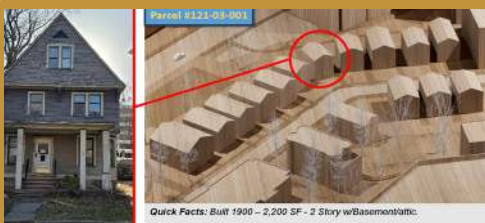


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CLEVELAND OBSERVER

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Trump names Cleveland Heights pastor for CDC role



Staff Writer

CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, Ohio — President Donald Trump said in a Sept. 1 Truth Social post that Cleveland Heights pastor Darrell Scott would serve as an adviser on tobacco health issues on the CDC's Advisory Committee to the Director.

Trump described Scott as a longtime friend, faith leader and advocate for underserved communities. He said Scott's work would help the administration consider how to better protect Americans from dangerous tobacco products while supporting “solutions to reduce harm and save lives.”

Premier Christian News reported on the appointment, which gives the national story a direct Cleveland connection. Scott is the founder and senior pastor of New Spirit Revival Center in Cleveland Heights and has been associated with Trump politically

for more than a decade. He co-founded the National Diversity Coalition for Trump and previously participated in Trump's presidential transition efforts.

But the announcement also leaves several questions unanswered about exactly what Scott's assignment will entail.

Scott's CDC role advisory only for tobacco policy

Despite some headlines describing Scott simply as a new “CDC tobacco adviser,” he is not being placed in charge of the agency's tobacco programs.

The Advisory Committee to the Director provides recommendations to the CDC director and the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services on broad agency strategy. Its responsibilities include advising on CDC priorities, performance, strategic planning, grants and ways of addressing health disparities. The committee itself does not regulate cigarettes, e-cigarettes or nicotine products.

Its charter allows no more than 15 nonfederal members. At least 12 are to have knowledge in areas relevant to the CDC mission, including public health,



Darrell Scott at the 2016 Republican National Convention. Photo courtesy of Wikipedia.

global health, health disparities, biomedical research and public health preparedness. Up to three public members may come from fields including innovation, public policy, public relations, law, economics or management.

Members are selected by the HHS secretary.

That distinction could become important in understanding the basis for Scott's appointment.

Continued on page 2

Stevie Wonder announces tour, no Cleveland date



Staff Writer

Stevie Wonder's newly announced Songs in the Key of Life Performances—50th Anniversary Tour includes Chicago and two Detroit performances, but no Cleveland date.

Wonder announced the Songs in the Key of Life Performances - 50th Anniversary Tour on Sept. 8. The 19-show international tour begins Oct. 13 in Birmingham, England, and concludes Dec. 19 at the Intuit Dome in Inglewood, California. According to the tour announcement, Wonder will perform the 1976 album in its entirety.

The U.S. leg is limited to six performances in five cities: New York, Chicago, Washington, Detroit and Inglewood. Chicago's United Center will host Wonder on Nov. 21, while Detroit's Fox Theatre will host performances Dec. 8 and 9.

As of Sept. 24, no Cleveland

performance appears on the announced schedule, and the tour announcement gives no reason for the city's absence. The limited U.S. schedule means many major markets are not part of the initial itinerary.

Still, Cleveland has documented connections to Wonder's performing history.

A history with Cleveland

Decades before the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame opened, Wonder performed at Leo's Casino, the celebrated Cleveland nightclub that became a major venue for R&B and Motown artists during the 1960s.

Case Western Reserve University's Encyclopedia of Cleveland History reports that Wonder and Aretha Franklin gave some of their early performances at Leo's Casino. The club also hosted acts including Ray Charles, Marvin Gaye, the Supremes, the Temptations and the Four Tops.

Wonder later performed at the Richfield Coliseum on Oct. 28, 1974, just two days after the arena opened. According to a Cleveland Cavaliers history of the Coliseum, Wonder headlined the venue's first R&B concert, with Rufus featuring Chaka Khan as the opening act. The



Stevie Wonder live performance. Credit: YouTube live performance.

Cavaliers also noted that Wonder was already trying out material that would later appear on “Songs in the Key of Life.”

Released in 1976, “Songs in the Key of Life” produced enduring songs including “Sir Duke,” “I Wish,” “Isn't She Lovely” and “As.” The album earned Wonder his third Grammy for Album of the Year at

the 1977 Grammy Awards and was added to the Library of Congress' National Recording Registry in 2005.

Wonder was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame as a performer in 1989.

Continued on page 2

Trump names Cleveland Heights pastor for CDC role

From front page

Scott’s biography at the New Spirit Revival Center emphasizes decades of ministry, biblical studies, work in juvenile detention centers and shelters, radio ministry and participation in citywide anti-drug campaigns.

The New Spirit Revival Center biography reviewed for this article does not mention formal training or prior work in medicine, epidemiology or tobacco control policy.

The Truth Social post did not state Scott’s term, committee category, voting status, working-group role or planned collaboration with tobacco-control specialists. Trump used the phrase “solutions to reduce harm,” but neither the post nor subsequent public materials reviewed by the Observer defined it.

Formal details have not yet appeared on CDC roster

As of this publication, the CDC’s public website listing members of the Advisory Committee to the Director had not been updated to include Scott. The page itself, however, is dated Sept. 13, 2024.

The publicly available announcement also does not specify Scott’s term, which category of committee membership he will occupy or whether he will lead a tobacco-specific working group.

Those details will help determine the actual reach of his assignment.

