



How Cities Can Power A Resurgence for Ohio

THE CASE FOR A STATEWIDE STRATEGY THAT EMBRACES
OHIO CITIES AND LEVERAGES OUR THRIVING METRO ECONOMIES





OVERVIEW

How Cities Can Power A Resurgence For Ohio

Over the next 25 years, Ohio is projected to continue to see significant population decline, which could further erode the state's national influence and weaken its long-term economic outlook.

While Central Ohio is defying these trends, most areas of the state are losing residents. By 2050, 74 of 88 Ohio counties are projected to lose population.

To make matters worse, accelerated growth in other states is causing Ohio to fall further behind. Other states are using their advantages to grow, attract talent, and build prosperity.

This report makes the case that Ohio has untapped, unique advantages in our cities and metro regions that can help power an economic and population resurgence across Ohio.

To leverage these advantages, however, Ohio needs a statewide strategy that embraces cities, recognizes the strengths of our metro economies, and delivers statewide prosperity and population growth across Ohio.



How Cities Can Power A Resurgence For Ohio

CHALLENGE

Our shared **CHALLENGE** is that Ohio is projected to lose population over the next 25 years with implications for our quality of life and our long-term economic prosperity.

OPPORTUNITY

We have an **OPPORTUNITY** to reverse these trends by leveraging the unique strengths of our numerous core cities and the balanced economic output of our metropolitan regions.

ACTION

The next step is to take **ACTION** by understanding the unique and untapped potential that Ohio has and develop a comprehensive, statewide strategy that embraces Ohio cities and leverages our thriving metro economies.

This report will dig deeper into our shared challenges and opportunities, and it will conclude with a call to action to develop a thoughtful, and comprehensive Core Cities Strategy for Ohio.

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CHALLENGE

Projected Population Decline in Ohio



CHALLENGE

OPPORTUNITY

ACTION

CHALLENGE

Projected Population Decline in Ohio

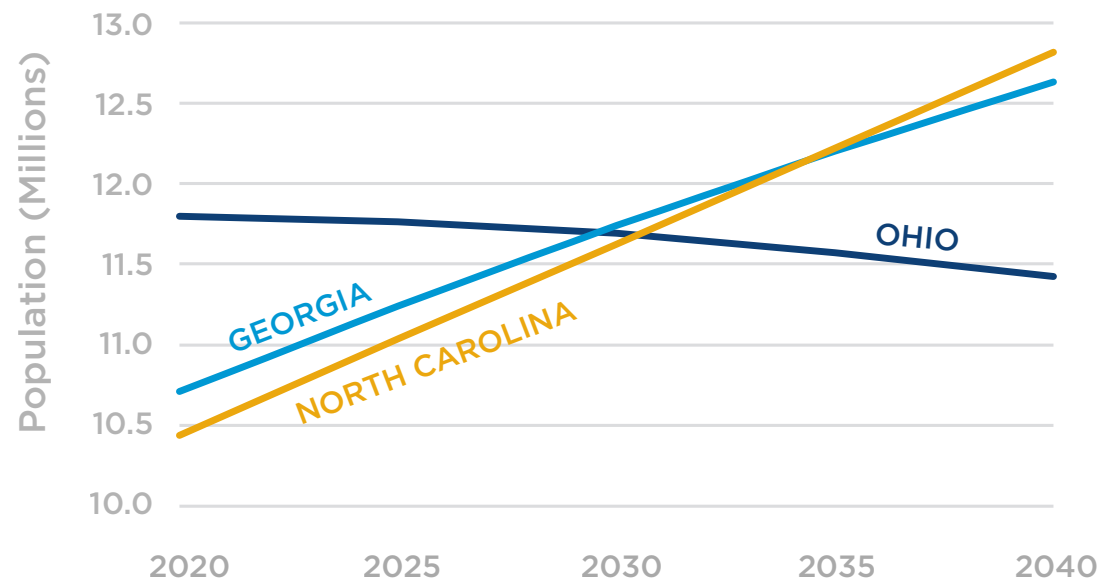
Over the next 25 years, Ohio is projected to lose approximately 675,000 residents and experience a 5.7% decline if current trends continue, according to the Ohio Department of Development. This follows decades of lagging population growth and suggests that the economic strength and political power that Ohio once knew will fall further behind.

