



# A LEGACY OF INNOVATION

How Leaders in Cleveland  
Reimagined and Rebuilt Their City  
After Decades of Decline

By Anna Clark

CLEVELAND REACHED for the sky. It took years of sweat and more excavated dirt than the Panama Canal, but when Terminal Tower celebrated its grand opening in 1930, it became an instant icon of Beaux Arts elegance in a soaring city. While initial plans for the project had called for a 14-story building atop an interurban rail station, that vision was scrapped by the project's developers in favor of a more ambitious concept: 52 stories of sandstone and steel in the heart of Public Square. That made Terminal Tower the second-tallest building in the world.

As a hub, Terminal Tower connected Cleveland to that world: every train headed in or out of the city traveled through the station. So did a lot of people. The interior was a bustling palace of lobbies, shops, and brass-railed stairways. On the day of its debut, the facade glittered with spotlights, beginning a tradition of artful lighting still frequently used today.

Nearly a century later, it's not hard to see what made Clevelanders inclined to mark their skyline. With its location on Lake Erie, proximity to Canada and the Erie Canal, and access to a network of railroads and highways linking it to Pittsburgh, Akron, Detroit, and other boomtowns, Cleveland was an ideal location for

shipping and industry. Around the time of Terminal Tower's construction, the local economy was built of cars, steel, electric equipment, and machine tools, as well as consumer goods: coffeemakers, greeting cards, paint, and much more. The streetlight was invented here, and the city earned international fame for the innovative Cleveland Clinic research hospital, founded in 1921, and the Cleveland Orchestra, which released music with Columbia Records. Well-regarded art and natural history museums, jazz clubs, and vaudeville thrived in Cleveland, as did the Play House, the first professional regional theater in the United States, and Karamu House, the country's oldest Black theater company, which premiered works by Clevelander Langston Hughes.

During the first half of the 20th century, the city drew hundreds of thousands of newcomers, including a surge of immigrants from southern and Eastern Europe in the early decades and, in the 1920s and 1930s, thousands of Black migrants from the South. To promote continued growth, the local electric company coined a slogan in 1944: "The Best Location in the Nation." The population continued booming until it peaked at 914,000 residents in 1950, making Cleveland the seventh-largest city in the country.



Map of Cleveland, 1898.  
Credit: THEPALMER/iStock.

Opposite: The Cleveland skyline, including Terminal Tower (second from right).  
Credit: tiftonimages/iStock.



That “Best Location” catchphrase stuck around for decades, but the people didn’t. As the century wore on, the dazzling successes of the first 50 years gave way to staggering losses—of population, of industry, of jobs, and of prestige. Before long, Cleveland had another nickname, one far less flattering. Years of chronic disinvestment in the city, coupled with a rise in pollution and crime, inspired the unhappy moniker “Mistake on the Lake.”

Over the years, Cleveland became “the butt of an awful lot of jokes,” said Anthony Coyne, a native of the city who is a lawyer, former chair of its planning commission, and a board member of the Lincoln Institute. “We took a lot of hits on the chin from late-night hosts.” But Coyne said those jabs belie what is very much alive in Cleveland: “We’re really trying to embrace a quality-of-life agenda,” he said, pointing to a diversity of employers in health care, banking, higher education, and manufacturing, as well as revitalized public spaces serving both locals and visitors, including Public Square. “That’s kind of exciting to see [these spaces] refreshed after being dormant for many years.”

Strong leadership and tactical urbanism are transforming the relationship between this city and its residents. While much work remains, significant investments in an ambitious waterfront revival, affordable housing, and multimodal transit are positioning Cleveland for a new era.

## Embracing the Waterfront

The Cuyahoga River is notorious for catching fire in 1969, but in that era, it was hardly uncommon for waterways to burst into flames. The United States had no enforceable water regulations, and rivers were frequently treated as open sewers. In this case, the blaze ignited when a spark from a passing train landed on a floating oil slick. *Time* magazine published a story about the fire alongside a jaw-dropping photo—but that image was from an earlier conflagration. The Cuyahoga had burned 13 times.

