

## Cleveland – Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition Cuyahoga County, OH

### OVERVIEW

#### **Intent of the Intervention:**

The Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition (CCCFPC, or “coalition”) was formed to help bring about public and private policy-based changes that foster a healthier food system in Cleveland and surrounding Cuyahoga County, Ohio. The CCCFPC accomplishes its policy work by bringing together and building the capacity of a broad range of stakeholders to promote a just, equitable, healthy, and sustainable food system. The CCCFPC is an emerging intervention that addresses the organizational, community, and public policy levels of the socio-ecologic model.

#### **Intended Population:**

While the intended beneficiaries of the CCCFPC’s work are all community residents of Cleveland and surrounding Cuyahoga County, the primary target audiences are stakeholders from all aspects of the regional food system, including food producers, consumers, food waste managers, food-related businesses, organizations such as hunger-relief groups, and policymakers.

#### **Setting(s):**

- (1) Community (zoning regulations, farmers’ markets, agriculture policies)
- (2) Schools (encourage healthy foods in schools)

#### **Background:**

The CCCFPC evolved out of the Steps Community Consortium, a component of the Cleveland Department of Public Health’s *Steps to a Healthier Cleveland* (“Steps”) grant beginning in 2004 that focused on a broad spectrum of public health issues including mental health, physical activity, community healthcare workers, smoking cessation, and more. In 2007, convening organizations and stakeholders spent six months conducting formative work before establishing the CCCFPC. The convening organizations were the Ohio State University Extension (OSUE), Case Western Reserve University, the Cleveland Department of Public Health, and the New Agrarian Center. The founding stakeholders included a core group of 20-30 individuals and organizations, many of them members of the Steps Community Consortium. Components of the formative work included:

- 1) *Reviewing and researching food policy councils (FPCs) across North America, particularly city and county-based FPCs.* These case studies included the Toronto Food Policy Council, the Dane County (WI) Food Policy Council, the Portland Food Policy Council, and the Michigan Food Policy Council.
- 2) *Conducting a scan of the non-profit environment in the Cleveland area and the financial resources available for non-profit and community work.* Through this process, the convening groups decided a non-profit structure was not appropriate for the CCCFPC because Cleveland did not need another non-profit with overhead and administrative costs. They also decided not to establish the CCCFPC under a local government

agency because hierarchal structures and bureaucratic processes might adversely impact the flexible, responsive, and independent nature of the CCCFPC.

- 3) *Conducting several stakeholder surveys.* One survey helped set priorities and determined the best process for establishing working groups. A second survey helped develop a “wish list” of what CCCFPC members hoped to accomplish through the work of the coalition.

The structure of the CCCFPC emerged through regular meetings during this early formative period. Funding from the Steps grant was used in the early phase of the CCCFPC, but eventually the George Gund Foundation became the primary funding source with additional support from other local philanthropic partners.

#### **Length of time in the field:**

The CCCFPC has been in existence since 2007.

## **HEALTH EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS**

The CCCFPC seeks to create a population-level impact in Cuyahoga County by supporting local food policies, environmental change, and programs. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2010 there were 1,280,122 people living in Cuyahoga County. Approximately 63.6% of the population is white, 29.7% is African American, 4.8% is Hispanic, and 2.6% is Asian. Approximately 323,850 residents of Cuyahoga County (25% of the county population) and 221,036 Cleveland residents (55.7% of the city population) live in areas categorized as food deserts. Between 2006 and 2010, the median household income in Cuyahoga County was \$43,603, and 16.4% of residents lived below the poverty line. The average household income in food desert areas is \$37,312 compared to \$70,448 in non-food desert areas.<sup>1</sup>

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Organizational Structure**

The formative work described in the Background section resulted in the CCCFPC’s structure as a horizontal, network-based coalition with the ability to connect people and work efficiently across various sectors. The coalition is not part of a local government agency, nor is it incorporated as a non-profit. It has continually evolved since 2007 into its current structure. An advisory committee oversees the CCCFPC, day-to-day administration is handled by two paid staff, and working groups accomplish goals in various aspects of local/regional food systems. Each of these components is described below.

