Cleveland Heights builds on ‘green’ inherent in prewar suburbs

Marc Lefkowitz

Zoning was a Cleveland invention, introduced to the world at the turn of the last century when the bustling town of Euclid faced a serious challenge, known as incompatible uses. Industry was creeping east from Cleveland, and faced with the health risks of a smoke stack on a residential street, Euclid moved to separate uses—homes here and industry there. Today, many cities use zoning to uphold restriction on mixed uses, or maintain a strict separation of live/ work spaces, and thus discourage dense development of neighborhoods that are nice to stroll, ride a bicycle, or hop a streetcar to go from place to place.

Raised in a suburb built in the post-WWII boom, I was unaware of the influence the historic Supreme Court decision that ushered in Euclidian zoning had in determining the shape and appearance of every nook and cranny of my experience. Later, when I found a suburb with neighborhoods that seemed to effortlessly intertwine the comings and goings of everyday life, I thought that Cleveland Heights and Lakewood had invented green living (well before “green” was a concept I was aware of). In these streetcar suburbs, the ‘bones’ of compact form support a system of sustainability, but that system, like a home built in the 1920s, needs occasional updates to reflect our current knowledge of what is efficient, what is ‘green.’

Cleveland Heights recently hired consultants from Chicago, Camiros, Inc., to audit its zoning ordinance with an eye toward making those decisions more sustainable. One focus of the consultant’s work will be to ensure proper setbacks for homes, and to encourage the development of homes in the historic district. While setbacks do exist, the consultant’s study will determine whether they are adequate or whether they need to be modified, or even eliminated. The consultant’s study will also look at the practicality of denser development, which will affect the potential for future revenue for the city. The consultant’s final report will be presented this year.

Heights High senior featured in winter concert

Daniel Heim

Harpist Kellen Lowrie will be the featured soloist at a concert on Friday, Feb. 11. Presented by the instrumental music department of Cleveland Heights High School, it is the second of two concerts the department will present that week. The first concert, on Wednesday, Feb. 9, features a chamber music recital in the school’s social room, followed by the school’s concert orchestra, a percussion ensemble, and the combined concert and symphonic bands in the auditorium.

Reaching Heights Spelling Bee turns 20

Patrick Mollen

What do you get when you put musicians, lawyers and educators in the same room? You get a great time at the 20th Annual Reaching Heights Adult Community Spelling Bee. This year’s funfilled Bee will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 22 at 7 p.m., at Cleveland Heights High School.

More than 20 teams will vie for bragging rights and the coveted Big Plastic Bee Trophy. Many teams wear costumes and bring their own cheering sections—complete with signs and pom poms. Last year there was a tie for first place between the Cleveland Orchestra (Orchestral Orthographers Publicly Support Annoyingly Lengthy Acronyms) and Squire, Sanders & Dempsey (Barbarous Orthographers).

Local food author Michael Ruhlman cooks up his own line of kitchen tools

Bob Rosenbaum

Michael Ruhlman, a Cleveland Heights resident, began his career as a nonfiction author, blended in his passion for good food, and wrote a recipe to become an internationally known food expert. Now he is stirring the pot with a fledging line of cooking tools, developed in his own kitchen.

Ruhlman, who has written eight books on food and has sold roughly 10,000 copies of his Ratio iPhone app for cooks, has now launched a small line of tools designed to appeal to the home cook. Ruhlman’s line of tool kits includes two sizes of all-purpose spacers, a spatula with a long handle, a small silicone spatula, a whisk, and a rolling pin.

Schools committee finds state report accurate

Deanna Bremer Fisher

Members of the CH-UH school facilities committee agreed with the state that the district’s buildings need more than a Band-Aid to make them suitable for learning in the 21st century. The committee held its second public meeting at the Roxboro Middle School on Jan. 7. Representing a cross-section of the community, committee members are charged with analyzing the district’s facilities, assessing its needs and developing options for the school board to consider.

The goal of making those tradition-laden neighborhoods more sustainable, and more resilient to the onslaught of foreclosure crises and sprawl.

To not weaken the bones or the value inherent in that system is a challenge, observed some attendees at the Jan. 10 presentation by Camiros at the Cleveland Heights Recreation Center. Concerns were raised about the impact to the city’s many historic districts and great buildings if zoning encourages the misconception that new green buildings are preferred to restoring what’s here.