This time, the burning waterway catalyzed a nationwide movement for change. Cleveland’s mayor, Carl Stokes—who had made history two years earlier as the first Black mayor elected to lead a major U.S. city and who subsequently convinced voters to pass a \$100 million bond for sewer upgrades—took reporters on a “pollution tour” the day after the fire. Stokes talked to the press about the effects of pollution on residents, and about how cities had few tools to address the issue, particularly when waterways crossed several jurisdictions. He also testified to Congress about the need for federal regulation: “We have the kind of air and water pollution problems in these cities that are every bit as dangerous to the health and safety of our citizens as any intercontinental ballistic missile that’s so dramatically poised 5,000 miles from our country.”

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Industrial buildings along the Cuyahoga River in the early 1900s. Credit: Detroit Publishing Company photograph collection, Library of Congress.





A partially submerged truck in Lake Erie, 1968. The truck is labeled *City of Cleveland*. Credit: Alfred Eisenstaedt/ The LIFE Picture Collection via Getty Images.

The fire and the conditions that led to it inspired a radically new approach to urban waterways, leading to the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970 and the passage of the Clean Water Act two years later. In Ohio, local leaders also developed the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NE-ORSD), a multijurisdictional management system that helped address industrial discharge and improved wastewater treatment.

Cleveland carries a heavy burden for its historical association with pollution, not only in the Cuyahoga, but in Lake Erie too. As the shallowest of the five Great Lakes, it is often the first to reveal the dangers of runoff from farming, sewage, and industry, including toxic algae blooms. Parts of the lake have been declared “dead.” At one point in the late 1960s, the city installed weighted curtains in the lake in an attempt to create pockets of water clean enough for swimming. Dr. Seuss took a swipe at the situation in the original edition of his 1971 book *The Lorax*; he wrote of humming fish “in search of some water that isn’t so smeary. I hear things are just as bad up in Lake Erie.”

Like Cleveland’s signature river, Lake Erie benefited from national and local policy changes, including the Clean Water Act and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, a deal struck between the United States and Canada in 1972. By 1985, the water quality had improved so much

that two graduate students asked Dr. Seuss to revise *The Lorax*. The author agreed, replying, “I should no longer be saying bad things about a body of water that is now, due to great civic and scientific effort, the home of happy smiling fish” (Egan 2017).

About 20 years ago, Lincoln Institute Chair and Chief Investment Officer Kathryn Lincoln worked with the Cleveland Foundation to make a film about the city for the Lincoln Institute documentary series *Making Sense of Place*, which was recently updated (LILP 2020). Interviewers asked community stakeholders what they saw as Cleveland’s crown jewel, said Lincoln, who spent eight years of her childhood in Cleveland and serves on the board of Cleveland-based Lincoln Electric (see sidebar page 35). “We could see the lake from where we were sitting,” Lincoln recalled. People pointed to the city’s orchestra, or its neighborhoods, or its ethnic diversity, but “not a single person said Lake Erie.”

Lincoln attributes the oversight to the way the lakefront has been separated from the downtown by train tracks, highways, and other barriers, including storm defenses like concrete, rocks, and steel. “You can’t just leave the Key Bank office tower and walk along the lakefront,” she said, referring to the city’s tallest building, which claimed that title from Terminal Tower in 1991. “At least, you can’t do it easily.”

Lakefront access is especially scarce on the city's East Side, where most residents are Black and lower-income. For more than a century, a coal-burning power plant loomed along the waterfront there, blocking views and access while polluting the air. The plant, built in 1911 by the same company that later coined the "Best Location in the Nation" slogan, was torn down in 2017. That has inspired dreams of creating open space; the boldest imaginings involve relocating a section of Interstate 90 that cuts the lakefront off from 122-acre Gordon Park. Proponents say this concept, which is being studied by Cleveland Metroparks and other partners, would improve livability in nearby neighborhoods and increase the economic potential of vacant parcels.

