

# Cleveland Foundation Headquarters

## Type

Neighborhood-scale food scrap collection to compost in soils

## Best Practice Strategies

- 2.09 Provide equal convenience disposal
- 2.32 Require a construction waste management plan
- 3.09 Incorporate community into collection operations
- 3.10 Collect local compost for initial landscape construction
- 3.11 Collect local compost for ongoing maintenance
- 3.12 Establish a closed loop between locally-produced organic waste and soil

## Context

The new Cleveland Foundation Headquarters on E 66th St was designed in partnership between S9 Architecture, Vocon, and DERU Landscape Architecture to double as an office and a community hub. Out of 50,000 SF of total area, over half is dedicated to community space. The building houses office spaces for Cleveland Foundation staff, as well as an interactive art space, and a public cafe.. Upholding the organization's legacy of community collaboration, the Cleveland Foundation and its design team held community-led meetings regularly to ensure that the building was being designed in tandem with local stakeholders. The building will also include office space for Neighbor Up, a local nonprofit that provides small grants to promote community stewardship. Sustainable material, landscaping, and community decisions helped the project achieve LEED Gold status,



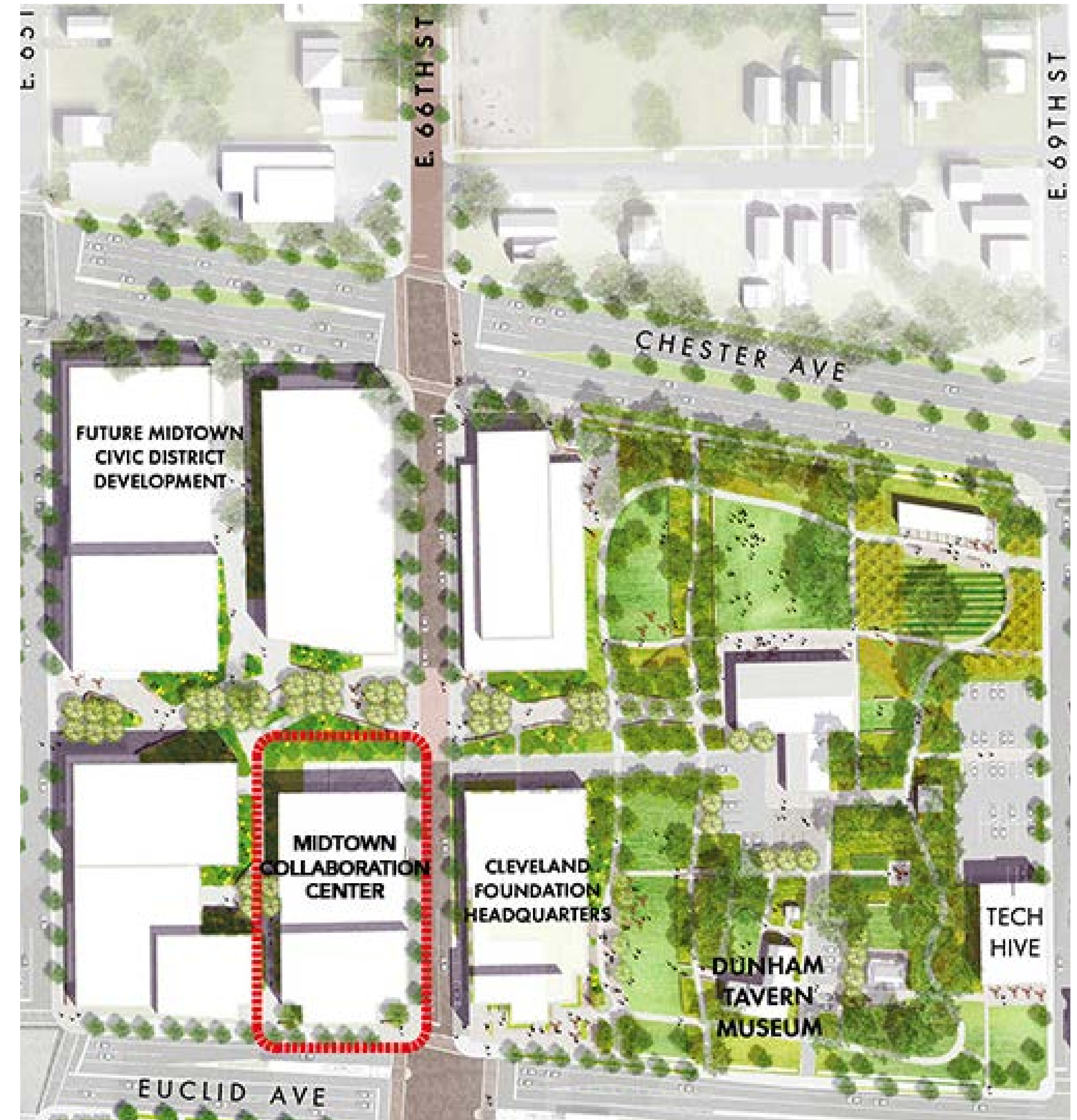
Top: Render of Cleveland Foundation HQ, Bottom: Render of community plaza



