“The goal here is to use the recommendations of this Task Force as a framework to expand opportunity to the entire community so that many more success stories can be told.

FitzGerald appoints Jenkins, Fuentes, Chappell, Mercado and Ronayne as co-chairs to lead new effort

CLEVELAND – Cuyahoga County Executive Ed FitzGerald today named the co-chairs of the newly formed Economic Inclusion Task Force. The task force will study the issues of economic diversity and inclusion in Cuyahoga County, and was created as part of The Economic Inclusion Plan. The Economic Inclusion Plan is one of the principles outlined in the County Executive’s Western Reserve Plan which was highlighted in his second State of the County Speech on February 1st of this year and can be found here: Western Reserve Plan .

The Economic Inclusion Task Force will begin its work in light of the $5 billion in economic activity downtown and to make sure that all qualifying county businesses can effectively participate in the $100 million economic development fund.

The primary goals of the task force are to examine and develop the County's employment practices, contracting practices and promote diversity and inclusion in development projects in Cuyahoga County. These goals will be attained through researching local and national initiatives, trends and best practices, meetings and offering the opportunity for public engagement.

"The Economic Inclusion Task Force will be tasked with devising a strategy to insure that as we continue to add to our list of major projects, the economic benefits that flow from those projects will actually reach those who need work the most," said FitzGerald. "Economic inclusion cannot be based on privilege, or nepotism, or cronyism. As we grow out of the recession, I am confident that the over sixty distinguished citizens who have volunteered to serve on the Economic Inclusion Task Force will develop a fair and workable strategy to insure that economic opportunity is open to every resident, especially those who have historically been excluded."

County Councilman Pernel Jones, Jr., District 8, is working closely with the County Executive and his team on these issues. Councilman Jones is an advocate of connecting the County's citizens with business opportunities and is a primary sponsor of the Disparity Study legislation currently before County Council. "I look forward to this continuing collaboration among Council, the Executive and the citizens and businesses of Cuyahoga County in ensuring that we are at our competitive best," said Jones. "The goal here is to use the recommendations of this Task Force as a framework to expand opportunity to the entire community so that many more success stories can be told. Creating an environment where everyone's efforts and ideas have a place at the table does not just improve the economic inclusivity of our region, it increases our economic power."

The five Co-Chairs have the goal of specific recommendations to the County Executive by mid to late summer. They are:

Inajo Davis Chappell

Ulmer & Berne, Partner

Rev. Cory Jenkins

Shiloh Baptist Church, Pastor

Carlos Fuentes

US Department of Commerce, Financial/Procurement Specialist

Nancy Mercado

Cuyahoga County, SBE Director

Chris Ronayne

University Circle, Inc., President