

# ***Cuyahoga Valley Initiative Idea Package Summary Destination***

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**Make the Cuyahoga River Valley the focal point of recreation and leisure activities for both residents and visitors.**

## **Introduction**

The Greater Cleveland Area has many outstanding attractions. However, the Cuyahoga Valley is home to a variety of resources that have the potential to become a world-class destination. The vision of the Destination Cuyahoga Valley idea package is to make the Valley the core of the region's efforts to become a destination by capitalizing on the unique history of the valley and by showcasing those activities that will restore both its economic and ecological health.



The traditional approach to the creation of metropolitan tourist economies is to build large facilities and attractions that capture a share of the market from similar venues in other metropolitan areas and tourist destinations. An alternate approach is to use public policy and resources to shape a community that is such a compelling destination, that a constant stream of visitors will result. Laurie Olin, a renowned landscape architect once told Cleveland audiences, "If you have a great community, the rest of the world will come and enjoy it with you". That is the approach proposed in the Destination Cuyahoga Valley Idea Package.

The vision of the Destination Cuyahoga Idea Package is to invest public resources for rediscovering our heritage and unveiling a world-class destination by applying best practices of historical interpretation and adaptive re-use. The vision is to demonstrate the area's transition to a 21<sup>st</sup> century community, based on the principles of ecological design. It can be accomplished by presenting side-by-side the history of the industrial era with those activities that will produce a cleaner, greener future that the region must have to propel it to the status of a world-class community. The vision is also to deepen the understanding of current residents to the historical and cultural roots of this region, while at the same time allowing them to remake the valley as the future social center of this community. Fostering physical and cultural connections to the resources of the Valley is a key to implementing the vision.

## **Existing Conditions**

The Cleveland Convention and Visitors Bureau estimates over 9 million visitors visit the Cleveland region for various attractions such as the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Great Lakes Science Center, museums, sports events and recreational activities. It also identifies Cleveland as the 14<sup>th</sup> largest destination market area (DMA) in the United States. The Cleveland DMA includes 17 counties from Erie County on the west to Ashtabula County on the east to Tuscarawas County on the south. This base of visitors presents an initial market for promoting the resources of the Cuyahoga Valley as part of the overall tourism package of the region.

## Attractions in the Valley

The Cuyahoga Valley's historic, industrial and cultural heritage has been recognized through its designation as a National Heritage Corridor in 1996. The Corridor stretches from Cleveland in the north to New Philadelphia in the south. The management plan developed for the corridor proposes to tell the story of the canal, and its impacts on the region, by providing residents and visitors choices of multi-modal journeys through the corridor. These journeys would link to a variety of heritage venues that highlight important resources associated with the canal and its legacy. The northern terminus at the proposed Canal Basin Park near Downtown Cleveland is planned as a major interpretation center. Other nodes that would serve as gateways to the corridor are proposed at Harvard Avenue, the Ohio and Erie Canal Reservation, Bacci Park, Rockside Road, Hemlock Road Canal Visitor Center and Station Road Bridge.

The Canalway Ohio Scenic Byway has been designated as part of the National Scenic Byways Program. In the northern section of the County this routes is broken into three legs:

- West Section – Schaaf, Broadview and West 25<sup>th</sup>
  - Central Section – East 49<sup>th</sup> and Independence
  - East Section – Warner and Broadway South of Granger Road
- the Byway route runs along Canal Road. The Towpath Trail, which ends at Harvard Road, and the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railway, which ends at Rockside Road, are also proposed to be extended northward through the Valley to Downtown Cleveland and the Lakefront.



The Cuyahoga Valley National Park located in the southern portion of the valley is the 15<sup>th</sup> most visited national park in the country with over 3.5 million visitors experiencing the early industrial age of the Ohio & Erie Canal and agricultural farming reflective of past practices. The Cleveland Metroparks has extended preservation of open space northward along the Canal between Rockside Road and Harvard Road with the establishment of the Ohio and Erie Canal Reservation. The Reservation's Canalway Center and improvements in the park itself highlight infrastructure found in the valley and begin to make a connection between the natural environment and the improvements made to foster human habitation and economic development. Despite these developments, the region has yet to tap its potential to serve the emerging world-wide markets of eco- and industrial tourism.

