



Cuyahoga County  
Together We Thrive

**2022**

**Cuyahoga County Executive  
Armond Budish**

# State of the County

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**“Progress over the past eight years; extraordinary investments; and, setting a vision for the future.” It’s been an honor to have served with you.**



Cuyahoga County Executive  
Armond Budish

## Message from Executive

Serving as your County Executive has been a great honor. I’ve been so blessed with the opportunity to get to know so many of you, our great regional partners in the private, public and non-profit sectors, our devoted employees, and thousands of residents in every corner of this great county.

While I will greatly miss serving as your county executive, I’m very proud of the work we have done and the progress the county has made. I will miss this job because I believe in public service as a means to repair the world. “Tikkun olam” as it’s known in Hebrew. I can’t say that we’ve repaired the world, but I know that we have made a difference here in Cuyahoga County.

In some critically important measures, we’ve made real progress over the last 8 years. The infant mortality rate has dropped by nearly 30 percent. We have secured one of the largest opioid settlements in the country to help defeat the scourge of addiction. We’ve made extraordinary investments in healthcare and education, and we’ve created thousands of jobs and significantly grown our regional economy.

In this report, I review the most important successes we’ve made to improve the lives of our residents.

# STATE OF THE COUNTY

# PROTECTING OUR HEALTH



Let's start with health care, because to thrive and flourish our residents must be healthy.

Medicaid is the federal program that covers health care for people who are poor. When I first came into this office, the state was threatening to cut thousands of county residents off the program unless they re-applied and jumped through a number of burdensome hoops. We undertook a successful campaign to help people take the necessary steps to maintain Medicaid coverage.



But that was just the start. Over the past eight years, our team transformed our eligibility system by implementing a modern call center system. To do this, our leadership toured the call centers in Medical Mutual and the Cleveland Clinic. We worked with the State of Ohio to leverage their technology, and we engaged our employees and collective bargaining partners to create a better customer service model. It used to be each worker had 800-1,000 clients per case load. Now they operate on a system where they take the next caller, which by the way allows them to capture digital signatures, record calls for quality assurance, and work remotely.



We are demonstrating this model through a grant with the federal government, but I can already tell that we have improved performance at a time when COVID had made our work harder—we've had huge increases in cases. I am so proud of the staff and leadership at Cuyahoga Job and Family Services for their commitment to improve these critical services.



Also, in Cuyahoga County, we are blessed to have a county hospital, MetroHealth, that offers high quality care regardless of income.

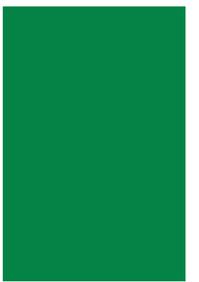
The main facility was getting old, so Metro chose to undertake a major facility upgrade at a cost of nearly \$950 million. And we helped enable that to occur. Dr. Akram Boutros has been a visionary CEO, and a great partner to me and the county. He's retiring this year, and we'll miss his bold leadership.

Our residents' health was uniquely challenged in recent years. During that time, we've tackled three major health care crises: infant mortality, opioids, and the COVID pandemic. First is infant mortality.

In 2015, the infant mortality rate in Cuyahoga County was 10.4 per 1,000 live births, the second worst of all counties in Ohio. In a county with the best medical care in the world, that was shameful, worse than many third world countries.

So, the County partnered with the City of Cleveland and then-City Council President Kevin Kelley, and with our hospitals, nonprofits, foundations, faith leaders, and community-based health care providers to create and fund First Year Cleveland to tackle the infant mortality crisis. And it's been working. By December 2020, the overall infant mortality rate in the County had dropped, by about 30% to 7.4, a huge change and the lowest annual rate in county history! And the rate fell by 39% for Black babies! But, our work's not done yet, as way too many kids are still dying way too young.

Second is the opioid crisis. For years, the county has been at the center of the opioid crisis, with thousands of residents dying from opioid overdoses. Between 2007 and 2017, annual drug overdose deaths rose from 226 to 727. Cuyahoga County has been one of the hardest hit in the nation. But we've also been among the most active in the country in tackling the crisis. We spent over \$460 million dealing with opioids, heroin, and fentanyl-related drug treatment, child services and criminal justice issues between 2006 and 2018. In 2023, we sued manufacturers and distributors who promoted sales of these addictive drugs. In 2019, the County settled its case for \$179 million. We immediately began using the available funds to treat people with addictions and to provide education to prevent additional overdose deaths. In addition, the



County opened the first Diversion Center in Ohio, designed to serve people with mental health and addiction issues.

The third health crisis is the covid crisis.

Over the last 2 ½ years, we have faced the biggest crisis in our lifetimes—the COVID pandemic. Out of all that we've done at the County, I'm most proud of our pandemic response. Our efforts have been recognized by leaders around the country.

