



COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP VISIT 2025 CINCINNATI, OH

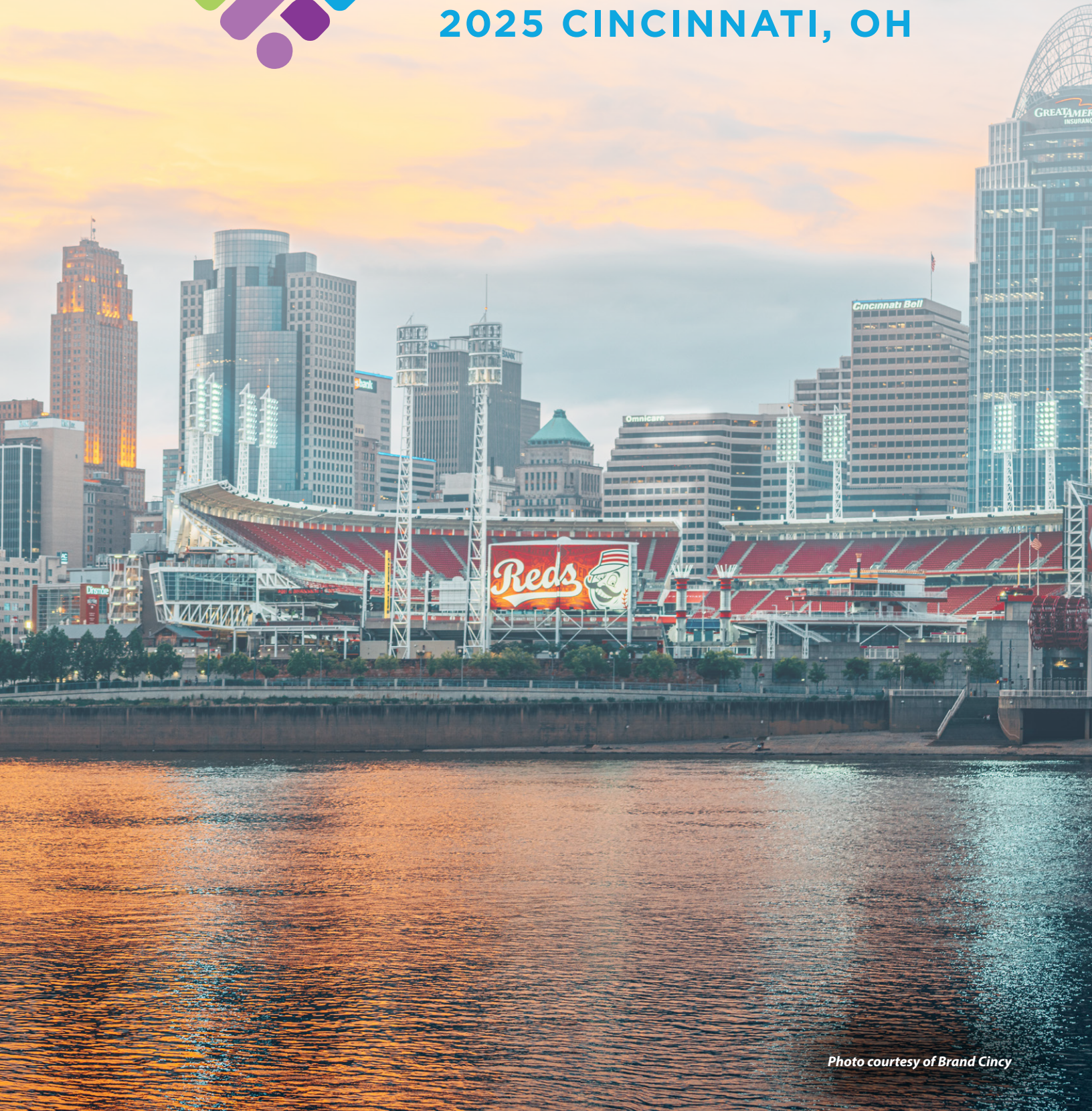


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Cincinnati: Embracing Ambition

Cincinnati may be larger than Springfield, but its innovative response to modern challenges made it a compelling and aspirational destination for the Chamber's 31st annual Community Leadership Visit. Across eight sessions over two days, Cincinnati's leaders demonstrated that progress depends on trust, alignment, and a willingness to act before every variable is known.

