Vol. 5, No. 11, Spring 2026, Section C

The REAL State of Downtown Cleveland

Top Tourist Destinations - USA 2026

Annual Visitor Numbers

RANK	CITY	VISITORS (Millions/Thousands)	RANK	CITY	VISITORS (Millions/Thousands)
1	New York City, NY	65.2 M	26	Salt Lake City, UT	8.4 M
2	Miami, FL	58.9 M	27	Tampa, FL	8.0 M
3	Las Vegas, NV	42.1 M	28	St. Louis, MO	7.6 M
4	Orlando, FL	39.5 M	29	Minneapolis, MN	7.3 M
5	Los Angeles, CA	36.8 M	30	Charlotte, NC	6.9 M
6	San Francisco, CA	28.4 M	31	Pittsburgh, PA	6.6 M
7	Chicago, IL	25.1 M	32	Cincinnati, OH	6.3 M
8	Washington, D.C.	22.7 M	33	Kansas City, MO	6.0 M
9	Honolulu, HI	19.3 M	34	Indianapolis, IN	5.7 M
10	Boston, MA	18.6 M	35	Cleveland, OH	5.4 M
11	Seattle, WA	17.9 M	36	Columbus, OH	5.1 M
12	Atlanta, GA	16.5 M	37	Virginia Beach, VA	4.9 M
13	New Orleans, LA	15.2 M	38	Milwaukee, WI	4.6 M

Cleveland built a tunnel under Lakeside Ave. to allow users of the downtown Hilton Hotel and the convention center to use the Willard Park Garage behind the County Courthouse, **if** they can find a space when the garage is typically filled with staff and visitors to the Courthouse, City Hall, the Justice Center, the Federal Building and/or Public Hall. Simply said, unlike Columbus, Cincinnati and Pittsburgh, Cleveland completely failed to integrate adequate parking immediately contiguous to its new convention center - even after removing the 500 garage spaces from the previous center.

Columbus has been named one of the Top 10 Best Cities in *Conde Nast Traveler's* 2025 Reader's Choice Awards, as well as one of America's Next Great Food Cities by *Food and Wine* magazine.

Cleveland claims that the economic impact of travel and tourism in Cuyahoga County was $11.4 billion in 2024. They have no data – that they care to publish - on that impact just for downtown.

Cleveland claims $6.9 billion in visitor spending that translates to an impossible $44.8 million per event. Columbus' $8.2 billion in visitor spending over 349 events yields an average event revenue of $23.5 million. It is highly unlikely that Cleveland's events generate revenue/ spending 90% higher than those in Columbus.

In a reality-based metric model, other evidence indicates that the economic impact of tourism in Cleveland is far, far less substantial than that of Columbus.

6. DCI's Bogus Claims:

Both Cleveland and Columbus have been called out for their excessive claims of tourism visits. An inaccurate count with inflated data points inhibits an accurate assessment of a destination's magnetism, its management organization and the true economic impact. This explains why both organizations are unable to resist inflating their numbers.

The stunning claims by both Cleveland and Columbus mean that both cities had the same amount of visitors as much larger cities (above left). These claims are simply not believable, nor are they verifiable. **"Absolutely incredible that this consulting firm paid by the city is saying more visitors came to Columbus than Chicago last year. This would be 1 out of 6 Americans visiting Columbus,"** wrote Max Littman, a special investigations editor for *The Rooster,* an Ohiocentric blog focused on Columbus, on X.

The US Summary of Visitor Numbers shows Cleveland in 35th place with 5.4 million visitors annually, only 13.7% of DCI's bogus claim of 39.5 million.

All destinations release similar data, but the problem is that there is no standard measure for what a visitor is. For tourism boards, the metric is key: Politicians look at visitor numbers – along with other data that shows economic impact – when determining how much money to allocate to tourism promotion.

As a demonstration of reality-based metrics, Pittsburgh, almost exactly the same size as Cleveland, reports 12.6 million visitors, which they define as overnight trips with $6.2 billion in economic activity. Realistically, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati are all cose to one another with 5.1M to 6.6M visitors annually.

National Geographic named Pittsburgh as one of the 25 best places to travel in 2026 – the only US city on its list. *Lonely Planet* selected Pittsburgh for its Top 10 "Must Visit" places in the world. Pittsburgh hosted the three-day NFL Draft event in April 2026, filling the

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18,600 hotel rooms in Allegheny County, and generating $12.3 million in hotel revenue.

Pittsburgh claims to have 18,600 hotel rooms in Allegheny County. Columbus claims to have 29,000 hotel rooms citywide. Cleveland claims to have 5,000 rooms downtown and 22,158 in Cuyahoga, Lake and Medina counties.

In his public hearing to commissioners, Visit Orlando Board Chair Terry Prather pointed to the destination's 74 million visitors that generated $87 billion in economic impact, $6.2 billion in state and local taxes and supported 450,000 workers. The US Visitors Survey lists Orlando in fourth place with 39.5 visitors behind Las Vegas (42.1M), Miami (58.9M) and New York (65.2M).

7. Jobs:

DCI's PR document does not address jobs, which many would argue is THE most important issue associated with stabilizing downtown, let alone effecting any degree of recovery. In the 2-26-26 issue of *Crain's Cleveland Business*, Zachary Smith presented Team NEO's PR on its recent efforts. NEO's new CEO Matt Dolan wants us all to know that they are "ramping up its efforts to attract business," which implies that they *now* (finally) realize that the group's previous efforts have been soft.

Dolan says his business attraction budget in 2025 was $192,000, while Cincinnati spends $750,000 and Columbus spends $1.1 million. No wonder we are getting our fannies kicked and that we trail the nation in job growth for mid-sized cities.

But it is not only how little we spend, it has been *what* we spend it on. Dolan is thankfully abandoning NEO's prior pattern of buying a table a trade events and waiting for people to stop by and instead is now working with consultants in Asia, Canada and Europe to "have boots on the ground 365 days a year."

Dolan acknowledges that NEO and the community need to make more sites shovel-ready by the time a company comes to look, acknowledging that they have lost projects "because our site isn't ready to work." Remember Amazon HQ2 where we did not have one single arrow in our quiver? And we still do not.

Dolan believes that what is more effective at trade shows is "renting a meeting room at trade shows and having one-on-one meetings with the prospective) companies."

Team NEO claims to have 'completed' 92 projects in 2025, compared to 125 in 2024, and the group ended the year with 35 offers still outstanding. Dolan believes that part of that is the high degree of uncertainty in the business world today. Dolan believes that the business growth from 2025's efforts will deliver 2,900 new jobs which will produce an estimated $188 million in annual payroll and $455 million in capital investment. That reads like a page from DCI's inflated playbook.

NEO's report showed 21 projects in Cuyahoga County, 16 in Summit County and 10 projects in Portage County. Half of the projects – 47 – are in the advanced manufacturing category.

Columbus ranks fourth in the nation in job growth according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics - and numner one in growth and infrastructure.

Data center technicians rank among LinkedIn's most in-demand jobs, with most openings concentrated in Columbus, Ohio, Washington, D.C. and Atlanta. Central Ohio is a major data center hub. At least 133 of Ohio's 217 data centers are in the region, the *Columbus Dispatch* reports, and it houses facilities from Meta, Google and Amazon Web Services. Data center technicians install, maintain and troubleshoot servers, storage systems and other hardware to keep operations running smoothly, according to LinkedIn.

Columbus has been named the top metro area in the country in *Site Selection Magazine's* 2025 Global Groundwork Index, a national ranking that tracks where business growth and public infrastructure investment are advancing together.

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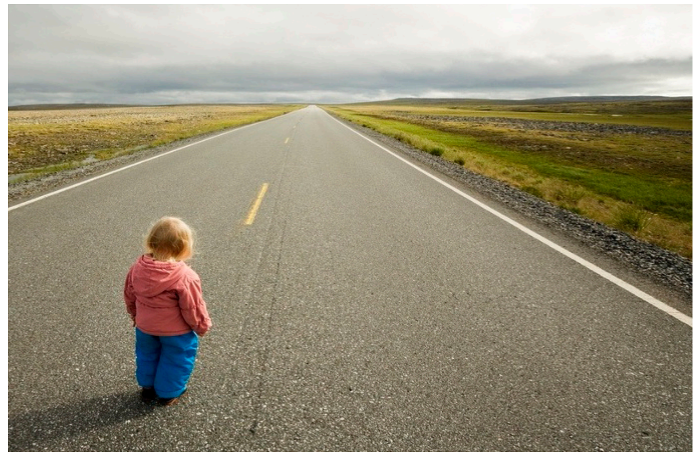

This marks Columbus' first time at No. 1 in the Index, which combines private sector investment and job creation data with federal infrastructure funding to show which regions are best positioned for long-term economic success. Columbus ranked No. 3 in 2024. *Site Selection* collects and analyzes data from January 2021 through July 1, 2025 to develop the index.

