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Northeast Ohio Citizens Speak: Individual Citizen Interviews Data Analysis Final Report

Mark Chupp

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Northeast Ohio Citizens Speak

Individual Citizen Interviews
Data Analysis Final Report



Citizen Interviews Conducted
August 2005 - May 2006

**Prepared by the Data Analysis Team
Cleveland State University
August 2006**

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(See Introduction for contact information)

Voices & Choices



www.voiceschoices.org

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INTRODUCTION

Voices & Choices is an 18-month public engagement process that has involved tens of thousands of citizens and leaders across Northeast Ohio in creating a shared action agenda for revitalizing the region's economy. In this process, Voices & Choices offered the opportunity for citizens to interview each other, and capture in writing their opinions, values and vision of a better future. This document captures some of the essence of those citizen interviews.

Voices & Choices is a project of the Fund for Our Economic Future, an unprecedented multi-year collaboration dedicated to transforming the economy of the region. The Fund consists of over 70 philanthropic organizations from across Northeast Ohio. Voices & Choices is being directed by *AmericaSpeaks*, in partnership with the Universities Collaborative, a consortium of Northeast Ohio universities. *AmericaSpeaks* is a non-profit organization, based in Washington, D.C., committed to elevating the role of the people's voice in public decision-making.

Voices & Choices engaged people of the region to create a shared vision and a common set of economic priorities for the future of Northeast Ohio. Based on the shared set of priorities, Voices & Choices is developing an action agenda for transforming the region's economy. The ultimate goal of Voices & Choices is to transform the region's economy, so Northeast Ohio will become a place where businesses want to locate, where people – young and old – want to live and build a career and family, and where residents feel proud and sure of their quality of life.

Phase 1 of the 18-month process included citizen interviews and leadership workshops. Thousands of citizens participated in the self-directed interviews, where citizens responded to an invitation to interview each other. In later phases, Voices & Choice convened a Regional Town Meeting of over 750 Northeast Ohioans in November of 2005, engaged thousands of citizens in facilitated Community Conversations, and held a second workshop for leaders. On-line engagement has also increased civic participation through "Tough Choices" surveys. A final Regional Town Meeting will be held in September, 2006. In all, Voices and Choices will have "touched" citizens over 20,000 times.

From August 2005 through March 2006, approximately 3,500 citizens from across Northeast Ohio interviewed each other. The interview design was based on Appreciative Inquiry, intentionally focusing on the region's assets, strengths, and core values as well as citizens' vision for the future. Interviewers and participants were recruited from all 15 counties determined to be part of Northeast Ohio. The Data Analysis Team randomly selected 1,006 of those interviews, proportionally representing each county, and analyzed two questions: "What makes Northeast Ohio and your community special?" and "What is your vision for the region in the next 10 years?" The numbers of interviews for each county appear below with the percentage that each county's general population represents out of the entire 15-county region.

This report summarizes the analysis of those 1,006 representative interviews of 3,500 total interviews submitted. The purpose of this document is to give the reader an overview of the

breadth of topics that interest NE Ohioans in improving our region as well as some insight into the depth of care and potential of citizens, leaders and thinkers. These insights will serve to continue the transformational dialogue in the region and bring new hope and new strategies into the common exchange of our day-to-day lives. We hope this report will be inspiration for those who are seeking input into their planning, as well as foundation for further research into what makes NEO special and worth attending to in its next developmental phase. We are committed to the region ourselves and hope we can be of further service to those seeking the will of the people as they plan changes impacting all of our economic futures.

The report includes a summary of the major themes identified in each of the two questions along with a detailed analysis of the most frequent themes. These themes are then analyzed by county, when there were significant differences from one county to another. In addition, themes are analyzed by pertinent demographic characteristics to see, for example, if rural respondents were more or less likely to identify a theme as opposed to urban or suburban respondents.

Table 1: Sample Distribution Across Counties

Counties	Number of Interviews	Percent of Total Sample	Percent County Represents Out of Regional Population
Mahoning	67	6.6%	6.2%
Medina	35	3.5%	3.6%
Lorain	73	7.2%	6.9%
Stark	84	8.3%	9.2%
Ashland	15	1.5%	1.2%
Ashtabula	29	2.9%	2.5%
Cuyahoga	333	33.1%	33.9%
Trumbull	52	5.2%	5.4%
Columbiana	31	3.1%	2.7%
Lake	40	4.0%	5.5%
Portage	38	3.8%	3.7%
Summit	136	13.5%	13.2%
Geauga	23	2.3%	2.2%
Carroll	7	0.7%	0.7%
Wayne	28	2.8%	2.7%
TOTAL	1,006	100%	100%

The Data Analysis Team was based at the Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University and consisted of Dr. Mark Chupp, Kathy Hexter, Susan Nelson, Naomi Sikes-Gilbert, Molly Schnoke and Anne Swanson. To learn more about the research team and our wishes for the future of our region, go to the appendix at the end of this document.

For further information contact Mark Chupp, who is now on the faculty at the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University, 10900 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44106. To contact Mark by phone, call 216-368-5157 or email him at mark.chupp@case.edu. Data from all citizen interviews belongs to the Fund for Our Economic Future and is accessible through Cleveland State University, a member of the Universities Collaborative.

METHODOLOGY

Citizen interviews resulted from a general invitation to all of Northeast Ohio to participate in the Voices & Choices process. Citizens were encouraged to interview other citizens, writing down the responses on a standard questionnaire and submitting them to the Voices & Choices office. Voices & Choices staff organizers conducted outreach to ensure that a diverse cross section of the region participated in each county. Organizations and corporations were also encouraged to host interview sessions, through which its members would interview one another. Several high schools, for example, opened their doors to the organizers who facilitated interview sessions, resulting in hundreds of interviews from teenagers. As a result, over 3,500 interviews were submitted that came from all 15 counties and even some additional counties surrounding Northeast Ohio.

Hand-written responses to interviews were then entered into an electronic database for analysis purposes. Due to time and financial constraints, not all interviews were entered into the database and not all questions were analyzed. We determined that a sample of 1,000 interviews would provide a robust sample for analysis. The research team used one primary criterion for selecting the sample of interviews—county of residence of the respondent. Given the nature of the outreach and participation in interviews, the pool of interviews was not consistently representative of the demographics of the region. In order to obtain enough completed interviews from specific counties, the total sample for a county might not be representative of the age, gender, or ethnic background of that county, although the team made an effort to be as inclusive as possible. For example, a county might not have had enough completed interviews to provide a representative sample of all age groups in that county.

There are a number of other limitations to the data. One specific limitation of the entire sample relates to ethnicity, where the sample includes a statistically significant number of African American respondents but few Hispanic respondents. Our analysis, therefore, offers a comparison of white and African American responses but does not extend the analysis to Hispanic or other ethnic groups. (See the Appendix 1 for a complete breakdown of the demographics of the sample used for analysis.)

Another limitation pertains to the nature of recording interviews. Citizens conducted the interviews and were encouraged to provide detailed summaries of responses to each question. The recorded responses varied greatly. In many cases, a rich description of a particular response is not provided but rather a few words or list of words. This resulted in inconsistent data—some with in-depth responses and others with a word or two where the meaning was not evident. From observation at interviews, it was clear that some of the most engaging interviews were not recorded completely as the interviewer became engrossed in the person's story.

The data from Question 6, the future vision question, were not as robust, creating serious limitations for in-depth analysis. The quotations were not as descriptive and varied widely in content. Responses indicate that citizens sometimes diverged from sharing what they envision as a positive future for Northeast Ohio to listing complaints or areas that need improvement. As a result, the analysis and this report are more limited for this data.

Some of the codes, such as Arts & Culture, are similar to other codes, such as Entertainment, and needed to be differentiated. Some terms, such as some industry codes or low-income housing, have specific definitions in professional circles and those definitions were maintained to benefit future analysis.

These limitations and the nature of the appreciative interviews meant that a strict quantitative analysis of the table conversation data with frequencies was not possible. The analysis, therefore, follows a qualitative analysis procedure of analyzing and weighting text. The team entered into a database all 1006 interviews and then imported them into ATLAS.ti qualitative analysis software. This software allowed the team to tag words, sections, or entire quotations to one or more simple codes. In the first step of analysis, the team selected a random set of 25 interviews and each member read, reread, and analyzed the direct quotations from each of the interviews. Each team member then tagged or coded these quotations to create a set of themes or simple codes for each distinct idea in a response. The team then came together to share and discuss the emerging codes, arriving eventually at a master list of codes. This code book then served as the basis for the analysis of all quotations for a question in the sample, which was conducted by dividing up the interview sample among team members. Through frequent team meetings, methodological issues were addressed and new emerging codes were added or codes were revised.

Once all the quotations in the database were assigned simple codes, the team generated a list of frequencies for the entire code book of over 100 codes. The most frequent themes were then analyzed at a deeper level by creating a representative subset of quotations for a particular code. Two members of the team worked together on the same quotations to arrive at a written description with direct quotes to describe the code or theme. These descriptions were then shared with the entire team for final discussion, revision, and refinement. The descriptive summaries in this report are comprised primarily of the products of this process.

The next step involved looking across themes to identify commonalities and contrasts. When appropriate two or three codes or themes were grouped together using selective coding, in which similar ideas were organized into supercodes or themes created by the data analysis team. Finally, further analysis of these supercodes led to the creation of descriptions of these combined themes, such as K-12 Education, Higher Education, and Education General.

Parallel to the qualitative process, analysts exported the code book and the linked database of demographics to SPSS software for further analysis. This process allowed us to identify the frequencies for each of the major themes by county, race, gender, age, and community type (rural, urban, suburban, and small town). The tables and graphs that appear in this report result from this cross-tab analysis.

In an effort to communicate the major findings of this analysis, the data analysis team concluded its work by creating ten theme sheets, quality two-page summaries with photos, figures, and graphs to accompany descriptions with direct quotes. These summaries drew primarily from the richer Question 1 data.

REGIONAL ASSETS

What Makes Northeast Ohio Special?

Most Frequent Themes Across the Region

In analyzing a representative sample of 1,006 citizen interviews, over 100 codes emerged from the data. As new concepts appeared in the data the data analysis team created new codes. The team met frequently to make explicit our shared understanding of the meaning of the codes. Often the team wrote specific instructions or definitions to ensure reliable coding. Table 1 includes a partial list of the codes with comments to provide the reader a sense of the meaning related to each code. The list includes the most frequently occurring codes and their overall ranking in answer to the first citizen interview question, “What makes NEO special?”



Table 2: Most Frequent Regional Assets Themes

Code	Comments	Percent of 1006 respondents who mentioned this code
1. Family Here	Immediate family or family of origin here	49.1%
2. Arts/Culture	All museums, art, live music, dance, theater, etc.	40.8%
3. Seasons/Climate	Seasons, weather, no natural disasters	34.0%
4. Diversity, People/Cultures	Anything related to race, age, ethnicity, etc. including ethnic food and Amish.	30.9%
5. Entertainment	Something you go to such as bars and restaurants, nightlife, amusement parks. Does not include plays, dance, live music which go under Arts/Culture. Different from recreation, which is something you actively do.	30.2%
6. Affordability	Includes housing that young people, seniors or workers can afford. Not low income housing. Also includes low cost of living, low property taxes, etc.	29.3%
7. Employment	Came here for a job or like it here because there are many good jobs. Stay here because of a job.	26.7%
8. Community	Close-knit community, Includes sense of belonging, including having a range of relationships. It can also be a sense of shared identity, home, attachment	25.8%
9. Lake Erie	Lake Erie, Great Lakes, lakefront	25.1%
10. Parks	Includes generic references to parks and specific parks by name (e.g. Cuyahoga Valley National Park)	23.9%
11. Nice Friendly People	Neighbors, welcoming, helpful, people are nice here, people care, you can trust people, etc.	23.3%
12. Location	Includes access and accessibility within region, the proximity to Cleveland; beyond its easy access to other major cities, ability to travel. If "close to airport," then it's coded as	20.5%

	Location. If just airport, then code as Infrastructure.	
13. Good Place	Includes any of the following: Slower pace, vibrant community, lots to do, quiet, calm, local identity, etc.	20.5%
14. Pro Sports	The Cavs, Indians, Browns, etc., 'team spirit' for pro sports teams.	19.4%
15. Friends Here	Not family but friendships, people you spend time with	18.5%
16. Higher Education	Quality and quantity of colleges and universities, specific institutions, higher education as a source of employment and an economic force for the region.	18.4%
17. Born & Raised	Distinct from family, a connection by birth or by growing up here; roots here.	17.4%
18. Cleveland Important	Whenever Cleveland mentioned; includes Cleveland is important. It may be a comment about Cleveland that implies Cleveland is important to the region.	15.7%
19. Recreation	Activities, non-team athletics, golf, fish, bike, hike	15.2%
20. Attitudes, Values	Attitude of group rather than describe people. Includes Amish morals (which can be double coded with Diversity), work ethic, Midwest values.	14.8%
21. Family Friendly	Good place to raise children, family oriented, etc.	14.6%
22. History/Heritage	Includes landmarks	13.6%
23. Rural Urban Options	Mix of rural areas close to urban centers	13.2%
24. Beauty of Place	Natural beauty and appreciation for built environment. Includes Architecture of houses and buildings	12.8%
25. Natural Environment	Natural areas, green space, nature, bio-diversity, ecology, capitalize upon as in tourism but not consumption, resources, transportation for commerce, drinking water, etc which are natural resources. Care for, enjoy, preserve, etc.	12.2%
26. Education (General)	Any mention of education without specifying what level. It is a forced choice in that if higher or K-12 education is mentioned, do not use this one.	10.6%

Potential Expansion of Theme Reports

The Data Analysis team produced twelve sample reports, reflections and images to demonstrate the kinds of understanding, knowledge sharing, community building and possible materials that can be developed from the citizen interview data. We urge the reader to think creatively about the potential for extending the dialogue and sharing the content that could be gleaned from individual or aggregated interviews as well as an analysis of the interview data with that from Community Conversations, on-line Choice Books, etc.

The twelve sample reports are on general themes, chosen from most frequently mentioned codes found in the first question of the Interview, "What makes NEO special?" Rather than treat similar themes separately, a Supercode was created that combined similar or related codes that were found together so often that analysis of the combination of codes enhances understanding of a broader topic and reflects the more accurate weight or importance of a topic. Table 2 provides the twelve topics selected from the most frequent themes.

Table 3: Twelve Topics from Most Frequent Themes

Frequency	Topic	Themes Combined to Create Topic
1.	Family/Roots Here	Family Here and Born/Raised Here
2.	Arts & Culture	
3.	Employment	
4.	Diversity, People/Cultures	
5.	Lake Erie	
6.	Affordability	
7.	Community	
8.	All Education	Higher Education, Education General, and K-12 Education
9.	Midwest Values	Attitudes and Values and Family Values
10.	Rural-Urban Options	
11.	Environment	
12.	Beauty of Place	

The next section provides detailed descriptions of these themes with results from the quantitative analysis of the data across counties and demographic groups. They appear in order from most frequent downward.

Family and Roots Make Northeast Ohio Home

The most frequent theme in what makes NEO and your community special was having family and roots here, which was foremost family here and then combined with a similar theme of born and roots here. Respondents expressed this in several ways such as this quote from the very first interview: “1) I was raised here so there is no place like home, 2) my roots are here, 3) the family farm is here and 4) my family of origin is here.” (ci 0001) Many people in NEO know they belong here, know how their family is tied into the community (ci 1583), and like knowing they are known here. This consistently stated experience brings with it identity, comfort, familiarity, and mutual support.

- *My family. Special people live here. I've always thought of people here as friendly, we wave. I run into people I haven't seen in years. It's a very caring community. We're interested in kindness. (ci 0686)*

What makes the answer to a question about a place be so often family – an answer that technically is not a description of place? This is an exercise in trying to describe the self-evident. It's very hard. If family and friends make NEO special, what makes family and friends special?

- *I have lived in Cuyahoga Falls my whole life and consider it home. It is special to me because it is a familiar place. I find comfort in knowing the town “inside and out”. I feel safe in my town. (ci 0074)*

Events and relationships happen in a place. Modern communications technology is stretching that, but our data clearly shows the importance of place to NE Ohioans and their relating. Often respondents mentioned family, then physical assets and returned to the topic of family again, as though they are tied together (ci 0071, ci 0507, ci 1083).

We are the memory of our place – of the weather, natural history (ci 0292), migration patterns, civic history and personal heritage (ci 0709). We are meaning makers. Our memories are set in the context of churches, schools, or surroundings (ci 0709). The fact that these events happened right here makes them more immediate, more personal, more real and more prone to emulation. We make small marks on a place and each time we pass that spot we are marked in return by the memory. With enough reminders, we groove the marks deeply enough to be noticeable, to ourselves and others. (ci 0074)

- *Born and raised in the area. That makes it a special place. Many good memories are here. I care about the community. (ci 0890)*

This heritage causes me to reflect. It's worth telling a story about. It's a story other people will listen to and/or know about. It has relevance to who I am or who we are. (ci 1286)

- *The family roots of this area is very imbedded within the community and when a person talks to individuals most of these people have been here since birth and their fathers, mothers, and grandparents come here to mostly work with the tire companies thus giving this community a shared heritage. (ci 1286)*

Family and friends are almost equivalent to Northeast Ohioans, as though family is a template for how to relate with people. One phrase, as frequently spoken as a mantra, was “family, friends and personal relationships” (ci 0094) are what make NEO special. Compare these common answers: “I have lived many places (states) and family was the reason my husband and I moved here. We were not close to any family and knew that we need family

around us,” (ci1628) and “family and friends live here and our community pulls together when anyone is having a hard time.” (ci1622) What’s more, the sense of continuity is cherished for providing “roots” from the past as well as hope for the future.

- *What makes Northeast Ohio special? This is where I grew up and where I raise my kids. (ci 1305)*

Respondents from every county in Northeast Ohio identified having their roots and /or family here as an aspect that made the region special to them. This was the most frequently mentioned response by interviewees with 49.2 percent of all citizens identifying family or roots here as something that makes Northeast Ohio special. Figure 1 details the percent of respondents who identified family and roots in each county. The range was from a low of just over 40 percent in Ashtabula County to a high of just over 70 percent in Carroll County.

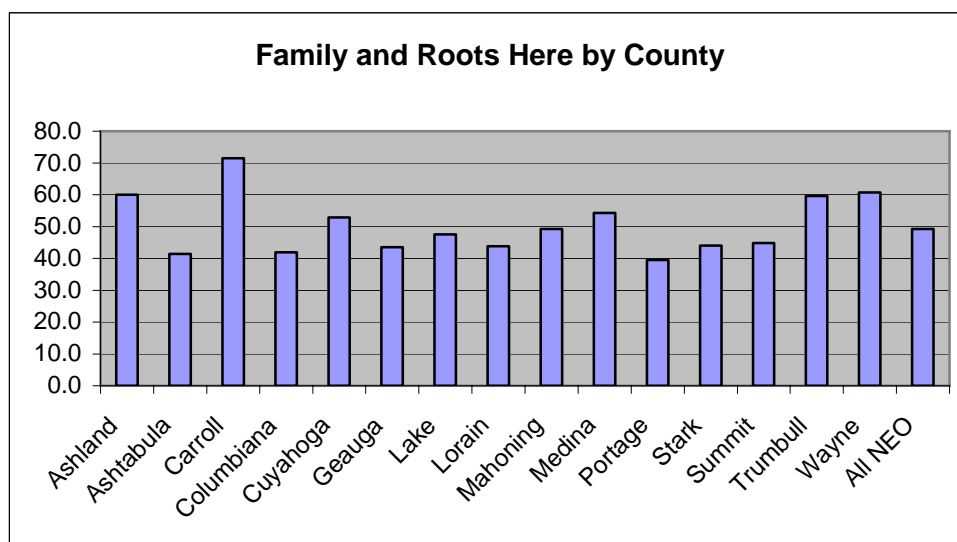


Figure 1: Family and Roots Here Broken Down by County of Respondents

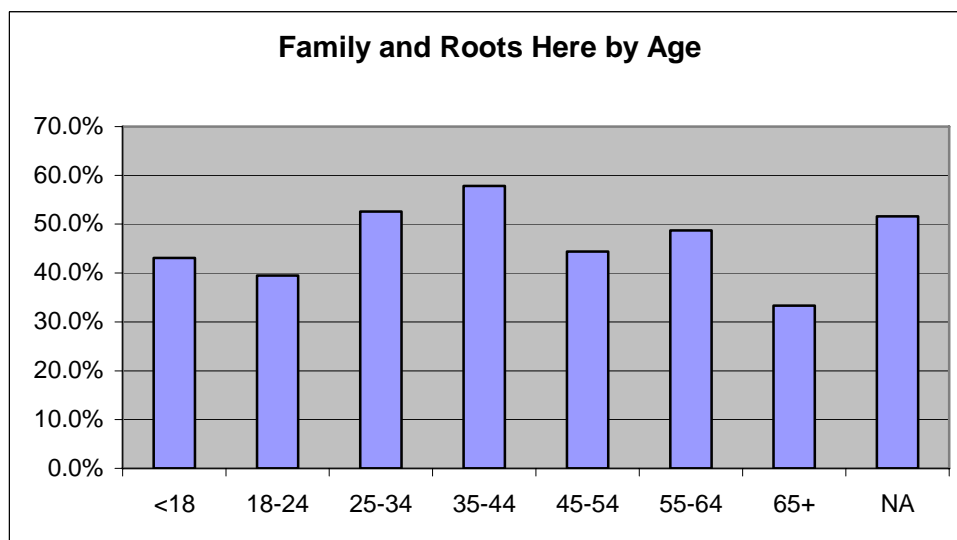


Figure 2: Family and Roots Here Broken Down by Age of Respondents

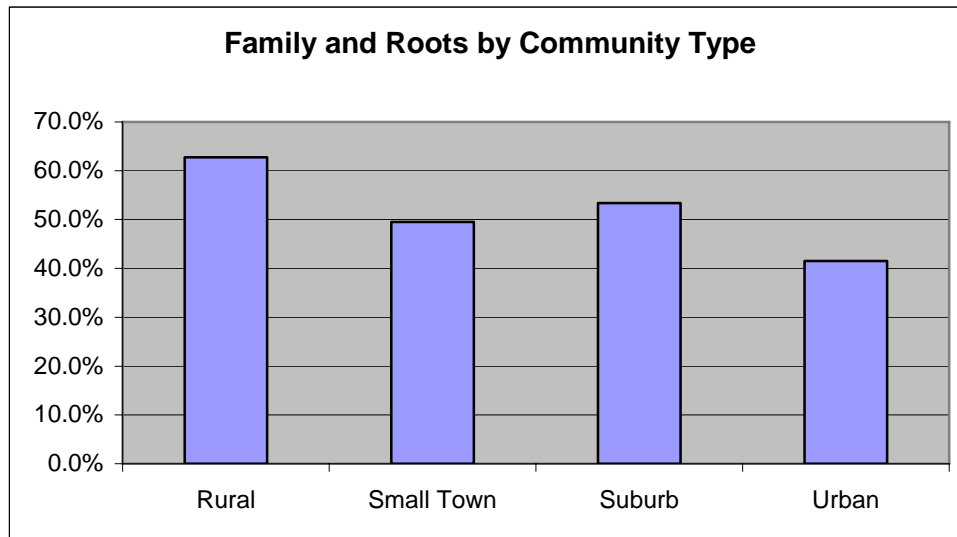
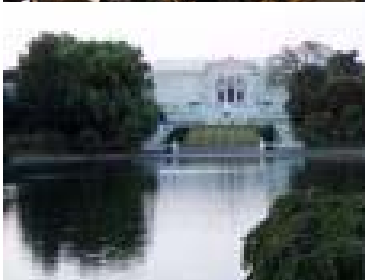


Figure 3: Family and Roots by Type of Community Where Respondents Live

Family and roots take on personal meaning, especially for those who claim extended family or generations of living in Northeast Ohio. This is the type of content that could be used to further regional cohesion and identity building. As an example, a personal reflection on the importance of family from a member of the data analysis team, see Appendix 2.



Arts & Culture Put Us On the World Stage

Arts and Culture was the second most frequently identified theme with regard to what makes our region special. It is not surprising that participants in the Voices & Choices citizen interviews responded strongly that the elements of arts & culture are one of the strongest assets that Northeast Ohio possesses.

Citizen interviews were peppered with comments about the quality, strength, visibility, variety and availability of activities and institutions that sustain this long-standing asset and source of civic pride.

Arts and Culture were mentioned as assets by respondents over 35 years of age more often than by younger respondents (see Figure 4). This may be influenced by a wealth factor or by time spent on young family activities, as two guesses.

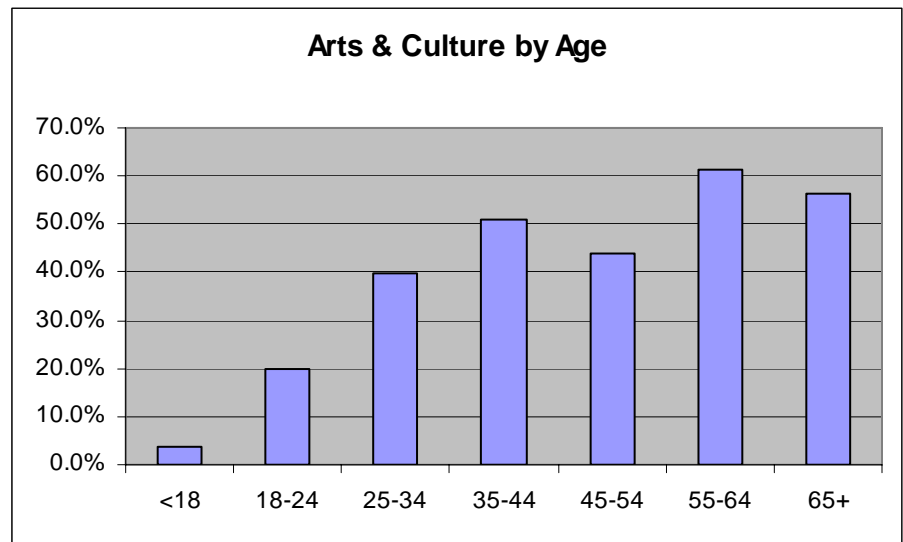


Figure 4: Arts and Culture Broken Down by Age of Respondents

The majority of organizations and institutions cited by name were predominantly centered in Cleveland's downtown and University Circle, though some other organizations and groups were mentioned such as the Youngstown Symphony, the Akron Natatorium and Blossom Music Center.

World Class Quality

The quality of the institutions in Northeast Ohio was frequently mentioned. Comments were infused with a sense of pride in the known quality of the organizations and institutions such as "We have the greatest symphony orchestra in the country" and "The art museum, University Circle is nationally known and respected."

This corresponds to the finding that a majority of institutions mentioned by respondents were well-established large arts institutions. These anchor organizations and institutions have allowed Cleveland, and other Northeast Ohio cities, to establish a reputation as a strong arts and culture center and through them a sense of Cultural Heritage. These include the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Orchestra and the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Variety From Institutions to Street Festivals

Northeast Ohio has a lot to offer. There is a full range of cultural and artistic opportunities within Northeast Ohio. Mentioned in the citizen interviews were performing arts organizations (theaters), arts education institutions and visual arts institutions (museums). There's "nothing in NEO you can't do from sports, cultural events....the lake." (ci 0509)

As stated above, the preponderance of organizations mentioned were the large and major institutions of the region. However, some respondents did talk about more grassroots arts activities.

The life of the city has been made immensely richer by the activities and institutions that people talked about. Many of these go beyond the traditional definition of the arts to include the activities that honor the cultures of other places and people. Often these are community wide festivals and celebration through food – such as the Maple Festival in Chardon.

Suburban and urban respondents mentioned Arts & Culture more often than rural or small town dwellers. At the same time, Figure 5 indicates that approximately 30 percent of small town respondents and 40 percent of rural residents identified the region's arts and culture as a major asset.

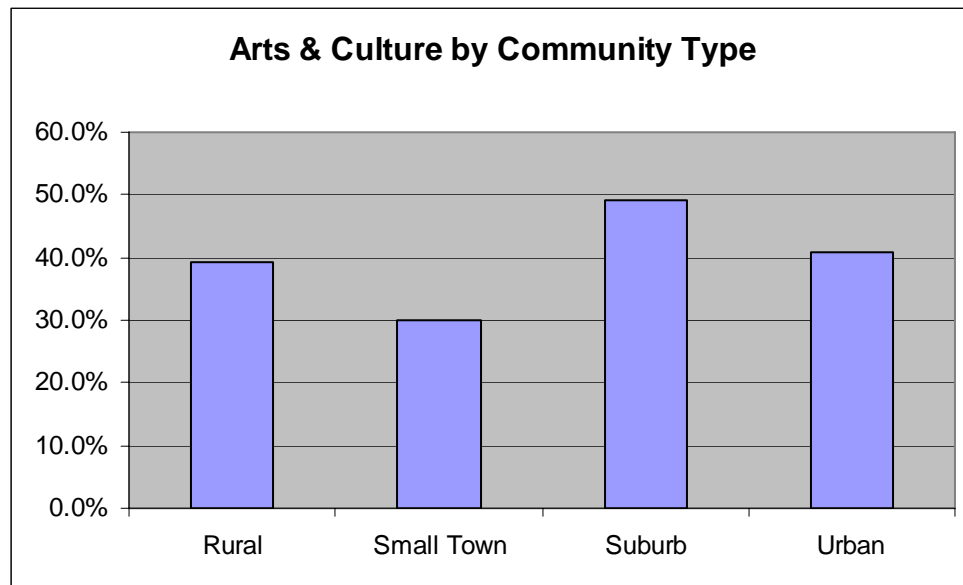


Figure 5: Arts and Culture by Type of Community Where Respondents Live

Conclusion

Overall, Northeast Ohioans value the arts and cultural amenities in the region. Northeast Ohio's arts & cultural assets make the region a livable and exciting place. Yet some

contradictions exist in the citizen interviews. Many, if not nearly all of the interviews contain very personal or local (even neighborhood) stories. And while people tended to speak more of the very local elements of the region that matter to them, when they talk about the elements of arts and culture they have a propensity to point to and highlight the very large arts organizations such as the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. So while people connected to their community locally in response to other citizen interview questions, in this one they seemed to highlight the elements of this asset that are held in greater esteem outside of the region as well as within it.