Over the past 20 years, Cincinnati focused on reversing decades of stagnant population growth and disinvestment in downtown neighborhoods while cultivating a renewed sense of cultural vibrancy. Civic, business, and non-profit leaders described how Cincinnati has been activating public spaces, addressing housing shortages, and reimagining urban redevelopment. Much of that work has been undertaken by 3CDC, a non-profit, real estate development and finance organization originally funded by Proctor & Gamble, Fifth Third Bank, and other large employers to work alongside public partners. The result: Cincinnati has leveraged collaboration, creativity and courage to reinvent itself.

"What's unique about Cincinnati is that it's a donut hole of 320,000 people in an urban core among 2.3 million in a 15-county region," said Brendon Cull, president and CEO of the Cincinnati Regional Chamber. "Whether people live in the city or not, they still care and are deeply engaged in downtown. We're always thinking about things on a regional basis, but as the city rises, so does the entire region, which is why we focus on what's happening in the center."

Cincinnati wants to put itself on the map and takes pride in hosting major events like the largest Oktoberfest outside of Germany; BLINK, the nation's largest immersive art event; Taylor Swift performing at Paycor Stadium; and Inter Miami's Lionel Messi playing at TQL Stadium. In 2024, Cincinnati lost its bid to host the Sundance Film Festival but still framed the attempt as a win because it signaled the city's readiness to compete for top-tier opportunities. To add to its competitiveness, the city is also currently undertaking an \$800 million convention center district renovation.

“We’re going to continue to step up to take big swings because we’re a city that’s not afraid to fail,” said Cincinnati Mayor Aftab Pureval. “We’re not just happy to be on the national stage, we actively want to be there.”

This message resonated as both a challenge and an invitation for Springfield to match that same ambition, leaning into a culture that embraces risk to shape the region's next era of growth.

SESSION 1

Leading with Vision: Welcome to Cincinnati

SPEAKERS:

BRENDON CULL – PRESIDENT AND CEO, CINCINNATI REGIONAL CHAMBER

MAYOR AFTAB PUREVAL – CITY OF CINCINNATI

Cincinnati's current momentum is powered by the chamber and city working together, with a secret sauce of private-public partnership. Mayor Pureval said the goal is "changing systems rather than just funding projects" by pairing bold policy with durable financing and regional teamwork.

This partnership has driven the city's aggressive office-to-residential conversions and corporate-backed redevelopment in the urban core; a comprehensive housing approach that combines a zoning overhaul with incentive redesign and gap-financing tools; expansion of bus rapid transit; and the \$1.6 billion sale of the 150-year-old, city-owned Cincinnati Southern Railway to create a permanent infrastructure trust.

The discussion also acknowledged groundwork laid by earlier reforms, including the development of community-focused policing following civil unrest in Over-the-Rhine (OTR), and revitalization of that crime-ridden neighborhood into a vibrant tourism destination. Previous administrations helped catalyze economic development by pursuing population growth and expanding services.

“Without these efforts, today's economic wins would not have been possible,” said Mayor Pureval. “Leadership and transformational change require iteration. If the built environment or infrastructure was the most important issue for cities in the last 100 years, housing will be the most important issue in the next 10 years. Pushing for necessary but sometimes unpopular zoning reforms, especially in the face of neighborhood NIMBYism, requires the courage of our convictions.”

Cull underscored the value of leaders like Mayor Pureval, Cincinnati's first Asian-American mayor and the son of first-generation Americans.

“We believe that if you're going to be the best kind of leader, particularly in a city, you need to have not just high IQ and EQ, but high CQ, civic quotient,” he said. “You need to understand what happens in the community, to know its history and racial demographics to be successful. We're uniquely aware of this history in Cincinnati and it helps us think about the future.”



*Leaders from the city and chamber shared their
visions for Cincinnati's future growth.*

SESSION 2

Tipping Points: Defining Moments in Cincinnati's Urban Core Revitalization

SPEAKERS:

BRIAN HODGETT – VICE PRESIDENT OF STATE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND OHIO COMMUNITY RELATIONS, PROCTER & GAMBLE

CHARLIE LUKEN – SENIOR COUNSEL, CALFEE, HALTER & GRISWOLD LLP; FORMER MAYOR, CITY OF CINCINNATI

RALPH "MIKE" MICHAEL – CHAIRMAN, GREATER CINCINNATI REGION, FIFTH THIRD BANK

JOE RUDEMILLER – VICE PRESIDENT FOR MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS, CINCINNATI CENTER CITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (3CDC)

Cincinnati's transformation from crisis to renaissance began in the early 2000s.