"The Columbus Region is playing to win with a continued emphasis on the public and private sectors stacking hands to prioritize practical solutions," said Jason Hall, CEO of the Columbus Partnership. "We're making bold moves, landing significant and innovative projects, and staying focused on long-term growth that lifts the whole region. Companies see the competitive advantage in the Columbus Region, and they want in."

Since 2021, 195 companies have chosen to locate or expand in the Columbus Region, drawn by its business-friendly environment, talent pipeline and infrastructure advantages. **These projects have generated over $38 billion in capital investment and led to the creation of nearly 28,000 new jobs across the Region.**

"Columbus is emblematic of high performance in both infrastructure investment and corporate end-user project activity in this year's Global Groundwork Index by metros and states in the heartland," said *Site Selection* Editor in Chief Adam Bruns, "with two of our top three metro regions in Ohio and several more of the top seven in neighboring Indiana."

A big part of the Central Ohio's infrastructure momentum has been driven by the Columbus War Room, a coordinated effort to secure competitive federal grants. By uniting public and private leaders, the War Room has helped the Columbus Region secure $116 million in federal funding for key projects such as Lancaster's Industrial Complex, Columbus Regional Airport Authority's Terminal Grant and COTA's West Broad Corridor expansion. These funds are now fueling transportation, mobility and utility upgrades that are strengthening the region's competitiveness for future business investment. Why does Cleveland not have such a War Room? Why are the Cleveland Foundation and Greater Cleveland Partnership not learning from our neighbors and their results?

"We are preparing for the future with the right mix of speed, scale and strategy," said Matt McCollister, Interim President of One Columbus. "Our team has worked closely with public and private partners to make sure our region is ready for growth and continues to attract the kinds of companies that create lasting opportunity." Health care is the sector where Columbus expects to add the most jobs in 2026.

Along with Columbus's No. 1 ranking, Cincinnati placed No. 3. Cleveland's retention of its college graduates stands at 51%. The University of Cincinnati's retention rate is 59.3%. Cultural amenities, professional sports, thriving neighborhoods, and strong schools add to Cincinnati's appeal. Pittsburgh's retention rate is only 50% while Detroit's is 77%.

The University of Pittsburgh's graduation rate is published at 72%. Ohio State University's overall graduation rate is 88%, among the highest in the country. **Cleveland State's average graduation rate is only 49%.** The University of Cincinnati's graduation rate is 71%.

Statewide, more than 75% of Ohio's college graduates remain here to work, compared to 67% nationally. According to *The Columbus Dispatch*, 80% of college graduates are working in Ohio one year after graduation. Around 70% continue to work and live in Ohio five and even 10 years after graduation.

A new study from ADP Research ranks the Columbus metro area 15th in the nation for recent college graduates entering the workforce. The analysis looked at payroll data from more than 140,000 workers at over 27,000 employers in 55 U.S. metro areas, factoring in annual wages, hiring rates and cost of living. It helps to have available jobs and a city where people want to live.

The Columbus Chamber of Commerce points out that the growing population of Columbus has made it the fastest growing city in the country because "People come to Columbus to go to The

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Ohio State University or work at one of the terrific hospitals here. They find affordable housing in a variety of authentic neighborhoods, a functional highway system, top tier sports and they see the non-chain retail and excellent restaurants of Short North, they notice that we have Saks, Nordstrum and Ikea, and they make friends here and they stay."

Columbus stood out due to its average annual wage of $51,322 and a hiring rate of 2.40%. Those numbers, paired with a relatively affordable cost of living, helped boost the city's standing. Raleigh, North Carolina, topped the list for the second year in a row, followed by Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Baltimore, Maryland; Austin, Texas; and Birmingham, Alabama.

GCP President Baju Shah has stated that there are 350,000 jobs in NEOH that are open. He says that the solution is to get more people here.

Getting more people here means fixing Cleveland's problems, including creating development that puts an end to sprawl and curbing pollution like Pittsburgh did eighty years ago.

8. Huntington Convention Center:

Cuyahoga County Convention Facilities Development Corporation Executive Director Tim Meyer announced that 2025 was a historically successful year for the Huntington Convention Center of Cleveland. The Center allegedly hosted 149 events, allegedly generated more than $101 million in economic impact, and supported over 132,000 hotel room nights across Northeast Ohio. They did not report downtown hotel room nights.

Columbus already has booked 461 events with 261,000 room nights for the future.

The Huntington Convention Center here says that they *finally* achieved its first-ever operating surplus since opening in 2013. The convention and tourism people naturally believe that this success was driven in part by the 2024 renovation and expansion of the former Global Center for Health Innovation and a strong partnership with This is Cleveland, which they believe helped attract high-impact first-time events. Time will tell if they and when they can catch up to our neighboring cities.

Each city has its own definition of visitors.

Chicago, with 51.96 million visitors in 2023, uses DK Shifflet, which for day trippers, goes by the UN Tourism definition of a visitor: "A visitor is a traveler taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited." Other national surveys of visitor numbers list Chicago with 25.1 annual visitors in seventh place nationally.

Those who spend the night at a destination are counted as overnight visitors, said Nandini Nadkarni, vice president of data operations of DK Shifflet's Travel Performance Data. The overnight stay can be part of a stop to another destination. The visitors don't need to have traveled a minimum distance to count. A family of four traveling 10 miles from their home on a day trip to Chicago for a festival counts as four visitors, said Nadkarni.

DK Shifflet does, however, track miles traveled and will put a cutoff distance for its reported visitor estimate if requested by the client. Most clients prefer not to have the cutoff in their reported estimates, said Sindy Diab, vice president of DK Shifflet's Travel Performance Data.

Destinations often switch between research firms. "At times some governmental entities don't feel that comfortable going for years on end with the same vendor," said Diab. "It goes back and forth." Tennessee, for example, has worked with both DK Shifflet and Longwoods International in the past 10 years.

Visit California uses language laid out in the California Tourism Marketing Act. It says travel and tourism revenue can only be derived from "people who travel at least fifty miles from home, one way, for purposes other than commuting to work or school; or have an overnight accommodation as part of the travel, regardless of the distance or purpose traveled."

But it uses a different definition than other California DMOs. For example, San Diego Tourism Authority counts "anyone coming in from outside San Diego County" as a visitor, including day-trippers, said Paul Garcia, director of communications.

In a report released this April, Visit California acknowledges the discrepancy: "Some destinations in California calculate visitation and economic impacts using different definitions of visitors and different data-gathering methods, so figures may not match," the report said. Hawaii Tourism Authority excludes day trippers and defines visitors as those who stay at least one night but less than one year. For 2023, the state said it had 9.6 million visitors.

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The Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis defines a visitor as a person who stays overnight at a paid accommodation or travels more than 50-100 miles from their area of normal, everyday activities for less than a year.

"Different destinations quantify their visitation differently," said Kevin Bagger, vice president of the research center for the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA). "There's no one single formal method that everybody uses for estimating the visitation." Bagger says that the lack of standard methodology has been a pain point for decades.

"The things visitation numbers touch on vary by destination," he said. "If you're a geographically isolated destination like Las Vegas is, we have comparatively very few day trips." The number of hotel rooms is an influence as well. "All of those things come into play and because of that, it's very difficult to compare visitation numbers from one destination to the next," said Bagger.

The LVCVA's visitation estimates are primarily based on hotel occupancy data and based on a model in use since the early 1970's. "At the end of the day, they are all estimates. The only way to do an exact count is to do a census," said Longwoods' Eylon.

9. Summary:

Why does DCI miss important facts and, of equal significance, misinterpret others?

Because they are not a research function with competent analytical personnel on staff. And as 2025's DCI paper on downtown retail proved, they do not know when the consultant they hire feeds them bogus data.

Clearly, DCI's cultural predisposition is that everything is wonderful and to therefore ignore important challenges and issues. It is only the part of the glass that is half full that matters to them. The problem with that is that it keeps DCI from seeking meaningful collaboration with other parties who do or should have skin in the game to move Cleveland's metrics up instead of allowing them to remain flat or drop further by maintaining Cleveland's pathetic status quo.