This leads to the question, “So what do the people of Northeast Ohio value about the smaller more local arts and culture community?” Is there a similar sense of pride in local arts & culture? Further analysis of all responses, but especially those from rural areas and small towns, would likely produce a richer understanding of these local assets.

Additionally, while residents value the quality and variety of cultural opportunities, they did not articulate the link between having a vibrant arts and culture industry and community to the strength of the economy – they did not talk about the creative capital that this asset brings or individual artists. Additional research might consider whether the concept of the creative class has entered or permeated the mindset of Northeast Ohio residents.

Northeast Ohioans Are Concerned About Jobs, Even When Identifying Assets

Many respondents, when asked what makes NEO special, mentioned jobs or the economy, as well as the other amenities of the region. The frequency of mentions—over one quarter of all respondents mentioned employment and almost one in five mentioned the economy—clearly shows that work and/or livelihood are on the minds of people as they think about what makes this region special. Some implied that this should be an asset even if it's not yet for them.

Employment is a frequently occurring theme throughout Northeast Ohio but varies widely in frequency from one county to another. Additional analysis by county might yield insights about what's working and not working in different parts of the region.

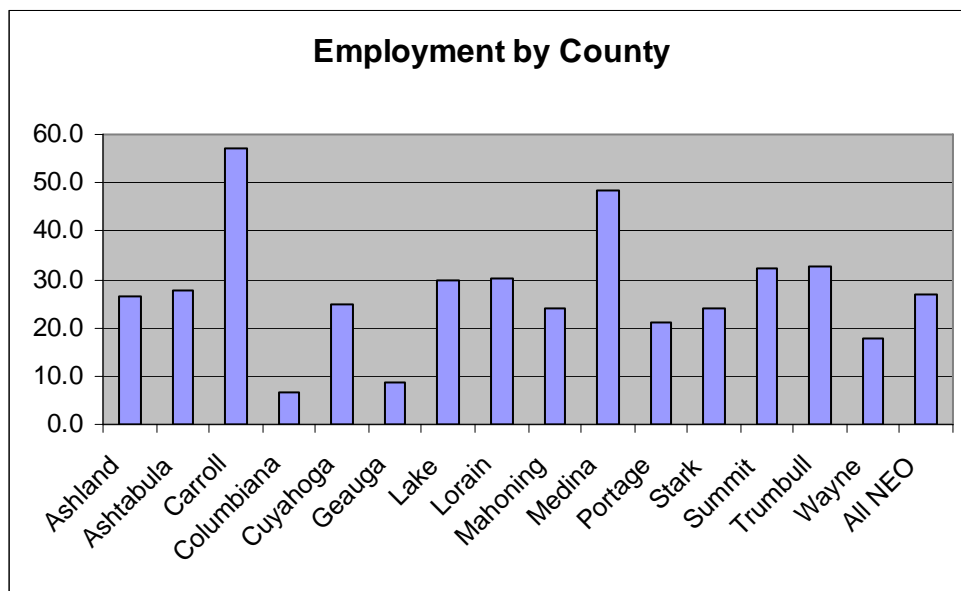


Figure 6: Employment as an Asset by County of Residence

I Have a Job Here. ci 0535

When asked what makes NEO special, citizens answered that their jobs as well as other amenities of the region keep them here. But not all of the comments were positive. Many respondents got their start in life here and have continued their employment or career. Some moved here for work and/or career opportunities and found that they not only loved their jobs, but love the area too. For some, family ties and the quality of life they've achieved by working are reasons to stay. Here are what respondents said about their jobs:

- I am here in NEO because my dad lives here. I have a good job. It's a government job, not necessarily satisfying. ci 0203
- It was never my intention to stay in NEO. Stayed for employment. ci 0505
- Job that I love. ci 0300
- I was raised here. Husband got a job here. ci 0305
- Our jobs are the main reason to live here but many aspects make this area pleasant to live in NE Ohio. ci 0808
- I own my own home and have a job that, although challenging, I love. ci 1163

- My family is from here and it is where I have established myself professionally. I feel a connection to the area because of the experiences that I have had here. ci 1297
- My dad worked in Milltown, proud to go to work. Time to raise a generation that thinks things will get better, need a positive aspect. Get pride back. ci 0888

It's the Economy, er, Jobs, Stupid

When asked about what makes NEO special, some respondents talked about jobs in general or the economy. They did not distinguish between the two concepts. This is consistent with the focus on jobs in response to another question in the citizen interview: "What is your vision for Northeast Ohio?" In this question many respondents mentioned a strong economy, but it was not mentioned frequently throughout the region. This may mean it is not seen as an asset in some areas, or that citizens spoke primarily of jobs rather than a strong economy. More research is needed to further understand these concepts.

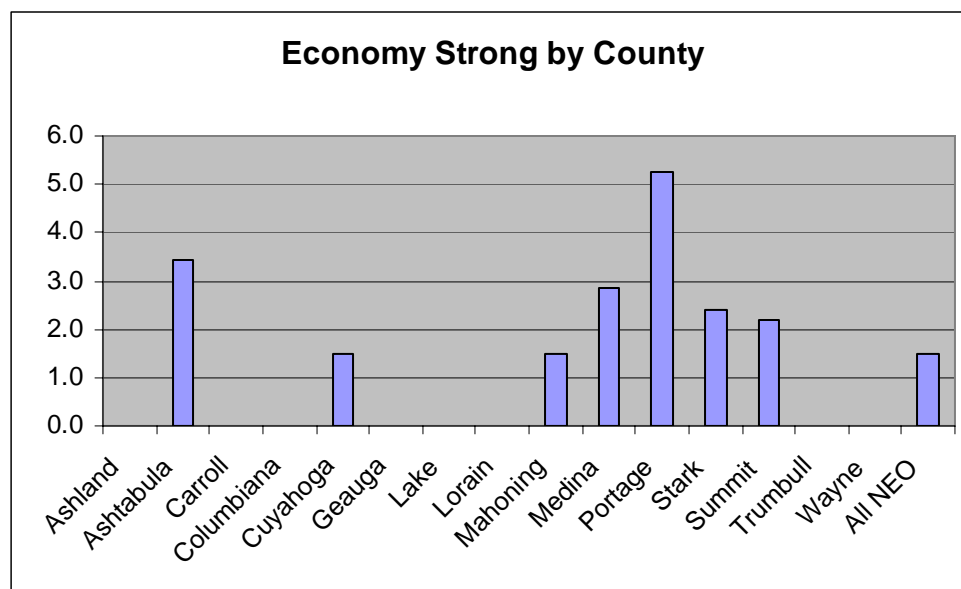


Figure 7: Economy Strong by County Where Residents Live

Those who moved here for a job generally see the economy as favorable for employment. Those who grew up here may either feel trapped or grateful for the experiences that shaped them in their career choices, and reflect their opinion back onto the job market as a whole:

- I am originally from Lincoln, Nebraska and it is obvious that there are more opportunities here. In Nebraska, it felt as though my career goals were limited. (ci 1281)
- At one time, it was the availability of jobs. (ci 0969)
- Forced to live here. Nothing special about this place. Here for job only. (ci 0601)
- It was never my intention to stay in NEO. Stayed for employment. (ci 0505)
- Even with the depressed economy still many avenues of work. Such as trucking, trades, and labor. (ci 1104)
- We are a large-small city community, connections made, do not want to lose them. Roots have been made. Many choices for work or fun or volunteer to choose from. (ci 0628)
- Family - friends - job - retirement soon. (ci 0747)

- Sentimental, lived here whole life. Education opportunities. Good job opportunities. (ci 1234)
- I also work in Northeast Ohio and have many memories from when I grew up in this area. (ci1284)
- Grew up in Stark County and all of her family is here. Her job is also a big reason she stays here. (ci1496)
- It's home. It's where family is. It maintains my livelihood. (ci1520)

We Need a Crystal Ball (Or Better Yet, a Plan)

The outlook for prosperous living in the future is varied. Some respondents think the job market is already an asset, some think it has potential (at least in a few fields) and some are concerned. There was minimal mention of plans for improvement.

- A lot of job opportunities in a lot of fields- such as medical, manufacturing (skilled and unskilled). (ci 0733)
- Employment opportunities and pay rate [make NEO special] (ci 0663)
- Job opportunities more plentiful, less competitive than east coast. (ci 0764)
- Employment is good, but not as good for blue collar. (ci 0735)
- OK job market. Not too business, never really was a city person. (ci 0999)
- Potential for more job opportunity based upon population of people. Potential for much more opportunity to come back. (ci1088)
- Job opportunities in Ohio aren't as promising. (ci1119)
- Of course our main concern for our area is jobs. Especially the lack of good paying jobs with a future for our young people. (ci1605)
- Visitors or other people who live in different places come to Northeast Ohio for jobs in our community so lots of people are out of work or living for unemployment. (ci 1567)
- [NEO is special because] Improved by economic change, ie corporate, cultural, ie minority race influx. (ci0304)

Strengths to Build Upon

Citizens mention strengths to build upon and expose their optimism as one asset. Some Northeast Ohioans bring a lot of heart to their work. Additionally, NEO's location, natural resources, institutions of higher education and current industries could be expanded.

- I care about my patients in the area. I am a Physical Therapist. (ci 0261)
- Now I have a wonderful job, I work in Barberton hospital. If I had to move I would lose my job, friends, I would be left heart broken. (ci 0353)
- Potential for economic growth. (ci1016)
- Potential jobs in the industrial field (ci1054); and Medical field (ci0346)
- Quality accessibility logistically, ie I can live in the country farm area and have quick access to all needs like job, shopping, cultural/access. (ci0764)
- Working with rubber companies and producing more jobs. (ci0609)
- The lakefront. Major transportation hub. Financial base. ci0446
- There are good jobs available. There are also good colleges to attend. (ci1528)
- Colleges retrain to let people get jobs in tech industries. (ci0735)

Picture Perfect

A gentleman from Summit County sums up how many respondents wish things still were:

I came to Ohio from Virginia 50 years ago. Not long after we were married. I was an Air Force Veteran with a high school education. I was looking for a job as Southwest

Virginia had nothing to offer. I arrived here on Sunday and hired in the Accounting Department of Goodyear Tire on Monday. I worked at Goodyear for 38.5 years. I advanced from clerk to manager of credit administration when I retired. I was able to buy a home and raise our children in a place that provides opportunities for them.
(ci1293)

Diversity of People and Cultures

The fourth most frequent theme was the diversity of people and cultures that people in Northeast Ohio value. But diversity was not a single concept and actually described a multitude of things:

- **Ethnic** – “diversity, ethnicity and culturally” (ci 0096).
- **People** – “And we have people from different backgrounds and religions” (ci 0404). “We have a lot of people from other countries and people that move from other cultures” (ci 0174). “The people, diversity. Different cultures, melting pot...” (ci 0197).
- **Community** – Community appears to be discussed separately from neighborhood. diversity within the community refers both to demographics and land, “Lorain County – the community is diverse in both demographics and community. We have farm land and urban areas” (ci 0413). “Build diverse communities without barriers” (ci 0097).
- **Neighborhoods** – “Diverse neighborhoods, Little Italy, Tremont, Slavic Village, restaurants” (ci 0526).
- **Economic** – Mentioned as economic diversity (as well as the region needing more economic diversity (ci 0096)
- **Opportunities** – Opportunity was used to describe not only things to do but cultural opportunity “Cultural opportunity” (ci 0097). “...and all of the diverse opportunities” (ci 0103).
- **Regional** – Diversity of the region as one of the things that attracts people. “One thing that attracts people here is the diversity of the region. You can quickly go from a city setting into a farm setting” (ci 0404).
- **Environment** – The cultural gardens were mentioned as well as the watershed. “...cultural gardens incorporate the watershed” (ci 0424). “Diversity in weather” (ci 0211). “Diversity in geography and topography. Have hills and flat areas” (ci1582)
- **Religion** – “diversity in places of worship” (ci 0570)
- **Political** – “diversity, all cultures all strata, all political persuasions” (ci 0044).

Where one lives matters when predicting whether diversity is frequently seen as an asset or not, but it is noteworthy that rural respondents mentioned diversity almost as frequently as those from urban areas.

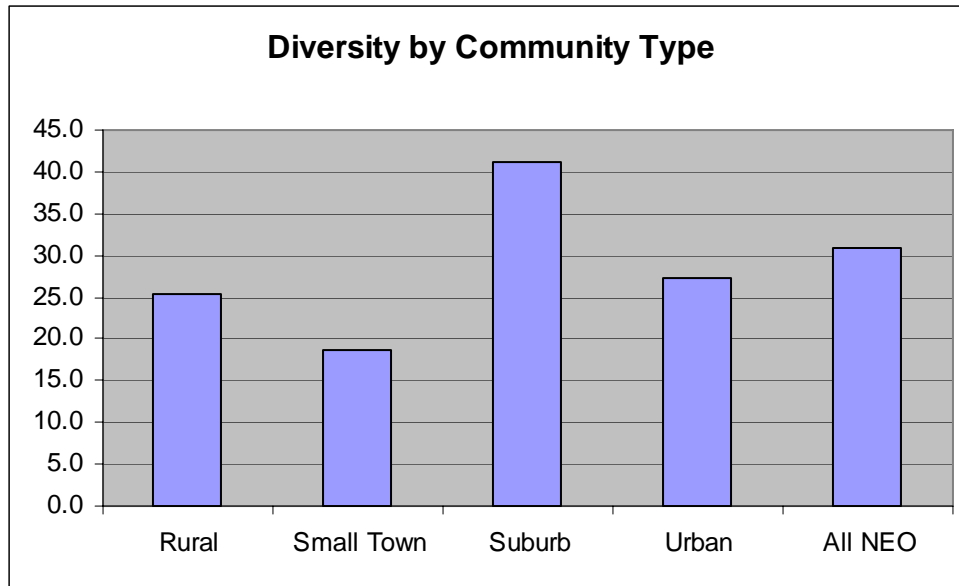


Figure 8: Value Diversity by Type of Community Where Residents Live

The diversity theme was not limited just to the people and cultures but also conveyed an attitude about this diversity:

- **Tolerance** – “tolerant of differences in people” (ci 0073). “Acceptance of people” (ci0019). “We need to work together to build tolerance of each other” (ci 0728).
- **Mix** – Diversity and mix were used together frequently. “Unique mix of people, diversity of people” (ci 0019). “I would miss ethnic diversity, lots of different foods, raised in Lorain and comfortable with mix” (ci 524). “Revitalized urban core with mixed income, race, ethnicity” (ci 414).
- **All points of view** – Diversity was seen as all points of view “Diversity – all points of view- workforce, age, viewpoint” (ci 0416). “Diversity, not only of races but religion, nationalities, cultures, and life preferences” (ci 0703)
- **Variety of foods** – “Could not find Italian sausage in Houston, TX” (ci 0624).
- **History and heritage** – history and heritage were mentioned as well as roots. “...ethnic and diverse roots” (ci 0629).

Whites are more likely than African Americans to mention diversity as an asset in NEO.

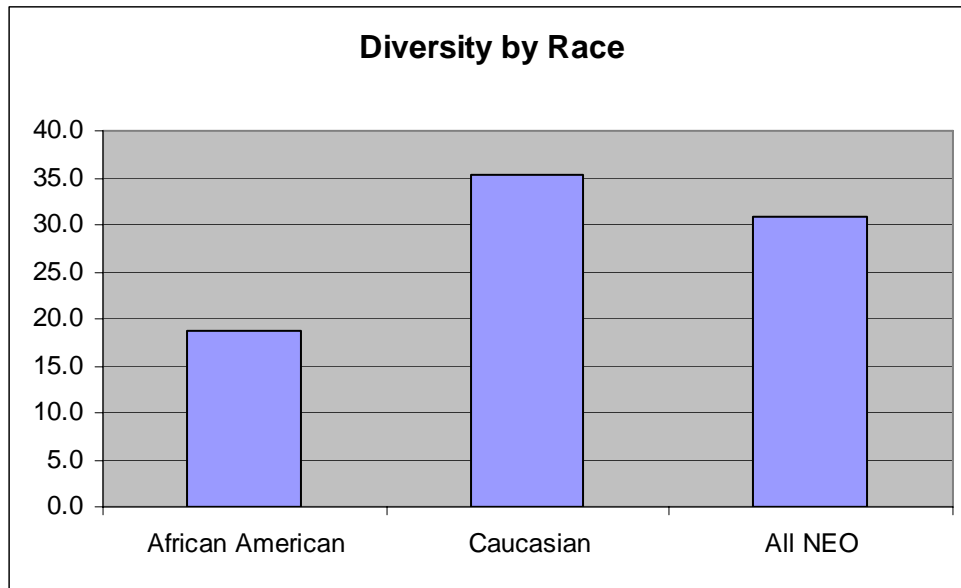


Figure 9: Diversity Broken Down by Race of Respondents

Those between 25 and 54 most frequently mentioned diversity of people and cultures as something that makes the region special. These age groups have likely had the most exposure to integrated schools and workplaces leading to mention of diversity as an asset most often.

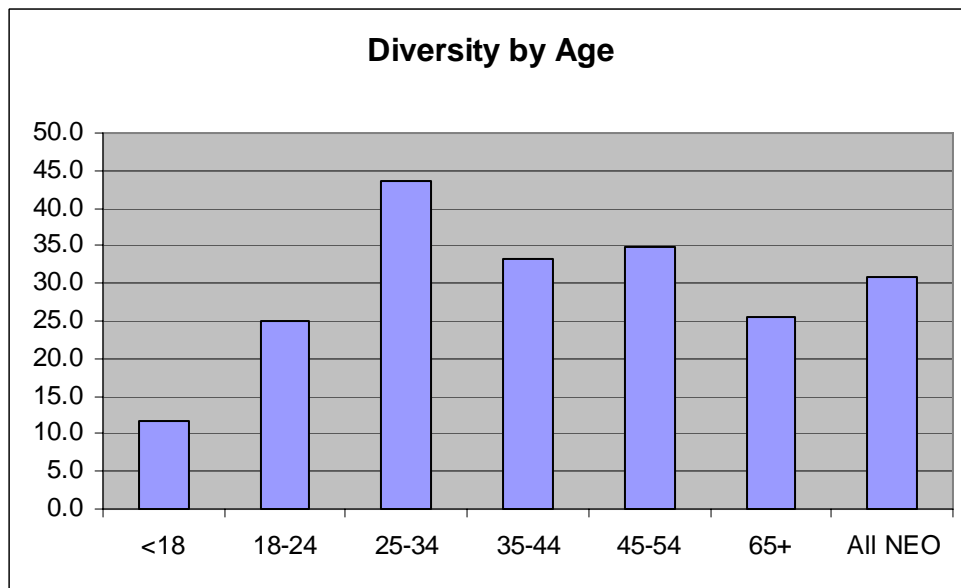


Figure 10: Diversity Broken Down by Age of Respondents

Further reflection on the significance of valuing diversity can be found in Appendix 3, written by two members of the data analysis team.

A graphic depiction of the diversity theme appears in Figure 11, which portrays the assets in the inner (blue) circle and the attitudes and values about diversity in the outer (yellow) circle. In reality, these two circles were often intertwined in respondents' statements.

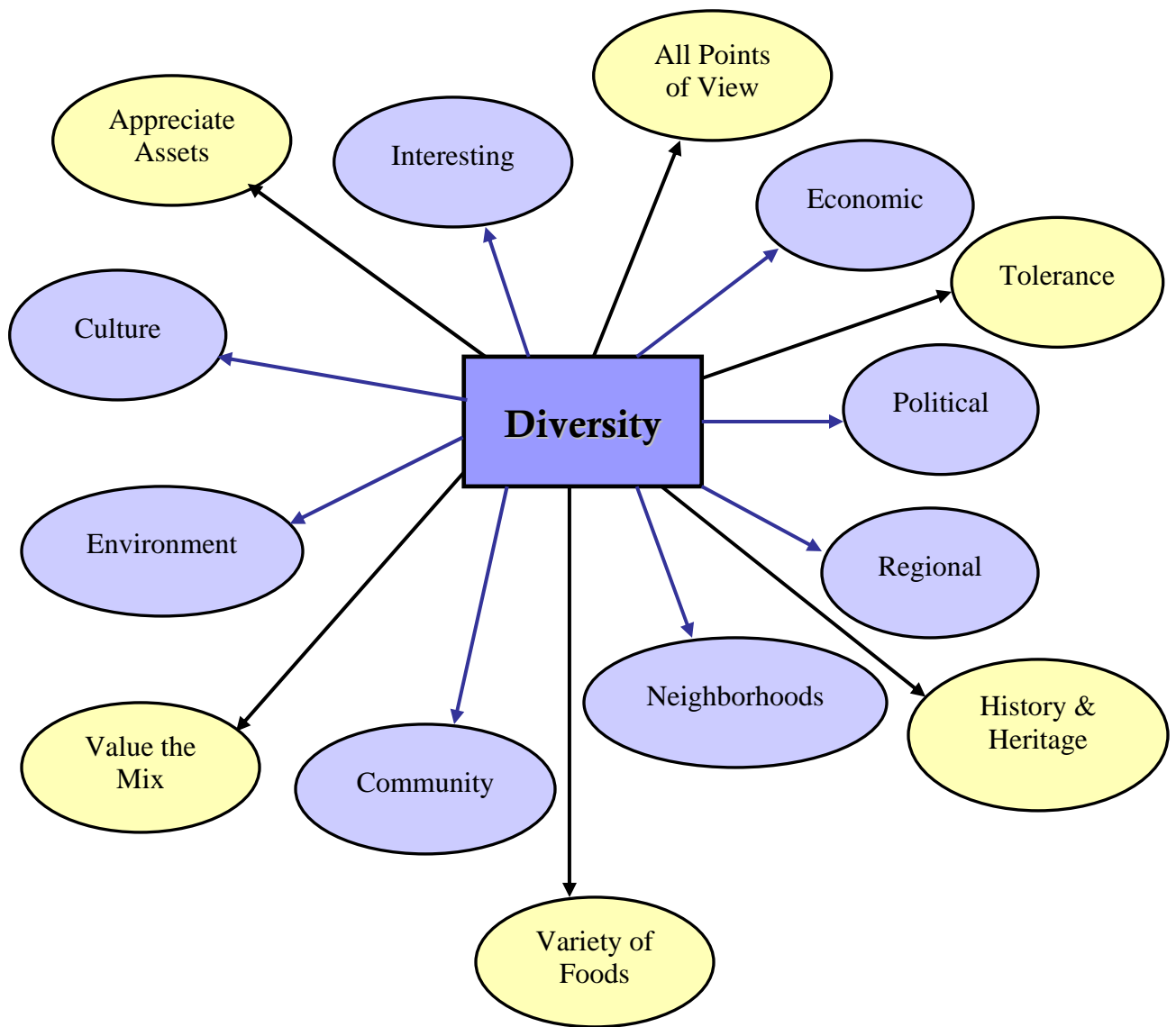


Figure 11: Graphic Depiction of Diversity Assets and Values

Lake Erie: A Public Treasure

“The most sophisticated residential area, educational and cultural institutions are built around the health of the watershed. The integrated lifestyle operating around the watershed is nourished by eleven miles of stream that feeds into Lake Erie. Architectural courtyards, and cultural gardens incorporate the watershed. These are green building examples from 70-100 years ago.”

Citizens envision great things for Lake Erie, one of Northeast Ohio’s public treasures. Many people identified the balance between developing the lakeshore and preserving it as a natural setting for the general public as one of our notable assets. The lakefront provides a destination where recreation and cultural activities, development, lodging, housing, and entertainment are anchored.

Lake Erie is mentioned as an important asset in every county in NEO, even those from where it would be over an hour drive to reach the lake.

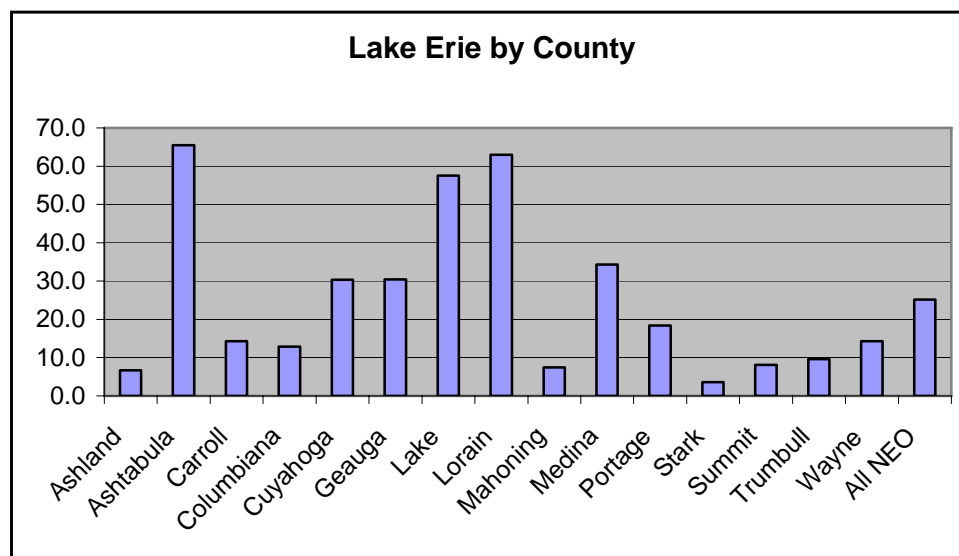


Figure 12: Lake Erie as a Treasure by County Where Respondents Live

The Lake Is Part of Our Identity

People enjoy the Lake and shore for the beauty, activities and opportunities they bring. But an equal number of people have a longing for the Lake to be more – to excite those who live in NEO and to attract new people to the area.

Citizens seem to be saying this is not a typical Midwest region, nor a typical large city. Lake Erie is a defining feature and when combined with other assets creates a region almost unsurpassed for its diverse offerings – big city amenities, rural landscapes, small communities, natural areas and a large lake. The many comparisons to Chicago seem to express this sense that we could be so much more.

- Lake Erie is **a touchstone** for what is unique about NEO, “even for those who do not use it directly.” One “feels the peace and serenity” of the lake (ci 1278). There is a sense that people take comfort in knowing this big beautiful resource is there for us. “I enjoy being close to the lake.” (ci 0494)

- The lake provides **an outlet and source of recreation** for the people of Northeast Ohio, from fishing, boating, and swimming to going to the beach or hiking along the lake.
- The lakefront provides **a destination** where cultural treasures (Science Museum, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame), development, lodging and housing (Geneva Lodge), and entertainment are anchored.
- Lake Erie is **a source of beauty** with its beautiful sunsets, cool breezes, great views, that varies through the seasons. “Sunsets on the lake, frozen lake, the fog, trees changing colors.” (ci 0376) The beauty is tied to the hills, trees, and shoreline. “We have the most spectacular sunsets and the air around the lake is restorative.” (ci 0056)
- The lake is **a resource that attracts and retains people** for all of the above reasons. “The lake is definitely the main attraction...the lake is what kept my family here.” (ci 0911)
- Lake Erie is **a tremendous natural resource**, from “freshwater” (P40) as “one of our biggest assets” (P217) to a means of transportation with ports and a driver of the economy from tourism, fishing, and boating. Many NEO businesses depend on the lake.
 - “The lake is probably the greatest thing about our region. The boating is tremendous along with the business opportunities that the lake offers. The new lodge is nice along with the new schools being built. The Geneva Lodge is a great addition to our community. You can fish, hunt, boat, start a new business...” (ci 0911).
- The lake is **a public treasure** to be preserved, cared for, and accessible to the public, “a major attraction that we should make more accessible than it is.” (ci 0524)
 - “Clean lake”
 - “Developed waterfront in an environmentally friendly way” (ci 0073)
 - “To invest in our natural resources, build bike trails, preserve the wilderness areas, including Lake Erie shoreline so that the public can enjoy it too.” (ci 0261)
 - “Continued renovations to the area of the community like upgrading and cleaning up the waterfront of downtown Cleveland.” (ci 0813)

Our Most Underutilized and Underdeveloped Resource

A great number of responses to the interview question about vision referenced the Lake. Many respondents made future-oriented statements when asked about current assets as well.

- “Lake Erie, hugely underdeveloped....Develop the lakefront. We need a long-term plan and to get past the turf wars.” (ci 1584)
- “Lake, we do not utilize it to fullest potential...Build up the lakefront. Will build on tourism.” (ci 0617)
- “I would like to see the lakefront development. We are not utilizing our natural resources.” (ci 0569)
- “Build upon natural resources like the lakeshore and waterways to attract and increase the value to the public of what we have available to us. A major breakwall—something to protect the shoreline from erosion, cleaning up the rivers and cities. If we protect our shoreline we may be talking about community and family entertainment opportunities, enjoying what we have during our leisure time.” (ci 0211).

- “Lakefront development like Chicago. Businesses with houses attached, where neighborhoods have businesses and residences.” (ci 0618)
- “Waterfront Mecca—destination. From Sandusky to Lake County. Experiences and activities year round. An underdeveloped asset that could revitalize the area.” (ci 0524)
- “More water recreation, casino, and shore development.” (ci 1584)

The significance of Lake Erie increases with age until 65, at which point it remains moderately high. This might have implications when considering investment as it relates to wealth, access and leisure time available.

