

DATE: April 14, 2026

TO: Brian Davis, Director, Office of Planning

FROM: Mike O'Leary, Clifton Community Council



SUBJ: 26-ZONE-0030. 1901 R Payne St, DD Williamson rezoning from M2 to CM, 3.12 acres  
Traditional Neighborhood Form District

The Clifton Community Council supports the rezoning of 1901 R Payne St from M2 to CM. CM zoning is a more appropriate use for the property, is better for residents, will be a great opportunity for the neighborhood to grow, and will increase the tax base. The recommended CM zoning is the appropriate zoning classification for this site for the following reasons:

1. CM zoning allows the property to transition to its highest and best use in response to market realities and surrounding land uses.
2. CM zoning provides an appropriate transition by permitting less intensive uses that are compatible with nearby homes in a Traditional Neighborhood Form District and within the Clifton Preservation District.
3. CM zoning permits a combination of commercial, office, residential, and less intensive industrial uses (M1), providing flexibility while reducing the intensity of potential uses compared to M2.
4. CM zoning continues to permit less intensive industrial uses, including those that may utilize existing rail infrastructure, while eliminating more intensive industrial uses that are not appropriate in this setting.
5. More flexible zoning increases the property's marketability and supports reinvestment, allowing the owner to realize fair market value consistent with the surrounding area.
6. Productive reuse under CM zoning will generate greater economic activity and property tax revenue for Louisville Metro.
7. Clifton has a history of former industrial properties transitioning to commercial, residential, or mixed uses. This reflects both market conditions and the established residential character of the neighborhood and supports the appropriateness of CM zoning for this site.


The structures have been demolished, and operations have been relocated. The prior use is no longer occurring at this location, and the matter before the Commission is the appropriate zoning classification for a now-vacant site within a residential neighborhood.

The history of the site includes a catastrophic November 12, 2024 explosion that resulted in the loss of two lives and significant damage to surrounding homes and properties, along with prior incidents over time. This history highlights the importance of evaluating intensity of use and compatibility in this context as part of determining the appropriate land use moving forward.

On December 16, 2025, Metro Council approved a resolution requesting the Planning Commission consider rezoning this property to a lower, more appropriate zoning classification. The March 9, 2026, Planning Commission application to rezone 1901 R Payne St. from M2 to CM is consistent with the resolution, supports the 2023 Clifton-Crescent Hill Neighborhood Plan, and reflects sound land use policy.

The Clifton Community Council respectfully asks the Planning Commissioners to approve the rezoning of 1901 R Payne St. from M2 to CM.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Michael O'Leary, President  
1963 Payne St 40206, 502-744-3144  
michael.oleary@twc.com

c: Andrew Owen, Metro District 9 Councilperson

March 20, 2026 Photos



1901 Payne St. the driveway. Lot size: 75 x 175. 0.2813 ac. Zoned R5  
 1901 R Payne St. plant & office Lot size: 233.2 x 582.96. 3.12 ac. Zoned M2  
 Traditional Neighborhood Form District  
 Compressed Acetylene Company dating to 1929. DD Williamson Co 1948-2021



