

Land

Search

Home » A great Public Square for Cleveland

Upcoming Events

« October »						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Practice areas

- Arts & Culture
- Building
- Economy
- Education
- Energy
- Food
- Health
- Land
- Spirit
- Transportation
- Water
- Zero waste

The content access permissions need to be rebuilt. Please visit [this page](#).

A great Public Square for Cleveland

View Edit Outline Track

Submitted by David Beach | Last edited November 15, 2007 - 10:48am

Posted in: [Green infrastructure](#) [Rebuilding cities](#) [Public art](#)

[Add child page](#) 12714 reads [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Print this](#) [Email this](#)

Projects

- Planning & development projects

About

- About us
- Contact
- Donate
- Join
- Network map
- Sustainability jobs

Marc Lefkowitz

- Administer
- Blogs
- Forums
- Image galleries
- Latest images
- My account
- Node locations
- Quotes
- Recent changes
- User locations
- Create content
- Recent posts
- Log out

Users

Online New

There is currently 1 user and 1 guest online.

Online users

Marc Lefkowitz

Over the years people have dreamed about how to make a better place out of Cleveland's Public Square. Right now, the square is a serious underperformer. It's a place that people pass through, not a destination they want to linger in. It's chopped up into four quadrants by busy streets that leave little room for greenspace (see picture at right). Each quadrant is poorly designed and programmed. Overall, it's so bad that the Project for Public Spaces, an organization that works internationally on creating urban places for people, ranked Public Square [seventh in a list](#) of the world's squares most in need of improvement.



However, community forces may be coming together to do something about the square. As more housing is developed downtown, urban greenspace is seen as vital amenity for economic development. And now, thanks to a survey conducted by a class of undergraduate economics students at Case, there is some evidence that Cuyahoga County residents would like to improve the square, and the public investment would bring substantial returns.

The survey was conducted for a public policy competition sponsored by the Richard Shatten Memorial Fund of the Cleveland Foundation. Students interviewed 567 people after sending them an information packet with a proposed new design for the square. The design — a quick plan by City Architecture done for ParkWorks — would make the square more pedestrian friendly by narrowing the cross streets (Ontario Street and Superior Avenue) and resurfacing the roads with brick and low curbs to create a more unified plaza out of the four quadrants. Except during morning and evening rush hours, traffic would be blocked from this pedestrian space. A new restaurant, kiosks, music performance space, winter ice rink, open air market, public art exhibits, and other activities would give people more reasons to spend time in the square.

More than three-quarters of the people interviewed were in favor of this plan, with the majority of those stating that they thought it was important to beautify and revitalize downtown. Moreover, by using a method called "contingent valuation," the students found that people were willing to pay an average of \$53.50 per household per year for a better square. Applied countywide, that would produce \$30 million a year to improve and maintain the square.

The students also found that reconstructing Public Square would bring economic returns. The square would attract 3.9 million more visits, an increase of 50 percent. And if those new visitors spent \$25 a visit, downtown businesses would reap almost \$100 million more a year.

Students concluded that Cuyahoga County residents care about downtown revitalization and care about Public Square as the city's outdoor "living room." If residents were presented with a plausible plan to improve the square and were asked to approve the civic investment, they would likely say yes.

Now, who will champion the effort to make Public Square one of the great urban spaces in the world?

Updates

In August, 2006 Cuyahoga County commissioners awarded the [Downtown Cleveland Alliance \(DCA\)](#) \$150,000 to improve the landscaping and complete a long-term plan for a major makeover of Public Square. DCA is partnering with Parkworks to develop the process for a master plan; the groups hope to make a decision on the process by end of October. Questions about DCA and the Public Square master plan can be directed to the group's president, Joe Marinucci, at 216-736-7799.

Kent State University's CUDC Fall 2006 graduate studio is investigating the redesign of Public Square. Log on [here](#) to see their evolving concepts.

- [Proposed new design for Public Square \(3.24MB PDF file\)](#)
- [Winning student paper from the Shatten competition \(1.94MB PDF file\)](#)

Resources

[10 principles for creating successful squares](#)

- [David Abbott on Public Square and the future of Northeast Ohio](#)
- [Unify Public Square to create a cool public space](#)
- [Working on 10 principles for Cleveland's Public Square](#)

[◀ Green infrastructure](#)
up
[David Abbott on Public Square and the future of Northeast Ohio ▶](#)

May 2, 2006 - 2:55pm

Public Square Redesign

Jtaylor says:

Public Square definitely needs to be redesigned. People need open, public spaces. However, Public Square needs to be more than just more "open"; it needs to be more green as well. New York would not be what it is today if a few visionaries hadn't taken time to lobby for the protection of what is now Central Park. Clevelanders need a central, public park that has a grass lawn connecting the four quadrants....not brick or asphalt. We need to be coming up with designs that create more green space for people to utilize.

A better design would involve the Removing the intersection of Ontario and Superior and replacing it with a large landscaped grass lawn.