but is still aiming to reach LEED Platinum. On site, the headquarters faces an expansive green park that houses the existing Dunham Tavern Museum and garden, as well as the new landscaped Heritage Trail, currently under construction, that would walk visitors through the history of the land. The Cleveland Foundation partnered with Rust Belt Riders (RBR) to compost the tenants' organic waste, and use it to create healthy soil that is applied to green spaces on site.

RBR collects food scraps from 25 drop-off sites scattered across Cleveland, as well as through a curbside collection program. To participate in the drop-off locations, residents pay a monthly fee and get a code so they can access the bins at any time. Residents using the curbside service set out 5 gallon bins (provided by RBR) once a week, and are given a newly washed bin upon collection. They can receive soil back every spring.

RBR accepts “raw vegetables, cooked foods, citrus, coffee grounds, bones, meat, dairy, and BPI-Certified compostable products.” The food scraps are then transported to their composting facility and processed into compost/soil. Tilth Soil, a soil vendor born out of RBR, mixes the compost with other materials to create specialty soils, which it sells directly to consumers, through retail outlets, and in bulk to larger operations, such as for new landscape projects where they can provide custom soils to match specifications.



Site plan of Cleveland Foundation Headquarters, Dunham Tavern Museum and upcoming projects



## Summary

The Cleveland Foundation used RBR to collect food scraps in their former office, and wanted to support the local community compost organization by integrating their services into the construction and landscaping of the new headquarters. The Foundation asked the design team to ensure that soil provided by Tilth Soil be used for interior plantings and exterior landscaping, providing a closed-loop organics strategy.

Inside, equal-convenience bins for trash, single-stream recycling, and composting bins are located on the first floor, with additional waste stations on the second and third floors. Currently, the building houses three tenants: the Cleveland Foundation, Neighbor Up, and Susanna's Café by [HELP Harvest](#) on the first floor. The cafe uses BPI-certified compostable packaging and non-compostable packaging. A two-stream station is located within the cafe's seating area, and additional bins are located in the kitchen. Neighbor Up has its own dedicated composting bucket for its employees. The building's janitorial staff collects all food scraps for commercial tenants in a 55-gallon toter which is collected once a week by RBR.

In the near future, the operations team intends to roll out composting training led by RBR for new hires, building staff, and new tenants. They have a goal of conducting regular waste audits that can be displayed on digital screens across the campus and on the Cleveland Foundation website. Two longer-term extensions to the site will be the



55-gallon toters are collected weekly by RBR



RBR food scrap processing site



Midtown Collaboration Center and the E 66th Greenway, both expected to participate and benefit from the RBR composting program.

**Challenges**

The landscape company contracted for the installation had concerns about using soils made from RBR compost, primarily as they had not used them before. Tilth Soil provided tests showing their soil, made from RBR compost, matched the specifications, but unfortunately this soil was not actually used because of a third-party manager error. A similar reticence was expressed by the interior landscaping firm, which had concerns over the health of the indoor plants. CleveLawn, the landscape company contracted for regular maintenance, is open to the use of Tilth Soil, provided that the cost is competitive with their current soil suppliers. The Foundation is revisiting the process to ensure that soils for next-phase landscapes and on-going maintenance will be made from RBR compost.

Another potential challenge is the contamination of food waste by visitors who have not been educated on the correct food waste separation. The building operations team is controlling against this by limiting visitor access to food waste bins until the end of the year, and holding small- and large-scale community events in the interim to test out reusable dishware, food waste separation, and composting amongst visiting community members and potential community group tenants.

**Applicability to NYC**

New York City already provides reclaimed soil to new construction projects through the Clean Soil Bank, and there is the potential to add soils amended with community compost. In this way food scraps collected locally can be composted locally and used for both new developments and on-going maintenance of green spaces. The city could develop environmentally preferred procurement rules and guidelines to increase closed organics loops. This would allow residents and community organizations to play an integral role in providing healthy soils for the green spaces in their neighborhoods.