An extensive park system, the Cleveland Metroparks, encircles the Valley, providing an “emerald necklace” that connects almost the entire county to the Cuyahoga Valley through this “greenbelt”. These parks allow for a number of recreational opportunities for residents as well as out-of-town visitors.

There are unique industrial processes within the valley that present the opportunity to expand industrial tourism and broaden the range of experiences for visitors. Three of the most intriguing place-based industries within the Valley involve the mining of salt and haydite and the production of steel. Each of these industries is located within the valley because of valley's proximity to the natural resources that are either the product of, or the basic input to, the production process. The

operations of these facilities are unique experiences that would allow the visitor to fully understand the Cuyahoga Valley's natural and industrial heritage in an exciting atmosphere.

The salt mines began production in Cleveland in 1962. The mines extend 1,800' beneath Lake Erie. They are one section of a tremendous salt deposit more than 40' thick, extending over an estimated 70,000 sq. mi. area under Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, and Ontario. The mines are developed using the room-and-pillar mining method: 45'-wide rooms are carved from the deposit, and 100' pillars of salt are left to hold up the mine roof and overburden. By 1993 approximately 6.75 square miles had been mined and the mazes and tunnels of the mine extended 2.5 miles out under Lake Erie. The mine provides salt to the entire Great Lakes.

The Hydraulic-Press Brick Company, located in Independence, mines the mineral haydite, which is used in the brick making process. It is the only place in the country to mine haydite and the company expects to continue its mining operation for at least the next 70 years. This lightweight shale, clay and slate aggregate is also used in a variety of other uses from aggregate for high performance lightweight structural concrete and masonry units, to soil conditioners, landscaping mulch and geotechnical fills.

The history of Cleveland has strong ties to the history of the steel making industry. Cleveland's steel industry is one of the largest in the country. The steel mill has been an icon in the Valley for over 100 years and was the lifeblood of many of the adjacent neighborhoods such as Tremont and Slavic Village during the late 1800's and early to mid 1900's. The manufacturing of steel is a magnificent process that involves massive machinery and a sequence of steps that can provide unique experiences for visitors. The valley has both operating and mothballed facilities that could be incorporated into the telling of this story. The industrial interconnection between the steel industry and other manufactures for items such as machine tools, sewing machines and clothing is one example of how growing industries benefited by linking to one another. Innovation and entrepreneurship was also a key component in the City's success. Steel-hulled ships began to be manufactured, including the first steel bulk carrier on the Great Lakes. Another innovation involved an even more efficient way to handle materials, the Hulett Unloader. These two Cleveland innovations confirmed the city's position as a leading Great Lakes port.

The Valley is also the location of John D. Rockefeller's original oil refining facilities which made the City the center of that industry in the 1870's. In part because of the refiner's need for sulfuric acid, Cleveland's chemical industry arose. Famous names in the paint and varnish industries such as Sherwin, Williams and Glidden located their facilities in the Valley.

The intense level of industry in the Valley couldn't have happened without the requisite infrastructure to support it. Because of the City's topography and the many curves in the river, the City had to build a great many more bridges than the average city possesses. The Lower Cuyahoga Valley is home to 35 bridges of assorted styles and size that allowed trucks, trains, and ships to move goods and people through and to the Valley. It is one of the highest concentrations of bridges in the world. The City is also the crossroads of many distribution related infrastructure such as rail lines, pipelines and communications lines. The railroad roundhouse, located off West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street is another historic example of that support infrastructure.

This industrial activity in the Valley is what also attracted many immigrant groups to Cleveland. It began with construction and operation of the canals and continued through the industrial revolution. The Heritage Corridor Management Plan identified the industrial valley and Cleveland urban neighborhoods as the segment of the heritage corridor that can best convey the story of technological ingenuity, entrepreneurship and the evolution of communities and immigrant groups. The Irishtown Bend archaeological district, the West Side Market, the many churches of Tremont, ethnic social halls and neighborhoods of worker housing assist in telling the story of the impact of the Valley on the development Greater Cleveland.