Appointment comes during upheaval in CDC tobacco programs

Scott also arrives at an unusual moment for federal tobacco control efforts.

The Associated Press reported in August that Congress appropriated \$246 million for the CDC’s Office on Smoking and Health, but the office was among a number of congressionally funded

CDC programs left with few or no employees following widespread federal health agency staffing cuts beginning in 2025.

The office historically tracked tobacco use, supported state programs and quitlines and operated the CDC’s Tips From Former Smokers campaign.

CDC research estimates that between 2012 and 2018, the campaign prompted more than 16 million smokers to attempt quitting and approximately 1 million to quit successfully. The agency estimated the campaign also helped prevent about 129,000 early deaths during that period.

That makes one question surrounding Scott’s appointment especially important: Will his role complement, replace or help rebuild the CDC’s traditional tobacco control work?

The administration has not yet publicly explained that.

Tobacco disparities have particular relevance for Black communities

The emphasis on underserved communities also has a substantial public health basis.

CDC data show tobacco companies have historically marketed menthol cigarettes heavily in Black communities. In 2020, about 81% of Black adults who smoked cigarettes used menthol cigarettes, compared with 34% of white adults who smoked, according to CDC data. The agency says menthol can increase nicotine’s effects, make cigarettes easier to start using and make quitting more difficult.

Those disparities could make Scott’s Cleveland and faith community background relevant to outreach, even as questions remain about what technical public health expertise will accompany that experience.

There also is precedent

for involving churches in tobacco prevention. CDC materials have specifically encouraged faith communities to participate in smoking cessation and anti-menthol initiatives.

Key role details remain unresolved.

Several key questions remain unresolved. Among them are whether HHS has completed Scott’s formal appointment; what term and membership category he will hold; whether tobacco scientists or public health specialists will work alongside him; and what Trump and Scott mean specifically when they refer to “harm reduction.”

The FDA continues to evaluate applications for e-cigarettes and other tobacco products under the federal tobacco premarket authorization process. Just days before Scott’s appointment was announced, the Food and Drug Administration authorized a JUUL2 e-cigarette device and tobacco- and menthol-flavored pods after determining that the potential population health benefits, including some adult smokers switching completely from cigarettes, outweighed identified risks.

There is no evidence that the FDA decision and Scott’s appointment are connected.

For Cleveland, however, the development places a longtime local pastor in the middle of a national debate involving tobacco addiction, health disparities, federal public health policy and the changing approach to nicotine products.

The Cleveland Observer will continue tracking Scott’s appointment and the policies he ultimately advocates.

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Stevie Wonder announces tour, no Cleveland date

From front page

Detroit offers closest announced dates

For Northeast Ohio fans seeking the closest announced anniversary performances, Detroit offers the nearest option. Wonder is scheduled to perform Dec. 8 and 9 at the Fox Theatre.

The announced U.S. schedule also includes Midwest performances in Chicago and Detroit, with Detroit receiving the only two-night stand on the U.S. portion of the tour. But the U.S. run covers only five cities, so Cleveland is one of many large markets not included.

Wonder, 76, has spent more than six decades recording music



Stevie Wonder live performance.
Credit: YouTube

across R&B, soul, pop and funk. The Library of Congress credits him with 25 Grammy Awards, while the “Songs in the Key of Life” album has been preserved in the National Recording Registry as a work considered culturally, historically or aesthetically significant.

Black Men’s Health Council launches in Cleveland



Devon Jones

Editor’s note: Writer Devon Jones is a co-chair and founding member of the Black Men’s Health Council. The Cleveland Observer publisher Ron Calhoun is also a founding member.

Village of Healing (VOH) is a Cleveland-area health center that emphasizes culturally responsive care and operates locations in Cleveland and Euclid. It provides primary care, obstetric and gynecologic care, pediatrics and mental health services.

The organization says its model is designed to respond to patients’ social and cultural needs and to expand access to quality care for Black families.

On Aug. 22, VOH further demonstrated its commitment to improving health outcomes by officially launching its Black Men’s Health Council, an initiative focused on advancing awareness, advocacy and access to care for Black men.



Health disparities the council seeks to address.

When discussing health outcomes in Cuyahoga County, it is important to acknowledge persistent racial disparities in life expectancy.

According to “Swimming Upstream: Getting to the Root Causes of Infant Mortality and Life Expectancy Outcomes in Cleveland, Ohio and the U.S.,” a report published by Cleveland State University in 2021, Black residents of Cuyahoga County had an average life expectancy of 73.6 years, compared with 78.3 years for white residents.

The report highlights that significant differences in health outcomes by race persist despite the presence of high-quality healthcare resources in the region, underscoring the influence of social and structural determinants of health on longevity.

Although these life expectancy figures reflect Black residents overall rather than Black men specifically, they could indirectly highlight broader inequities that disproportionately affect Black men. The committee feels the need to address the underlying social, economic and systemic factors that shape health outcomes in Cuyahoga County.



Multiple factors contribute to these inequities, including limited access to culturally competent healthcare, socioeconomic challenges and systemic barriers that impact health and well-being.

While numerous organizations and initiatives are working to address these disparities, many community members remain unaware of the available resources and efforts designed to improve health outcomes. Increasing awareness, engagement and access to trusted sources of care is essential to closing these gaps and advancing health equity for Black men throughout Cuyahoga County.

How is VOH addressing the health disparities?

The VOH Black Men’s Health Council was established to help address the health disparities experienced by Black men through collaboration, partnership and sustained community engagement.

