



# • **Women Religious in a Changing Urban Landscape:**

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## **The Work of Catholic Sisters in Metropolitan Cleveland**

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**CASE WESTERN RESERVE**  
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MANDEL SCHOOL OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES

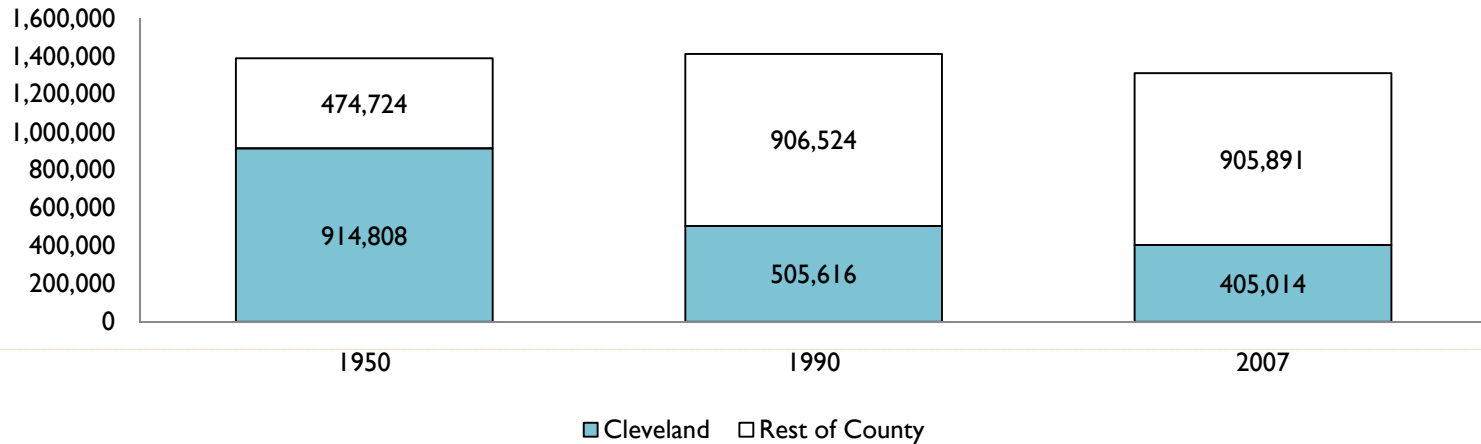


# **Purpose of the research**

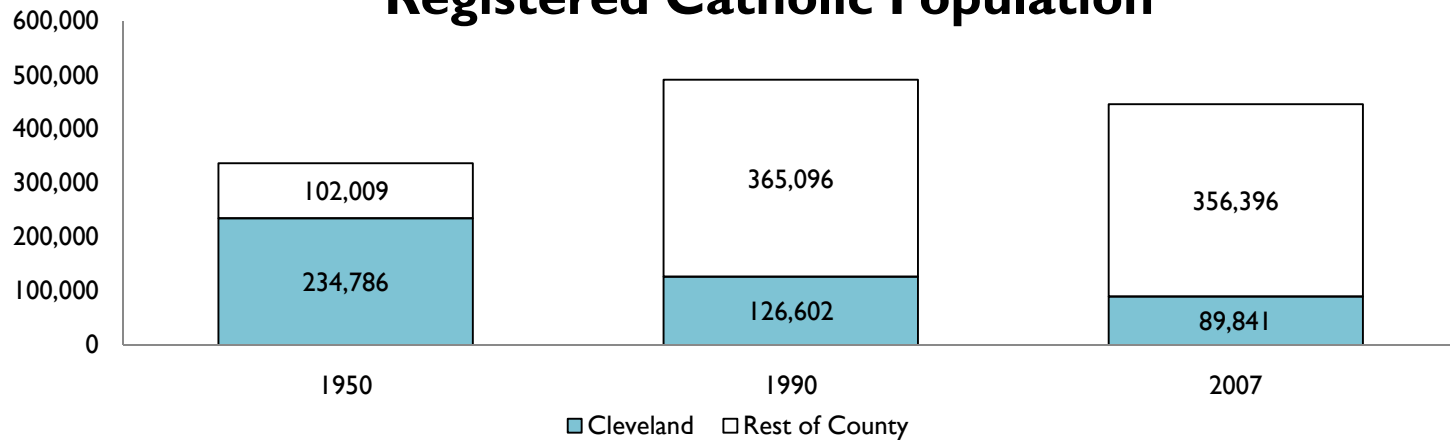
- 1. What is the current status of Sisters' ministries in the changing environment of Cleveland?**
- 2. What do Sisters themselves see as the challenges, needs, and vision going forward?**
- 3. To what extent are Sisters collaborating as a way to sustain their work?**
- 4. What strategies are needed to advance the Religious Communities goal moving forward?**
- 5. What can we learn about the unique approach and spirit in the ministries of Women Religious?**