Many of the industrial processes that made Cleveland prosperous had a negative effect on the



underlying ecology of the Valley and health of adjacent neighborhoods. Often byproducts of industrial processes were simply dumped into the river. They also often altered the natural features of the Valley and affected its natural functions. Numerous streams such as Walworth Run, Kingsbury Run, Morgan Run and Burk Branch have been covered and culverted. Dams built on the river and the removal of tree canopy has affected migratory routes of fish and birds. In 1969, national news was made when the environmental abuse finally took its toll, and millions of people watched the river burn. This incident was responsible for the resurgence of the environmental movement and led to the Clean Water Act and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. As the reliance of heavy industry has diminished in the local economy, a number of major industrial sites, such as the steel works on the west side of the river have become available for redevelopment and restoration.

As the baby boomers age, the trend of experiential tourism continues to expand as they seek “authentic” experience destinations as an alternative to “Disneyfied” and pre-fabricated attractions. These types of venues continue to expand as the demand for eco-tourism and industrial tourism experiences rise. The market for these authentic experiences is global with settings as diverse as the Amazon and France serving as the locations of venues targeting ecological and industrial tourism. The marketplace has become popular enough that the eco-tourism community has developed an eco-tourism certification program to verify destinations as truly authentic, and not just marketed as authentic.

### **Living City**

Since the early days of the City’s founding, the Cuyahoga Valley has been seen as separating the City into east and west sides. Because so much of the Valley has been devoted to industrial uses, many residents that don’t work in the Valley usually pass over it on one of the high level freeway bridges that traverse it.

In fact there are a number of major community facilities located in, or at the rim of the Valley. Their accessibility to adjacent neighborhoods or their orientation to the river could be stronger in some cases, however. The district maybe most associated with the Cuyahoga River is the Flats. Although this area has fallen on harder times recently, it has been one of the most visited places in the State of Ohio. The Flats has been seen as a one dimensional district catering to dining, nightclubs and entertainment and has been somewhat isolated from adjacent neighborhoods by a lack of attractive entryways and the land uses surrounding it. In addition to bars the Flats is also home to a number of restaurants, music venues, marinas and site-seeing companies. Housing that has been developed in the Warehouse District and on the East and West Bank of the Flats has started to lessen the Flats’ relative isolation. A better connection between the Flats and the Lakefront has also been identified as a way to expand the attraction of the district.

An entertainment node has also begun to form on Canal Road just south of I-480 in the community of Valley View. Cinemark has constructed a 24-screen movie theatre and a cluster of chain restaurants have located adjacent to it. It is a suburban style development that includes large areas of parking. The node is relatively isolated from the neighborhoods above the rim of the



valley and is not served by public transit. A golf driving range and putt-putt course is located on the west side of the Canal across from it. This node is located just north of the Rockside Road trailhead of the Towpath Trail.

The Cuyahoga Valley National Park covers much of the Valley south of Rockside Road and the Ohio and Erie Canal Reservation also protects a corridor of open space along the Canal and Towpath Trail north of Rockside Road to Harvard Road. The northern terminus of the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railway is currently at Rockside Road. South of Rockside Road the National Park dominates the landscape and presents a very natural feel to the Valley. A section of the Buckeye Trail, a hiking trail that traverses the State of Ohio, runs through the Valley between Brecksville and Walton Hills. The area's ski slopes and a water-slide park are also located near the southern border of the County. Between Rockside and Warner Roads, adjacent retail and light industrial development has a negative impact on the aesthetics and comfort level of this portion of the Ohio and Erie Canal Reservation. The parks are well used and provide a major public recreation opportunity in the heart of the Valley. Most people must drive to the parks to use them. The proposed extension of the Towpath Trail to Downtown Cleveland will bring it close to more densely developed urban neighborhoods.

A number of recreational user groups have recently shown interest in developing or expanding facilities in the area including rowers, mountain bike riders and skateboarders. The Western Reserve Rowing Foundation currently leases a facility near the Carter Road Bridge just across from the proposed Canal Basin Park. This group is looking to expand its facility and developed a center that could also accommodate other recreational opportunities such as a climbing wall. Balancing the opportunities presented by such recreational groups with ongoing industrial operations and capitalizing on the existing industrial character as the setting for recreational venues is a challenge for opening up the Valley to new users while at the same time not losing its unique charm.