The Council brings together community members, healthcare providers and health organizations who share a common vision of improving health outcomes for Black men across Greater Cleveland and surrounding communities. Guided by this mission, the Council focuses on three key strategic pillars:

- Expanding Holistic Care: Streamlining equitable access to comprehensive healthcare services designed specifically for the unique medical and social needs of Black men.
- Cultivating Trust and Leadership: Fostering community-led engagement to heal historical medical mistrust and build reliable leadership pipelines.
- Advancing Health Equity: Educating families, amplifying local voices and systematically breaking down barriers that prevent men from taking

Continued on page 4

Column: My Uncle John said...



Little Miss Marva Bean

My Uncle John is so smart! He really cares about what he believes in. I heard him tell the grown-ups at church that they need to vote. Afterward, my Auntie told him that maybe people weren’t registered to do so. He said he wasn’t speaking to those who weren’t registered to vote. He was talking to the ones who were.

My Uncle John said that the Cleveland ward turnout percentages from the Nov. 4, 2025, election were a disgrace to our ancestors who risked their lives back then to do what so many take for granted today: voting.

Befuddlement. Merriam-Webster says that this noun means the state of being confused, dazed or utterly bewildered. My Uncle John said that was his first reaction when he learned of our community’s turnout percentages from last November...

He got his information straight from the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections website.

Check to see your ward’s turnout. www.boe.cuyahogacounty.gov/elections/GetElectionByld/264

Since we’re learning to

research in school, I had to check it out for myself. The numbers are crazy!

It seems that grown-ups aren’t taking this voting thing seriously. There’s a table from that website that breaks down the voter turnout by wards. It is a transparent snapshot that states the obvious. A lot of the registered grown-ups didn’t vote. Why? Don’t they know that each vote counts?

A Pew Research Center report published Dec. 4, 2024, found that 35% of nonvoting U.S. citizens said a major reason they did not vote was that they thought “their vote would not make a difference.”

My teacher said that during the Kennedy-Nixon election, Kennedy won the popular vote by 0.17 percentage points. That election shows that each vote counts, but choosing not to vote means your ballot will not be part of the count.

My Uncle John said that it makes sense to feel that one vote is small, but elections are made of individual votes, and many races, especially for school boards and city councils, are decided by very small margins.

To keep it close to home, in Cleveland’s 2025 Ward 12 council race, the certified results showed Tanmay Shah with 1,485 votes and Danny Kelly with 1,476 — a difference of just nine votes. One ballot becomes part of the larger total. My Uncle John said strong turnout sends officials



a message that a community is paying attention.

So, if grown-ups aren’t sure who to vote for, Antioch Baptist Church’s Social Justice Ministry is organizing Road To the Polls, a series of voter-engagement events at Antioch and other locations. The ministry is partnering with Greater Cleveland Congregations on Fairfax canvassing.

Although they are nonpartisan and don’t tell people who to vote for, they encourage participation. People can learn why voting matters and about the candidates who are running, and they can help spread the word by canvassing the Fairfax neighborhood with friends of Olivet.

For more information on Road To the Polls, call Antioch Baptist Church at 216-421-1516.

My Uncle John said that voting is a gift that allows people to be a voice for the voiceless

and put compassionate folks in government. It’s a way to help those who are less fortunate than others. It’s a way to help ourselves.

My Uncle John said he worries that if people fail to use it, people may lose it. Please don’t lose it before I get a chance to use it.

Little Miss Marva Bean is the precocious fourth-grade version of the managing editor, Marva White. She is committed to accurate editorial content with an emphasis on clear reporting, strong collaboration, and coverage that informs and serves readers.





Kayla Blake



On Nov. 30, 2022, ChatGPT was released to the public; five days later, it had attracted 1 million users. Since then, AI tools and chatbots have grown rapidly in popularity, according to OpenAI.

Generative AI tools are increasingly relevant to schools, where students and educators may encounter them for writing, tutoring, planning, accessibility and assessment. A February 2026 JAMA Network Open study of 6,488 U.S. youths ages 4 to 17 found that 31.9% had accessed generative AI apps on their devices.

According to Boston University, AI tools moved into daily use faster than any other educational technology in recent memory. Students now use AI tools for anything from drafting essays and summarizing readings to working through math problems. AI is reshaping educational practice and debate.

According to The Phoenix School, classroom instruction for elementary and middle school children lays the foundation for lifelong success. As AI becomes more common in educational settings, researchers and educators must examine how the technology may affect young students.

The Brookings Institution published a report on a year-long study on June 5, 2026, that drew on interviews, focus groups and consultations with more than 500 students, teachers and parents from 50 countries. The study examined potential risks, benefits and recommendations. Ultimately, Brookings concluded that “the risks of utilizing generative AI in children’s education overshadow its benefits.”

The researchers found that overreliance on AI tools can put children’s fundamental learning capacity at risk. The report warns that overdependence can undermine learning when AI replaces rather than supports students’ thinking.

Rather than working through math problems, students can use chatbots to complete their assignments. For example, an unnamed student interviewed by Brookings researchers described AI as easy to use because “you don’t need to [use] your brain.”

One expert consulted for the report compared AI to “the fast food of education,” reflecting concern that convenience can displace deeper learning.

AI tools and chatbots are not solely viewed in a negative light. For example, the University of San Diego highlighted how both can enhance and modernize education.

With sound educator oversight, AI can personalize learning to help students learn and progress at their own pace. This could make classroom learning more accessible and tailored for each student — especially for students with special needs.

