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GETTING BIGGER, BUT ALSO BETTER

TOM BRECKENRIDGE | PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

For those who believe Cleveland is in inexorable decline, come to tranquil Wade Park lagoon and take a 10-minute stroll in any direction.

You'll see evidence of a boomtown. Orange barrels and construction fence are as familiar as the world-class landmarks, new and old, that have undergone big-ticket makeovers in University Circle.

With \$2.4 billion in projects built or under way since 2000, the University Circle area is growing bigger. City leaders — and residents in struggling neighborhoods nearby — want it to grow better.

This mecca of arts, medicine and culture has never felt like home. It's more an archipelago — institutional islands sorely lacking the connective tissue of a neighborhood, with places to live, eat and play, observers say.

Visitors "tend to think of it as a patchwork of

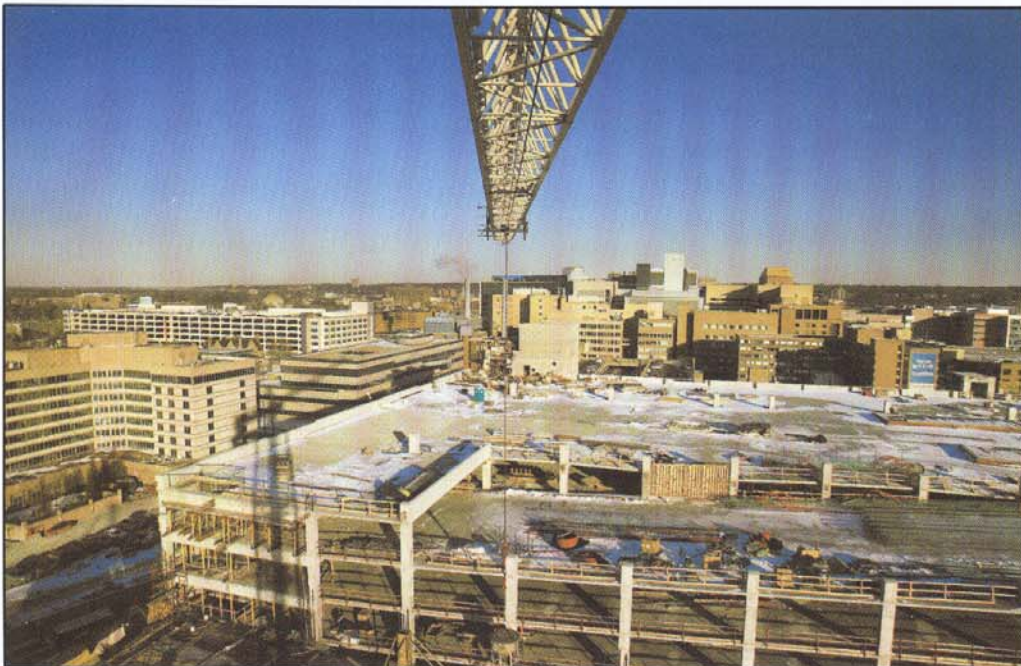
destinations, hospitals and education centers," says Chris Ronayne, president of University Circle Inc. and former planning director for Cleveland. "They tend not to think of it as a place."

But change is afoot. Aiming to leverage the unprecedented growth, foundations have joined the institutions, the city and neighborhood leaders to ply million-dollar strategies to make University Circle a better place.

With up to 10,000 new jobs expected there in the next decade, civic leaders want to foster residential development in the circle, boost neighborhoods from Glenville to Fairfax and smooth the street and transit kinks that make the 10-minute walk from Wade Lagoon a risky proposition.

The growth presents an unprecedented opportunity to fix University Circle's flaws, says Lillian Kuri, a Cleveland Foundation planner heading a multi-pronged strategy called the Greater University Circle Initiative. "There's enormous investments taking place," says Kuri, one-time executive director of Cleveland Public Art, "and not dealing with this would be a big mistake."

UNIVERSITY CIRCLE NEIGHBORHOOD



JOHN KUNTZ | THE PLAIN DEALER

It's booming around the University Circle neighborhood, and the skyline is changing with such projects as the new Cleveland Clinic parking garage rising along Chester Avenue at East 105th Street.

CHALLENGE: University Circle lacks a street life — places where college students, residents and museum visitors can shop, hang out or grab a bite after a museum visit.

"It doesn't have the feel of a place you just amble around in," said Ronayne. "That's what we aspire for it to be."

RESPONSE: Hope lies in a growing number of developments, big and small.

Principal among them is the "Uptown" development, a \$300 million mix of arts, retail, offices and dwellings along Euclid Avenue, just east of Mayfield Road. It's planned for eight acres owned by Case Western Reserve University and University Circle Inc.

