

Chapter 2

A Century of Cleveland Local Government

What is the governmental structure of Cleveland with which city residents must deal? Constitutionally, Cleveland has had a mayor elected at large every two years, 33 council members elected every two years from single member districts, nine municipal court judges each elected city-wide to six year terms, and a clerk of court who is also elected by the city voters as a whole.

The mayor and council oversee and make policy for a vast array of facilities and services—an electric power distribution facility, a water purification and distribution system, two airports, a convention hall, music hall, municipal stadium, swimming pools, over 50 parks and playfields, a nursery for trees and shrubs, health clinics, maintenance garages for vehicles, a corrections facility for alcoholics and minor offenders, retail markets, a dog pound, more than 200 different buildings, 1800 police officers, and hundreds each of firemen, waste collectors, and maintenance personnel. In the private sector, nearly every one of those functions is often performed by some organization for profit, but no private sector organization attempts to combine them all. Indeed, few for-profit conglomerates of any sort are as diverse in their functions as the Cleveland city government.

Understandably, Cleveland's governmental functions are, in fact, managed through a variety of department heads. Some are like chief executive officers in their own mini-conglomerates. For example, in 1980 the Properties Director had indirect responsibility for operation of the municipal stadium which is under contract to a private business. He also had direct supervisory responsibility over maintenance of all other city buildings in addition to management of the city's parks and operation of its recreation programs. A Safety Director managed both the police and fire departments. The various chief executives were political appointees of the Mayor.

Reporting to each director are two, three and sometimes four or more levels of supervisors who hold office under civil service protection. The director and the highest level of civil service su-

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supervisors work either at City Hall or at another downtown location. Most of the ultimate workers, those who pick up trash, repair streets, or respond to calls for help, are based at decentralized offices and are supervised directly by people who do not work at City Hall.

No two departments have the same subdivision of service areas. The police department has divided the city into six districts with a headquarters building in each district. The fire department has many more fire stations, each servicing its own area. Health clinics are fewer than police stations and serve yet different areas. Sanitation, streets, and park services also have their own areas.

None of those service areas corresponds to the wards from which Cleveland's 33 council representatives are elected. Since the ordinary resident would not necessarily know even the location of the local headquarters for a particular service function, it becomes the responsibility of the council representative to know who is in charge of various services for each ward and to build communication between the local supervisor and the resident.

The constant political struggle in municipal administration is over how many men and how much money to allocate to what subsection of the city. Priorities for major capital expenditures of a particular kind in a ward are worked out in negotiations involving the council representative, administrators within a particular department, other council representatives, neighborhood organizations, and the mayor. Where capital expenditures are involved, the political process works to equalize in a rough and tumble fashion gross expenditures among wards.

Decisions as to how many police or other service workers to allocate to a particular ward are usually made by departmental supervisors. There is, however, neither a general service nor a capital budget for a particular ward. Thus, it is not possible for any subsection of the city to establish a priority for recreation supervisors rather than housing inspectors or for police rather than street repair personnel or vice versa. Those priorities are established only on a city-wide basis. Thereafter, administrators with service specialties make the decisions about geographic priorities, but there is no mechanism for a shift of funds from one service category to another within wards.

The task of getting better service for a local area out of departmental budgets fixed at the city-wide level falls to the council

representatives, street clubs, and groups like Near West Side Neighbors in Action. By exerting sufficient pressure, they establish priorities for their area. But their success is limited by the total budget allocation on a city-wide basis for any particular service.