We took immediate steps to protect the health of our residents. I immediately stood up the Emergency Operations Center to coordinate efforts. While we were constantly being told there were no masks, sanitizers, and other PPE to be had, and we should just wait for the federal stockpile to open, we went out and against all odds collected and distributed more PPE than any other county our size, nearly 27 million items, to nurses, first responders, jail officers, hospitals, teachers and others.

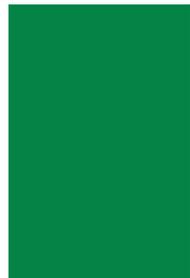
PPE Distro: <https://tinyurl.com/msyaktgs>

People around the country in congregate settings, like jails, were dying at horrific rates. We worked with the judges, prosecutors, Sheriff and County staff to reduce our jail population in half. We then set up screening protocols and isolation and quarantine areas in the jail. And, remarkably, in 2 ½ years, only 1 prisoner in our jail died of COVID, far less than the general population and much, much less than in other jails and prisons.

Similarly, we reduced local shelter census by 50% through supporting the use of local hotels and boarding houses as alternative shelter locations, and providing housing incentives to family members. This strategy was highly successful, keeping COVID positivity rates well below that of the general population.

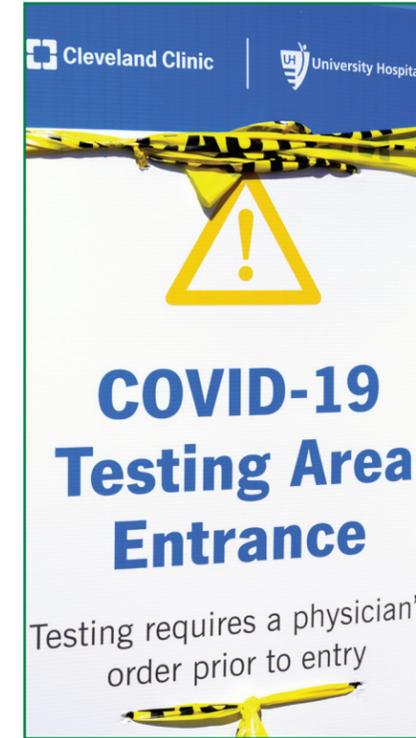
We partnered with Metro Hospital and the Board of Health to make sure all residents, including those in underserved areas, had access to testing, tracing, and vaccinations.

People were extremely afraid of the unknowns surrounding Covid. So, the County partnered with the Board of Health to



provide frequent public media briefings. Our aim was to make as much information as possible available to everyone.

And we did a whole lot more. Every day some new emergency came up, and we quickly dealt with each one. There was no pandemic playbook. And Cuyahoga County has come out of the worst of the pandemic very well.



# SUPPORTING OUR CHILDREN



Next, I'd like to talk about how we've focused on improving the lives of our children.

The best way to give children a great start in life is with a high-quality education starting at age 3 or 4. When I came into office, we already had an excellent pre-k program in place, serving about 2,000 kids a year. I worked with Paul Clark, then President of PNC Bank, to raise money so that we could double the number of children in our pre-k program. We received support from the Plain Dealer and Ideastream too. Together, we more than doubled the capacity of the program, raised the number of families getting a scholarship, and have made the program sustainable.



We didn't stop there. When the Cleveland schools adopted the "Say Yes" scholarship program, the County took on the responsibility for the important wrap-around social services, so kids could focus on their schoolwork, and to keep them out of the justice system. With the advocacy of Council President Pernel Jones Jr., we increased our support for the Closing the Achievement Gap program. And when schools shut down in-person classes due to the pandemic, and sent kids home to learn on-line, thousands had no way to get on the internet to do their classwork. So, the County again stepped forward. We provided more than 5,000 hotspots with two years free service, and more than 10,000 computers and tablets to help students continue their education.



And education doesn't end at 12th grade.

A college degree opens a lot of doors to good paying jobs. But lots of our families can't pay the costs. We want to make it possible for anyone, regardless of income, to get a college degree. To accomplish that, we're pursuing three initiatives, with the strong support of Councilwoman Sunny Simon and the non-profit, College Now.



First, the County has for years offered scholarship money to help kids pay for college. We are doubling the amount of the scholarships and significantly increasing the number of recipients.

Second, there are many students who have started college, then had their education interrupted. And if they owe the school any money for books, labs, or anything, they may not be able to get a transcript which is necessary to return to college. So, we'll help by paying their unpaid bills up to \$2,000. We can't let an unpaid bill ruin a student's chance for a degree and a career.

Third, we want every person to have the chance to get a college education. So, we've created a program where lower income students can go to a two-year college like Tri-C for free (after Pell and other existing grants), and then continue to a four-year college where we'll subsidize the costs.