In an interview with WKYC, Shawn Braxton, executive director of IT customer excellence for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, said AI can help teachers assign work for students to “grow at their own pace.” He said he sees AI technology as beneficial for students’ futures.

According to the Harvard University Center for Education Policy Research, students are significantly further behind than they were a decade ago, partially because of the pandemic.

Some educators and researchers have suggested that AI tools could provide additional support for struggling students, although the effectiveness of those tools remains an area of study. The University of San Diego states that personalized learning can help students push their education further.

Another criticism of AI is that it affects creative spark. A 2025 study by researchers Christian Terwiesch, Lennart Meincke and Gideon Nave found that ChatGPT reduces diverse ideas, flattens creativity and hinders innovation. In 37 of 45 comparisons, ideas produced by participants using ChatGPT were significantly less diverse than those produced through other methods.

Terwiesch argued that relying on ChatGPT as a sole creative advisor will leave you



Credit ChatGPT

out of ideas because they will be almost the exact same.

Longtime Cleveland educator and former member of the State Board of Education of Ohio Meryl Johnson also expressed concerns about AI’s effect on student writing. Johnson said that after teaching English for 40 years, “it breaks my heart that students won’t have a chance to become great writers.” She said that “writing is an art, and because of AI, we are going to have so many people who don’t know the art of writing.”

Overall, artificial intelligence presents both potential benefits and concerns for young learners. Research has raised concerns that overreliance on AI may affect cognitive development and reduce idea diversity. On the other hand, AI can help advance students’ education.

Educators and parents can decide how they will help this new generation of learners

mitigate AI risks. The Brookings Institution published a list of recommendations to help families and schools navigate the rise of AI in education. It suggests that students, educators, and families build knowledge and establish how students will interact with AI.

If parents and educators are uninformed about this new technology, students may use it improperly. The Brookings Institution also recommends implementing safeguards to protect cognitive development and prevent overreliance.

This research suggests parents and teachers need to take a more active role in setting boundaries and expectations so young students can use AI to learn and grow into the next generation of scholars and leaders.

Kayla Blake is a recent graduate of George Washington University.

Black Men’s Health Council launches in Cleveland

From page 3

charge of their health.

Through these efforts, the Council seeks to create meaningful, lasting change by addressing barriers to care, fostering strong community partnerships and empowering Black men to take an active role in their health and well-being.

The council’s founding members include co-chairs Dr. Roderick Harris and Devon Jones and members Ron Calhoun, Dr. Stephen King, Pastor Kyle Early, Pastor Dwayne Simmons, James Wade III and Timothy Hamilton.

The council is actively seeking local healthcare providers, community leaders and residents who share this vision for Greater

Cleveland. To learn more about the initiative, find clinic locations or join the council, visit the official Village of Healing website.

Jones said, “If we are to improve the health outcomes of men of color, we have to be intentional about building trust and addressing the barriers of access to care.”

“Black men are at a high risk of dying from preventable diseases and it’s essential that we address this disparity through coordinated and intentional action. That’s what the council intends to do, one man at a time, one event at a time, one screening at a time until we make a difference.”

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Baby, now what? Postpartum mood changes



Jennifer Bailey



Editor’s note: “Baby, now what?” is a new series exploring the mental, physical and everyday realities of motherhood.

The murder trial of Lindsay Clancy, a Massachusetts woman accused of killing her three young children in 2023, ended in a mistrial Sept. 4 after jurors could not reach a unanimous verdict. Her attorneys argued that she was suffering from postpartum psychosis and was not criminally responsible for the killings.

The case has renewed discussion about recognizing and treating serious perinatal mental health conditions. Postpartum mental health concerns extend beyond the commonly discussed “baby blues,” while stigma and fear of judgment can make it harder for people experiencing symptoms to seek care.

Erika Kelley said fear of disclosure is a barrier, especially in healthcare settings. “Women fear, ‘What will happen if I tell my doctor this?’ Are they going to think I’m crazy? Are they going to take my baby away?” said Kelley, a clinical psychologist at University Hospitals who works with patients experiencing postpartum mood disorders.

Many new mothers experience a shift in mood after giving birth. According to the Cleveland Clinic, postpartum mood disorders fall into three categories:



Perinatal and postpartum experts from left to right: Erika Kelley, PhD; Karen Kearney, LISW; Melissa Endsley, LCPC-C, PMH-C; Christina Washburne, LISW, PMH-C

baby blues, postpartum depression (PPD) and postpartum psychosis (PPP), differing in severity and duration.

The Cleveland Clinic says baby blues usually begin a few days after delivery and subside within one to two weeks. Kelley noted that baby blues can present as minor mood swings, irritability and feeling tired.

“A distinction with baby blues as compared to depression is that baby blues doesn’t affect your functioning,” said Kelley. According to the Cleveland Clinic, baby blues affects 3 out of 4 women after giving birth, making initial mood changes a common occurrence.

Postpartum depression is a longer-lasting condition that can begin within the first few weeks after delivery or can develop gradually, including during the first year postpartum, according to the Cleveland Clinic. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 1 in 8 women with a recent live birth report symptoms of postpartum depression.

Karen Kearney, a licensed independent social worker, psychotherapist, educator and mental health advocate, said PPD is often discussed within a broader framework of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs).

PMADs can include

depression, anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder that occur during pregnancy or after birth. Bipolar disorder and postpartum psychosis require particularly careful clinical assessment and should not be treated as interchangeable with PPD.