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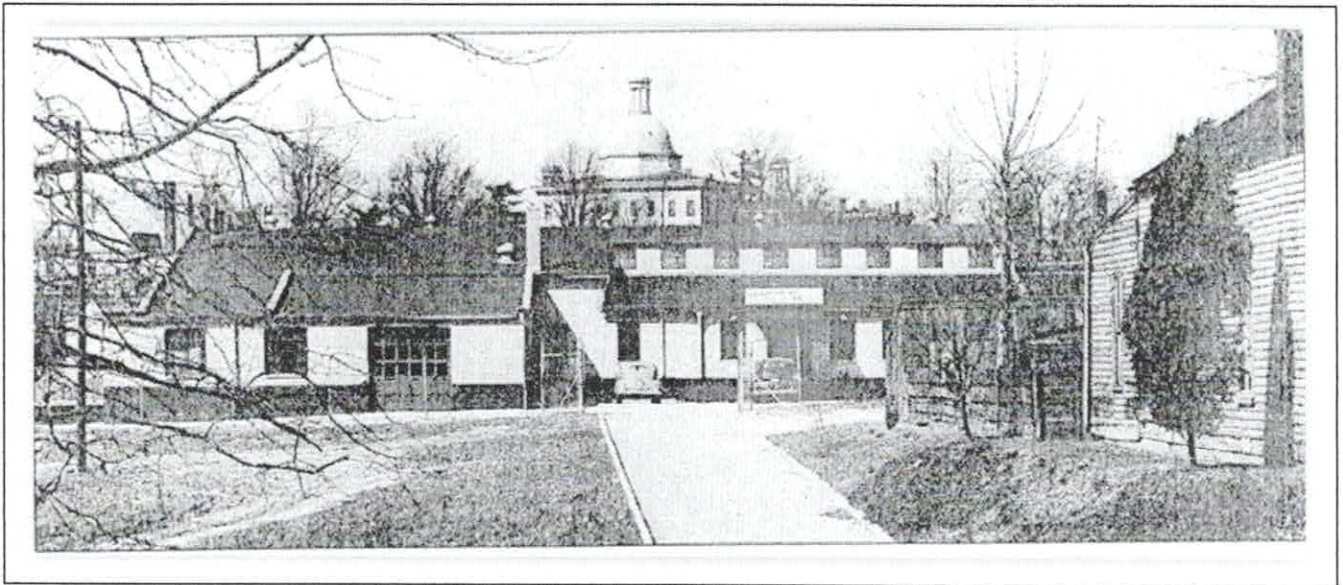
DD Williamson building  
PVA: Basement Area 3,794 SF  
PVA: Height: 34 ft  
PVA: Tower Height: 64 ft.  
PVA: Above Grade Sq Ft. 38,686 SF  
83 x 149. 74 x 155  
64 x 125. 30 x 98  
Office: 46 x 89  
429 linear feet

CSX railroad tracks  
2 tracks, one for each direction  
DDW has 1 side track for shipping

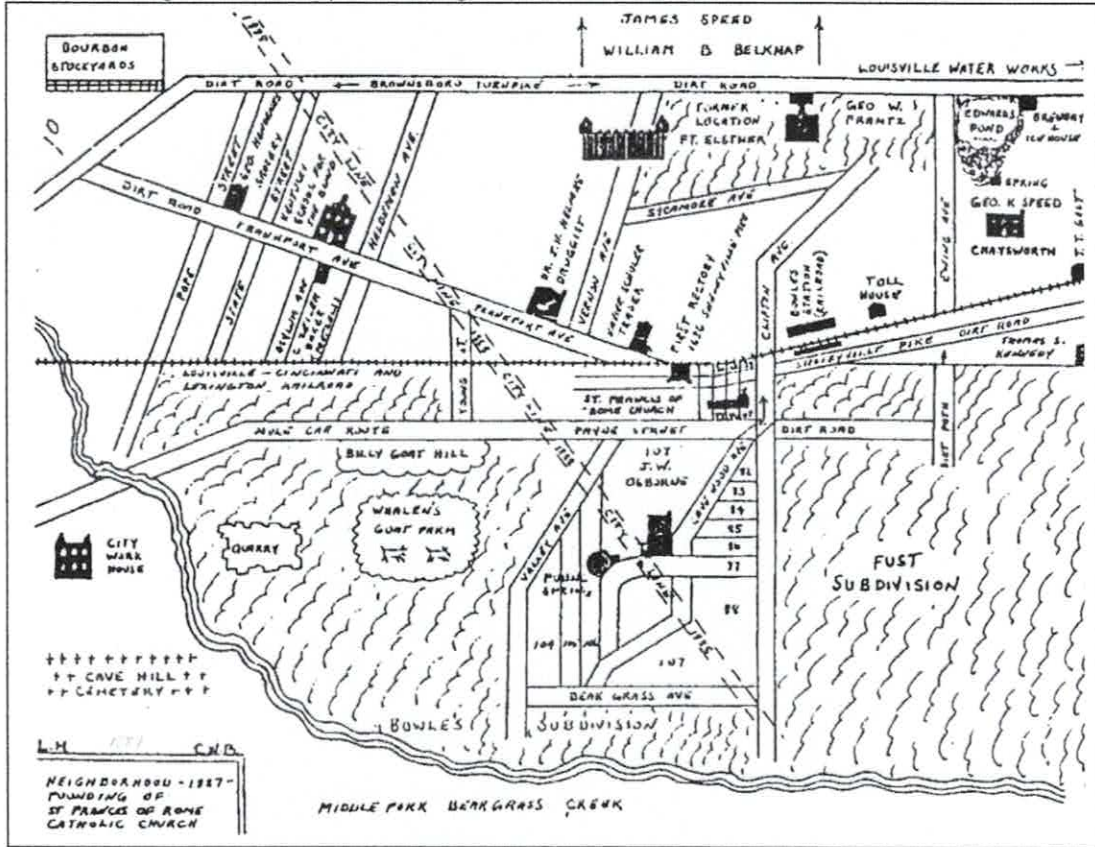
\$6.8 million rebuild and expansion  
after 4/11/2003 explosion.