While we are making a college education available to anyone who wishes, we're recognizing that college just isn't for everyone. So, we've been working on an initiative to prepare kids to get a good job right out of high school. We've based the program on a European model. It's designed to expose middle schoolers to a variety of fields. Students can follow a curriculum tailored to a child's desired occupation, supplemented with internships and apprenticeships, so they can gain experience and knowledge needed to obtain employment upon graduation, without further schooling.



# PROTECTING SENIORS

While we've focused on improving the lives of our children, we also have made great strides in helping our parents and grandparents live safe, fulfilling, lives and to age at home.

For example, during my time in office, our adult protective services have stepped up to protect 20% more seniors. We have more than doubled the number of home-delivered meals, and we have almost tripled the total number of meals provided to seniors. This is crucial to help our elder residents to remain at home. And we are supporting 36 community senior centers to provide enriching activities, meals and transportation. In the midst of the pandemic, we continued home visits and support services and even added behavioral health and homebound vaccinations, in order to keep our aging neighbors healthy and safe in their own homes.

Our parents and grandparents are at risk of being taken advantage of financially by scammers. Our consumer affairs specialists have created a Scam Squad to protect them.



# CREATING, ATTRACTING, AND GROWING GOOD JOBS

Let's switch gears. During my first campaign for Executive, I promised that my priorities were jobs, jobs, jobs. That's because jobs can solve lots of social problems. And I kept my promise.

The best determination of a successful economy is GDP, gross domestic product. And in Cuyahoga County, we're doing very well.

Cuyahoga County's GDP ranks 31st among 3,108 counties nationally; our GDP is larger than the GDP of 13 states.

We're number two in Ohio, just behind Franklin County. And we're ahead of many of our competitors like Marion County, which is Indianapolis; Milwaukee County; Denver County; Orange County, Florida, which is Orlando, Hillsboro County, Florida, which is Tampa/St. Pete; Orleans County which is New Orleans; Montgomery and Baltimore counties in Maryland; Wayne County which includes Detroit; and many others. Our economic development financial assistance has totaled over \$90 million which has directly leveraged over \$2 billion in overall investment for this County. Through this investment we've created, retained, or attracted 20,000 jobs.

We kept Sherwin Williams and its 3,500 jobs here, along with a pledge to bring 400 more. We've supported headquarter companies like Lincoln Electric, Dealer Tire, Covia Corporation, ABB Inc., and Redwood Living, and assisted in a wide array of important business expansions including GOJO Industries.



### Cuyahoga County

King Nut, Consolidated Precision Products, Charter Steel, USA Insulation, FabTech, Roechling Glastic, Fat Heads Brewing, Darko, Hillcrest Food Services, Terves, and iRX Reminder, just to name a few.

Place-based & mixed-use successes in our neighborhoods were critically helped in projects like Church & State, Link 59, and The Quarter; and of course in Downtown including The Athlon, The Beacon and The Lumen.

County-assisted high technology health business attractions brought us IBM-Watson and 7-Signal Solutions. Our direct early-stage pre-seed investments have blossomed into enormously successful cutting-edge companies such as BoxCast Streaming, Apollo Medical Devices, Your-Efolio, and EveryKey. And Ford is investing \$1.5 billion in a new commercial electronic vehicle assembly plant in Northeast Ohio, creating 1,800 new good paying jobs.

And since most new jobs come from small neighborhood businesses, working with our small business lending partners like JumpStart, ECDI, and NDC, we've invested millions of dollars in hundreds of small businesses to add thousands of jobs. The majority of those small businesses were minority and female owned. And that was just our normal economic development.

Small Business STIMulus Grant Program: <https://tinyurl.com/mr8j2zv8>

State of the County 2021: Supporting Small Businesses: <https://tinyurl.com/2yxpayfd>

When the pandemic hit, thousands of people lost jobs when businesses shut down. The County stepped up its efforts, providing \$8.68 million for loans and grants to small businesses to keep them alive.

So what is the result of all this investment? Residents' household income increased more than 14 percent from 2015 to 2020. And we created and retained more than 20,000 jobs.

When I came into office in 2015, Brent Larkin wrote in his Plain Dealer column that falling property values created an "unprecedented" "catastrophe" for the county, and "wreak havoc" on schools and local communities. I am pleased to say that as I



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leave office, property values increased by more than \$7 billion, or 34 percent, from 2016 to 2021.