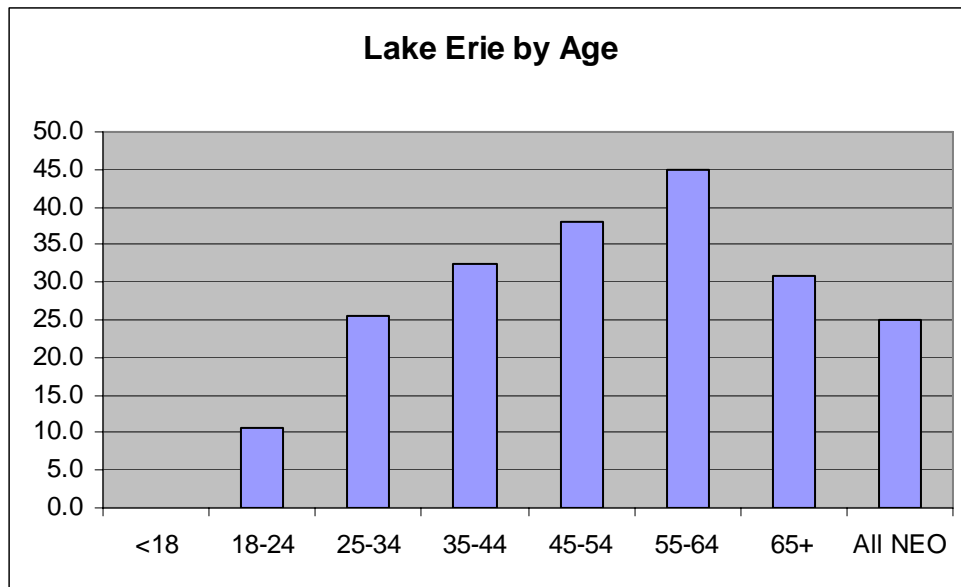


Figure 13: Lake Erie Broken Down by Age of Respondents

In comparing this chart with the urban counties chart above, one can see that the frequency of urban respondents is low even though the more urban counties of Lorain and Cuyahoga are high. This might be a point for further investigation.

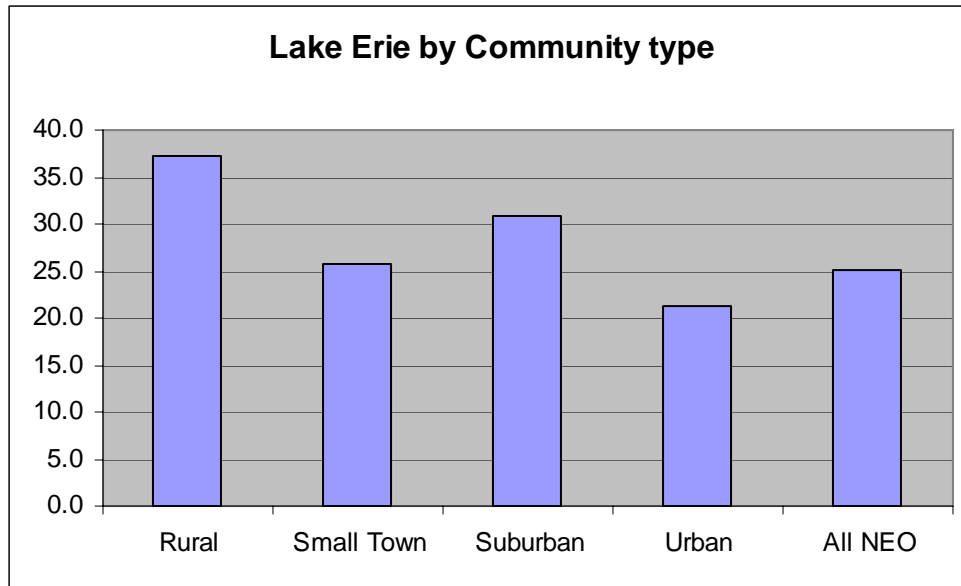


Figure 14: Lake Erie Broken Down by Type of Community Where Respondents Live

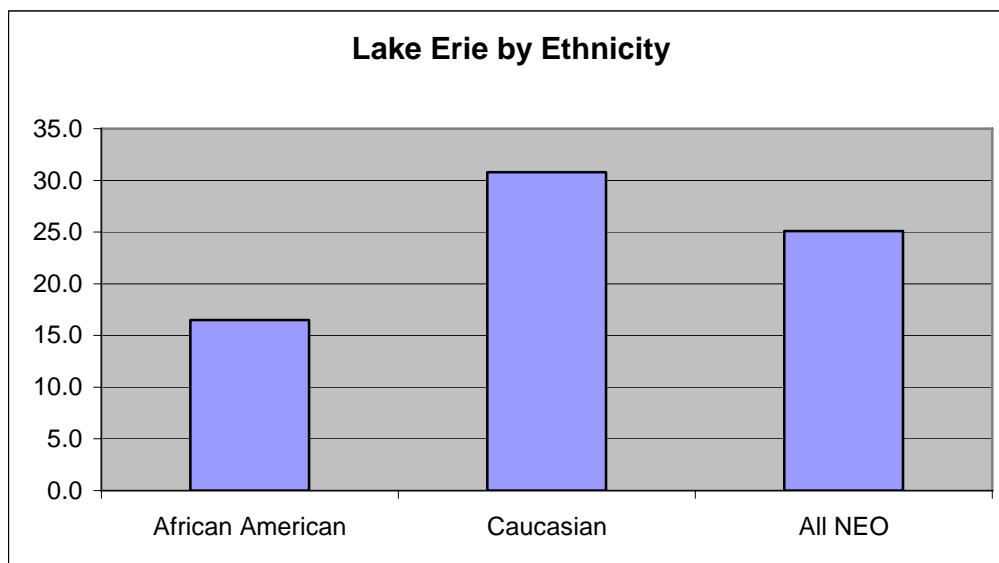


Figure 15: Lake Erie Broken Down by Race of Respondents

An example of a way to expand dialogue on lake Erie is the personal reflection on interpreting the data on the significance of the lake. See Appendix 4.

An Affordable, High Quality Lifestyle You Can't Find Anywhere Else

Responses in the interviews did not reveal a simple, single factor that defines the affordability theme. Three elements best describe this asset: the cost of living for basic necessities, affordable housing, and high quality of life. Overall, “cost of living” appears to be the most frequently mentioned response.

“Affordability. Quality of life. Many amenities of a large city but affordable and accessible. Affordable housing. Easier to do so many different things. It’s a great place to raise a family. There are Midwest values. You can expose kids to many kinds of people and places. It’s more difficult to do this in other urban areas. Range of housing—there is something for everyone.” (ci 0416)

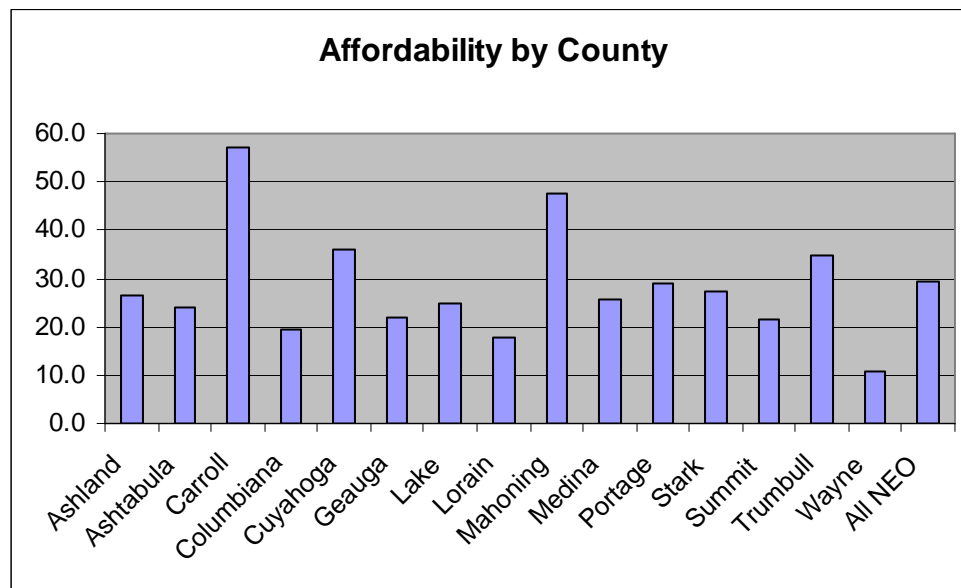


Figure 16: Affordability by County Where Residents Live

Three Primary Themes

1. The cost of living in comparison to other cities:

- Clearly the most dominant theme
- Almost always expressed Q1 (NEO Special) just with phrase
 - “cost of living” (ci 842) probably mentioned over 100 times
 - “cheap living” (ci 980)
 - “low cost of living and housing” (ci 1068)
- Cost of living explained:
 - “as a retiree, the cost of living is very low—housing, clothing, food” (ci 345)
 - “It’s a very economical place to live. Housing is affordable.” (ci 0863)
- A comparative term—cost of living is lower than other cities
 - “The cost of living is extremely reasonable compared to other metro areas.” (ci 1166)
 - “In comparison with other cities, the cost of living is low. I can support my family on a smaller income than in NYC and I know there are other former New Yorkers who feel as I do.” (ci 0381)

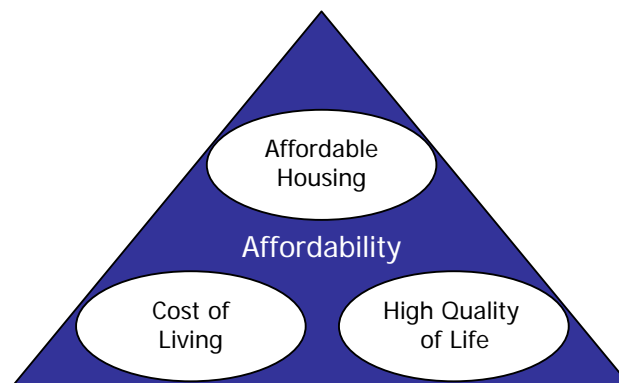
- “For the most part, can purchase inexpensive, better than more ‘climate friendly’ areas.” (ci 0213)
- “People stay here because of the family and friends here as well as low price of living compared to other places. And people come here for jobs and a cheaper cost of living.” (ci 1375)

2. Good affordable housing at a low cost:

- Second most dominant theme
- Nearly always does not refer to housing affordable for low-income (trade term)
 - “Housing is affordable” (ci 863)
 - “Cheap housing” (ci 1149)
 - “Cost of living, less to buy a house. More house for the money.” (ci 376)
 - “Affordable housing for renters and homeowners.” (ci 718)
- Primary meaning is good housing for low cost
 - “NEO is a reasonable place to live in the sense that housing choices are broad and affordable.” (ci 627)
 - “The houses are big, the rent is low.” (ci 1065)
 - “The housing is wonderful, the median price is attainable.” (ci 719)
 - “Housing great/affordable. Can be deciding factor.” (ci 1201)
- Housing much more affordable than in other cities/places
 - “Housing reasonable compared to other regions.” (ci 736)

3. A high quality of life that includes urban amenities at an affordable price:

- Associated with affordability—often terms appear next to each other
 - “Affordable quality of life keeps people in Cleveland and suburbs.” (ci 639)
 - “The sense of place and community. Affordability. Quality of life.” (ci 416)
 - “Cost of living is low lots of variety nested in a culture with traditional, stable core values.” (ci 1428)
- High quality of life that combines urban amenities at affordable price
 - “I also feel like I live in a wonderful, urban area in a major US city. We have all the elements of a big city present. Yet we are still an affordable place to live.” (ci 310)



While citizens frequently identify aspects of affordability as assets, there do not appear to be contradictions with other themes. In specific interviews, even those who appeared to be more negative about Northeast Ohio mentioned that it was an affordable place, as in housing or the cost of living.

The cost of living was the most frequently mentioned item under affordability with the second most common theme being the affordable nature of housing. Additionally, while many chose to describe affordability as part of the overall cost of living, numerous people cited affordable housing separately. There was not enough detail in the response to distinguish whether the housing market is a draw or if housing is the greatest importance to people already living here.

Of course people want a place that is affordable. Why would you want to pay more for things simply because of where you live? Numerous respondents compared the cost of living and sense of affordability in Northeast Ohio with other places. In some cases they pointed to specific cities like N.Y. and Chicago. This was even true of people who stated that they have lived here their entire lives.

The data suggests that citizens appreciate not only the low cost of living (housing and other basic necessities) but also the high quality of life in Northeast Ohio. There are many great amenities - like recreation and museums, and beautiful neighborhoods for raising a family. Many spoke of the numerous opportunities available at an affordable price for most families.

Other Themes or Concepts

There were several common terms that crossed all dimensions of affordability: “more for your money,” “access,” “reasonable,” and “lower cost or price.”

Opportunities here at low cost

- “I think that we have a lot more opportunities for a better life here in Ohio than most other states, because of our education and career opportunities along with a cheaper life style.” (ci 881)

Basics are accessible and affordable:

- Education—both elementary and higher ed
 - “Affordable, good schools, quiet place to raise a family, job, friendly.” (ci 692)
 - “Good school low cost of living” (ci 663)
 - “Manageable cost of living. Access to higher learning.” (ci 727)
 - “Slower pace and smaller community. Affordability of the school (YSU)” (ci 1109)
 - “Affordability and access to healthcare and a good education could also attract people.” (ci 312)
- Affordable Insurance
 - “Low insurance premiums.” (ci 315)
- Lower taxes
 - “Lower taxes” (ci 319)
 - “Taxes lower” (ci 1295)
- Overall access
 - “Most everything one could want is available and the prices are not absurd.” (ci 714)

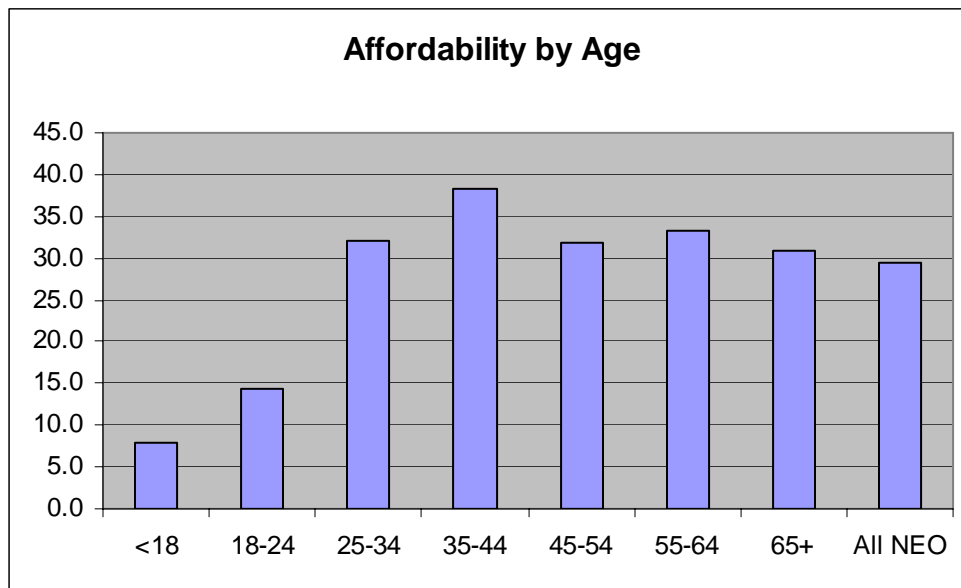


Figure 17: Affordability by Age of Respondents

Whites were 1.5 times more likely to mention affordability as blacks. Only about 1 in 5 African Americans in our sample listed affordability as an asset.

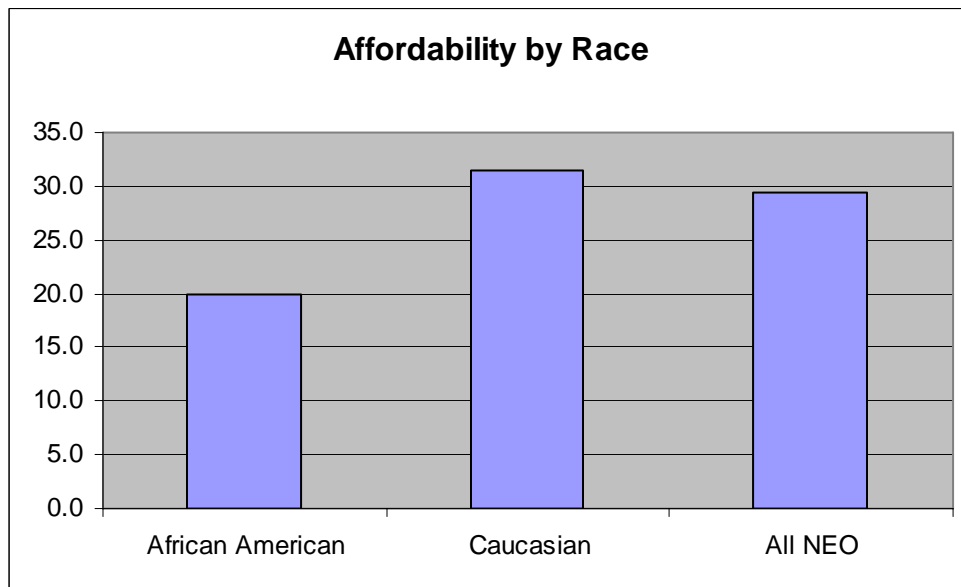


Figure 18: Affordability by Race of Respondents

Affordability was associated within a list of other quality of life factors:

- Low crime, safety (ci 1462) (ci 921)
- Good jobs (ci 987)
- Good place to raise a family (ci 731)
- Lifestyle: Quiet, peaceful place, with less hectic lifestyle than many places/cities (ci 1375)

- Amenities and lots to do
 - “People stay here because of the family and friends here as well as low price of living compared to other places. And people come here for jobs and a cheaper cost of living.” (ci 1375)

An issue that came up with affordability was that the region was not affordable for everyone:

- Good for middle class, not affordable for low income
- “NEO does have some good museums and theaters. Though cost should be more affordable for the low income.” (ci 698)
- “We have sports games, museums, etc. but they are so expensive so poor and low income cannot participate. The places should make changes so that low income and poor people can use these great things in the community. To take two kids to the Science Center, its like \$70 total—too expensive.” (ci 1192)

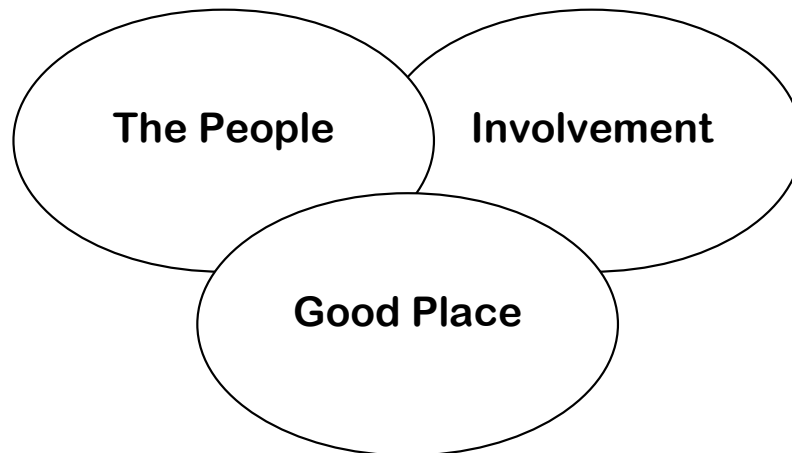
Finally, one other interesting quote dealt with the different ways economics affect the diverse populations of Northeast Ohio:

- “Middle class stay for the standard of living. Rich stay for money. Poor have no choice.” (ci 0842)

Community

Northeast Ohio embodies community, characterized by interconnected warm people involved in a good place to live and to raise a family. There is a sense of familiarity and getting along even while enjoying a diverse mix of people, places, and activities. Across the region, people love the sense of community that comes from knowing each other in a small town atmosphere—even in urban settings—and from being actively engaged in activities that provide a high quality of life. Involvement includes efforts that support one another and improve their community.

“Neighborhood feeling. Each has a different character. NE Ohio has preserved history and neighborhoods. Warmth of people. When I moved here, all my neighbors dropped by and gave me their phone numbers. This was like nowhere else we have lived before. We felt immediately welcomed. People want to know their neighbors. So many cities here have interconnectedness. If we were to move, I would miss the people here.” [I would] “miss the friendliness, miss character. Not cookie cutter. So pretty, kept old trees and old character of homes. In the West, they are tearing down old houses and building new. I would miss the parks (Emerald Necklace). They are big, and well maintained. Nice public spaces. Urban spaces are preserved. Not paved over park. Like the diversity, like the integration. I like that people work hard at successful integration (Seattle is not integrated.) So many people here have strong roots (several generations). So many things to do. Good public transportation.” (ci0737)



All 15 Northeast Ohio counties identified Community as an asset of the region with slightly over a quarter of all respondents citing community as important and special to them. Portage County had the highest percentage of responses citing community with 38.1 percent.

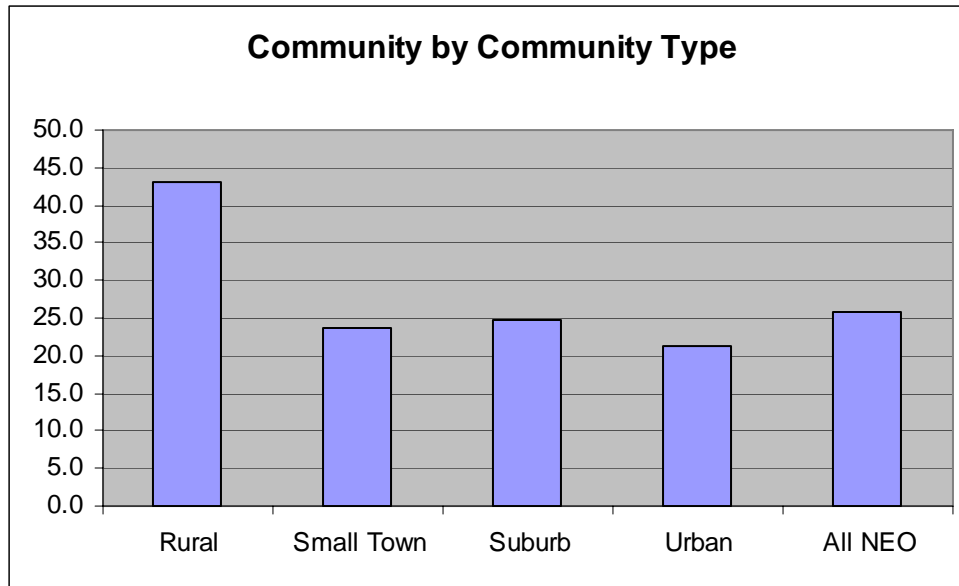


Figure 19: Community Important by Type of Community Where Residents Live

Respondents who live in rural areas of the region were the most likely to remark that community makes NEO special. Over 40 percent of respondents from those communities cited community as an asset compared with 20 percent from urban areas.

“Best of many worlds. New England quality in east side suburbs. Rural quality outside of city, healthy, growing suburbs. Sense of connectedness to the core because of sports teams in central city, transportation in central city good. Infrastructure: can get anywhere in 20-30 minutes. Quality arts and culture supported by philanthropy, unmatched anywhere else in the country. Old world connection to neighborhoods - living history. Exports a lot of people, come for education, from the city. Quality colleges.” (ci0621)

People, People, People

Nothing stands out more about community than the people that make Northeast Ohio special. The quality of people and relationships include: warm and friendly, strong relationships, family, seeking to know each other, and getting along.

- *“My family. Special people live here. I’ve always thought of people here as friendly, we wave. I run into people I haven’t seen in years. Very caring community. We’re interested in kindness. Culturally aware.” (ci0686).*
- *“Love sense of community People know each other--cashiers get to know you at grocery. Sense of belonging--missed if moved. Take visitors to dad’s place -- 21 wooded acres. Locally owned businesses make unique NE Ohio -- people are nice.” (ci0953).*
- *“Family is really important to her and will always bring her back here. If she moved away, she would miss the tight-knit community and knowing everyone.” (ci1024).*
- *“I grew up here. Since age 6, I have lived in Madison. It was and still is a safe and quiet community. I graduated high school, married...raised two sons, who also attended Madison schools, Boy scouts, church, played baseball and are now college*

students. My family lives in NE Ohio so most of my ties are here... NE Ohio is diverse yet close to each other as individuals that love their lives.” (ci1163).

Involved Community

As a people-centered region, community means forming supportive relationships with friends and neighbors who readily help one another. There is a rich variety of activities—from informal gatherings to arts and culture to small venues and clubs—for people to get involved in. People in Northeast Ohio also value participating in community efforts and having a voice in public decisions. Key phrases appeared numerous times: variety of activities and programs, you have a voice, ability to impact community, giving back to the community, helping and supportive of one another, and interconnectedness.

- “Here in Northeast Ohio we have a strong sense and connection to our families that you don't always see in other regions of the country. To go along with this, there is also a great sense of tradition within our region. The values and beliefs are such that we share a common vision, but are diversified enough to allow for differences in how this vision is carried out. I lived in Northern California for a period of time, and I never saw this sense of family and tradition. Out there, everyone was from some other area of the country so there was no shared connection. Here we have a shared connection that makes us unique.” (ci0404).
- “Northeast Ohio is a small taste of home, no matter where you are from. It offers many activities, both outdoor and indoor, that people of all ages can enjoy. One thing that's unique about Northeast Ohio is its blend of hometown personality. Each city in Northeast Ohio offers their own local restaurants or bars, in which out-of-towners can enjoy special hometown plates.” (ci1262).

Education

Participants in the Voices & Choices citizen interviews responded frequently that education is a paramount issue facing Northeast Ohio as well as one of its strongest assets.

In an age where information and knowledge drive economies, it is no surprise that education appeared so frequently in citizen interviews. Whether it was k-12, continuing and adult education or getting a college degree, residents feel that the region has a lot to offer people.

Citizen interviews were peppered with comments about the quality, strength, variety of educational opportunities and choices in institutions and school systems throughout fifteen counties. This analysis combined higher education, K-12 education and quotations that simply mentioned education in general.

Strength of the Region's Schools

Residents believe that the schools in Northeast Ohio are first class, especially the colleges and universities throughout the region. These included the quality of the professional schools in the region such as medical, dental and law schools. Research competencies at such universities as Case Western Reserve University and the University of Akron are seen as opportunities for future economic growth.

Opportunities

If you live in Northeast Ohio, there are many options for getting an education. Residents cited more than just the number of institutions of higher education in the region, but the variety in types and specialties.

The numerous community colleges, four-year universities and specialty schools such as the Cleveland Institute of Art establish Northeast Ohio as a center for higher education where you can get any type of education that you may desire.

These educational opportunities are not just abundant in a concentrated area in the region but throughout it.

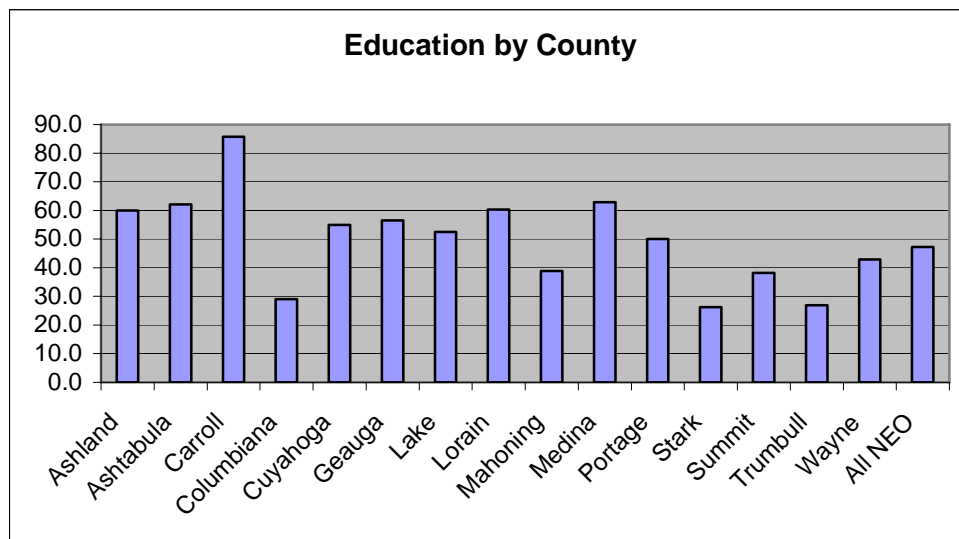


Figure 20: Education (all types) by County Where Residents Live

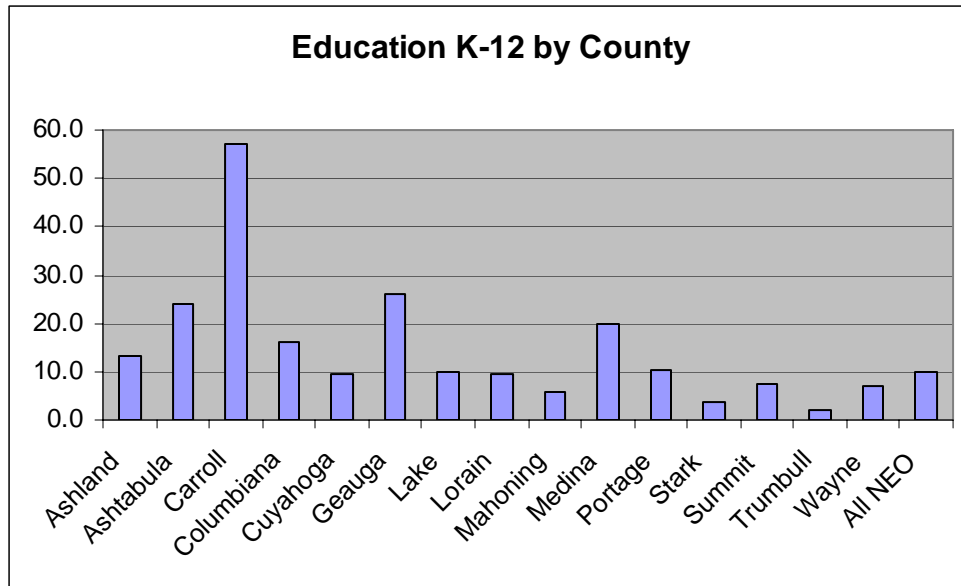


Figure 21: K-12 Education by County Where Residents Live

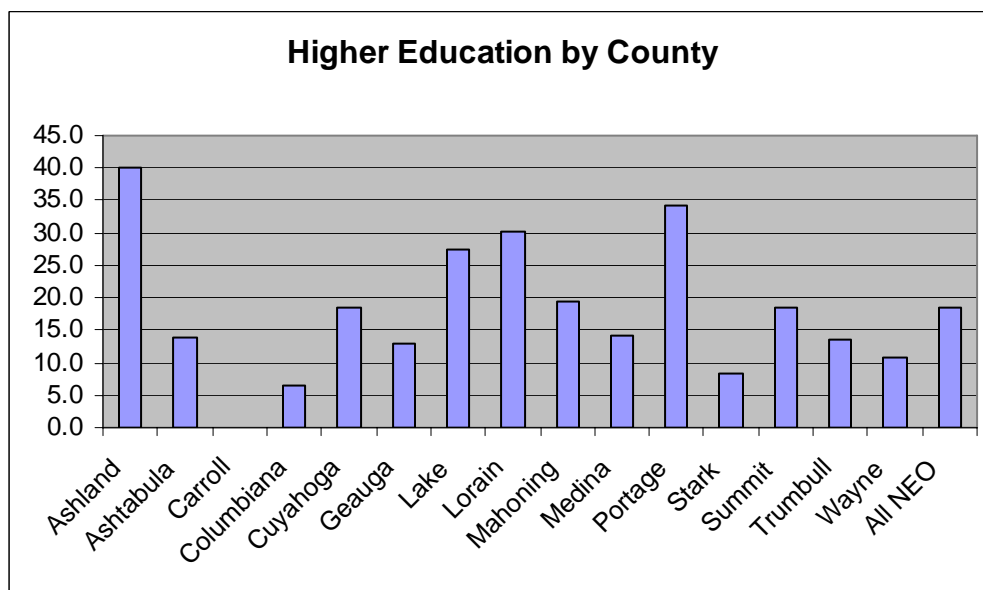


Figure 22: Higher Education by County Where Residents Live

Education Attracts People to the Area

Numerous respondents indicated that they originally came to the area for the schools. This included both k-12 systems and the many colleges in Northeast Ohio.

