



At Big Fun, Cleveland's iconic toy store, you can pick up, among other objects, a *Star Wars* lunch box or that famed leg-shaped lamp from *A Christmas Story*. You can also grab a vintage T-shirt depicting an industrial Cleveland skyline and the city's 1970s slogan, "Cleveland: You've Got to Be Tough."



For the Cleveland of today, a better T-shirt slogan might be "The Revolution Has Begun." Revolutionary changes are happening here — and the mood is different from that in many other large American cities fighting for a place in the global economy. Very different.

An imagine-or-die philosophy is driving the leaders of this onetime industrial powerhouse as Cleveland and the surrounding region pursue a future beyond their "rust belt" roots. The Cleveland they envision replaces idled smokestacks with wind turbines as it lays claim to a place of prominence in the burgeoning alternative energy industry. It leverages its strengths in health science to become a hub for the biomedical

industry. And it shows off its most valuable natural assets: Lake Erie and the Cuyahoga River.

The vision for Cleveland and Northeast Ohio — dubbed the “Cleveland Plus” region in marketing efforts — has called for a revolution in civic thinking. Through groundbreaking initiatives like the Fund for Our Economic Future, the region’s major philanthropic institutions are playing an influential role in reshaping Northeast Ohio. And that innovative approach to economic development is serving as a model for other metropolitan areas throughout the country.

It’s a critical time for Cleveland, as it is for many regions struggling to redefine themselves in a world that keeps getting smaller. This city just may be tough enough to meet the challenge. And it has the T-shirt to prove it.

(How to) Farm Fresh Air

A single wind turbine whirs in front of the Great Lakes Science Center along the lakefront in downtown Cleveland. It’s an impressive sight, and a symbol of things to come. The actual energy produced by the 145-foot structure satisfies only 10–12 percent of the science center’s energy needs. But just wait. What the turbine currently lacks in capacity, it makes up for in potential.



The corporate and philanthropic leaders who sponsored the Great Lakes Science Center’s lone turbine see it as a promise to transform the region into a center for alternative energy research and production. And they’re backing that promise with bold ideas. The most audacious calls for a wind farm off the shore of Lake Erie. The dozen or so turbines that would sprout a few miles offshore would convert the wind that blows off the lake at an average of 16.4 mph into enough electricity to power up to 6,000 homes.

Lake Erie may soon house the world’s first freshwater wind farm.

The Great Lakes Energy Development Task Force — a collaboration involving Cuyahoga County, the City of Cleveland, and various corporate and nonprofit organizations — is leading the initiative with a certain amount of urgency: If the principals act quickly enough, the Lake Erie wind farm they envision could be the first in the world constructed on a body of fresh water.

That sort of achievement would go a long way toward helping Cleveland create a new image as a center of energy innovation. But industries aren’t built on image. The innovators of Cleveland and Northeast Ohio have a strategy that capitalizes on the

region's manufacturing strengths, infrastructure, and workforce in order to attract alternative energy enterprises. Already, the region is home to companies developing fuel cells, improving alternative fuels, and engineering better solar and wind power components.

Betting on the Breeze

In the green-energy spirit of “recycle, reuse, renew,” the region is restructuring its manufacturing capabilities — particularly its expertise in the metal industry — to accommodate the production of wind turbine components. It's also tapping its rich research and technology base, anchored by institutions like the NASA Glenn Research Center and Case Western Reserve University, to help solve some of the problems that plague the alternative energy industry.

One of those challenges is finding a way to store power generated by the sun and wind so that it can be used even when the source isn't delivering. The great hope for cracking that problem lies with the Great Lakes Institute for Energy Innovation at Case. The institute recently received more than \$5.6 million in funding — a \$2 million gift from the Maltz Family Foundation of the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland and a \$3.6 million grant from the Cleveland Foundation — to take a key research role. If the investments pay off, Cleveland could sprint to the lead in the clean-energy race, according to Ronn Richard, president and CEO of the Cleveland Foundation, the oldest and third-largest community foundation in the United States. “If we could develop [solar and wind energy] storage capability at this institute, we would really wipe out the competition,” he says.

The irony of Cleveland one day being associated with cleaner alternative energy is not lost on its civic leaders. Peter Lawson Jones, for one, is happy to trade the image of the burning Cuyahoga River — once so polluted that it literally caught fire in 1969 — for that of a wind turbine spinning on a clean Lake Erie. “This marks a radical departure from the previous reputation,” says Jones, who is president of the Board of Cuyahoga County Commissioners. “This is indeed a new Northeast Ohio, a new Greater Cleveland, when we are looking to come up with ways to spur and support clean energy.”