The Cleveland Clinic lists potential symptoms including persistent sadness, anxiety, fatigue, guilt, loss of interest, changes in sleep and difficulty caring for oneself or one’s baby.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, postpartum psychosis (PPP) is a rare but treatable psychiatric emergency that can disrupt a person’s sense of reality after birth.

Symptoms may develop rapidly and can include confusion, severe agitation, delusions, hallucinations, mania, paranoia or markedly disorganized behavior. Immediate medical and psychiatric evaluation is essential. It affects roughly 1 in 1,000 people after delivery.

Intrusive thoughts can be distressing and are not, by themselves, evidence that a person will act on them. As defined by the Cleveland Clinic, intrusive thoughts are unwanted images or urges. Kearney explained the distinction between ego-dystonic thoughts — unwanted thoughts inconsistent with a person’s values — and ego-syntonic thoughts, which feel consistent with a person’s beliefs or desires.

If a thought feels congruent a clinician must assess the surrounding symptoms and level of risk.

Thoughts of harming oneself or a child, particularly when accompanied by delusions, hallucinations, confusion or an inability to maintain safety, warrant immediate emergency evaluation. Call 911, call or text 988, or seek care at an emergency room.

Meal trains, gift cards and “thinking of you” text messages often arrive shortly after birth, but the support may decrease over time. Kelley emphasized that ongoing practical support can help families navigate postpartum

challenges.

Melissa Endsley, a licensed professional clinical counselor, also a certified perinatal mental health provider and owner of Grove Counseling Collective, emphasized that postpartum challenges impact the entire household.

“If we could get the buy-in from the spouse, the family, maybe the friends, whoever’s part of that village, we are all affected by this, not just one person,” said Endsley. “We all have a role in supporting and helping and navigating this, not just one person.”

Postpartum depression can be difficult to identify, particularly when people minimize or conceal symptoms. Kelley used the informal phrase ‘smiling depression’ to describe patients who may appear to be functioning while experiencing symptoms.

Rather than relying on a general “How are you?” Kearney suggests using the acronym NESTS. “It stands for nutrition, exercise, sleep, time to self and support. And so you want to check in with all those boxes, and keep checking in with all those boxes.”

Experts emphasize that action is essential. Christina Washburne, a licensed independent social worker and certified perinatal mental health specialist at Grove Counseling Collective, encouraged loved ones to offer concrete help.

“Drop off food. And don’t ask; just drop it off.” Washburne said, “Ask if you can visit, sure, and be OK with no. If someone’s lawn needs mowed, say, ‘Let me come mow your lawn.’ We need to continue to be the village.” Simple acts like holding the baby so mom can rest, cleaning, cooking and running errands can make a big difference.

Support from family, friends, healthcare professionals and community resources can make it easier for people to seek care and manage postpartum mental health conditions.

For immediate danger, call 911. For suicide or mental health crisis support, call or text 988. The National Maternal Mental Health Hotline is available at 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262).

Series note: In future installments, “Baby, now what?” will draw on local experts for insight and practical guidance on topics ranging from postpartum depression to identity and other challenges and joys of motherhood.

Jennifer Bailey is a licensed clinical social worker and registered drama therapist.

Feeling sad, worthless, hopeless or guilty

Worrying excessively or feeling on edge

Loss of feelings in hobbies and things you usually enjoy

Changes in appetite or not eating

Loss of energy and motivation

Trouble sleeping or wanting to sleep all the time

Crying for no reason or excessively

Difficulty thinking or focusing

Lack of interest in the baby or feeling anxious around the baby

You're not alone.

These feelings are real, and support is available.



Baby, now what? The realities of new motherhood



Jennifer Bailey



Editor's note: "Baby, now what?" is a new series exploring the mental, physical and everyday realities of motherhood.

The lines on the pregnancy test confirmed she was pregnant. Then came nine months of growing a life inside her body. The anticipation can feel as tall as a skyscraper.

The mindset can shift from thinking about yourself to thinking about the baby. There are murmurs of sleepless nights, weird poop and other inconveniences, but those stories belong to other mothers; surely her experience will be different.

How hard could motherhood be? TV moms like Clair Huxtable, Harriette Winslow, Florida Evans and Vivian Banks made it look easy. The water breaks, labor begins, or the cesarean section is scheduled, and then the baby comes.

According to the National Vital Statistics System, more than

3.6 million babies were born in the United States in 2025. Much of the attention during pregnancy and immediately after centers on how to care for the baby. Although the baby is a top priority, the mother — who brought this baby into the world — can often be overlooked.

"We see the tiny baby, and we think of that as the vulnerable thing," said Karen Kearney, a licensed independent social worker certified in perinatal mental health. Kearney is an adjunct professor at Case Western Reserve University and is involved in social justice advocacy. "And it is, but so is the mother."

The maternal instincts everyone told her would kick in don't seem to be kicking in. Being one person's everything, from entertainment to emotional soother to food source, can take a toll. And even though she is around this tiny, adorable person all the time, for some mothers there is a sense of loneliness.

"Many parents are surprised by how lonely and isolating parenting can be," said Erika Kelley, a clinical psychologist at University Hospitals who specializes in working with postpartum mood disorders.

"I've been thinking a lot about how, in our work recently

is [that] functioning doesn't equal well-being. We're learning more and more that just because you're getting up, taking care of a baby, getting up in the middle of the night, going to work, does not mean you're okay," said Melissa Endsley, a licensed professional clinical counselor certified in perinatal mental health who leads Grove Counseling Collective.