In contrast, other states are seeing rapid population growth such as Georgia and North Carolina. Both are expected to see a population growth of more than 20 percent by 2040. Other states in the South and Southwest like Texas, Florida, and Arizona are also seeing significant increases in population and economic growth.



Ohio is projected to lose approximately **675,000** residents by 2050.

Projected Population Growth, 2020 to 2040 Ohio, Georgia and North Carolina



Source: Ohio Department of Development; 5 Population Trends You should Know; 2024

CHALLENGE

Projected Population Decline in Ohio

A closer examination of the data suggests that strong growth in central Ohio masks even more concerning population trends throughout the rest of the state.

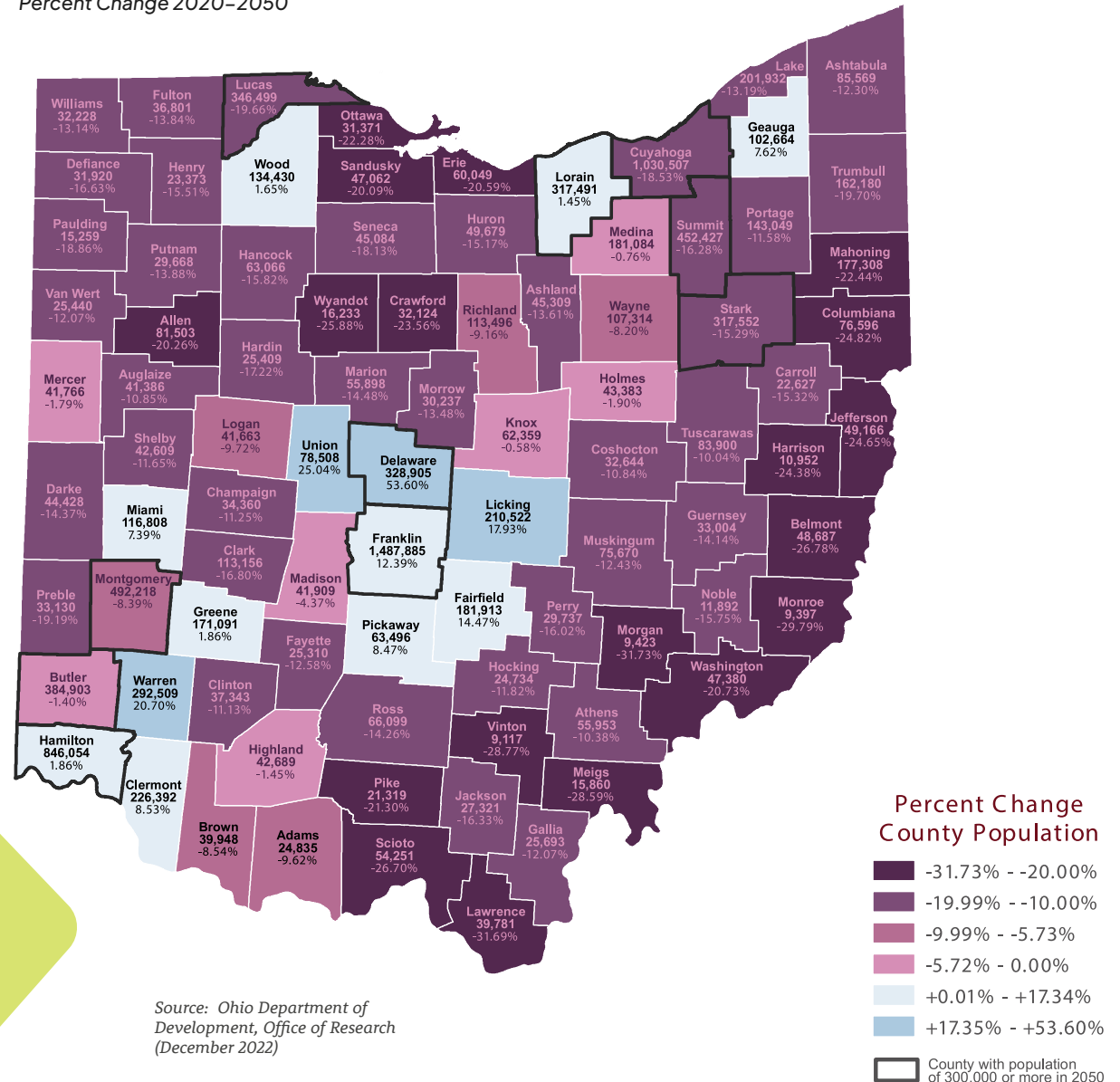
By 2050, 74 of Ohio's 88 counties are expected to lose population.