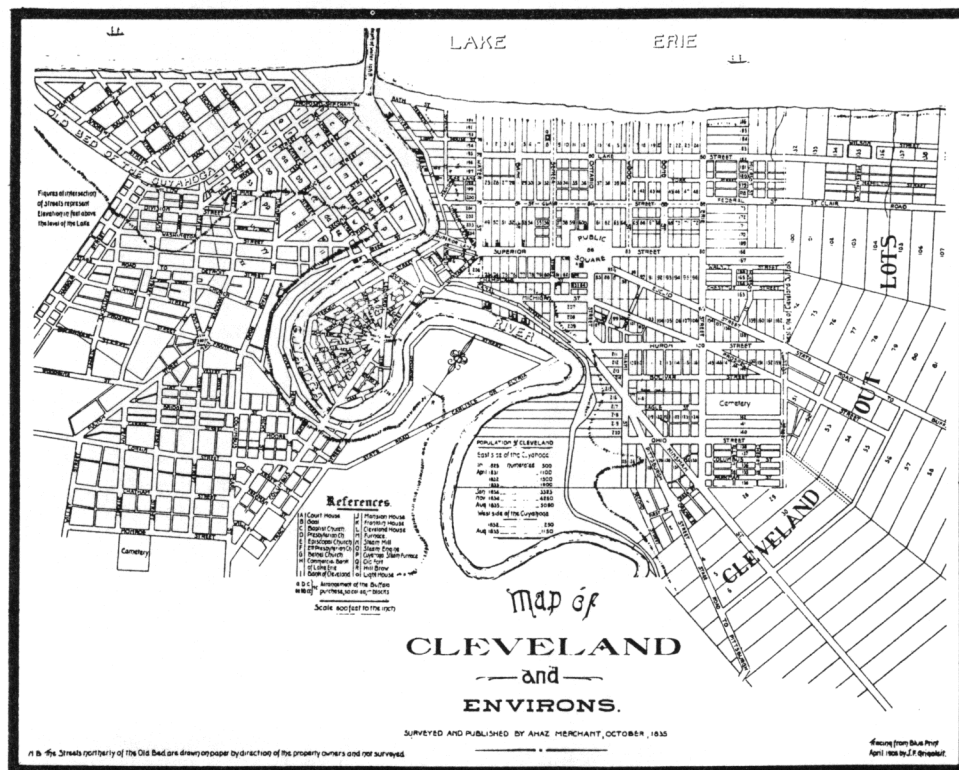
Genesis

How did Cleveland arrive at the form of local government that requires local priorities to be approached so often with main force by council members and citizens' groups? Six times since 1853 and four times in the last century the City of Cleveland has fundamentally altered its constitutional structure. The present structure was adopted in 1932.

The six changes between 1853 and 1932 occurred during a period of rapid population growth, industrial expansion, and tensions between life-long residents and recent immigrants that the city may never again experience. In that period, every large city in America was struggling to devise a system of effective, efficient, sensitive and honest municipal administration. Government in most large American cities was a disgrace.

Between 1870 and 1930, the City of Cleveland grew from under 100,000 to nearly 900,000 residents. In 1870, there were no electric lights, telephones, or automobiles. The only foreign language or dialect frequently heard was German, and only a handful of faces were black. By 1930, the gas lights were gone, only a few horses were on the streets, and at least a dozen foreign languages were widely spoken in neighborhood stores and churches. The new technology and the new residents forced the government of the old residents to change both in personnel and in structure to meet new needs.

Cleveland's first population spurt resulted when the Ohio River-Lake Erie Canal changed Cleveland in 1833 from a center for farmers and a way-station west to a genuine commercial city. Still, even with railroads and a canal, Cleveland had fewer than 50,000 people in 1860. Steel-making and European immigration between 1870 and 1930 created the houses, the street patterns, the churches, and the neighborhoods that we know as Cleveland today. The city's territory grew through repeated annexations of adjacent communities. The rapid growth of the period resulted in mounting pressures, and the first real step toward forming Cleveland's present governmental structure occurred in 1891.



Cleveland in 1835.

The half-century after 1833 was the period during which the city first began to take on the functions which today are such a burden. At the beginning both the city and its services were small. In 1835, for example, the city extended from the Cuyahoga River to about East 14th Street and only as far south as Huron Road. Trash collections, tree maintenance, parks, water supply, and entertainment facilities were not municipal services. As those functions were assumed by city government, they first became the separate responsibilities either of certain elected officials or appointed boards and commissions. Before 1836, a ward system of representation did not exist, and afterward neither the mayor nor city council had control over all municipal functions.