“We had never been at such a tipping point”, recalled former Cincinnati Mayor Charlie Luken. “We could have gone down or used it as a launching point. The city was singularly bad at economic development, but I had an idea for a non-profit development corporation, and the resulting partnership was stronger than anything we’ve seen.”

Out of that pivotal moment came the creation of the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC), a public-private partnership funded by the city's largest employers. 3CDC took on the role of buying down risk on properties to accelerate redevelopment and activating public spaces to restore safety in the central business district and OTR. Business leaders have remained committed, reinvesting profits to sustain revolving loan programs. Today, 3CDC's funding is generated through its role as the city's largest parking operator and from commercial properties it continues to own as a form of quality control.

3CDC is rooted in shared responsibility with Cincinnati as its client. Long-time president and CEO Steve Leeper is widely regarded as instrumental to its success, credited with the strength and creativity to bridge the public and private sectors to make projects work.

Fifth Third Bank's headquarters is near Fountain Square, which the city turned over to 3CDC to manage. Despite strong opposition from residents, 3CDC moved the fountain by 80 feet, opening it up for development.

“The tipping point wasn't one event, it was the moment a handful of us decided that ‘good enough’ was no longer good enough for Cincinnati,” said Michael. “Projects like Fountain Square are important because for our employees and customers to be successful, they need to live in a vibrant, successful community.”

Rudemiller described the importance of not just building civic spaces but activating and programming them to draw people in, which 3CDC has done with squares, parks and the convention center district.

"You can't revitalize a neighborhood one building at a time," he said. "You have to think in blocks, in districts. It requires patient capital and a vision that outlasts any single project."

For Procter & Gamble, the city's revival was both civic and strategic. The company originally put in \$25 million and the CEO at the time was committed to 3CDC being the most important and well-run organization in the community.

"At P&G, we realized we couldn't attract top talent to a city with a dying heart," said Hodgett. "Investing in our downtown wasn't charity—it was a core business strategy."



Community leaders described the creation of 3CDC, a pivotal tipping point in Cincinnati's history.

SESSION 3

Building Momentum: Housing and Redevelopment as Catalysts for Growth

SPEAKERS:

LUKE BLOCHER – GENERAL COUNSEL AND CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER, CINCINNATI DEVELOPMENT FUND

MARKEIA CARTER – DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CITY OF CINCINNATI

JEFF CRAMERDING – DIRECTOR OF CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION, AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS;
COUNCILMEMBER, CITY OF CINCINNATI

JAKE SAMAD – PARTNER, ROBBINS, KELLY, PATTERSON & TUCKER; CHAIR, CITY OF CINCINNATI PLANNING COMMISSION

STEVE SMITH – PRINCIPAL, MODEL GROUP

In recent years, Cincinnati leaders have proactively rezoned the city, aiming to create more housing and walkable neighborhoods by loosening parking, density, height and single-family exclusive restrictions along transit lines to invite organic private investment. Layered financing, CDFI lending (an affordable housing trust fund), and rebalancing tax abatements toward disinvested areas are all aimed at spurring equitable development where it's needed most.

The panel discussed the continued progress, and challenges, with Cincinnati's city-community council structure. Residents broadly support new housing, but implementation often proves difficult due to parking and traffic concerns. Panelists emphasized that affordable housing needs to be indistinguishable from market-rate units to ensure true neighborhood integration. Developers are required to obtain letters of support from community councils before projects advance to the planning commission — a process that fosters collaboration but can also slow development. While the city's "can-do" attitude naturally ebbs and flows with each administration, the model is yielding results through sustained, community-led growth.

In fact, the city's community councils, community development corporations (CDCs), and neighborhood business districts (NBDs) have powered a revival of Cincinnati's 52 officially declared neighborhoods.



"The last 15 years have seen significant neighborhood growth reversing 50 years of decline because institutions committed over many years to the same places," said Blocher.

