

Summary Report

Our Place in the Urban Age

The Levin College of Urban Affairs 30th Anniversary Forum Series



Communities of Choice: Cleveland's Strategic Investment Initiative

On November 29, 2007, an overflow crowd packed the atrium at the Levin College for the second forum about “Creating and Sustaining Communities of Choice,” part of the year-long 30th Anniversary series “Our Place in the Urban Age.” The keynote speaker was Ben Hecht, President and CEO of Living Cities, a national organization with a mission to increase the vitality of cities and urban neighborhoods and improve the lives of people who live there. Panelists offered an in-depth look at Cleveland’s Strategic Investment Initiative (SII): Vickie Eaton Johnson, Executive Director, Fairfax Renaissance Development Corporation; Jeff Ramsey, Executive Director, Detroit Shoreway Community Development Corporation; Oliver “Pudge” Henkel, Esq., Executive Director, Government Relations, The Cleveland Clinic. The panel was moderated by Bobbi Reichertell, Sr. Vice President, Neighborhood Progress, who provided an overview of the SII.

Hecht attributes Cleveland’s historical success in community development to the efforts of an “amazing group of institutions and leaders that have been doing this work. They get what it takes to make it happen.” However, he also recognizes the challenges to Cleveland’s community development sector presented by the fallout of the sub-prime crisis. Drawing from the book *Only the Paranoid Survive* by Andrew S. Grove, Senior Advisor and former Chairman and CEO of Intel, Hecht believes Cleveland is at a “strategic inflection point.” He explained, “if you continue to do business the same way, events will manage you, you will not manage events.”

He challenged Cleveland’s community developers to do things in a fundamentally different way. The traditional tools that enabled CDCs to effectively focus on housing and neighborhood development will still be necessary, but are not going to be enough. We have to do more. Reinforcing the message of Doris Koo, President and CEO of Enterprise Community Partners, his organization is exploring ways to assist CDCs in connecting people to the opportunities that exist in the mainstream. “We will only make a difference if we can build the infrastructure out of the neighborhood and connect it back to where people live.”

Community development has always faced the tension between place-based and people-based strategies. Of course, it must be both. This will require expanding the financial resources and the policy and program tools available to CDCs.

To expand financial resources, Living Cities is focusing on 4 key areas:

1. Reestablish cities as cities of choice—places of individual opportunity and wealth that consider the impact on the environment.
2. Be a place for business expansion and development
3. Remain a place that has strong neighborhoods with their local culture
4. Develop strategies that are sustainable both environmentally and financially—Cities must start making critical infrastructure investments for the 21st century that will enable every person to be part of the global economy.

Is the Future Possible?

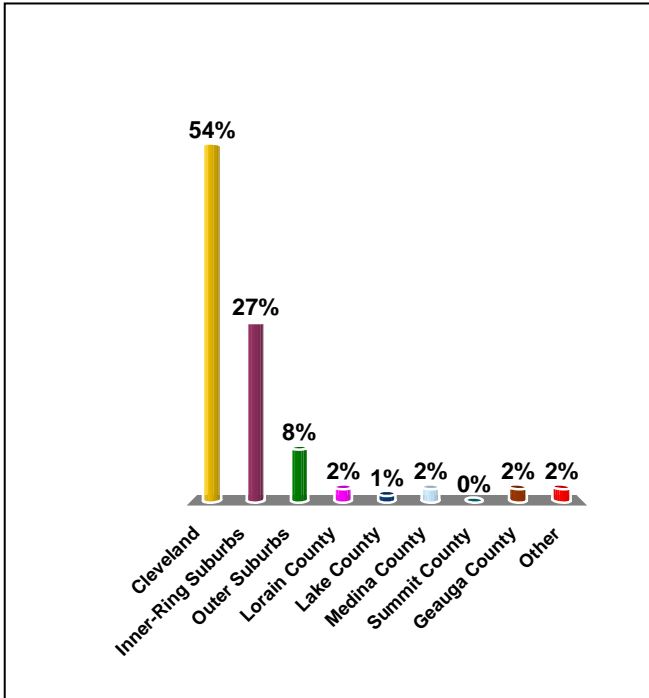
Hecht believes it is and he cited three fundamental forces of change:

1. **Reestablish cities as economic engines that run on all cylinders.** Human capital makes a city competitive and new strategic investments are needed to facilitate the success of low-income people.
2. **Technology allows us to do things differently.** Community development brought services into the neighborhoods. Now technology can enable us to move things out. For example, Consumer Credit Counseling Services of Atlanta is providing homeownership counseling services to people in all 50 states—using technology.
3. **We are an incredibly wealthy nation.** Hedge fund managers are making \$50 million a year and they are interested in putting that wealth to a socially responsible purpose. Socially responsible investing has gone from \$600 billion to \$3 trillion in last 10 years. That’s the tip of the iceberg—intergenerational transfers of wealth are just starting.

Who Attended?

On November 29, 2007 135 people gathered at the Levin College Forum to hear Ben Hecht, President and CEO of Living Cities speak about Cleveland's strategic investment initiative. So where did forum participants come from in the region?

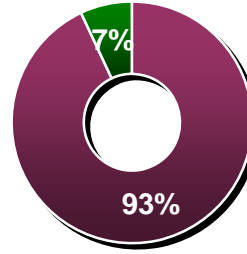
Where are you from?



What sector do you represent?

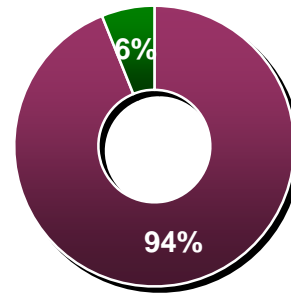
Private Sector	12%
Non-Profit	48%
Government	7%
Academia	4%
Entrepreneur	7%
Student	13%
Retired/not Working	6%
Other	4%

Did today's forum give you new ideas that you can use?



■ Yes ■ No

Did today's forum inspire you to think about pursuing new collaborations?



■ Yes ■ No

Your rich aunt in Chicago is looking at a 15 year real estate investment opportunity on Euclid Avenue between E. 9th Street and Playhouse Square. She is asking for your advice.

Would you say that such an investment is a:

- High Risk – 18%**
- Moderate Risk – 48%**
- Sure thing, go for it – 34%**

Special Thanks to our 30th Anniversary Sponsors:

- The Cleveland Foundation
- Cuyahoga Community Public Library
- Enterprise Community Partners
- George Gund Foundation
- Jones Day
- Neighborhood Progress

Data was analyzed from 85 forum participants. Survey was conducted on November 29, 2007. Respondents were asked to answer a series of questions at two points in time during the forum program.

The results of audience surveys will be incorporated into an end of the series report.

All forums are archived at www.urban.csuohio.edu/forum