Of the 14 counties that are expected to grow, 6 are in the Columbus metro region, while the remaining growth counties are in the Cincinnati/Dayton and Northern Ohio metro regions.

Ohio Department of Development's projected population map shows that **74 out of the 88 counties are going to experience population loss.** Counties in purple will lose population - the darker the purple, the more intense the population loss.

PROJECTED OHIO COUNTY POPULATIONS

Percent Change 2020–2050



Source: Ohio Department of Development, Office of Research (December 2022)

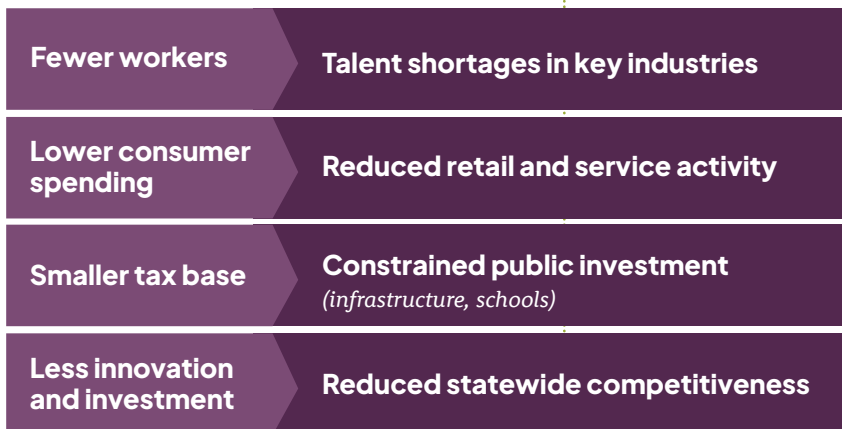
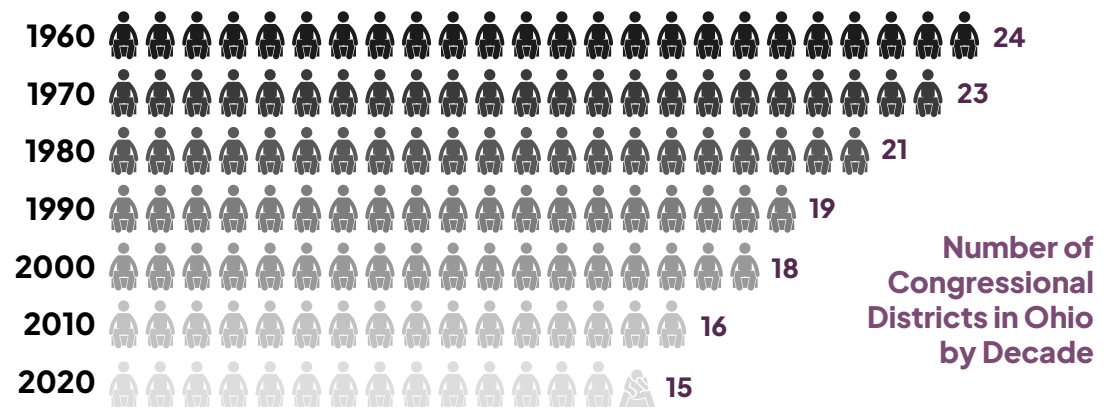
CHALLENGE