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Cleveland Heights needs more money, not green space

Editor,

I was delighted to hear about the plans by First Interstate Properties to develop Oakwood Country Club, a site that I believe needs more attention from Cleveland Heights. I have never set foot on it, as it has historically been a private country club. I can appreciate the sentiment of many residents that this property could remain green space, but Cleveland Heights already has more parks than most other inner-suburbs—Cain Park, Caledonia Park, Camberland Park, Turn Park and Forestville Park, not to mention nearby Shaker Lakes.

Further, I applaud the developer for recognizing the importance of green space to residents and agreeing to do so. It is important for Cleveland Heights.

Ask residents of Cleveland Heights what they dislike most about the city, they would probably mention the property taxes. Among the top three complaints, you might hear that property taxes are too high.

As developers, we should be aware of this concern. A small city like Oakwood could deliver real and lasting value by using the community’s intellectual and financial capital in new and novel ways. It could take a holistic approach to making our community more sustainable. It could make us all healthier, more employable and a better place to live.

Sincerely,

Regina

[continued on page 3]
Over the past 20 years, more than 36,000 students have built relationships and prevented lessons at the high school level, a program created for their favorite teams, enjoy the silly costumes, buy a chance to win raffle prizes, and more responsible. Its healthcare partner would benefit from the opportunity to strengthen the community’s ability to thrive in an economy in which each person’s success is not worthy of his or her unique talents and efforts. It would have the opportunity to make people more self-reliant and the community more sustainable.

William Cimino is a resident of Cleveland Heights, a concerned citizen of the world and a management consultant.

Kevin Smith is a resident of Cleveland Heights.

My hope and expectation is that the developer will incorporate significant community input, design a center and find tenants, while respecting the uniqueness and diversity that makes Cleveland Heights great. Additionally, I would like to see Cleveland Heights and South Euclid come up with a tax-sharing plan so that both cities share in the benefit of this development. I think that all too often, residents of Cleveland Heights resist change. To compete in the 21st century, we need to embrace change. Development of this site can have a tremendous fiscal impact on our city and schools. Hopefully, next we can have the Top-of-the-Hill [Cedar Fairmount] and Lee/Meadowbrook sites developed.

The social return on investment for this project would have the opportunity to shape and influence the future of the community. The project line launched in mid-December and is available on his website, www.ruhlman.com, or at the OpenSky shopping site, www.opensky.com.

The products are aptly named Ruhlman.com and are produced by DaltonRuhlman Ventures, a partnership between Ruhlman and an old high school friend, Mac Dalton, also of Cleveland Heights. Dalton’s role is product development and sourcing.

His business, Dalton Consulting Group (www.manufacturparts.com), specializes in outsourced manufacture of plastic and metal parts—typically components for such industrial companies as Boeing, General Motors and Avery Dennison.

Dalton said he also has experience with consumer products and a wider variety of materials.

"I can do everything but sell the stuff," Dalton said. Based on handmade prototypes, he sources manufacturing in China, and oversees mail-order fulfillment. That work is done by Vocational Guidance Services in Cleveland, which employs a large percentage of people with physical and mental disabilities.

The business is being built on cash flow, Ruhlman said, with the first round of products ordered in small batches of just 250 units. Ruhlman has shown the products and prototypes to local chefs and received positive feedback.

Consumers seemed interested, too. After 30 days of availability, Dalton said orders were coming in at a rate of three or four a day, and inventory was running low enough to reorder.

"The challenge is that I’m used to orders of 40,000 units; everything is different when you’re working with such a small order," he said. "This first phase has been great, but we need to be talking about 10,000 units, not 250." Dalton also has ambition to win retail shelf space in home-and-kitchen stores. "But that’s a challenge at a whole different level," he said—like the difference between cracking some eggs and making a souffle.
Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

DECEMBER 20, 2010
Council Member Bonita W. Caplan was absent.

Summer 2011 recreation rates
Council approved regulations and rates for admission and entertainment programs in Cain Park and other locations for summer 2011. These will remain the same as those for summer 2010.

2011 swimming passes
Council established regulations and rates for admission and other services for Cleveland Swimming Pool and the Cleveland Heights High School pool for the year 2011. Newly established is an annual pass rate that combines outdoor and indoor pool usage at a 20 percent discount, for the period from Jan. 3–Dec. 16, as follows: preschoolers accompanied by parent or adult 1:1, cardholders, free; students (K–12), $70; adults (ages 18–59), $90; adults 60 years of age or older, $70, family, $200.

