

Speech Draft: County Administrator *Working Title: "Cuyahoga County: A Beacon of Resilience"*

35th Climate Resilience Festival: December 5, 2075

Location: Edgewater Park

[Introduction] Good afternoon, Cleveland!

Thank you to everyone who's gathered here today at the 2075 Climate Resilience Festival—students, community members, elders, and leaders of our local tribes. It's an honor to stand before you and reflect on how far we've come. I appreciate your presence here today, as it marks a moment of ~~not just~~ celebration ~~but~~ and deep reflection on the journey we have taken together.

As many of you know, in 2030, the climate clock reached midnight. That was a pivotal moment in our history. A time when the urgency of our collective responsibility became impossible to ignore. The Climate Clock, launched back in 2015, had shown us a countdown—a reminder of what was at stake. And by 2030, we faced the devastating reality that the world had already passed the point of no return. At midnight *(figurative midnight— 2030, specify this?)*, the temperature crossed the 1.5°C threshold, and we entered an era of extreme loss. Millions of lives were lost, ecosystems were shattered, and our way of life was irreparably changed. We lost the forests, the oceans, and the delicate balance of nature that had sustained us for generations. We have lost a lot, *and we should always take the time to remember this.*

But today, we are not gathered to mourn—we are here to celebrate how far we've come since that dark period. In the decade following that tipping point, Cuyahoga County, along with Cleveland and the broader region, made a choice chose to act. We decided to adapt. And in doing so, we became a model for the ~~nation~~ Country.

[Reflection on the Past] By 2040, our region was ready for change. The lessons of the past were too heavy to ignore. The agricultural failures, the flooding, the economic inequities—we knew we could not return to old ways. Inaction in the face of these growing threats would have only deepened the crises. So, we made bold choices.

In 2075, as we reflect on the projections made decades ago, it is striking to see both the foresight and the gaps in understanding that shaped our responses to climate change in this region. The warnings about rising temperatures and intensified precipitation were accurate, and their impacts have reshaped our landscapes and communities. Extreme rainfall caused unprecedented flooding, particularly in urban areas that failed to adapt to infrastructure. Agricultural productivity initially benefited from longer growing seasons, but those gains have been reversed by erratic weather, pests, and soil degradation. Perhaps most troubling is the increase in harmful algal blooms, which were expected but underestimated in severity, leading to widespread water crises.

Yet, despite these challenges, many communities in the region have demonstrated remarkable resilience, leveraging adaptive strategies like green infrastructure, cooperative lake management, and local climate councils. The projections served as a blueprint—imperfect but invaluable—for navigating the turbulent decades that brought us here.

[Celebration of Community and Technology] We now look back at the great strides we've made. Cuyahoga County today stands as a leader in sustainable adaptation. Our success is not just measured by how we weathered the storm but by how we transformed our challenges into opportunities for growth.

Some of our proudest achievements in the urban sector include the development of Vertical Farming Skyscrapers, Flood-Resistant Agricultural Land Program, and Mobile Climate-Resilient Farmers' Markets. You all know how central the Vertical Farming Skyscrapers have become to our city's skyline and our lives. These towering gardens have redefined urban agriculture, allowing us to grow fresh, local produce in the heart of the city, no matter the season. They've helped us adapt to dwindling arable land and reduced the carbon footprint of food transportation. And of course, the Mobile Climate-Resilient Farmers' Markets are now a familiar sight on our streets, ensuring every neighborhood—especially those hit hardest by past inequities—has access to affordable, nutrient-rich food. It's easy to forget, but just a few decades ago, these innovations were bold ideas born out of necessity during some of the toughest times in our history. Today, they're symbols of resilience and equity, delivering food security while keeping our community connected.