There are also a number of major activity and community centers that are located on the rim of the Valley but which don't have a very strong orientation towards it. Near Downtown Cleveland, Tower City, Gund Arena and Jacobs Field are located along the eastern rim. Neighborhood centers in

Ohio City, Tremont, Slavic Village, Brooklyn Centre and Old Brooklyn are very close to the Valley but don't have a strong connection physical or visual connection towards it. The same is true for suburban community centers in Cuyahoga Heights, Independence, Brecksville and Garfield Heights.

The development of stronger and more attractive connections and gateways, promoting development patterns that extends existing neighborhoods fabric into the Valley and the identification of new uses and nodes of activity in the Valley are concepts for integrating the Valley more fully into the rest of the region.

### **Making Connections**

Making connections not only involves how people are able to physically access and

move through the Valley but it also involves how people are able to connect with the history and the functions of the Valley.

**Transportation Access**—The Cuyahoga Valley National Park located in the southern portion of the valley is the 15<sup>th</sup> most visited national park in the country and is visited over 3 million times a year.



This resource, however, is largely disconnected from the lower sections of the Valley and the Lake Erie shoreline. Plans to extend the Towpath Trail and the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railway north toward Downtown Cleveland are currently under development. Canal Road is the main north-south road that runs through the Valley in the southern portion of the County. North of Granger Road, however, the roadway system requires drivers to exit the Valley. It's not until the area around Fleet and Clark Avenues that one can re-enter the Valley and drive toward Downtown Cleveland. Very little public transit serves the Valley. Most bus service is along the main streets that parallel the Valley in the neighborhoods just beyond the Valley walls. A number of buses use I-77 to transport commuters from Downtown to the southern suburbs.

At Downtown Cleveland a number of transit lines converge at the Valley. The hub of Cleveland's rapid transit lines, Tower City is located on the rim of the Valley. Transit lines that serve both the east and west (including Cleveland Hopkins Airport) sides of the City meet at this location. The Waterfront Line, which services the Flats and the Lakefront also connects to Tower City. Tower City is also the hub of the area's bus service.

There are a number of private companies that provide touring opportunities for visitors. Lolly the Trolley is a company that provides tours of Downtown and the Cleveland area in a motorized coach designed to look like a trolley car. The Nautica Queen and the Goodtime III are ships that provide regularly scheduled sightseeing tours of the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie. The Cuyahoga River is regularly dredged for ship traffic and is navigable only up to 5.8 miles from the mouth of the river. Beyond that the river is too shallow for most boat traffic. Some individuals do canoe in the upstream portions of the river but water quality issues discourage that type of activity.

The most prevalent access to the Valley from the surrounding neighborhoods is by automobile. There are numerous gateways to the Valley via east-west oriented streets. Many of these entryways have extremely good views of the Valley. Other than the occasional corporate limit sign, there are no improvements at these gateways that enhance or capitalize on these views. There are a limited number of safe and attractive access points to the Valley for pedestrian or bicyclists. A study by the National Park, the County's Greenspace Plan and the Towpath Trail Extension study have identified numerous opportunities to connect surrounding neighborhoods via trails and open space to the Towpath Trail. More work needs to be done to identify funding, responsibility and design of these connections.

The Valley is close to a number of ports of entry from outside the region. There is the potential to access the Valley from a wide range of transportation choices in the vicinity of Downtown Cleveland. Amtrak and Greyhound each have stations in Downtown Cleveland. Burke Lakefront Airport is also less than a mile away. Although in close proximity, there is room for improvement for connecting these facilities to the Downtown and the Valley.

In addition, there has been increased interest in not only connecting to outside the region via land and air, but also by water. The feasibility of ferry service for passengers and cars between Port Stanley, Ontario and Cleveland is being looked into. Transient boaters, those looking to dock their boats for a few days, have also been identified as a market that is not being adequately served in the Cleveland area. Cruise ship tours currently target the upper Great Lakes, but Cleveland is not a destination on a water tour that packages this area as part of the larger Great Lakes region.