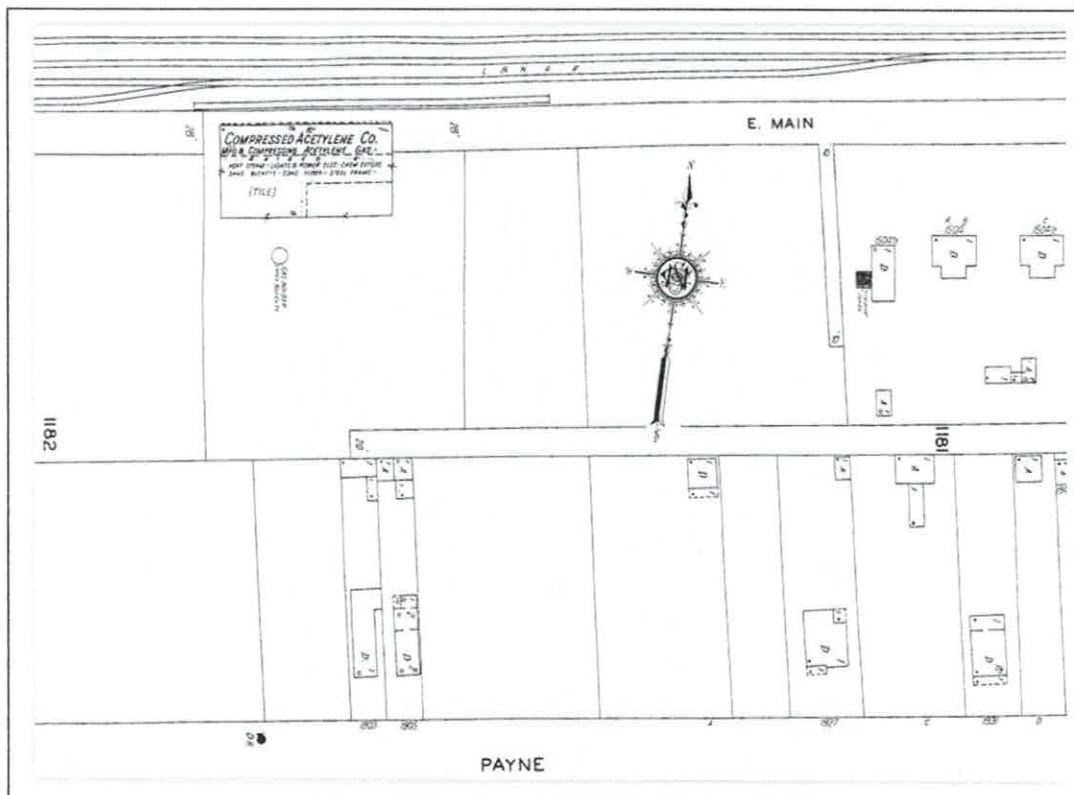
Undated photo from Courier Journal  
Ky School for the Blind is seen beyond the plant

