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## **Greater Ohio White Paper Offers Recommendations to Reshape and Renew Ohio's Largest Cities**

**Analysis distributed at White House, Brookings Institution summit  
exploring innovative strategies for auto-dependent regions**

**Columbus, Ohio** – Columbus\*, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Toledo, Akron, Dayton, Canton and Youngstown have been the drivers of Ohio's economy for most of the 20th century. Today, however, these "Big Eight" cities are experiencing sustained, long-term population loss, turning them into Ohio's "shrinking cities" and prompting city and state officials to ask: How will they reshape and reinvent themselves?

A white paper released today by the Greater Ohio Policy Center and the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program lists 10 policy recommendations to guide leaders as the cities undergo a physical transformation. "Both Ohio's large and many of its smaller cities are in a transitional phase, and reshaping them for the next economy will require local, civic, philanthropic, business and state leaders to take affirmative steps and adopt a new way of thinking. Our white paper outlines recommendations to help them address the demographic, land use, vacancy and abandonment and other related challenges they face, embrace opportunities that exist, and build on their assets," said Lavea Brachman, Greater Ohio co-director, Brookings Non-Resident Senior Fellow, and a co-author of the report, *Ohio's Cities At A Turning Point: Finding the Way Forward*. She added, "The issue confronting these cities – and the state and surrounding metropolitan area – is not *whether* these cities will have different physical footprints and more green space than they do now, but *how* it will happen."

The state has much at stake in helping the cities to regain their footing: According to the white paper, Ohio's seven largest metro areas surrounding these cities are home to 71 percent of its population, 76 percent of its jobs, and 80 percent of the state's gross domestic product.

The white paper and its contents were distributed today at the "Auto Communities and the Next Economy: Partnerships In Innovation" summit to launch a discussion on how to align local, state and federal resources to boost auto-dependent cities reeling from the economic crisis. The summit, held in Washington, D.C., was sponsored by the White House Council on Automotive Communities and Workers; the U.S. Department of Labor; the Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institution; and the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities.

According to the white paper, the following seven premises must frame any vision for recreating the physical footprint of Ohio's largest cities:

- These cities contain significant assets for future rebuilding.
- These cities will not regain their peak population.
- These cities have a surplus of housing.
- These cities have far more vacant land than can be absorbed by redevelopment.
- Impoverishment threatens the viability of these cities more than population loss.
- Local resources are severely limited.
- The fate of cities and their metropolitan areas are inextricably inter-connected.

Specific recommendations from *Ohio's Cities At A Turning Point* include the call for joint regional planning and economical development; targeted, strategic investment of resources; prioritization of state funding to cities adopting proactive plans that address their population loss and need for land reconfiguration; and local government consolidation where appropriate. One of the recommendations advocates for the creation of an anchor institution transformation zone program to replace the expiring urban enterprise zone program. An asset for many of the "Big Eight" cities is that they already have strong permanent institutions, such as universities and medical centers, which form a basis for revitalization, Brachman said.

Another recommendation promoting passage of comprehensive land bank reform became reality last month with passage of the county land bank bill, House Bill 313, which cleared the way for 41 additional counties with populations of more than 60,000 people to form and operate countywide nonprofit land banks.

Research from *Ohio's Cities At A Turning Point* influenced another major report released by Greater Ohio and Brookings Institution in February: *Restoring Prosperity: Transforming Ohio's Communities for the Next Economy*. That report outlines a plan to help all of Ohio regain its footing in the emerging global economy.

*Ohio's Cities At A Turning Point* was co-authored by Alan Mallach, a Non-resident Senior Fellow at the Metropolitan Policy Program of the Brookings Institution, where he works on foreclosure issues, neighborhood stabilization and the revitalization of older industrial cities, and a Visiting Scholar in the Community Affairs Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. He has been engaged in studying and implementing urban policy since the 1970s.

*Ohio Cities At A Turning Point* is available online at

<http://greaterohio.org/files/quick-downloads/shrinking-cities-paper.pdf> and  
[http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2010/0518\\_ohio\\_cities\\_mallach\\_brachman.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2010/0518_ohio_cities_mallach_brachman.aspx).

The *Restoring Prosperity* report is available online at

<http://greaterohio.org/files/quick-downloads/restoring-prosperity-report.pdf>.

About Greater Ohio Policy Center

*Greater Ohio, the state's "smart growth" organization, promotes – 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 advances policies and programs that revitalize urban and metropolitan areas, strengthen regional cooperation, and protect Ohio's open space, natural resources and farmland. Based in Columbus, Greater Ohio is non-partisan, non-profit, and foundation-funded. For more information, please go to [www.greaterohio.org](http://www.greaterohio.org).*

\*Columbus has been growing, but only as a result of annexation. Columbus inside its 1950 boundaries has lost much of its population.