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Greater Ohio Policy Center

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Greater Ohio, Akron Leaders Partner To Present Economic Forum Jan. 18

***Building upon Akron's economic accomplishments, initiatives
and creating future strategies for continued growth focus***

COLUMBUS – Greater Ohio Policy Center, The University of Akron, the Greater Akron Chamber, Summit County and the city of Akron are partnering to present an economic forum Jan. 18 in Akron at the John S. Knight Center to build upon Akron's recent accomplishments and major initiatives, and develop new strategies to pave the way for continued growth.

The *Building Prosperity in Akron Forum* is one of a series of forums and meetings planned by Greater Ohio throughout the state in connection with its *Restoring Prosperity: Transforming Ohio's Communities for the Next Economy* (<http://www.greaterohio.org/policy-and-research/>) report, which was released in conjunction with the Brookings Institution last year. The report is a "blueprint" for structural changes and state policy reforms intended to bring economic vitality to the state.

For more than a year University of Akron President Luis Proenza, Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic, Summit County Executive Russ Pry, and Greater Akron Chamber President Dan Colantone have been meeting with Greater Ohio to organize the forum, which will be attended by private and public sector leaders from throughout northeastern Ohio and the state.

"Leaders will convene to learn about Akron's current successes and how it is reinventing itself to compete in the next economy," said Lavea Brachman, Greater Ohio executive director, Brookings Non-Resident Senior Fellow, and co-author of the *Restoring Prosperity* report. "Our goals include featuring and stimulating a constructive discussion among the Greater Akron community about the numerous innovative efforts and initiatives already under way and developing next steps and plans Akron can undertake to continue to build prosperity for the region."

Another goal will be to influence and inform new state leadership about the needs of cities, such as Akron and its region. "We want to encourage the state to take an active role in facilitating the right type of investments in Ohio's cities and metros, keys to the economic revival of our state," Brachman said.

The keynote speaker will be Paul S. Grogan, president and chief executive officer of The Boston Foundation, who will discuss the importance of using clusters and how metric research can help guide future policy decisions. Ohio Lt. Governor Mary Taylor and Congresswoman Betty Sutton will provide remarks during the forum, while Ohio House Speaker William G. Batchelder will lead a plenary session on the General Assembly's priorities for 2011.

“Akron is excited to showcase our successes,” said Mayor Plusquellic. “Our city is transitioning to the new economy by retaining and attracting new talent, placing an emphasis on workforce development, strengthening our neighborhoods, and promoting the innovative Akron Biomedical Corridor that continues to attract jobs in research and manufacturing.”

“ ‘The Akron Model’ is being recognized as one of the most effective and highly robust platforms for economic development and new wealth creation anywhere. It calls for the University and our partners in the City of Akron and Summit County, among others, to work together to act as conveners, developers and anchors for clusters of innovation,” says Dr. Proenza. “ ‘The Akron Model’ – and the relationships that the University, city and county have cultivated with industry and local, state and federal government – has made Greater Akron a hub of innovation. It is our hope that ‘The Akron Model’ can provide a framework for cities around the nation to leverage their resources to reinvigorate the economy and create jobs, and that others will view Akron as an example of the success that can be achieved when private and public sectors collaborate to support a city as it reinvents itself to be competitive in the future.”

Forum session topics will be:

- The “Akron Model:” Establishing a Baseline for Progress
- Clusters of Innovation (Regional and Global)
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- Talent and Workforce Development
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- Quality of Place and Product
- Identifying Solutions to State Policy Barriers

Media are invited to attend this invitation-only forum. For additional information about the forum and Greater Ohio, please visit www.greaterohio.org or contact Dawn Larzelere at 614.224.0187 or 614.204.5419 the day of the event.

Greater Ohio Policy Center (www.greaterohio.org) is the state’s “smart growth” organization. We promote public policy to grow Ohio’s economy and improve Ohioans’ quality of life through sustainable land use and growth. Through research, public education and grassroots advocacy, Greater Ohio works to advance policies and programs that revitalize Ohio’s urban cores and regions, strengthen regional cooperation and protect Ohio’s open space, natural resources and farmland.

Greater Ohio works closely with local partners to bring state reform recommendations “to ground” in meaningful ways, and then link them to local practices and find ways to enhance existing practices or stimulate new ones. The organization is nationally recognized for its effective blend of politics and policy, and for its pioneering work on policy and practice associated with “cities in transition.” We are a non-partisan, non-profit, and foundation-funded organization. Greater Ohio’s office is located in Columbus, Ohio.