2010 and 2011 budgets
Council approved minor adjustments to the city’s budget for the fiscal year ending Dec. 31, 2010. The city will end the year with a surplus of $70; adults (ages 18—59), $90; adults 60 years

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The most moving holidays of our nation, and family from out of town, and the route with lawn chairs, blankets, friends and family from all 1.9 small-town feeling of community is the Bowl Parade. So what's the secret? Our or the fancy flower floats of the Rose of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade is one of the best attended in the city; have more ethnic food vendors on representing the ethnic groups in our city; more boardwalks, and a marching band representing the steel drum bands, and a marching band running its 125th anniversary. The parade was only children and families coming to the parade warned, “Don’t change a thing! It’s great the way it is.” The children sitting on the curbs on Memorial Day parade? The parade starts to Jackson with my dad and my brothers, and then ending up to Jackson with my dad and my brothers, in their front-row seats on the curb, waving flags and with our neighbors, we wave flags and memories of past parades.

The children rode decorated bicyles and tricycles. Younger ones were palled in decorated Red Flyer wagons. Children beating drums and exercising their God-given right to music on kazoos made up the band. We stood before the flag of the United States and said the Pledge of Allegiance. It may not have happened exactly that way, but it is my memory, the one I cherish. I say “real” parade because every one had a role, even those of us watching and waving to the parade. To borrow a famous phrase from President Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, it was a parade “of the people, by the people, for the people.”

For the past 29 years, my hometown parade has been right here. That is what we do in University Heights, keep our Memorial Day Parade a hometown parade. It will be months before the Canada geese head back north, but University Heights is already gearing up for our 45th Memorial Day Parade. Residents have already begun sending in suggestions: have a table on the Honors Ceremony platform where residents can place photos of veterans who served our country; invite gospel choirs, steel drum bands, and a marching band representing the ethnic groups in our city; have more ethnic food vendors on the parade grounds; a DJ; and return the bicycle judging contest. Add your ideas here.

The parade committee invites you—your ideas, thoughts, memories and enthusiasm—to share in making the 45th Memorial Parade as special as the others. Join us. Meetings are held once a month; contact me for the next meeting date. And remember, the forecast for May 30, will grow up to have their own special memories of this event.

Anita Kazarian is a marketing professional, founder of Nadii Landing, LLC and the parade chair for the honors platform at the 45th Memorial Day Parade. Contact her at anikazarian@gmail.com.
Susan Infeld, Mayor of University Heights

My first year as mayor was a busy one. I reduced City Hall staffing by 6 percent; retrained employees to create workflow efficiencies; appointed a part-time manager of senior services; appointed a full-time finance director; updated the website and joined Facebook; established late-night hours on Wednesdays during summer; cut the cost to produce the community newsletter; cut costs for towels, linens, cleaning and office supplies; produced a new service department policy booklet; eliminated erroneous billing from the Illuminating Company; and established appropriate fund accounting for the city's books. There was also the cleanup of financial issues from 2008-2009.

Some of the financial setbacks are still being addressed, but I believe we have a handle on the city's finances. We finished the year with a surplus of $800,000, approximately $500,000 more than originally projected. This is largely due to higher-than-anticipated collections from the Regional Income Tax Agency and the settlement of a large collections from the Regional Income Tax Agency and the settlement of a large

University Heights typically has an annual surplus ranging from $100,000 to $350,000, so this is a banner year for our city. We need to use these funds wisely and continue cost-cutting into 2011. The 2011 budget I will present to our city council will reflect a continued focus on efficient and effective budgeting and decision making.

First wave of boomers

reaches Medicare age

Anita Kazarian

If you were born in 1946, you are part of the first wave of baby boomers to reach Medicare age. This year, you are eligible to start receiving health care benefits through Medicare. You must contact the Social Security Administration to enroll; it does not happen automatically. You may sign up as early as three months before your 65th birthday. To enroll in Medicare, telephone the Social Security Administration at 800-772-1213. Happy Birthday!

Anita Kazarian is a marketing professional, founder of Noah's Landing, LLC and a long-time resident of University Heights. Reach her at antikazarian@gmail.com.

1. $60,000 for payments due on the University Square parking garage bonds. The city is several years in arrears on these payments and will make $60,000 annual payments for the next seven years to satisfy the debt;

2. $200,000 for repayment to the county of 2006-2009 property tax payments that were lowered retroactively due to successful appeals to the boards of revision by commercial property owners;

3. $100,000 to pay down short-term notes that are scheduled over annually;

4. $50,000 to establish a capital fund for equipment purchases;

5. $100,000 for a 2011 road program to resurface city streets;

6. $50,000 to establish a rainy-day fund to defray cutbacks from the state in monies normally returned to the city as the Local Government Fund;

7. $65,000 for the city's required contributions due to planned county road resurfacing projects: the 2011 North Taylor Road resurfacing project and the 2011 Beolvar Boulevard resurfacing project;

8. $100,000 for the street maintenance fund;

9. $75,000 for the sewer maintenance fund;

The delivery of services to residents is being evaluated for efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Within the next month, a residential survey will determine the relative value of various city services. Because budgetary constraints are projected to continue, we need to be proactive in assessing services and careful about making changes. I will make no changes to city services without input from residents.