# Population migrates to suburbs, including Catholics

## Total Population



## Registered Catholic Population



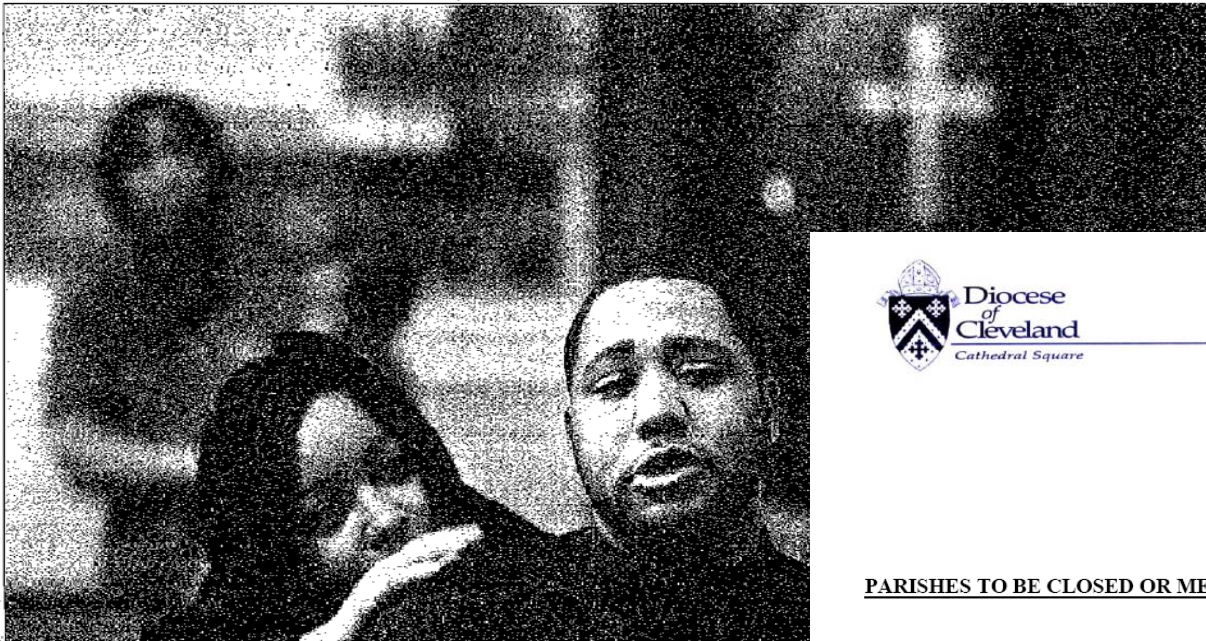
\* Source: 2005-2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates (U.S. Census)

Source: Catholic Diocese of Cleveland (2009). Overview of Outmigration Fact Sheet.

MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2009

**DIOCESE DOWNSIZES**

# Parishioners in churches getting the ax ask, why us?



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

July 9, 2009

## PARISHES TO BE CLOSED OR MERGED IN THE DIOCESE OF CLEVELAND

27 parishes will close  
41 parishes involved in 18 mergers  
50 fewer parishes

As the result of a nearly two year consultative process Bishop Richard Lennon has issued notice to these parishes that they must close or merge as directed by June 30, 2010.