Projected Population Decline in Ohio

Unless Ohio changes this trajectory, we risk losing our status as the seventh largest state in the union. This continued lagging population trend is a threat to the Buckeye state's national influence as well as our economic outlook.

FADING NATIONAL INFLUENCE

In 1960, Ohio had 24 congressional representatives. Since that time, the Buckeye State has lost a congressional seat in each decade. It now has just 15 seats in Congress and much less relevance in US Presidential elections. Even more concerning is the adverse economic impacts that Ohio will face as the state population declines as projected.



EROSION OF ECONOMIC POWER

Ohio's population trajectory is also likely to constrain long-term economic growth and opportunity. Fewer people in Ohio will mean less demand, fewer entrepreneurs, and reduced consumer spending.

Ohio's population decline could weaken its ability to attract new corporate headquarters and facilities as companies will opt for expanding markets with population growth when relocating. States seeing rapid population growth will be able to attract more talent with a growing workforce and draw investment and opportunity away from the Buckeye State.



OPPORTUNITY

Leveraging Regional Strengths and Embracing Ohio Cities

CHALLENGE

OPPORTUNITY

ACTION

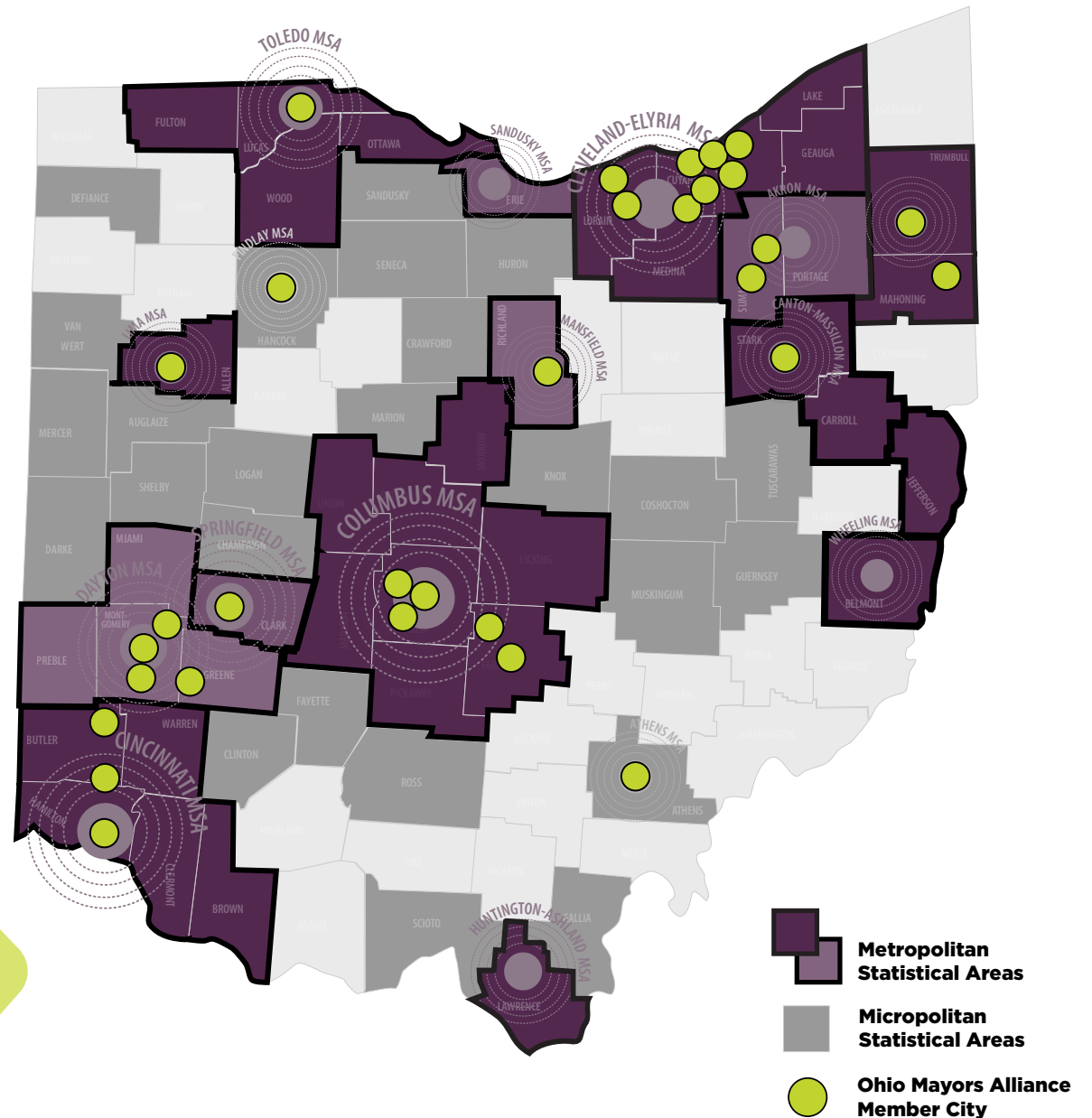
OPPORTUNITY

Leveraging Regional Strengths and Embracing Ohio Cities

Compared to most U.S. states, Ohio's economy is more balanced across numerous cities and multiple metropolitan regions. This makes it more regionally diverse, less dependent on a single urban hub, and better positioned for economic growth to spread among urban, suburban, and rural communities. Ohio's cities and metro regions are a unique, competitive advantage for the Buckeye State.

Ohio's metro regions provide balance and a unique competitive advantage for Ohio.

OHIO'S METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS

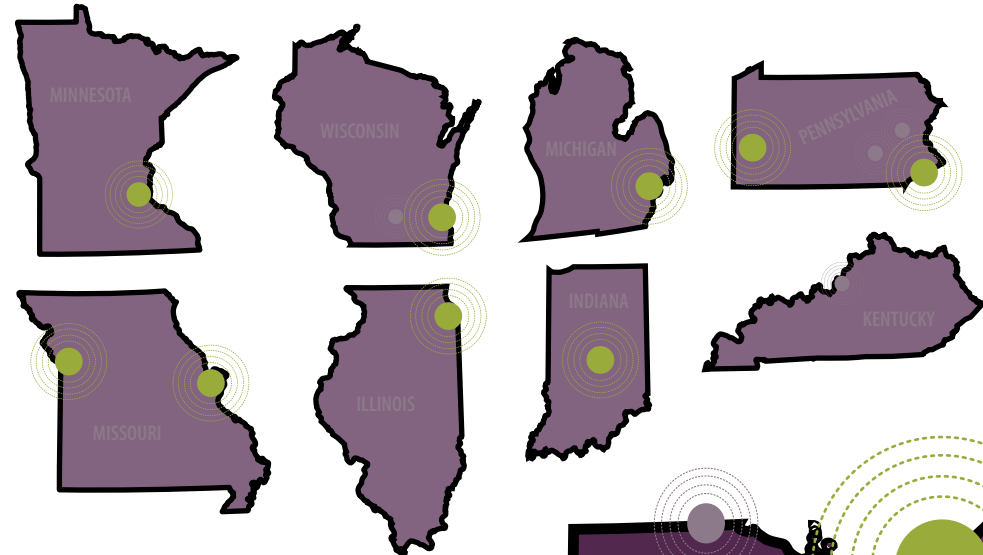


OPPORTUNITY

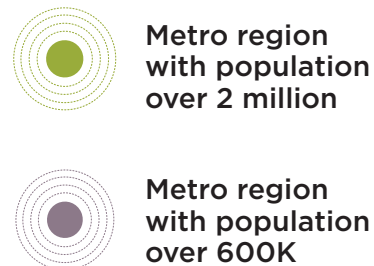
Leveraging Regional Strengths and Embracing Ohio Cities

