

An Open Letter to the Community from Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, Councilman Mike Polensek, and Western Reserve Land Conservancy

We want to thank the community for both their interest in and support for the Euclid Beach Neighborhood Plan.

Please know that we have and will continue to proceed with conviction knowing we have engaged the community in a meaningful, thorough, and thoughtful process. Along with our many partners, we fully understand this is a project that must be managed with the utmost compassion and respect, and we are committed to doing so. We want you to know:

- Plans for Euclid Beach were not formed hastily. The planning process, which began in February 2022, was led by Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, Greater Collinwood Development Corporation, Cleveland City Councilman Mike Polensek, and Western Reserve Land Conservancy. These project partners, and others, have been engaging with the Greater Collinwood community and the residents of the Euclid Beach Mobile Home Community (EBMHC) for more than a year.
- Addressing the concerns and needs of the residents in a compassionate and fair manner is a top priority for all project partners. To complete the recommendations of the Euclid Beach Neighborhood Plan, residents of the community will need to transition out of the property by September 1, 2024. The project partners along with a diverse list of additional, local nonprofit agencies will work diligently with the tenants to connect them to housing resources and provide supportive services.

The land represents a prime lakefront location, ideal for public use, yet it is disconnected and underutilized. Cleveland is often and perhaps rightfully criticized for not doing enough to make Lake Erie more accessible for everyone. In fact, there have been five other planning efforts over the last 75 years that made the same recommendation of the Euclid Beach Neighborhood Plan: consolidation of Euclid Beach, Villa Angela Park, and Wildwood Marina into a single, unified open and accessible public park. **This is a unique opportunity to finally make that “big idea” into a reality and do so in a responsible way.**

We are aware of misinformation that was recently spread regarding the carefully planned proposal for the future of Euclid Beach Park, and we want to make sure you have the facts.

- Western Reserve Land Conservancy bought the Euclid Beach Mobile Home Community in 2021. Councilman Polensek contacted the nonprofit in March 2019 to ask for its involvement after the prior owner reached out to him about selling the park to a new owner to turn the property into high-rise apartments or a commercial retail center. We were bidding against private developers when we bought the property. Had private developers – likely from out-of-town – acquired the property, **the new owner would have had the legal ability to close the mobile home community with only 180 days of notice**, the minimum amount of time as required by law. If that scenario happened, it is most certain that the EBMHC would now be closed, residents would be out with no concern for their financial situation or welfare, and the site would be under construction for new high rise apartments or another unwanted use. Similarly, Western Reserve Land Conservancy could have closed EBMHC and provided 180 days’ notice to residents to vacate the property. Instead, it made significant upgrades to the mobile home community, froze rent increases for 14 months, and pledged to residents that no change in their tenancy would occur until after the Euclid Beach Neighborhood Plan was developed. In multiple tenant-only meetings, the Land Conservancy made it

clear to residents that it would honor and implement the final recommendations of the Euclid Beach Neighborhood Plan.

- The Land Conservancy is not pursuing this project to make money or to develop the land; all of their efforts are focused on creating a transformational new park on the shores of Lake Erie. Their mission is to restore and conserve land and to improve environmental conditions that uplift **all** communities of people. Despite the risks presented by acquiring this property – which after decades of neglect by the previous owner had been left in a dilapidated state with significant and costly sewage and water issues – Western Reserve Land Conservancy decided to make the acquisition *because it was the right thing to do*, both for this community and for the residents on site. The Land Conservancy went at great financial and reputational risk and secured the property for public purpose and use, now and for future generations. They operate EBMHC at a significant financial loss every month. Western Reserve Land Conservancy has provided the residents with an extraordinary amount of time and notice they otherwise would not have had, and with unprecedented resources to help them pay current and past-due rent, lower their bills, improve their conditions, and now to compassionately and generously assist them with relocation services.
- It is simply not possible to relocate the residents into another section of the park. To do so would result in prohibitively expensive infrastructure costs that would not be affordable to the residents and would not allow for the creation of a public park along Lake Erie's shoreline on the east side of Cleveland.

We are excited to be in a position to finally realize the decades-old dream of a breathtaking new park on our Great Lake, which will be nearly 150 acres in size, will run from Lakeshore Boulevard to the beaches of Lake Erie, and will include world-class park amenities that will benefit the Greater Collinwood community and the entire Greater Cleveland region.