Communities with good school systems and areas with choices in private schools attract families looking for an environment where they can live and raise their children. For these respondents, good schools make the region a good place to live.

For others, it was the opportunities that the region's institutions of higher education offered that make NEO special. In a region densely populated with colleges and universities, people have many choices in the school they can attend. "Look at all the wonderful universities.... Oberlin

College, CWRU, CSU, CIM, CIA, John Carroll University, Kent State U., Akron U.,YSU. These educational institutions attract people from all over the country and around the world. CIM is ranked with Julliard and Eastman as one of the top arts educational institutions in the country. I have a friend, a young African American male who came from St. Louis to attend CIM.” (ci0380)

- “There are a lot of educational opportunities from LCCC and CCC to Case Western Reserve and the Cleveland Institute of Art.”
- “Higher Education opportunities- CWRU, JC, Lakeland, Cuyahoga Community, CSU, Notre Dame.”
- “Excellent school systems.”
- “Another item to mention is that there is local access to educational opportunities – Lakeland Community College. Then looking towards Cleveland there is Case and the research going on with biomedical and chemical engineering which makes us unique regionally and we can build for the future.”
- “Good school system for my children.”
- “First class hospitals, colleges and community colleges.”
- “The ability to earn a degree is only a short distance from everyone.”

Midwest Values

Respondents spoke frequently of a set of attitudes and values that make Northeast Ohio special. At times they spoke indirectly of these values when they referred to the region as a great place to raise a family. The most common phrase to describe this theme was “Midwest Values.” Upon further analysis, a number of key attitudes and values give meaning to Midwest values.

Friendly—people greet each other

- Most people in the community are friendly and greet each other. They also share similar views on religion, taxes, family values, politics, and schools. I value a community that works together with other communities to achieve a goal. (CI 1569)

Pride in ethnic diversity—welcoming new groups and shared values

- Personal heritage, family, religions, neighborhoods, family, friends...Uniqueness: multicultural aspects, all races and religions working, sharing same principles (CI 0709)
- Diverse population. Hard working industrial center. Progressive ability to attract diverse groups of people. (CI 0889)

Hard working, blue collar ethic

- During economic change and tough times, people have stayed in the region...Folks grind it out and make it a better place for the future. I admire the character of the people to stay when things aren't going well. (CI0413)
- Cleveland is a city where people work hard and can become successful. (CI 0706)
- I thought Ohio was part of the heartland of America. We are known for our strong work ethic, family traditions, and deeply rooted values. (CI 1269)

Communities and people pull together to make the region a better place

- Region has intangible sense of people feeling we're underdogs and need to assert ourselves in respect to larger communities—unites us across various boundaries. A sense of artisanship that we're makers of things, particularly in small firms like blacksmiths. (CI 0635)

Good place to raise a family—safe, strong family values, wholesome and/or conservative

- Born and raised in area. Value family life, ability to have family and friends who share same interests and values. Large cultural community makes it easy to share spirituality. When people come from out of town we are proud to show our ethnic backgrounds through festivals and group functions. (CI 0904)
- The area is family and church oriented, would miss my family friends and church friends after 30 years of living here. (CI 1241)

Simple, real, earthy people

- Diverse rural and urban, difference in flavors, ethnicities. People are friendly...Amish community, people are simple, easily pleased (CI 1237)

- Ohio is unique because of small-town feel that has a lot of depth. Culturally and socially it has a real and earthy feel to it and is not polished but gritty. (CI 1307)

Sincerity

- Good work ethic. Sincerity of the population (CI 1240)

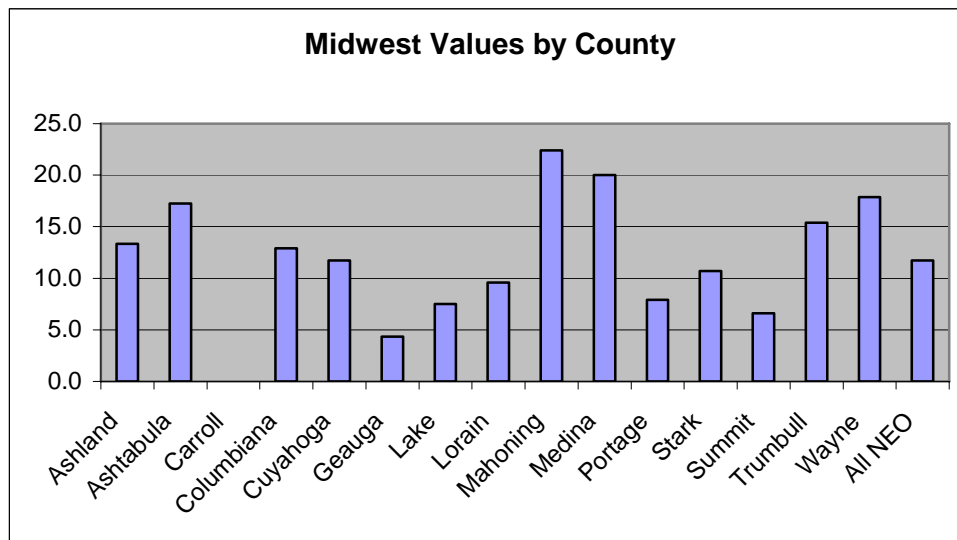


Figure 23: Midwest Values by County Where Residents Live

Rural-Urban Options: There is Something for Everyone



People spoke about Northeast Ohio's cities, suburbs, small towns and rural areas as amenities for a number of reasons. Many appreciated being able to 'retreat' to the country or to a small town, but still have the conveniences of the city nearby. Others spoke about the region as a mix of urban and rural aspects and benefits. They did not speak of them as distinct places, but rather as one place with both the slow pace of a small town and the amenities of a city. Still others discussed the many options available in Northeast Ohio such as *"To be able to drive 35-45 minutes to a major city and go back home to a rural area."* (ci665)

All in all, rural—urban options get to the heart of the region. It's a wonderful mix of slow-paced and big city, of farmland and skyscrapers. The respondents who discussed this in their interviews are truly looking at Northeast Ohio as a region.

"NEO provides a unique opportunity for myself and my family in that we can all live in different parts of the community yet really live close by." (ci1229)

Figure 23 illustrates that 14 of the 15 Northeast Ohio counties identified the rural-urban options available in Northeast Ohio as an asset ranging from a low of 3.8 percent in Trumbull County to 46.2 percent in Wayne County. Carroll County was the only county where respondents did not mention this.

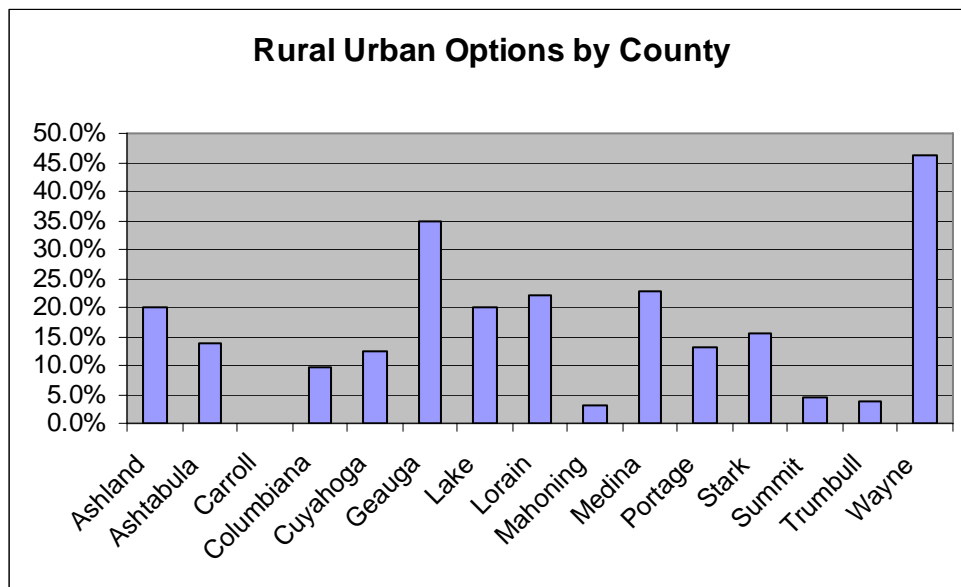


Figure 24: Rural and Urban Options by County Where Residents Live

Options for Everyone

It is important to have a vibrant core city to attract young people – perhaps young people who grew up here and would love to be near their families but don't necessarily want to move back to Beachwood or Fairlawn – while maintaining the importance of existing successful outlying communities.

This points to the idea of the region as a place where each unique member of a family can find their niche and still be near each other.

The central location of our community to Pittsburgh and Cleveland is very convenient. Within less than 1hr you can be in Pittsburgh with all the options available of entertainment, both cultural and sports. The same with Cleveland which is about 1:20 minutes away. We are close to several major interstate systems that will lead you to other parts of the country. We have a major shopping mecca in Boardman which is only 20 minutes away. (ci909)

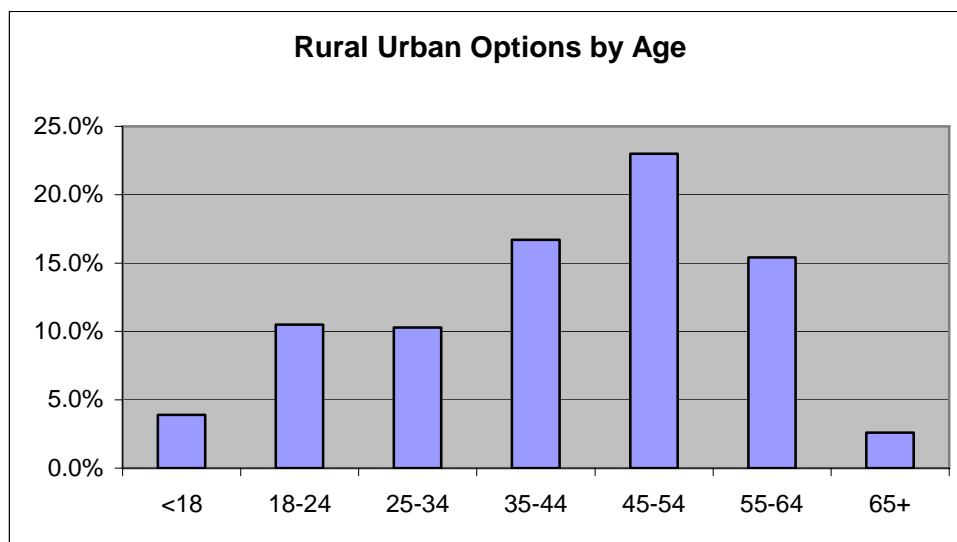


Figure 25: Rural Urban Options by Age of Respondents

Retreat to the Country

People talked about living in a smaller, slow-paced town or suburb with the conveniences of the city nearby.

- *“The serene country and the closeness to city life.” (ci0525.)*

Those who cited rural-urban options tended to talk about “the city” and its amenities such as museums, concerts, restaurants and sporting events, as a great thing to have close by, but they still want to “retreat” to their much slower paced small town or rural home.

- *“I enjoy living in an area with a rural feel, yet we are so close to so many great cultural and athletic events.” (ci0023).*
- *“We have our cities close by and the hustle & bustle that go with that, but here you can retreat into the countryside and enjoy a more relaxed frame of mind.” (ci0339)*

The opposite is also true, although less common – people appreciate getting away from big city life by visiting outlying rural areas and/or parks.

- *“It’s great to be able to go to the lake or Metroparks. It doesn’t even feel like you’re in Cleveland anymore.” (ci0540)*

Balance - All types of Communities Rolled Into One

Some respondents focused on the feeling one can get living in Northeast Ohio and less on the amenities of the country and city life dichotomy. These respondents described the perfect mix of city conveniences and small town atmosphere such as *“big city at a country pace.” (ci1277)*

Some residents think less about Northeast Ohio as a region but rather find Northeast Ohio special for its mix of the options that come with living in a place that has both rural and urban communities. Even though their ideas about the region might be slightly different, their ability to connect these communities into a single place may be where there is the some identification with the concept of a region. Those who reported the rural-urban mix as an asset expressed appreciation for all that Northeast Ohio offered, not just about their community in very local or immediate terms.

This connection seemed directly linked, at times, to transportation convenience – you can live in a small town and still easily take advantage of the neighboring city, or vise-versa. Other times it seemed to reflect a “feeling” you get in NEO that is not possible in larger metropolitan areas.

The Value of Nature and the Natural Environment

No matter where they live in Northeast Ohio, people talk about enjoying and preserving its natural beauty--the scenery, the changing seasons and, of course, Lake Erie as well as the many other lakes, rivers and waterways.

The unique beauty of Northeast Ohio is an image that is described in many different ways but clearly resonates throughout the interviews. Whether they live in rural areas, or in the center city, residents describe the abundant natural resources of Northeast Ohio, recognizing that our productive agricultural land, abundant fresh water supply, wineries, and forests contribute to the regional economy as well as quality of life. And they talk about the easy access and the many ways in which they enjoy the numerous recreational opportunities afforded by our parks and waterways.

There are many things that make Northeast Ohio special to me, but I would say the main three would have to be Lake Erie, our spectacular change of seasons and also all of our natural resources. People who live here don't realize how many options Lake Erie brings to our area. We can use it not only for industry, but also for recreational purposes. The change of seasons brings people back because many people are used to a stagnant climate, but our temperate climate gives lots of visual change. Finally, our natural resources are very beneficial. We have things like rails-to-trails and also a very rich history. All of these things should be taken advantage of. (ci0807)

In Figure 26 we see that 14 of the 15 Northeast Ohio counties identified the Environment as an asset ranging from a low of 9.6% in Trumbull County to 41.4% in Ashtabula. Carroll County was the only county where respondents did not mention the environment.

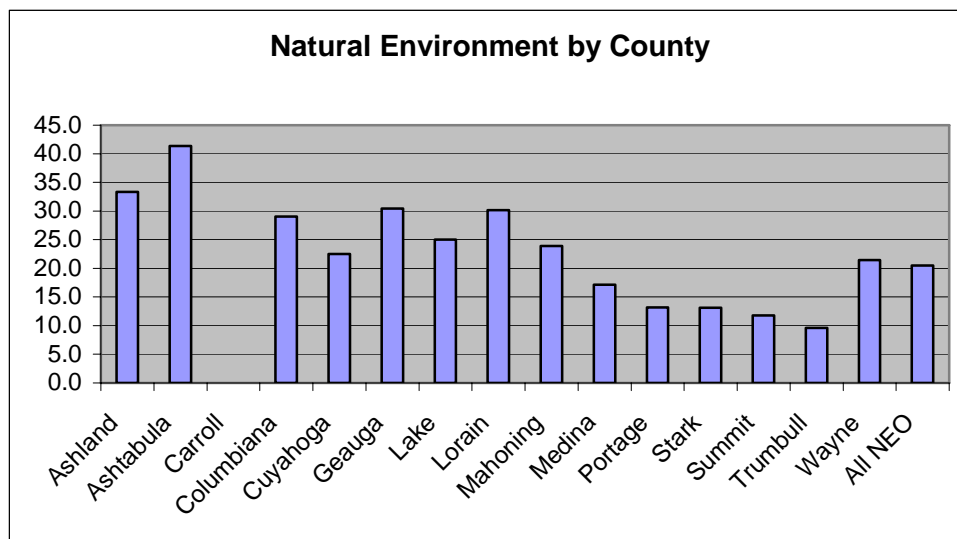


Figure 26: Natural Environment by County Where Respondents Live

Natural Resources

The region's ecological and natural resources are valued in part because they contribute to a sense of shared identity. People talk about the inter-connections between nature and their own personal identity, the region's bio-diversity, the quality of life and the economy. These

are the things that make Northeast Ohio special, unique and they are clearly a source of pride.

"One of the things that makes Northeast Ohio special is the accessibility to major cities and surrounding communities that offer opportunities for various arts, educational and recreational activities. Having Lake Erie as a resource not only recreationally but economically is also a benefit to NEO." (ci0010)

Natural Beauty

People talked about the environment as a way to be grounded in a shared past (geography, topography, diversity are *"part of our very rich history"*) and a source of hope and optimism for a shared future (have *"great potential,"* will *"draw people"*, are *"an opportunity to live more sustainably."*) They see a need to protect these resources, so that they will be here for future generations.

What People Have to Say

- *"We have the most spectacular sunsets and the air around the lake is restorative." (ci0056)*
- *"...it is a wonderful place to raise a family...the change of seasons and love for the winters." (ci0096)*
- *"Recreation distinguishes our region from other parts. For example, Malabar Farm, Johnny Appleseed Theater, Amish, Mohican State Park, Cedar Point." (ci0104)*
- *"The founders essentially created a sustainable city and the foundations from that era still hold. Examples: Doan Brook Watershed. The most sophisticated residential area, educational and cultural institutions are built around the health of the watershed. The integrated lifestyle operating around the watershed is nourished by eleven miles of stream that feeds into Lake Erie. Architectural courtyards, and cultural gardens incorporate the watershed. These are green building examples from 70 - 100 years ago. There is connection to the lake. We have the infrastructure, human expressions of what inspires us. These structures are still functioning - expressions of beauty, color, form rhythm - that provide us with connection to the global community". (ci 0424)*
- *"It is a very diverse community, not only just in people but even the landscape is very different (among the counties). It's great to be able to go to the Lake, or the Metroparks. It doesn't even feel like you're in Cleveland anymore." (ci0540)*
- *"I enjoy snowfall as well as sunshine." (ci0968)*
- *"Being able to go from city to farmland in a half hour is a plus." (ci1246)*
- *"There are not many states that can compare to Northeast Ohio's spring and falls." (ci1285)*

Beauty of Place

In analyzing the data, the references to the beauty of Northeast Ohio were undeniable. While many assets included an aspect of beauty, combining them together provided the clearest indication that the beauty of Northeast Ohio is one thing that makes it truly special. There five themes surrounding the beauty of place: water, land, seasons, buildings, and heritage.

Water

In the interviews, water takes on a quality of emotional or spiritual connection. Water provides a sense of health and well-being for people in Northeast Ohio. Could these natural assets serve as visual cues, where water and land point toward a core part of being and identity for Northeast Ohio? Traditionally, beauty is associated with truth and human goodness and nobility. Waterways and springs are often sources of healing. In Northeast Ohio, this metaphysical quality of water and land emerges from the interviews. In general, the sense of connection and appreciation for physical place may be part of what could be described as our “Midwestern mentality.”

Water Has an Emotional Draw: Water is Invigorating

- Lake Erie Landscape (agriculture and scenery) ci0002
- Lake [Erie] draws people ci0027
- “The thing I like most about NE Ohio is the lake. I miss it when I'm gone from here for more than a couple of days. We have the most spectacular sunsets and the air around the lake is restorative.” ci0056
- lake - Sunsets on the Lake, frozen lake, the fog, trees changing colors. ci0376

Views of the Water, Lake

- “The it is beautiful to look at. I like the lake because it is pretty.” ci0190
- “The vibrancy of its people are special. The natural beauty of the area, especially its lakes, rivers, and wild life are special. The vibrancy of the arts, especially the theatrical and visual arts, are special.” ci1223
- “I think being on the lake. The freshwater.” ci1546

The Waterfront

- “Like to see the water front developed. Would like to see our economy improved Good Jobs and a beautiful water front.” ci0190
- “Develop lakefront into park.” ci0737
- “Our lake is gorgeous & we need to keep the views preserved.” Ci 0808

Land

Land is seen as being separate from cities, but less separate from water. Naturally, there is a particular attachment to the land for farmers. For some, the land is something that is pristine, as in people's appreciation for Amish country. Stopping to describe the natural surroundings requires withdrawing into oneself to reflect, which was not the environment in which most of the interviews took place. There were numerous references to trees, almost implying a metaphorical sense of roots and sense of direction as in tree-lined streets.

Variety

- Geography in this area is perfect - lakes, parks, beaches. Beautiful part of country. ci0522
- The geography, both topographical and social, is a draw for NEO. There are hills, valleys, water, parks, towns, country, urban, etc. ci0730

Association with rural areas

- Rural community. Beauty of the land, area, trees, hills, sunrise, farms, etc ci0966
- When friends come in to visit, we invariably show-off the beauty of Amish country ci0339
- The country and the farmland, and would miss the fall season with the beautiful leaves that fall from the trees.

Association with seasons, especially trees

- The beautiful countryside, the changing seasons ci0534
- The country and the farmland, and would miss the fall season with the beautiful leaves that fall from the trees. ci0659
- I like the seasons, the colorful fall and the beautiful spring with green grass and trees and beautiful flowers. ci0904

Trees

- Having trees and natural space close helps improve quality of life. ci1246
- [Speaking of neighborhoods] miss character. Not cookie cutter. So pretty, kept old trees and old character of homes. ci0737
- Trees! Cleveland is old and has roots. ci1222
- Northeast Ohio and my community of Kent are special to me because the area has a lot of character. I love the small town atmosphere, lined with trees, and small stores that are one of a kind in the area. ci1264
- [Manifestly important – listed often without description]
- Clean up lakefront. Barriers now. More landscaping. Connect areas. Extend trees to downtown area to lead people downtown. ci0737

Parks

- [Like trees, often just listed. Sometimes given descriptor such as beautiful or lovely.]
- I also see the Metroparks and the natural beauty of the region, being an attraction to the area. I think the fall season and how beautiful it is will be a major attraction to come and visit. ci1275

Beauty of Seasons

Most of the comments on seasons/climate mention the beauty of the seasons; some mention the beauty of certain seasons like fall leaves, spring flowers, winter snows. A number of people appreciate the change of seasons, the fact that we have all four seasons. Others talked about how the weather made them feel (calm) or how they appreciated the beauty of the seasons. The comments about no hurricanes or natural disasters may be the result of the all the news about hurricanes. Another category of comments about the seasons were from people who thought the climate was decent and was what made NEO unique.

- “I like the four seasons and not dealing with hurricanes and earthquakes.”
- “While the winters can be difficult at times, the change of seasons which usually includes a beautiful fall, provides a nice variety of weather and landscapes.”
- “Northeast Ohio has wonderful seasons, we have snow, we have sun, and in the fall we have leaves which are breathtaking.”
- “The seasons are beautiful here and there are many lovely parks to enjoy them.”
- “I love the variety in the weather and the landscape. WE have beautiful seasons. We have hills and valleys-lots of trees and flowers. This is a very pretty part of the county without being manmade. It is a natural beauty that is very satisfying to the soul.”
- “One of the reasons most people stay here is because of the changing seasons, with the beautiful fall colors, the winter snows and our beautiful springs.”
- “Northeast Ohio is one of the few places where someone can experience all four seasons. The summers are hot, the winters are freezing, the fall is beautiful and with the spring.”
- “The weather climate makes it so unique from other parts of the country.”

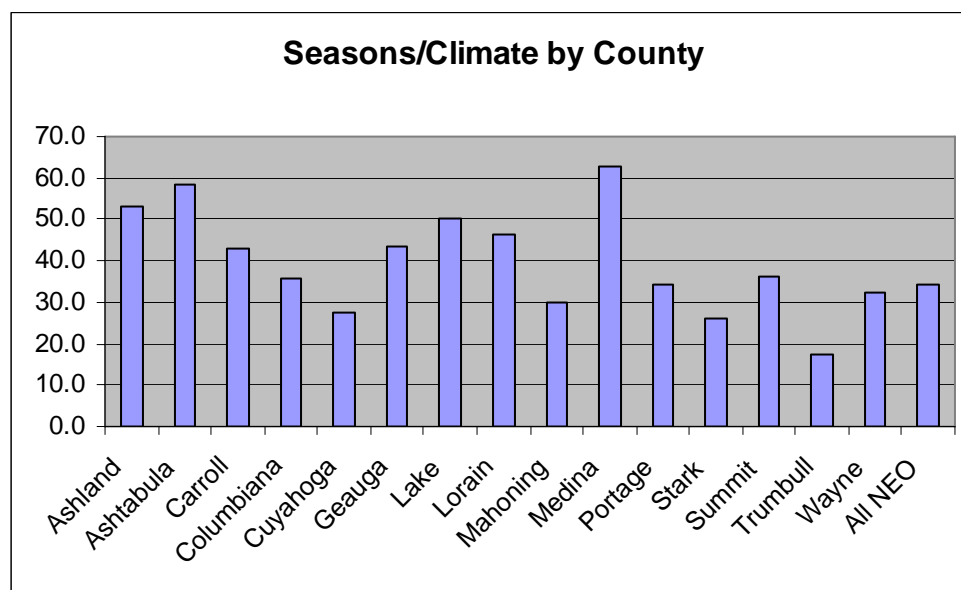


Figure 27: Seasons and Climate by County Where Respondents Live

Buildings and Built Beauty

Design is the marriage of form and function. The phrase, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder” perhaps indicates the beholder’s affinity with a particular style a form takes on or the function itself. When buildings, houses, architecture and history are put together, it portrays ethnic identity and class of a community, not aesthetics alone.

- Covered bridges - scenic; wineries ci0027
- Cuyahoga River trips and their views of downtown and the bridges ci0215
- Build upon the beauty of the lake facilities. ci0481
- “...gardens with flowers and water running through them. We should have some kind of flower festival,” ci1436

Heritage

- “Cleveland is ethnically diverse, lots of heritage. Old history & heritage, compared to Columbus, which is more modern.” ci0031
- “Much history, many gems, Wade Chapel, etc.”
- “Neighborhood feeling. Each has a different character. Northeast Ohio has preserved history and neighborhoods.”
- Not cookie cutter. So pretty “kept old trees and old character of homes.”
- They like the fact that it is steeped very much in history. The historical value. Came to region because of houses' character and is very glad to have accomplished just that and believes the community can be restored.
- Trees! Cleveland is old and has roots. Likes the diversity of architecture.
- The ethnic diversity, the history, and the vibrancy of its people are special. The natural beauty of the area, especially its lakes, rivers, and wild life are special. The vibrancy of the arts, especially the theatrical and visual arts, are special. The beauty of the churches is special.