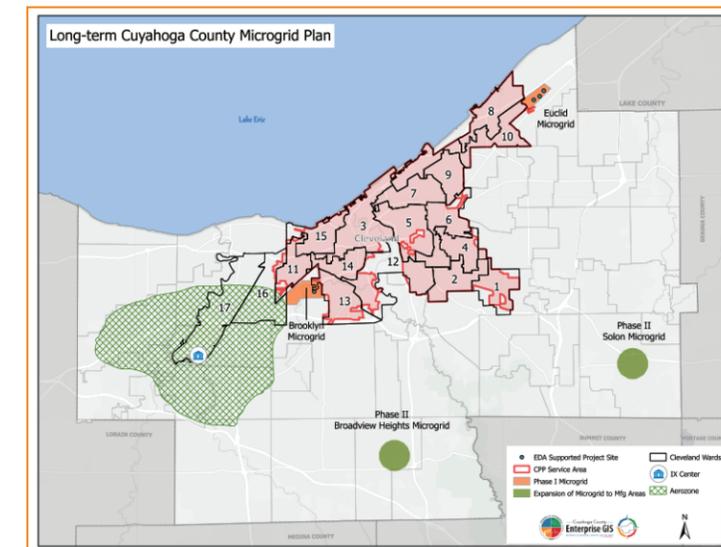
We're putting ourselves in the position to attract new jobs and businesses, and retain existing ones, by investing in two major initiatives: microgrids and water attraction.

I've talked about microgrids before, which will enable us to provide the most reliable electricity in the world. We've been working on these for several years. The overall electricity grid is fragile. Hurricanes, floods, wildfires, tornadoes, extreme heat, droughts, cyber-attacks – so many things can take down the grid. If a business loses power for an hour, a day, a week, or more, the results can be calamitous. To address these issues, Cuyahoga County created its own Department of Public Utilities in September of 2021. This will bring reliable and renewable energy to our region. Companies using our microgrid can be guaranteed they would not lose power for more than 5 minutes in a year. Businesses seeking the most reliable electricity anywhere will come here to hook up. We just released the RFQ for a utility operator to be our strategic partner in developing these microgrid districts throughout the County.

Link to 2019 Micro Grid: <https://tinyurl.com/2cmabfa5>

We have also been working on a water attraction business initiative.

We can and should use our water resources to attract businesses, and jobs.



### Cuyahoga County

A number of types of manufacturers require huge quantities of fresh water. These include food processing, chipmaking and batteries, to name a few.

Many of these manufacturers are located in the west and south, regions suffering from the worst drought in 1,200 years. Lakes and rivers are drying up. Have you seen pictures of the Colorado River? Lake Meade? California, Nevada, and Arizona are all facing severe water usage cuts. Water scarcity will be forcing businesses there to shut down for periods of time. Or to move! And here's where they should go – Cuyahoga County.

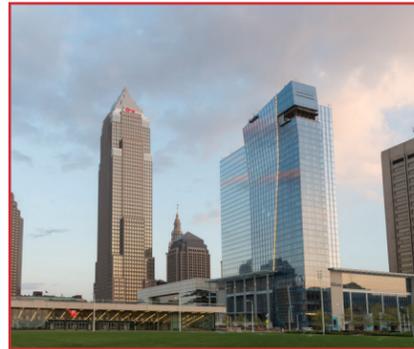
We have huge quantities of fresh water. And Cleveland's delivery system is underutilized. So, we could add major water users without the need to build extensive and expensive additional infrastructure.

Our challenge is to convince these companies that they should build their next plant here. We're partnering with Team NEO, GCP and the Cleveland Water Alliance to create a program to move these companies here, while also using water responsibly. The water attraction initiative, and the microgrid, can transform and protect Northeast Ohio.

When we talk about job creation, we also must talk about training workers. We can't expand jobs without workers.

The biggest hurdle facing businesses today, large and small, is a qualified workforce. For years there's been a terrible disconnect between people wanting to work, and businesses looking for workers. Seven years ago, the County brought together the local funders of workforce training programs, and together we developed a program known as sector partnerships and intermediaries. Four sectors are identified: manufacturing, health, IT and hospitality.

Manufacturing has gone first. Magnet is the agreed upon intermediary. In the last year, working directly with employers, almost 150 people have been trained and over 100 placed in good manufacturing jobs under the program. Of that cohort, 42 are re-entering the community from prison. And of those, there has been zero recidivism! Furthermore, because of the collaboration driven by MAGNET, 58 companies now have better access to



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existing workforce programs, and have hired another 380 people.

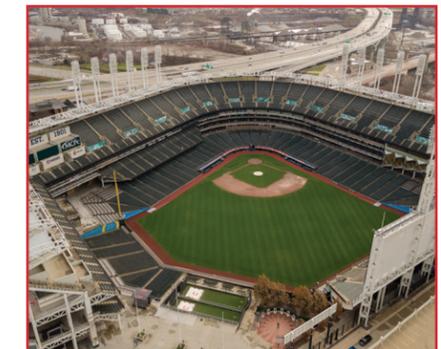
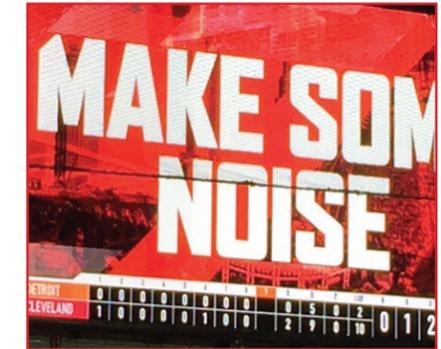
Our workforce initiative is poised to expand to 2,750 people placed in manufacturing yearly, plus hundreds more in the other sectors. This initiative will provide wonderful opportunities for our county residents. But it also will serve as a business attraction tool. We will show prospective businesses that they'll have a reliable pipeline of employees.