Clearly also, the cognitive reasoning of DCI's staff is a major issue. The staff lacks statistical and analytical skills. It is a disturbing fact that the group's head, Michael Deemer, made a statement last year about what a boom it would be for downtown when Sherwin-Williams' employees finally move downtown which indicated that he apparently did not know that S-W's HQ personnel were only moving two blocks north from the downtown location where they have been for decades.

It can be challenging in reviewing DCI's staff to determine where any analytical expertise is present outside of marketing and PR, which may explain why DCI's principle output is PR and not accurate data or genuine synthesis.

$70 million in taxpayer incentives in limbo as downtown Cleveland building faces foreclosure

Updated: Oct. 31, 2025, 12:56 p.m. | Published: Oct. 31, 2025, 12:35 p.m.

The Centennial (formerly The 925 Building, Huntington Bank Building and The Union Trust Building) at the corner of Euclid Avenue and East 9th Street John Pana, cleveland.com

There *are* positive things happening downtown. Public Square's renovation is an improvement - despite its flaws. Important historical buildings like the UCC HQ and Rose Building on Prospect are being renovated instead being allowed to deteriorate past the point of no return before our eyes like the Rockefeller Building.

But the timing of traffic lights on Euclid Ave. is STILL a serious problem that apparently warrants no attention.

Public safety ebbs and flows.

Sidewalks and crosswalks on Euclid and Prospect Avenues are uneven and past the point where repairs are necessary for safe passage - and not with asphalt - reset the darned pavers! Short Vincent rivals the worst GM Torture Track.

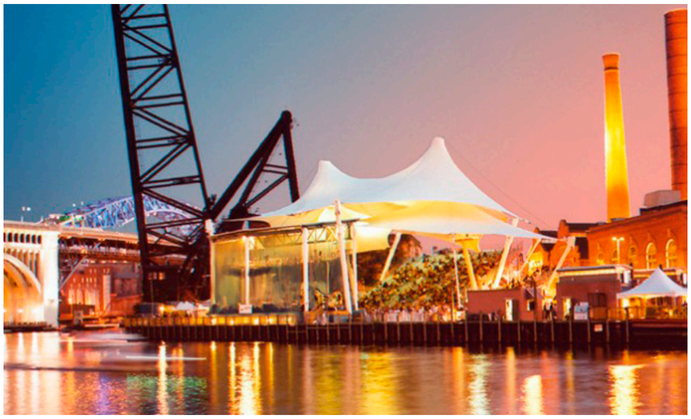
The quantity and quality of downtown retail is very low. Violence still persists. Not one retail establishment is a destination of any consequence, except Heinen's which is still not profitable.

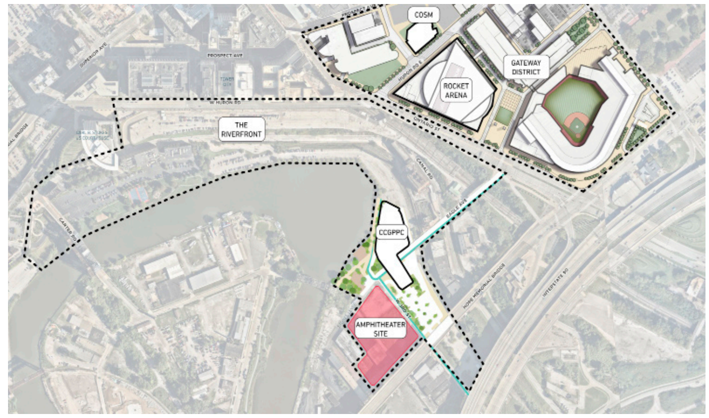
Parking is expensive and in short supply in and near the core.

As Steven Litt has pointed out, our downtown connective tissue and its walkability does not pass the sniff test. The potholes in our streets are increasingly microwave-sized, up from their previous toaster status. If you read DCI's PR – DCI's 2025 downtown retail portrait was full of irresponsible disinformation - you would think that everything is just fine and that there is nothing to be done. It is not so.

The endless cheerleading from DCI and GCP is effort that is better invested in a far more comprehensive and honest assessment of downtown and the mobilizing of pertinent resources to effectively address the challenges. It is instead what the community wants and deserves.

Bedrock Threatens Jacobs Pavilion





In March, Bedrock and Rock Entertainment Group – REG - announced their intention to develop a 6,200-seat outdoor amphitheatre directly across the river from the 5,000-seat Jacobs Pavilion/ Nautica complex (above left). Bedrock's teaming with Live Nation who has committed to a long-term lease to book and operate the site could mean the end of Nautica, which is operated by AEG, Live Nation's largest competitor. Live Nation also runs the House of Blues and Blossom Music Center in Cuyahoga Falls. Neither the Peak Performance Center nor the REG amphitheater are in Bedrock's Riverfront Master Plan which continues to await their Phase IB design and implementation.

Not that Bedrock/ REG have clear sailing. Their claim of 30-40 shows annually and adding 250,000 visitors to downtown to generate $59 million in direct annual spending implies 40 sell-outs – doubtful – with each attendee spending $238 each – is also doubtful. First, there are not 40 acts touring the US that are the right fit for 6,200-seat venues.

Secondly, it is not clear that NEOH can support 1.5 - 2 outdoor concerts a week in late-May-to-early October in addition to Nautica and Blossom Music Center. And the $59M revenue claim fits alongside Bedrock's previous grossly exaggerated claims for jobs, income and taxes for its casino and Riverfront Master Plan.

In addition, **Bedrock's site has zero parking.** It sits immediately southwest of the Peak Performance Center and the Kayak Launch. Bedrock's claim of ample parking nearby is simply not credible. Since opening in 1987, Nautica has ample affordable parking immediately adjacent to its performance facility - with a number of ways in and out. If the City of Cleveland had any smarts and balls, it would not issue permits for such a facility in such a location that lacks necessary parking and complimentary food and beverage assets, but the city has already approved site demolition for the project.

Live Nation has the potential to create as solid a booking stream as may be possible, though the size of the proposed amphitheater has a limited number of acts that can draw and fill such a facility. On the positive side, Bedrock/ BEG has retained the DLR Group architectural firm which is known internationally for its performance facility design – Blossom Music Center, Playhouse Square, etc. – to design the riverfront amphitheater, which they expect to open in 2028.

Jacobs Pavilion/ Nautica, previously run by Live Nation, sits on the west bank of the Cuyahoga River directly opposite Bedrock's proposed site, was opened in 1987 and seats 5,000. Cindy Barber, co-owner of Beachland Ballroom and the Treelawn Social Club, in concerned that the smaller independent venues can maintain their ground; "We really have to all come together and try to figure out how do we improve the music economy in Cleveland? Not just, you know, building amphitheaters." Barber notes that "sometimes when there is competition, you're bidding a higher price to get that act in at your place. And that may mean that the ticket prices go up."

The new Bedrock venue announcement follows a string of music venue openings in recent years, including Globe Iron, Treelawn, Welcome to the Farm and more. This raises legitimate questions about whether there is room for yet another performance venue in what *Axios* termed "collateral damage in a saturated market where smaller, independent vanues are struggling."

An indoor-outdoor music venue to accommodate 8,000 – 10,000 has also been proposed for Cleveland's Downtown lakefront. Bedrock's Cosm immersive sports bar and domed theater is under construction immediately north of Rocket Arena, three blocks away. Bedrock's Phase 1B Riverfront development is supposed to include a 17-story building that is supposed to include a hotel, offices, restaurants, retail and yet another live music/ entertainment venue.

Barber would like to see a $1 per ticket fee contribution to a fund for independent stages that functions as a launchpad for local artists, something her non-profit Cleveland Rocks: Past, Present and Future advocates.

Mahall's Roxy and Dunlap's opened in 2023. The Music Box Supper Club opened in 2014. Jolene's county bar opened in 2025 on East 4th Street. The Treelawn Social Club brought jazz to the Waterloo District in 2023. AEG-managed Globe Iron's 1200-seat venue opened last March on Elm Street in the Flats. The Odeon is rumored to be coming back. When the Bop Stop folded, it later reappeared at the Cleveland Music Settlement.

Cleveland Clinic's Trauma Center Bully Act

Cleveland Clinic announces plans for city's third Level 1 trauma center

Ideastream Public Media | By Stephen Langel, Stephanie Metzger-Lawrence
Published January 15, 2026 at 4:36 PM EST

Clinic's trauma center plan gets $50M

By Ken Prendergast / March 31, 2026

The Cleveland Clinic Main Campus' existing Emergency Department on Cedar Avenue

The trauma cnter initiative recently announced by the Cleveland Clinic will destabilize existing the Health/ Trauma industry. In January, the Cleveland Clinic announced its intent to establish a third Level I Trauma Center in our region, which will negatively impact the existing trauma centers at MetroHealth and University Hospitals.