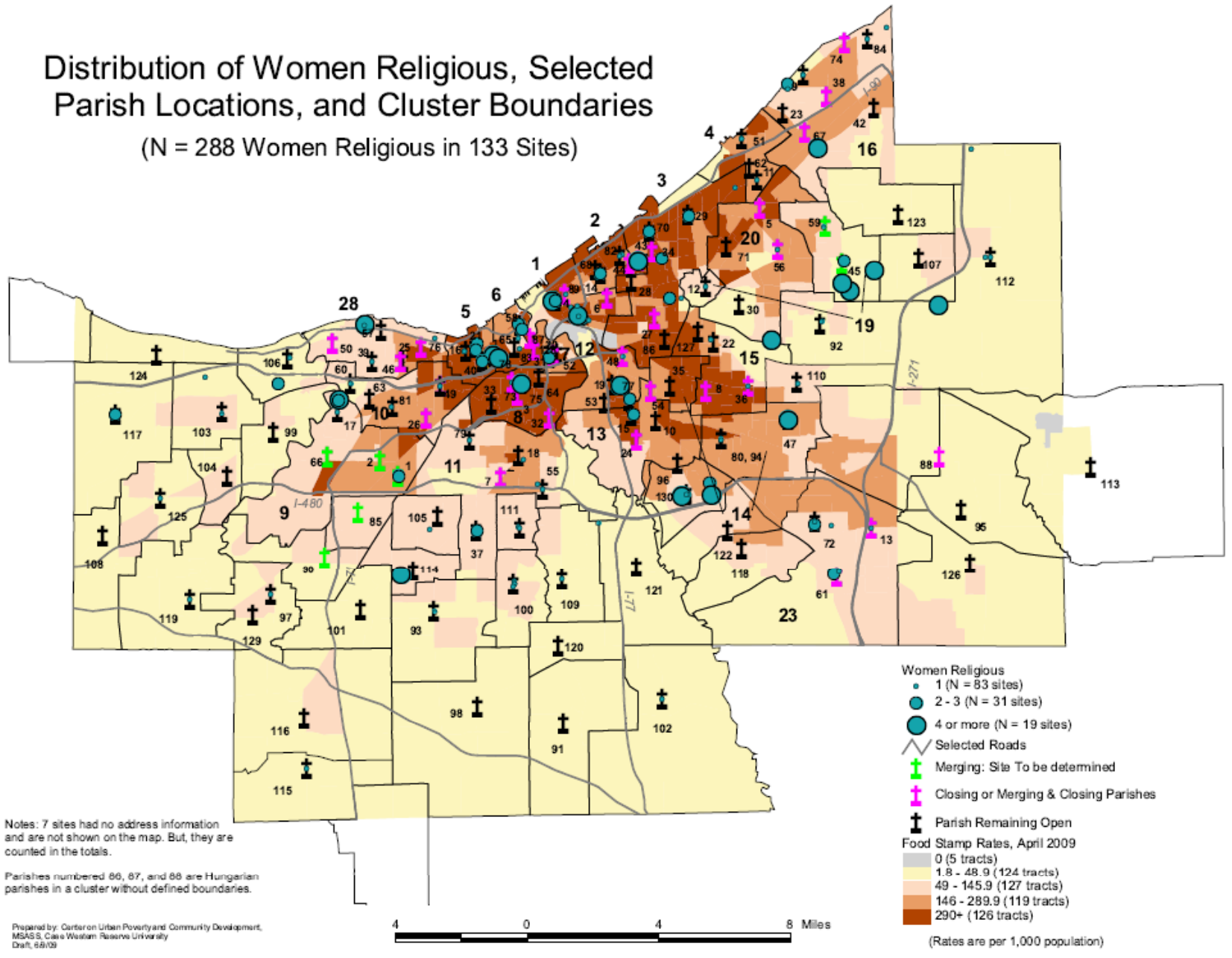
# Mapping the presence of Women Religious



