



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## HealthLine is expected to be a key driver of University Circle's residential growth by Robert Sberna

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Affordable housing and seasonal programming are attracting visitors

and new residents

By Robert Sberna

With the opening of RTA's HealthLine, University Circle's cultural, educational and medical institutions are only a 20-minute ride along Euclid Avenue from downtown Cleveland. Serving as a connecting link between two of Northeast Ohio's largest employment centers, the hybrid bus/rapid line is expected to help drive residential development in University Circle and its adjacent neighborhoods.

"We want to leverage this transit-oriented corridor to make University Circle a full-service vibrant urban district," said Chris Ronayne, president of University Circle Inc., the area's community development corporation.

Each year, about three million people visit University Circle's various attractions. Ronayne said he hopes to convert many of those visitors into residents.

"We're getting the word out that University Circle's rental housing is a tremendous value," he said. "Affordable housing is one of the marquee reasons to live here. Our average monthly rental is about \$750 for a one-bedroom apartment. It's hard to beat that value. As an example, you'd be paying two to three times more in New York City."

Ronayne said the new transit line has the potential to serve as a linchpin in the expansion of University Circle's residential sector, which is projected to add 1,000 new housing units over the next five years.

Along with the renovation of several neighborhood luxury hotels into rental units and for-sale condos, the planned \$300 million Uptown development will add hundreds of new apartments and condos, restaurants, stores, and entertainment along Euclid Avenue. The project, which is spearheaded by developers MRN Ltd. and Nathan Zaremba, will be anchored at one end by the relocated Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland. The other anchor will be the Cleveland Institute of Art, which is moving its operations from East Boulevard to its campus in the Joseph McCullough Center for the Visual Arts.

Ronayne noted that plans call for the addition of 350 housing units under UCI's portfolio.

"We are also focusing on the development of a new hotel, as well as structuring garage space in University Circle to accommodate our growth," he said.

Discover the Circle

Since taking the helm of UCI in 2005, Ronayne said he has found gratification in seeing people from all over Northeast Ohio discover University Circle through its cultural institutions and various events and festivals.

"We have the ability to introduce people to a district that is one of the best hopes for this region," he said. "From every respect, this district represents more than a quarter of what's being built in the city of Cleveland at-large. Institutions such as the Cleveland Clinic are growing, and it's satisfying to leverage that growth into the development of University Circle."

#### Rental incentives

If you're currently looking for rental housing in University Circle and you're an employee of Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals, and several other University Circle institutions, you may be eligible for a one-month rental reimbursement of up to \$1,400.

Offered by UCI's Greater Circle Living rental program, the incentive is geared for renters who sign "new" one-year leases at specific apartment buildings. The incentive is not available for lease renewals.

Along with the Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals, the rental program is open to full-time employees of Case Western Reserve University, the Cleveland Museum of Art, and Judson at University Circle.

Genna Petrolla, Greater Circle Living manager, said the key objective of the program is to spur residential growth in the University Circle district.

"We want to increase the liveliness of this area and give employees an opportunity to live near their workplaces," she explained. "This really is a premier urban district with proximity to the greatest concentration of cultural institutions and medical facilities anywhere in the nation. Greater Circle Living renters can take advantage of being able to walk to work and save on energy costs."

Along with its rental program, Greater Circle Living offers incentive programs for homebuyers. Full-time employees of any nonprofit institution in Greater University Circle are eligible for a \$5,000 forgivable loan for the purchase of an owner-occupied home in the district. Employees of Case Western Reserve University, the Cleveland Clinic, the Cleveland Museum of Art, Judson at University Circle, and University Hospitals may be eligible for an additional \$10,000 forgivable loan for the purchase of an owner-occupied home.

The Greater Circle Living initiative is funded by Case Western Reserve University, the Cleveland Clinic, the Cleveland Foundation, the Cleveland Museum of Art, Judson at University Circle, the Kent H. Smith Charitable Trust, the Surdna Foundation, and University Hospitals.

For more information about Greater Circle Living's programs, visit [www.universitycircle.org](http://www.universitycircle.org) or call (216) 707-4642. Information is also available at the Visitor and Living in the Circle Center, 11330 Euclid Avenue.

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Photo: Chris Ronayne, president of University Circle Inc.

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