Eco-Tourism—Lake Erie Coastal Ohio, Inc. is a nonprofit organization formed in 2002 to create a comprehensive resource-based tourism strategy for Lake Erie. The strategy is to use natural, cultural and historical based resources into a marketing tool that expands the tourism economy and strengthens community resources. The components have been framed by the natural and historical resources of the entire Ohio coastline. The themes include: Historical - Working Waterfronts, The First West, Life on Lake Erie, Pursuit of Leisure and Legacy of Freedom. The strategy has also been sorted by landscape features such as rivers, streams, bays, ports and harbors. This work should be integrated into the



Valley's resource network so that it becomes an integral part of the Lake Erie landscape and cultural network.

The Cuyahoga Valley National Park is also working on initiatives to strengthen the interpretive capacity of the Valley. The Cleveland Convention Visitors Bureau has an "All-American City" tour package that connects Cleveland with Pittsburgh and Buffalo on the tour itinerary. However, the expansion of this tour within the framework of Lake Erie and the Great Lakes is still being developed. The Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor is also working on a project to market the corridor through logos and signage. Determining which stories to highlight and how best to tell them as an interactive and inspiring experience for both visitors and residents is an important component of any developed strategy.

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While there are hotels located throughout the Cleveland area, within the vicinity of the Valley there are two main clusters in Cuyahoga County. One cluster is in Downtown Cleveland and the other is around the I-77 and Rockside Road interchange. Hotels within Downtown are typically oriented toward convention business, freeways or other Downtown attractions. The cluster of hotels at I-77 and Rockside are there because of its easy freeway access and central location within the entire region. There are very few other options for people to stay in the Valley. There is a youth hostel located off the Towpath Trail near the Boston Mills area. Other accommodation opportunities such as camp sites, transient boat docks or bed and breakfasts are non-existent.

## **Components**

### **VIII. Attractions**

#### **A. Experiencing the City at Work**

- Salt Mines
- Steel and Related Industries
- Bridges/Infrastructure
- Shipping

#### **B. Heritage**

- Canal
- Industrial
- Ethnic/Institutions

#### **C. EcoTourism**

- Regeneration Projects/New Technologies
- Clean-Water Act/Environmental History
- Migratory Routes/Habitat

#### **D. New Parks/Open Space – Support Facilities**

#### **E. Conventional Tourism**

- Museums
- Sports
- Shopping

## **X. Living City**

### **Strengthen Neighborhoods**

- Access to Shopping, Eating & Drinking
- Recreation Venues – Open Space, Music, Specific User Groups
- Identify New Nodes of Activity
- Local Distinctiveness
- Local Stories

Highlight Local Design/Infrastructure Improvements/Public Art  
Natural Features/Interpretation  
Working River

## IX. Making Connections

To Outside Region - Gateways

Trains – Amtrak

Planes – Burke, Hopkins

Boat – Ferry, Great Lakes Cruise, Transient Boaters

Bus - Greyhound

Automobiles – Interstate

Programmatic – Regional/State/National Routes, Programs

Within Region – Link Together Multiple Modes

Transit – Rapids, Waterfront Line, Loop Bus, Other Bus Lines

Rail - Scenic Railway

Trails - Towpath Trail, Neighborhood Connectors

Private Enterprise – Lolly the Trolley, Goodtime, Nautica, Taxis (Other Rental Enterprises –  
Skates, Boats, Bikes)

Distinct Zones – Lake, Canal, Neighborhoods, City Centers

To Neighborhoods, Physical Connections and Opportunity for Input

Places to Stay – Hotels, Camping, B&B, Hostels

Information

Interpretation – Stories, Venues, Design of Improvements

Way finding – Sign System, Streetscape

Visual – Scenic overlooks

## Opportunities

Expansion of the **Heritage plan** for the valley to include the area's role in the industrial revolution. The stories of the steel, chemical, automobile and related industries should be highlighted. This initiative should include both protection of representative historic structures as well development of opportunities to experience unique ongoing industrial activities. The importance of the Valley as a crossroads for transportation and distribution activities should be highlighted. Infrastructure improvements needed to accommodate this industrial activity, such as the concentration of bridges near the mouth of the river, should be an important part of this story. Specific ideas could include:

- Steel heritage center or tours of steel making processes,
- Rail museum,
- Pipeline museum,
- Interpretive program for the concentration of bridges near the river's mouth,
- Reuse of lower level of Detroit-Superior Bridge,  
Interpretation or public participation in archaeological site at Irishtown Bend.