Cleveland Clinic does not ***need*** a trauma center - they ***want*** a trauma center. They want the income from their own trauma cnter. **They are only two miles from the existing UH trauma center at University Circle.** But ever since Kaiser Permanente left the CCF joint emergency room facility the two built together, CCF has had underutilized space adjacent to their emergency room.

Every health care expert states that the existing two Level One Trauma center at Metro General Hospital on the west side and University Hospital on the east side are more than adequate for the population of NEOH. But CCF does not care about imbedding further excessive costs in oversupplying physical and human resources in our region so long as it generates even more money for them.

If implemented, the Clinic's trauma center would also be Northeast Ohio's sixth Level 1 trauma center, capable of handling the most critically injured adult and/or children patients. Youngstown has one at Mercy Health St. Elizabeth Health Center. Akron has two including Summa Health System and Cleveland Clinic's Akron General.

MetroHealth's President/ CEO Dr. Christine Alexander-Rager has pointed out that such a move would likely weaken both Metro and University Hospitals and the care they deliver by diminishing their patient flow and adversely impacting their income and staffing which Cleveland Clinic would be expected to snare.

MetroHealth publically stated, "MetroHealth is alarmed for our community and calls on the Cleveland Clinic to reevaluate its plans," the county-owned health system said in a statement. "Like similarly sized metropolitan areas, Greater Cleveland cannot sustain three Level 1 Trauma Centers. It will harm patient outcomes and increase costs for the entire community."

MetroHealth has pioneered trauma care in NEOH by opening the region's first Level I Trauma Center in 1992. Metro's trauma center, which treats 7,000 patients annually, is a significant competitive advantage in Cleveland's saturated health care market. **Health experts say that this advantage would be undermined by a third center that would dilute the financial advantages to the trauma center and its pipeline into its patient care system.**

University Hospitals established its Level I trauma center ten years ago which then adversely impacted the number of trauma cases treated at MetroHealth, and also caused "some talent" to migrate to University Circle.

Alexander-Rager is concerned that the Clinic's move will cause labor costs to rise with competition for trauma surgeons, nurses and trauma team members, which will translate into higher prices for consumers.

Tom Campanella, a professor emeritus of health care economics at Baldwin Wallace University and a consultant in the industry agrees: "What we don't need is a bidding war between talents, between our major health care systems. Nobody wins in that kind of a scenario." Health care experts agree that increased competition in Level I trauma care could have a negative impact on MetroHealth and its "tenuous" financial standing.

Those health care systems with greater resources are able to be more competitive in a crowded market. Campanella observes, "If you're talking about who has deeper pockets… it'll be the Cleveland Clinic" and their $14+ billion annual income.

Level I trauma centers are profitable but carry high costs to develop and involve annual readiness costs of $10 million. Medicare reimburses providers with a 'trauma activation fee.' A 2023 study by the National Library of Medicine reported medium tier trauma activation fees range from $9,500 - $61,750, with higher fees at for-profit hospitals and in the West.

Cleveland Clinic's Trauma Center Bully Act

Level I trauma brings "downstream" procedures and care needs for further surgeries and/or physical therapy in a health system. Cleveland Clinic's Dr. Scott Steele claimed at a February community meeting that money is not the Clinic's motivation; "Our goal is to take care of patients."

At present, the Clinic transfers trauma patients to University Hospitals, which is only two miles away, or MetroHealth that is seven miles away. The Clinic claims that such transfers "introduce delays at the most critical moment in care, increasing risk of complications and mortality."

Last year, there were only 253 transfers from Cleveland Clinic facilities to MetroHealth, which amounts to 3.6% of Metro's annual patient intake. When University Hospitals opened its trauma unit in 2015, the number of Clinic transfers to UH caused the transfers to MetroHealth to drop by 66%.

Northeast Ohio already reflects an irresponsible overbuilding of acute care and ambulatory care facilities, programs and staff from a variety of providers, which imparts an already high cost of care to patients and everyone in the community.

"Whenever you are part of a community like this, there's going to be ways in which you compete with each other and ways in which you collaborate with each other," Alexander-Rager noted.

"I think we need to be really, really mindful of what programs we're creating that are duplicative, that are just adding cost and not necessarily improving quality." **She characterized the Clinic's plan for a third trauma center as "reckless."**

With University Hospitals 6,000 annual trauma center visits and MetroHealth's 7,000 annual patient visits, **both have over triple the state's average of 2,000 patients per Level I trauma center.** MetroHealth disputes the Clinic's assertion that there is any need for a third trauma center in NEOH and called on the Clinic to re-evaluate its plans.

Alexander-Rager's crisp opinion piece in *Crain's Cleveland Business* on 5-11-26 made compelling points that puts the Cleveland Clinic's bullying in perspective:

1. The Clinic's plan to open a new Level 1 trauma center is "a reckless move with real consequences for every member of our community."

2. The Clinic's proposal will "drive up costs, worsen workforce shortages and increase mortality rates – pulling the rug from underneath policymakers in Columbus and Washington, DC, who are urgently working to do just the opposite: lower costs, improve workforce challenges and protect the safety of patients."

3. "Capacity in today's healthcare system is not defined by buildings: it is defined by people. Trauma care is not constrained by space but by specialized labor."

4. **The Clinic's plan is not expansion – "is displacement."**

5. "Cleveland Clinic needlessly creating labor scarcity won't just affect Cleveland area hospitals – it will affect employer benefit packages, public program sustainability, and ultimately, the incomer and taxes of every Ohioan."

6. "If the Clinic really believes that its scheme will expand effective capacity rather than destabilize it, they should be eager to demonstrate it through a comprehensive workforce assessment, which would answer these important questions:

a. How many additional trauma-qualified clinicians will be required?

b. How many are expected to be new to our region, as opposed to recruited from existing hospitals?

c. What contingency plans exist if recruiting falls short?

d. How will staffing changes affect nearby trauma centers?

CCF's Trauma Center Bully Act

e. What impact will the project have on residency and fellowship training programs, including whether existing programs would be reduced, destabilized or forced to close as faculty and case volume are redistributed?"

This "would compel Cleveland Clinic to complete and share a thorough examination of the issue before attempting such a significant intervention in our region's trauma network."

As other experts have already indicated, Alexander-Rager concludes, **"Northeast Ohio already has plenty of trauma care "Capacity"…Without a credible, realistic plan to expand the trauma workforce, Cleveland Clinic's new trauma center creates a world-class façade of "capacity" while undermining its reality."**

Signal Cleveland updated a comprehensive analysis it performed in 2019 regarding the potential need for additioonal trauma centers in NEOH, and they found that **there is no need for new trauna centers in NEOH's five county area.**

Signal's findings were reviewed and confirmed by Dr. Glen Tinkoff, the former system chief for trauma and acute care at University Hospitals and a former medical director of the Northern Ohio Trauma System. State Rep. Bride Rose Sweeney has asked the Cleveland Clinic for a needs assessment to support or condemn their plan.

Signal Cleveland shared its assessment with the Clinic's spokespeople and emailed it to Dr. Jeffrey Claridge, a trauma surgeon helping lead the Clinic's proposed trauma center. Claridge was the principal investigator with the 2019 assessment who worked for MetroHealth when the first study was published. *Signal* has received no response as yet.

The odds that the Cleveland Clinic will have the courage and integrity to conduct the kind of comprehensive assessment suggested by Alexander-Rager BEFORE proceeding further are on life support with no generator and a major CAT 5 storm arriving shortly.

First Energy Wants Diminished Accountability After Outages

Tens of thousands still without power in Northeast Ohio as winds return Sunday

Updated: Mar. 14, 2026, 9:27 a.m. | Published: Mar. 14, 2026, 8:29 a.m.

In March, while the bribery corruption trial of its former executives was in full swing, FirstEnergy announced it will invest nearly $800 million to upgrade its power grid equipment in Ohio. The scope includes $294 million to build a new substation in Clark County where two major power lines meet and also replace breakers and upgrade high-voltage lines in several northern Ohio counties.

FirstEnergy is also investing $490 million through Grid Growth Ventures, a joint venture with Transource Energy to install nearly 200 miles of new high-voltage transmission lines to support growth in the Columbus region. FirstEnergy claims the upgrades will help move electricity more easily across the grid and reduce the risk of outages.

But the company also wants to be let off the hook by regulators to lessen reliability standards for its electric utilities. FirstEnergy wants the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio to grant it more time to restore power after outages and to allow more outages per year than current standards permit. This is hardly in the interest of public safety and consumers, but then PUCO has not always acted in the interest of Ohio's citizens. FirstEnergy admits that its reliability performance has worsened sine 2019.