- 1) *Convening Organizations:* OSUE and Case Western Reserve University’s CDC-funded Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods (PRC) are the lead convening organizations. OSUE serves as the fiscal agent for the CCCFPC and employs the CCCFPC’s two paid staff. The PRC provides research and evaluation expertise and support.

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<sup>1</sup> Cleveland Creating Healthier Communities Initiative. Ohio Department of Health. *Cuyahoga County Assessment: Access to Supermarkets, Summary of Progress-to-date.* December 2011.

- 2) *Advisory Board:* The CCCFPC has an advisory board of approximately 10 members with representation from city and county government, local organizations and the George Gund Foundation. Original advisory board members were selected for various reasons. Some were invited based on their ability to influence policymaking, for their passion for food access and local food systems, or for the stakeholder group they represented (legislature, philanthropy, public health, planning, city, county, or state government). Others were appointed by County Commissioners or other agencies. The CCCFPC made a concerted effort to ensure that a variety of stakeholder groups and systems were represented. A list of current advisory board members is available on the [Who We Are](#) page on the CCCFPC website.
- 3) *Staffing:* The day-to-day operations of the CCCFPC are facilitated by highly skilled OSUE staff. The OSUE Coordinator (75% FTE) serves as legislative liaison, coordinates working group activities, maintains and updates the CCCFPC website, facilitates public relations and fields inquiries from the public, conducts development activities, and coordinates other activities related to day-to-day coordination of the CCCFPC. A second OSUE Project Coordinator (40% FTE) splits responsibilities between the CCCFPC and a second project. More information about staffing requirements is included in the Resources Required section of this template.
- 4) *Working Groups:* The CCCFPC uses a working group structure to address priority policy issues identified by coalition members. Five working groups were formed in the initial stages of CCCFPC development, but these have evolved into the current structure of four working groups, each representing a different aspect of the local food system: (1) health and nutrition, (2) land use, (3) research and assessment, and (4) local purchasing. Working groups are headed by volunteer workgroup leaders who are typically professionals working locally in the topic area. Working group membership is a mixture of coalition partners working toward targeted policy outcomes, best practice pilots, and assessment. More information about the [Working Groups](#) is available on the CCCFPC website.
- 5) *Members:* The CCCFPC's membership has grown from approximately 40 organizations in 2007 to over 100 organizations in 2010. Members include representatives from local government (city and county), public health and nutrition advocates, hunger advocacy groups, faith-based organizations, academia and research institutions, foundations, businesses, food retailers, farmers, and land use specialists. Please see the [list of participating organizations](#) on the CCCFPC website. Participation is voluntary, and members are encouraged to be active in one or more of the four working groups. Member organizations often allow their employees to donate work time to the CCCFPC.

### **Key Implementation Activities**

1. *Develop and Implement CCCFPC Action Plan:* In addition to developing the original CCCFPC Action Plan, the CCCFPC engages in strategic planning to better define and refine its work in line with its capacity and resources. The Action Plan guides CCCFPC activities and serves as a communication mechanism to the public.
2. *Develop and implement working group work plans:* Agenda-setting processes vary across working groups, but many groups first discuss and identify food system issues and needs related to their topic area, then develop a work plan to address or better understand the issue. For example, the Land Use Working Group uses a two-part 'dreamstorming' process in which members write down big ideas and goals - nothing is

off limits. These are then shared with everyone, organized by topic or policy area into a Goals and Objectives outline, and a timeline is developed to accomplish these goals. An example goals and objectives outline and timeline are available in the Implementation Materials section of this template. If a working group's work plan requires policy changes, the CCCFPC will work with city or county officials—many of whom serve on the CCCFPC working groups or advisory board—to determine the best approach to addressing the priority issues. Working groups also coordinate with CCCFPC staff to strategically outreach to other community partners whose membership in the CCCFPC would help accomplish these goals. This organizational framework has allowed CCCFPC to identify and address issues transparently through collaboration.