Development of an **Eco-Tourism market** based upon activities associated with ecological restoration of the valley and the creation of urban ecological innovations for businesses. Develop opportunities to expand fisheries with wetland restoration and recreation, birding, plant habitat, experiential urban ecological innovations, regenerative ecology, and organic farming. Utilize the Cuyahoga County Greenspace Plan as a base for guiding creation of a continuous environmentally protected corridor. Develop codes and guidelines that coordinate with the national ecotourism certification program. Eco-tours at regeneration sites, like the Kingsbury Run area, could be established. Habitats that support migratory routes along the Valley and the Lake could be reestablished and could increase opportunities for bird-watching. Urban agriculture could be reintroduced into the Valley.

**Marketing of Greater Cleveland as part of the larger Great Lakes region** by developing activities and facilities that support water-oriented travel. Opportunities to attract ferry service, Great Lakes cruises and transient boaters should be investigated. Potential facilities needs and



locations should be studied along with how these facilities could be connected to the rest of the city.

Creating improvements that strengthen the interface and connections between various forms of transportation in and around the Valley. The area around Canal Basin and Tower City has great potential for developing connections between transportation options related to the Heritage Corridor and those that connect to other parts of the City.

Introducing a wider variety of recreational opportunities within the Valley and encouraging the accessory uses that support those new uses. The Western Reserve Rowing Foundation's plan for a new and expanded boat house facility is a good example of such an opportunity. The development of a camp site that would cater to out of town hikers or bicyclists is an example of an accessory facility that would support new users of the Valley.

The possible location and design of a proposed new convention center should also take factors into account such as easy and attractive connections to the heritage venues developed in the Valley.

Developing better connections between the Valley and historic town and neighborhood centers and identifying those locations within the Valley that can be developed as new nodes of activity that can provide 24 hour a day vitality to the Valley. The development of guidelines that promote a desired character for these places and connections would promote the preferred development. This has been accomplished in Slavic Village's Mill Creek development. The local community development group connected unused land to the amenities afforded by Mill Creek, which connects directly to the Cuyahoga Valley, and built a housing development that now provides moderately priced housing in an older urban neighborhood.

Creating a way finding system that allows people to easily move through and along the Valley and provides them with information on the history and current events.

### **Current Efforts/Activities/Reports**

Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor – Marketing Study

Canalway Ohio Scenic Byway

North Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Extension Alignment

Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railway Extension to Downtown Cleveland

Cuyahoga County Greenspace Plan

Coastal Ohio – Tourism Plan for the Ohio shoreline

Cuyahoga RAP' Wetland Delineation Study

Cuyahoga Valley National Park /Countryside Conservancy – Rural Farming Program

Cleveland Lakefront Plan

Historical society

### **List of Technical Experts/Potential Partners**

Tim Donovan – Canalway Ohio

John Debo – Superintendent, CVNP

Jennie Vaserhelyi – Chief of Interpretation, CVNP

Dave Nolan - Cleveland Convention & Visitors Bureau

Melinda Huntley – Coastal Ohio

Bobbi Reichtell – Slavic Village

Ryan McKenzie – Eco-City Cleveland

Jim Pressler – Flats Oxbow Association

Dave Gilbert – Greater Cleveland Sports Commission

Chris Carmody – Cleveland Film Commission  
Carol Poh Miller  
Owners of Lolly the Trolley, the Nautica Queen and Goodtime III  
Lillian Kuri—Cleveland Public Art

**Maps :**

1. Destination – Historical, Cultural, Industrial and Recreational Resources