Cities like Cleveland, Barberton and Lakewood are urging the state to reject FirstEnergy's request. "Lowering reliability standards because a company has struggled to meet them sends the wrong message," Rep. Sean Brennan, a Parma Democrat, said. "Ohioans have invested heavily in grid improvements. They deserve accountability and measurable results - not a reduced standard."

Shaker vs. University School on Field Lighting

Shaker Heights City Council introduced new zoning amendments on March 9 to circumvent University Schools' application for a permit to install 80' poles and lights for its football field at its main campus in a distinguished residential neighborhood.

Shaker's new standards prohibit stadium lights without a variance to prevent encroachment on the residential character of city neighborhoods and maintain a balance with significant institutional uses.

Currently, University School plays its games at its 220-acre Hunting Valley Campus (above right) that houses academic facilities for grades 9-12, and a complete menu of facilities for other sports. US representatives are already unhappy with Shaker, alleging that the city 'called an audible' in late 2025 by passing a 150-day interim zoning ordinance with similar restrictions.

A petition circulated by "Protect Our U.S. Neighborhood" that opposes the school's plan has already obtained 300 signatures. Shaker Council plans additional readings to vote to adopt its amendment. At the recent meeting, six residents spoke in support of the zoning amendment and against University School's proposal for lighting.

Shaker Heights High School now has lighting (above left). US seeks the same priviledge.

Built in 1932, Shaker High's Rupp Stadium did not get lights until 2023 (above left), although temporary ones were introduced two years earlier. However, the city was not involved in the agreement between the school system and area residents.

The school system and neighbors negotiated "reasonable restrictions" and entered into a "Memo of Understanding" that allowed the high school to add lights with conditions for their use which were permitted under the zoning code - or simply not addressed.

Ben Malbasa, director of development for University School, provided the Planning Commission with a thumbnail sketch of the proposed $7 million project, showing a synthetic turf field, a new track and seating for less than 950 spectators in bleachers rising less than 20 feet from ground level. He noted that Shaker High's stadium holds a capacity of over 2,500. Shaker still hosts most all of its football games on Saturday afternoons.

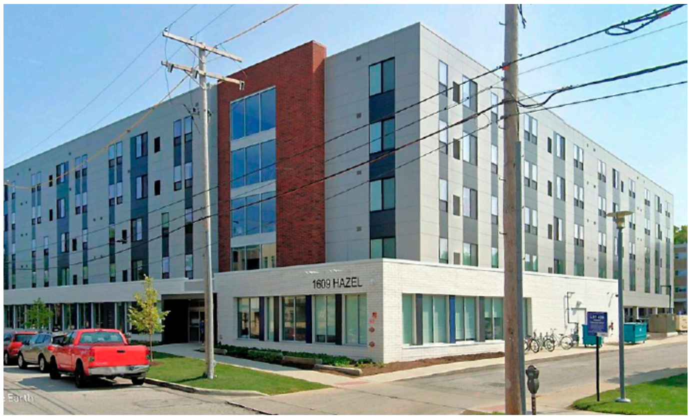
In recent years, University School says it has invested $60 million in its Shaker campus "at a time when many wondered whether we should consolidate with the high school campus" in Hunting Valley. "We made this choice because we value this neighborhood, its proximity to the city and its ability to serve as a catalyst to bring people together," Malbasa said.

Rumors have spread that suggest the new US field would remain "in constant use and rented out non-stop" for nighttime contests and events. "In fact, we seek to host four to five home football games each fall, a handful of spring lacrosse matches, perhaps a middle school game in each season and an occasional early evening practice for our own teams to acclimate to the lights."

Shaker Mayor David Weiss has suggested that US apply for a conditional use permit to enable further conversations.

Below: St. Justin Martyr Church; Eastlake, OH; Don Hisaka FAIA

CIM Sues 1609 Hazel Apts. Architect & Contractor



The water damage repairs to the almost-new student housing due to poor construction have been identified as a $1.7 million expense. The Cleveland Institute of Music hired J. KURTZ Architects to conduct due diligence and prepare contract documents for the repairs which have been filed for permit with the city.

The work involves, "Selective tear down and repair of the exterior wall panel system which was not constructed in accordance with the previously submitted and approved plans. Work will include removal and replacement of cladding panels, sheathing, framing and insulation…(The) existing established use — residential units, classrooms, and amenity spaces are to remain unchanged."

CWRU has students living at 1609 Hazel but has limited their occupancy to just two floors so the repair work can begin without adverse impacts.

The five-level 117,000 square foot facility includes 20 sound-isolation practice rooms, classrooms and offices on the first floor, with 64 apartments on the four stories above, or 16 units per floor. The site is designed with a new fire access drive as well as covered and surface parking lots. The residential units range in size from studios to four-bedroom apartments.

The defective workmanship and their repairs has resulted in a civil lawsuit — Cleveland Institute of Music vs. Vocon Partners LLC et al — that was filed Aug. 29, 2025 in Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court and is being heard by Judge Carl Mazzone.

The complaint states, "The project has suffered from substantial defective workmanship on the part of the contractors, and lack of proper observation from the project architect in assessing contractor performance and verifying performance, and lack of proper administration of the project…As a result of significant water infiltration, exterior sheathing and wood stud framing have rotted and exhibit biological contamination. Evidence of substantial damage to exterior sheathing and even structural members is observed."

Defendants in the case are John G. Johnson Construction, architect Vocon Partners, and manager Bowen Construction Services LLC, all of Cleveland. Third-party defendants are Fox Enterprises of North Canton, A&R Builders of Millersburg, Runyon & Sons Roofing Inc. of Mentor, Ameriseal and Restoration LLC of Kent, plus Steingass Mechanical Contracting LLC of Akron.

Third-party defendants Runyon & Sons Roofing, Ameriseal and Restoration, plus Steingass Mechanical Construction were added as a result of complaints filed by John G. Johnson Construction. Fox Enterprises was added a result of a complaint filed by Bowen Construction Services. A&R Builders was added by CIM.

The lawsuit is expected to go to trial this fall.

AmTrust to Vacate 800 Superior for AECOM & Mayfield Hts.

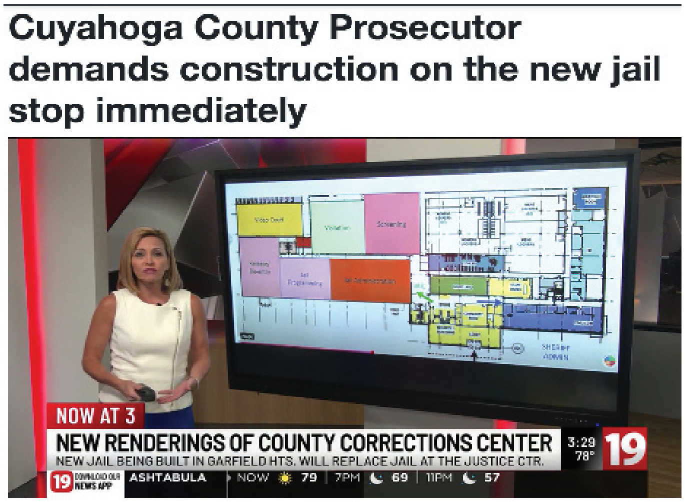
The timing is ironic. Weeks after James Kassouf bought the 21-story 350,000 square foot 800 Superior Building and parking garage for a paltry $4 million, AmTrust decided to lease two floors in the 21-story AECOM Building further north on East 9th Street – 51,397 sf – and also lease 102,062 square feet at the former Progressive Insurance building in Mayfield Heights (above right) on Parkland Boulevard.

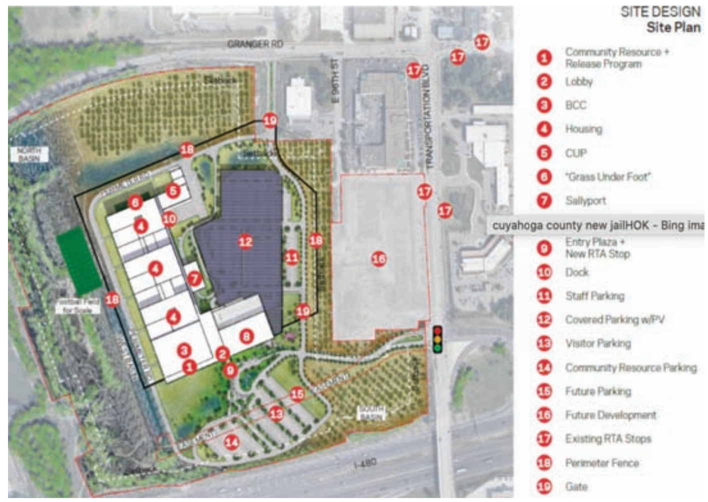
AmTrust will enforce a return-to-office policy with the moves. The company is reportedly spending over $14 million to demo and build out its AECOM tenant space – a staggering $275/sf – with the Phoenix office of the same mediocre architect doing the Hopkins airport replacement. That sum is 350% more than what Kassouf paid for seven times the amount of space AmTrust will lease.

