



Monday, June 8, 2009

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Key State Leaders Gather to Develop Strategies to Revitalize Cleveland's Economic Competitiveness

Cleveland Summit Defines Recommendations for Alignment with State Action Agenda

Cleveland – With unemployment in Cleveland at 8.7 percent and over 10 percent statewide according to the U.S. Labor Department, Greater Ohio is convening a summit today with key state leaders to examine alignment of the Cleveland urban revitalization agenda with state reforms. Lt. Governor Lee Fisher, Ohio House Speaker Armond Budish and Mayor Frank Jackson will join over 400 key corporate, civic, political, academic and philanthropic leaders from the Cleveland area to focus on a renewed commitment to the Restoring Prosperity to Ohio agenda.

The Restoring Prosperity to Ohio Initiative is a non-partisan research, policy development, and organizing initiative led by Greater Ohio and the Brookings Institution focused on revitalizing the state's core communities and reinvigorating the state's economic competitiveness. The summit builds a platform for change to address the multiple crises in Cleveland, and all of Ohio, with state reforms in the drivers of prosperity: infrastructure, workforce, innovation and quality of place.

"Cleveland's crises mirror deterioration in other Ohio cities, therefore many of the Cleveland fixes can be replicated elsewhere in the state," said Lavea Brachman, Co-Director, Greater Ohio & Non-Resident Brookings Institution Senior Fellow. "The fixes and replication cannot be done without state reforms – it's a moment to align state, federal and local policies."

The Cleveland Mini-Summit builds on the momentum and success of the Brookings/Greater Ohio Restoring Prosperity to Ohio Summit held last fall, which launched the Restoring Prosperity to Ohio Initiative and unveiled a state reform agenda. The Cleveland summit is the first in a local convenings series that Greater Ohio will host throughout Ohio, in conjunction with local partners.

"In this time of economic and fiscal crisis, the state has to commit to targeted, integrated investments in the assets that drive prosperity," said Bruce Katz, Vice President & Director Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institution. "These assets are concentrated in core communities like Cleveland. Ohio's prosperity depends on the prosperity of its core communities."

In particular, discussion will center on finding revitalization and stabilization strategies for Cleveland in terms of their job market, their industrial base, their physical footprint, and their ability to build on their existing assets, at a metro-wide, not just city scale. Cleveland, like other Ohio cities with the exception of Columbus, is shrinking in population but its physical size has remained the same, leading to destructive effects on the tax base, the real estate market, and the community fabric. Particularly hard hit by high foreclosures, a specific panel addressed Cleveland's foreclosure crisis and its aftereffects of abandonment and neighborhood decline, helping to identify a new vision and strategies that will revive its housing stock and revitalize its communities.

Cleveland has been engaged for a few years in several local economic development practices that align with the Restoring Prosperity Initiative "playbook," helping it regain competitiveness, including leveraging anchor institutions, such as University Circle; building on assets, like the Lake Erie waterfront; and targeting resources with market potential, like the Euclid Corridor.

Participants agree that there is a critical need to "reimagine" Cleveland and the state and institute governance reform, creating a new political culture of collaboration and consolidation across jurisdictions. Discussants recognize that the state is not taking up this urgent charge yet. The state plays a critical role in how these new strategies ultimately advance the urban revitalization agenda in Cleveland.

The summit is being co-hosted by Greater Ohio, a non-profit research and advocacy group based in Columbus and Policy Bridge, a nonprofit policy organization based in Cleveland, in partnership with the Maxine Goodman Levin College Forum Program. Sponsors for the event included: Fund for Our Economic Future, The Cleveland Foundation, RPM International, Inc. and the Cleveland Clinic.

Comments from today's gathering, along with upcoming convenings in other Ohio communities, will help to shape a final report to be released in late 2009 by Greater Ohio and Brookings. Additional information is available at www.greaterohio.org.

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Greater Ohio (www.greaterohio.org) is the state's "smart growth" organization. We promote – through research, public education and grassroots advocacy – public policy to grow Ohio's economy and improve the state's quality of life through intelligent land use. Toward this end, Greater Ohio works to advance policies and programs that revitalize urban and metropolitan areas, strengthen regional cooperation, and protect Ohio's open space, natural resources and farmland. We are non-partisan, non-profit, and foundation-funded. Greater Ohio's office is located in Columbus, Ohio.