Samad highlighted the persistence behind the turnaround of his own neighborhood, College Hill. After big box stores drove out diverse, multi-generational family businesses in the 1990s, citizen volunteers spent two decades organizing and leveraging city resources to finance and rehabilitate neighborhood properties. He described it as "a neighborhood effort—citizens serving as patient capital before the capital really existed."

Carter emphasized the city's role as an enabler rather than a developer, providing \$2-4 million each year for projects through the Neighborhood Business District Improvement Program.

"We learned a lot from working with College Hill," she said. "We helped them make some strategic acquisitions, then sat on it for years. We don't always know what the end goal will be, but we know it's going to be great and give the neighborhood something it really wants."

Councilmember Cramerding underscored the need to strengthen capacity among the city's 27 CDCs.

"When you focus on one area, you're effectively saying 'no' to the other areas," he said. "The ongoing conversation is centered on where we can focus resources so we're getting real change that we can measure."

Smith, whose firm, Model Group, has led much of the redevelopment in OTR, described how the historic neighborhood's transformation became a flashpoint for the city.

"We never aspire to a complicated deal," he explained, "but to a transformative deal that uses the 'economic defibrillator' approach. You can't win by doing a 360-degree battlefield, but OTR worked by using the Central Business District as a community anchor then advancing block-by-block."



Speakers from both the public and private sector shared lessons on community engagement in housing and redevelopment efforts.



Key partners discussed their collaborative approach to revitalizing the downtown convention center district.

SESSION 4

From Vision to Venue: How a Convention Center Fuels Economic Development

SPEAKERS:

JEFF ALUOTTO – ADMINISTRATOR, HAMILTON COUNTY

JULIE CALVERT – PRESIDENT AND CEO, VISIT CINCY

WILLIAM “BILLY” WEBER – ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER, CITY OF CINCINNATI

KATIE WESTBROOK – SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF DEVELOPMENT, CINCINNATI CENTER CITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (3CDC)

Cincinnati's convention district overhaul that began in 2024 is a case study in shared risk and partnership. Westbrook described the project as “an \$800 million plan, \$264 million to modernize the Duke Energy Convention Center inside and out plus a new 700-room full-service Marriott hotel with a skybridge connection, all to position Cincinnati as a top-tier convention destination.” The convention center is slated to open in January 2026 with a newly selected operator, while the hotel should be open by 2028.

Aluotto described Hamilton County's 2020 acquisition and demolition of the blighted, privately-owned 1960s Millennium Hotel as the domino that started the project. He noted years of disciplined transient occupancy tax savings that created a “ready war chest” for action.

“We couldn't listen to the naysayers, if we're ever going to do something about this, we just had to do it,” he said.

“People were critical of paying \$54 million to purchase the hotel, but we knew we had lost \$97 million in known business.”

While the city and county had always owned the convention center, Visit Cincy moved beyond marketing to become a financing partner in the project, committing \$3 million annually for 30 years.



“We're acting in a way that no project is too big for us to tackle as a community,” said Calvert.

“We put our eyes to it, our focus to it, we work collaboratively to say, ‘yes we can,’ not ‘how can we?’ You can't think of it as a transaction. It's investing in your future.”

Alignment has been key, with non-governmental facilitators like 3CDC and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber helping to build consensus among residents, elected officials and multiple partners when it's not always clear which entity will get the win. The county will measure success based on the financial model, knowing that success in the urban core will benefit all 48 political subdivisions. 3CDC will manage downtown activation around the new Elm Street Plaza, leaving operations of the convention center and hotel to the city and Visit Cincy.

“The pandemic forced a change of the status quo, so there was more cross-collaboration, and we had a window of alignment on the convention center,” said Weber. “If you have misalignment among partners, that's the number one thing you need to correct, because if you don't, it will break down when the going gets tough.”

SESSION 5

Stronger Together: Collaborative Strategies for Regional Economic Growth

SPEAKERS:

LAURA BRUNNER – PRESIDENT AND CEO, PORT AUTHORITY OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (THE PORT)

KIMM LAUTERBACH – PRESIDENT AND CEO, REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (REDI)

AMY SPILLER – STATE PRESIDENT, OHIO AND KENTUCKY, DUKE ENERGY

MARK VON ALLMEN – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, CITY OF CINCINNATI

With defined roles and steady funding, the City of Cincinnati, REDI, The Port, and Duke Energy have built an agile economic development system that recruits and retains businesses across a metro area spanning Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana.