The County libraries have also been an integral partner in helping us prepare people for jobs. They are helping residents get their GEDs and they have created and staffed four innovation centers to help residents design a new business using the most modern technology.

One of our expanding business areas is tourism. David Gilbert, Destination Cleveland and the Sports Commission, along with our Convention Center and Convention Hotel, have been great at bringing tourism to the region. Events like two All Star Games, the NFL Draft, the Gay Games, and the Republican National Convention gave our town a big boost. And others like the Pan American Masters Games are still to come.

We enhanced our convention business by getting our beautiful Hilton done on time (and under budget), and by adding connected parking.

And now we're going the next step to enhance our ability to attract conventions, by expanding the Convention Center. We're adding critical meeting rooms and an enlarged ballroom by incorporating and renovating the Global Center.



# CREATING A MORE EQUITABLE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM, WHILE KEEPING RESIDENTS SAFE



Let's switch gears again. The criminal justice system here and around the country has been stacked against people who are poor and/or minorities. We have been striving to bring fairness to the system, and while there's still much to do, we have made some significant progress.

First and foremost is our Diversion Center, the first in Ohio. This is one of our projects of which I'm most proud.



Jails and prisons around the country have become a dumping ground for people with mental illness and addiction problems. That's wrong. Low-level, non-violent offenders should be diverted out of the criminal justice system into treatment programs in the community. And that's what we're doing now, having created the first Diversion Center in Ohio. Police are being trained to identify non-violent offenders suffering from mental health and addiction issues and to bring them to the County Diversion Center, where they are stabilized, treated, then moved into longer term community treatment. The goal is to help people so they can be productive members of the community, without a criminal record. The culture must be changed so that the police use the Center to the fullest, but it's beginning to happen.

The Diversion Center works. One man reported that the people there were incredibly caring, non-judgmental and supportive. He said going to the Diversion Center was the best decision he has ever made. He is still sober and continuing treatment.



Sometimes people will slip through and be booked into the jail. The County, working with the Judges, Prosecutors, Pre-Trial Services, defense counsel, and others, has created a Central Booking program. There, judges and attorneys will quickly see a person who has been charged, within a day rather than several days or a week after being charged. If appropriate, a person may be referred promptly to the Diversion Center or other appropriate community mental health or addiction treatment services.

This program, like the Diversion Center, will enable non-violent folks to quickly get the treatment and services they need outside a jail setting.

And I should also thank the Bail Project for coming to Cuyahoga County. The Bail Project pays the bail for low level offenders who it determines are not a flight risk or a danger to the community. The County has been supporting the work of the Bail Project.

The Diversion Center and Central Booking are both designed to serve adults. But what happens to our troubled youth, who may end up in Juvenile Court and the Juvenile Detention Center? Or in a County office building?

The County Department of Children and Family Services, DCFS, is the custodian of last resort. When families can't or won't keep the kids at home, when residential programs can't or won't keep the kids, when the police pick up kids and can't keep the kids, they end up at the Jane Edna Hunter office building. Our DCFS staff is excellent at finding proper placements for kids—more than 90 percent are placed within hours. But the most troubled kids are tough to place. Residential facilities won't take them. The Juvenile Detention Center is filled with violent lawbreakers and won't take them. And the County staff have little authority to properly handle them.

This is not a Cuyahoga County problem. It's everywhere. We've been working with all our local agencies, community partners, and the State of Ohio, to come up with a solution. And I believe we have one.

We are creating emergency childcare services that will divert the children from Jane Edna Hunter. This program, like the adult Diversion Center, will enable young people to get the care and



treatment they need in the community in a proper residential setting.

We recently entered into a contract with The Centers to provide a drop-off center for troubled adolescents and older youth, which should replace the long-time practice of dropping older kids at our office building. We are also working with Providence House on younger kids as well as Ohio Mentor and SAFY to develop more respite homes. Instead of kids staying over and living in an office for days, they can stay in The Centers and receive initial care and treatment, under the supervision of trained staff. If necessary, the staff will also seek more long-term residential placement. The Center's facility will have to take all kids, no matter how troubled. We are hopeful that this will become a model for the entire state.

We strive to keep our residents safe. While cities, not the county, run the police departments, we have taken steps to help. We created a crime gun lab, which determines whether a firearm has been used in a crime. We created a data warehouse, making outstanding warrants available to police in real time. And we have provided cameras and license plate readers for police to monitor and catch criminals.