Most Midwestern states and many states across the country rely on one large metro economy anchored by a large city. Ohio is the only state in the Midwest with three metro regions with over 2 million people (Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati). With numerous core cities dotted throughout the state, Ohio is also the only Midwestern state with 3 additional medium-sized metro regions with more than 600,000 people (Toledo, Akron, and Dayton). Ohio's multi-metro regions provide strength, balance, and a unique competitive advantage for Ohio.

Ohio's regional economic strength and numerous cities are a competitive advantage.



METRO REGIONS WITH LARGE POPULATIONS IN MIDWEST STATES



OPPORTUNITY

Leveraging Regional Strengths and Embracing Ohio Cities

Ohio's balanced distribution of medium and large cities means economic, cultural, and political power is more spread out across the state. It also provides regional balance with cities across Ohio serving as anchors that drive regional growth from the cities and out to both nearby suburban and rural communities. Neighboring states and many states across the country rely on one or two large metro regions to power the state economy.

The 6 largest MSAs are responsible for over 80% (\$706 billion) of Ohio's total GDP.

Cincinnati MSA (OH-KY-IN)

\$198 Billion

Columbus MSA

\$182 Billion

Cleveland-Elyria MSA

\$173 Billion

Dayton-Kettering MSA

\$57 Billion

Toledo MSA

\$49 Billion

Akron MSA

\$47 Billion



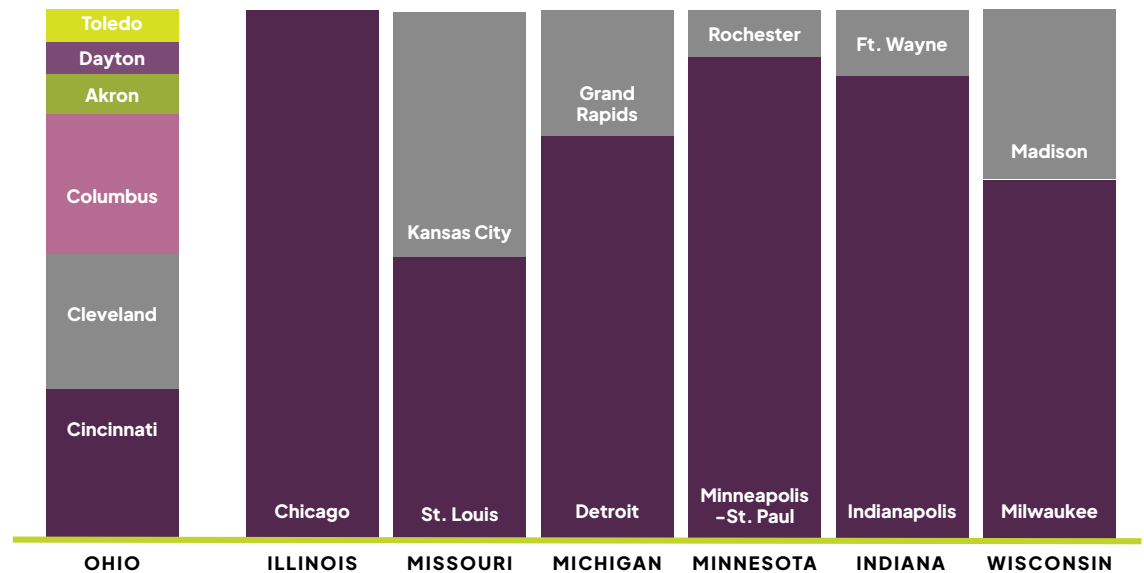
GDP output in Ohio by metro region is remarkably balanced.