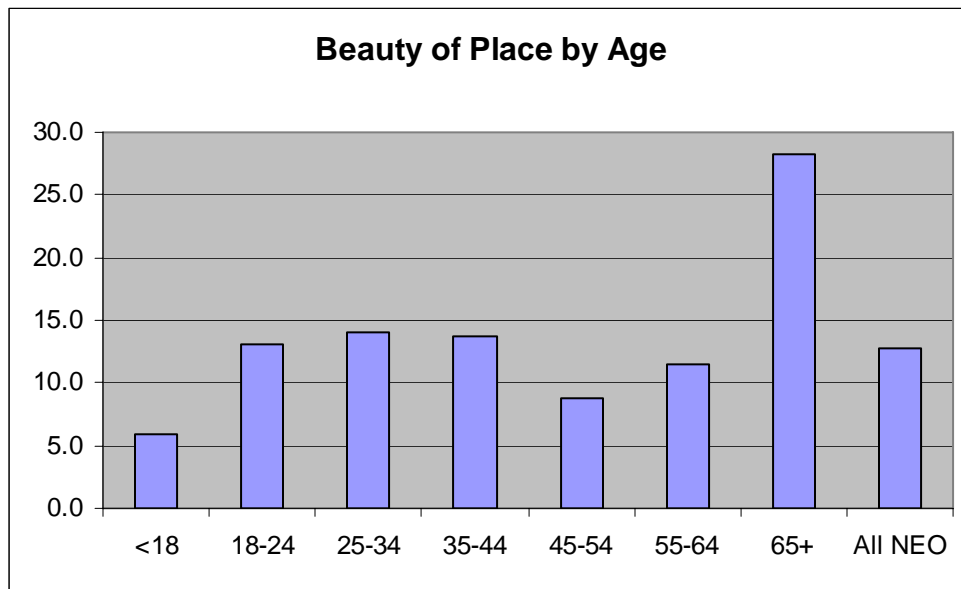


Figure 28: Beauty of Place by Age of Respondents

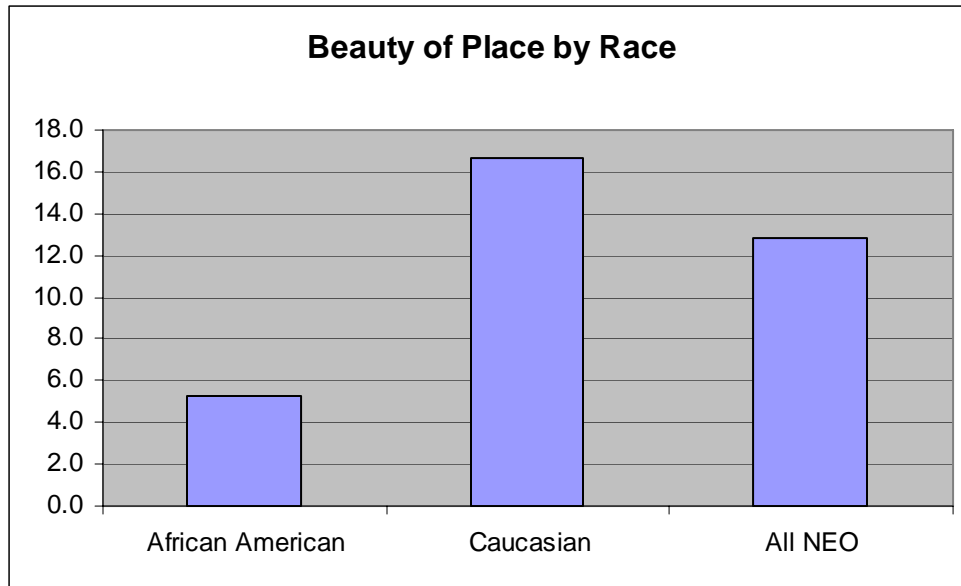


Figure 29: Beauty of Place by Race of Respondents

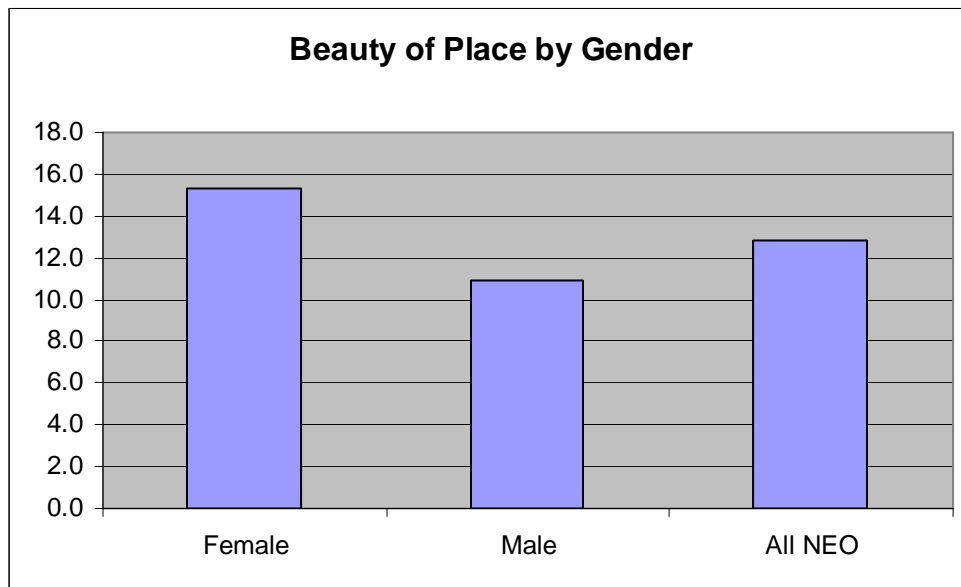


Figure 30: Beauty of Place by Gender of Respondents

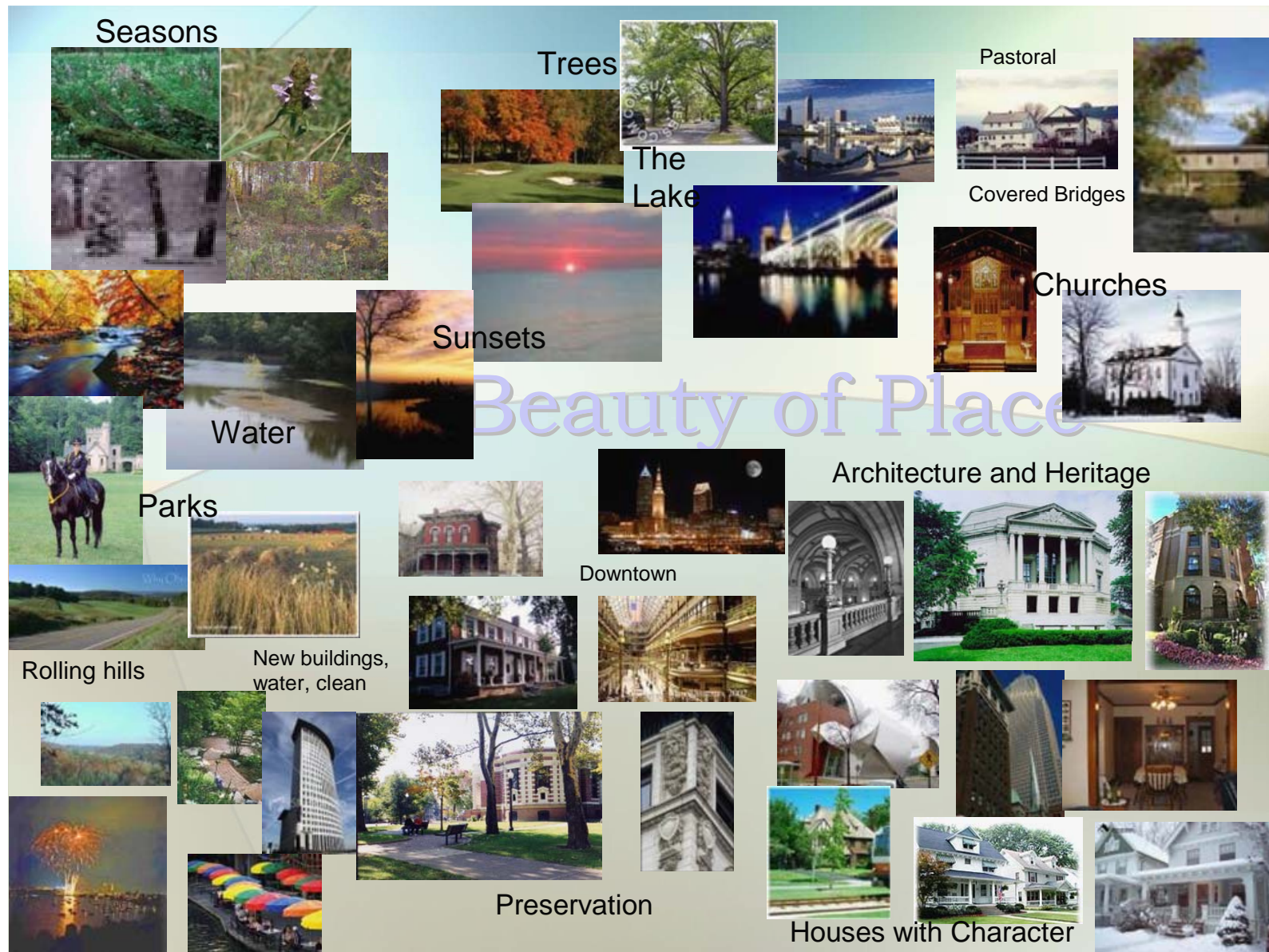


Figure 31: Beauty of Place through Images

ENVISIONING NORTHEAST OHIO

After asking about the region's assets, citizens were instructed to think about the future of Northeast Ohio. The script was as follows:

Imagine what Northeast Ohio will look like if we steadily build upon the strengths you value most about the region for the next 10 years. What will Northeast Ohio look like? What is your vision for the region's future?

Many responses included a look back to the way things used to be with a sense of longing for days when manufacturing brought strong jobs, safe neighborhoods, good schools, and active local churches. While most citizens seemed to recognize that manufacturing will never be what it was in Northeast Ohio, there was hope for a strong community for raising a family, a strong economy, and access to quality education. Citizens from the rural, southern counties in the region more frequently mentioned restoring strong moral values and the centrality of the family as key to building a positive future.

In terms of more concrete visions, there was the least clarity about the economy and employment, two of the most frequent themes. Sometimes people deferred to government and elected leaders rather than suggesting their own solutions. Others were clear about the solution—full employment in good-paying jobs with benefits—but were uncertain about how to achieve it.

At the same time, there was general consensus and more knowledge about what needs to be done on specific topics. The strongest convergence of views related to the need to strengthen public K-12 education, make school funding more equitable, and link future employment to the many institutes of higher education in the region. Table 4 provides a breakdown of the most prominent themes. You will note that when K-12 and Education General are combined they form the most frequent theme. Higher education was also a dominant theme and although not one of the top ten themes, it reinforces the strong sentiment that education is key to the future of Northeast Ohio.

There are also similarities between the regional assets respondents identified and their vision for the future. Education, Employment, Attitudes and Values, Lake Erie, and Housing were all top regional assets identified in the question on what makes Northeast Ohio special. The other top vision themes have related concepts that could be explored in further research. In particular, it would be interesting to compare the Rural-Urban Options responses with the vision comments about Land Use Planning.

You will note that in Question one there was a greater convergence of responses as nine themes were mentioned by more than one fourth of all respondents. In the vision question, only Employment and Education (combined) were mentioned by more than one-fourth of all respondents.

In an effort to reach a deeper understanding of several of the most frequent themes, the data analysis team analyzed random samples of topics to create narrative explanations illustrated with direct quotes. Some topics were first combined, such as Economy Strong and Business Friendly Environment, to identify the shared meaning of these two topics. In the case of Cleveland Important, the data analysis team included this theme as there have been concerns expressed about maintaining Northeast Ohio's identification with Cleveland even while working toward a broader regional identity.

Table 4: Most Frequent Themes from Citizens' Vision for Northeast Ohio

Topics	Comments	Percent of Respondents who Mentioned Theme
Employment	Jobs, jobs, jobs	25.9%
Education Pre K-12	Primarily directed at public education and school funding	15.9%
Economy Strong	Also relates to more & better jobs	13.7%
Collaboration	Two or more groups working together, often governments	10.8%
Attitudes/Values	Includes Midwest values, Christian values	10.6%
Population Growth	Increasing population, reversing decline	10.5%
Education (general)	When not specified as K-12 or higher education	10.4%
Business Friendly Environment	Includes tax incentives, pro-business policies, and help for small businesses	10.0%
Safety	Lower crime, juvenile delinquency	9.4%
Lake Erie	The lakefront, beauty, source of recreation, and natural resource	9.3%
Urban Development	Cleaning up urban blight, redeveloping downtown, etc.	8.1%
Housing	Building upon our quality, affordable homes	7.6%
Land Use Planning	Fighting sprawl, preserving rural and natural areas, etc.	7.5%

Table 5: Vision Themes for Narrative Analysis

Theme	Topics Combined
Education is Key	Education Pre-K – 12, Higher Education + Education
Employment: Job Creation is the Future	Employment
Strong, Business-Friendly Economy	Economy Strong and Business Friendly Environment
Attitudes and Values	Attitudes and Values + Family Values
Collaboration	Collaboration
Population Growth	Population Growth
Urban Development	Urban Development + Redevelop Downtown
Cleveland Important	Cleveland Codes from Questions 1, 3, and 6

Table 6: Top Five Vision Topics by County

1	2	3	4	5
Ashland				
Employment 53.3%	Business Friendly Environment 40.0%	Attitudes, Values 33.3%	Collaboration 26.7%	Land Use Planning 26.7%
Ashtabula				
Economy Strong 31.0%	Employment 27.6%	Lake Erie 20.7%	Recreation 17.2%	(Tie of 2 or more) 17.2%
Carroll				
Employment 57.1%	Education Pre K-12 28.6%	Safety 28.6%	Business Friendly environment 14.3%	(Tie of 2 or more) 14.3%
Columbiana				
Employment 22.6%	Economy Strong 19.4%	Beauty of Place 19.4%	Business Friendly environment 16.1%	(Tie of 2 or more) 12.9%
Cuyahoga				
Employment 24.6%	Education Pre K-12 24.0%	Economy Strong 15.9%	Lake Erie 15.3%	Collaboration 15.0%
Geauga				
Employment 26.1%	Entertainment 26.1%	Education Pre K- 12 21.7%	Environment, Clean 21.7%	Population Growth 21.7%
Lake				
Employment 32.5%	Lake Erie 25.0%	Education Pre K- 12 20.0%	Environment, Clean 12.5%	(Tie of 2 or more) 12.5%
Lorain				
Employment 31.5%	Education Pre K-12 17.8%	Lake Erie 16.4%	Industry:Manufacturing 13.7%	Collaboration 12.3%
Mahoning				
Employment 25.4%	Attitudes, Values 20.9%	Economy Strong 16.4%	Business Friendly environment 13.4%	Population Growth 11.9%
Medina				
Education K-12 25.7%	Industry/Health Care 20.0%	Population Growth 20.0%	Economy Strong 17.1%	(Tie of 2 or more) 14.3%
Portage				
Employment 23.7%	Attitudes, Values 13.2%	Safety 10.5%	Government 10.5%	(Tie of 2 or more) 10.5%
Stark				
Employment 26.2%	Business Friendly Environment 10.7%	Collaboration 10.7%	Population Growth 9.5%	(Tie of 2 or more) 9.5%
Summit				
Employment 25.7%	Population Growth 17.6%	Economy Strong 15.4%	Good Place 14.0%	Education (general) 11.8%

Trumbull				
Employment	Collaboration	Education(general)	Safety	(Tie of 2 or more)
25.0%	11.5%	11.5%	9.6%	9.6%
Wayne				
Education (General)	Land Use Planning	Employment	Industry: Agriculture	(Tie of 2 or more)
28.6%	28.6%	25.0%	21.4%	14.3%

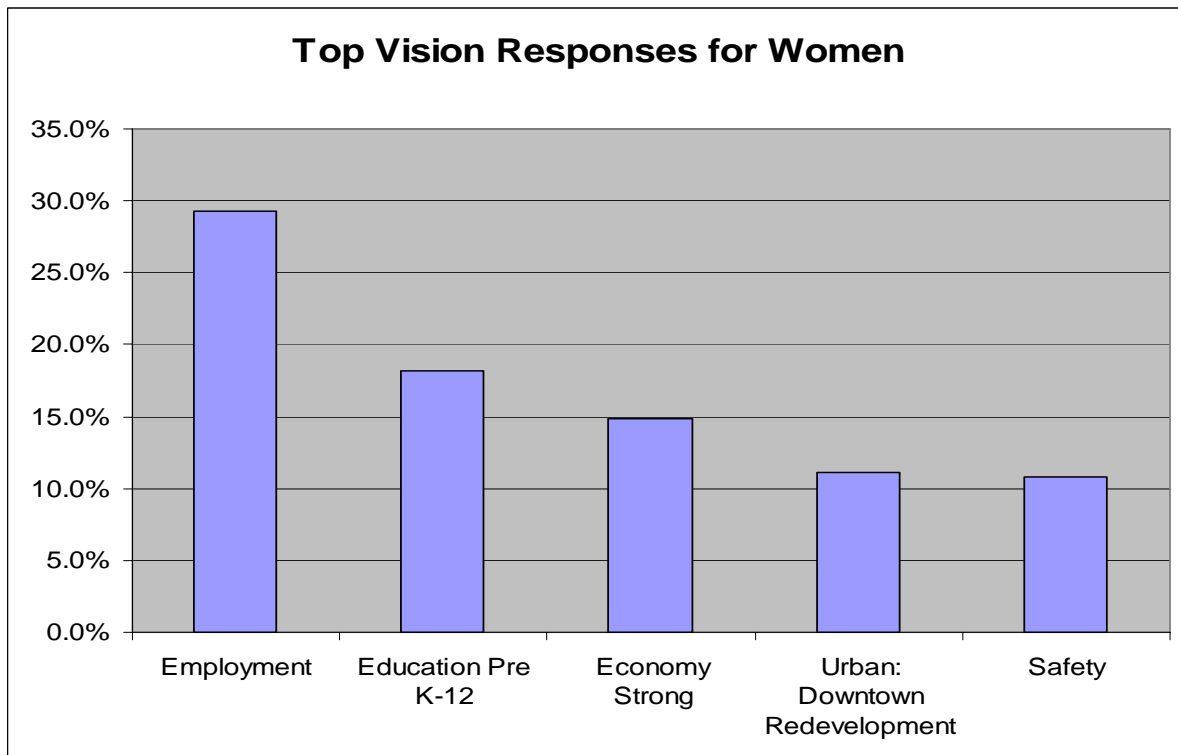
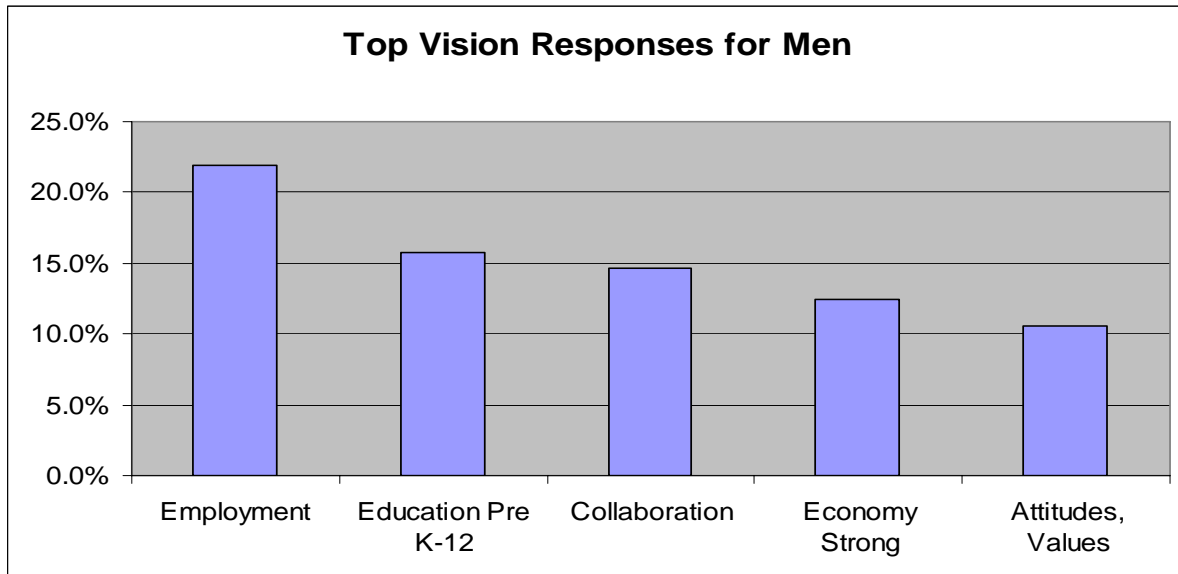


Figure 32: Top Vision Themes by Gender

Table 7: Top Themes by Community Type

Rural				
Employment 27.5%	Education (General) 17.6%	Collaboration 15.7%	Economy Strong 13.7%	Education Pre K- 12 13.7%
Small Town				
Employment 23.7%	Economy Strong 12.4%	Education Higher 12.4%	Education Pre K-12 12.4%	Population Growth 10.3%
Suburban				
Employment 23.3%	Education Pre K-12 17.5%	Urban Downtown Redevelopment 15.7%	Lake Erie 15.2%	Economy Strong 14.3%
Urban				
Employment 23.0%	Education Pre K-12 17.5%	Education (General) 11.5%	Economy Strong 10.6%	Safety 10.1%

Table 8: Top Vision Topics by Age

Less than 18 years old				
Employment 23.5%	Safety 13.7%	Education (General) 11.8%	Education Pre K-12 9.8%	Entertainment 7.8%
18-24 years old				
Employment 21.1%	Population Growth 18.4%	Education Pre K- 12 17.1%	Safety 10.5%	Economy Strong 10.5%
25-34 years old				
Employment 32.1%	Education Pre K-12 21.8%	Economy Strong 14.1%	Population Growth 12.8%	Urban Downtown Redevelopment 12.8%
35-44 years old				
Employment 27.5%	Education Pre K-12 18.6%	Economy Strong 14.7%	Education General 13.7%	Urban Downtown Redevelopment 13.7%
45-54 years old				
Employment 23.8%	Education Pre K-12 19.0%	Collaboration 16.7%	Economy Strong 15.9%	Lake Erie 15.9%
55-64 years old				
Employment 24.1%	Education Pre K-12 23.3%	Collaboration 17.7%	Attitudes, Values 16.5%	Economy Strong 13.9%
65 years and over				
Employment 20.5%	Urban Development 20.5%	Collaboration 17.9%	Economy Strong 17.9%	Attitudes, Values 15.4%

Education is the Key

Respondents mentioned education in three ways: when referring to Pre-K through 12 grade schooling, higher education, and education as a general term. When considering the breakdown of those who mentioned education by the demographics of the respondents, all education categories were combined into a supercode entitled simple Education. Figures 33-36 provide a breakdown by county, gender, community type, and age. In an effort to more fully understand the importance of education, the data analysis team analyzed these distinct topics as separate categories to arrive at the narratives that follow the figures. .

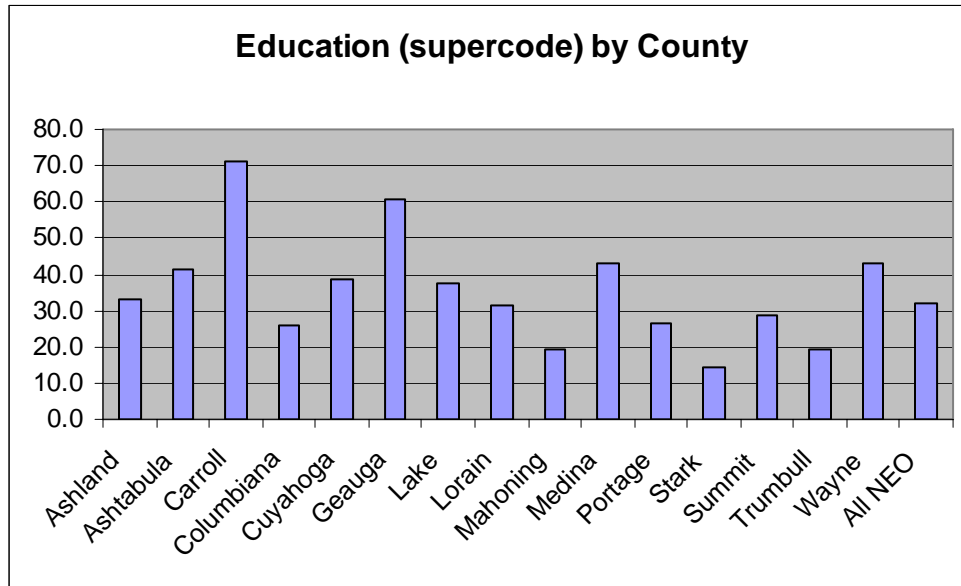


Figure 33: Education (all codes) by County Where Respondents Live

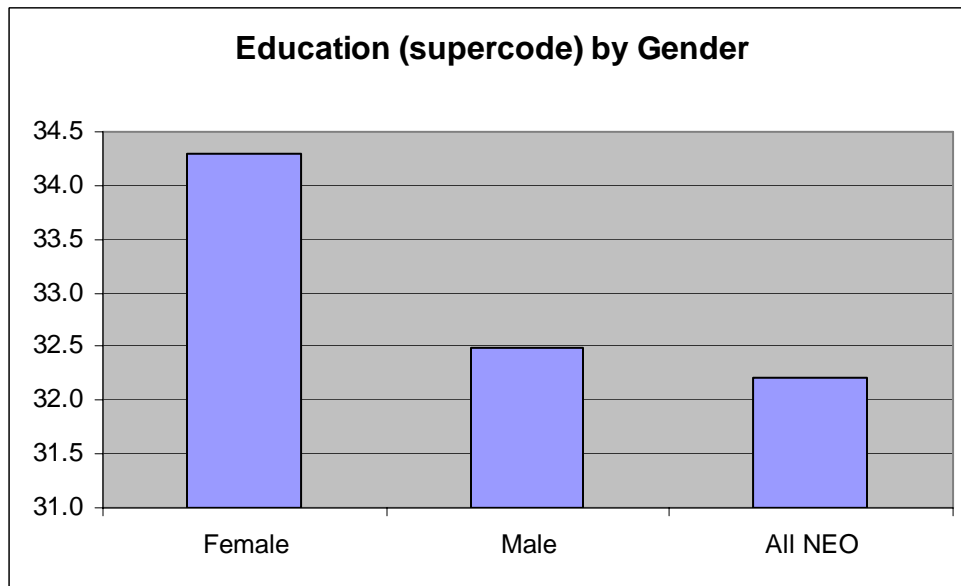


Figure 34: Education (all codes) by Gender of Respondents

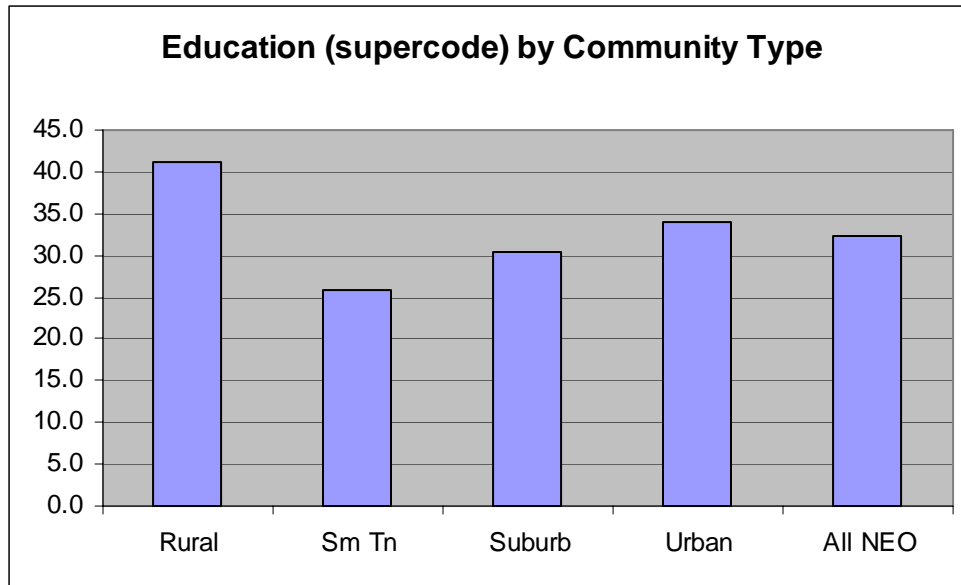


Figure 35: Education by Type of Community Where Respondents Live

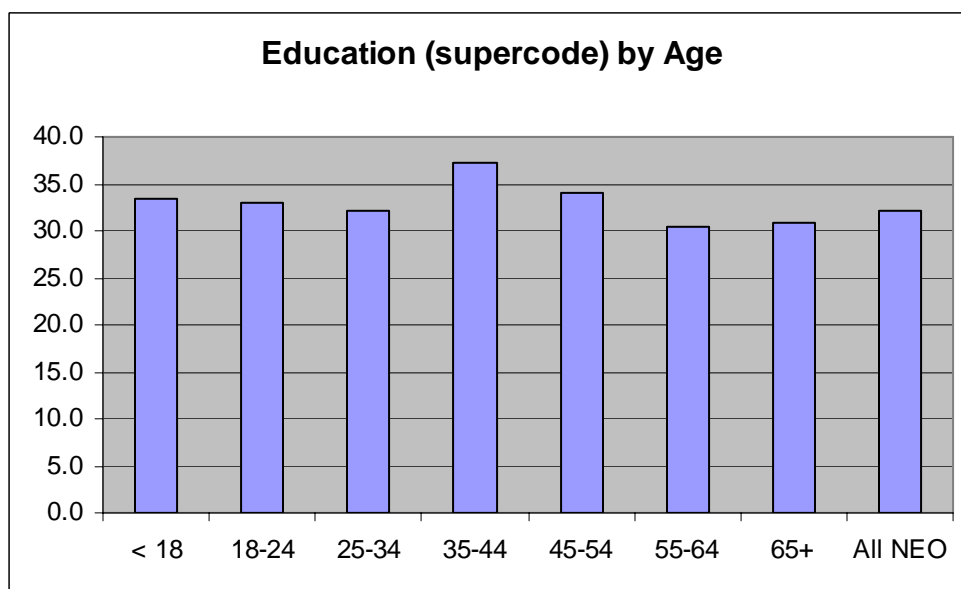


Figure 36: Education (all codes) by Age of Respondents

Fix the Schools! Education Pre-Kindergarten through 12th Grade

Overwhelmingly, as people envision the future of Northeast Ohio, they want better schools. They want schools to provide a higher quality education, they want more equity in school funding, they want schools to prepare students for higher education and jobs and they want to see more people with college degrees living here. People fully understand the importance of education for the future of our region. Education is seen as the key to attracting new people and businesses and retaining those that are already here. Education is seen as the key to future economic development. Moreover, it is important to them personally, as they want greater opportunities for their children.

Most people talk simply about the need to “fix the schools,” referring to both the physical structures as well as the quality of education. Others have more specific suggestions for improving the schools, including actions that can be taken at the local level such as building new buildings, reducing class size and improving special education programs; actions that can be taken at the regional level including consolidating districts to transcend political boundaries; and actions that can be taken at the state level including increasing funding and making the funding system equitable to comply with the Ohio Supreme Court.

- But above everything I see the school systems in my region improving. I envision better deaf and special education programs and more money going to schools. CI0074

Quality education is the lynchpin for our future. Improvements are imperative. People called for better schools, expanded arts programs, more after school activities and magnet schools to achieve greater integration, both economic and racial. They see the importance of education in the abstract but also hope that their own children will have a quality education.