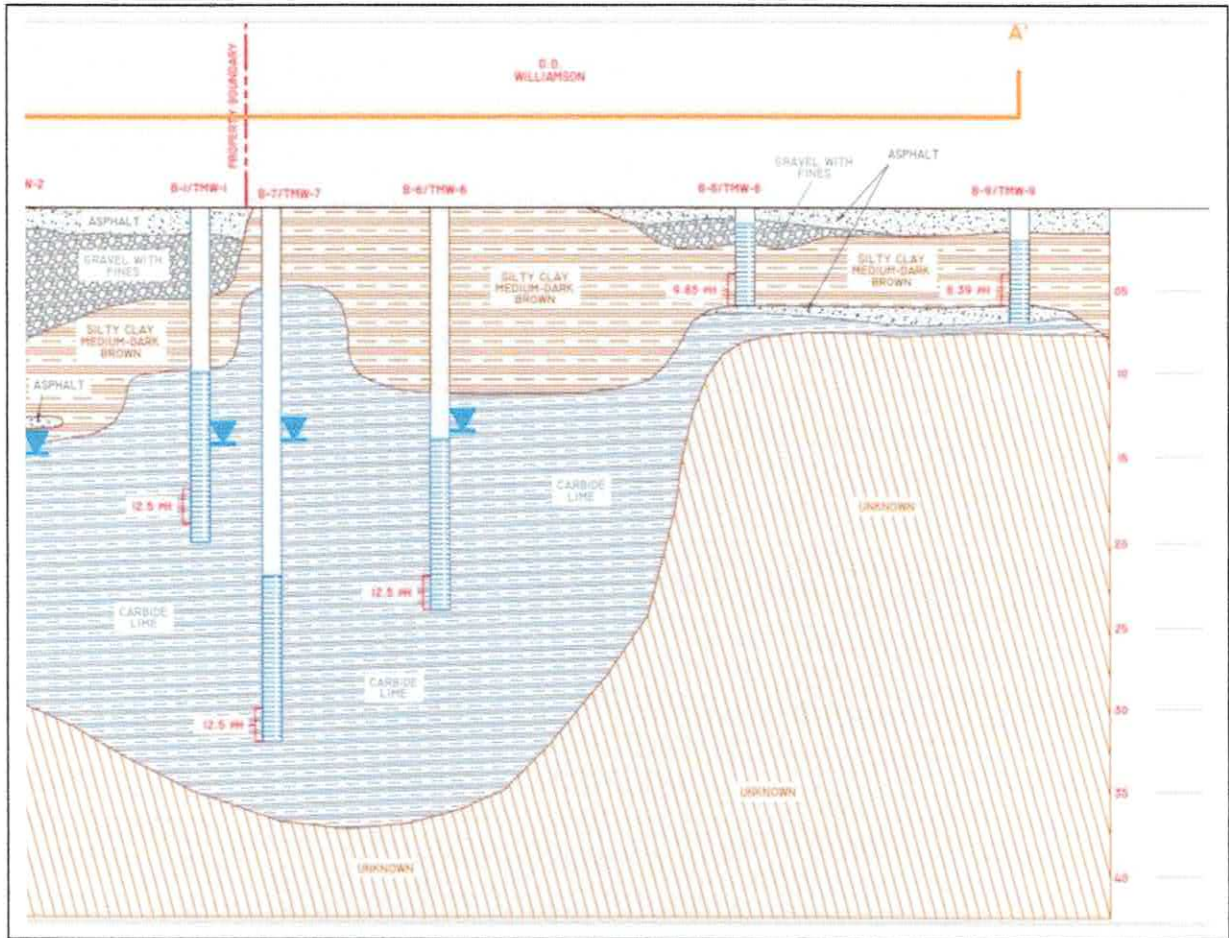


1887 Clifton neighborhood map - Founding of St Frances of Rome Catholic Church



1928 - Sanborn map, volume 7, sheet 743





## Existing in Clifton

### 2 CM properties

2306 Frankfort Ave –DIXIE EQUITY LLC owns both properties. 0.3670 acre. Bldg SF: 12,330. 60 x 188. Storage units

2320 Frankfort – Redefine Design. Former Dr Pepper plant, D & W Silks. 0.7982 acre. Bldg SF: 20,009. 107x187



### 23 M2 properties

1860 Arlington	Willis Klein
1866-80 Arlington	Leonhardt storage
100 S Bellaire	LGE substation
109-111 S Charlton	Fleur de Lis Construction
113-115 S Charlton	RWSS Properties/ Adv Bus Solutions. Former Louisville Paving
1612 Mellwood	Apocalypse Brewing
1626 Mellwood	PGS ESTATES LLC
1634-38-40-48 Mellwood	MJTHOME LLC
1700-26-28 Mellwood	building at Frankfort & Mellwood. ALEMAP LLC. Pursuit Spirits Distillery
1732-34 Mellwood	PADEN JAMES INVESTMENTS LLC. Graduate Contracting, Roofing contractor
1906-10 New Main St	Cummins-Boldin, just east of DD Williamson
2000 New Main St	LGE substation
2014 New Main St	2014 NEW MAIN STREET PROPERTIES LLC
2016 New Main St	2016 NEW MAIN LLC. Carmichael's
1745 Payne St	RWSS PROPERTIES LLC. Advanced Business Solutions.
1901 Payne St	DD Williamson/ Givaudan
130 Stevenson	Robert C. Rueff. zoned R6 and M2
143-45-47 Stevenson	Craig Kaviar Forge

### C2 properties

01 on Bellaire Ave.	069H00770000. PLAN C LLC. North of 111 S Bellaire and rear of 2004-2006 Frankfort
03 on Brownsboro Rd.	1800, 1806, 2200. Car repair, Kroger
71 on Frankfort Ave	
02 on S Jane St.	104, 110. Car repair
01 on Mellwood	1648. Also zoned M2. Parking lot at Frankfort & Mellwood
01 on New Main St	2132. Gallant Fox
01 on Pope St.	203. Clovene
01 on S Rastetter Ave.	123. H&W, PROPERTIES LLC

## Similar Cases

2008-2032 Frankfort Ave., 113 N Bellaire Ave.  
2030 Frankfort Ave. Zoned C2. 1.6 acres  
AMP Apartments  
Former Ready Electric Co



4/24/2014 LD&T