When Jane Campbell became Cleveland's mayor in 2002, "the lakefront was not really embraced as the incredible resource it is," she confirmed. Campbell, who also serves on the board of the Lincoln Institute, said a visit to Chicago's waterfront and a conversation with that city's mayor, Richard M. Daley, inspired her administration to make changes at home. In 2004, with Campbell in the mayor's office and Coyne heading the planning commission, the

city adopted a Waterfront District Plan, an ambitious proposal to unify and reinvent its eight-mile lakeside shoreline. The plan, supported by foundation money and fueled by community input, has a price tag of about \$1 billion and has proceeded as funding has become available. "I haven't been mayor in 15 years, and our lakefront plan is still used as a guide," Campbell said. "That to me is a great accomplishment."

The city adopted a Waterfront District Plan in 2004, an ambitious proposal to unify and reinvent its eight-mile lakeside shoreline.

Changes have included the renovation of several pedestrian tunnels under a lakefront railroad line to ensure safe access to the waterfront. The Ohio Department of Transportation has been slowly converting a freeway known as the West Shoreway into a boulevard, reducing the speed limit to 35 miles per hour and adding landscaping and lakefront access. Other major projects have included a \$2.3 million marina at

Parks and beaches on the Lake Erie waterfront have been cleaned up after years of neglect, becoming a destination for Cleveland residents. Credit: Pgiam/iStock.





North Coast Harbor and the 88-acre Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve on Dike 14, a former disposal area for sediment dredged from the Cuyahoga. Open space and affordable housing advocates have also raised the question of reinventing Burke Airport, which occupies 450 acres of prime downtown waterfront and saw air traffic decrease 60 percent from 2000 to 2018.

The city has also cleaned up waterfront parks and beaches after years of neglect. In the 1970s, Cleveland ceded management of its park system to the state because it couldn't keep up with high maintenance costs. (In 1978, Cleveland became the first city since the Great Depression to suffer municipal default.) The state returned 455 acres of city-owned property to local control in 2013, and improvements quickly followed.

Lee Chilcote, a journalist whose family has lived in the Detroit Shoreway neighborhood for 15 years, said the changes have been dramatic. Before the improvements to nearby Edgewood Park, he said, "We literally told our kids, 'OK, look at this beautiful view, but don't play in the sand.' . . . It was disgusting, because the state didn't have the time or resources to put into it." Now the park is a pleasure to visit, Chilcote said. Offshore, rowers and kayakers frequently ply the waters.

Regional improvements that build connectivity across political borders are also in the works, including dam removal and habitat restoration at Cuyahoga Valley National Park, which lies along the river between Cleveland and Akron. In the nearby suburb of Euclid, city and county officials partnered on a \$30 million lakefront trail made possible by easements granted by private landowners in exchange for help with erosion control. A regional planning agency has allotted \$250,000 to study the feasibility of a similar arrangement for a lakefront trail spanning Cuyahoga, Lake, and Lorain counties. In 2020, local leaders debuted a plan for the Cuyahoga River watershed called "Vision for the Valley."

And eight miles offshore from Cleveland, the city where the electric wind turbine was invented in 1888, the Lake Erie Energy Development Company wants to build North America's first freshwater wind farm.



Statue of former Cleveland Mayor Tom Johnson holding the book *Progress and Poverty*. Credit: russellkord.com/agefotostock.

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#### CLEVELAND AND THE ORIGINS OF THE LINCOLN INSTITUTE

Cleveland is a city of special interest to the Lincoln Institute: it is where the inventor and philanthropist John C. Lincoln founded the Lincoln Electric Company in 1895. The company celebrated its 125th year in 2020, and Cleveland is still home to about 3,000 of its 11,000 employees. "We have 58 factories in 18 countries around the world, and Cleveland is by far the innovation hub," said Amanda Butler, the company's vice president of investor relations and communications. "We've been investing multimillions of dollars annually, and will continue to do so, to maintain Cleveland as the most innovative hub in our industry worldwide."

