

Looking At The ISSUES

June 8, 2007

The State Role in Revitalizing Canton & Other Older Industrial Cities

For the first time in many decades, there is reason to be truly optimistic about the future of America's older industrial cities. Advancing beyond hope, however, requires a vision of the possible—and the will to achieve it. – Brookings Institution

Canton and eight other Ohio cities were included in a new report published in May by the Brookings Institute.¹ The report carried the message that “given their assets, the moment is ripe for the revival of older industrial urban economies.” The report maintained that Canton and her sister cities in Ohio have tremendous resources in culture, education, and health care. These resources create amenities that if properly leveraged can become competitive assets. Yet, cities can't go it alone.

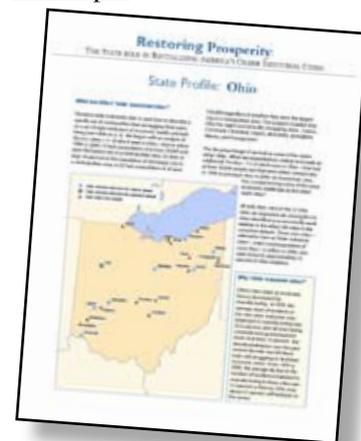
States have an essential role to play in the revitalization of older industrial cities, but they need a new urban agenda for change. While noting that any revitalization depends on local vision and leadership, the report contends that states have treated the nation's older industrial cities with a kind of benign neglect over the last 50 years. States need a new “holistic” urban agenda. They need to help cities fix the basics, build on economic strengths, grow the middle class, transform the physical infrastructure, and create neighborhoods of choice that are attractive to families of all income levels. Additionally:

States help shape the quality of regional economic growth, through their substantial investments in K–12 education, higher education, and economic development. (They) create the opportunity structure for low- and middle-income residents, by administering myriad federal- and state-funded social programs that impact families' ability to improve their incomes and build wealth.²

The overall benefits of city revitalization—for families, for suburbs, for the environment, and ultimately for states—are potentially enormous. What does the state, even those in the suburbs, get in return? Restoring prosperity in older industrial cities will lead to a reduction in unemployment and poverty, a rise in incomes and wealth, and an improved quality of life for urban families. Restoring prosperity in older industrial cities will increase the jobs, amenities, and housing choices available to suburban residents, enhance the regional market for business location, raise both urban and suburban property values, and improve the overall competitiveness of metropolitan areas.³

Take A LOOK

An additional Ohio state profile from the Brookings Institution is available at http://www3.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20070520_oicOH.pdf



¹ The full report and state of Ohio Profile may be downloaded from: http://www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20070520_oic.htm

² Vey, J.S. (2007). Restoring Prosperity: The State Role in Revitalizing America's Older Industrial Cities. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, p.5.

³ Restoring Prosperity: The State Role in Revitalizing America's Older Industrial Cities, p.8.