Your city administration is committed to continuing its stewardship of taxpayer dollars. In recent months I have been meeting with the mayors of our neighboring communities to identify ways to collaborate to share resources and lower costs.

The city council will address the delivery of senior transportation, review the study commissioned in 2009 for rubbish collection, continue its evaluation of EMS billing, and consider an update of the 2006-2009 drug programs. Our city has been fortunate in obtaining donated funds and grant money this past year for various purposes: free First Alert fire and smoke detectors; a new pumper truck for the fire department; free medical items for the ambulances; free background checks for citizens volunteering for the Community Emergency Response Team; reduced costs for bulletproof vests; reduced costs for the D.A.R.E. program and the Juvenile Diversion program; free portable digital audio and a laptop computer/mobile data terminal; and a rain garden. We will continue pursuing grant dollars to fund special programs and capital equipment purchases.

We have so many things to celebrate. Sound fiscal management has kept our city in the black. Our treasured asset, John Carroll University, continues to receive positive attention on University Heights. Our public schools have received recognition with both the state’s 2010 Teacher of the Year and Treasurer of the Year awards. The building department overviewed a large number of home improvement projects with the issuance of 1,836 permits. The police department formed a cooperative agreement with nearby cities for SWAT services. The fire department performed 340 home safety inspections with the introduction of a residential fire safety program.

Our green initiatives are blossoming. Our city finished the year with a surplus of $800,000, approximately $500,000 more than originally projected. This is largely due to higher-than-anticipated collections from the Regional Income Tax Agency and the settlement of a large collections from the Regional Income Tax Agency and the settlement of a large

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Architects Walker & Weeks contributed to the Heights’ unique character

Chuck Miller

It would be hard to overstate the significant contribution that architects Harry E. Weeks and Frank R. Walker made to the beauty of Cleveland in the first half of the 20th century.

Here’s a partial list: Severance Hall, First Church of Christ Scientist (now Nottingham Spark Design Associates), Lorain-Carnegie (Hope Memorial) Bridge, Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, Epworth-Euclid Methodist Church, St. Ann Church (now Cleveland Heights Community Center), Allen Memorial Medical Library, Cleveland Public Library, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Public Auditorium. These are treasures we hope we never lose.

Walker & Weeks also left their imprint in Cleveland Heights, although one of their houses is now planned for demolition in the Ambler Heights Historic District.

We hope we never lose.

But I was interested in a more personal, on-the-ground exchange in Cleveland Heights.

What better time, I thought, than when the police department has a new chief. In addition, four captains have retired and been replaced. So it’s a new team.

It took time and a lot of phone calls to reach the inner sanctum of the police department, but once I did, I was invited into an open discussion with Chief Jeffrey Robertson and two of his officers.

At 6’4”, Robertson is an imposing figure. “It’s why I like to sit down,” he said with a smile, immediately leveling the field. He became head of the 109-officer department in early December.

You might say it is a department characterized by continuity. He follows in the footsteps of Martin Lentz, who was chief for 36-and-a-half years. Robertson himself has served in the department for 30 years. Robertson is personable, uses a bit of humor and assures—in his manner and his words—that he is open and accessible to the community.

The number of violent crimes has gone down slightly in the past two years. There were three murders in 2009, which was down from 11 in 2008. There were four aggravated assaults, compared to 70 in 2008. There were 48 simple assaults, compared to 92 in 2009.

Rape, as well known, is probably vastly underreported. The number of burglaries, however, rose significantly, especially in December.

There were 161 burglaries (30 in December alone) in 2010, up from 118 the year before.

A concentration of burglaries occurred in the area north of Mayfield Road, between Coventry and Superior roads. Robertson said police set up a detail between Coventry and Superior roads.

Larceny theft dropped to 401 incidents last year—418 in 2009. So, too, with motor vehicle theft, of which there were 38 reports last year, and 110 in 2009.

Robertson said that in March the department plans to begin a new program called Meet the Police. On Thursdays, beginning at 6 p.m., a police officer will be available in the department’s cafeteria. Anyone may come to discuss privately with the officer anything they wish. It could be such things as vandalism of a vacant house, next door, a crime they know of that has not been reported, or even bringing a child in to meet a police officer. Starring date for this has not yet been announced.