Endsley has more than 15 years of experience working with pregnancy, postpartum transitions, anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

For some, loneliness is a whisper, a soft voice; for others, it's a drill sergeant screaming all her shortcomings in her ear.

This can be motherhood, a life transition many know exists, yet conversations about how difficult and rewarding motherhood can be are often limited.

Christina Washburne, a licensed independent social worker and certified perinatal mental health specialist at Grove Counseling Collective, noted the importance of pushing back against the idea that parenting is effortless.

"We need to fight back against the rhetoric that's saying,



New Mom arriving home after giving birth Credit: ChatGPT

this is supposed to all be rainbows and butterflies," Washburne said, emphasizing that society must allow "there to be challenge and joy in motherhood."

Series note: In future installments, "Baby, now what?" will draw on local experts for insight and practical guidance on topics ranging from postpartum depression to identity and other challenges and joys of motherhood.

Jennifer Bailey is a licensed clinical social worker and registered drama therapist.

Design Review Committee tables UH plan to demolish 12 homes



Staff Writer

Editor's note: Ron Calhoun, publisher of The Cleveland Observer, serves on the Central East Design Review Committee. Calhoun attended the Sept. 10 meeting and participated in the discussion and voted to table the University Hospitals proposal.

Design reviewers want University Hospitals to show what would replace the century-old houses before demolition moves forward.

University Hospitals will have to provide a clearer redevelopment plan to win the Central East Design Review Region Committee's support for its proposal to demolish 12 houses along East 115th Street near its University Circle medical campus.

The committee tabled the request after members questioned demolishing the houses before UH presented a specific plan for what would replace them.

Chris Trotta, the committee chair, who abstained from voting, presented University Hospitals' proposal. The proposal calls for demolishing 12 UH-owned houses. He proposed demolishing

12 houses UH owns along East 115th Street. Three other houses would remain and are being considered for sale, while a duplex used by Transplant House of Cleveland would remain.

The houses were built around 1900. Trotta told the committee that, based on the project team's research, the properties are not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, are not in a local landmark district and are not individually designated landmarks.

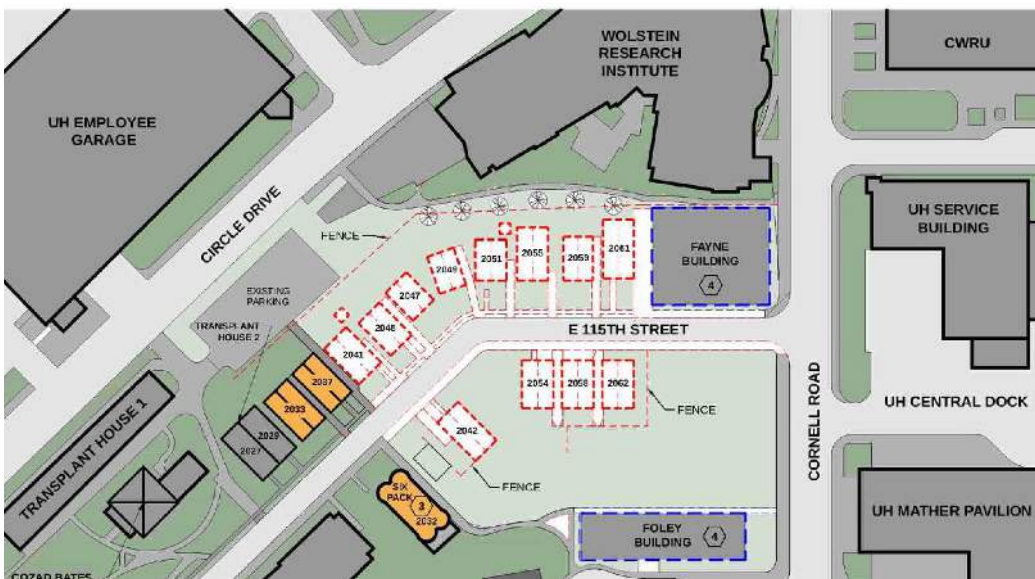
The presentation outlined a phased plan. The immediate phase called for asbestos sampling and abatement, demolition of the 12 houses and associated driveways and garages, filling basements, removing an existing wood fence, retaining trees and planting turf.

A later interim phase contemplated new sidewalks, lighting and landscaping, along with possible asphalt parking areas.

The presentation also showed a long-term concept for a health care "Center of Excellence" and parking structure. That phase was labeled as more than 10 years away and dependent on completion of a master plan.

Why UH says demolition is needed

UH Cleveland Medical Center President Stathis Antoniadis told the committee the hospital eventually needs



University Hospital E 115th Street Demolition Strategy presentation Credit LevelHeads

additional space because of capacity constraints at its University Circle campus.

"We know that we will need to expand because of the capacity constraints on our University Circle campus, but we do not have definitive plans," Antoniadis said.

Antoniades said, "UH's emergency department is overwhelmed and that the hospital operates at 95% to 98% occupancy."

He said the East 115th Street parcels represent what UH considers its only opportunity for campus expansion in that area.

UH's presentation described the demolition as a "catalyst" for eventual campus growth while acknowledging that the best long-term use has not yet been determined. It said future use would ultimately be based on patient clinical needs.

UH officials also cited pedestrian safety, deteriorated sidewalks and opportunities to improve the area. At the same time, they emphasized that long-term expansion needs — not simply the condition of the houses — were driving the demolition request.

What residents and reviewers are saying

Committee members repeatedly questioned why demolition should happen before UH presents a specific project for the site.