Ohio has three large metro regions (Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus) of over two million people and three medium-sized metro regions (Dayton, Akron, Toledo) of over 600K people. Ohio also has the nation's number one micropolitan region in Hancock County with Findlay as its anchor city.



GDP output in Ohio by metro region is remarkably balanced across these metro economies. This contrasts sharply with most other Midwestern states where GDP output is almost exclusively concentrated in one metro region.

METRO GDP BREAKDOWN (2022, EST.)





ACTION

The Case for a Core Cities Strategy for Ohio

CHALLENGE

OPPORTUNITY

ACTION

ACTION

The Case for a Core Cities Strategy for Ohio

If Ohio wants to grow its population, it must grow the places where people choose to live, growth is welcome, and capacity and infrastructure exists. A coordinated strategy to support and revitalize Ohio's core cities will also benefit the interconnected suburban and rural communities within a metro region.

Ohio cities have benefited from state policies like funding for brownfield remediation, renewal of the Ohio Public Works State Capital Improvement Bond program, the historic building preservation tax credit, the Transformational Mixed Use Tax Credit, and others.

However, a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to support smart growth in Ohio cities is critically needed if the state is to reverse these troubling growth and population trends.

Targeted growth in communities that are built for it.



ACTION

The Case for a Core Cities Strategy for Ohio

The interdependency of urban and rural areas is important as many rural counties are a key part of regional metro economies. It's also evident that rural counties in closer proximity to urban centers have higher GDP output and more economic opportunities.

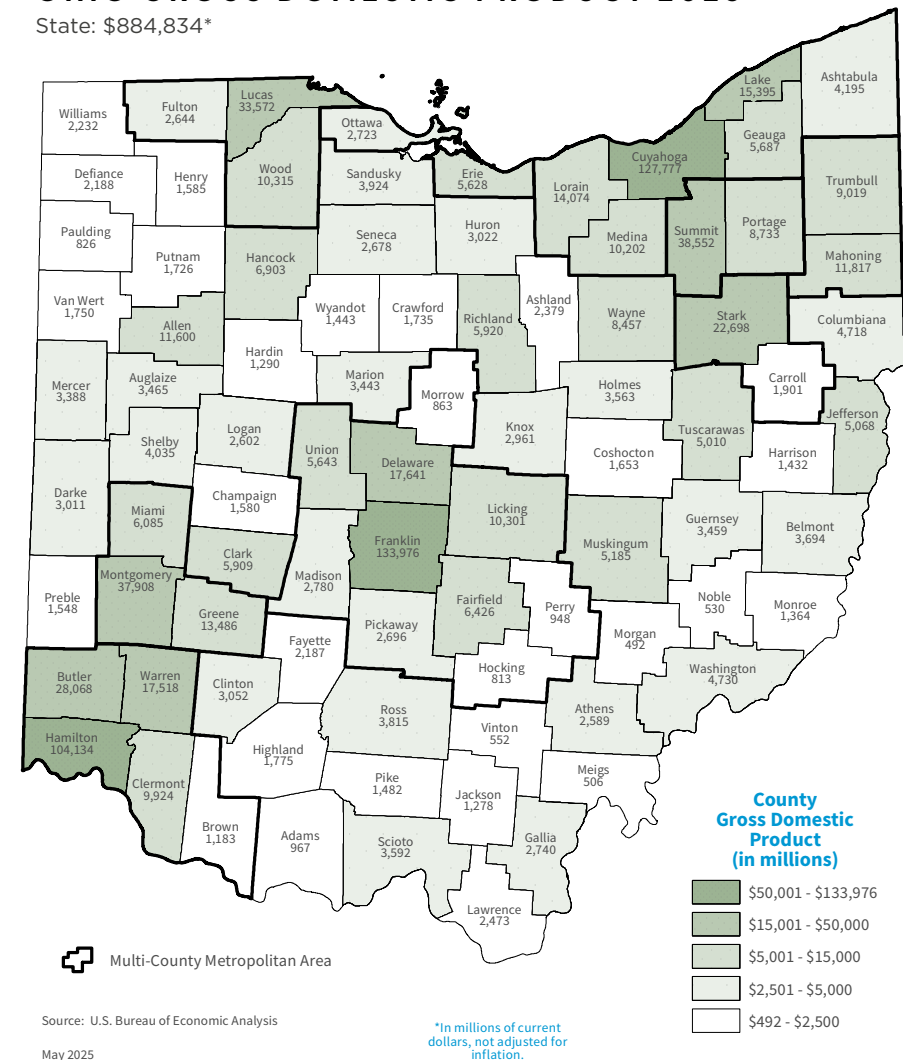
A core cities strategy for Ohio isn't just about cities. It is about leveraging our cities to support smart population growth and balanced regional economic strength. Many Ohio cities were built for populations that are much larger than they are now and a targeted state and local strategy to revitalize these communities will benefit the cities and the surrounding regions.