- More lanes would be added surrounding the new "Central Park" in order to handle re-routed traffic, similiar to a round-a-bout.
- The central lanes of Ontario would be dug underneath the park...thus keeping the main flow of traffic between Lakeside and I-71. The outside lanes of Ontario would merge into the "round-a-bout".

The proposed brick plaza idea mentioned in the article will only cause more people to walk **through** Public Square, not stay and relax there. The problem is this....the proposal doesn't change Public Square into a **destination**.....that is a major issue. The list of troubled public spaces which the article refered to (created by the Project for Public Spaces) has several squares and piazzas listed that have the same design as the proposal for Public Square. The reason they are on a list of the top 25 public spaces in need of redesign is because they simply help move people from one place to another and don't cause them to stay and enjoy the space.

While it may be true that events could be held in this new piazza design in order to attract people, the site itself will not attract people. If Public Square is redesigned to become one central park...then people will go to the park regardless of whether there is an event because the space is the destination, not just an event. With Public Square as one park, you can still hold events, and they will definitely attract more people, but you are ensuring that the space will attract people even without anything extra.

If Public Square can become a destination in and of itself, then it can be the economic catalyst that the city needs. It will connect the surrounding districts, give residents a place to congregate, attract people to the center of the city (feeding all the surrounding businesses), cause people to stay longer downtown, and will increase the asthetic appeal of the city.

[delete](#) [edit](#) [reply](#) [report to Mollom](#)

May 4, 2006 - 3:24pm

Good point overall

Stephen Gross says:

(1) I agree that a rotary traffic pattern makes sense for public square. There are a few things to

keep in mind in so doing, however. The rotary should be designed to "limit" driving speed, not increase it. We want pedestrians to be encouraged to use the public square space, which means that traffic speed has to be kept slow.

(2) The park concept is pretty solid, overall. A multi-function space in the middle will probably prove the most useful: skating rinks in the winter, orchestra concerts in the summer, etc.

(3) Let's make sure that kiosks/vendors "are" allowed in the park. If it only functions as a park--if it bars commercial uses of the space--pedestrians may stay away. Assuming we want to get the lunch crowd out there, we'll need to have food options available.

(4) Converting public square will eliminate some parking downtown; we have to figure out whether and how to replace those parking spaces.

[delete](#) [edit](#) [reply](#) [report to Mollom](#)

May 2, 2006 - 11:56pm

Public Square Design Competition

BFink says:

There is a ton of unrealized potential at Public Square and many great ways to program and redesign the space. A Parkworks-organized open design competition may present some of the best ideas for how to do this and generate the excitement and momentum needed to make it happen.

[delete](#) [edit](#) [reply](#) [report to Mollom](#)

July 25, 2008 - 12:52am

the river, the mall or PUBLIC SQUARE?

Susan Miller says:

I had to LOL when I cruised over to Patrick Hyland's website this evening and looked at his portfolio with [plans for Public Square](#).

With all the hand wringing over where to put Cleveland's next great debacle (a big box right in downtown that has the promise of the Richfield Coliseum), I was surprised to see that Patrick has given us lots of ideas for Public Square. He's a freakin' one man design competition for the Square!

Can't wait to see the one where he puts the MedicalConCenter on the Square; what a compromise that would be! No danger of falling in... or is there?

Wasn't it David Byrne who had the song about "water flowing underground - same as it ever was" back in the 80s or 90s or something like that?

Somehow this Public Square seems to have become lost in the shuffle (uh... would that be the shuffle of cards that we have built our house of?)

At the public hearing with the Chris Kennedy show (which one was that? I think he did it twice), I asked former Cleveland City Planner, Hunter Morrison what we would do with the Mall site if we didn't build something there, and he said, "the taxpayers of Cleveland will continue to pay to run the pumps that keep the water out of the current underground convention center". Hmmm... did we know we're running pumps down there?

If the BOCC decides to cantilever a huge structure off the side of Ontario perched on the river like a buzzard on a birch branch and we have the hundred year flood (the last one was in 1913), well... somethin's gonna give...

But if we put it right on Public Square it might just stay afloat. Otherwise the IX-Center with a makeover looks pretty good, eh?

How much tax have we collected for this white elephant so far? Maybe we coulda, woulda, shoulda put it on the ballot last summer. But the circus wouldn't have been nearly as good as it's getting right about now.

[delete](#) [edit](#) [reply](#) [report to Mollom](#)

July 25, 2008 - 8:19pm

brilliant satire or next wave urban planning?

Marc Lefkowitz says:

Patrick Hyland deserves some kind of medal for the daring he brings to re-envisioning Public Square. I agree, Public Square has seen its better days. Why not breath some fresh ideas into the space including programming and break down what works and what doesn't in each quadrant. As a whole, are we so unaccustomed to using public spaces that a space devoid of activity and the lure of commerce is lost on us? If so, let's indeed commoditize and brand "Public" Square in a way that supports use but also invites us to stay awhile -- we need a great plaza like they have in European cities that has cool sculpture and movable chairs to sit and stare and sip an espresso or space to throw a frisbee. Let's re-invent it!

[delete](#) [edit](#) [reply](#) [report to Mollom](#)