As a private fee-for-service regional economic development organization, REDI coordinates attraction and retention efforts with the authority to negotiate project incentives directly. In addition to private sector support, REDI receives funding from JobsOhio, the state's private non-profit corporation wholly funded by profits from liquor sales.

Working alongside local and regional partners, Lauterbach noted that REDI's success lies in the balance of scale and agility.

“Cincinnati still feels small enough to be manageable,” she explained. “We struggle to find a site over 200 acres and once we do, it’s usually for a data center. But we are forward-thinking in ways that set us apart, like establishing a revolving site loan fund using money from reserves.”

“Sites are always a challenge,” Allman agreed, “but it’s better in the greater Cincinnati area since the pandemic.”

Converting underperforming assets into productive sites available for REDI to market to generate new jobs and new tax base is one of the goals for The Port.

Brunner says when she introduces herself, she always follows it with “and we have no port,” noting that Cincinnati’s port authority makes real estate work by assembling sites, issuing bonds, remediating properties, and acquiring and rehabilitating homes across neighborhoods.

“When we attract business investors, we know they may not get much ROI, but they will get social return,” she said.

Brunner described projects like working with partners to purchase, clean up, and upgrade infrastructure at a former Dow facility that with restructured incentives attracted a local manufacturer with international roots.

Spiller emphasized the central role of utilities like Duke Energy in ensuring regional competitiveness.

“We have to be on the front end of these conversations and work with The Port and REDI,” she said. “We are patient, but we want to make sure our dollars are used for the long-term prosperity of the region. It’s really critical to control what we can, be responsive, to keep costs low while meeting infrastructure needs. Business, non-profits and economic development organizations here are in lock step, and there’s a willingness to always have the conversation.”



Speakers from the City of Cincinnati, REDI, The Port and Duke Energy shared lessons for advancing regional economic growth.

SESSION 6

Fueling Growth: Workforce Strategies for a Competitive Region

SPEAKERS:

PETER ADEBI – SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, CINCINNATI CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL MEDICAL CENTER

KIM GINN – CHIEF PROGRAM OFFICER, 4C FOR CHILDREN

DONNA LAUVER – EXECUTIVE LEAD OF WORKFORCE INNOVATION NETWORK (WIN) AT HAMILTON COUNTY EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER; CHAIR, GREATER CINCINNATI BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL (GBAC)

MILES MCDOWELL – ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI COLLEGE OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

AUDREY TREASURE – VICE PRESIDENT, CINCINNATI USA REGIONAL CHAMBER; EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WORKFORCE INNOVATION CENTER

AMY WALDBILLIG – VICE PRESIDENT OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND ENROLLMENT SERVICES, CINCINNATI STATE

Cincinnati's leaders emphasized that sustaining talent growth requires viewing workforce not as a single program, but as a shared regional mission.

"We partner with businesses to help them recruit, but also help existing employers be the kind of place people want to work," said Treasure. "It's not really an ecosystem because everyone is designed to work in their own self-interest, it's stakeholder capitalism. Businesses have to provide good jobs if they want to get and train people to be good employees."

Waldbillig outlined Cincinnati State's role of accessible, career-aligned education.

"Co-op is a requirement in every associate degree we offer," she explained. "You're earning income while you learn."

The college's 600 paid employer partnerships have produced high conversion rates and strong workforce retention.

"University of Cincinnati's co-op program gets students out in the workforce so they can stay ahead of changing technology and AI," echoed McDowell. "Our business partnerships are why the university has grown and why 80% of the companies our students work for are here in our region."

Lauver emphasized exposure and alignment between schools and employers, describing how the GBAC works with more than 30 school districts and 40 business partners to advocate not just for higher education, but also skilled trades. LinkedUp Connect, another WIN program, connects students to apprenticeships and job shadowing, leading to a mindset shift for employers hiring high school graduates.

“Sometimes educators can be the biggest barriers,” she described, “so we must open the doors and make sure students know what careers are available to them and have pathways to success. Our job is to expose all students to all jobs.”

Cincinnati Children's Hospital employs 20,000 people, the largest employer in southwest Ohio and a top-ranked pediatric provider. Adebí described efforts to design training programs that bridge persistent skill mismatches as the hospital faces 800 open positions despite thousands of local job seekers.