3. *Convene meetings for general membership, workgroups, advisory board, and others:* The CCCFPC facilitates a variety of different meetings. General membership meetings (held several times per year) and working group meetings facilitate partnerships and networking opportunities among member organizations. The advisory board, convening organizations, working group leaders, and working groups all meet regularly. In addition, the CCCFPC hosts meetings and various events such as trainings and forums for the broader public as part of its working groups' initiatives.
4. *Provide administrative and logistical support for CCCFPC activities:* The CCCFPC's paid staff provide day-to-day administrative and logistical support to working groups. Examples of support include printing materials, providing meeting space, facilitating strategic partnerships, conducting ongoing development/fundraising activities, and organizing professional development opportunities for working group leaders.
5. *Recruit members and partners:* Members are recruited or join the CCCFPC in one of two ways: sometimes individuals or organizations approach the CCCFPC about joining, and in other cases the CCCFPC strategically reaches out to specific community partners when their expertise in a certain topic area would be helpful for a particular project. These connections are often achieved through pre-existing relationships with CCCFPC members.
6. *Engage members and the community in ongoing environmental assessment and information gathering:* Community outreach and engagement is an important CCCFPC activity. The working groups serve as a mechanism to receive continuous feedback from members. Working group leaders meet twice per year to discuss logistics, structure, and leadership challenges they are facing, as well as opportunities for collaboration between working groups. The CCCFPC also conducts assessments that engage community members, identify issues, and ensure policy implementation is on target. Two examples of recent community involvement were (1) assessing transportation barriers preventing access to healthy food outlets and (2) a Community Food SkillShare event for area residents in which community leaders came together to share best practices and technical assistance for healthy food access projects. More than 100 residents attended 12 workshops in neighborhood food projects. The Community Assessment working group also developed a Community Conversations Toolkit that includes group discussion guides, survey instruments, and focus group guides for conducting community assessments of food gaps in neighborhoods. The working group conducted these conversations with four neighborhoods in Cleveland to determine their priorities about food access (see the [Community Food Assessment](#) working group webpage).

7. *Communicate accomplishments*: Examples of CCCFPC communications products may be found throughout the [CCCFPC website](#). Communication products include working group blogs, posters, policy briefs, action plans, reports, photographs, local food guides, community assessment toolkits, presentations, academic papers, legislation, and more.

### **The CCCFPC's Role in the Policymaking Process:**

The CCCFPC's ability to influence policy decisions focuses primarily on informing the legislative process by providing research-based information. CCCFPC staff, as OSUE employees, must be careful not to 'endorse' legislative policies or ask people or policymakers to vote 'yes' or 'no' on specific legislation. Instead, coalition staff provide qualitative and quantitative information—including potential policy ideas based on best practice and other communities' innovations and solutions—that helps policymakers make decisions and raises awareness of challenges community members and residents face. CCCFPC staff often attend meetings with legislative sponsors/political champions to answer questions and concerns with data- or research-driven responses. Coalition staff also ask coalition members and community members to contact their elected officials with their perspective on pending legislation. The CCCFPC Coordinator says, "It can be a fine line but has helped to establish credibility and the CCCFPC's reputation as an honest broker."

The CCCFPC's specific role in advancing food policy varies from issue to issue. The history and process for achieving several successful policy initiatives can be found at the links below and on the CCCFPC website [Resources page](#):

- [Chickens and Bees Ordinance](#) (2009)—public policy
- [EBT at Farmers' Markets](#) (2011)—organizational policy initiative
- [Water Access for Urban Agriculture](#) (2011)—administrative policy

### **Keys to Success:**

- The flexible nature of the working group structure and the support of convening organizations as back-up has helped ensure the success of the working groups. The coalition staff try to make the CCCFPC's work fun and interesting, with emphasis on a spirit of collaboration.
- Funding for staffing is key to maintaining the CCCFPC in its current structure.
- In addition, the motivation, support, ability to follow up on action items, and administrative role of paid staff is key to moving the CCCFPC's work forward.
- Cultivating political and legislative champions has been essential to the adoption of policy initiatives and recommendations. Champions include city council members, staff in the Office of the Mayor, the Office of County Executive, and directors and commissioners from several municipal and county departments including community development, economic development, planning, public health, and sustainability.
- Emphasizing cross-sectoral collaboration brings together a diversity of ideas and perspectives that build more comprehensive policy strategies addressing challenges on multiple levels.
- The ability to act and react quickly when opportunities for policymaking present themselves (i.e., taking advantage of policy windows).
- The CCCFPC's periodic revision of its action plan ensures that the coalition will stay in step with new developments and evolving needs in the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County area. This flexibility and adaptability will help the CCCFPC maintain its value and relevance.