In the decade before 1891, the city was governed, in part, by an eight-member board of trustees elected from four districts. The trustees shared power with a plethora of special purpose boards and commissions and with a host of popularly elected administrators. In the 1880's Cleveland's elected officials included the mayor, town marshal, solicitor, treasurer, market superintendent, civil engineer, auditor, police court judge, court clerk, and prosecutor. The city trustees had limited policy-making functions.

The various commissions, some elected and some appointed, made policy decisions for streets, bridges, parks, water, fire, health, and sanitation.

For a growing industrial city, the system suffered greatly from the absence of central or coordinated decision-making.

In 1891, the network of policy-making boards and commissions was eliminated, and the number of elected administrators was reduced. All powers of the boards and commissions were transferred to a city council of 22 members, elected two each from 11 districts, serving a total of 40 wards. Mayor Tom L. Johnson who headed the flourishing city from 1901 to 1909 called it "a better system than any other city in the United States had at that time."

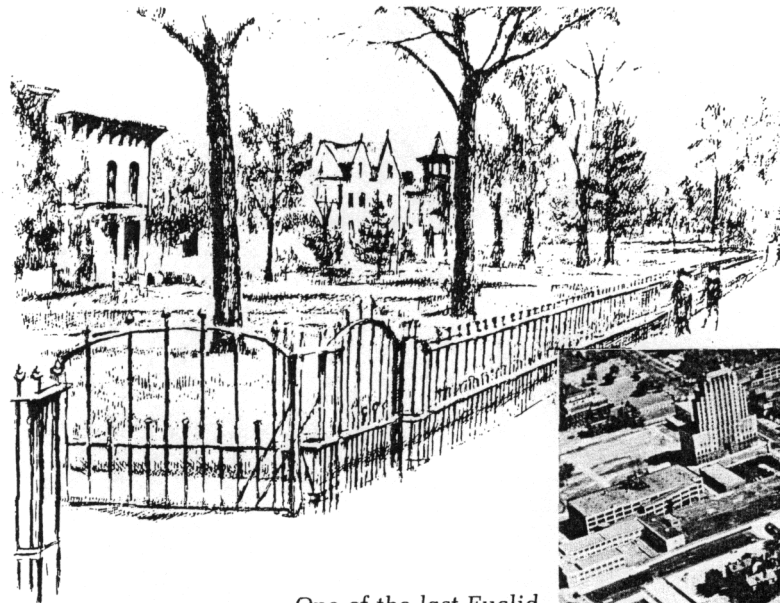
In 1903, as a result of an Ohio Supreme Court decision, the council composition was increased to 32 members elected from single member districts (wards). That system prevailed until 1924.

The thirty years from 1890 to 1920 were years of immense growth of population, technology, and wealth. From 1890 to 1900 the city added 100,000 people; nearly 200,000 between 1900 and 1910; and 236,000 between 1910 and 1920. In 1890, Cleveland had 261,000 residents. In 1920 there were 806,000.

In the 1890s Cleveland's politics did not differ markedly from those in other large cities excoriated by such journalists as Lincoln Steffens. From 1895 to 1899, Cleveland had a Republican mayor in his early thirties, Robert McKisson, who built a municipal patronage machine typical of the era. At the same time, Mark Hanna, the most powerful politician in America, called Cleveland his home. Businessmen bribed local politicians to obtain licenses for franchises. Opposition to control of public services by private businessmen was the issue upon which Tom Johnson rose to power.