14DEVPLAN1034. Category 3 Plan for construction of a 93-unit multi-family development, landscape and parking waivers. Parking Waiver - Waiver of Table 9.1.2.A. of the Land Development Code (LDC) to not provide the minimum required parking. The request is a reduction from 126 to 115 spaces

4/21/14 Board of Zoning Adjustment (BOZA)

Approved a variance to not provide a private yard; a waiver to allow parking in the principle structure area, several landscape waivers, and the Category 3 Plan.

Variance of Sec. 5.4.1.D.2. of the Land Development Code (LDC) to not provide the required 30% private yard;

Waiver of Sec. 5.4.1.C.2. of the LDC to allow parking in the principal structure area;

Waiver of Sec. 10.2.4 of the LDC to not provide the required 10-ft. LBA and plantings adjacent to R-6 property to the southwest;

Waiver of Sec. 10.2.10 of the LDC to not provide the required 5-ft VUA LBA adjacent to C-2 property to the northwest (Johnson & Cox properties), conditioned upon providing an 8-ft. wood fence;

Waiver of Sec. 10.2.12 of the LDC to not provide the required 120-ft. distance between the ILAs;

4/23/2014 Clifton ARC

14COA1038. New construction 4-story multi-family housing and 103 on-site parking spaces. Approximately 47' feet tall and 270' linear feet in length expanding across the majority of the site's street frontage, and will contain 93 dwelling units and garage parking for 10 units. Total floor area for the project is 71,300 sq. ft. Ready Electric office building, as well as, the concrete and metal warehouses on the site were demolished.

115 S. Charlton St and 1829 R. Payne St.  
1745 Payne St.  
Zoned OR3 and M2. 3.49 acres  
Advanced Business Solutions  
Former Louisville Paving/Charlton Company, Inc./  
Dougherty Coal Co. Garages & Equipment Yard



8/7/17 BOZA

17DEVPLAN1110, Category 3 review plan to construct a 29,700+ sf building on 3.49 acres in the M2 zoning district.

A variance to encroach on front and rear yard setbacks

Review of a Category 3 Development Plan for a proposed 38 +/- foot tall 29,700 sf. light industrial building with 145 parking spaces with two variances.