In parallel, our Flood-Resistant Agricultural Land program has completely re-engineered our rural farming landscapes to absorb excess floodwaters rather than be overwhelmed by them. As a development during the years following the agricultural crises of the 2030s, one of the pivotal changes that reshaped farming in our region was the adoption of subirrigation and water capture systems, inspired by early research conducted in Northwest Ohio. These systems deliver water directly to plant roots, proving transformative in combating increasingly unpredictable rainfall and prolonged dry spells. By capturing and efficiently using water, our farmers not only salvaged crop yields during times of scarcity but also thrived, ensuring a stable food supply for urban and rural communities alike. What began as a pilot project, informed by

the groundbreaking studies of the 2010s and 2020s, has since evolved into a cornerstone of our county's agricultural resilience. *Today, this technology symbolizes how innovation and foresight turned a looming crisis into an opportunity to secure our shared future.*

[Acknowledging the Land's First People] As we celebrate these advancements, let us also remember that this land, this county, is not just ours—it has been home to the Kickapoo, the Erie, and the Shawnee, and other Indigenous nations long before our time. Post Climate Crisis, their lands and communities were hit the hardest. Their sovereignty and nationhood is integral to the continuation of adaptive technology and community building, and Cleveland would be nowhere without their leadership. Their knowledge of the land and water has been critical to the city's success.

[Celebrating the Future] As we reflect on the work that has been done, we also look forward to the future. Our shared vision of tomorrow is one that goes beyond survival—it's one that ensures sustainability, equity, and community.

Let me share with you a glimpse of the future that we are building:

The Lake Battery: Our groundbreaking infrastructure project, which turns the Great Lakes into giant "batteries" for energy storage, is a shining example of our innovation. This system stores excess energy generated by our renewable sources in underwater reservoirs. When demand spikes, we can tap into this massive energy storage to keep our homes, businesses, and transportation systems powered.

Wave-Powered Hyperloop: And for those who've traveled between cities along the Great Lakes, you've probably seen the **Wave-Powered Hyperloop**—a revolutionary transportation network powered by the very waves of Lake Erie itself. This high-speed rail system now connects Cleveland to Chicago, Detroit, and beyond. It's zero-emission and a perfect example

of how we've turned environmental challenges into a new infrastructure of hope. - Add more details of the technology and timeline, or leave to panelists? (proposed to be finished by 2075, using remains of older "Amtrak" train routes, which are salvageable to run Hyperloop on)

[Closing] So, as we gather here today, let us not only celebrate how far we've come but recommit to the work ahead. Yes, we have faced unimaginable losses, but we have also risen to meet them with strength, resilience, and creativity. We have not just adapted—we have transformed.

Thank you, Cleveland, for your unwavering commitment to a sustainable, resilient, and equitable future. Let's keep pushing forward.

* Remember to introduce Panelists:

Tentative Panel Speakers:

1. Representative from Local Tribes
2. Youth Activist or Student Representative
3. Urban Farming Entrepreneur - Supervisor from Farming Skyscrapers or sub-irrigation advocate
4. A representative from the Agricultural Community
5. Healthcare Advocate from the Cleveland Clinic Reach out to children's healthcare, women's health
6. Local Artist and Activist Human HeART Studios representative to speak on mutual aid and art
7. Citizen Representative from Frontline Communities

MEMO

To: Cuyahoga County Council

From: Office of the County Climate Taskforce

Date: November 12, 2075

Subject: Update on Climate Adaptation Projects and Future Strategies

Overview:

As we mark 35 years since the county's pivot to intensive climate adaptation, this memo outlines ongoing projects, proposed initiatives, and challenges ahead. Our collective work continues to position Cleveland and the broader Cuyahoga County as leaders in sustainable urban-rural climate strategies.

35-Year Achievements at a Glance

1. **Vertical Farming Expansion:** Cleveland now boasts 15 vertical farming skyscrapers, supplying 60% of the city's fresh produce year-round.
 2. **Flood-Resilient Agriculture:** Rural areas successfully integrated water capture and sub-irrigation systems, improving crop yields by 30% despite increased drought conditions.
 3. **Community Partnerships:** Over 50 community councils were established to lead grassroots efforts in food security, energy use, and climate education.
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Current Initiatives

1. **Resilient Crop Breeding Programs:**
 - Objective: Develop drought- and flood-resistant crop varieties suited to local conditions.
 - Status: Collaboration underway with Ohio State's Climate Research Division; field trials in Year 4.
 - Budget: \$15M allocated for 2075–2078.
2. **Community-Run Seed Banks and Shared Agricultural Equipment:**
 - Objective: Expand access to climate-adapted seeds and reduce equipment costs for small farmers.
 - Progress: Seed bank pilots in 10 locations; early data indicates 40% increase in farmer participation.
 - Next Steps: Expand to 30 sites and establish equipment-sharing co-ops by 2077.
3. **Water Purification Skylines (Proposed):**
 - Objective: Transform urban skylines into solar-powered water filtration systems using Lake Erie water.