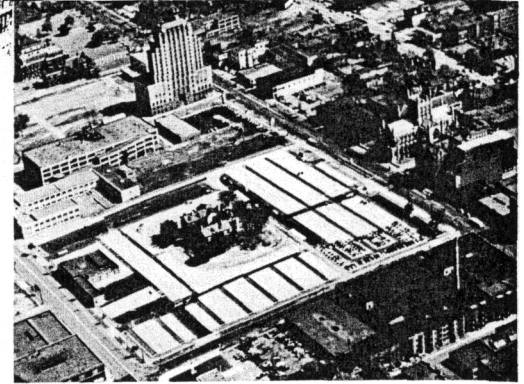
Tom Johnson believed his mission was to clean up a corrupt police force which allowed prostitution to flourish in downtown saloons and to curb the many business interests who corrupted city officials. Johnson saw the battle against corrupting influences as more fundamental than the need to provide efficient city services. He believed: "If fraud and graft are kept out, there is not apt to be much unwisdom in public expenditures..."

Johnson appointed a remarkable group of reformers to city government. Harris R. Cooley, Johnson's pastor, helped create the now decayed workhouse—an institution which was, at its inception, a model of enlightened penology. Frederic Howe joined



Euclid Avenue at the turn of century.

One of the last Euclid Avenue mansions, 1949.



the tax commission which, to the limit of its authority, shifted the real estate tax from buildings to land after the single tax philosophy of Johnson's friend, Henry George. Newton D. Baker—later to be Secretary of War under Woodrow Wilson and Mayor of Cleveland—was Johnson's Law Director. Together these men fought the special interests of private business.

Johnson and his colleagues believed that municipal ownership of public service and public facilities was the best means of preventing the corruption associated with the municipal power to grant franchises and licenses. To stymie the various private street car companies that controlled public transportation, Johnson created a city-owned trolley line and charged a three cent fare to offer price competition. Cleveland's municipally owned electric company was created for similar purposes. The newfound vision of municipal ownership saw Cleveland extending its water system, creating a greenbelt of parks around the settled portions of the city, and building public markets, bathhouses, playgrounds and swimming pools. Commonplace in city government today, municipal operation of such facilities was a new American concept in Johnson's day. Johnson and Cleveland were heralded nationwide as pioneers in governmental reform.

Johnson's goals were only partly achieved and those that were reached were short-lived. Moreover, in shifting Cleveland's government from a deliverer of basic services toward an owner and manager of public buildings and business enterprises, Johnson

