

## Policy Proposal: Pursue the Sustainable Economy

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*The fourth of an on-going series, this proposal outlines the principles and priorities to be pursued by the first County Executive, and highlights one approach towards “**Creating Jobs and Promoting Economic Growth.**” FitzGerald’s Five Point Plan for Cuyahoga County government is available at [www.EdFitzGerald.org](http://www.EdFitzGerald.org).*

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This policy proposal addresses the following policy priorities enumerated in the County Charter:

1. Focused, effective and accountable leadership;
  2. Job creation and economic growth as a fundamental government purpose, thereby helping the County do a better job of creating and retaining jobs and ensuring necessary and essential health and human services;
  3. Collaborative leadership with Cleveland, suburbs and others within the public and private sectors;
  4. An improved focus on equity for all our communities and citizens;
  5. Long-term regional and global competitiveness; and
  6. Significant taxpayer savings by streamlining and eliminating unnecessary expenses.
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### The Opportunity

Cuyahoga County has a wealth of natural, financial and human capital from the region’s history of labor, wealth creation and innovation. While the County Charter makes economic development a priority, the first County Executive must lead with principles and priorities that balance healthy economic *and* community growth. Incorporating these principles leads to a more sustainable model of economic growth.

Our region is uniquely positioned with the natural resources, infrastructure and expertise to become a leader in the Sustainability Economy. Unlike many regions, we already enjoy assets clustered around advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, green building, and local food production. The current economic environment also creates opportunities for Cuyahoga County and the region to leverage these assets to rebuild our economy, further develop our workforce and establish a model of sustainability. Wise use of the same human and natural resources that fostered our Industrial Era growth and prosperity will also define our 21<sup>st</sup> Century success.

### Pursue the Sustainable Economy

1. Energy efficiency products and services
2. Renewable wind energy
3. Renewable solar, biomass, and fuel cell energy manufacturing and installation
4. Maximize and reuse vacant land, green space and brownfields
5. Local food
6. Reduce and eliminate waste
7. Foster collaborations

## **Pursuit of the Sustainable Economy**

### **What is a Sustainable Economy?**

The best known definition of “sustainable development” is from the World Commission on Environment and Development: development is sustainable where it “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This definition has been translated into sustainability’s “triple bottom line”: a balance between social, economic and environmental interests.

### **The Sustainable Economy Means Growth for Our County**

A Sustainable Economy does not meet the “triple bottom line” unless it produces jobs that benefit people. As County Executive, Ed FitzGerald will seek to implement policies that permit the convergence of economic, social and environmental priorities. Decision-making towards a sustainable economy will be geared towards economic, community and educational-social development. In pursuit of a sustainable economy, FitzGerald will prioritize investment of resources toward innovations that:

- capitalize on our county and region’s demonstrated and unique labor, geographic/environmental, infrastructure and intellectual expertise
- take advantage of the continuing innovations that will make up our future sustainable economy
- foster a regional economy of a sustainable technologies as an engine for growth
- are areas of growth that already employ people locally and offer more growth potential

## **Specific Opportunities for Cuyahoga County to Encourage Sustainable Models**

- a. *Energy efficiency products and services*, including high performance “green” buildings and “green” rehabilitation. This area of focus arguably provides the greatest opportunity to save money, create jobs, energy cost reduction and carbon emissions reduction. Energy efficiency is easy to understand, not necessarily costly, and something in which everyone can participate. Studies on energy supply and demand universally identify energy efficiency as the best low hanging fruit to pick for a sustainable economy.

The County must continue to invest and continue efforts to make its own operation and facilities energy efficient, seizing the opportunity afforded by Energy Efficiency Block Grant Dollars and other federal resources to invest money allocated for energy conservation to be spent wisely. The County Office of Sustainability and the Great Lakes Energy Development Task Force will be directed to pursue additional energy saving and collaboration opportunities, and to partner with the private sector to discover and implement new energy efficiency innovations.

- b. *Renewable wind energy*, especially on or near the lake, and associated manufacturing is a sizeable opportunity that capitalizes on our manufacturing

and technology strengths. Wind turbines and components made here can power a whole new clean energy industry on Lake Erie and throughout the Great Lakes.

As Executive, Ed FitzGerald will support continued investment by the County and other community stakeholders to ensure the proposed 20 MW project is successfully completed. The project should be leveraged by the County's Department of Development to support job-creation opportunities to build the supply chain for this exciting new industry.

- c. *Renewable solar, biomass, and fuel cell energy manufacturing and installation* also take advantage of existing regional research, manufacturing and business talent. Ohio and Northeast Ohio in particular, is already nationally recognized for its fuel cell manufacturing cluster. The county must place the same emphasis on fixed sustainable energy products as it does on renewable wind energy.

Renewable energy alone will be insufficient to meet our energy needs for a number of years. Until that time arrives, this region also is well-positioned to play a major role in improving the energy efficiency of traditional forms of energy production.

- d. *Maximizing and reutilizing vacant land, green space and brownfields* are key opportunities to adapt our county for the next century. Areas of declining population loss create opportunities for a rebirth of neighborhoods by opening green space for recreation and community functions. Smart, coordinated, land use policy will be critical to our success. This region has a long history of foresight and innovation here—the Emerald Necklace and MetroParks system has long been a model emulated around the world for progressive stewardship of natural spaces.

The County Planning Commission will be directed to coordinate with and our communities and representative organizations, including First Suburbs and Northeast Ohio Mayors' and Managers' Association, to advance land use planning policies to recognize current population trends, and use sustainability principles to grow our neighborhoods for long term health, prosperity and quality of life.

- e. *Local food* in northeast Ohio is a \$10 Billion business. People are starting to remember that there was a time during which most of our food did not come from Florida, California or overseas. We can support local businesses and help keep money here—as well as eat better food—if we redevelop regional food networks and supply chains. The Department of Development and Board of Health will coordinate to implement measures in support of local food procurement as appropriate to the county's mission and charter.
- f. *Reduce and eliminate waste* is a sustainable way in which we can all save—and even make—money. Businesses in the Cuyahoga Valley are already experimenting with a process known as “industrial symbiosis,” i.e. “what’s waste in my business is raw material in yours” and “waste to profit.”

FitzGerald will direct an audit of county operations' and facilities' waste disposal practices through the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and utilize the District's expertise to look for waste reduction and recycling opportunities beyond the District's current programs.

- g. *Foster collaborations like the Solar Special Improvement District* to pool the costs of energy efficiency projects from multiple property owners to deliver special financing rates to make energy efficiency projects that save energy *and* money. Collaborations like these should create enough critical mass among local property owners' projects to help grow local businesses that support energy efficiency projects. The City of Lakewood has already taken a leading role in this initiative, which will represent the largest sustainable energy collaboration in Ohio.

Sustainability also means being strategic. We cannot proceed under the status quo. A competitive world economy demands adaptation. The County Executive must understand how to identify what are our strategic goals, and how to use County resources, both direct and indirect, to realize those goals. The County Executive must harmonize our major local infrastructure assets toward agreed-upon strategic directions to maximize our opportunities.

In short, Cuyahoga County government must lead and support innovation to succeed as a Sustainable Economy. As County Executive, Ed FitzGerald will lead Cuyahoga County to be efficient and nimble, so that it can free our people to maximize use of all our resources in a way consistent with the principles of sustainability.