The city is also where John Lincoln encountered the work of the writer and economist Henry George, whose ideas about land value inspired the creation of the Lincoln Foundation and, ultimately, the Lincoln Institute. George's work also galvanized Tom Johnson, a fellow inventor who became mayor of Cleveland. Johnson championed public ownership of utilities and expanded parks during his tenure, which lasted from 1901 to 1909. The bronze statue of Johnson in Public Square, the city's central plaza, shows him holding George's most famous book, *Progress and Poverty*.

## Expanding Housing Options

Cleveland is home to about 379,000 people today. In the 1950s, residents began flocking to the suburbs, including Shaker Heights, a planned community designed by the team that built Terminal Tower. As a result, the urban core saw many properties become vacant and eventually crumble into disrepair.

That downward spiral continued in the last decades of the 20th century and accelerated during the Great Recession. Between 2007 and 2015, banks foreclosed on more than 25 percent of all city parcels. Neighborhoods were hit by a cascade of problems: structural issues, lead contamination, and a plague of speculators buying houses in bulk over the internet. In 2007, the Slavic Village neighborhood, a predominantly Black community, had the highest foreclosure rate in the nation.

The housing stock was hurt not only by vacancy, but also by the Forest City's large base of wood-frame construction. "It's unlike Boston, or Columbus even, where there's a lot of masonry construction," said Coyne. In Cleveland, "homes are historically made of wood," making them especially vulnerable to deterioration. But a number of efforts, some of which are bearing

fruit after decades of concerted effort, are interrupting the cycle of vacancy and disrepair.

As Coyne explained it, city leaders in the early 1990s pursued an aggressive agenda that emphasized the development of more diverse housing options, including townhouses and rental units, as well as lease-purchase programs and down payment assistance for modestly priced homes. In some ways this was a callback to Cleveland's post-war boom. To accommodate the surge in population in the 1940s, landlords in neighborhoods like Hough and the Near West Side converted mansions to rooming houses, and single-family homes into two- and four-family apartments (Souther 2017). But this time around, investment in housing alternatives was designed to accommodate population loss. By providing scalable options for people with different lifestyle and financial needs, the city hoped to give people more ways to stay.

Then-Mayor Michael White also challenged banks to live up to their mandate to comply with the Community Reinvestment Act, Coyne said. "It sent an important message to reinvest in demographics that were left out of the market," he noted, referring to the systemic racism that had created unequal housing patterns and opportunities in a city where Black residents make up more than half of the population.

The Great Recession hit Cleveland hard, leaving many vacant properties in its wake. Here, a postal carrier passes a vacant home in 2008. Credit: Timothy A. Clary/AFP via Getty Images.







When the Great Recession hit, Cuyahoga County responded by creating one of the first land banks in the nation.

Gus Frangos, president of the Cuyahoga Land Bank, points to a map of Cleveland foreclosures (marked in red) in 2011. Credit: Michael Williamson/The Washington Post via Getty Images.

## Land Bank Pioneers

When the Great Recession hit, Cuyahoga County responded by creating one of the first land banks in the nation. The Cuyahoga Land Bank acquires property with the goal of returning it to productive use. This can mean patching together contiguous parcels for green space or development, demolishing vacant structures, or working with homeowners and other partners on property rehabilitation and maintenance. Funding for the land bank comes largely from penalties and interest on real estate tax assessments, as well as from grants and sales of city-owned properties. Cleveland created its own land banking program in 2009 as well, which works in partnership with the county. The Cuyahoga Land Bank might demolish a dilapidated building, for example, and then deliver the title for the lot to the city land bank, which then seeks buyers with plans that will “contribute to the economic, social, and environmental betterment of the city.”

