

NEFCO: A Regional Council

NORTHEAST OHIO FOUR COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION
180 East South Street, Akron, Ohio 44311-2035 (330) 252-0337 • Fax (330) 252-0664

Bob Breneman, Chairman

Joseph Hadley, Jr., Executive Director

WHAT IS NEFCO?

The Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO) was formed in 1974 as a council of governments by the elected officials within Portage, Stark, Summit and Wayne Counties. NEFCO was created as a voluntary organization to enable local officials to discuss problems facing the Region and to develop strategies to cope with them. NEFCO also serves as a forum through which local, state and federal planning programs can be more effectively coordinated.

HOW IS NEFCO STRUCTURED?

The organization is directed by a General Policy Board which serves as the decision making body and meets monthly. The Policy Board is comprised of representatives from each of the four counties, including the Cities of Akron, Kent and Wooster. Of the Board's 38 active members, 16 are elected officials, 18 are public officials, and 4 are private appointees.

WHAT DOES NEFCO DO?

NEFCO's primary purpose is to serve the county, city, village and township governments, and the citizens within the four-county area. On behalf of these local units of government, NEFCO produces a series of studies or plans supporting the local plans in order to help maximize the return of federal tax dollars to the Region. Through communication, planning, coordination and technical assistance, NEFCO addresses issues which cross jurisdictional boundaries. Such issues as the environment, economic development, transportation, housing and land development are regional problems which require locally conceived regional solutions.

DO NEFCO'S POWERS SUPERSEDE THOSE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS?

No, regional planning organizations, such as NEFCO, do not change the boundaries or authority of existing jurisdictions. However, through NEFCO, a variety of regional issues are discussed and actions taken or recommended. NEFCO does not have the authority to force member governments to comply with its decisions, but it does use a variety of methods to encourage voluntary participation in policy development and implementation. For example, NEFCO prepares and adopts regional water quality management and economic development plans which increase the Region's eligibility for federal funding consideration; it reviews applications for federal funds from local governments and the private sector in Summit County under the Intergovernmental Review process; and it is used by its member local governments to make new development initiatives which are multi-jurisdictional in nature.

HOW IS NEFCO FUNDED?

From its inception, NEFCO has been supported by local dues which are utilized to attract federal and state grants to carry out the planning program. Local governments contribute \$220,763/year on a twenty cents per capita basis or as determined annually by the Board. Funds supplied by local units of government are used to match those of state and federal programs. These funds come from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA), The Lake Erie Protection Fund, and from other agencies and local governments.

WHAT ARE SOME OF NEFCO'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE?

- The NEFCO Region's designation as an Economic Development District has increased the area's advantage in securing federal grants to develop plans and programs that address economic development problems.
- NEFCO spearheaded the application process which resulted in the awarding of a grant of authority to the Akron-Canton Regional Airport Authority to establish a foreign trade zone at the airport. The foreign trade zone, now an integral part of a nine-county trade consortium (NEOTEC), promotes exporting by area firms and provides the area with an additional and powerful development tool.
- NEFCO has provided direct Economic Development Administration (EDA) technical assistance to several units of local government. In 2008, NEFCO's coordinating assistance led to the awarding of \$1.5 million to the regional entity JumpStart, Inc. The Ohio State University, Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster received \$744,091 for a renovation project to start its BioHio Research Park. The City of Akron was awarded a \$1,750,000 grant to renovate its industrial incubator. Other past recipients include Stark Development Board and the Cities of Louisville, Canton, and Barberton. The City of Louisville's Drinking Water Treatment and Water Supply Improvement Project received a \$695,500 EDA grant to assist in the construction of an untreated well water supply field and associated distribution facilities. The direct beneficiary of the project was the J & L Specialty Steel Corporation, the city's largest employer. The City of Akron received \$1.17 million in EDA funding for an industrial incubator expansion project. In 2000 the EDA approved providing \$1.25 million to the City for its Massillon Road Industrial Park project. Canton received EDA funds to construct a discharge pipeline. The City of Barberton also was awarded funds for its revolving loan fund.
- NEFCO maintains an industrial park inventory for the four county economic development district.
- On an annual basis, the NEFCO General Policy Board adopts an areawide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The NEFCO CEDS report serves to summarize and assess the past year's activities and present new or modified program strategies. Every five years, NEFCO completes an CEDS Update, which evaluates the area's economic situation based on the analysis of relevant data

of the area and surrounding region. The Update evaluates the existing and potential assets and liabilities of the NEFCO region that may affect new development and business/job retention. The most recent CEDS was completed in March 2007.

- Prepared a watershed action plan for Nimishillen Creek which has been endorsed by Ohio DNR and Ohio EPA. This endorsement enhances the area's eligibility and attractiveness for various environmental grants and loans.
- Consistency with the NEFCO Clean Water Plan, certified by the Governor and USEPA, enables local governments to be eligible for sewage treatment construction/improvement loans to assist them in meeting clean water requirements.
- NEFCO staff has assisted several of the region's communities in the preparation of their groundwater protection programs, including the Cities of Barberton, Rittman, Orrville and Wooster, Portage County (Shalersville) and the Villages of Canal Fulton, Minerva, Waynesburg, Navarre, Mantua, Marshallville, Lakemore, Doylestown, and Bolivar.
- NEFCO was named by the Director of the Ohio EPA to the Cuyahoga Coordinating Committee, which is charged with the responsibility of preparing the remedial action plan, or cleanup plan for the Cuyahoga River's Area of Concern.
- NEFCO has conducted several watershed studies designed to better understand actual or potential pollution threats. These studies are used to qualify these areas for federal and/or state grants. Examples include Sippo Lake and Nimishillen Creek (Stark County), Upper Tuscarawas River, Middle Cuyahoga River, and Yellow Creek (Summit County), and Killbuck and Sugar Creeks (Wayne County).
- NEFCO staff work with local government staff on an ongoing basis to identify water quality management issues and develop locally acceptable solutions. Two examples of that approach are NEFCO's assessments of septage disposal and brine disposal. NEFCO's two-part septage disposal study analyzed current and future conditions facing septage haulers and treatment plants. The City of Akron revised and adopted its oil and gas regulations based largely on model regulations developed by NEFCO.
- NEFCO also provides coordination and technical assistance in the areas of population and economic studies, rural planning, human services, and open space and recreation.
- As an affiliate of the Ohio Department of Development's Office of Strategic Research and depository for census data, the dissemination of various material continues to remain a fundamental task of NEFCO in order to heighten public awareness and encourage public participation.

For information on any of these accomplishments, please call NEFCO, (330)252-0337; FAX (330)252-0664.

1/8/10

1/8/09