Here's a real-life example of how license plate readers help. Three victims reported that another man, we'll call him Mr. P, shot at them from his car. Mr. P told police his car didn't work, and he gave police an invoice indicating his car was in for service. But police found that a license plate reader caught his car on the freeway when it was supposedly inoperable. The police found the invoice was fake and Mr. P was caught. The prosecutor said the LPR system was crucial to the conviction.

I cannot talk about criminal justice improvements without talking about the jail.

In 2018, the County agreed to take the City of Cleveland's prisoners, saving the City between \$4 and \$5 million a year. And a combined City/County jail was critical to make Central Booking effective.

The media has adopted a storyline that the motive for the county to take Cleveland's prisoners was to make a profit. That's just false. There are a number of reasons. For one, regional efficiencies



avoid duplication of services.

And the county made an agreement with Cleveland to avoid being forced to take Cleveland's prisoners with no payment, which would have cost county taxpayers of tens of millions of dollars. The courts have ruled that a city may charge people under state law, and send their prisoners to county jail at no cost. That's what Toledo is doing right now to Lucas County.

The jail health system I inherited was dysfunctional, with both the County and MetroHealth awkwardly sharing responsibility. That system didn't work, with tragic results. So, we turned over the entire management of the jail health care to Metro, and they are doing a great job. In fact, just recently the jail and its health care achieved accreditation from the National Commission on Correctional Health Care. That's a high honor. Only a small percentage of jails and prisons achieve this accreditation.

We have also made many, many other improvements to the jail, to make it safe and better for the prisoners. These include x-ray machines and drug-sniffing dogs to keep contraband out, and anti-ligature materials to prevent suicide.

And we've made many improvements to the building structure, including: ventilation and HVAC improvements, updating of multiple dorms and housing units, and increased security measures—not to mention, we completed more than 7,000 maintenance work order requests, just in 2020!

In 2019, the Ohio Bureau of Adult Detention inspection noted 84 jail deficiencies. Today there are only 12 deficiencies. And almost all of these, such as the size of cells and natural sunlight, cannot be fixed in the current jail. Our current jail is outdated, inefficient, and non-compliant with state safety standards.

Nearly four years ago a large committee of interested stakeholders was assembled to evaluate the jail as well as the rest of the Justice Center. This Committee has gone through a lengthy and thorough investigation, and has recommended that the County build a modern, state of the art jail.

We have proposed paying the project's cost by extending the existing one-quarter cent sales tax that is already in place and

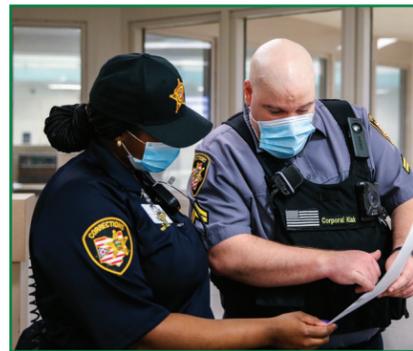


was used to build the Convention Center. This is not a tax increase. This same extended sales tax could provide funds to be put toward a new or renovated justice center as well.

Taken together: a new jail, a new or renovated Justice Center, our Diversion Center, Central Booking, and the Youth Diversion Program will transform criminal justice in the County.



**The County's accreditation from the National Commission on Correctional Health Care, the highest standard in the field and one that only a small percentage of jails and prisons obtain, is a direct result of the hard work and concerted commitment that the County, MetroHealth, and other partners have made over the last several years to improve operations, procedures, staffing, and services in both the jail and accompanying criminal justice programs.**



# ENHANCING LIVABILITY

Cuyahoga County is one of the best places in the country to live. We have one of the top parks systems, a beautiful lake and river, and the number one public library system. And we're getting better!

We're supporting projects all along the lakefront to increase access for residents, we're planting trees, and we're making sure our sports teams are here to stay.

Central Surge Tree Planting: <https://tinyurl.com/2gshhefz>

Lakefront Access Plan Teaser: <https://tinyurl.com/45akkvrm>

Housing is a key element of livability.

So we've focused here too. For renters, we have distributed more than \$76 million dollars to help renters who are having trouble paying their rent and utilities. We are expanding the Challenge Program to make it easier and affordable to make needed home repairs, and we have begun an important down payment assistance program to help people buy a home and start to build wealth.

To improve neighborhoods, we've spent \$50 million to eliminate blighted properties.

For years, the County has partnered with EDEN and others to create safe, clean, permanent supportive housing for people who otherwise would be homeless. And while we haven't yet reached our goal, we're getting close. According to the Cuyahoga Homeless Continuum of Care, projections indicate that we as a county are on track to meet the demand for housing those that are chronically homeless by 2024.

Internet access has become a "must have" item for livability. Without it, it's tough to get a job or apply for a job, check your health care, or follow school lessons.

We're on the verge of going from worst to first. Cuyahoga County was one of the least connected regions anywhere. But we recently



announced a partnership with Governor DeWine and the State of Ohio to bring affordable high-speed internet to some of the least connected areas in the Cleveland suburbs, and the City of Cleveland is making plans to cover Cleveland residents.