Territorial Growth of the City of Cleveland

City of Cleveland
City Plan Commission

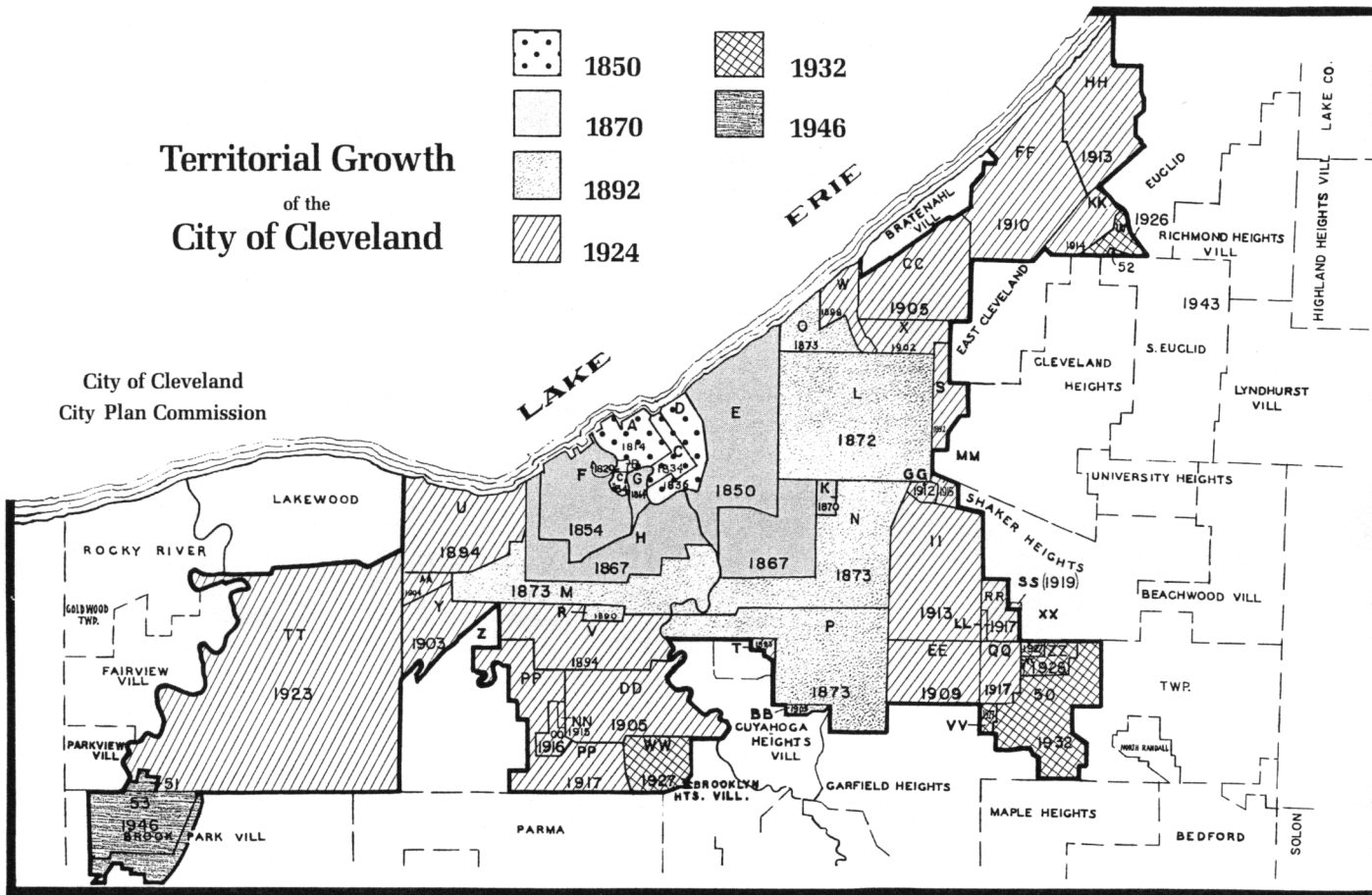
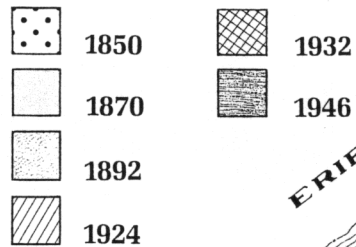


TABLE I
Changes in Cleveland's Governmental Form

Year	Population of Cleveland	Governmental Form
1800	Estimated at 7	Ohio governed with territorial legislature under Northwest Ordinance; "Cleveland" part of Cleveland Township under Trumbull County.
1803		State of Ohio created.
1810	Estimated at 57	Cuyahoga County created.
1814		Cleveland recognized as a village; elected president, recorder, treasurer, marshal, two assessors, and three trustees.
1830	1,075	
1836	5,080	Inaugurated as a city; elected mayor, treasurer, marshal, twelve member council with three members each from four wards, and three aldermen at large.
1850	17,034	
1852		Elected mayor, six other executives, judge, clerk of court, prosecutor, superintendent of markets, council (with two members per ward), a Board of Commissioners (with responsibility for streets and bridges).
1860	43,838	
1865		Police commission created by state legislature with one member appointed by mayor and four by governor.
1870	92,082	Elected mayor, solicitor, treasurer, clerk of court, police judge, prosecutor, and city council (two members per ward); appointed civil engineer, police chief, fire engineer, superintendent of markets, and various commissions pursuant to <i>Ohio General Code</i> .
1872		Police Commission changed from appointed to elected membership.
1878		General Code revision; mayor, councilmen, treasurer, police judge, and prosecutor elected; numerous boards for corrections, health, infirmary, parks, improvements, etc; composed variously of elected officials and persons appointed by them.
1880	160,146	
1890	261,353	
1891		Federal system adopted by state legislature providing elected mayor, council, and judges, but ending most boards and commissions including police commission.
1900	361,768	
1910	560,663	
1914		Home rule charter adopts Federal plan similar to 1891 form with 32 wards.
1920	806, 368	
1924		City manager appointed by council; council elected from four wards by proportional representation under nonpartisan ballot.
1930	902, 471	
1932		Return to Federal plan with 33 wards.