“...this will be a first step in talking to each other,” Robertson said. “It is a beginning that maybe will blossom. Problem-solving is a two-way street.”

So, it looks as though we can look forward to more conversation with Chief Robertson and his officers.

The combination of their design and business abilities eventually led Walker & Weeks to become one of the most prominent mid-20th century architects. By the mid-1920s, they had established a strong reputation as specialists in designing banks, churches and public buildings, with a preference for neo-classical styling. Even today, their legacy remains all around us.

Walker & Weeks’ most important contributions were to evolve the architectural form and fabric that has given Cleveland Heights its enduring special identity and is another reason why this place matters.

Chuck Miller is a principal at Dutty & Miller Architects and serves as chair of the Cleveland Heights Landmarks Commission.
The new year welcomes a new congregation to Cleveland Heights. Imani Temple Ministries now proudly occupies the former St. Louis Church building and the former rectory. Imani Temple Ministries, led by Rev. Dr. Rodney S. Thomas, is a non-denominational, Bible-based church, welcoming people of various faith traditions. The church was founded by Rev. Thomas in 2001 with 15 members and now has about 500 active members from African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, Catholic and other backgrounds.

“Imani,” “meaning faith” in Swahili, initially held services in a Bedford funeral home before moving to other temporary homes at Lutheran East High School and, most recently Temple Tifereth Israel. As it grew, the church considered several sites around Greater Cleveland, including former commercial properties and other closed churches, and even considered purchasing land and building. Ultimately, however, the congregation felt that God had led them to the St. Louis location. The sale was completed nine years to the day from the founding of Imani. “We thank St. Louis and its parishioners for their many years of ministry to this community,” said Pastor Thomas.

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“Imani,” “meaning faith” in Swahili, initially held services in a Bedford funeral home before moving to other temporary homes at Lutheran East High School and, most recently Temple Tifereth Israel. As it grew, the church considered several sites around Greater Cleveland, including former commercial properties and other closed churches, and even considered purchasing land and building. Ultimately, however, the congregation felt that God had led them to the St. Louis location. The sale was completed nine years to the day from the founding of Imani.

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Parenting Q&A

Ellen Barrett

Ellen Barrett, a parent educator at Family Connections, fields questions from parents about the daily ups and downs of parenting. The same issues affect many parents. If you have questions for Barrett, e-mail her at charette@heightsparentcenter.org.

Q. My husband and I have two children and we need to build a pool of reliable sitters. We have no idea how to start. Where do we find sitters? How do we choose one? And how can we determine whether a sitter is a good fit for our family?

A. Whether you have a dentist appointment in the middle of the day, a meeting at your child’s school or are trying to plan date night with your spouse, the task of finding a sitter can be a challenge. Here are a few tips to guide you:

• The best place to begin the search for a sitter is in your own neighborhood: at the playground, at the library or at your church. Word-of-mouth is the most useful and comfortable way to find a sitter who fits your family and will be interested in the job. Find out if local colleges have lists of potential baby sitters. John Carroll University, Notre Dame College and Ursuline College have services available to connect to students. Nanny agencies, such as Erin’s Nannies, provide part-time and full-time care options. (Family Connections does not endorse any particular agency or institution.)

• Interview each prospective sitter. Ask for references to find out about the sitter’s past experience, promptness, level of maturity and attitude toward kids. Has he or she taken a first aid class? If not, is she willing to?

• Treat your sitter with respect, invest time to get to know him or her. Some of the best baby-sitting experiences come from beginning with a mother’s helper, a younger sitter who will be there only when you are home. Mother’s helpers can provide an extra pair of hands and eyes on your child while you pay bills, prepare dinner or even take a rest. The benefits of starting with a helper often result in your being able to groom a sitter for future long-term jobs. If you will have the benefit of getting to know your house rules, seeing how you interact with your child, bonding with your child and developing a vested interest in your family. The downside of this approach is that you won’t be able to rely on him or her right away for the appointments that will take you out of the house. But, before you know it, you’ll be able to run a quick errand or two as your helper grows into the job.

• Be sure to give your sitter all of the information he will need to be successful. Provide information about your child, such as routines, allergies and food preferences. Leave clear rules about television watching, bedtime and other situations that might occur while you are gone. Be sure to provide written contact information for yourself, close neighbors, your pediatrician, and instruct him or her to call you if an emergency.