Digital Connection Broadband press event:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_hkOICAKU4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hkOICAKU4)

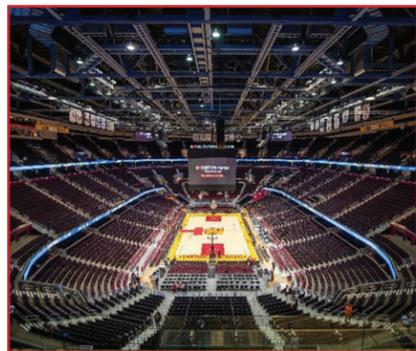
Our region is known for our arts and culture. Organizations like the orchestra, art museum, Rock Hall, and many smaller venues, create a wonderful quality of life for our residents. So we are proud to support them, large and small. We play a major role in supporting the cigarette tax to fund arts and culture organizations, providing \$1.4 million of bed taxes last year for the Rock Hall.

During the pandemic, arts and culture organizations closed their doors to audiences, causing significant lost revenues. We could have lost many of our arts and culture gems. The County stepped forward with \$3.3 million to help them survive. We were able to support our arts – from the orchestra to the Happy Dog. Many arts and culture organizations credit the County with keeping them alive.

And then, there's sports.

We are the smallest city in the nation with professional basketball, football, and baseball teams. The Cavs, Browns, and Guardians provide entertainment to our residents and a source of pride for all (remember the championship parade in 2016?).

The County led the way, with the City of Cleveland, to provide the resources to improve the Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse and Progressive Field. By doing that, we were able to lock in leases for the Cavs and Guardians for the next 15 years. And unlike Buffalo and Las Vegas, we did it without breaking the bank



# PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

I am very proud of the steps we've taken to improve the environment for our residents now and long into the future.

One of the most impactful initiatives was to work with Ohio EPA to clean up one of the dirtiest sites in the Midwest, ARCO. The ARCO dump in East Cleveland was literally a mountain of trash in a residential neighborhood. And we've done a whole lot more. The County created the first solar farm on a landfill in the Midwest. More than 35,000 solar panels generate enough clean electricity to power 800 homes a year.

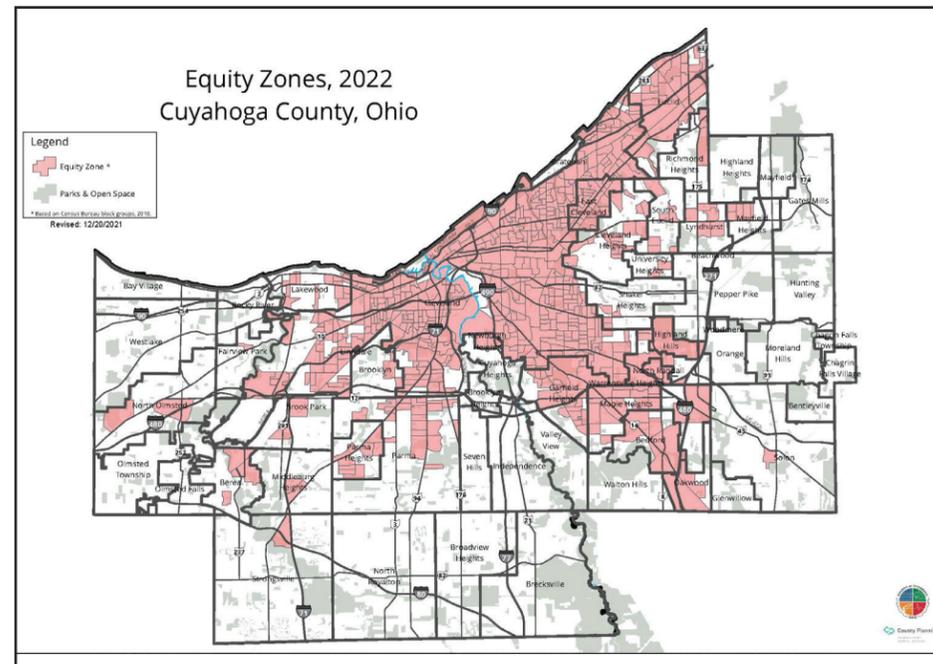
We put solar panels on the roofs of four County buildings, and created a solar co-op and Green Bank to help homeowners and businesses cut their energy costs, offsetting over 305 million pounds of carbon dioxide. We provided the resources to plant 7,500 trees. The County invested \$400,000 to transform vacant lots that scar our neighborhoods into pocket parks and gardens. And we are investing \$5 million to leverage another \$ 28.3 million from the state to clean up brownfields. We launched a scooter share program to reduce the need for driving, resulting in over 1 million rides in three years. We are implementing a lakefront access plan so our residents across the entire county can enjoy the lakefront. We are supporting the LEEDCo wind turbines to generate clean, renewable energy. And we created the first County Climate Change Action Plan, the first Sustainable Cuyahoga toolkit, and the first Climate Risk Calculator. We are fulfilling our goal to be the most environmentally friendly county in the nation.



