

The New York Times
Reprints

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers here or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit www.nytreprints.com for samples and additional information. Order a reprint of this article now.

From
ALEXANDER PAYNE
Director of
SIDEWAYS

November 29, 2011

Cleveland Turns Uptown Into New Downtown

By **KEITH SCHNEIDER**

CLEVELAND — Since 1950, when its population peaked at 914,808, Cleveland has steadily shed residents and jobs. In 2010, just 396,815 people lived within the city limits, almost 81,000 fewer than a decade before, and about the same number of people who lived in Cleveland in 1900.

The sequence of events is sadly familiar: the disappearance of labor-intensive industry that paid a living wage, followed by entrenched poverty and the social disruption that it brings.

But in recent years Cleveland's municipal government and its Regional Transit Authority have rallied major employers, banks, foundations and developers around a central goal of rebuilding the city's core according to the new urban market trends of the 21st century — health care, higher education, entertainment, good food, new housing and expanded mass transportation.

A point of focus has been the emerging Uptown arts and entertainment district along Euclid Avenue, near where John D. Rockefeller and other industrialists and financiers built opulent mansions.

When it is finished next year, the new \$27 million Museum of Contemporary Art, designed by Farshid Moussavi, will perch, like a lustrous black gem, at the entrance to the district, at Euclid and Mayfield Road. A pedestrian plaza designed by James Corner Field Operations, a designer of the High Line elevated park in New York City, separates the new museum from two four-story, mixed-use residential buildings under construction on the north and south sides of Euclid.

The 60,106-square-foot south building will have 70 rental apartments above 21,189 square feet of restaurant and retail space. The north structure, larger at 84,399 square feet, has 44 apartments and 36,480 square feet of retail space that includes a bookstore and a big grocery, the first in the area. Both buildings were designed by Stanley Saitowitz of Natoma

Architects in San Francisco, and built at a cost of \$44 million by MRN Ltd., a Cleveland development group.

To get residents and visitors to and from the arts district, the Regional Transit Authority is planning to move two existing rail stops on the city's 19-mile Red Line closer to Uptown, nearby Little Italy and Case Western Reserve University at a cost of nearly \$30 million.

"All of this new construction is enhanced by international design," said Ari Maron, a 33-year-old partner in the family-owned MRN Ltd. "The focus is the street. You provide the right mix of assets. You fill the buildings with people and open the storefronts to the sidewalk. You create a place where people want to be which didn't exist before."

In effect, the Uptown area will be what amounts to a new downtown for the University Circle neighborhood on the east side of the city. Within the square mile of University Circle, and within easy walking distance of Uptown, are Case Western Reserve, the Cleveland Institute of Art, the Cleveland Institute of Music, University Hospitals, Cleveland Clinic, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Museum of Art and the Museum of Natural History.

Spread across a campuslike expanse of green space, these institutions form a distinct economic microclimate that has fostered the highest growth in job numbers, income and residents in a city that lost 17 percent of its population from 2000 to 2010.

"There are 5,000 more jobs here than in 2005," said Chris Ronayne, an urban planner who is president of University Circle Inc., a nonprofit community service organization that has helped manage the area's development. "About 50,000 people work here. The number of residents grew 11 percent since 2000. And there are 10,000 people who live here now."

By almost any measure of civic energy and interest, Uptown looks to be a success. Mr. Maron said MRN Ltd. had already leased all three retail and seven restaurant spaces in his project. The one-bedroom, one-bathroom, 750-square-foot apartments have drawn strong interest and will rent for about \$1,500 a month when they go on the market in January, he said.

Other new projects in Uptown include a planned \$26 million, 150-room Marriott hotel just down Euclid on Cornell Road. The Cleveland Institute of Art now trains 520 students in a 155,000-square-foot building, where Ford Model Ts were once made, that was recently renovated at a cost of \$35 million. Next June the institute is scheduled to break ground on a \$30 million, 91,000-square-foot, four-story addition — designed by Stantec Architecture, which has an office in Cleveland — that will be clad in multicolored panes of glass, said Grafton Nunes, the president and chief executive.

And just a block away, Case Western Reserve in 2002 completed a \$62 million, 152,000-square-foot classroom building, designed by Frank Gehry, for its Weatherhead School of Management.

“That area of the city is really coming fast as a center of Cleveland’s growth,” said Tracey A. Nichols, the director of the city Department of Economic Development. “We are convinced projects like Uptown will continue to be built and in the next generation this will be a city of 500,000 people again.”

One of the first major projects for Uptown, completed in 2008, was the \$200 million reconstruction of Euclid Avenue, which included installing a dedicated lane for an unusual bus rapid transit line. The three-year-old line has attracted 12 million riders and connects the city’s central Public Square to University Circle.

The bus service, known as the HealthLine, and the reconstructed boulevard are credited with contributing to a boom in development that The Plain Dealer reported in July had reached a total of \$5 billion. Along with Uptown, where the investment so far totals \$162 million, other big projects include a \$560 redevelopment of University Hospitals Case Medical Center, a \$350 million casino on Public Square and a \$465 million, 555,000-square-foot convention center and medical mart downtown.

“There were skeptics about the HealthLine,” said David Beach, an urban design expert with the Museum of Natural History. “It’s proving that an investment in transit and improvements in streetscape do start to change real estate investment patterns over time. In a slow economy it takes a few years. But we are seeing new development up and down the Euclid corridor now.”