- Initial effort to inventory the ministries of Sisters showed -
  - Women Religious serving in areas of greatest need -- **288 Sisters from 17 orders in active ministry, most prominent in areas of poverty**
  - Ministry sites include but also reach far beyond the “parish” structure
- Of the 38 parishes with WR serving there –
  - 7 closing (involving 8 WR)
  - 5 to merge and stay open (involving 8 WR)
  - 26 to remain open (involving 31 WR)

# Distribution of Women Religious, Selected Parish Locations, and Cluster Boundaries

(N = 288 Women Religious in 133 Sites)



# Survey of Sisters-logistics

- Mail survey combining closed-ended and open-ended items, based in part on survey used in South Carolina (Mark Small, Clemson Univ., 2008)
- Received endorsement from Conference of Religious Leadership (CORL) in June 2009
- Study approved by CWRU Institutional Review Board in August 2009
- Began with estimated population of Sisters in Diocese (1,100), but focused in on approx. 360 serving a direct service ministry in Cuyahoga County



## **Women Religious in active ministry**

- Women from 15 Orders participated in the survey (n=164); over half were Ursuline Sisters or Sisters of Notre Dame
- Respondents were 64 years of age on average, and 16% were 75 or older
- Nearly half (46%) began their career in ministry in northeast Ohio 1964-74; median 19 years of experience in current ministry
- Over 80% hold a graduate degree
- Nearly 60% of Sisters reside in the same geographic area where their ministry is located

# Diversity of ministries

Primary Ministry	Percentage of Respondents
Education (grades preschool to post-secondary)	42%
Religious education (i.e., RCIA, DRE, liturgy)	16%
Social Services (Relief, refugees, emergency or victims assistance, food and nutritional assistance, residential or custodial care)	10%
Administration – Congregational, Diocesan Offices	7%
Hospice and healthcare	6%
Congregational support	5%
Counseling, family services, and adult education	4%
Retreat/spirituality and Intercession	4%
Other	5%

- 99% of sisters reported being involved in more than one ministry
- Over half reported 2 ministries, one-quarter reported 3 ministries, and 13% reported 4 ministries



## **Sisters work long hours and serve many**

- Sisters report working an average of 41 hours/week (range: 7-80 hours weekly)
  - 21% work < 30 hours/week
  - 43% work 30-40 hours/week
  - 37% work >40 hours/week
- Persons served annually by ministries
  - 19% serve less than 100
  - 44% serve 100-499
  - 12% serve 500-999
  - 25% serve 1,000 or more