# PROMOTING EQUITY

On to the next topic: promoting equity is infused in almost all we do.

In selecting roads to repair, businesses to support, locations for testing, tracing, and vaccinations, renters to subsidize so they can remain in their apartments, and housing projects to create affordable housing, we are providing special attention to historically redlined and underserved areas. In fact, we have formalized the process by designating "equity zones," which get extra "points" when evaluating projects. And this is working. For example, in our Healthy Urban Tree Canopy program, 70% of the awards went to projects in equity zones. For our road repair projects, 42% of the CDBG funds for municipal community projects were for projects impacting equity zones. We created a Department of Equity so that we maintain our focus. And we have adopted legislation prohibiting discrimination in housing and employment against people who are LGBTQ.



# MANAGING COUNTY FINANCES

Now completely switching topics. At the onset of my term as Executive, the county faced some serious financial issues, which were compounded by the state slashing \$50 million of taxes to us on Medicaid Managed Care and imposing various unfunded mandates. I am very proud to say that, as I leave office, the county is in the best financial position it's ever been. I am going to repeat that – we're in the best financial position we've ever been in. And that's despite the terrible COVID pandemic that shut down our economy and reduced tax revenues.

Through careful management and budgeting, and with help from the federal and state governments, we will leave reserve funds of more than \$200 million -- more than ever, and almost twice the mandated reserve.

Much has been made in the media of our debt, the vast majority of which was incurred prior to my administration. But over the last 8 years we have not added a penny of debt without an identified source to pay for it. The bond rating services Moody's and Standard and Poor's have recognized our prudent management and sound financial position. And we recently received not one, not two, but the three highest budget and finance awards from the Government Finance Officers Association, which is the preeminent budget and finance evaluation organization.

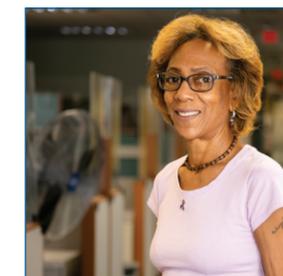
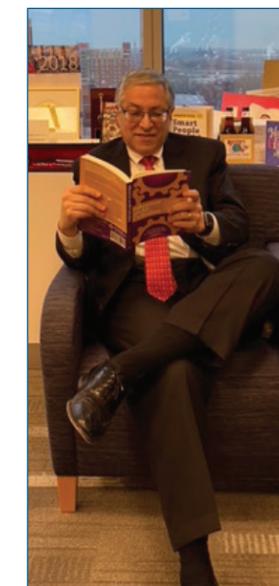
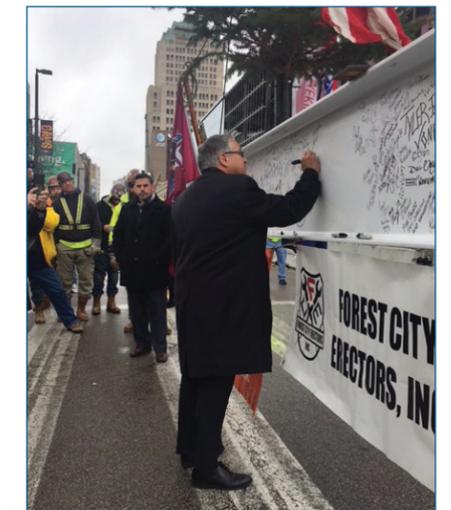
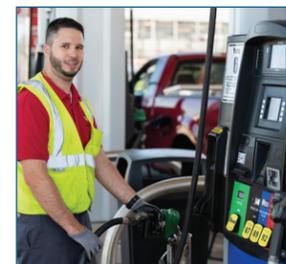
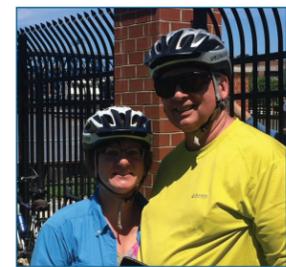
Our excellent fiscal results are achieved through a group effort. First, I want to thank Mike Chambers, our Chief Fiscal Officer, Walter Parfejewiec, our Director of the Office of Budget and Management and their excellent staffs. And County Council deserves major credit too, led by President Pernel Jones Jr., Finance and Budget Chair Dale Miller, Chief of Staff Joe Nanni, and Budget Director Trevor McAleer. They review, advise and revise the budget all year, every year.





Cuyahoga County  
Together We Thrive

I feel grateful each and every day to have such dedicated employees serving the residents of Cuyahoga County. It's an honor to join you in public service as together we work to better the lives of our residents.





Cuyahoga County  
Together We Thrive

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