• Have realistic expectations. Remember that sitters are not parents. Their job is to keep your children safe and happy. They should not be expected to discipline your child, prepare difficult meals or clean up anything that isn’t related to their tasks.

• Sometimes, sitters can provide special fun. Set them up with play dough, finger paint or other messy projects. Let them eat ice cream together or order pizza for dinner. Make it special and exciting to both the sitter and your kids will have a positive experience and want to do it again.

• Baby sitters can provide much needed respite from the daily tasks of parenting. Taking the time to choose a sitter carefully will go a long way toward a comfortable and beneficial relationship. Treat your sitter fairly and he or she will reciprocate. Like any other relationship, the more you put into it the more you’ll gain.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

CLEVELAND HEIGHTS continued from page 1

• Allow urban agriculture accessory uses such as cold frames, greenhouses and farmstands.

• Allow urban agriculture accessory uses such as cold frames, greenhouses and farmstands.

Exterior

• Follow the Dark Skies Initiative recommendations for cut-off lights.

• Design standards for electric vehicle charging stations on private lots.

Adaptive reuse

• Allow live/work districts.

• Create specialty residential-office districts (design standards for reusing houses).

Parking

• Adjust parking maximums down (maxi-

mums often lead to seas of asphalt).

• Allow landbank parking. Hold back on paving areas that might be needed for parking; landscape instead.

• Reduce parking requirements for car-sharing services, such as CityWheels.

• Offer incentives for compact spaces.

• Require permeable paving.

• Require bicycle parking.

Landscaping

• Allow well-developed natural lawns and native landscapes.

• Require species diversity and drought-resistant native plants.

• Require smart irrigation systems that tap into local weather forecasts.

• Allow rubber concrete and other permeable, malleable pavers around old-growth trees.

• Create tree preservation requirements.

• Institute performance-based stormwater requirements (i.e. postdevelopment runoff rate cannot exceed 50 percent of predevelopment rate). Rather than lots, streets are the bet-

ter scale to think about and measure im-

 pact, resident Mark Chupp commented.

Zoning shouldn’t encourage keeping the abandoned house versus taking it down for a pocket park or wetland, especially if the greening of a vacant lot helps bring the neighborhood to the desired stormwater requirement.

Cleveland Heights is one of 12 cit-

ies suing the Northeast Ohio Sewer Dis-

trict, challenging its authority to charge a service fee for many of the stormwater management techniques that the city is considering adopting as ordinance, an irony not lost on this reporter.)

What is the next step? The green ordinance audit is in the public com-

ment period, after which the planning commission considers it before final debate and vote by council, said Council Member Dennis Wilcox. The expected timeline for passage of all or part of spring 2011.

Marc Lefkowitz is the Web editor for Green CityBlue Lake, www.gcbl.org, where this story first appeared.
Heights Observer February 1, 2011

Heights Library is on the cutting edge

Dean Schurr

The way people use libraries and read books is changing, and the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library is striving to stay on the cutting edge of those changes.

Although printed copies of books remain a staple for some, many people are switching to electronic devices or e-readers to satisfy their thirst for knowledge and reading. Understanding this fundamental shift in patron use, the Heights Library will begin to circulate several electronic reading devices, beginning Jan. 24.

The statistics clearly support that readers are moving to electronic devices. In July, Amazon.com announced that for the first time, sales of digital books in the United States surpassed printed books. For every 100 printed books sold, Amazon was selling 443 digital titles. The trend has not subsided. Moreover, last Christmas seemed to be the year of the e-reader. This hot technology, of course! can you take your child for quality fun?

Heights Library’s children’s services staff show their lighter side.

Dean Schurr is the former marketing and community relations manager for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library.

Heights Library’s children’s services staff show their lighter side.

Beyond story time at the public library

Dean Schurr

The community pool is closed for the season, and you don’t want to shell out big bucks for Chuck E. Cheese. Where can you take your child for quality fun? The library, of course!

Long past are the days when bringing your child to the Heights Library meant a one-hour trip. This is the era of the drop-in story hour. The Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library offers a veritable cornucopia of activities for children, and they’re all free. This year’s activities include wonderful activities for children of all ages,” reports Nancy Levin, director of the Heights Library. “The staff puts tremendous effort into researching and developing programs for children that are both fun and developmentally enriching.”

Certainly there are still plenty of opportunities for story time, but other exciting programs include baby sign language, Fancy Nancy parties, cooking for Kids, Wii Wednesdays, Lego nights, puppet shows, family game nights, talent shows, Spanish language story times, arts and crafts programs, and African dance programs. This summer, the children’s services department is even planning a pet show.