In its first 10 years, the county land bank demolished about 7,000 properties, supported in part by \$50 million from Cuyahoga County’s budget. According to a study commissioned by the land bank, each demolition generated nearly \$60,000 in value to neighboring properties, for a total increase of \$415.3 million (CLB 2019). The study also reported that the land bank spent about \$56.3 million to rehab houses,

adding an average of \$151,105 to the value of each property. Nearly 11,500 distressed properties were returned to the tax rolls. Now, with fewer houses in need of demolition, the land bank has signaled that it will focus more on rehabilitation and stabilization, including home renovation, commercial development, and home-buying assistance programs.

Meanwhile, some neighborhoods are in the midst of a housing and population boom. Home prices rose more than 16 percent between 2015 and 2020 (Chilcote 2020). Downtown has grown from 5,000 residents to 20,000 over the last decade. Millennials are the largest group, according to the Downtown Cleveland Alliance, while empty nesters are the fastest-growing segment. In the next decade, the downtown population is expected to reach 30,000. Neighborhoods near downtown, including Detroit Shoreway and Ohio City, are also in high demand.

“The heart of any city is its downtown, and Cleveland recognized more than three decades ago that it needed to use every tool in the box to rebuild a vibrant, competitive downtown,” said Alison Goebel, executive director of the Greater Ohio Policy Center and coauthor of the Lincoln Institute report *Revitalizing America’s Smaller Legacy Cities* (Hollingsworth and Goebel 2017). She noted that the city has been particularly successful at securing state and federal historic preservation tax credits.



The boom has become so strong that one legacy program from the White administration, citywide tax abatements, is now controversial. In neighborhoods where house values have spiked, the homeowners, who are disproportionately white, still get a break on property taxes, meaning that the city is effectively subsidizing upscale housing, according to critics.

Meanwhile, neighborhoods with a majority of people of color aren't seeing meaningful gains in housing or investment. "As in most legacy cities," Goebel said, "redlining resulted in resource constraints that are racialized." According to a 2018 report on property devaluation in U.S. metro areas, the average devaluation of houses in predominantly Black neighborhoods in Cleveland is 20 percent. This means that a house valued at \$85,000, the median home value in majority Black neighborhoods in Cleveland, should more accurately be valued at \$104,000 (Perry, Rothwell, and Harshbarger 2018).

Hoping to change that, Cleveland Development Advisors (CDA) is launching an initiative that will see nearly \$9 million invested over three years in three key neighborhoods: Clark–Fulton, Glenville, and Buckeye–Kinsman, all of which have struggled with disinvestment and concentrated poverty. The program will provide loans to developers at below-market rates to support social-impact projects and attract additional investment. Funding comes from JPMorgan

Chase's annual Partnership for Raising Opportunity in Neighborhoods competition (\$5 million) and CDA (\$3.75 million). The challenge will be to accomplish the goals of the project while not replicating the gentrification and resulting displacement seen in some other neighborhoods.

In the midst of these investment projects, community members have been undertaking land use experiments of their own. Off Kinsman Avenue, residents started a dynamic farm on vacant land bank property, taking advantage of a 2010 zoning change that allowed urban agriculture. The Rid-All Green Partnership has four hoop houses, two greenhouses, and an aquaponics fishery; it provides food, beautifies the community, and offers jobs, educational opportunities, and even a comic book series to teach young people about environmental stewardship. "Community is pretty much the biggest cornerstone of what we do here," said Tim Lewis, a cofounder of the partnership that created and manages the farm, in an interview for *Making Sense of Place* (LILP 2020). "Without the community, you don't have anything to build off of."

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Cleveland Development Advisors is investing in three neighborhoods that have struggled with disinvestment and concentrated poverty. This architectural rendering shows affordable housing planned for the Clark–Fulton neighborhood. Credit: RDL Architects.