"This type of partnership and collaboration, when you can work with the colleges around you to identify your needs, to teach specific courses that are relevant, it helps," he explained.

Abedi also discussed the hospital's focus on Generation Z employees, who make up a core of the current workforce, and value flexibility, autonomy, teamwork and clearer paths to career progression.

Ginn emphasized how deeply affordability, accessibility and reliability shape the local childcare system.

In Cincinnati, 4C for Children plays a pivotal role, maintaining a database of licensed childcare providers to aid families, and recruiting and training people to work in the field. A tri-share model in which businesses

and the state work together to help fund childcare for employees didn't work in Cincinnati; employers were interested but weren't willing to put the money into it. Another recent program with city funding was more successful, helping 4C open 70 new in-home providers that serve employees working second and third shifts.

"Without these centers and other providers open and thriving, your workforce isn't showing up," Ginn said, "so we're doing our best."



Participants learned how organizations support a skilled workforce, at all levels of education and training.

SESSION 7

Capitalizing On Your Assets: Placemaking That Shapes Growth

SPEAKERS:

AMY FITZGIBBONS – VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS, CINCINNATI REGIONAL CHAMBER

JOSH HEUSER – FOUNDING PARTNER, AGAR; CO-CREATOR, BLINK FESTIVAL

WADE JOHNSTON – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TRI-STATE TRAILS

CHRISTY SAMAD – EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CIVIC AND COMMERCIAL SPACE ACTIVATION, CINCINNATI CENTER CITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (3CDC)

At TQL Stadium, FC Cincinnati President and CEO Jeff Berding welcomed the delegation with a message about the power of vision. He recounted the club's decision to invest early in a world-class stadium, saying, "If we hire the wrong people, we can fix that, but if we get the building wrong, we won't get a second chance." For Berding, the stadium wasn't just about soccer, it was a statement of confidence in Cincinnati's future.

Cincinnati's civic leaders demonstrated how intentionally combining infrastructure, culture, and activation can transform a city's identity and economy. Fitzgibbons framed the discussion around the chamber's focus on vibrancy, noting, "Our goal is to lift up cultural assets that make this region an economic magnet and to celebrate our wins through the people who create them."

Samad described how 3CDC evolved from developer to steward, managing six civic spaces with more than 1,400 annual events.

"You can't just create pretty things, you need to figure out how to do things in them so people have a reason to come," she explained. "It's a mix of small and large events, but more than 80 percent of our programming is produced in-house, everything from library readings to holiday tree lighting. There's something every day of the week to surprise and delight visitors because an active space is a safe space and a vibrant space."

Heuser explained how immersive events like BLINK bridge art, commerce, and community as the "value of human experience only increases" in an increasingly digital world. An entrepreneurial spirit has helped his team turn urban spaces into catalysts for local pride, like murals painted around Findlay Market before OTR was redeveloped. He described AGAR's work and partnerships as using "little breadcrumbs that are underutilized assets for storytelling and experience."

For Johnston, connectivity itself is a form of placemaking. The non-profit Tri-State Trails works to facilitate and expand the region's trails, including the 34-mile CROWN trail loop which will complete a 104-mile active transportation network in Greater Cincinnati. Resident, public and philanthropic engagement is critical because trails go near houses, connect parks and link to employment centers as both recreation and mobility infrastructure.



"Our trail network and civic spaces are how we redefine our future and control our destiny," said Johnston. "These trail projects are expensive, and they take a long time, but the impact that they create will last for generations."



Jeff Berding, president and CEO of FC Cincinnati, welcomed the delegation to TQL Stadium.



Speakers shared how partnerships, intentional planning and community collaboration have shaped the city's continual activation of public spaces.



Participants heard how working in partnership resulted in community buy-in for tangible growth targets.

SESSION 8

The Power of Partnership: How Collaboration Builds Stronger Communities

SPEAKERS:

BOBBI DILLON – SENIOR MANAGER, STATE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, PROCTER & GAMBLE

PETE METZ – VICE PRESIDENT, CIVIC & REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS, CINCINNATI REGIONAL CHAMBER

The closing session focused on how Cincinnati's civic, business, and government leaders built a culture of partnership to address systemic challenges and plan for the city's future. The Cincinnati Futures Commission, a business-led effort launched by Mayor Pureval and chaired by Procter & Gamble CEO Jon Mohler, produced an ambitious, data-driven roadmap in 2023 for fiscal sustainability and inclusive growth.