Building with Biotech

Along with the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum and the Cleveland Orchestra, the Cleveland Clinic completes an unlikely trifecta of renowned Cleveland institutions. The clinic, which started as a small hospital in 1921, is now the largest employer in Northeast Ohio and the second-largest in the state, employing 38,000 people. In the past three years, the medical center has grown by 25 percent, spurred by new construction and expansion of research and health care facilities. The Cleveland Clinic's world-class reputation is earned: It is consistently named by *U.S. News & World Report* as one of the nation's top hospitals. And its heart center is considered without peer in the United States.

For decades the city has celebrated its world famous medical and research facilities, but what has always been a source of civic pride is now becoming a far more crucial part of Cleveland's identity, and the foundation for its economic renaissance. The Cleveland

Clinic, University Hospitals, and Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine — and the technology spinning out of those facilities — are all helping to seed an industry that promises to reshape the city.

And community leaders are working hard to cultivate those seeds. BioEnterprise, for



example, is a new business-accelerating initiative designed to lure medical and bioscience companies to Northeast Ohio and help bring to market the technologies emerging from the region’s medical research institutions.

“We clearly have strengths — the medical field is obvious. Let’s build on those strengths,” says Ronn Richard. “Not only are we terrific at doing heart surgery at the Cleveland Clinic and cancer research at [University Hospitals], but there are also a lot of innovations that are coming out of Case and others. [The Cleveland Foundation] tries to be a catalyst for that kind of innovation.”

The Cleveland Clinic is one of the top hospitals in the United States.

Northeast Ohio’s reputation as a brain-trust hub already has drawn start-ups from out of state. The region’s strength in polymer technology, manufacturing, and electronics makes it a logical magnet for medical device companies. According to a recent survey by BioEnterprise, Ohio ranks second among states in the Midwest in the number of FDA-registered medical device companies. Many of those businesses are traditional manufacturers that have retooled their operations to enter the high-growth health science markets.

This sort of growth is thrilling, especially to civic leaders, who are counting on the bioscience and health care technology industries to be major components — along with alternative energy and information technology — in the high-tech economy they envision for the region’s future.

“It’s very exciting to see how basic research and very creative people can, in fact, develop the biotechnology economy of Cleveland,” says Pamela B. Davis, dean of Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine.

Medicine at the Mall

One ambitious plan calls for the creation of a Medical Mart and convention center complex in downtown Cleveland. Cuyahoga County officials are working with Merchandise Mart Properties in Chicago to design and construct permanent showrooms where planners of hospitals and other medical facilities from all over the world can browse displays of health care equipment and products. The convention center space

would serve as a venue for health care trade shows and conferences, which planners believe would bring new jobs and thousands of visitors to Cleveland. Meanwhile, the institutions at the core of the region's redefined economy continue to gain momentum.

In 2007, the National Institutes of Health awarded a \$64 million grant to Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Medical Consortium to help improve the process of translating medical research into patient treatment. Earlier this year, the Cleveland Clinic was awarded a \$10 million contract to create and lead the Armed Forces Institute of Regenerative Medicine (AFIRM), which will develop technologies to help treat wounded service members.

These sorts of high-profile projects provide evidence that Cleveland and Northeast Ohio will play a prominent role in the future of health science, says Oliver Henkel, chief external affairs officer for the Cleveland Clinic.

"We are committed to making this the economically vibrant region it once was," Henkel says. "We think we have the capacity, with others in the health care industry, to do that."

Raising Capital and Reinventing Pierogies

The prevailing idea is that philanthropy steps in when trouble strikes. Following a hurricane, flood, and the like, the philanthropic community is there. But what about economic troubles that stretch out over the course of a few years? Isn't philanthropic help just as important in those times?

That's the philosophy behind Cleveland and Northeast Ohio's approach to economic development. Representatives from community foundations and nonprofit groups here are working alongside business leaders and politicians (the traditional players in economic planning) to turn the tide of disappearing manufacturing jobs and build a wave of prosperity.

At the center of this novel approach is the Cleveland Foundation's Fund for Our Economic Future. A collaborative philanthropic effort involving more than 100 member organizations from 16 counties, the fund conducts research, makes grants, and engages in civic outreach aimed at strengthening the region's economic competitiveness.