# Diverse set of target groups – special populations

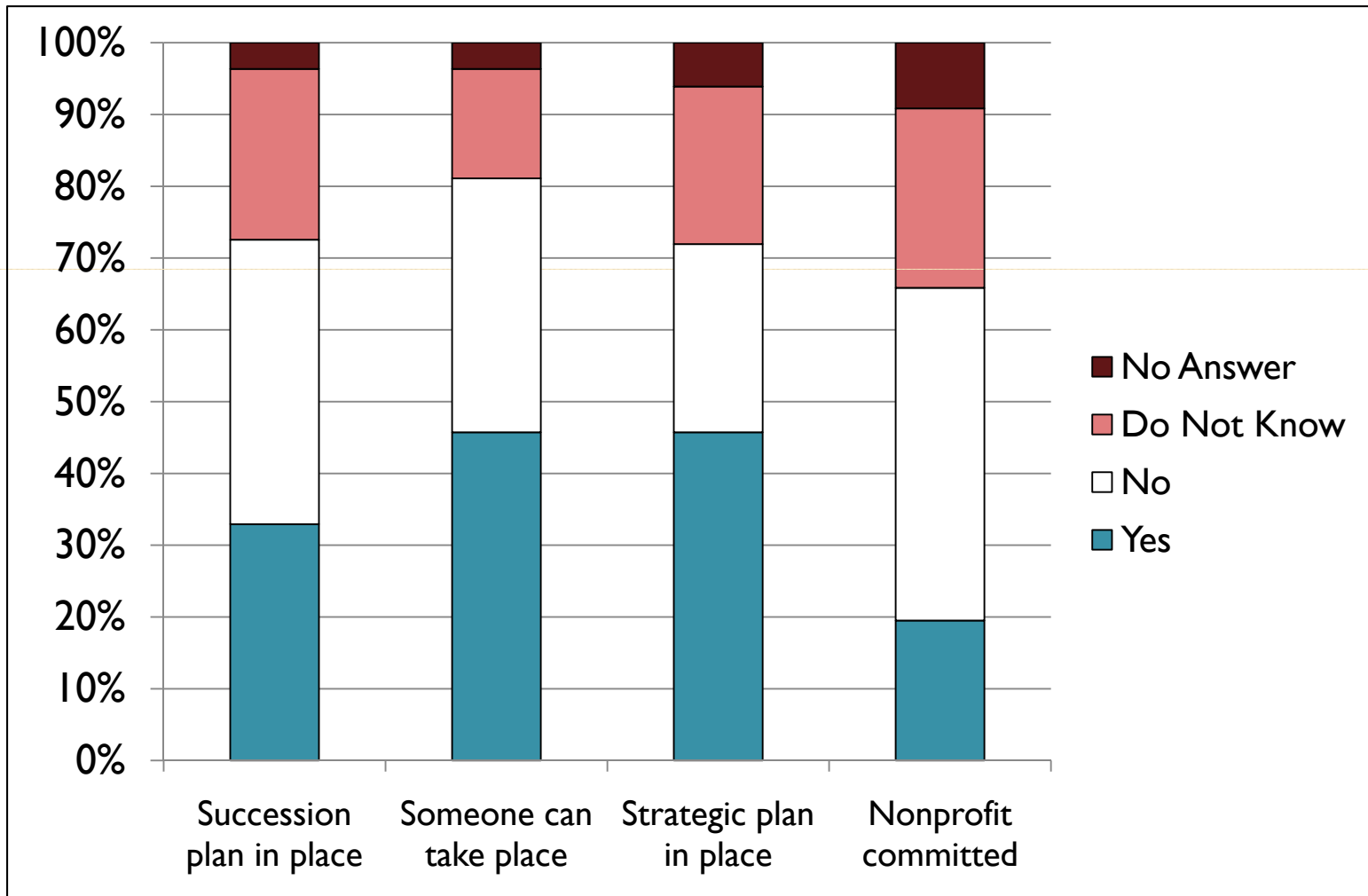
Service Populations	% Identifying as their primary population	% Reporting that their ministry serves this population
Low-income families	27.4%	44.5%
Ill and the dying	15.2%	26.2%
Homeless or at-risk	12.8%	26.8%
Developmentally disabled	11.6%	22.6%
Drug/alcohol users	8.5%	19.5%
Victims of domestic violence	7.9%	18.9%
Former prisoners	7.3%	14.6%
Immigrants/refugees	6.1%	13.4%
Incarcerated	3.7%	7.3%



## **Sisters are collaborating in ministry**

- 71% engaged in collaboration
  - 45% engaged with Sisters from other Orders
  - 48% engaged with Diocesan organizations
  - 34% engaged with faith-based organizations
  - 41% engaged with nonprofit or governmental organizations
- Why collaborate?
  - 66% of Sisters see this as way to serve clients better; few see as way to access funding or leverage resources

# Subgroup of ministries have sustainability plans





# Findings

- Sisters' ministries face multiple challenges
  - Tension between mission and money
  - New streams of funding needed
  - Many unknowns due to reconfiguration
- Some ministries are at particular risk - smaller-scale, and in inner-city
- Some areas need attention: Seniors, esp. homebound, young adults, individuals who have lost faith during reconfiguration, families with school-age kids, immigrants