Metz described how the commission emerged in 2022 amid political change and post-pandemic financial uncertainty. The chamber played a central role in convening the commission based on earlier collaborations with the city on transportation initiatives. The chamber brought together 30 business leaders, utilizing key board leaders from major employers and P&G leading to achieve instant legitimacy.

“The city is a public body, so this needed to be a truly third-party review,” Metz explained. “The mayor said, ‘I’m going to throw this over the wall and you’re going to do your work independently, then hold me accountable for what you recommend.’”

Dillon discussed how the structure was informed by a similar commission in the 1980s that allowed P&G executives and other leaders to get involved in city budgeting. She echoed the commission's ability to conduct an objective analysis.

“Traditional public hearings often elevate the loudest voices, so we worked to hear from everyday people who aren’t usually at the table,” she said.

Robust community engagement included people with mixed incomes, college students, small businesses with permitting concerns and parents expressing worry over traffic safety.

The resulting 80-page report, developed in partnership with consultant EY, offered more than 50 recommendations to help the city run more like a business and establish fiscal targets tied to population growth. They spanned revenue diversification, job-ready sites, housing investment, and neighborhood business district revitalization. The report recommended new land use plans and proposed creating an Office of Strategic Growth to coordinate city departments and external partners.

Metz and Dillon said the commission spent a year working on the report, but it's hard to implement. The Futures Commission's recommendations will take time, but they're sweeping through community conversations.

Top Takeaways

Each CLV culminates in a small group debrief session to identify takeaway themes. Upon returning to Springfield, delegates and Chamber board members ranked and refined these ideas to provide priorities for our city and region's future.

1. Public Space Activation and Management

Cincinnati offered clear examples of how civic spaces can become catalysts for pride and safety through intentional programming and strong management. Year-round activation ranging from large events to small, everyday gatherings has made downtown spaces welcoming, vibrant, and secure. Each space has defined ownership, clear accountability, and aligned stakeholders to make programming possible. Springfield leaders noted that local permitting and logistical hurdles often slow similar efforts at home. Participants agreed that a “programmable spaces” initiative could be an achievable step to build early momentum, especially along Jordan Creek and the Route 66 Centennial corridor.

2. Catalytic Convention and Event Center District

In Cincinnati, the convention center serves as both a facility and a redevelopment anchor for the downtown district. The project's strength lies in its district-wide approach and unified communication among partners. Springfield leaders emphasized that any future convention and event center here should be framed similarly, as a regional asset that elevates the urban core and supports the broader economy. Achieving that vision will require clear alignment among partners, consistent messaging, and defined leadership at every stage.

3. Housing and Land Use

Participants consistently cited housing and land use as pivotal challenges and opportunities for Springfield's future. Barriers such as restrictive zoning, neighborhood resistance to infill, and limited housing diversity have slowed progress. Cincinnati's examples—converting underused commercial properties into housing, leveraging land banks, and prioritizing “missing middle” options—offered pragmatic, actionable models. Springfield's ongoing zoning updates create a critical window to link land-use reform with housing diversity, density, and long-term growth.

4. Risk-Taking and Transformative Change

Cincinnati's leaders repeatedly modeled a willingness to take calculated risks for long-term impact. From moving a historic fountain to launching large-scale infrastructure projects, the city's progress often stemmed from decisions that were unpopular at first but visionary in hindsight. Springfield participants recognized a need to push past hesitation and scarcity thinking. Building a culture that values bold, data-informed action, and accepts short-term discomfort for lasting benefit, can accelerate transformation and inspire confidence.

5. Alignment and Reducing Silos

Across nearly every session, participants identified misalignment among local entities as a key barrier to progress. While Springfield prides itself on collaboration, efforts often diverge due to overlapping roles and competing priorities. Cincinnati stood out for its clarity, each organization understanding its lane, responsibilities, and how it contributed to a shared regional vision. For Springfield to move forward cohesively, leaders emphasized the need for unified messaging, role clarity, and consistent accountability.