The Fund for Our Economic Future sets a bold precedent for philanthropy's role in economic development issues. The Cleveland Foundation, which is one of the wealthiest community foundations in the nation, with \$1.9 billion in assets, is leading the region's drive to become a center for advanced energy solutions. It is the only community foundation with senior staff members dedicated to economic development as well as international relations. (For example, the foundation helped the city establish ties with Costa Rica, which resulted in a trade deal with that country.) The foundation is partnering with Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson to build a global business strategy for the city.

Brad Whitehead, president of the Fund for Our Economic Future, says it makes sense that philanthropy should play a greater role in civic planning and economic development efforts. As globalization increases and businesses become more transient, there is a growing need for permanence in a community's leadership base, Whitehead says. Community foundations provide that permanence, since their "bottom line" is determined by the prosperity of the region and its citizens, and their traditional areas of focus — education, the arts, and social services — are closely tied to the economic success of the community.

"It became clear that this idea of local philanthropy working on core economic development issues is not something that has any mainstream precedence," says Whitehead of the four-year-old initiative. "Our members have become involved for a variety of reasons. [They] said, 'If not us, then who?'" The experiment's success has drawn the attention of other cities in need of an economic makeover.

"We are sowing the seeds for the next generation of jobs and companies, attracting those jobs and companies and making sure that we have our population prepared to do those jobs in a competitive way," Whitehead says.

Community Lures for Entrepreneurs

In 2002, *Entrepreneur* magazine declared Northeast Ohio the worst place in the country to try to start a business, compared with other large cities and regions. But through efforts backed by the partner organizations of the Fund for Our Economic Future, Northeast Ohio has become fertile ground for new enterprises. According to a report financed by the fund, Northeast Ohio companies raised \$318 million in venture capital in 2007, twice the amount invested in 2006. A large part of that growth is attributable to the region's success in breaking through historically parochial boundaries and forging new partnerships instead. That mission is at the heart of the Fund for Our Economic Future.

"The fund itself is a partnership of the philanthropic community, and we are wholly committed to partnering with our business and civic leaders," Whitehead says. "The only way you move a \$170 billion economy, the only way that happens, is when people work together. It is way beyond any institution or any one sector."

Pop Culture, High Culture, and One Wild Dumpling

While Cleveland's philanthropists are busy raising capital, the city's foodies are just as busy building a better pierogi. A pierogi, if you aren't familiar with the delight, is a traditional Polish or Slavic dumpling typically stuffed with potato, meat, sauerkraut, or cheese, and it's a Northeast Ohio mainstay. Clevelanders — from Parma's first-generation immigrants to Shaker Heights foodies — know that some of the best homemade pierogies can be found at the West Side Market, just across the Hope Memorial Bridge from downtown. (That's also where you'll find the freshest produce, every cut of meat imaginable, and arguably the best gyro in the country, served from the tiny food stall of a quiet guy named Steve.)

This is the *humble* pierogi, served with sautéed onions and sour cream in the kitchens of Slavic and Eastern European families throughout blue-collar Cleveland.

Now meet the pierogi of the other Cleveland, the city known for world-class dining, Playhouse Square Center, and the Cleveland Orchestra. This pierogi you'll find on the menu at Michael Symon's Lola. Symon, the latest champion on the Food Network's *Iron Chef*, takes his hometown dish uptown, stuffing it with beef cheeks and serving it with wild mushroom gravy, horseradish, and crème fraîche.

Cleveland itself is much like that versatile pierogi. No matter how it's served up, it has a flavor all its own — and it's always uniquely Cleveland. Samantha Fryberger, director of communications for Positively Cleveland, the city's convention and visitors bureau, says newcomers are often surprised by the diversity of experiences the city has to offer.

Interested in pop culture? There's plenty here. Visit the house where Ralphie lived with his Red Rider BB gun and that atrocious leg lamp in the 1983 film *A Christmas Story*. See the Cub Scout uniform of Doors singer Jim Morrison at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. Then head to Big Fun in Cleveland Heights, where you'll stumble across playthings you haven't seen since the days of metal lunch boxes and music on 8-track.

If high culture is more your taste, consider an afternoon at University Circle, the most concentrated square mile of arts and culture in the United States. Catch an evening show at Playhouse Square, one of the nation's largest performing arts districts. Or listen to the world-renowned Cleveland Orchestra.

After the performance, move on to a memorable meal at an award-winning fine-dining restaurant, like the Baricelli Inn in historic Little Italy, or at a trendy spot in Tremont or the Warehouse District.

The good news is that all these experiences would cost much more outside of Cleveland. Fryberger suggests, with the money you save, you can afford to spend a night in a luxury hotel, and, perhaps, treat yourself to a plate of pierogies.

— Candace Goforth (reprinted from *Continental Magazine*)