- My dream is for every person to have a quality education so as to be prepared to make his or her positive contribution to society and growth in our area. CI1175
- A true education agenda that will have our children prepared for higher education. CI0698
- A better education for Cleveland’s children because they are the future. CI0729
- We should be funding the future of the students. CI0812

People see a need to improve school buildings. They want new schools, new buildings, and new playgrounds for youth. Safety is a major concern and some call for more discipline or more after school activities to keep kids out of trouble.

A well educated population, especially people with college degrees, is seen as the key to economic opportunity and jobs. People often mentioned jobs and education in the same sentence.

- We will be in the top 5% of educational programs and new job production.
- Businesses will come to Northeast Ohio because of ...education and good paying jobs. CI1338

- Healthy neighborhoods, jobs, and good schools can make Northeast Ohio an increasingly attractive region. CI1368
- ...fine colleges that produce great students and people. CI0914

It is somewhat surprising that few talked about the state proficiency test as either a problem or a solution. Similarly, no one mentioned teachers, either positively or negatively. No one said we are spending too much on education, but a number of people talked about complying with the Supreme Court order to change the way schools are funded. Other reforms such as Universal pre-K, and private schools also were not mentioned.

While people are quite critical of the schools and consistently call for improvements, when they talk about the future they actually seem hopeful that we can someday have an education system that meets their expectations. "Schools are going to keep improving." (ci 0551) Perhaps this is because they clearly see that without a quality education system, from pre-K through higher education, we will not have much of a future.

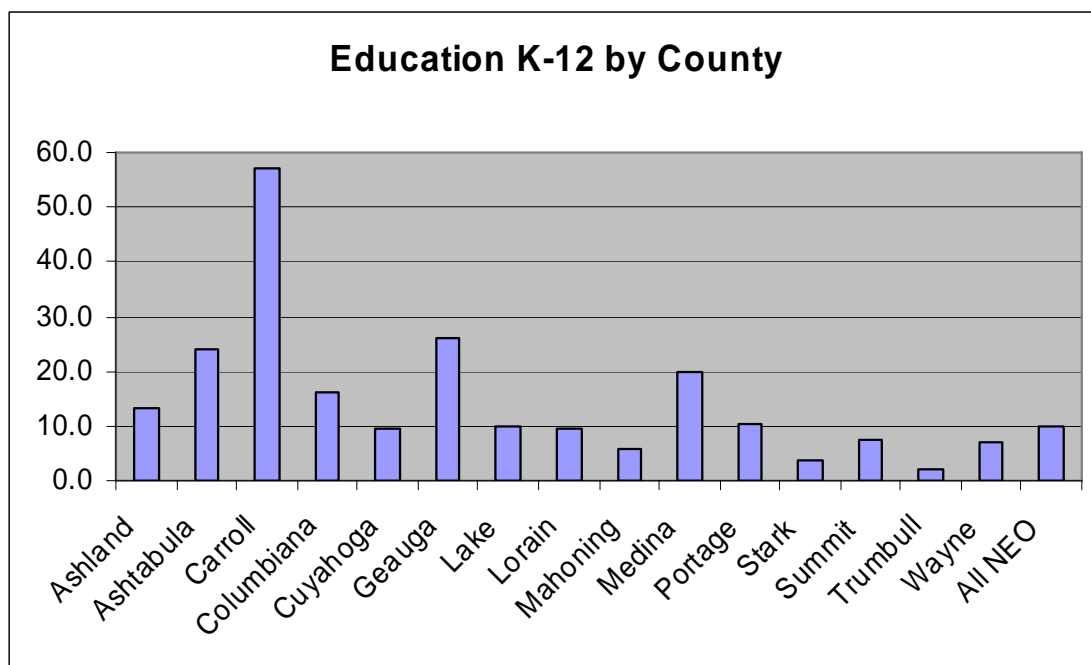


Figure 37: Education Important by County of Respondents

Higher Education

Education makes for a stronger community. This means more and better jobs, economic growth and increasing regional population. Residents hope to capitalize on institutions of higher education to see a region with strong centers of learning.

Attracting Young Professionals:

Respondents think that the strong institutions of higher education that reside in the region will still be a powerful attraction 10 years from now. Moreover, they think improving them will make them a far greater attraction tool for bringing in new people to the region and having the ones that go to college here stay after graduation.

- “People will come here for an education” (ci0033)

Increasing Access:

- “Northeast Ohio will be known for good public schools and access to higher education” was one respondent’s vision for the region’s future. (ci0565)

For the most part, increased access to education for the region was tied to cost. Some respondents said that they felt tuition at Northeast Ohio (and Ohio’s) colleges would continue to increase. Others simply said they felt higher education should be made more affordable.

Higher education should be an equal opportunity option. This is especially true when it comes to low income students. Respondents mentioned increasing the number and availability of scholarships or funding the cost of college. In general they want to see the future hold more opportunities to get an education – and provide opportunities for everyone.

- “Education would be available to poor and wealthy people.” (ci0044)
- “A better and stronger educational base of opportunity through scholarships.” (ci0177)

Stronger and Better:

Respondents want to see the region strengthen the education systems in and for the region. Included in this concept was that colleges and universities would be more integrated/a part of the broader community. These institutions can also be used to create better global collaborations.

The concept of “better” also includes adding to or changing the curriculum of these institutions by including more diversity.

- “Higher education working together with the community, engaged with the community” (ci0416)

More Education Leads to Jobs:

We will be leveraging our colleges to “catapult” the region’s residents to the next level.

It became very clear that respondents feel that jobs are tied to educational attainment. They hope that more residents will see that every job in today's and the future economy needs educated workers.

And that more people will be attending college. In one respondent's vision "We would be one of the best educated metropolitan regions in the country." (ci0044)

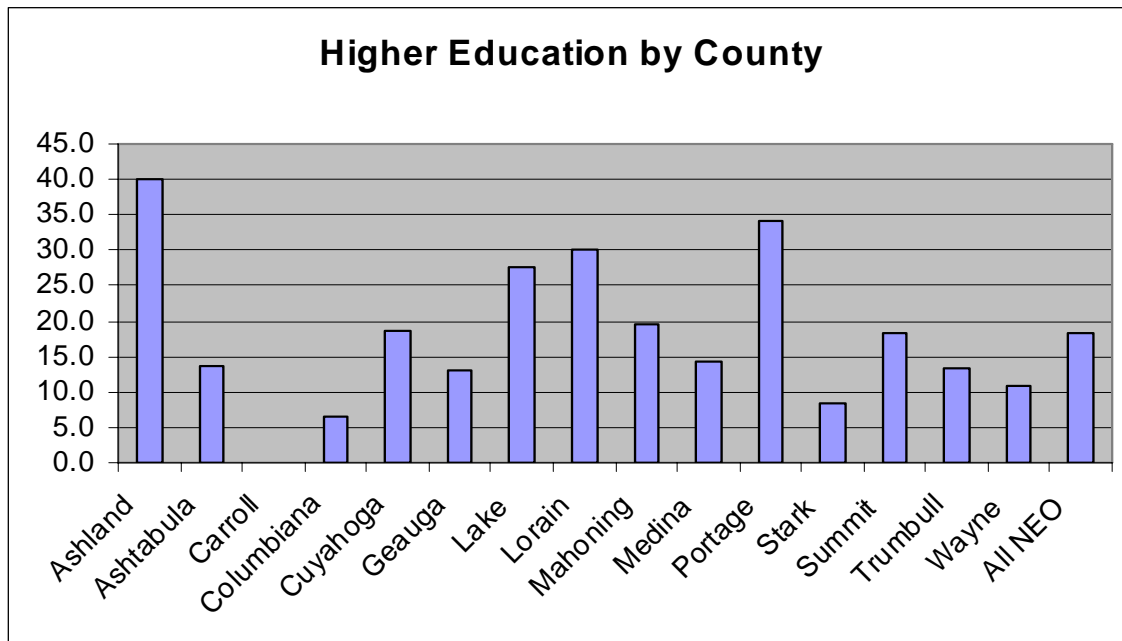


Figure 38: Higher Education Important by County of Respondents

Employment: Job Creation is the Future Of Northeast Ohio

Jobs are a major theme in shaping any future for Northeast Ohio. Residents want to see more and better jobs in the region in the coming years.

Residents link jobs to the overall quality and health of their communities including being safer and creating better schools. Moreover, employment is seen as one tool to attract new people to come to the region as well as keeping them from leaving for other cities that have jobs to offer them.

More, more, more:

Whether it's attracting jobs to the area, creating new jobs or keeping ones that are already here from leaving, citizens want to see the region provide job opportunities for its residents. However the majority of comments described 'bringing' jobs to the region versus creating new jobs locally through entrepreneurship or small business creation.

Many respondents did not specify what kinds of jobs (industries and occupations) that they wanted, just that they felt there should be more of them. They believe that these job opportunities will keep recent college graduates in the area and that places with growing job opportunities will bring more people into the region.

When respondents did discuss the kinds of jobs they envisioned they included: Medical, biotechnology and other high tech jobs, and service related employment.

Some residents contradict each other. While some said that the industry of the past was not the kinds of jobs the region needed for its future, others said the region should bring back the manufacturing jobs that once paid good wages and were the backbone of the state. In these cases it is unclear whether respondents felt this way because they thought there was still potential in the manufacturing industry or if what they described was a longing for the past when they felt the economy and life were generally 'better'.

Better Jobs:

Residents equate better or good jobs with wage levels.

While jobs that have higher earning potential are generally associated with high skilled and technology/knowledge related employment, many respondents did not mention these. More respondents mentioned jobs in the service or tourism industry than did technology.

Regardless of what kinds of jobs are brought to the region, residents want to see those jobs paying better.

Social Equity:

Although it was not often directly addressed, citizens expressed sentiments that jobs are an instrument for addressing issues of equity in the region along with providing jobs that should be offered equitably – the jobs in the region will be adequately available for all those in the workforce. These included comments about economic improvement through better paying jobs that would reduce poverty.

What Citizens Have to Say About Employment:

- Less poverty, better paying jobs. (ci0028)
- Strong emphasis on job creation through assisting current businesses and attracting new businesses. (ci0193)
- More opportunities for employment (ci0503)
- Need to be county wide effort to attract business (ci0527)
- Don't know what the jobs will be, won't be industry (ci0531)
- I think there are going to be a lot of jobs here, more professional positions versus factory. (ci0551)
- Create jobs. Keep present employees in area (ci0606)
- I also feel that we'll be talking about more jobs being based upon the lake and medical facilities that are right around us (ci0914)
- Better educated persons. People will see that every job needs education (ci0918)
- I think most importantly Ohio has to find a new job market. New jobs will bring more money into the area, so things such as education in the city can improve and build more homes (ci0999)
- There will be adequate jobs available for the work force. I anticipate more jobs and choices of place to work (ci1061)
- Cleveland will have larger medical facilities and adjunct businesses. Hopefully more jobs-good ones (ci1125)
- More high-tech industries to provide jobs (ci1129)
- We need a strategy for manufacturing mid-range jobs that pay a decent wage that people can feel good about that you don't need a degree (ci1188)
- We need to retrain manufacturing workers to acquire new skills that will allow us to compete. Silicon Valley did it for no special way; we can too (ci1213)
- And better job training and more plentiful and better paying jobs (ci1394)
- To have a better job and a better community (ci1618)

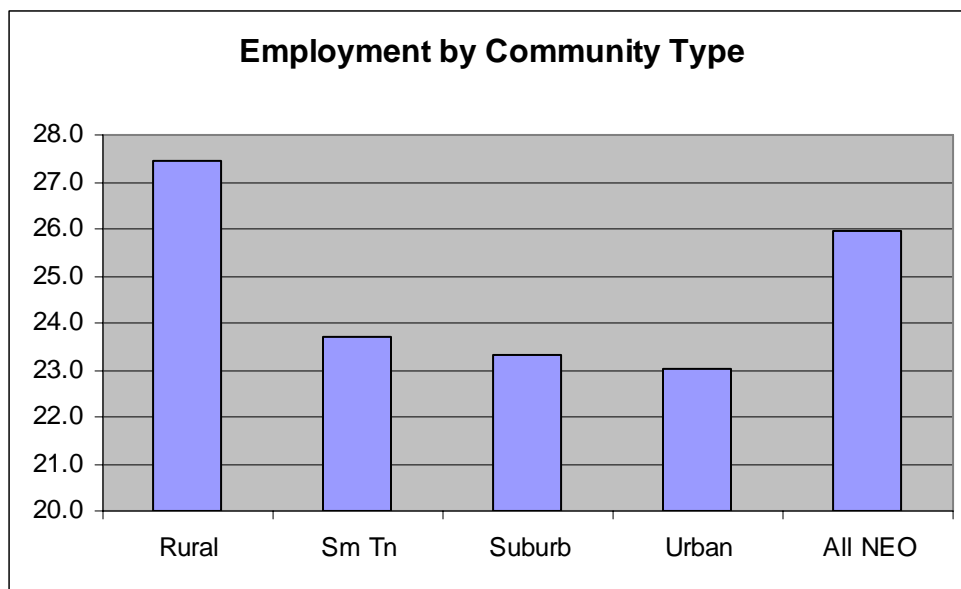


Figure 39: Employment by Type of Community Where Respondents Live



Figure 40: Employment by Age of Respondents

Strong, Business Friendly Economy

Closely tied to employment, respondents envision a future with a strong, business friendly environment where government, higher education, and business work cooperatively. This vision includes a regional approach to this type of cooperation, in which the products and economy of Northeast Ohio would be a player in the global economy.

- I'd like to see multi-tiered economy. Self reliant—grow our own food, employ our own populace, manufacture and produce what local consumers need. Regional cooperation—as small pockets ebb and rise, other pockets in the region can take up the slack. Global competitiveness—enhance the above with production that sells in the work marketplace and puts NEO over the top economically. Ci 0301
- Regional land assembly to assist industry. Symbiotic relationship among government, industry, and populace. Ci 0624
- Regional economy in place, infrastructure updated to meet the needs of a modern economy, clean river. Low unemployment. ci 1159
- Small/big businesses have learned how to market to global economy to help sell their product & services to global person in Japan, California, Wyoming market. Help the entrepreneurial spirit in small business. Selling to the global community. ci 0007

This last quote speaks to another common theme, an environment that promotes small business development and sustainability. Rather than a limited number of large manufactures, citizens envision a future where many small businesses are joined together to market their products globally.

- I see small business becoming more valued, especially minority business. ci 0761
- Small scale activities (business) would be expanded. People working together more. Businesses working together to produce products. ci 1145
- Need to attract diverse group of businesses. Need both service and produces industries. Need to be county wide effort to attract business, not have businesses pitting communities against each other. Ci 0527

Finally, there was a strong theme for creating a sustainable economy that preserves the natural environment of Northeast Ohio and provides a means for everyone in the region to have full employment.

- Have controlled growth, green space. Have regional planning for businesses, county wide. Be concerned about retaining family farms. Regional plan for declining industry. Find a high tech area for business. Capitalize on post secondary colleges. Market the area to people laid off in other areas. Ci 0305
- NE Ohio will have economic prosperity that benefits all classes of people ci 0073
- This requires civic minded government -- regional government support with strategic investment of resources. We could provide reasonable access to amenities, rather than building another replication. We need an environment where people are

supported in being creative: arts districts and settings where folks can try out stuff economically. We need places where people can come together, such as cafes and parks, where the great idea emerges: unplanned coming together that creates wonderful new concepts/plans; spontaneously connect where no one feels insecure. Then out of that we would create dynamic, derivative organizations, creating wonderful things in quality of life leading to new types of economic development. ci 0131

A strong economy is shared value in citizens' vision of the future with significant numbers of respondents mentioning it in all age groups. Citizens in their prime employment years frequently expressed the need for a strong economy, but as Figure 41 illustrates, the highest age group was those over 65 years old. Perhaps these respondents recall the days when Northeast Ohio had a strong economy with high paying jobs for working class families.

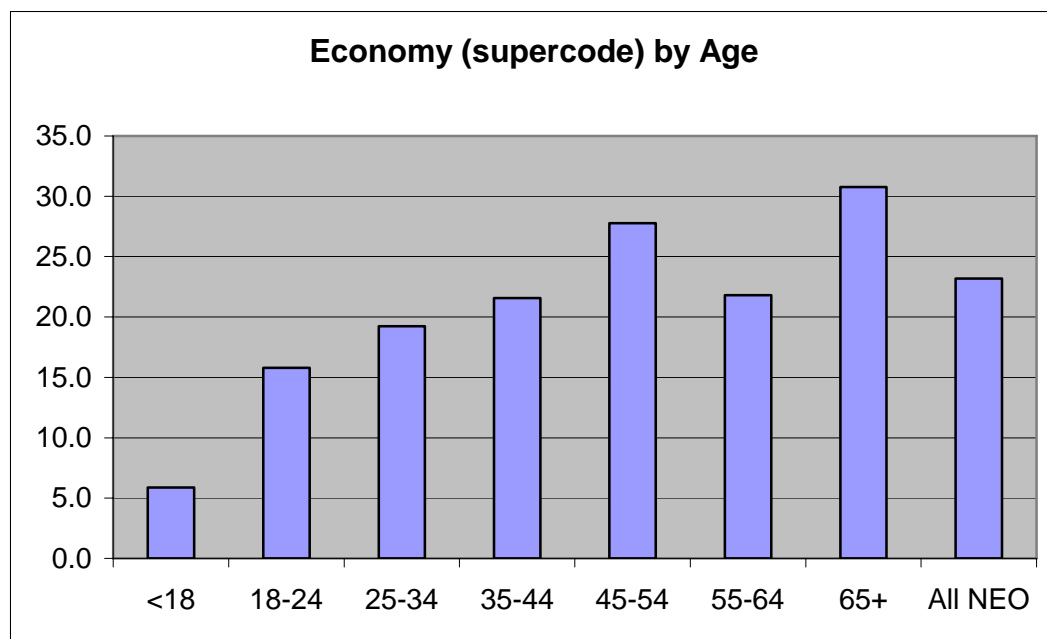


Figure 41: Strong Economy by Age of Respondents

Attitudes and Values

Attitudes and values represented in Question 6 varied widely. The most frequent theme was to move from a sense of pessimism or negative self-image to one of collective pride in our region. Many of these quotes also stressed working together across boundaries or municipalities.

- We would be working together as one. We would be positive in our self-promotion and not dwell on negative feedback. We need to except change and lot go of the past. We need to except that certain industries are gone and work on getting cutting edge jobs here. ci 1058
- Would like Clevelanders to have better image of themselves. Hope that in 10 years Clevelanders will be proud. ci 0631
- More cosmopolitan -better quality jobs -what steel to scholars campaign embodies-change in mindset and importance of education -leverage our collective strength to compete globally. ci 1359
- Boundaries we have created (real or perceptual) east versus west-side are gone. Neighborhoods throughout region that echo whole region. Proud to be from here. ci 1307
- Changing the concept of the people, thinking us and we. ci 0446

Closely related to this theme, many respondents spoke of a vision where people are more caring, socially conscious, and committed to the welfare of all. This often meant improved economic opportunities for those from lower socioeconomic status.

- Losing apathy. Everyone having a job... Caring for one another, avoiding selfishness. People loving one another, working with one another, no crime. ci 0709
- Jobs offering decent wages are available so that people are living with dignity that is the right of every citizen in Northeast Ohio. In well-kept buildings students appropriately dressed are listening attentively and responding respectfully as teachers enthusiastically share our cultural heritage with them. A sense of inner satisfaction and peace pervades the premises of these schools attended by students of diverse ethnic heritages. ci 1174
- Invest in people, value all. ci 0612
- Socially-minded community ci 0615
- Every citizen must have their fair share, responsible public officials, corporations that are ethical, wealth should be re-distributed in our region. Region with emphasis on youth & education not personnel wealth. ci 0820

Another theme had to do with family values or strong morals, which were often linked to Christian values (especially in the southern and rural counties of the region). At the same

time, there was a much smaller number of respondents who spoke of more progressive and open values, especially with regard to sexual orientation.

- Maintaining the core family values. ci 0913
- Stark county grounded in Christian morals, values and allowed to be part of civic life would make a big difference. Want results (morals and values) but not one (religion) who bring results. ci 0455
- Many Christian churches. People's attitude, clothes different, more modest. General attitude will be more positive. Understanding and forgiving. ci 0425
- Free of anti-gay communities, more accepting of the gay communities, and laws to protect gay couples. ci 1214

Equity was a specific value that was coded separately, given the frequency with which it was mentioned. Many people see the future of Northeast Ohio characterized by greater equity in opportunities, resource distribution, wealth, and quality of life in general. The following figures offer an analysis the frequency of the equity theme across different demographic groups.

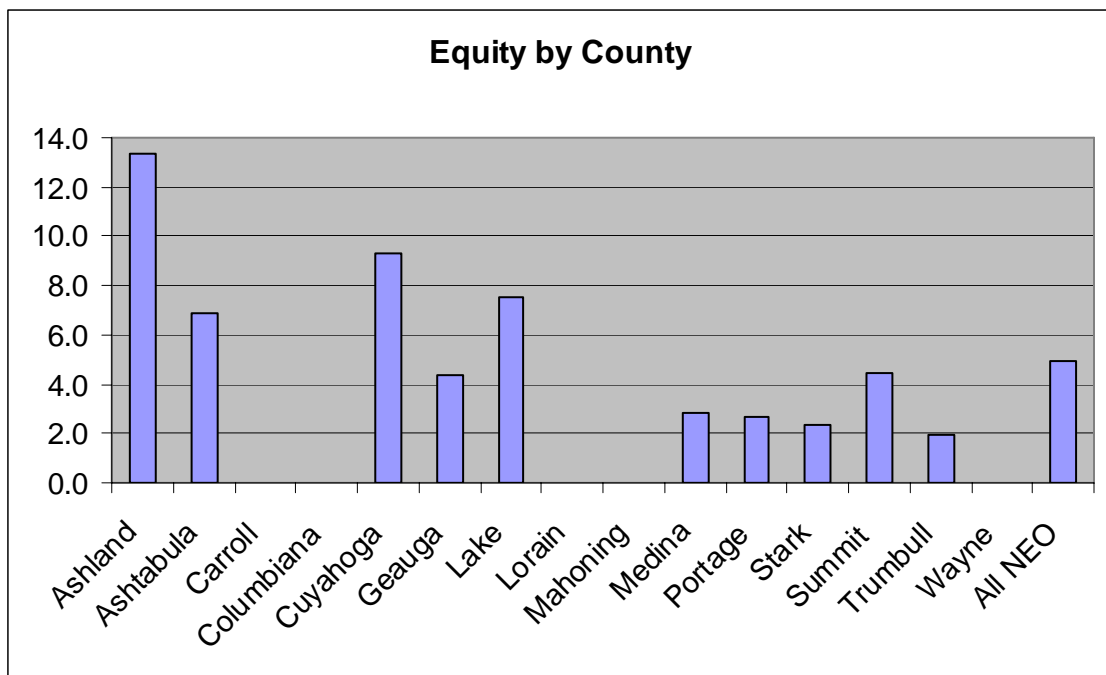


Figure 42: Equity by County of Respondents

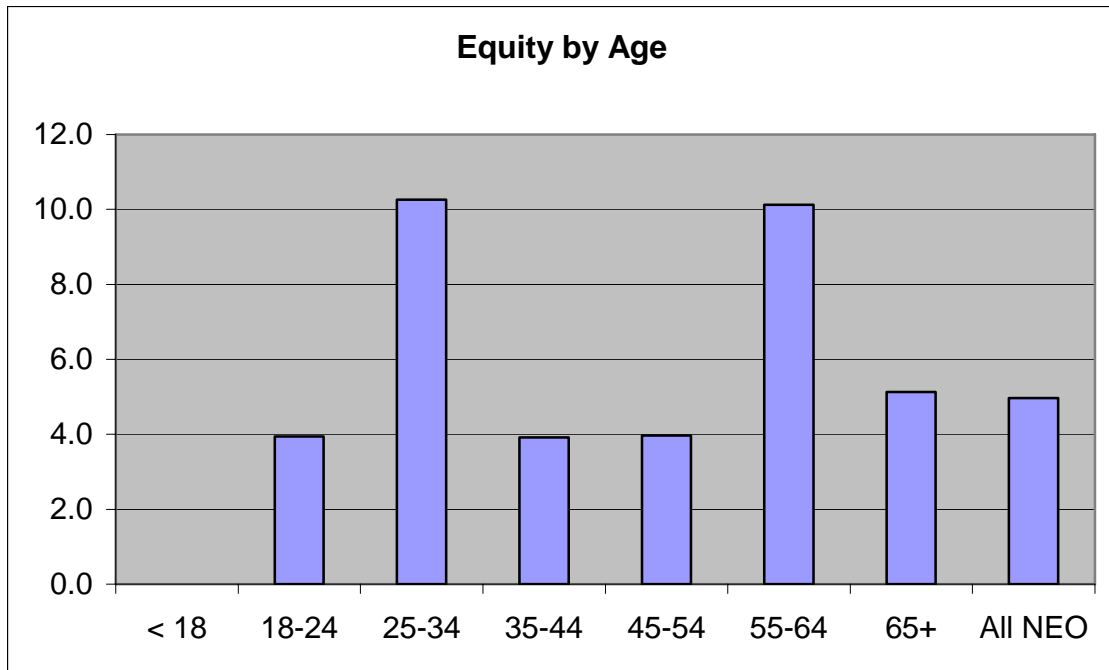


Figure 43: Equity by Age of Respondents

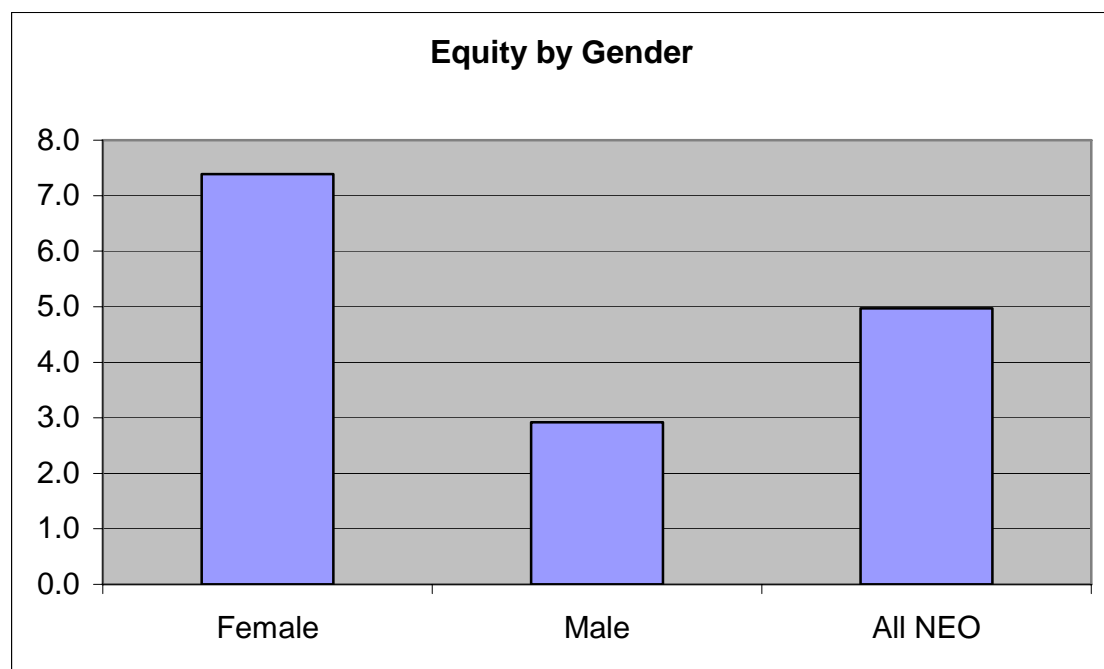


Figure 44: Equity by Gender of Respondents

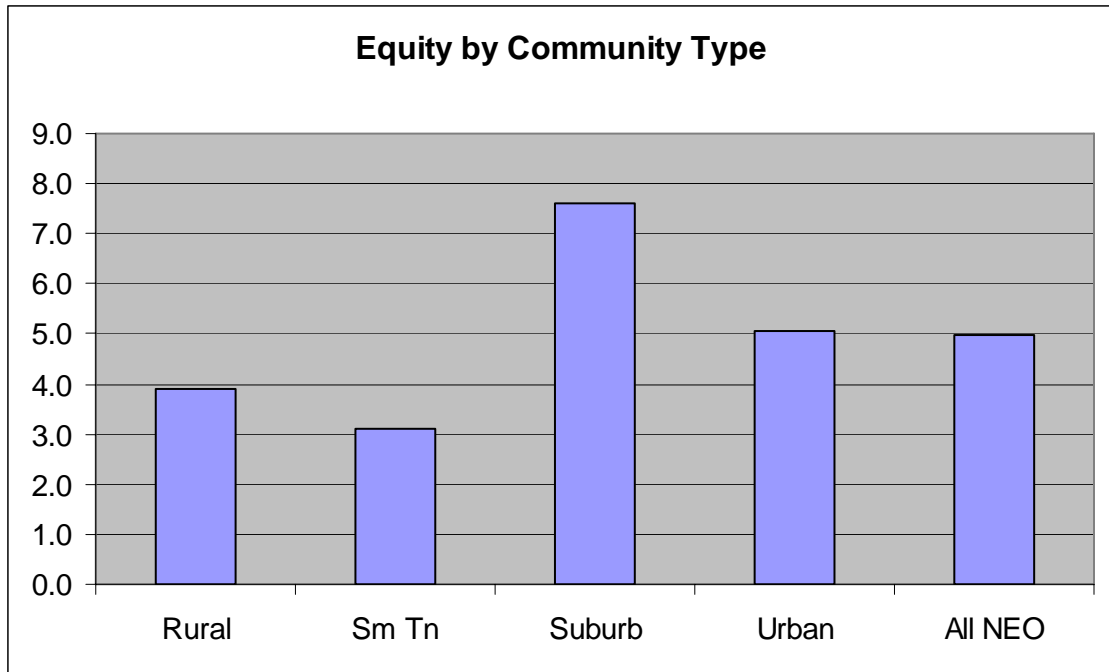


Figure 45: Equity by Type of Community Where Respondents Live

Collaboration

Northeast Ohioans desire a future with collaboration at multiple levels. Overall, respondents described a strength-based approach, where resources and assets are united to strengthen the weakest elements and the region as a whole. Collaboration includes governments uniting and overcoming turf battles, merging public services, businesses collaborating to strengthen the economy and regional market share, suburbs and cities working together, and even sharing taxes and resources across municipalities for public education. Respondents also described collaboration on a social level, where ethnic groups would come together, churches would work together with public entities for the good of the region, and racial integration would be commonplace.