- Proposal: Launch a pilot project on the waterfront, leveraging existing solar tech partnerships.
 - Funding Need: \$25M initial investment; potential grants identified.
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Challenges

1. Urban vs. Rural Resource Balancing:

- Urban areas demand innovations like the Water Purification Skylines, while rural areas face infrastructure gaps.
 - i. Solution: A hybrid funding strategy to ensure equitable allocation of resources across the county.

2. Budget Constraints:

- Climate adaptation costs remain high despite external funding. Balancing short-term mitigation with long-term sustainability, as always, is critical.

3. Ongoing Climate Impacts

- New widespread developments of agricultural diseases due to flooding.
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Next Steps

- Convene a joint urban-rural advisory board to prioritize project funding for 2076–2080.
 - Approve \$10M supplemental funding for the seed bank program expansion.
 - Initiate feasibility studies for Water Purification Skylines by Q4 2075.
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Your continued support is essential as we move into the next phase of climate adaptation. Together, we can sustain Cleveland's legacy of resilience and innovation.

Prepared by:

Grace Buckman

Administrator, Cuyahoga County

Subject: Collaboration Opportunities: Local Farming Co-ops and Community Food Resilience

From: County Sustainability Office

To: [HumanHeART Studios]

Hello Sunny,

I hope this email finds you well! It's been incredible to witness the impact HumanHeART has had on our communities over the years, from fostering creativity to organizing mutual aid projects. Your team's ability to bring people together has been invaluable, and we're excited about the possibilities of further collaboration to enhance climate resilience in Cuyahoga County.

Updates on Current Projects:

1. **Mobile Climate-Resilient Farmers' Markets:**

As you know, the mobile farmers' markets launched last year have been a lifeline for areas hardest hit by climate disruptions. We've secured additional funding to expand the fleet with solar-powered refrigeration units and low-emission transportation. If HumanHeART is interested, we'd love for your team to help coordinate routes and organize community events around these markets.

2. **Floating Agricultural Islands on Lake Erie:**

Following your suggestion during last month's meeting, we've started feasibility studies for floating agricultural islands. These could be a game-changer for food security and Lake Erie preservation. Your team's artistic and community engagement expertise would be perfect for helping us envision how these islands can also serve as educational hubs and gathering spaces.

3. **Climate-Resilient Community Kitchens:**

We're piloting two community kitchens powered by renewable energy, equipped to prepare meals for distribution during extreme weather events. We'd love HumanHeART to co-host a workshop on how to use these kitchens for cultural food preservation and cooking with locally grown climate-adapted crops.

Potential Collaborations:

- **Shared Agricultural Equipment Program:** We plan to roll out co-ops for shared tools and machinery to support urban and rural farmers. Your networks could help us identify key participants and potential sites.

Challenges We'd Appreciate Your Input On:

1. Balancing rural and urban needs while maintaining equitable access to resources.
2. Engaging underserved communities who may not yet feel the direct impacts of climate change but could benefit from preparedness programs.

Let me know your thoughts! We'd love to schedule a follow-up meeting. Your vision and dedication are vital to ensuring these initiatives succeed as policies and community-driven movements.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Warm regards,
Grace Buckman
Cuyahoga County Sustainability Office

Response from Sunny, HumanHeART Studios

Subject: Re: Collaboration Opportunities: Local Farming Co-ops and Community Food Resilience

Hi Grace,

Thanks so much for reaching out! It's amazing to see the county taking these steps to tackle climate issues, and we're really excited about the opportunity to partner with you on this work.

Here's some quick feedback on the ideas you shared:

- 1. Mobile Farmers' Markets:**
This is such a great idea. We've been hosting small neighborhood festivals, and it would be awesome to combine those with market stops. We could bring people together with art and music while they shop for fresh, local produce.
- 2. Floating Agricultural Islands:**
What if these spaces were more than just food production? We could add public art or even hold workshops about sustainable farming. It'd be a cool way to bring people in and educate them at the same time.
- 3. Community Kitchens:**
We're already doing some meal-sharing events, so this is a natural fit. It could be fun to organize cooking workshops where people learn how to use locally grown, climate-resilient crops. We could even incorporate storytelling—sharing recipes and traditions connected to these foods would make it more personal.
- 4. Seed Banks & Equipment Sharing:**
Managing a seed bank hub sounds great, and we could tie it into what we're already doing. Maybe a "Seed Saturday" program where families come to trade seeds and learn gardening tips. For the equipment co-op, we'd be happy to connect you with local farmers to figure out what's most needed.