Moving Forward

The lessons from Cincinnati reaffirm the importance of partnership, bold action, and long-term vision, principles that mirror the Chamber's strategic plan. Our priorities of regional economic development, growing the workforce-ready population, strengthening and supporting business,

and operating with excellence form the framework for a thriving regional economy. The spirit of this trip—shared learning, courageous leadership, and collective ambition—will continue to guide the Chamber's work to help businesses thrive and communities prosper.



2025 Delegation List

Organizations and titles listed for each participant reflect positions at the time of the September 2025 trip.

Bruce Adib-Yazdi

*Councilmember
City of Springfield*

Logan Aguirre

*Owner / Publisher
FourOneSeven*

Jonas Arjes

*Senior Vice President, Economic Development
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce*

David Atkisson

*Springfield Office Leader
J.E. Dunn Construction*

Jamie Birch

*Chief of Staff / Assistant to the President
for Government Relations
Missouri State University*

Andrea Brady

*Community Outreach and
Development Manager
Great Southern Bank*

Judy Brunner

*Board of Education - President
Springfield Public Schools*

Jasmine Burks

*Executive Director
Monett Chamber of Commerce*

Callie Carroll-Swofford

*Councilmember
City of Springfield
Chair, The Network for Springfield's Young
Professionals*

Ashley Casad

*SVP – President of Springfield Hospitals
CoxHealth*

Steve Childers

*Director, Planning and Development
City of Springfield*

Tiffani Claussen

*CEO
Amprod LLC*

Chris Coulter

*County Administrator
Greene County*

Shane Cowger

*Loan Manager / Executive Vice President
Arvest Bank*

Ryan DeBoef

*Partner
Hahn | DeBoef Government Relations*

Bob Dixon

*Presiding Commissioner
Greene County*

Paula Dougherty

*CEO / Owner
Achieve Private Wealth / Ameriprise Financial*

Joe Driscoll

*Senior Vice President, Commercial Banking
UMB Bank*

Brad Erwin

*President
Paragon Architecture
President, Springfield Business Development
Corporation*

Sara Fields

*Executive Director
Ozarks Transportation Organization*

Leslie Forrester

*Executive Director
Springfield Regional Arts Council*

Dr. Jeff Frederick

*President
Drury University*

Jonathan Garard

*Owner
Grooms Office Environments*

Laura Gates

*President
TransLand*

Whitney Guison

*President / CEO
Nixa Area Chamber of Commerce*

Stephen Hall

*Chief Communications Officer
Springfield Public Schools*

Heather Hardinger

*Mayor Pro Tem
City of Springfield*

Jessica Harmison-Olson

*Owner
Maxon Fine Jewelry*

Dr. Spencer Harris

*President / Co-Owner
Mostly Serious*

Kristen Haseltine

*President / CEO
Show Me Christian County Economic Development*

Dr. David Haustein

*Associate Dean, Springfield Clinical Campus
University of Missouri School of Medicine*

Mark Hecquet

*President / CEO
Visit Springfield, Missouri*

Amanda Hedgpeth

*Chief Operating Officer
CoxHealth*

Bob Helm

*Partner
Elliott, Robinson & Company, LLP CPAs
Chairman, Springfield Chamber Board of Directors*

Philip Herzog

*Engagement Specialist
People Centric Consulting Group*

Dr. Hal Higdon

*Chancellor
Ozarks Technical Community College*

Nicole Jarratt

*CEO / Strategy Director
Revel Advertising*

Brandon Jensen

*Councilmember
City of Springfield*

Jen Johnson

*Vice President, Corporate Affairs
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce*

Victoria Keith

*Senior Workplace Strategist
Grooms Office Environments*

Mary Kromrey

*Office Leader
OWN, Inc.*

Allen Kunkel

Associate Vice President for Economic Development
Missouri State University

Karen Kunkel

Workforce Development Manager
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Derek Lee

Councilmember
City of Springfield

Dr. Alina Lehnert

Board Member
Evangel University

Matt Lemmon

Vice President of Communications and Marketing
Community Foundation of the Ozarks

Christian Lewis

Regional Community Executive
Simmons Bank

Lacy Martin

Southwest Commercial Division Manager
Commerce Bank

Anne E. McGregor

Board President
Neighbor Company

Tori Mercado

Public Affairs Manager
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

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