## Investing in Transit

Cleveland covers about 80 square miles. Its two biggest employment hubs—the downtown core and University Circle, where the city’s hospitals are clustered—are some four miles apart. The route between those neighborhoods was long served by the Number 6 bus. Offering a slow ride on an aging fleet, the Number 6 “was not an economic development tool, shall we say,” said former mayor Campbell. The city decided to invest in a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, which has made rides quicker and more efficient, and has also stimulated an estimated \$9.5 billion of mixed-use development along the corridor.

The project was a long time coming, emerging from a series of community conversations in the 1990s. The city secured its first grant for the project from the federal Department of Transportation while Campbell was in office in the early 2000s, and the program was implemented under Mayor Frank Jackson, now in his fourth term. The resulting HealthLine bus along Euclid Avenue—a main thoroughfare once dubbed “Millionaires’ Row” due to residents including the founders of Standard Oil and Western Union—is now a popular feature of Cleveland’s transit system.

The \$200 million system debuted in 2008, financed in part by selling naming rights to the Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals for 25 years. The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA) was the first transit authority in the nation to sell such a sponsorship, and it has since made similar deals for regular bus routes now bearing the names of sponsors MetroHealth and Cleveland State. The HealthLine also received funding from city, state, and federal sources and the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency. When the HealthLine was scarcely five years old, one team of researchers described it as having “by far the highest” return on investment of 21 transit corridors studied (Hook, Lotshaw, and Weinstock 2013). The result, according to RTA’s chief operating officer, Floun’say Caver, is that the HealthLine is “a jewel of our city” (Wood 2019).



Students from Cleveland State University at a stop on the HealthLine, a Bus Rapid Transit system that connects their college with other schools, hospitals, and neighborhoods. Credit: Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority.

The 7.1-mile route stretches from downtown to East Cleveland, a predominantly Black inner-ring suburb. Along the route are stops at Cleveland State University, Case Western Reserve University, and Playhouse Square. To the relief of riders, the number of stops has shrunk from 108 on the old Number 6 to 36 today. (Some riders say the line could stand to lose a few more stops, but the agency says it should remain a local service.)

The system’s hybrid-electric buses run 24 hours a day on dedicated lanes in the middle of the road and are allowed higher speeds than other vehicles. Bike lanes hug the curb, and cars use the lanes between the bikes and buses. “We all just share the road,” said Deltrece Daniels, an avid bus rider who works at Bike Cleveland.

Despite its successes, the system has faced criticism and legal challenges related to inequitable fare collection and enforcement. For the first several years of operation, passengers purchased fare cards before boarding. They could board at any door and had to provide proof of purchase when spot-checked by transit police. In 2010, the *Plain Dealer* reported that 85 percent of fare-violation tickets on RTA lines went to Black passengers, who made up 70 percent of



ridership at the time; in 2017, a municipal court ruled that the spot-checking was an unconstitutional search. The RTA unsuccessfully appealed the decision.

Riders now pay as they board, which critics say has countered the efficiencies that made the line an improvement in the first place. Like many systems, the RTA doesn't give change. If you pay \$3 for the \$2.50 fare, you don't get your quarters back; that, according to Daniels, "adds up over time and could be \$50 over a year. I don't want to give away money if I don't have to."

The HealthLine initially saw highs of about 4 million riders a year, but the COVID-19 pandemic and frustration over fare collection have led to decreases in ridership throughout the system. During the month of June 2020, the overall RTA system had 1.2 million riders, compared to 2.4 million during June 2019. Funds from the RTA's biggest revenue source, the county sales tax, have dropped too, even as heightened bus sanitation has added to operating expenses. The RTA received more than \$111 million in federal aid in the early months of the pandemic, which helped offset the losses, and it has promised no service cuts or fare hikes in 2021. The agency also joined a national effort by transit authorities seeking increased federal relief.