In 2011, AmTrust moved 800 employees downtown to 800 Superior where it at one time leased over 300,000 square feet.

The Mayfield Heights building, Parkland Place, was formerly owned and occupied by Progressive Insurance. It was sold one year ago to Time Equities Inc. of New York City and Legacy RHM Capital of Lyndhurst for $3.5 million. The partnership updated the 38-year-old building in the past year. AmTrust also owns and uses a portion of the Rock Run Center office building in suburban Seven Hills.

Is Cuyahoga County's Jail Project Out of Control?





Attorney Jeff Appelbaum of Thompson Hine has been the darling of local politicians for decades. His TH subsidiary Project Management
Consultants LLC was formed in 1997 and has been paid tens of millions of dollars to manage – some would argue mis-manage – major capitol projects, most often in an owner's representative capacity. PMC now has 11 offices around the country.

Recent developments with the Cuyahoga County Jail project being managed by PMC raise questions about whether the project is under control or is beginning to look a lot like PMC's contributions to the Convention Center and Medical Mart fiasco.

Medical Mart/ Convention Center Reminder:

Appelbaum told us that we needed to hire LMN Architects from Seattle for the medical mart and convention center because they were expert convention center architects. We were told that we needed to tear down the existing convention center and its 500-car underground parking to build a larger one to be competitive in the Midwest. But as Appelbaum managed the project, it failed to provide any parking at all and ended up building a new over-budget, under-sized convention center exactly the same size as the one he tore down for more than the guaranteed maximum price!

Budget:

In a 2022 story in Cleveland.com, "officials" – Appelbaum – alleged that the failed Global Health Center cost only 12% of the $465 million convention center project costs. That assertion was far beyond absurd. An examination of the size and higher level of finish of the Global Health Center when compared to the below-grade low-level-finish convention center reflected the Global Health facility's cost was *at least* 55% of the $475 million.

Appelbaum's assertion was simple to refute. Both the GCHI and CC were each 235,000 sf. If each were of comparable quality, then the GCHI's cost would be 50% of the total or $232.5 million. But the CGHI's cost was higher than the CC because:

Site Acquisition: The GCHI sat entirely and exactly on the site of the former 113 St. Clair multi-tenant office building which the county had to acquire for $17 million. The area to the north now occupied by the Hilton Downtown Hotel was the site of the former County Administration Building and the CC sits on the site of the former Mall A convention center.

Differences in Construction and Corresponding Cost: The CC differs significantly in its construction cost from the GCHI. The CC is a large flat facility with exposed concrete floors and exposed structural steel ceilings in its large exhibit areas. Thus on balance, its level of finish materials in the CC is very low by comparison to GCHI. Its large ballroom and meeting areas feature a low percentage of walls.

The CC has poured concrete floors and a green roof. Its ceiling heights are not terribly significant which is why the architects - "to create a meaningful entry experience for users"- sloped the roof up to Lakeside Ave., eliminating the visual and physical connection from Mall A to the lakefront that we had previously enjoyed for 100 years.

GCHI on the other hand had small tenant showrooms with a large 70' high atrium and a full-height glass wall facing east, single-loaded corridors on its floors, hung glass bridges on its east elevation connecting the north and south sides of the building and primarily glass storefronts on its tenant spacers. Its percentage of walls per square foot was dramatically more significant than the CC.
CC, aside

CC, aside from its glass storefront on Lakeside where it rises out of the ground to welcome visitors, is underground. Its exterior walls on 3.5 sides are therefore basically foundation walls - poured concrete with only waterproofing as the exterior surface.

Is Cuyahoga County's Jail Project Out of Control?

By contrast, the GCHI has a complex and costly custom textured precast concrete exterior envelope with glass that has a probable material cost of, in 2011 dollars, \$75/sf - \$100/sf of surface area in addition to its substrate that holds the precast and glass to the building. Cost including installation labor is estimated to entail \$150 - \$175/sf. With a perimeter envelope above the ground floor glass of approximately 47,500 sf, this amounts to at least \$6,000,000 more than the cost of the CC concrete foundation walls.

Additionally, the east exterior wall of the GCHI building's atrium is a full-height (70') monumental glass wall which had a probable cost in 2011 of \$175/sf of surface area vs. the CC's \$25/sf concrete foundation wall. The difference between the two amounts to roughly \$1,575,000.

The interior construction off the CC involves a comparatively small percentage of partitions and doors with a correspondingly small portion of electrical outlets, air conditioning zones, etc. In 2011 dollars, the interior construction of the CC likely cost \$25/sf - \$35/sf, where the GCHI's smaller tenant spaces and glass storefronts entail an interior construction cost of \$100/sf in 2011 dollars.

These numbers are a product of referencing the nationally recognized *RS Means Commercial Cost Data* book published yearly, referring back to the early 2010's. These numbers are responsible, verified and squarely in the ballpark.

Therefore the differences between the two facilities are likely to conservatively reflect:

GCHI Exterior Precast Envelope Delta:	+\$ 6,000,000.
GCHI Monumental Glass Exterior Delta:	+\$ 1,575,000.
GCHI Hung Glass Bridges: 4500 sf x \$750/sf:	+\$ 3,375,000.
GCHI Int. Constr. Delta:	+\$15,750,000.
Land Acquisition Delta:	+\$17,000,000.
Sub-Total:	+\$42,700,000.

Therefore, half of the difference being \$21,850,000. In dividing the cost of the equally sized facilities by two, the \$465M project translates theoretically to \$232,500,000 for each.

To arrive at a responsible comparative cost for each, one adds half of the cost difference to the GCHI and subtracts half from the CC half. Therefore, absent a detailed cost segregation to indicate otherwise, the Convention Center cost \$210,650,000, while the GCHI cost \$254,350,000. Thus the GCHI cost at least 20.75% more than the CC, and of the \$465M total project cost, the GCHI conservatively consumed 55% of the budget (vs. Appelbaum's 12%) while the CC ate 45%.

Applebaum's specious 12% assertion implies that the GCHI somehow cost only \$55.8 million, making his unfounded statement off by \$198 million (42.7%).

Blowing the Budget:

In August, In August 2010, County Commissioners promised citizens that the projects would have a "first-class finished product for \$425 million."

They brought in Chicago's MMPI as a development partner with a promise that MMPI would guarantee the cost and accept the obligation to fund any overrun. But then in September 2010 – *one month later*, Commissioners Hagan and Lawson Jones said they were \$40 million over the budget they had guaranteed the previous month, and that MMPI was going to fund only \$8.5 million of that increase.

Attorney Appelbaum in Laura Johnson's *Cleveland.com* article "said he recognized the need for extra spending after he and consultants took a close look at the facility MMPI proposed to build for \$425 million. In that plan, the ballroom – the most important space for marketing a center – had a low ceiling and was interrupted by columns. Its design also would have forced the delivery of food through the same doorways convention attendees used." Those substantial design defects were not noticed until Appelbaum and his team took "a close look?"

"The key here is really high quality space," Appelbaum said. "That's what planners will look at."

So the convention center experts Appelbaum said we needed were so inept at planning convention centers had designed a facility where the ballroom's design was compromised with columns obstructing sight ines and food deliveries were routed through guest entrances. AND the quality of the space was unacceptably low. All of these mistakes revealed that LMN was doing a piss-poor job at properly designing our convention center and that PMC was doing a piss-poor job of managing LMN and their design. AND that PMC did not realize these huge shortcomings until after a guaranteed maximum price had been given to the community.

So the revised design pushed up the ceiling by raising the mall, removed the columns from the ballroom to give unobstructed views,

Is Cuyahoga County's Jail Project Out of Control?

and created separate service entries for food delivery.
AND these design errors and cost forecasting errors by LMN and PMC ALSO required that the facility's size be reduced. So the new design also cut the total size of the proposed center, reducing the amount of meeting room space from 100,000 square feet to 60,000 and cutting exhibit space by 40,000 square feet, to 230,000 sf. And Appelbaum said that's plenty for the conventions that Cleveland hopes to attract.

