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The Greater University Circle Initiative:
Leveraging Institutional Investments to Create a 21st Century Community

The health of Greater University Circle, Cleveland's premier district of world-class cultural, educational and medical institutions, is integrally tied to the vitality of its adjacent neighborhoods. Years of isolated development has led to a place that encourages the arrival at single destinations versus the influx of people to the district as a whole. This effort aims to reverse that trend.

The Greater University Circle (GUC) area, which includes the traditional University Circle, the Cleveland Clinic campus, the Veterans Administration Medical Center and the four adjacent neighborhoods, is poised to become the region's premier district of world-class institutions, as well as a leading shopping and residential environment.

Collaboration is the key. Since July 2005, a coalition led by The Cleveland Foundation has been developing an ambitious strategy to stimulate reinvestment in Greater University Circle. Now included in this group are Case Western Reserve University, University Hospitals, The Cleveland Clinic, The Veterans Affairs Medical Center, University Circle, Inc., Neighborhood Progress, Inc., the George Gund Foundation, The Kent H. Smith Charitable Trust, Charter One Bank, the Greater Regional Transit Authority and the City of Cleveland. The Greater University Circle area expects to have \$1.5 billion of institutional developments in the next three-to-five years. Leveraging this investment holds great promise for making this area even stronger.

This coalition is action-oriented and focused on cross-cutting issues that are important to the area as a whole, but currently are not the responsibility of any individual institution. These include transportation, housing, retail, open space and programs for economic inclusion. The strategy is two-pronged:

- **Develop priority public improvement projects and other physical development projects such as housing and retail which compliment institutional developments, that can be completed in the next three-to-five years and will improve the attractiveness and quality of life of the area as a whole**
- **Develop programs and policies that truly revitalize adjacent neighborhoods.**

The Initiative has already mobilized institutional, philanthropic and public dollars to begin to transform and reshape the Greater University Circle Area.

The Priority Projects

Housing and Retail. A critical piece of the strategy for a world-class district lies in the success of Case Western Reserve University's Arts and Retail District (UARD) development project. In fact, the viability of the GUC district as a neighborhood of choice is tied to the quality and make-up of the retail and housing to be built at the corner of Ford and Euclid Avenue. Working with a developer yet to be formally named and institutional partners, Case Western Reserve University hopes to launch a mixed-use project of more than \$100 million that includes retail stores, condominiums, apartments as well as cultural arts through incorporating the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland (MOCA) into the project. The University believes such a project of scale will help stimulate investment and development in surrounding locations, and also satisfy the needs of its students, faculty and staff along with those of the many employers and residents in and near Greater University Circle.

While the UARD project is critical, equally important is the strategy to create a diverse range of housing product at various price points in the adjacent neighborhoods. The housing strategy includes identifying target areas in Hough, Fairfax, Little Italy, Wade Park and Buckeye/ Shaker for new construction and rehabilitation, including a combination of rental and for-sale products. Neighborhood Progress, Inc., and University Circle, Inc., are leading these housing efforts.

Transportation. Greater University Circle has a complex system of infrastructure that, in some ways, has limited its growth and connectivity to the surrounding neighborhoods. Harnessing transportation systems in a way that completely rethinks mobility (roads, transit, pedestrian access, parking and the public realm) will make the big changes necessary to significantly impact land uses and create an attractive public environment. The GUC transportation coalition includes Case Western Reserve University, University Hospitals, The Cleveland Clinic, Holden Parks Trust, University Circle, Inc., The Cleveland Foundation, The Greater Regional Transit Authority, The County Engineer Robert Klaiber Office, and the City of Cleveland. This group has raised \$1.1 million for the design of three key transportation projects: the 105th and Martin Luther King intersection reconfiguration, the Cedar Hill bus and rail transportation improvements, and the renovation and relocation of the 120th Street red line station. All are moving forward with open collaborative processes that will achieve the highest design quality possible.

Parks and Open Space. Activating the underutilized Rockefeller Park and creating strategic, high-quality open spaces that enhance housing development are integral to the GUC initiative. A coalition of foundations, including The George Gund Foundation, The Kent H. Smith Charitable Trust and The Cleveland Foundation, has provided grant funding to ParkWorks to look comprehensively at Rockefeller Park and to identify and develop priority areas that directly link to transportation, housing and retail developments. Also, ParkWorks, in collaboration with the Cleveland Municipal School District, will implement an innovative greenspace for the John Hay Campus that ties together four premier Cleveland Public Schools: Cleveland School of Arts, The Cleveland School of Science and Medicine, Cleveland School of Architecture and Design and the Cleveland School of Early College. The \$1.2 million campus plan will be completed by August 2007 and is funded primarily by local foundations, with in-kind support and additional funding from the Cleveland Municipal School District and the City of Cleveland.

Policies and Programs for Neighborhood Development. Equally important as the physical development projects is the collaboration taking place to create policies and programs that enhance and strengthen the adjacent neighborhoods. Supporting existing neighborhood residents is as imperative as attracting new residents. In order to achieve economic inclusion and preserve and enhance the rich neighborhood fabric, the coalition is developing strategies for leveraging institutional relationships in order to accomplish four goals:

- Increase purchasing and contracting opportunities for GUC businesses
- Create better access to Greater University Circle jobs for GUC residents
- Enhance local schools options by improving existing public schools in the GUC district
- Create strong incentive programs for mortgage assistance and home repair. The coalition is developing a standardized incentive program that provides housing incentives to any employee in the Greater University Circle Area who wishes to move into the district.

The potential is enormous for Greater University Circle to become a nationally recognized urban neighborhood, an internationally recognized center for research, education, medical care and culture, as well as a much desired place to live. The Greater University Circle Initiative holds great promise for making Cleveland an even stronger community and a centerpiece of the region. The collaboration of these institutions, as part of the Greater University Circle Initiative, has been paramount in creating the incredible momentum for realizing an unparalleled 21st century community right here in Cleveland.