The children’s areas have also received facelifts. From new life-sized murals to more pint-sized furniture, plus decorative window art, the spaces for children at the Heights Libraries are being designed to inspire and delight the young and old.

For a full list of the children’s spring programs see the February issue of Check Us Out or visit www.heightslibrary.org/page/specials.

Dean Schurr is the former marketing and community relations manager for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library.

What’s going on at your library?

Coventry Village Library
1925 Coventry Road, 216-321-3400
NIA Coffeehouse, Tuesdays, Feb. 1 & 15, 6 p.m.
Step Out of Time for Kids: Energy Healing, Thursday, Feb. 17, 6:30 p.m.
Telekinesis Jam, Thursday, Feb. 22, 7:30 p.m.

Lee Road Library
2345 Lee Road, 216-932-3600
The World of Chocolate, Thursday, Feb. 10, 7 p.m.
The Mouse with the Musical Ear, Monday, Feb. 14, 11 a.m.
Reading Comics, Monday, Feb. 27, 4 p.m. A Teddy Affair, Wednesday, Feb. 29, 10 a.m.

Whole Foods Market
at Cedar Center
13998 Cedar Road, 216-932-3918
Stories, Snacks, and Crafts, Thursday, Feb. 17, 6:30 p.m.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE continued from page 1

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The subcommittee recommended that the district open its buildings to the public so that residents might see their condition for themselves. They also urged that any building project be adequately funded to ensure quality.

The subcommittee toured a renovated 1920s school building in Lakewood and were impressed by what they saw. The architectural features of the building had been preserved, while electrical and mechanical systems had been completely replaced. The cost of the renovation was equal to what it would have cost to build a new structure, and the operating cost was the same as that of a new building of the same size.

The educational assessment subcommittee also visited several school buildings in other districts to determine the building components necessary for learning in the 21st century. They reported that any learning is dependent on buildings, a student’s environment can have a positive effect.

The team determined that buildings should reflect the culture and values of the community, provide choices and adaptability, and strike a balance between efficiency and effectiveness.

The group recommended that the district think about the sustainability of a building program before it is implemented; consider new grade configurations; explore opportunities for buildings to function as centers of the community; and consider new partnerships with local businesses and other community stakeholders.

Several residents commented on the reports concerning sustainable and green practices within Monticello Middle School, eliminating asbestos from the buildings, and encouraging social development among students.

Steve Shergalis, director of business services for the district and the point person for the school facilities committee, introduced the members of two new subcommittees—facilities options and financial assessment. These groups will build on the work of the previous teams to create options for the school board to consider, and to assess the costs and financing possibilities.

According to a formula set by Ohio law, the district is eligible to receive state funding for up to 14 percent of approved renovation or new construction projects. The district would have to find other sources for the balance.

The new subcommittees will present their recommendations to a meeting of the committee of the whole, on March 14 at Monticello Middle School. The public will be invited to comment on their recommendations on March 14 at the high school. The committee of the whole will meet again on May 19 at Boulevard Elementary School, and will formally present its recommendations to the school board on June 21 at Wiley Middle School.

The public is encouraged to attend any of the subcommittee meetings, and to direct comments or questions to Steve Shergalis at 216-320-2005 or s_shergalis@ch-uh.org. For more information about the committee and a full meeting schedule, visit www.chuh.org.

Deanna Bremer Fisher is executive director of FutureHeights and a member of the district’s school facilities committee.

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www.heightsobserver.org
Versatile, sustainable bags, made in the Heights

Kim Sergio Ingles

In a light-filled studio in the Coventry neighborhood, designer Madeline Hoyle crafts versatile and graphically striking bags. An avid bicyclist, Hoyle is inspired by the needs of bike commuters, and is committed to using sustainable materials to produce her durable, practical line of products.

Hoyle established her company, Blicksbags, after graduating from the Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA) in 2009. A native of Miami, Fla., Hoyle moved to Cleveland Heights after graduation, and cites Cleveland’s artistic community as a reason she decided to stay in the area. “I like the community here,” noted Hoyle. “And it’s relatively affordable, which is a huge plus. I lived in Little Italy when I was a student, and always hung out around Coventry.”

Hoyle makes each bag herself, using a mix of old and new materials. Reclaimed materials include vinyl exhibition banners from CIA and the Cleveland International Film Festival, as well as found remnants from Cleveland’s old textile mills, such as colorful accent straps and zippers. Hoyle pairs these recycled materials with new abrasion-resistant fabric.