But that was a lie. After the facility's completion and it totally failed first as a medical mart, then as a global center for health innovation, and when the convention center did not achieve traction as designed, our crack leaders came back and complained that the reason they were unsuccessful was because they lacked an adequate number of meeting rooms to attract events to the convention center. So Appelbaum's Seattle convention center experts apparently got that wrong also.

So in 2022, the Cuyahoga County Convention Facilities Development Corp. came back, complaining that they were turning away event business due to a lack of meeting space. To solve the problem, they not only wanted to completely capture the entire former Medical Mart and convert it to purely convention center meeting room use and also add 23,000 more square feet to the west for another $50 million. They assured us that after the planned expansion, the convention center would rise up to "the middle of the pack" of competing centers nationwide. The clock is ticking.

Public Auditorium:

But the original project scope was supposed to include the connection of the convention center to a renovated Public Auditorium to provide a broader range of meeting and event facilities. But despite being paid millions for due diligence, Appelbaum's team blew the preliminary cost forecast for that portion of the work and it ended up getting deleted from the project altogether.

Appelbaum's crack team of experts did their due diligence on the renovation scope and cost of Public Auditorium. It turned out that their estimate of $32 million was $60 million short. Because of that, the integration of the facility into the immediately adjacent convention center was simply dropped, further diminishing what we got for our money, which was then increased and the convention center's size further reduced after they guaranteed our cost.

Cuyahoga County Jail:

Originally budgeted at $400 million, then $700 million, the county's jail project - above right - is now estimated to cost $1 billion. There has been no explanation of the project's evolution or what possibly justifies its ever-increasing cost.

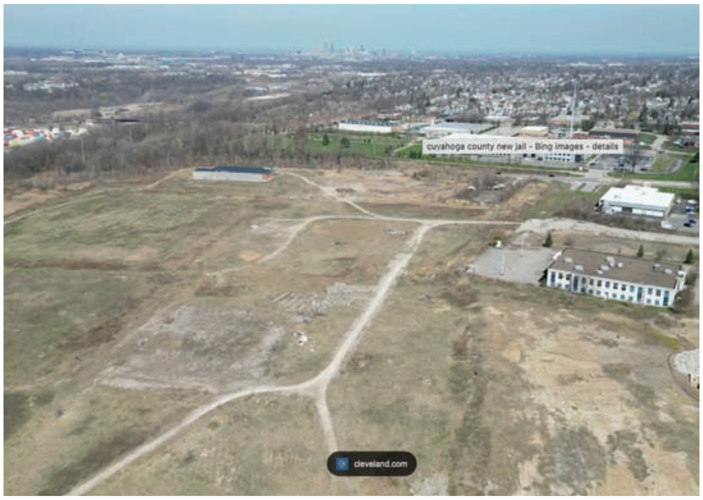
Failure to Comply With Legal Requirements:

Despite Appelbaum's brand identity of a stellar legal career, as managing director of PMC, in March, County Prosecutor Michael O'Malley hit Appelbaum, PMC and the County for failing to comply with Ohio law obtaining approvals from Ohio's two required oversight committees.

A March 27 story observed, "The Cuyahoga County jail project - nearly a billion dollars, years in planning, on the verge of actual construction - is teetering on collapse, all because of a procedural requirement that county officials somehow missed." The Today in Ohio podcast "hosts described how County Executive Chris Ronayne and his administration have been barreling full steam ahead on one of the region's most expensive projects, but without any oversight. Now, they've been blindsided by a warning from County Prosecutor Michael O'Malley: Everything they've done so far may be illegal."

"State law requires two specific oversight committees—composed of judges, the sheriff, the clerk of courts, and others—to

Is Cuyahoga County's Jail Project Out of Control?



formally approve plans before any real money gets spent on jail or courthouse projects. Those committees were never formed."
"So now you've got this massive project, years in the making, on the verge of construction, and it could all grind to a halt over this misstep here," explained Leila Atassi. "If the prosecutor's right, you can't keep going without legal risk. But if you stop, you've already sunk tens of millions into land and early work on a project that the county desperately needs."

And the associated delays will add millions to the project costs in escalation for the PMC team – a subsidiary of one of the region's most prominent law firms - to properly manage the project. This is incompetent performance from Appelbaum's law firm and his PMC subsidiary.

"O'Malley told officials to stop work immediately and cautioned that anyone who continues approving spending could be personally liable to repay that money. That would be tens of millions of taxpayer dollars potentially coming out of individual pockets if the state auditor decides to pursue it. Chris Quinn pointed to a recent story in which the auditor has been compelling a lot of public officials to repay money they spent improperly."

Is it time to start demanding accountability from Appelbaum,

More Transitions

Masonic Auditorium:

The owner of the Great Brick Beast at East 40th Street (above) has decided to give up the renovation of the aged performance facility and has placed the property on the market in February for sale, "subject to offer."

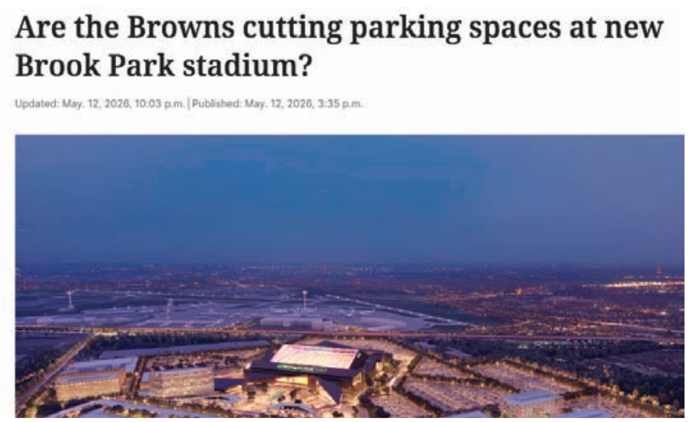
Temple Live, the operating unit, had laid off its staff last September after investing $8 million on a new roof, new HVAC system, and new stages. They had planned to add a $60 million hotel.

But the compnay found that they were "outsiders" in an increasingly insular and consolidated ticketing and venue magagement industry dominated by two players, making it impossible for independents to survive.

Bridgeworks:

Aftyer six years since its initial announcement and multiple design revisions from different architects, Bridgeworks says that they are ginally able to proceed. Sadly, the final design is far less successful that previous iterations.

Browns Are WAY Short on Parking - and Honesty!


Are the Browns cutting parking spaces at new Brook Park stadium?

Updated: May. 12, 2026, 10:03 p.m. | Published: May. 12, 2026, 3:35 p.m.

When the Browns trotted out their plan to move to a domed stadium in Brook Park in 2024, they told us they would have 22,000+ surface parking spaces that would enrich them by $93 million over some undetermined period of time.

But at the Brook Park 3-26-26 Planning Commission meeting, the Browns new Master Plan includes only 8,400 – 9,400 parking spaces! Even NOACA's published statements in mid-March with regard to their satisfaction with the infrastructure improvements planned, stated that there would be 22,000 spaces.

Even for the Browns who have not been short on exaggerations and disinformation on pushing their Brook Park agenda, this is a new low.

From Channel 19 on 3-25-26: BROOK PARK, Ohio (WOIO) - During a Brook Park Planning Commission meeting on Tuesday, Browns representatives changed their tune, saying 13,000 parking spaces would not work at the new dome site. It was too many!!

Aric Yarberry with Browns development partner Lincoln Properties the Browns' had the audacity to express concern over a motion by the planning commission to expand parking from the currently planned 8,000 stalls to 13,000 stalls. "The 13,000 stall increase is dynamic. 5,000 (more) stalls, the site didn't get any bigger or smaller," Yarberry said. No kidding. And the stadium did not get any smaller! **The Browns are attempting to provide the fewest number of parking spaces of any stadium in the US!**

In the latest Preliminary Development Plan (PDP) released on March 2, the Browns had initially listed only 8,734 gameday parking spaces available once the project is completed. **That is parking for only 13.4% of Browns fans, to say nothing of the staff needed to host a game!**

The planning commission told the Browns that there needs to be "at least" 13,000 spaces to limit the amount of residential parking, and decrease the amount of people walking miles to the stadium. Following a vote, 13,000 is now the minimum, meaning the Browns' plans will need to change. Planning commissioners cited safety as a main reason for the additional spaces. **And even BP's 13,000 is nowhere near enough!**

And a peek at that latest site plan indicates that a high percentage of patrons will have a very long walk to the facility. For all of the Browns BS hype about the fans, this is very far from 'fan-friendly.'