One committee member said they were concerned "that a neighborhood be replaced by grass and contractor parking," adding, "I don't find that as an acceptable trade-off."

Another committee member

Continued on page 7

Design Review Committee tables UH plan to demolish 12 homes

From page 6

questioned why the homes could not be sold or placed under another arrangement that would allow them to be rehabilitated.

“If this is beyond the means of University Hospital to maintain and operate residential properties ... then there you have options other than demolition,” the member said.

The Cleveland Restoration Society submitted a Sept. 3 letter strongly opposing the demolition. The organization described East 115th Street as “a remarkable, intact collection of century-old residences” representing an increasingly rare part of University Circle’s residential history and character.

The society also challenged the idea that the condition of the houses should justify removing them.

“That deterioration should not become a self-fulfilling justification for demolition,” the organization wrote. It also noted that neither UH nor University Circle Inc. had publicly shared a redevelopment plan explaining why demolition of the neighborhood was necessary at this stage.

The organization raised a separate concern about public spending, arguing that in a city needing safe, affordable housing, public funds should prioritize rehabilitation when possible. It urged the Central East Design Review Committee to deny demolition.

In a separate written public



University Hospital E 115th Street Demolition Strategy presentation. Credit: LevelHeads

comment, Dana Noel asked the committee to pause demolition long enough to determine whether historic-preservation requirements associated with state demolition funding had been satisfied. Noel cited the Ohio Department of Development’s Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Program and said required historic review had not yet been verified.

Noel did not ask the committee to permanently block UH development. Instead, the letter urged officials to verify preservation requirements and consider whether some properties could be rehabilitated for patient housing, support services or another use compatible with UH’s mission.

University Circle Inc. acknowledged both UH’s need for additional land and community objections to demolition.



Quick Facts: Built 1900 – 2,200 SF - 2 Story w/Basement/attic.

1 permit in 2000 (UH) - (New roof, porch floors & rails, gutters & fascia) - work to meet present codes

Matthew Provolt, UCI’s director of planning and design, said the organization wanted “the final outcome to balance these competing priorities.”

What was decided

A committee member moved to table the demolition request until “a bona fide building is presented to us” for the site. The motion was seconded and passed.

The committee chair summarized the decision by saying the proposal would remain tabled until UH presents a more concrete conceptual plan showing what would happen after the houses are demolished.

The committee did not approve the demolition request.

Questions that need to be answered for the committee

Several significant questions remain:

- What specifically does UH intend to build on the East 115th Street properties?
- Why should demolition occur now when UH’s own presentation places the proposed Center of Excellence more than 10 years into the future?
- When would permanent redevelopment actually begin?
- Could some of the houses be sold, rehabilitated or reused instead of demolished?
- How much state demolition funding has been awarded or approved for the project?
- What historic-preservation review is required under that funding program?
- Has that review been completed, and where can the public see the documentation?
- Would temporary parking eventually become permanent?
- When will UH present an updated campus master plan to the design review committee and the public?

UH’s presenter said the Cuyahoga Land Bank was expected to complete demolition in the fourth quarter of 2026 and that first-phase interim improvements were expected by the second quarter of 2027. It also said master planning could restart in 2027 or 2028. Those timelines were part

of UH’s presentation before the committee tabled the request.

What happens next

UH officials said they could return with a 2019 master plan to illustrate the institution’s previous development thinking, although Antoniadis said that plan was not approved by UH’s board or finance committee.

Officials also said developing a new plan would take longer and did not provide a timetable for returning to the committee.

Until UH returns with a more concrete proposal, the demolition request remains tabled.

Why it matters

Demolishing the 12 houses would permanently alter one of the remaining residential streets within University Circle’s heavily institutional landscape.

Committee members and opponents of demolition focused primarily on whether the houses should be removed before UH presents a definitive replacement project.

For residents and preservation advocates who opposed immediate demolition, that distinction was important: The physical change could happen long before the permanent development.

For now, the demolition remains a proposal, not an approval.

Transparency note:

This report is based on the Central East Design Review Committee presentation, discussion, public comments and vote; University Hospitals’ East 115th Street demolition-strategy presentation; a Sept. 3 letter from Cleveland Restoration Society President Kathleen H. Crowther; and written public comment submitted by Dana Noel.

The Cleveland Observer will continue tracking the proposal as UH returns to city review.

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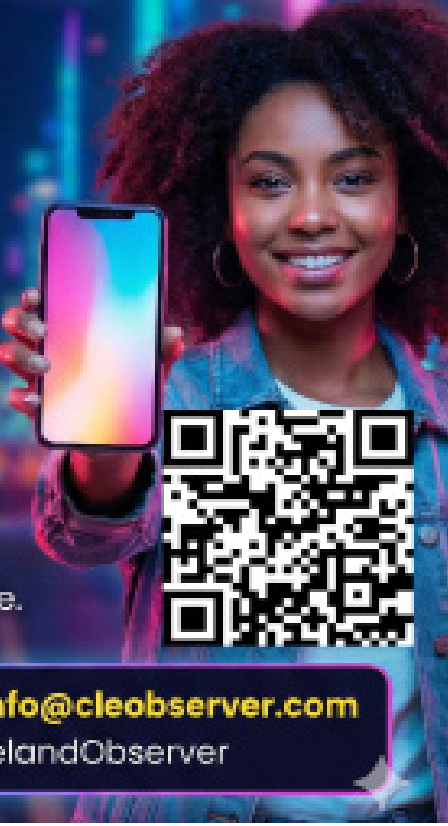
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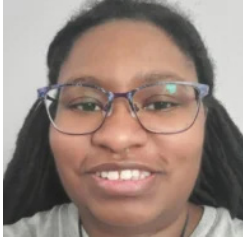
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Black hair treatments and their health effects