- I would see the Rotary and other clubs, churches, villages, townships, and larger government officials working together and visiting other communities to get to know each other and work from each others strengths and build on weaknesses. There would be more involvement from working and knowing each other's community, crating more uniformity. (CI 0806)

Governments working together

- More regional government cooperation—currently it is ridiculous to have so many separate governments. Cut down on duplication and simplify the structure. (CI 0416)

Unite districts, taxes, and resources to strengthen public education

- Higher education working together with the community, engaged with the community. Producing an educated workforce. (CI 0416)
- Regionalized greater Cleveland. Regionalized school system, share tax dollars, pleasant aesthetic neighborhoods, regionalized police/fire departments, regionalized control over unemployment, crime, blight out of downtown (CI 0730)

Businesses collaborate

- Counties will be working together jointly. We will have great connectivity between university, businesses, healthcare facilities. (CI 0734))

Suburbs and cities working together

- Akron is going to start talking to Youngstown, Cleveland, Lorain, and more cooperating. (CI 0599)
- Increased planning that fosters collaboration and coordination of services
- The affluent help the less well off

A positive attitude that enables unity and collaboration

- We would be working together as one. We would be positive in our self-promotion and now dwell on negative feedback. (CI 1058)

- Tax sharing, education and information exchange. People are hopeful about the future of the region as a whole. Working together for the region and not just individual communities. (CI 0471)

Increased incentives for coming together

- If we build on our assets, it will rock! The suburbs and the city of Cleveland really feel like they are part of each other. There are Mentor, Solon, Eastlake, etc. days in downtown Cleveland. Residents of the featured community get 10 percent discounts in all downtown stores on “their” day. There is a parade down Euclid Avenue honoring the featured community. We have pooled our resources together across the region. The inner cities have resolved their safety issues. The region has cultivated businesses, both big and small. There is a feeling like the old days, like when you could go to Higbee’s basement and get a frosty. (CI 0383)

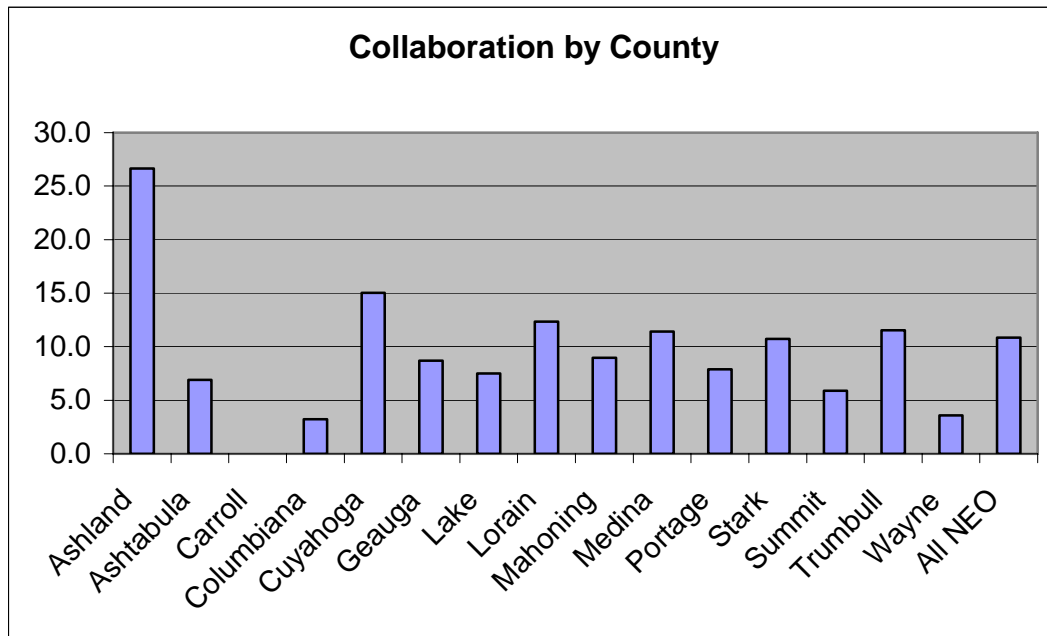


Figure 46: Collaboration by County of Respondents

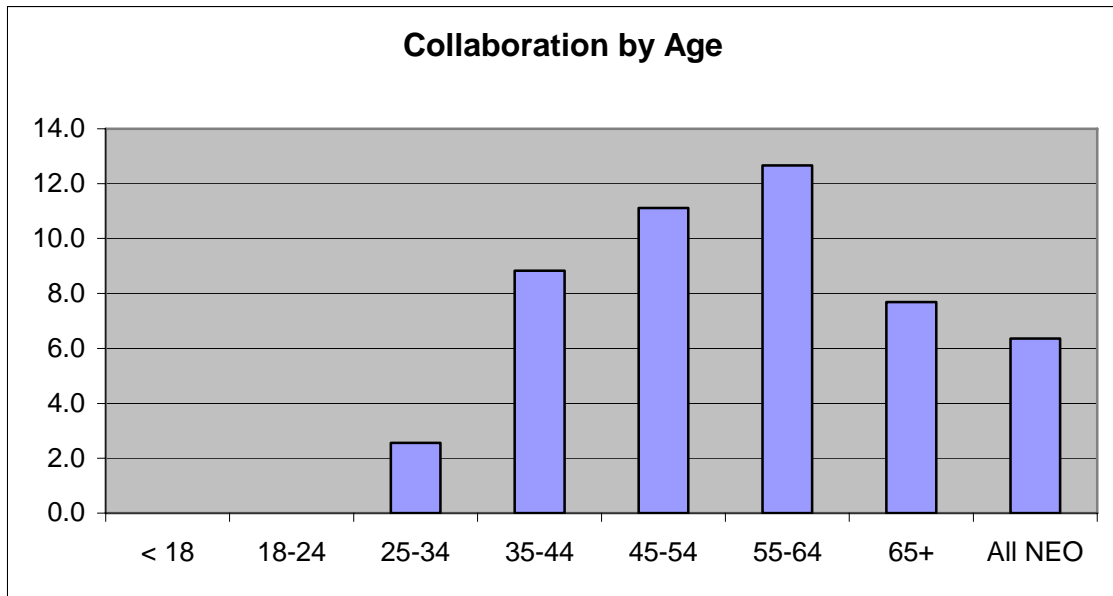


Figure 47: Collaboration by Age of Respondents

Population Growth

Where there's a trend, there's a counter trend. NE Ohioans' sense of place in the world is reflected in their desire to be a competitive region in terms of cities and population size, or at least they desire Cleveland to return to its former greatness. There are attractors and impacts of population growth that may feed a spiral in one direction or another. One thing is for sure, you can't separate the issues around population growth and jobs. Here are the trends:

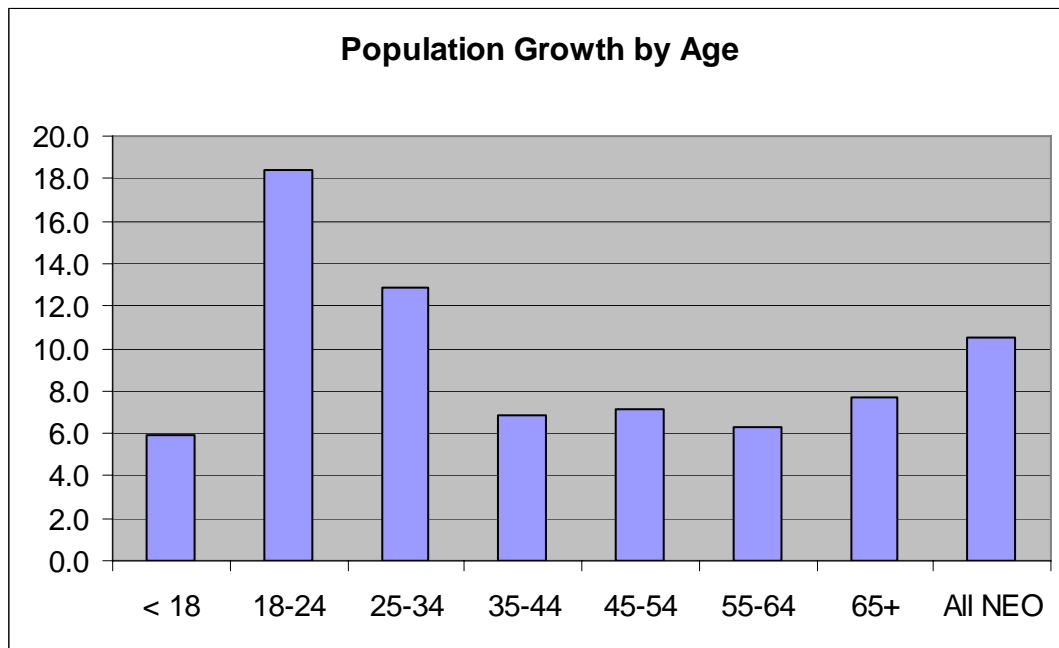


Figure 48: Population Growth by Age of Respondents

More People Mean More Business

Some citizens think the way to increase the presence of business, and hence jobs, is to attract a larger population.

- If more people want to live here hopefully more businesses will want to be here too ci1022
- I think it will continue to grow and the jobs will begin to come. The communities to grow and contain beautiful homes. ci1151
- A national city or community -- more population, more companies would open businesses ci0156
- She thinks that there will be more houses, more schools, and more people. There may also be more job opportunities. ci0993
- A lot of new homes and neighborhoods. Many offices and restaurants to help build growth of community.... More jobs for people. ci1013

More Jobs Mean More People

Other citizens think that an improved job market will attract new people to the area and help retain our current residents, especially new college graduates.

- I would like to see Northeast Ohio as having more job opportunities that fit within the time-demand of the market. I hope that there will be more industries, more businesses running in this area. Having more job opportunities in this area will attract more people from other places and maybe cause them to move to this part of the state or country. ci1274
- My vision is to see better improvements in education, job opportunities, bigger and expanded technologies and the ability of our state to keep our educated citizens in Ohio ci0225
- To be a vibrant, exciting area of business. Filled real estate. More drugstores, supers where people live. Businesses attracted to move, homegrown entrepreneurs, ultimately more people decide to stay. ci0686
- Research will continue to be a priority within healthcare; collaboration between hospitals and universities. Media will start focusing on the positive aspects of the region. Take after N. Carolina with their "triangle." State funded collaboration between hospitals, and universities and private enterprises. These kinds of collaborations and innovations need to be publicized. Stay focused on strengths and spin off companies will start and more people will come into region for jobs which will increase tax base. Vision for future is hopeful. ci0863
- [There will] Be many smaller industries-no huge steel mills or auto plants, etc. Smaller companies that will be profitable and can serve the country. Give a more stable base of employment instead of the opposite with large companies - attraction to this area will be because stability - will be much more stable than larger cities. Although a huge increase in population, [it] will give a steady linear growth unlike larger cities. ci1088
- Quite frankly, I don't think that much about the region's future. That's why you elect politicians; they have to do that thinking for you. I think most areas are defined by their economy. People won't move to a place if there's no jobs. If more jobs are created, you'll have more people come to the area in the next 10 years. ci1406

Economic Impact of Population Growth

Foresight, in the case of NE Ohioans is rosy. For the most part, citizens believe that population growth will benefit the area. Those beneficial impacts, in turn, will make our region even more attractive. The major request is for thoughtful, controlled growth so that we don't lose the wonderful quality of life that is seen as an attractor in the first place.

- Cleveland will still be the cultural leader, and have more history, but until people move within the city and there is a higher tax base, schools and businesses will struggle. ci0218
- NEO will be larger with newer buildings and better surroundings. It will have more stars coming from our area. ci0292

- Have controlled growth, green space. Have regional planning for businesses, county-wide. Be concerned about retaining family farms. Regional plan for declining industry. Find a high tech area for business. Capitalize on post secondary colleges. Market the area to people laid off in other areas. ci0305
- There's risk in growth, more people does not necessarily mean they will appreciate the same things. Education would be the cornerstone. Good school systems. Economic activity can bring more people committed to the health of the community. ci1030
- I would like to see Northeast Ohio keep growing in business as the population increases. Wadsworth is growing as they have new businesses emerge on Route 261. ci1284
- I feel that Northeast Ohio is a steadily growing area in population and it will continue to grow for years to come. Since the population is at an increase, I think the economy will grow and become very wealthy area for business. Since more people are coming in, a sense of pride needs to be established in order to help build up the area. ci1289

Economic Factors Are Also Attractors of Increased Population

Many citizens see the strengths of our region as a draw for more population growth. Some see our cultural strengths and quality of life as predominant; others see affordability, the natural environment, educational systems, redeveloped cities, entertainment and family friendliness to be attractors. On occasion citizens look at the larger world and see economic difficulties that might drive more people to our area. Sometimes, citizens fondly remember the good ol' days of being a business center and hope for a return to our former glory.

- More people coming and settling in Northeast Ohio for affordability and quality of life. ci0811
- Families will attract people to the area, good housing at affordable prices, good economic development. ci0890
- It will become a place where medical fields will expand and the growth of YSU that will help draw in new people and companies to the area. The downtown area will become prosperous for the city. [With] Youngstown 2010 [we] have a good background for updating the area. ci1109
- If the people continue to restore the historical value of our area it will draw more quality oriented people, such as the Mill Creek Park in Youngstown. ci1241
- [We will] attract people in 10 years: if we have a cleaner environment and more access to Lake Erie. ci1308
- People would be attracted to more arenas and community activities. Then, of course, the Brown's will have a winning record. ci1410
- Thinks there will be a water shortage and everyone will want to move to Northeast Ohio. He has already seen this happening in Las Vegas and Colorado. We are running out of water in the world. ci0556

- The region will regain businesses lost. The cities will continue to attract families and reduce the pressure on our farmland. Neighborhoods will be rejuvenated. ci0831

Retain The People We Have Now

One factor in the desired growth of population in NEO, is the retention of those who already live here. Special interest is in keeping young professionals and families in the region.

- Families have stayed in region. Other people want to come here because of above and good education available. ci1186
- And people staying in the region ci1212

Caveat: Not In My Back Acreage!

While population growth is generally seen as good, not everyone wants every square inch covered by humans. As seen in the section on Urban Development, controlled growth is what is desired, not willy-nilly development and stress.

- The cities will continue to attract families and reduce the pressure on our farmland. Neighborhoods will be rejuvenated. ci0831
- I do not want the area to develop anymore; the suburbs & rural areas are what make living in NE Ohio so nice. The small towns keep people close & working together. ci0835

Urban Development

Buildings: It Would Look More Like A City

A strong visual element of citizens' vision for Northeast Ohio is tall, beautiful buildings. Our cities would have recognizable skylines, beautiful, green streetscapes where we move from one place to another and look like the thriving, vibrant, hip place we're becoming. For Cleveland, the ideas for urban development are in addition to lakefront development.

- Matt thinks it would be better and help its image if both Cleveland and Akron build more big buildings. If Cleveland and Akron had a recognizable skyline across the United States, it would help attract more people to the region. ci1263
- I think that a large amount of improvements will take place downtown. I think the biggest change will take place in the Flats. It saddens me to see all the boarded up buildings and businesses that used to thrive some years back. The property there can be such an asset in bringing new life to downtown, I try to follow what is happening down there as much as possible. My vision is to revitalize downtown. I think that would bring more jobs to the region and attract people from other big cities to relocate here. ci1285
- Look like NYC. Buildings higher. ci0272
- Lakefront development enormous asset, Euclid Ave Corridor will be vibrant. ci1199
- Northeast Ohio will have all types of new buildings and [a] new site that makes Cleveland exciting. ci1379

New Urbanism and Tourist Destination All Rolled Into One

Northeast Ohioans want vibrant, happening, tourist-attracting, downtowns with youth appeal. Citizens want centers for night life as well as the option of work-live-play neighborhoods with loads of charm. They see this development as part of the larger economic revitalization for the cities and region. The contained living area will be sustainable, too.

- I envision a more urban oriented community. I see people living in the downtown Cleveland area. There will be downtown neighborhoods with grocery stores, restaurants and entertainment centers. Most of all, there will be centralized living. Every downtown neighborhood will be alive with the hustle-bustle of people living, working and playing in these neighborhoods. All of this will be good for business. I see people living in downtown, working in downtown and docking their boats in Lake Erie. I envision skyscrapers populated by college educated young professionals. In my vision, we have recruited college students to live here after they graduate. We have changed our image from a rust belt city to a high tech city. ci0382
- More business centers or places people can gather.... Revitalized urban center. ci0630
- Keep green space. Let's not build on every piece of land we have. ci1231
- Northeast Ohio to be a destination city for tourism, conventions, and bio tech. Succeed to attract others to our community so we have no suburban flight. Fun to

see a fun, young city downtown. A happening kind of place like Chicago. Must be unique attractions to put us on the map. ci0095

- A great place to live and work. A strong central city bordered by strong suburbs and communities. ci1319
- Make improvements around the Lake and around the Flats. Focus on improvements that help regular people not just the wealthy. ci1189
- New Urbanism: Knowing your neighbors, pedestrian friendly developments, less driving, town centered neighborhoods. ci1447

Housing For All

Housing is a component of the urban revitalization vision citizens have. There is concern about the variety and affordability of good housing for all residents of urban areas. Housing, more than other building/redevelopment, is the measure of inclusion.

- There will be revitalized housing - not necessarily new but refurbished ci0379
- My vision is one that includes ridiculously overpriced lofts downtown that are not built at the expense of the 4,000 other downtown residents whose homes are sidewalks. ci0717
- Accessible housing improved, transportation improved. Build new homes in inner city and 1st ring suburbs. ci0663
- It is growing in development of housing projects. Have a theater coming to town as to the advantage to make the town or city to grow. ci0440
- Revitalize more of poor areas. I drive through them on the way home and see progress with housing starts. ci0272

Transportation: Not Just Your Father's Oldsmobile

Mass transit, carless, walkable cities and centralization are on the minds of those envisioning redeveloped urban centers. In addition, connecting urban centers around the region would increase the interrelationships between them. Transportation is key to the possibility of full revitalization and "use" of the city. Road surface improvements continue as a perennial request.

- Smart investment in mass transit (light rail) as opposed to only investing in roadways. ci0867
- Improve roads. More business centers or places people can gather. Provide better transportation to center and from west to east sides of Cleveland. Revitalized urban center. ci0630
- Expand public transport routes. Greater access for the suburbs. Draw more workers, encourage greater participation in downtown attractions. Public transport will make a huge difference. If we had a better rapid system, it would benefit the entire area. ci0744

Curb Appeal: Clean and Beautiful

Residents of NE Ohio appreciate the beauty of the built environment and enjoy the landscaping and green space in their cities. But most of all, they appreciate cleanliness. There's a sense that more than just good looks are at stake.

- Vision- try and clean up run down area. Clean up community-look beautiful- more trees -- in fact it is beautiful place. ci0197
- I think that NEO would be bigger. More buildings and clean. ci0290
- Not a big difference, just cleaned up. Flats, parts of downtown Akron ci1376
- Bringing life to downtown and cleaning up the cities will improve the prospects for tomorrow. ci1508

What Used to Be an Errand – Shopping – Is Now Entertainment!

Shopping is a major attraction in urban centers, a reason to travel from rural areas and small towns, as well as being a potential draw for tourists. Independent, creative shopkeepers will find interested customers in NEO. One citizen might prefer to not have to drive from Mahoning County to Crocker Park!

- Small stores downtown and old houses filled again. The culture in Cleveland has continued to improve. In ten years it will be more like Chicago, more shopping, theaters, like Crocker Park. ci1063
- More stores and businesses in the downtown area. ci0928
- I can only hope that the Flats become a big attraction again and that Tower City and all the shopping becomes revitalized too. ci0121

Urban Redevelopment is an Antidote to Sprawl...

Many citizens want to keep their rural/urban options open. There is also a high interest in preserving our natural environment and living sustainably. Residents want coordinated transportation, centralized work and living areas, access for everyone to everything and maintenance of our quality of life.

- Smart investment in mass transit (light rail) as opposed to only investing in roadways. Stop urban sprawl and invest in core cities/town/villages. Interest in parks, bike trails, rivers, lakes, purchase more land. Improve city (urban) aesthetics. Promote economic growth downtown in all cities (smart growth with local business owners). Follow Portland, Oregon as a prime example. Everyone has a sense of pride and a common goal. ci0867
- The region will regain businesses lost. The cities will continue to attract families and reduce the pressure on our farmland. Neighborhoods will be rejuvenated ci0831
- Conservation of farmers. Mass transport from city to city and within the city. More responsive government to the general populace. Planned development; lots of green space, livable cities, thriving downtowns. ci1237

- The natural beauty of our area of rolling hills, farmlands, meadows, forests, parks, wetlands, ponds, and streams-and our Lake area has been preserved, together with their unique ecosystems, from pollution and over-development. But a transformation has taken place in the inner city. ci1174

...Or not

- More suburban growth. Slow central city growth. Solid technologically driven economic growth. ci1161

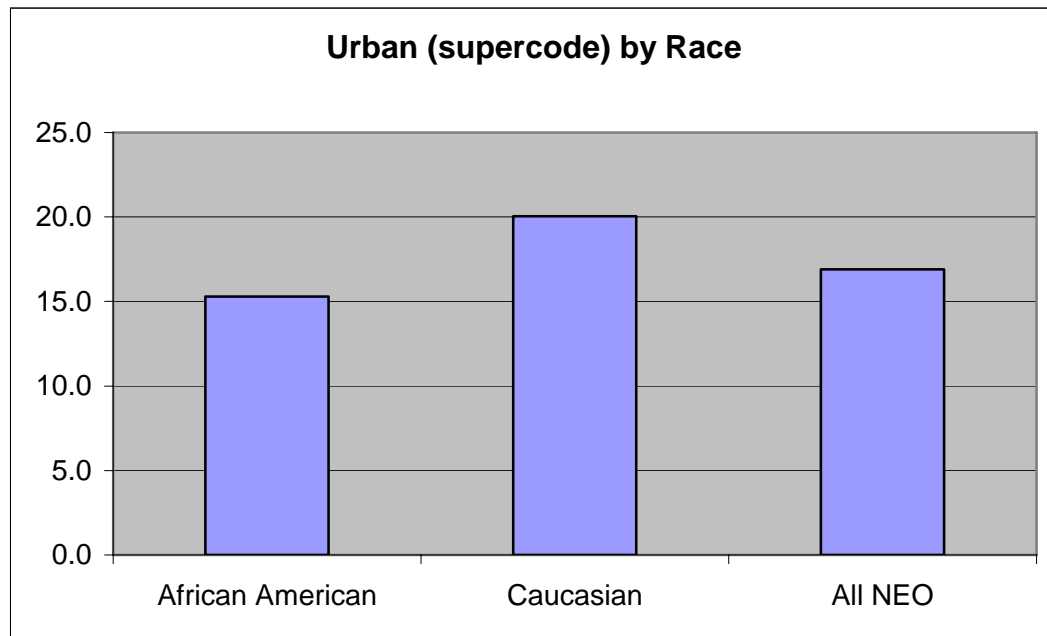


Figure 49: Urban Development by Race of Respondents

Cleveland Important

Cleveland is important to people throughout the Northeast Ohio region. Its spirit, heritage and diversity make it special to those who have lived here their whole lives as well as to recent arrivals. People value it for its many opportunities--easy access to jobs, affordable housing, culture, entertainment and natural beauty.

- You haven't seen Ohio until you've seen Cleveland. CI 1385
- Cleveland is an awesome place. CI1019
- Would most miss "user friendly" city of Cleveland. CI0866

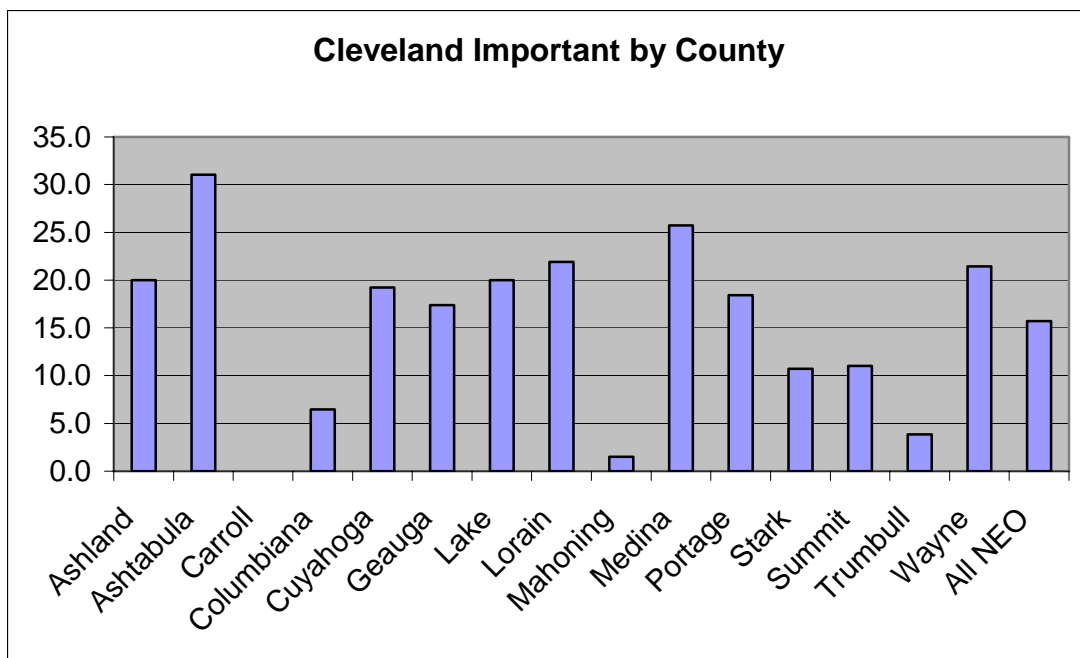


Figure 50: Cleveland Important by County of Respondents

There are a number of key content areas that define how Cleveland is important. They include:

1. Cleveland is important because it connects people from across the region. People from Canton, Akron, Oberlin, Lorain, Wooster all talk about the importance of Cleveland. Even if they don't want to live in Cleveland, they see Cleveland as a common connection shared by all.
 - Cleveland is the "Mother City" a great place to work, not to live. CI0596
 - Most importantly, Northeast Ohio is home and where you find family. CI1060
2. People throughout the region identify with Cleveland. It's the big city of the region and hosts the sports teams that have so many fans.

- If we build on our strengths (and promote them) I see a modern downtown metropolis of Cleveland as the core of the region. CI0381
- [Vision] Entire region recognized value of core cities and made funding commitment to these areas. Population of city should increase to 1 million. CI0640
- (from Ashtabula County) Family ties keep people here -rural setting attracts people - not too far from Cleveland area & culture CI0851
- (from Wayne County) Closeness to Cleveland and the lakes and southern Ohio and to Amish country CI1336
- (from Mahoning County) Northeast Ohio is unique with the snow belt, Amish, sports (Cleveland Browns, Indians, and Cavs), rich history and tradition. Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Rock-N-Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, West Side Market, and Amish Community (Middlefield Cheese Barns, Berlin area) are areas that people from out of town visit. CI1060

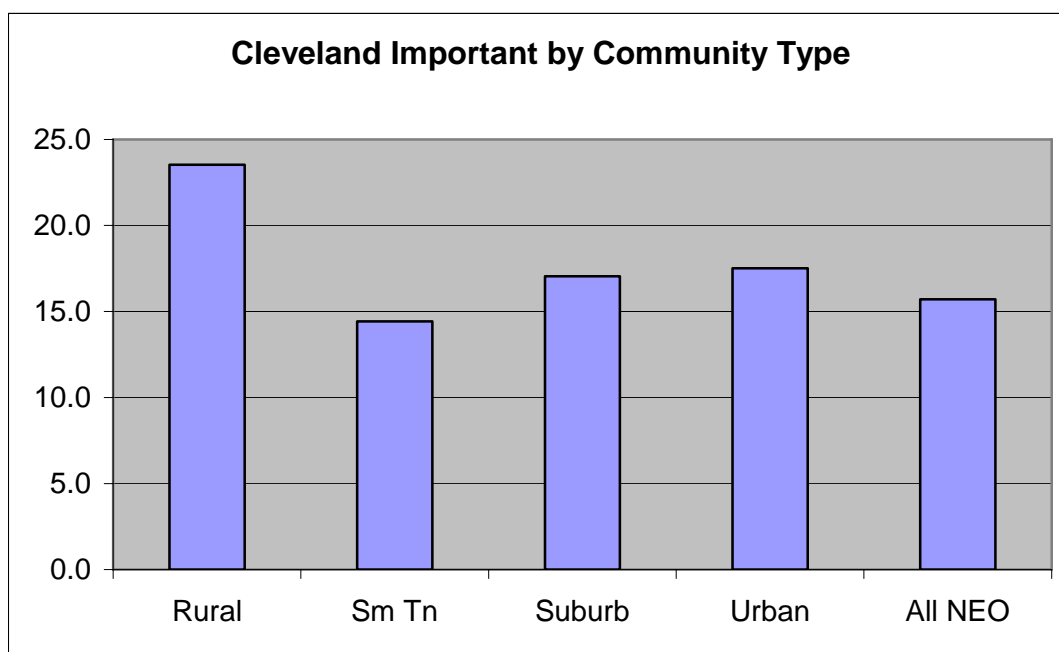


Figure 51: Cleveland Important by Type of Community Where Respondents Live

3. Feeling good about Cleveland. When people talk about Cleveland they speak with pride about its rich heritage, ethnic diversity and the acceptance of different cultures and people of different abilities. It is often described as a big city with a small town feeling.
 - The diversity of Greater Cleveland makes it unique. CI0088
 - There is a great sense of ethnicity here, too, with Cleveland being a huge melting pot. CI0121

- Diversity is especially evident in the big city. CI1248
 - Cleveland is not completely white, rich history of eastern European immigrants. CI1249
 - Cleveland is big city but living here is special, friendly. CI0713
4. Cleveland is a user-friendly city. There is a lot to do and it's easy to get places. It's easy to get to other cities in the region such as Akron and Canton. It's easy to travel to other states for vacation or business. It's easy to get around town using RTA. It's easy to take advantage of the wealth of arts, culture, sports, entertainment, restaurants and coffee houses. It's easy to take advantage of the natural beauty of the Lake, the Metroparks, Amish Country, the scenery, the architecture.
- It's accessible, it is livable. There is a good balance. CI0414
 - I enjoy the proximity of Playhouse Square, the Flats, coffee houses, museums. CI0031
 - Cleveland is underrated; there are lots of arts, cultural opportunities. CI0736
 - Lots of trees, open, open space though close enough to "big city" for culture; arts, theater... CI1565

People's feelings about the region are closely tied to their sense of the importance of Cleveland, either as home or as a place to visit or work. As they think about the future, they can envision an even stronger Cleveland, with people, jobs, and attractions. Yet when they describe the future, they recognize the importance of building on existing strengths. There is a sense that "all the ingredients are here" (CI0596) including fresh water, diversity, families and affordable housing. But people also talk about things that need to change or greatly improve if there is to be hope for the future—schools, the economy, taxes, public transportation, politics/governance, and limits on sprawl. Only one person saw Cleveland as becoming less important to the region in the future.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

In analyzing the data, a number of questions emerged that would provide further insights into what citizens value and envision for the future of Northeast Ohio. Given the limitations of this study, the following list is simply a sample of questions that could be investigated through additional research.

