential property tax base outside of Cuyahoga County is growing 63% faster than the tax base within the County.
- One-third of Cuyahoga County’s homesellers move “up and out” to a neighboring county, taking their tax dollars with them.
- The outmigration follows the new highways . . . straight out of the county.

As a County, we are steadily disinvesting in our oldest communities, our landmarks, our shared cultural heritage—in short, in our history.

Sprawl is a national problem, which has been abetted by governmental policies and in many cases actively subsidized with tax dollars. Unchecked, it will separate people from jobs, clog our highways and create clusters of disposable cities across the nation. In 1996, the First Suburbs Consortium was formed to preserve and protect our oldest communities by insisting that public dollars for new development be matched with equal dollars for reinvestment. For perhaps the first time in Ohio, there is a common vision between farmers (preserving farmland); environmentalists (preserving green space) and urban, political leaders (preserving established communities).