Lest the truth get in the way for HSG and Mr. Yarberry, when Haslam Sports group (HSG) met with BP Mayor Ed Orcutt and ODOT on April 25, 2025, Orcutt stated that the site could hold up to 22,000 parking spaces **and that this number would increase significantly before the first event at the new dome.**

On July 8, 2025, Brook Park Public Works Director Brian Beyer stated, "There definitely has been conversations with creating more parking. At this point it really hasn't been in detail." Obviously HSG was not taking those conversations seriously.

At the August 21, 2025 meeting with Brook Park to rezone the current site to allow for a stadium, hotels, residential units and more, HSG answered questions from City Council. HSG President Dave Jenkins said of the parking, "The day-one plan will be roughly 12,000 to 14,000 parking spots on site. As market demands rise with further development, we would look to go to more structured parking".

"That is a concern of ours, especially as a commissioner, one of the biggest things is looking out for the safety of the city," Brook Park Planning Commissioner Holly Klingler said. Planning commissioners such as Klingler continually cited previous promises of more parking when announcing the vote for more than 8,000 stalls. *19 News* looked into that claim, discovering multiple instances where HSG had promised no less than 12,000 stalls. Below is a timeline of those instances:

Following an April 25, 2025 meeting between Brook Park, Haslam Sports Group (HSG) and ODOT, Brook Park Mayor Edward Orcutt says the facility could hold up to 22,000 parking spaces (that as of April, 2025). He also said that number would increase significantly before the first event at the new dome.

"There definitely has been conversations with creating more parking. At this point it really hasn't been in detail," says Brian Beyer, Public Works Director for Brook Park. During a July 8 Brook Park meeting to rezone the current site to allow for a stadium, hotels,

Browns Are WAY Short on Parking - and Honesty!

residential units and more, HSG answered questions from City Council. Dave Jenkins, President of HSG, said of the parking "The day-one plan will be roughly 12,000 to 14,000 parking spots on site. As market demands rise with further development, we would look to go to more structured parking".

On August 21, 2025, Jenkins was presenting once again to Brook Park during a special council meeting. While showing a promotional video, he explained the current lakefront stadium parking situation: "You'll see the substantial amount of parking around the stadium. Roughly 12,000 parking spots around the stadium in immediate proximity. In contrast, the Muny lot is roughly 2,000 spots, we control maybe 1,500 spots around the stadium right now", Jenkins said.

On March 2, 2026, HSG released the PDP to the public. They explain that Phase one of construction, which is essentially just the stadium, will have only 9,401 gameday parking spaces provided. Phase two, which is the entire complex, will have even less! - 8,734 gameday parking spaces provided. **Thousands less than previously discussed.**

At the March 2, 2026 NOACA board meeting, parking at the new stadium and the potential safety issues associated with a lack of parking were addressed. The board noted that HSG and Lincoln had previously promised at least approximately 12,000 spaces: "Off-site parking is a major question for this development project. It is staff's understanding the development is estimated to provide approximately 12,000 to 13,000 spaces on-site".

At the March 24, 2026 Brook Park Planning Commission meeting, HSG was told that the city requires the site to increase

parking to 13,000 stalls before approving the PDP. Browns representatives pushed back on this, saying it would be difficult to accomplish as the site "didn't get any bigger." **Planning Commissioners continually cited safety and the Browns' previous promises of more parking when discussing the need for the amendment. The vote for more parking unanimously passed with the PDP.**

The PDP passed with the requirement for more parking in addition to two more motions:

- HSG must adhere to Brook Park's storm water code
- HSG must create a 10 foot buffer of green space on Snow Rd and Engel Rd between the parking lots and the roads

The Browns will now have to make the necessary changes prior to the final development plan being presented to Brook Park in the fall. **To repeat, the Browns are attempting to provide the least amount of parking for ANY NFL stadium - by a lot!** Perhaps it is their strategy to make the community realize that the new stadium will fail unless RTA puts a station at their doorstep which naturally, the billionaire Haslams refuse to pay for.

A pertinent comparison of other NFL stadiums, their seating and the number of parking spaces provided reflects:

1. Cleveland/Brook Park, OH – 65,000 seats; 8,734 spaces?
2. San Francisco/Santa Clara, CA – 68,50 seats; 31,500 spaces
3. Los Angeles/Inglewood, CA – 70,240 seats; 16,000 spaces
4. Kansas City, MO – 76,416 seats; 19,000 spaces
5. Miami Gardens, FL – 64,747 seats; 26,728 spaces
6. Dallas/Arlington, TX – 80,000 seats; 24,000 spaces
7. Tampa, FL – 75,000 seats; 13,470 spaces + 15k nearby
8. Philadelphia, PA – 67,594 seats; 22,000 spaces
9. Washington DC/Landover, MD - 70,000 seats; 8,000 - Metro Stop
10. Phoenix/Glendale, AZ – 73,000 seats; 14,000/ 28,000 spaces
11. New England-Foxborough, MA – 64,628 seats; 20,000 spaces
12. NYC/East Rutherford, NJ – MetLife - 82,500 seats; 23,800 spaces
13. Houston, TX – NRG Stadium- 71,500 seats; 26,000 spaces

In addition to failing for years to put a responsible product on the field for fans, the Browns are failing to meet essential fan needs in the new location. And now we do not even have Miles Garrett.

The Browns Want a Sin tax

Quadruple the sin tax? Cuyahoga County wants to save taxpayers from stadium bailouts

Updated: Feb. 17, 2026, 1:48 p.m. | Published: Feb. 17, 2026, 7:00 a.m.

The Browns are running like a scared little girl from any obligation to maintain their Brook Park Stadium or contribute to the large infrastructure work scope and costs needed to get their fans to their stadium.

For the first time there is an alignment of all pertinent political entities: Cleveland's mayor, the county executive, and the ownership groups of the Browns, Guardians, and Cavs all agree on something. The initial Gateway sin tax has for years proven to be inadequate to keep up with the Cavaliers' and Guardians' demands for maintenance and repairs.

The teams and Gateway need more money to keep the region's sports venues from falling into disrepair, and they have a plan — quadruple the sin tax on cigarettes and alcohol in Cuyahoga County to fund stadium maintenance and avoid a cascade of costly emergency bailouts for taxpayers. And a few of them know that if they were to put that to a vote, it is not likely to be approved by voters any time soon.

Naturally, the Browns who have already conned Brook Park into taking title to the new stadium when completed, want to make sure that they – Jimmy and Dee Haslams - are not on the hook to maintain the facility so they can keep their billions. They already seemed to have dodged the obligation to spend the $70 million - $100 million on infrastructure requirements to get fans to the facility. And the billionaire Haslams have been asking RTA to pay to build them a new rapid station at their stadium that the folks at RTA have no hope of funding.

But Ohio House Speaker Matt Huffman said 'no' to the quadruple sin tax idea because it would not be self-sustaining. "This is really about this grudge with Ronayne and his very public fights with Republicans over the Brown stadium financing in the Brook Park move, and that is so petty," *Today in Ohio* host Leila Atassi observed. Huffman instead suggested adding a dollar surcharge to every ticket sold at Cleveland's venues. But Cleveland has the highest ticket tax in the state already, and teams don't want to further burden fans.

Huffman did have the point of the teams' fans bearing the burden of the added tax instead of citizens who do not patronize the teams. A countywide sin tax asks every Cuyahoga County resident to chip in for facilities that many of them never use.

A ticket surcharge puts the cost on the people actually walking through the turnstiles. *TINO* host Quinn suggested instead a regional quarter-cent sales tax that would spread the burden across the full geographic footprint of Cleveland sports fandom, not just one county. It's an idea *Today in Ohio* and *cleveland.com* both championed two years ago, with broad public support, but risk-averse politicians ran from it at the time.

Meanwhile, Gateway — which manages Progressive Field and Rocket Arena — is warning that by 2027, the funding gap becomes a legitimate crisis. Cleveland and Cuyahoga County already shelled out $40 million in emergency stadium bailouts last year.

For those who argue that the rich owners of the teams should pay, the facts on their side are compelling:

Last year, the Guardians, with the sixth lowest payroll in major-league baseball, reported a profit of $53 million on gross revenue of $337 million according to *Forbes* magazine.

The Cavaliers reported 2025 profit of $127 million on revenue of $440 million according to *Forbes* magazine.

And the Browns, even with Deshaun Winston's hefty salary, reported profit of $90 million on revenue of $685 million in 2025.

Polemically, it is hard to argue that the public should be paying to maintain the facilities for these super-rich people who are making even more serious money each year.