According to Angie Schmitt, a Clevelander who recently wrote a book about transit and equity (Schmitt 2020), Cleveland's transit system suffers from a pattern of underinvestment that could be remedied by a city levy or by financial aid from the state, which focuses most of its transportation spending on roads and highways. "There's still a good amount of road widening, two- to three-lane conversions in the latest sprawl suburb," she said.

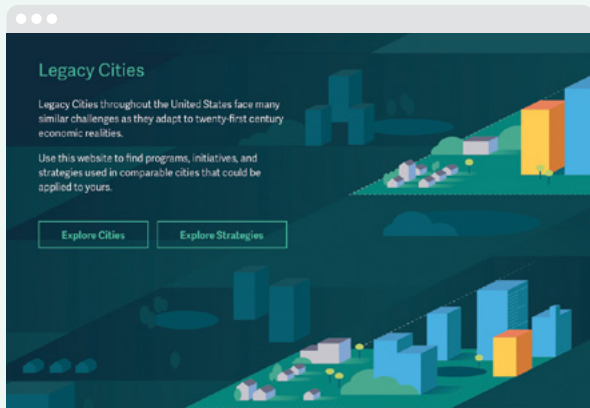
The divisions among local, state, and federal interests are nothing new. After the Cuyahoga River burned, Mayor Stokes pointed out that a city's problems don't begin or end at its borders. Just as strong state and federal action was needed to revive the waterways of Cleveland and other cities across the country, cohesive state and federal leadership can strengthen the revival underway in this city and improve urban infrastructure nationwide. "Tragically, in some ways, cities are left on their own to survive," said Coyne, the former planning commission chair. "We just don't have a good urban agenda in Ohio."

Faced with that reality, Cleveland continues to manufacture its own urban agenda. The transformation of Public Square a few years ago offers an example of what is possible. The \$50 million redevelopment of this central gathering place was completed in 2016, led by the firm of James Corner—the designer of New York City's High Line and a contributor to the Lincoln Institute book *Design with Nature Now*. The site was enlarged by about 40 acres and transformed into a walkable public mall overlooking Lake Erie, featuring public art, landscaped medians, and 1,500 newly planted trees. Planners eliminated cut-through roads, with the exception of a bus lane through the middle of the square. During the renovations, the city took the opportunity to implement a few infrastructure improvements. The upgrades included the reconstruction of electrical circuits dating to 1948 and the installation of an underground system that collects and reuses stormwater instead of sending it into the lake. □

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**Anna Clark** is a journalist in Detroit and the author of *The Poisoned City: Flint's Water and the American Urban Tragedy* (Metropolitan 2018).

Just as strong state and federal action was needed to revive the waterways of Cleveland and other cities across the country, cohesive leadership can strengthen the revival underway in this city.



## ABOUT THE LEGACY CITIES INITIATIVE

In 2020, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy launched the Legacy Cities Initiative to help policy makers, civic leaders, and other stakeholders build on their city's strengths to create a more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous future. Legacy cities are places like Cleveland that were once drivers of industry and prosperity but have since experienced economic and population losses. In the United States, legacy cities are home to nearly 17 million people and a collective economy worth \$430 billion. In recent years, many legacy cities have advanced on a path of revitalization. Now they are being tested by unprecedented health and economic crises, which, together with demonstrations against police violence and increasing calls for addressing systemic racism, have shed light on longstanding inequities.

The initiative includes cutting-edge research and online tools, as well as opportunities for participants to connect with peers in other cities through a national network of governmental, civic, and philanthropic leaders. "Research and ideas are important, but the success of legacy cities depends on people," said Jessie Grogan, the Lincoln Institute's associate director of reduced poverty and spatial inequality. "A big part of our mission will be to bring leaders and civic advocates from legacy cities together so they can learn from one another and achieve even greater impact. No city will have to rebuild alone."

To learn more about the Legacy Cities Initiative, visit [legacycities.org](https://legacycities.org).

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