Amaya Gentry



In the United States, most cosmetics do not require the Food and Drug Administration premarket approval before they are marketed. The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act defines cosmetics as “articles intended to be rubbed, poured, sprinkled, or sprayed on, introduced into, or otherwise applied to the human body... for cleansing, beautifying, promoting attractiveness or altering the appearance.” The FD&C Act prohibits adulterated or misbranded cosmetics before they enter the market. The Modernization of Cosmetics Regulation Act of 2022, known as MoCRA, expanded FDA authority and established additional requirements intended to strengthen cosmetic product safety. MoCRA provides the FDA with new authorities, including access to certain records and authority to order mandatory recalls in specified circumstances. It requires serious adverse-event reporting, facility registration and cosmetic product listing, and maintenance of records supporting adequate safety substantiation.

Implementation dates and exemptions vary by requirement, so manufacturers and consumers should consult current FDA guidance. Most cosmetic ingredients do not require individual FDA premarket approval, although manufacturers and responsible persons have legal obligations to ensure cosmetics are safe and properly labeled; MoCRA added an explicit requirement for adequate safety substantiation. FDA guidance states that, except for color additives and ingredients prohibited or restricted by regulation, manufacturers may use an ingredient if the finished cosmetic is safe under labeled or customary conditions of use and is properly labeled. **Research on hair products commonly used by Black women** Concerns about some hair products marketed to Black women have received increased attention because research has identified differences in product use and chemical exposure. A 2021 study in the Journal of Exposure Science & Environmental Epidemiology examined hormonal activity in six leave-in hair products commonly used by Black women, including a hair lotion, two leave-in conditioners, two hair oils and one root stimulator. Researchers found hormonal activity in laboratory assays for all six products, though the type and

magnitude of activity varied across products. The finding indicates the products interacted with hormone-related receptors in the tests; it does not establish that their use causes disease. In a 2018 study published in Environmental Research, tested 18 products used primarily by Black women for 66 chemicals, including fragrances, phthalates and parabens. Researchers detected 45 chemicals that the study categorized as endocrine-disrupting or asthma-associated across the tested products. Additionally, the researchers reported finding “cyclosiloxanes, parabens, and the fragrance marker diethyl phthalate at the highest levels, and DEP most frequently.” The researchers reported that many target chemicals were not listed individually on labels; some fragrance components may be declared collectively as “fragrance” under federal labeling rules. Phthalates are a family of chemicals used for different purposes, including making some plastics more flexible and, in some cases, helping fragrances last longer. Some phthalates have been associated with reproductive, developmental and endocrine effects in scientific research, including animal studies; risks depend on the specific compound, dose and route of exposure. The FDA states that, based on currently available safety information, it does not have safety concerns about diethyl phthalate, or DEP, as it is currently used in cosmetics and fragrances. Parabens are used for their antimicrobial and preservative properties. Parabens can show estrogen-like activity, although the FDA notes that studies have found that their estrogenic activity is substantially lower than that of naturally occurring estrogen. The FDA’s current position is that parabens have not been shown to be harmful as used in cosmetics, where they are generally present in small amounts. In a 2017 commentary in the American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology, researchers Ami R. Zota and Bhavna Shamasunder wrote that “Women of color have higher levels of certain endocrine-disrupting chemicals, such as phthalates and parabens, in their bodies compared to white women, and these racial [and] ethnic differences are not explained by socioeconomic status.” The commentary summarizes associations reported across studies; it does not establish that using a particular hair product causes these outcomes. Zota and Shamasunder also wrote, “Exposure to one or more of these chemicals has been linked to endocrine disruption, cancer, reproductive harm and impaired neurodevelopment in children.” The FDA says it continues to monitor

and review published research on cosmetic-ingredient safety. **How to evaluate ingredients in hair care products** Consumers can start with a product’s ingredient declaration. For consumer cosmetics sold at retail in the United States, ingredients generally must be listed by their common or usual names in descending order of predominance. Ingredients present at 1% or less and color additives may be listed in any order after ingredients present at more than 1%. Consumers also may consult third-party databases, such as the Environmental Working Group’s Skin Deep database or CosDNA, to identify reported ingredients and review each service’s methodology. CodeCheck, an app that scans product barcodes and provides ingredient information and ratings, can be used to check labels and investigate ingredients found in hair care products. These third-party tools do not replace FDA safety determinations or product-specific advice from a qualified health professional. They can help



Photo credit: Unsplash

consumers see which ingredients are listed for particular products, although users should compare the results with the current package label and recognize that formulas can change. It is also important to note that different services use different rating methods. **Takeaways** MoCRA expanded federal requirements and FDA authority over cosmetics. Research has identified potentially concerning chemical exposures in some hair products, but risk depends on the chemical, concentration and type of exposure. Some products used by Black women have contained chemicals researchers classify as endocrine-disrupting or asthma-associated. However, the FDA says available evidence does not show that phthalates as used in cosmetics pose a safety risk or that parabens as used in cosmetics affect human health. Ingredient labels identify ingredients but generally do not disclose concentrations, and fragrance mixtures may be listed simply as “fragrance.” Amaya Gentry has a bachelor’s degree in biology and has worked as a quality control chemist.

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