8/2/17 Clifton ARC

17COA1159 demolition and construction of a two story office building

Demolish 7 structures: barrel roof metal garage with cement block garage addition, Metal garage, Steel structure, Metal garage, Canopy storage structure, Retaining wall, and Metal shed structure (behind barrel roof garage)

History:

1884 – Caron’s city directory shows 12 families lived on Payne St. William Whalen, a goat farmer, of Billy Goat Hill, was listed. Nicholas Satori and Joseph Willinger were also listed. Andrew Brauner owned a dairy farm.

1900 – Caron’s city directory lists 10 families from Charlton to Miller, 7 from Miller to Sturgis, 9 from Sturgis to Young (Bellaire), 14 from Young to Cavewood (Clifton Ave), 7 from Cavewood to Rastetter, 3 from Rastetter to Jane, 5 from Jane to Raymond (Ewing). 55

1928 – Sanborn map, volume 7, sheet 743 shows “Compressed Acetylene Co., Mfg & Compressed Acetylene Gas. Heat Steam–Lights & Power Elec Chem Extgrs. Sand Buckets – Conc Floor – Steel Frame. Tile. Gas Holder. Capcy 500 Cu Ft

1933 - Historic records show the city of Louisville first created a board to designate zoning in 1933. The zoning description for that area was only a couple of sentences long. The Payne Street location was designated as “light to medium industrial” and has not been changed since then. WAVE TV documentary “If you look at when zoning was instituted, both in the city and the unincorporated areas, it was kind of pre-automobile, especially before the big car boom,” said Brian Davis, director of Louisville Planning and Design Services.

“People were not necessarily driving to and from work every day, and so it was a little more common to have residences kind of closer to industrial uses like that” — allowing workers to walk to the plant for shifts, day and night.

Louisville and Jefferson County eventually implemented zoning laws, in 1931 and 1943, respectively. Where a plant was already in operation, officials drawing up the zoning districts decided: “All right, that’s industrial,” Davis said.

Industrial corridors also popped up around key infrastructure like rail lines and interstates, which cut through Louisville neighborhoods in many places.

By the late 20th century, planners around the country were shifting heavy industry out of urban centers and into concentrated “industrial parks” on the outskirts of cities — away from homes, but close enough to population centers to access workers. 2/9/25 Courier Journal article. Where heavy industry meets residential: Thousands in Louisville live near chemical risk

4/23/1946 – DD Williamson and Co. Inc of KY purchased Tract II. Deed Book 5717, Page 654

3/18/1948 - DD Williamson and Co. Inc of KY purchased Tract I. Deed Book 5717, Page 653

1965 and 1970 – according to Courier Journal archives, caramel was sprayed over homes on Haldeman.

11/13/24 CJ article ‘Will explosion cause plant to leave Clifton neighborhood?’

1993 - Dust particles ignited and were carried through the machinery’s piping, and into the drying chamber. No one was hurt. The fire department wrote that it caused more than \$150,000 worth of damage. WAVE TV documentary

03/02/1996 2 am - a railroad tank car carrying 20,000 gallons of ammonium bisulfite ruptured, overheated and exploded, sending a green powder throughout the Clifton neighborhood. The tank’s lid landed two blocks away at 118 Stoll Ave. That powder was ammonium bisulfate- used to make caramel. No one was reported injured. The fertilizer type chemical was diluted with water. Water trucks sprayed homes as they drove through streets.

06/05/2002 – APCD failure to comply with FEDOOP permit agreement. \$1500

04/11/2003 – Explosion that killed one worker and injured 26 others was due to pressure buildup in a 8 foot tall tank. Firefighters said hazardous amounts of ammonia leaked from the plant and debris was sent flying through fences and into neighboring parking lots. The company was fined \$10,000 by the KY Labor Cabinet. WLKY 11/12/24.