I hear you on balancing urban and rural needs—it's not easy. But I think we can find some common ground by focusing on shared goals, like food security. We're happy to help bring

people to the table for those discussions. There's so much potential here, and we're ready to get started!

Best,
Sunny

Follow-Up from County Sustainability Office

Subject: Re: Collaboration Opportunities: Local Farming Co-ops and Community Food Resilience

Hi Sunny,

Thanks for getting back to me so quickly! We're really excited about the ideas you've shared and can't wait to start working together.

Here's what we're thinking for next steps:

1. **Mobile Markets + Festivals:**

Combining the farmers' markets with your neighborhood festivals is a fantastic idea. Let's set up a planning meeting to figure out how to make it happen, including logistics, partners, and funding.

2. **Floating Agricultural Islands:**

Adding art and workshops to these spaces sounds perfect. We're putting together a team to develop the project, and it'd be great to have someone from HumanHeART involved. We'll also start exploring grants to fund the creative components.

3. **Community Kitchens:**

The cooking workshops and storytelling idea is awesome. Let's collaborate on a plan that combines those with meal prep focused on climate-resilient crops. Maybe we could organize a trial run at one of your events this summer?

4. **Seed Banks & Equipment Co-ops:**

"Seed Saturdays" is such a fun idea! Let's work on making that a countywide thing. We're also hosting a meeting next month to hear from farmers about the equipment co-op. It'd be great if someone from your team could join.

You're totally right about the urban-rural balance—it's tricky, but we're working on a framework to address it fairly. I'd love to get your thoughts on it before it goes to the council.

Looking forward to making all of this happen together!

Best,
[Your Name]
Cuyahoga County Sustainability Office

Forwarded Email to Local City Councils

Subject: Seeking Input on Community-Led Food Resilience Initiatives

Dear Council Members,

I'm forwarding an exciting update from our collaboration with HumanHeART Studios, a local grassroots organization leading incredible work in food access, community building, and climate resilience. We're exploring several projects together to strengthen food systems and climate adaptation across Cuyahoga County.

Here's a summary of what's on the table:

- 1. Mobile Farmers' Markets + Neighborhood Festivals:**
HumanHeART proposes combining mobile farmers' markets with existing neighborhood events. This would make fresh, locally grown produce more accessible while engaging residents with arts and cultural activities.
- 2. Floating Agricultural Islands on Lake Erie:**
We're developing a proposal for floating islands to produce food and enhance lake conservation. HumanHeART suggested including public art installations and workshops on sustainable farming, creating a multifunctional space.
- 3. Community Kitchens:**
These kitchens would not only prepare meals using local produce but also host workshops and storytelling sessions to educate residents about climate-resilient foods. HumanHeART has already expressed interest in piloting this initiative.
- 4. Seed Banks & Equipment Sharing Hubs:**
A network of seed banks and co-ops for shared farming equipment is also in the works. HumanHeART has floated a "Seed Saturday" concept—family-friendly events where residents can exchange seeds, learn gardening techniques, and access tools.

We'd love your input on how these initiatives could serve your city's specific needs and priorities. Some questions to consider:

- Are there existing events or programs these projects could connect with?
- What logistical challenges or community barriers should we address?
- Are there local organizations or groups in your city that might be interested in partnering on these efforts?
- What funding or resources could your city potentially contribute?

Your feedback is crucial to ensuring these projects are tailored to benefit all our communities. Please share any thoughts or concerns by [specific deadline], so we can refine the proposals before presenting them to the County Council.

I am looking forward to your insights!

Best regards,

Grace

Cuyahoga County Sustainability Office

35th Climate Resilience Festival Location: Edgewater Beach



Edgewater, 2024



Beach Pavilion, est. 2018

Cleveland Climate Innovations



Vertical Farming
Skyscrapers



Wave-Powered
Hyperloop

Lake Battery