Sources: Elroy M. Avery, *A History of Cleveland and Its Environs* (1912). Samuel P. Orth, *A History of Cleveland, Ohio* (1910). William G. Rose, *Cleveland: The Making of a City* (1950).

fundamentally diminished the mayor's ability to manage the basic services needed by neighborhood residents.

By World War I, many resident civic leaders continued to perceive Cleveland's government as corrupt and inefficient. After Johnson left office, pressure mounted even among Johnson's former supporters to replace the mayor with a professional administrator and to structure the city council to represent more fairly the different constituencies that had emerged through immigration and industrial growth.

In 1921, the city responded to those suggestions by adopting a radically new form of government, and in 1924 it went into effect. All elected positions were eliminated except for municipal judges, court clerk, and council members. Executive power was given to a city manager appointed by the city council. The council itself was reduced to 24 members. The number of wards was reduced to four, and the 24 council representatives were allocated to the four wards in relation to population but were selected by a system of proportional representation.

In 1924, the city's boundaries were substantially identical to its present ones. One council ward covered the entire West Side. A second ward was on the East Side, south of Kingsbury Run. A third was east of the Cuyahoga River from Kingsbury Run to the lake but ending at Liberty Boulevard. The fourth ward was all of Cleveland east of Liberty Boulevard to the Heights and to the City of Euclid. Five to seven representatives were elected from each ward under a system which saw all candidates from a ward run on a non-partisan ballot against each other. Each voter ranked the candidates in order of preference; the preferences were then tabulated; and the candidates with the highest total of weighted votes in any ward were elected to the allotted council positions from that ward.

The system was predicated on the concept of a non-political executive and a policy-making council that was above partisanship. The four wards were conceived as logical and practical subdivisions for practical municipal administration. The system failed to achieve either a non-political executive or a non-partisan council. The city returned in 1932 to the earlier discredited mayor-council system of wards but with one more councilman than the previous 32. (See Table I for chronology of governmental changes in Cleveland.)

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Although the constitutional structure of Cleveland has remained substantially the same since 1932, it has been beset by pressures. The national crises of war and depression and the national postwar prosperity helped mask from 1932 to 1962 the weaknesses which had spawned Cleveland's experiment with city managers and proportional representation. Since 1962, however, tensions have mounted in the central city, and the weaknesses apparent before 1924 have resurfaced in an atmosphere of relentless political confrontation. Politicians of black, Italian, Croatian, Slovenian, Polish, and Irish heritage have vied for dominance as the mayorship became a symbol of ethnic admission to the citadels of power.

While the mayor's office has held prominence as a symbol of success, no mayor has been able to distinguish himself as an effective city manager. From the late 1930's to the late 1960's, the city enjoyed a succession of mayors whose roots were in the diverse ethnic population of the city and whose hallmarks were personal honesty. During this same period, however, repeated studies revealed that the city's administrative structure was long on personnel, short on service, and clinging to outmoded management practices. Since 1950, three different study commissions composed of outside experts from business and management consulting fields have detailed a litany of municipal management failures. Each successive report has found uncorrected many of the deficiencies noted in similar studies made a decade or more earlier.

Whatever the good intentions of the mayor, the realities of government for the central city of Cleveland have either prevented significant management reforms from being adopted or, if the reforms were instituted, their life was short or ineffective.