Louis Perry, a 44-year-old DD Williamson employee, died when a cooker exploded. According to federal investigative records, the company was using a tank as storage and had eliminated a safety valve since it was not used as a cooker. When the company decided to use the vessel as a cooker, the safety valve was never re-installed. The tank over-pressurized and exploded. Givaudan was sued, fined, and sanctioned for several violations. The explosion led to the company being placed under a consent decree. WAVE TV’s documentary

12/16/2003 –APCD failure to control objectionable odors. Agreement \$375

01/15/2004 – MSD has sued DD Williamson for about \$200,000 after blaming a nearby collapsed sewer line on the company’s wastewater. MSD records show 18 discharge violations since 2000 for either ammonia or acid levels, including six in the past year. DD Williamson also has a track record of failing to meet discharge standards for acidity. A pretrial conference on the MSD sewer damage lawsuit is scheduled for Jan 23 in Jefferson Circuit Court, and the chemical safety board intends to hold a meeting in Louisville in six weeks. MSD insists the acidic nature of caramel waste products ate away at the concrete pipes over many years, causing MSD to spend about \$200,000 to replace or repair the damaged line. MSD fined DD Williamson \$15,000 in March 2022 for the acidic discharges, which the company agreed to pay. MSD is preparing for a trial to collect the larger civil claim. Courier Journal article by James Bruggers, Nine companies violated MSD’s discharge rules.

11/02/2005 – APCD failure to comply with District Permit. Agreement \$1500

03/02/2006 – APCD failure to control objectionable odors. Agreement \$750

03/14/2006 – APDC Permit Conditions – not in accordance with application. Agreement \$375

06/27/2006 – APCD visible fugitive emissions beyond the property. Agreement \$750

06/30/2006 – APCD failure to comply with FEDOOP Permit. Agreement \$1500

10/06/2009 – APDC failure to comply with requirements of program. US Court \$300,000

01/13/2014 – APDC failure to control objectionable odors. Agreement \$750

09/29/2016 – Site Characterization Report, Wet Weather Seep Discharge 1829 Payne St report to KY Dept for Environmental Protection from Linebach-Funkhouser Inc. Page 23-24 are a map and table showing isopleths reflecting pH levels in soil. Buried former stockpile of carbide lime in excess of 32 ft thick with 7-12 feet of cover material is beneath the Louisville Paving, DD Williamson, and RMC properties from the former production of acetylene gas dating back to 1929. Page 33 is a letter from the KY Dept for Environmental Protection dated 8/5/2016 stating “With the inclusion of potassium and magnesium to the list of caustic parameters, the plan is hereby approved.”

08/00/2018 - Four fire engines responded after the company “overcooked” a batch of caramel, according to the plant manager. WAVE TV documentary

06/00/2019 – 911 was called and the Fire department reported, the employee said the mixing motor stopped working. The employee says the caramel in a hopper overheated and had formed into a solid gelatin. Records state the cooling system couldn’t get ahead. That’s when the employee said the relief valve on the tank began working only intermittently. The caller explained the tank hit 300 degrees, had exceeded its pressure and was steaming. The dispatch notes say the caller was concerned it may explode. Employees were evacuated and standing about a block away from the location, the caller said. The records show seven fire engines responded. Firefighters placed a hose on the exterior of the tank and a fog line, or mist, to absorb heat and smoke and cool the room. They then doused the tank with water using an unmanned line with a nozzle called a Blitzfire. After about 25 minutes, the pressure and temperature drop escaping disaster. WAVE TV documentary

08/03/2021 – Plant manager attended a Clifton Community Council LUPC meeting and provided an update on new equipment installations relating to APCD FEDOOP Construction Permit. Two new batch cookers to replace a continuous process cooker and add automated and manual safety controls.

10/11/2021 – Givaudan announced it has reached an agreement to acquire DDW, The Color House.

04/18/2022 – Plant manager informs Clifton Community Council of water in backyard at 1831 Payne, and will work with MSD, Water Co., and 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractors to determine the source. Fresh water supply line was found damaged located under the parking lot. Repair was completed.

12/27/2022 – Plant manager informed the Clifton Community Council of a rental boiler on site. The recent cold temperatures caused busted water pipes and took out their boilers. The rental boiler will be in front of the plant for a few months while new boilers are installed.

2023 – Givaudan received two citations from Air Pollution Control District for not notifying APCD about excess emissions and not submitting annual reports, and agreed to pay \$7500.

10/20/2023 – 6 am. the plant had a caramel food coloring emissions release which coated nearby homes, property, and cars – 20 pounds of emissions put out over a 30-minute release. WDRB 11/16/2024.