- Other strengths of the CCCFPC include: framing food policy issues around economic recovery; food environment data collection; foundation support; strong leadership; and emphasis on community engagement.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Barriers to Implementation:**

- Lack of time and resources for monitoring and evaluation may impact the CCCFPC's ability to demonstrate impacts on health or other key outcomes, which in turn could impact future funding opportunities.
- Volunteer burn out.
- Funding diversification is an ongoing challenge, but the CCCFPC's extensive network and emphasis on relationship building help position it to identify viable funding opportunities.
- Finding ways to integrate more community resident participation.
- Establishing a timeline for group decision-making processes.
- Keeping the focus on policy change rather than tangible projects and initiatives.
- Working across multiple jurisdictions (more than 50 municipal governments, county government, and state government).

## **RESOURCES REQUIRED**

**Staff:** One CCCFPC Coordinator (75% FTE: 30 hr/wk), a Project Coordinator (40% FTE), and occasional interns. Total personnel costs are estimated at \$60,000 per year. Some of the minimum qualifications for the Project Coordinator position include: BS or equivalent experience in community development, public policy or related field; Experience in conducting community outreach in an urban setting; Knowledge of the community's infrastructure and culture; Experience in establishing and conducting educational presentations to small or large groups; and more.

**Training:** While no formal training is required, coalition staff may find the following skills/training helpful: conflict resolution; meeting facilitation; coalition building; policy development process; and project management.

**Materials:** No materials are required.

**Funding:** Various local foundations including the George Gund Foundation. Estimated annual operating budget is \$70,000 per year.

**Other costs:** The following are estimates for annual costs in addition to personnel:

- Printing: \$2,000 (includes publicly-distributed food guides)
- Food/Refreshments: \$1,000
- Meeting Space Rental: \$1,000
- Website Design and Development: \$2,500

<sup>2</sup> The CCCFPC participated in a Pre-Evaluation Assessments of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Programs and Policies project, a collaborative effort led by a team from the CDC Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity, and coordinated by ICF Macro International. The findings in this section are based on the opinion of the site visitors and derived from the Summary Report (June 2011).

- Travel: \$2500

## UNDERLYING THEORY/ EVIDENCE

### Underlying Logic:

The CCCFPC's work is based on the premise that local communities can change food access and use at a systems level by:

- Using a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach to facilitate multi-disciplinary and multi-sector collaboration that create broad buy-in and support across many traditionally siloed disciplines and organizations. The coalition's extensive bottom-up formative approach is a clear example of early phases of CBPR as opposed to the leading stakeholder groups deciding on an approach and then attempting to engage others. Some of the key sectors brought together include academic institutions (public and private), local public health and agricultural leaders, producers, consumers, and other community stakeholders involved in different aspects of the local food system.
- Employing community empowerment methods/constructs in ongoing leadership and management of the CCCFPC. This is characterized by open communication among all stakeholders, and the fact that much of the work takes place in smaller workgroups who make recommendations to the full council.
- Working directly with local policymakers and policy champions to enact and implement local policy changes.

### Evidence-based Intervention Strategies<sup>3</sup>:

The CCCFPC's various program and policy initiatives use a number of evidence-based strategies to achieve healthier food systems and environments through:

- **Community-wide campaigns to promote healthy eating** – The CCCFPC developed local food guides that are distributed to the community. The CCCFPC also conducted Community Food Assessments with several communities in Cuyahoga County, then worked with multiple sectors (such as government or private industry) to achieve desired community-wide changes.
- **School nutrition programs to promote healthy eating** – The CCCFPC's Health and Nutrition Working Group is working to increase availability of fresh fruits and vegetables in schools; for example, the CCCFPC and Ohio State Extension of Cuyahoga County worked with three K-8 Cleveland Municipal School District schools to implement recent state and federal legislation requiring improvements in physical activity and school nutrition.
- **Changing access and availability to favor healthy foods and beverages** – The CCCFPC worked with farmers' markets in Cuyahoga County to accept SNAP benefits through Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) and develop an incentive program for EBT customers. The initiative was successful in increasing the number of farmers' markets in Cuyahoga County that accept EBT benefits from 1 in 2008 to 14 in 2011. The CCCFPC was also instrumental in establishing a Sustainable Street Food Pilot Program that offers grants and favorable loans to new food cart operators providing healthy, locally-sourced menu items.

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<sup>3</sup> A full description of the *intervention strategies* used can be found on [www.centertrt.org](http://www.centertrt.org) with references to the sources of evidence to support the strategies.

- **Increasing purchasing and use of foods from local farms** – The CCCFPC was involved with the passage of a City of Cleveland “Local purchasing ordinance” that provides 2% bid discounts on all applicable City contracts to businesses that are sustainable, locally-based, and/or purchase 20% of their food locally, which can be combined for a maximum discount of 4%.
- **Urban planning/zoning approaches to facilitate healthy eating** – The CCCFPC was involved in the development of new zoning regulations that allow urban bee-keeping and animal husbandry (2009), the creation of an Urban Garden District zoning designation (2007), and the creation of an Urban Agriculture Overlay District zoning designation that allows more intensive food production within the city (2010).

### **Evidence of increased capacity of the CCCFPC and its members to achieve food systems improvements:**

While there is no formal assessment or measurement of the CCCFPC’s capacity or the capacity of its members to engage in food systems work, it appears the CCCFPC has developed the capacity to effectively bring together diverse stakeholders to function well as a full council and in working groups. Evidence of this includes the CCCFPC’s ability to:

- Achieve consensus around mission, broad strategies, and goals;
- Establish infrastructure that includes paid staff, an advisory board, and working groups;
- Engage a broad spectrum of members and partners to facilitate communication and partnerships across sectors; and
- Secure resources to accomplish food systems policy work.

It also appears that the CCCFPC has been effective in assisting diverse stakeholders and partners to increase their own capacity to engage in food systems policy change by providing information and opportunities for communication and networking that facilitate collaboration between community partners. The CCCFPC coordinator explains “...the CCCFPC has done a good job bringing food systems into the forefront and shifting the paradigm...agencies who were unfamiliar with this work [now] think about food systems – healthy access and local food economies – when they develop plans, program ideas, policies, etc. The level of expertise and sophistication of the discourse around food has changed dramatically in Cleveland. We have changed the way people think and how they do business.”

### **Evidence of the CCCFPC’s impact on policies, environment, and programs:**

The CCCFPC and its working groups have successfully helped to achieve policy change in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. The CCCFPC tracks policies, certain environmental changes, and programs impacted by its efforts. Working group accomplishments are tracked internally as well as publicly via the CCCFPC website and other means.

Examples of policy initiatives that increase access and availability of healthy food are described above under Evidence-based Intervention Strategies. A summary of key policy accomplishments and other CCCFPC working group successes is available on the [CCCFPC website](#). The policies themselves have had an impact on the food environment in the region. For example, in the first year of the Farmers’ Market EBT Incentive Program (2010), participating markets saw EBT sales in the first month alone surpass their total 2009 EBT sales. Over the course of the year, the Kamm’s Corners Farmers’ Market saw an increase



in sales from \$359 in 2009 to \$1,765 in 2010 while the Tremont Farmers' Market experienced an increase from \$110 in 2009 to \$2,067 in 2010.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to policy initiatives, the CCCFPC has also produced a number of food assessment reports, guides, tools, and events to inform food policy decisions and implement recommended policy strategies. Examples include:

- *Community Conversations Toolkit* and *Community Conversations 2.0: The Community Conversations Toolkit* uses a group discussion guide and survey instruments to provide quantitative and qualitative data to assess food gaps in urban neighborhoods. *Community Conversations 2.0* is a report of the results of focus groups with more than 100 adults and 50 youth held in seven communities.
- Various community forums and events such as a Community Food SkillShare

These and many more reports, tools, and other publications are available on the [CCCFPC website](#).

## POTENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT

### **Effectiveness in achieving population-level food access:**

The CCCFPC aims to establish policies that use several evidence-based strategies (listed in the Underlying Theory/Evidence section of this template and described fully on the Center TRT website). These strategies aim to reduce barriers and increase healthy eating for all Cuyahoga County residents. Some of these policies are already having an impact on the food environment in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. For example, the Farmers' Market EBT Incentive Program has increased sales dramatically at many participating markets. The Chickens and Bees Ordinance (2009) resulted in the City of Cleveland receiving 18 new applications within the first year after passage requesting permits to keep chickens, bees and other livestock on residential lots.<sup>5</sup>

The sustainability and continued success of the CCCFPC appears to depend a great deal on political will and motivated stakeholders, as well as a secure source of funding to support staff effort. While this is feasible in the case of the CCCFPC, there may be more hurdles to overcome in other locations/political environments.

### **Equity in distribution of improvements in healthy food access across population sub-groups:**

As described in the Health Equity section, the CCCFPC focuses much of its efforts on improving access to healthy food for residents who are low-income or live in areas with lower food access. As described in the Underlying Theory/Evidence section, various policy initiatives such as the

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<sup>4</sup> Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition, 2011. EBT at Farmers' Markets: A \$5 Incentive Program Increases EBT Use at Local Markets. Available at: [http://cccfoodpolicy.org/sites/default/files/resources/ebt\\_at\\_fm\\_brief\\_0.pdf](http://cccfoodpolicy.org/sites/default/files/resources/ebt_at_fm_brief_0.pdf). Accessed 5-17-12.

<sup>5</sup> Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition, 2011. Chickens and Bees Ordinance: Cleveland Revamps Zoning Codes to Promote Urban Agriculture. Available at [http://cccfoodpolicy.org/sites/default/files/resources/chickens\\_and\\_bees\\_policy\\_summary\\_0.pdf](http://cccfoodpolicy.org/sites/default/files/resources/chickens_and_bees_policy_summary_0.pdf). Accessed 5-17-12.

Farmers' Market EBT Incentive Program specifically target low-income Cleveland and Cuyahoga County residents that participate in the federal SNAP program.

**Cost effective in achieving improvements to the food system:**

The CCCFPC's reliance on volunteer members, working group leaders, and advisory board members maximize the coalition's access to resources while minimizing costs.

## INTERVENTION MATERIALS

### Materials for Download

*NOTE: Many CCCFPC materials, including the most recent CCCFPC Action Plan and org chart, as well as various reports and assessments, key policy outcomes, and more are available on the [CCCFPC website](#).*

Land Use Working Group Timeline<sup>6</sup>  
Land Use Working Group Goals<sup>7</sup>

## EVALUATION MATERIALS

For new adopters wishing to implement a food policy council/coalition, the Center TRT has developed a evaluation logic model and an evaluation plan reflecting the initial formation and development of an FPC. These tools are not specific to the CCCFPC. Please note that this logic model and evaluation plan do not reflect the later stages of an FPC once it is established and mature. These are available for download on the Center TRT website.

Center TRT Food Policy Council logic model  
Center TRT Food Policy Council evaluation plan

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Web links:

- CCCFPC website: <http://cccfoodpolicy.org/>
- Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods at Case Western Reserve University: <http://prchn.org/>
- Ohio State University Extension: <http://extension.osu.edu/>
- Community Food Security Coalition's North American Food Policy Councils: <http://www.foodsecurity.org/FPC/>
- Food First: <http://www.foodfirst.org/en/about/programs/policycouncils>

### Training/Technical Assistance available:

While no formal training or technical assistance is available, CCCFPC staff is available on a limited basis to discuss or present the process for developing and implementing an FPC.

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<sup>6</sup> Credit for this material: Meghan Chaney, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, and the CCCFPC

<sup>7</sup> Credit for this material: Meghan Chaney, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, and the CCCFPC

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