The Suburbs: A Political Alternative for Many

Those were the political structures for individuals who chose to remain as central city residents over the last century. At the same time, however, other Cleveland residents were abandoning the city to work different political solutions in the adjacent suburbs. The suburbs maintained the mayor-council or council-manager forms but applied them to much smaller areas, to many fewer people, and to substantially fewer functions. They have worked remarkably well when not overburdened by people and responsibilities.

In the late 1800s the very wealthy moved to Bratenahl, East Cleveland, and Cleveland Heights. Between the two World Wars, professionals and small business owners created new white collar suburbs in such places as Shaker Heights, Rocky River, and Fairview Park. After World War II, blue collar suburbs emerged on an equal footing with the prewar suburbs of the rich and the white collar middle class. Each of these suburbs has developed a special, albeit changing, ethnic mix.

In 1914, when Cleveland adopted its home rule charter, few could anticipate the growth of suburbia. In 1920, Cleveland had 806,000 residents, while the suburbs had only 137,000. But thirty years later, the suburbs had added nearly 340,000 residents to reach 474,000, while Cleveland added slightly more than 100,000. By 1990, it is projected that the 1950 relationship of city and suburbs will be reversed. The suburbs are expected to have 980,000 residents, and Cleveland will have 470,000 (see Table II).

One reason was that after the turn of the century, the state legislature lost substantial control of municipal government, and

TABLE II
Population of Cuyahoga County, the City of Cleveland,
and the Suburban Remainder of the County
1910-1970 with Revised Projections for 1980-1990

Year	County Total	City of Cleveland	County Suburbs
1910	637,425	573,872	63,553
1920	943,495	806,368	137,127
1930	1,201,455	902,471	298,984
1940	1,217,250	878,336	338,914
1950 April	1,389,532	914,808	474,724
1960 April	1,647,895	876,050	771,845
1970 April	1,720,835	750,879	969,956
1980 April (proj.)	1,512,600	560,000	952,600
1990 April (proj.)	1,450,000	470,000	980,000

Sources: 1910-1970 from U.S. Bureau of the Census; 1975-1977 and 1978 county estimates from *Current Population Reports Series P-26, No. 78-35* and earlier issues. 1980-1990 derived from Regional Planning Commission with adjustments by E. A. Weld. Prepared by Institute of Urban Studies, Cleveland State University, December 1979.

incorporated municipalities were permitted to adopt home rule charters. Cleveland's charter was adopted in 1914.

It was not always clear that these new communities would survive as independent cities. Prior to World War I, the typical pattern was for people employed in Cleveland to move outside of the city limits into adjacent townships such as East Cleveland, Newburgh, and Brooklyn but eventually to vote for annexation to the City of Cleveland. Nineteen twenty-four was a turning point for the suburbs as well as for the central city. After that year, when inner-city residents were establishing a new form of government, not a single major outlying community ever again voted to be governed by the City of Cleveland.

Another reason was the new-found tool of zoning. In the years before World War I, zoning was either nonexistent or ineffective in Cleveland, and the demands of business and industry over-rode residential land uses. Indeed, it was not until 1916 that the nation's first comprehensive citywide zoning ordinance was enacted in New York City. Thereafter, zoning became the legal tool for implementing the concepts of garden cities that the best city planners in Europe and America were suggesting.

As central city and suburbs began to experiment with zoning, its constitutionality was in doubt. In 1925, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled zoning to be constitutional in Ohio; and in 1926, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed zoning for the nation by upholding the constitutionality of Euclid's zoning ordinance in the historic opinion of *Ambler Realty Company*. Thereafter the suburbs – with their immense acreage of unimproved land – had a secure legal tool to control industrial and commercial growth and to protect residential interests. While land use patterns in the central city had already been determined by private business considerations, the newly developing suburbs could use zoning codes to channel business and residential growth into patterns which fit residential priorities. Greater political power thus gave suburban residents a supervening reason to reject annexation and to reach for the garden city dream despite the central city's larger tax base. By 1980 the suburbs had met the test of survival and in surviving had proved themselves fiscally sound and politically manageable.