03/20/2024 – Givaudan has quarterly inspection of French Drain completed

06/00/2024 - An employee calls 911 and tells them there's been a fire inside of the hopper's ventilation fan. The records show the employees were evacuated. The 911 report states "we have a small fire upstairs on one of our equipment," the caller said. "I hit it with the fire extinguisher but I if you could send someone up to make sure everything is ok with it because I hit it with the fire extinguisher, it flamed back up. I hit again and it went down, I just want to make sure," he continued. WAVE TV documentary

08/29/2024 - Kentucky's Occupational Safety and Health Administration received an online complaint filed by an employee at Givaudan about the working conditions. The complaint said there were chemical leaks, alarms were not functioning, and that employees had to "run off the floor" because they couldn't breathe. The employee adds that there was "product" on the floor and hoses around the work area, making it difficult to "make it to safety." WAVE TV documentary

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11/12/2024 – 2:57 pm explosion occurred. 2 lives lost (Kevin Dawson Jr and Austin Jagers), 11 people hurt. MSD reported approximately 2,000 gallons of caramel food coloring spilled into Beargrass Creek. 100 gallons of hydrochloric acid was also released. Hundreds of homes and business properties were damaged. Damage estimate from ATF in the tens of millions of dollars.

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11/13/2024 - "I do think there are probably better locations in the city than this location to rebuild this plant," Mayor Craig Greenberg said Wednesday. WDRB article and Courier Journal article

11/18/2024 – Meeting held at UCHM. Approximately 200 residents attended to hear from city officials about the Givaudan explosion and to express their concerns

01/03/2025 – Courier Journal reports "The explosion released a total of 5,000 gallons of corn syrup blend used by the company to develop pigment," according to a statement from the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet. The runoff reached Beargrass Creek via storm drains "due to firefighting activity." No impacts to wildlife or the Ohio River have been observed and pH readings are normal, officials said, as water quality monitoring continues.

01/21/2025 – Givaudan announces it will not rebuild

01/22/2025 – 120 residents sign a letter to city officials asking that the company not be allowed to rebuild.

02/17/2025 – Courier Journal reports The Kentucky Department of Housing, Building and Construction found the vessel that exploded at the Givaudan Sense Colour plant in Louisville was installed without a permit after July 2021. The installation contractor paid \$500 to settle the violation, according to records.

02/20/2025 – WAVE TV documentary – the good neighbor – Givaudan in Louisville. [wave3.com/page/the-good-neighbor](http://wave3.com/page/the-good-neighbor)

02/25/2025 – D9 Andrew Owen holds meeting at UCHM

02/27/2025 – US Chemical Safety Board report released

04/17/2025 – Mayor directs metro agencies to meet with Givaudan to discuss demolition plans

06/03/2025 - 143 page final report from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives released

08/20/2025 – Mayor announces the site has been released back to the company and they may apply for required permits to begin demolition. Givaudan announced Hayden Wrecking will complete the demolition and removal

09/10/2025 - 25-COA-0213. Givaudan Demolition. Entire building/silo demolition and 1970s brick office building. Seeding of the entire lot post demolition approved by Clifton ARC

09/17/2025 – D9 Andrew Owen holds Givaudan Community Listening Session Life After Givaudan at UCHM

12/16/2025 – Metro Council approves a resolution with 17 yes votes and 9 no votes.  
R-161-25 A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE PLANNING COMMISSION CONSIDER REZONING THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 1901 R PAYNE STREET TO A LOWER, MORE APPROPRIATE ZONING CLASSIFICATION

01/12/2026 – Metro approves wrecking permit for 1901R Payne St. BLD-WRE-25-00339

01/19/2026 – Givaudan plans to have equipment and contractors on site to begin the demolition

03/09/2026 - 26-ZONE-0030 application filed to rezone property from M2 to CM

3/16/2026 – Brian Davis, Director, Office of Planning, made a presentation at the Clifton Community Council public meeting discussing the M2 to CM rezoning recommendation

04/23/2026 – Planning Commission Public Hearing, 1 pm, Old Jail Building, 514 W Liberty St