Question 1, “What makes Northeast Ohio special?” provoked a number of questions about the relationship of certain assets to different demographic groups and parts of the region. In addition, the data offers insights into key concepts that could be analyzed in depth.

1. Lake Erie, the underutilized public treasure, brought out the strongest emotional responses. In analyzing the data further, what might citizens see as priorities in making Lake Erie an engine for reviving the economy? Given that all counties see the Lake as an asset, could further analysis reveal what specifically is valued about the Lake across all of Northeast Ohio?
2. Citizens frequently mentioned the natural environment as an important regional asset. In Question 6, they also mentioned preserving natural and rural areas as important. How widespread and compelling is the interest in the natural environment? Does the data provide specific suggestions for building jobs and a strong economy while preserving the natural areas?
3. In a region known for its racial segregation, what does it mean that ethnic and cultural diversity is highly valued? Does the data provide evidence that the current spatial distance between groups is not an accurate reflection of the level of interaction people desire? How do African Americans speak of diversity and how does it differ from that of Caucasian respondents?
4. What do young people value about Northeast Ohio and want from the region? The sample includes significant respondents from two youth age groups—those under 18 years old and those 18-24 years old. Separate analysis of just their responses would likely yield different priorities and goals.
5. Manufacturing made Northeast Ohio great. While respondents seem to know that the future will likely be much less dependent on manufacturing, what do citizens see as the current and future state of specific industries?
6. There is significant attraction to professional sports teams and local celebrities in the data? What fulfillment, hope, or meaning do they provide respondents? What does the data reveal that might help attract new people to the region? What demographic groups are most likely to identify with these assets?
7. Questions 2 and 4 provide examples of Northeast Ohio at its best and stories of collaboration. What do these stories reveal about the nature of community? Is there a correlation between community involvement and a feeling of safety?

This report does not include an analysis of Question 2, which provides specific examples of our assets as a region. Compilation and analysis of these many positive examples could be used for marketing the region and shifting the mindset of those who are pessimistic.

In Question 6, “What is your vision for the region’s future?” responses varied widely. In spite of that, education was undeniably the highest priority for the region. Other topics were less obvious.

1. Higher education is seen as both an asset and part of people’s vision for the future. What does the vision data in Question 6 reveal that citizens specifically want from higher education? Are there specific suggestions that would better link education to employment and business development?
2. Full employment and a strong economy are high priorities for Northeast Ohio. What specific strategies or suggestions can be found in the data that could be channeled to elected officials and education and business leaders?
3. One area with many diverse opinions relates to land use planning. While the majority spoke of fighting sprawl and preserving natural areas for public use, what does that mean? Are citizens asking for more government or legislative intervention to curb the expansive private, free market trends? What suggestions are there for being more deliberate about land use?
4. Nice friendly people and a sense of community were strong assets. Of those who mention these assets, how many also mention attitudes and values in either Question 1 or Question 6?
5. Citizens express the need for greater collaboration between government and other sectors of society. What role can common citizens play in promoting such collaboration? In which counties and/or community types is it more likely to find an audience willing to engage in civic discourse? Where do the requests for more discussion come from?

Question 5 provides hundreds of stories of collaboration across sectors and communities. Compiling and analyzing these stories would naturally provide inspiration and successful strategic ideas for increasing cooperation. Investigators could do in-depth, filmed interviews of key stories that could serve to motivate others and to market the region. Here is one example:

My vision would include leaders of NEO—business, educational, civic & religious—who would be willing to invest back into the region. For instance, much of our high-tech work in the region is being outsourced to India. Although it might cost a little more to keep those kinds of high tech jobs here, they are an investment in the future stability and long-term quality of life of NEO... For instance, the summer Applied Mathematics program that I’m involved in at the College finds businesses in NEO who are willing to be paired with students from our mathematics department. Students are charged with the task of tackling a real-world problem for their particular sponsoring business. Through these contacts I see a unique opportunity for us to give our young people good reasons to stay in the region and put down roots. My vision sees the leaders of NEO as long-range thinkers who will be willing to keep NEO, our area, as a priority in their thinking & in their strategic planning. ci 0339

Finally, it might be wise to consider what the difference is between an asset and a vision? An aggregate list of regional assets can be ranked and prioritized. The purpose in finding out assets is self-evident. But what is the purpose in finding out citizens' visions for Northeast Ohio? Envisioning the future is a more complex task and requires reflection and at least some dreaming. What are specific (possibly composite) visions that link the specific topics or themes together? Respondents linked concepts together and further analysis might reveal specific intertwined themes. A vision for the future is also different from priorities, which was the focus of Question 7. It would be useful to conduct an analysis of Question 7 and then compare with the highest priorities with the key concepts of citizens' visions.

Northeast Ohio is special and has a great future. Just listen to its citizens.

- Neighborhood feeling. Each has a different character. NE Ohio has preserved history and neighborhoods. Warmth of people. When I moved here, all my neighbors dropped by and gave me their phone numbers. This was like nowhere else we have lived before. We felt immediately welcomed. People want to know their neighbors. So many cities here have interconnectedness. If we were to move, I would miss the people here. Miss the friendliness, miss character. Not cookie cutter. So pretty â€œ kept old trees and old character of homes. In the West, they are tearing down old houses and building new. I would miss the parks (Emerald Necklace). They are big, and well maintained. Nice public spaces. Urban spaces are preserved. Not paved over park. Like the diversity, like the integration. I like that people work hard at successful integration (Seattle is not integrated.) So many people here have strong roots (several generations). So many things to do. Good public transportation. ci 0737
- Northeast Ohio to be a destination city for tourism, conventions, and bio tech. Succeed to attract other to our community so we have no suburban flight. Fun to see a fun/ young city downtown. A happening kind of place like Chicago. Must be unique of attractions to put us on the map. ci 0095
- We'll work more closely together without respect across community boundaries. We'll see ourselves as part of a larger whole. When people think in terms of being bigger, it might mean moving a company from Cleveland to Stow. Thinking bigger doesn't mean you have to be bigger, but we can share revenues and resources to create win-wins. It's not that bigger is necessarily better. Just take off the narrow boundary. ci 0274
- If we build on our assets, it will rock! The suburbs and the city of Cleveland really feel like they are a part of each other. There are Mentor/solon/Eastlake, etc. days in downtown Cleveland. Residents of the featured community get 10% discounts in all downtown stores on "their" day. There is a parade down Euclid Avenue honoring the featured community. We have pooled our resources together across the region. The inner cities have resolved their safety issues. The region has cultivated businesses, both big and small. There is a feeling like the old days like when you could go to Higbee's basement and get a Frosty. ci 0383

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Demographics of Our Sample

Gender of Respondents		
	Number of Respondents	Percent
Female	379	37.6%
Male	274	27.2%
Did not answer	353	35.1%
Total	1006	100

Age of Respondents		
	Number of Respondents	Percent
Less than 18 years old	51	5.1%
18-24 years old	76	7.5%
25-34 years old	78	7.7%
35-44 years old	102	10.1%
45-54 years old	126	12.5%
55-64 years old	79	7.8%
65 and over	39	3.9%
Did not answer	455	45.2%
Total	1006	100%

Race/Ethnicity of Respondents		
	Number of Respondents	Percent
African American	170	16.9%
Asian American	10	1.0%
Caucasian	529	52.5%
Hispanic-Latino	4	0.4%
Native American	5	0.5%
Did not Answer	288	28.6%
Total	1006	100%

Type of Community Where Respondents Live		
	Number of Respondents	Percent
Did not answer	417	41.5%
Rural	51	5.1%
Small Town	97	9.6%
Suburban	223	22.1%
Urban	217	21.5%
Total	1006	100

Appendix 2: Personal Reflection on Family

By Susan Nelson

Speaking of family, my family and I have lived here all our lives. My brother, Jim, is a singer/songwriter and artist who writes and draws about what he knows – family and home. For concerts Jim often wears his Patch Pants. They've been with him for 17 years and he keeps adding patches as they need to be resized or the fabric wears away. The material for the patches comes from garments that have memories, too. You can check out more of his music at www.jimgillmusic.com.

In the meantime, here's an audio clip from a song called "Mark's Harley" about our brother-in-law.



Jim Gill photo © by Kim Leuschel

Mark's Harley® –Jim Gill

Released 2001 Music and lyrics by Jim Gill/Lunch Bucket Studio. All rights reserved.

*MARK BOUGHT A HARLEY
OFF THE SHOW ROOM FLOOR
ONCE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WANT
YOU DON'T NEED MUCH MORE*

*LIFE'S TOO SHORT
THAT'S WHAT HE'D SAY
NOW HE'S RIDING HIS DREAM
WITH HIS HARD EARNED PAY*

*MARK DOESN'T LIKE THE VIEW
OFF I-71
THE ROADS IN THE COUNTRY
ARE A LOT MORE FUN*

*HIS WHEELS ON THE PAVEMENT
A FISHIN' POLE BY HIS SIDE
A DAY OF HEAVEN
ON HIS ELCTRAGLIDE*

*(refrain)
AND HE'LL RIDE
AND HE'LL RIDE*

*MAUREEN USED TO WAIT FOR HIM
TO CRUISE BY THE HOUSE
SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL IN MAKEUP
AND HER OXFORD BLOUSE*

*SHE SAID HER FAVORITE SONG
WAS MY CHERI AMOR
SHE SAID, "I'M CRAZY FOR HIM"
AS SHE SLIPPED OUT THE DOOR*

*AND THEY WOULD RIDE
AND THEY WOULD RIDE*

*THEY'VE GOT FOUR KIDS NOW
IT AIN'T NO FANTASY LAND
YOU WANNA MEET A HARD WORKER
SHAKE A WELDER'S HAND*

*LIFE'S BEEN STRANGE
FOR SOMEONE SO HELLBENT
ONE KID'S GOIN' TO COLLEGE
ANOTHER GUARDS THE PRESIDENT*

(humming)

*MARK BOUGHT A HARLEY
OFF THE SHOWROOM FLOOR
ONCE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WANT
YOU DON'T NEED MUCH MORE*

*LIFE'S TOO SHORT
THAT'S WHAT HE'D SAY
NOW HE'S RIDING HIS DREAM
AND HE'LL BE GONE FOR THE DAY*

Appendix 3: Personal Reflections on Diversity

By Anne Swanson and Naomi Sikes-Gilbert

In the context of the Voices and Choices interviews, we found the topic of diversity to be interesting with a diverse set of meanings. As we have defined the code “Diversity, People/Cultures” we expected to find quotations on culture, diversity of race and ethnicity. We did find these quotations as well as quotes referring to a diverse environment, “Diversity in geography and topography. Have hills and flat areas” (ci1582). In addition, political, economic, and regional diversity was mentioned, “You can quickly go from a city setting into a farm setting” (ci 404). There is also diversity in communities and neighborhoods and we have separated the two rather than linking neighborhood and community together.

One of the reasons we have separated the concept of community from neighborhood with regard to diversity is because of two quotes. The first quote talks about Lorain as a whole community “Lorain County – the community is diverse in both demographics and community. We have farm land and urban areas” (ci 0413). The second quote talks about specific neighborhoods with strong cultural and ethnic backgrounds “Diverse neighborhoods, Little Italy, Tremont, Slavic Village, restaurants” (ci 0526). While there is diversity in the neighborhood of Little Italy, it is not where the majority of Italians live. There is a strong Italian influence in the neighborhood and cultural affairs such as the Feast of the Assumption bring the community together and strengthen the presence, but a majority of the residents in the neighborhood are CIA or CWRU students. But this also leads to more diversity, the influx of students has added to the diversity of the neighborhood. Yet, you still see planters of basil and tomatoes growing on porch ledges and there are still statues of the Virgin Mary in the front yard of people’s homes and early in the morning there is still an elderly man walking to Presties for a cup of coffee with a cigar in his mouth.

There are concerns that we are reading too much into the data as with the case of “LCC County, Oberlin, Lake front metro parks, Cleveland flats, West side, Tremont, restaurants and shops, Crocker Park.” (ci 0412) These are a long list of different things—a diverse list—not necessarily diversity. Should we only be coding things for diversity in the cases where they specifically state “diversity?” In addition there is diversity in environment, regional etc, are we only interested in the original definition of diversity as in Culture/People, or should we use diversity as a supercode? How many people talk about living around diversity as compared to having an accepting community? In cases where tolerance and acceptance is mentioned, this probably should have been double coded for Attitudes/Values. Another question is what culture means, due to the people being interviewed think of culture as arts and entertainment—a night out at the theater—or culture in the sense of people from around the world. If people are only saying culture, we cannot decipher their meaning. There are a lot of interviews that say “Amish” or “Amish country,” (ci 0229) and (ci 0298). We are concerned that these don’t necessarily reflect diversity, these comments could refer to liking the rural area—the countryside—or morals and values “Amish based morals,” (ci0559) it could just mean that they are good neighbors.

We found it interesting that there are individuals who mention diversity as an asset and those who envision more diversity “tolerant of differences in people” (ci 0073), “acceptance of people” (ci 0019), “we need to work together to build tolerance of each other” (ci 0728) and “the diversity of the community makes the community special, though too segregated (ci

0106). It would be interesting to pull the ages of the people who say we need more diversity compared to those who say diversity is an asset.

Also of note are the interviews in which people compared diversity in NEO to other places “born in rural Mississippi—saw discrimination,” and “here we have a shared connection that makes us unique (ci 0097).

The University of Maryland defines diversity as *“‘otherness,’ or those human qualities that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet are present in other individuals and groups. It is important to distinguish between the primary and secondary dimensions of diversity. Primary dimensions are the following: age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race and sexual orientation. Secondary dimensions of diversity are those that can be changed, and include, but are not limited to: educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs, and work experiences.”*

<http://www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/Topic/Diversity/Reference/diversity.html>

Worldreference.com defines ethnicity as *“an ethnic quality or affiliation resulting from racial or cultural ties; “ethnicity has a strong influence on community status relations.”*

<http://www.wordreference.com/definition/ethnicity>

Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia states that *culture with its root meaning “to cultivate” generally refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activity significance. Different definitions of “culture” reflect different theoretical bases for understanding, or criteria for evaluating, human activity. Anthropologists most commonly use the term “culture” to refer to the universal human capacity to classify, codify and communicate their experiences symbolically.* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture>

Appendix 4: Reflection on Significance of Lake Erie

By Mark Chupp

“The most sophisticated residential area, educational and cultural institutions are built around the health of the watershed. The integrated lifestyle operating around the watershed is nourished by eleven miles of stream that feeds into Lake Erie. Architectural courtyards, and cultural gardens incorporate the watershed. These are green building examples from 70-100 years ago.” (ci 0424)

This quote sticks with me. Maybe it’s because it reflects my views so well rather than what the data says. I’m struck, however, with how many people identified the twin balance of developing the lakeshore and preserving it as a natural setting for the general public.

There do not seem to be big contradictions about this. Even those who push for development and exploitation of the lake seem to have a concern about keeping the natural environment.

Another equally balanced set of comments are those that say the Lake currently is the main attraction for NEO and those that say it is underdeveloped and underutilized. Many people enjoy the lake and shore for the beauty, activities, and opportunities they bring. But an equal number of people have a tremendous longing for the Lake to be more—to excite those who live in NEO and to attract new people to the area. They seem to be saying this is not a typical Midwest region nor a typical large city. Lake Erie offers an added feature and when combined with the other natural areas creates a region almost unsurpassed for its diverse offerings—big city amenities, rural landscapes, small communities, natural areas and a large lake. You can do almost anything you want here.

Within this context, Cleveland seems to be so clearly tied to Lake Erie for people across the region. When people speak of the lakeshore they often include comments about Cleveland’s amenities or lack thereof along the lake. I hear people saying we have the opportunity to be a world class city because of what Cleveland has as a city, its location in the US, and because it is situated on a lake and river. The many comments about Chicago seem to express this sense that we could be so much more. While we might not ever be as large, Cleveland has everything that makes Chicago so appealing—we just have not fully developed it yet. Even those in Ashtabula echo this concern.

One sole comment also stuck with me, “enjoying what we have during our leisure time.” (ci 0211). I felt something in me stir when I read this. Maybe we (me included) are so driven by our work ethic and desire for success that we miss out on the lake’s potential to draw us into play, leisure, relaxation, enjoying each other’s company. I felt a longing for this to happen for us.

THE DATA ANALYSIS TEAM

The core mission of the members of the Data Analysis Team is to educate the regional community about issues and ideas supporting transformation. We are committed to giving hope for rejuvenated living and working conditions, increasing the level of civic discourse, narrowing the distance between disparate populations and bringing our community to a joyful proud place with an increased capacity to relate meaningfully to all of our neighbors.

Internally, our team has worked to learn new technical and professional skills (especially ATLAS ti), deepened our awareness of the complex systems of the region, expanded our understanding of the profound challenges of the region, as well as the great talent and willingness to help of the people who reside here.

By changing the conversation in Northeast Ohio, we can build on the movement started by the Fund For Our Economic Future and Voices and Choices. We believe that our work, and the on-going work of many others, can and will turn our faces toward the brighter optimism that comes after a great effort has been taken up. We continue to offer the Fund and others our desire and ability to serve and support the transformation of NEO through research and communication, systems design, program development and community renewal.

The Team

The Data Analysis Team has the capacity and capability to contribute significantly to the regeneration of the Northeast Ohio area. Each member brings particular strengths along with dedication and good humor. The team's range and depth of experience, commitment to each other, generosity of spirit and personal, professional discipline makes this an exceptional team to bring to any endeavor. The ability of this team was underutilized on the Voices and Choices project and we hope that there will be open doors for our suggestions and our work in the future.

In alpha order:

Mark Chupp, Ph.D.

Mark Chupp is Assistant Professor at the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University. He teaches community development and designs systems for transforming inter-group conflict, increasing citizen participation in democratic decision-making, and facilitating appreciative inquiry in organizations and communities. Mark is an international consultant, having worked in Northern Ireland, Egypt, Croatia and throughout Latin America. Mark joined Case in August 2006 to help redesign the community development concentration for the Master's in social work. He is also a research associate at the Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development.

For the previous 8 years Mark was with the Levin College at Cleveland State University. Mark directed the Civic Engagement Initiative, which involved designing and facilitating processes for citizens to actively participate in public decision making. He adapted Appreciative Inquiry to improve race relations in Cleveland, which served as his research for his PhD dissertation that he earned from Case Western Reserve University. He assisted in the community engagement design for Voices & Choices as well as led the research design for the Data Analysis Team.

Mark completed his undergraduate studies at Goshen College in Indiana and his Master's in Social Work at The University of Michigan. His areas of specialization include conflict transformation, peacebuilding, and community development. He is fluent in Spanish and has authored many articles and training materials. He is married with two teenage children and is an avid cyclist.

What are your wishes for Northeast Ohio?

Northeast Ohio provides a wonderful potpourri of nature, the arts, family-friendly neighborhoods, hard-working people, and cultural diversity. I wish we would rediscover ourselves through our amazing stories and overcome our self-loathing to see that we are a gift to the world. As we awaken, we will discover that many people and societies long for what we already have. In transcending our fears and pessimism we will strive for the highest quality of life for everyone in Northeast Ohio.

Kathryn Wertheim Hexter, M.A.

Kathy is Director of the Center for Civic Education, and joined the Levin College of Urban Affairs in 1986. A planner and public policy analyst, Ms. Hexter has over 25 years of experience managing and directing projects and evaluating programs in the areas of housing policy, neighborhood development, low-income energy assistance, city and regional planning and civic engagement. She has worked extensively with federal, state and local governmental, philanthropic and non-profit organizations.

She is the founding director of the Levin College Forum Program, the signature program of the Center and recognized by Northern Ohio Live (2005) as "a springboard for economic and social progress throughout the region" and recipient of the national 2003 CivicMindTM award. The Forum brings together the university and the community to address critical public policy issues that impact Northeast Ohio, the state and the nation. She has edited and authored a number of books and articles including, *The New American City Faces Its Regional Future, A Cleveland Perspective*, Ohio University Press, 2000. Ms. Hexter holds a bachelor's degree from Washington University in St. Louis, 1976 and a masters degree in City and Regional Planning from Harvard University, 1978. She is a graduate of the 2003 Rockwood Leadership program and attended the Foundations and Frontiers in Appreciative Inquiry workshop at the Case Weatherhead School of Management, 2004.

What are your wishes for NEO?

My wish is that NEO will be a place of opportunity and hope--for everyone. On a personal level, my wish is that it will be a place that both my daughters will CHOOSE to live and where they will be able to realize their full potential because there will be meaningful work for them to do here.

Susan Gill Nelson, M.A.

Susan, is the Principal of Improvement Works LLC, a consulting firm specializing in creating learning organizations in government, non-profit and for profit sectors. She works with the whole system to identify points where new thinking and change can happen most easily. She designs processes and facilitates organizational learning to enhance creativity, analysis of information, anticipation of consequences, overcoming resistance to change and acting more effectively so improvement is inevitable.

Previously Sue designed the prototype culture change process for Ford Motor Assembly plants, led the culture change at The Cleveland Museum of Art, was the Director of Programs for the Career Initiatives Center, and wrote Yearly Employment Trends Forecasts for NE Ohio. She has designed Peer-led Diversity Training programs, and conducted community mediations. She presented nationally on Wisdom in the Workplace and employment and small business trends for employers and employees as well as job seekers and entrepreneurs.

Sue has a Masters degree in Whole Systems Design from Antioch University in Chicago and a Diploma of Competency in Systems Renewal Consultation from the International Institute for the Study of Systems Renewal (SRi). She earned a Bachelor of Business Administration from Cleveland State University, specializing in Human Resources. She also earned a Training Certificate from the National Multicultural Institute in Washington, DC and is a Certified Trainer in Conflict Resolution from Peace Grows, Akron, OH.

Sue Nelson, a native Clevelander, chose to live in the inner-ring suburb of Lakewood for its diversity and walkability. Her favorite pastimes are visiting her three grown children, conversing with great friends over wonderful food, wine tasting, listening to the orchestra and local jazz musicians, strolling through local art galleries and the Cleveland Museum of Art, gardening, hiking and watching Lake Erie sunsets.

What are your wishes for NEO?

I wish we could develop a statewide program for health care delivery that was not tied to employment. This would be the single biggest step we could take to increase jobs in NEO. I hope we make the entire region wireless, giving everyone access to electronic information who wants it. Telecommunications should be infrastructure just like highways and sewers. I wish we had a vision of economic development that was centered on a mix of industries and services rather than just real estate development. I wish we would incorporate all kinds of arts, music and critical thinking into schools so that creativity, logic, development of thought and expression become the routes to higher quality jobs and career progression. I hope we have community dialogues/civic participation as a matter of course, so people become less fearful of folks who are different from them and more people realize they have worthwhile ideas to contribute.

Molly Schnoke, MA

Molly Schnoke, Project Coordinator, joined the Center for Civic Education in 2006. Prior to joining the team at the Levin College, Ms. Schnoke worked as the Research Manager for Strategic Economic Initiatives (SEI), a local research firm focusing on regional economic development. During her tenure at SEI, she conducted extensive research in this area and has provided operational support on key projects including the New Jersey State of Industry Report. Molly was the Assistant Director of Research at the Center for Regional Economic Issues (REI) at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. At REI, she garnered significant experience in the areas of economic development and entrepreneurship as well as grant writing, public policy research, surveys and written analysis. For the last three years Molly has worked on such projects as the Northeast Ohio Barometer Poll of Economic Attitudes, a public opinion survey on the state of our region's economy.

Molly graduated from The Ohio State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and received her Master of Arts in Political Science from the University of Akron.

What are your wishes for NEO?

I really hope to see a thriving metropolitan area. This region already has a fine quality of life and I would like to see those successes linked to greater economic growth in a variety of technology and innovation industries and this would certainly include creating greater prospects for higher education both here and across the state.

I have a great desire to see this region become one of the most environmentally conscious and innovative in the nation.

Naomi Sikes-Gilbert

Naomi Sikes-Gilbert graduated from Oberlin College with a degree in Environmental Studies and is currently pursuing a Nursing degree through Cleveland State University. After college, Naomi moved to New York City and worked in various non-profits with responsibilities including running a Teach in China Program for Council Exchanges and grant writing for Sanctuary for Families, a domestic violence services agency. Since moving back to the Midwest in August 2005, Naomi worked temporarily for Cleveland State University's Levin College Forum Program where she was introduced to the Voices & Choices Program. She is very optimistic about Cleveland's and Northeast Ohio's future and feels fortunate to be a part of it.

What are your wishes for NEO?

I really hope NE Ohioans (and Clevelanders, specifically) feel proud to live here and have a desire to work to make it the best place it can be. I want to see downtown Cleveland bustling and full of city life 24/7 while maintaining the beautiful countryside and parkland just next door. I hope that people with children will feel like they can live anywhere they want (small town, suburb, city) and have the resources and amenities they need. I hope that a good quality of life (employment, safety, housing, fun, education, etc.) will be available to everyone, not only those with money or those that live in certain districts.

Anne Swanson

Anne is currently enrolled in the Master of Urban Planning, Design and Development program at Cleveland State University's Levin College of Urban Affairs specializing in archaeological management which she expects to complete in May, 2007. Previously she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology focusing on Archaeology.

Ms. Swanson's interest in ancient societies' functioning and land use has taken her to study Maya culture in Yucatan, Mexico, sustainable development in Monteverde, Costa Rica, and the anthropology of tourism and native peoples in the American Southwest. Following a multi-disciplinary approach, Anne has practiced archaeology lab methods, studied Maya hieroglyphs, geology, geographic information systems (GIS), urban planning and Spanish. She has written an archaeological guide book for future tourism use in the Maya Mountains of Belize. Her current Master's project utilizes GIS for the co-management of archaeological and environmental resources in Belize. Anne is planning on returning to Monteverde in late 2006 to continue her research.

What are your wishes for NEO?

My wish is that Cleveland will improve enough that people will not say, "I'm sorry," after I tell them that I have moved here from a much warmer place. I would like to see more color in the architecture in Cleveland proper and improved infrastructure – the potholes in the road need to be fixed. Cleveland needs to be more desirable – visually and socially – to attract and retain people.

Thanks to the Following for Their Help

Roberta Waxman-Lenz, PhD

Roberta was a member of the team for the Leadership Workshop and Preliminary citizen interview Reports. Her influence and support continues for the team, as well as NEO. She currently works at the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland.

What are your wishes for NEO?

That people who grew up here lose the chip on their shoulders and come to see how lucky they are to have a thriving – at least culturally and people-wise – metropolitan /suburban place to live. That with this new-found energy and appreciation for what we have, each person can put more in to what can be created rather than take away from it (by grumbling and complaining).

That those who are jazzed about being here can find each other and multiply that energy in many creative ways.

That some of the small start-ups that are striving to succeed here do so and enable us to build the economy.

That those who want to limit the types of people here and the possible creativity factor that comes with diversity (of populations, preferences, and ways of doing things) can be voted out of office. (hmmmm. I guess the political does seem to creep into most things!)

Sudhir Ragupathy

Sudhir was a member of the team for the Leadership Workshop and Preliminary citizen interview Reports. He continues on with his real job at Real NEO, where he also furthers the outreach of Voices & Choices to the citizens of Northeast Ohio through design and posting on the Voices & Choices website.

What are your wishes for NEO?

One wish for this place is for it to shift from a governance wrought with divisiveness to one of solidarity and unity. I wish the people of this place to continue to shine forth their best selves and work to continually better the quality of life and place for this region so great outcomes are made possible for everyone.

And Special Thanks To

David Bright, Ph.D.

David, Assistant Professor at Wright State University, is technically our consultant for ATLAS.ti, but has proven to be a great contributor to the design of our research. We wish him well in his new professorship at Wright State University, and look forward to continuing our working relationship with him as often as possible.

We are also grateful to many others who volunteered their time, including Ashwini Rajurkar, Jennifer Porter, and Dr. Jerry Floersch who offered us the opportunity to sit in for ATLAS.ti training at Case Western Reserve University.