By focusing on the redevelopment of Ohio's legacy cities through a Core Cities Strategy, Ohio can harness the economic power of our unique cities, historic downtowns, and multi-metro region economy. Doing so also better constrains growth from sprawling into rural communities and protects Ohio's critically important agriculture industry.

When core cities thrive, regions grow and interconnected rural areas benefit.

OHIO GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT 2023

State: \$884,834*



ACTION

The Case for a Core Cities Strategy for Ohio

Cities give Ohio a unique, competitive advantage to ignite a resurgence.

Because Ohio is not reliant on just one metro economy or one large city, the state has a competitive advantage to drive broad-based economic growth in all parts of Ohio through a concentrated growth strategy focused on revitalizing Ohio's core cities and boosting regional strength.

Cities are job centers and engines of opportunity in Ohio

As the economic centers of Ohio's metropolitan regions, Ohio cities drive regional growth and support Ohio's statewide economic success. Home to over two dozen Fortune 500 companies, Ohio's core cities and metro regions account for over two-thirds of the state population, 76 percent of Ohio jobs, and nearly 90 percent of Ohio's GDP.

Cities are hubs of Innovation, Entertainment, and Entrepreneurship


Attracting visitors from all over the world, Ohio cities are home to major sports teams, world-famous museums, and thriving entertainment districts. Our cities are also home to 45 different community colleges and universities, world-renowned medical institutions, and state-designated Innovation Hubs.

Cities Fund Critical Infrastructure and Frontline Services

Ohio cities fund critical infrastructure essential to providing jobs and supporting economic growth. This includes housing developments for an emerging workforce and public safety, which is the largest budgetary expense for most Ohio cities.

Ohio's metropolitan areas account for:

76% OF JOBS IN OHIO 

71% OF OHIO'S POPULATION 

90% OF OHIO'S GDP 





CONCLUSION

A Core Cities Strategy Can Power an Economic and Population Resurgence for Ohio

Ohio's numerous cities and multiple metro regions are a competitive advantage for the Buckeye State.

The Ohio Mayors Alliance believes there is an opportunity to better realize this advantage, to position Ohio for population growth, and to generate balanced economic prosperity across the state.

With declining statewide population trends, Ohio risks losing both national influence and the economic power that has positioned Ohio as one of the leading innovators and an economic powerhouse in the last century.

Ohio needs a bold strategy that embraces Ohio's cities, leverages our multiple metro regions, and delivers statewide prosperity and population growth.

This strategy needs to drive growth to the communities that are built for it and in need of revitalization. In doing so, it will also preserve vital farmland and protect Ohio's agricultural economy.

Ohio's cities are the foundation for a brighter future, and embracing their potential is essential to reversing population decline, strengthening the economy, and ensuring the state remains a vibrant place to live, work, and thrive.



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