“I really appreciate organization and simplicity, and I’m passionate about sustainability and the environment, so it made sense to me to pursue that in my work,” Hoyle explained. “If I could use just old materials I would, but for longevity, it’s practical to mix old and new—there is always a balance between the two. If I can make something that lasts longer, that’s also sustainable.”

Besides bags, Hoyle’s line includes four accessories: a lock holster, which enables one to wear a bike lock on a belt; a wallet, sized to accommodate a checkbook, and to fit inside Hoyle’s bags; bike fenders, made from reclaimed wood shop scraps; and a chain link necklace, made from a bicycle chain link and glass seed beads. The bike fenders are made by Steven Bakowski, another CIA alumnus, and Hoyle produces the necklaces with Megan John, also a CIA graduate.

Hoyle also collaborates with other artists as a member of Aspirium, a group of individuals sharing knowledge of branding and niche marketing, to promote their products and projects.

The newest addition to the Blicksbags line is the DC01, a messenger-style padded laptop bag, created in collaboration with Dan Cuffaro, head of CIA’s industrial design department. An industrial design major, Hoyle will donate 10 percent of the sales of the DC bag to CIA.

“I am interested in applying industrial design to the crafts industry, and making individual pieces for individuals,” Hoyle explained. Her bags are available as ready-to-ship versions, and are also offered with customizable features, enabling the customer to select a color scheme, for example, as well as unique embroidered and appliquéd accents.

For information on Blicksbags, as well as Hoyle’s work and collaborations with other artists, visit www.blicksbags.com.

A former marketing professional, Kim Sergio Ingles moved to Cleveland Heights after 20 years in Brooklyn, NY.

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Join the Walk to School movement
strongen community support for our schools

Joan Spoerl

Become in-volved in the growing effort to help our public schools by attending a community planning meet-ing on Sunday, Feb. 7 at the Lee Road Library from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. The How to Walk to School movement in this community was inspired by the book by the same name, coauthored by Jacqueline Edel-burg and Susan Kurland.

Local residents have been meeting, thinking, talking and brainstorming about ways to build community support for the CH-UH schools. Now it is time for planning and executing those plans.

We welcome your involvement, however large or small, and whether or not you use the schools.

Help us to maintain a healthy and sustainable community through strong community support of our students and our schools. Come and learn about the role you can play.

For more information, contact Joan Spoerl at joanspoerl@sbcglobal.net or 216-371-3753.

Joan Spoerl is a Cleveland Heights resident and an occasional contributor to the Heights Observer.

CH-UH Board of Education Meeting highlights

JANUARY 4, 2011

All board members were present.

Board positions

Eric Cobble and Ronald Register were nominated and approved for board president and vice presi-dent, respectively. Board Member Karen Jones was approved as treasurer pro tem.

High school’s 2011–2012 schedule

Superintendent Douglas Huer and Assistant Superintendent Jeffery Talbert presented recom-mendations for the 2011–12 High School sched-u-ule, developed by Talbert and others, to move the district toward an excellent state rating. The Ohio Graduation Test score has im-proved since small schools were implemented in 2006, but has since plateaued and the high school has remained at the continuous improve-ment state rating. The major challenges identified were:

- The ninth grade retention rate is too high. Currently 20 percent of ninth grade students fail algebra and are not promoted to tenth grade.
- At least one-third of ninth and tenth graders are in classes outside their small school, includ-ing core courses. This number increases in the upper grades.
- Choice and collaboration is difficult with the current schedule because of insufficient staff.

Major changes proposed were to:

- Decrease the number of small schools from five to four. This should decrease the number of students taking core courses outside their small school. According to Superintendent Huer, the high school has not met the standard for adequate yearly progress because over 40 percent of students take courses outside their school. This figure is even higher for special education students. With this change he anticipates an excellent rating after two years.
- Create a common experience for ninth graders to ensure they have the academic, social, and emotional support they need in making the transition from middle school to high school. This will help academic success and tenth grade promotion.
- Develop a more flexible and alternative sched-ule to enable students to take eight, instead of seven, classes plus lunch. Also, with the oppor-tunity to take more credits, some students may reach graduation requirements early. This also presents opportunities to offer college credit on campus for such students.
- To increase academic rigor, algebra II and advanced science courses will be needed on campus for such students.
- With this change he anticipates an excellent rating after two years.

Superintendent Huer maintained that a score of excellent could be achieved within two years if the school met its yearly goal of a five percent improvement in math and reading scores.

LWV observer: Cassandra Talecica

See disclaimer on page 4.
Heights High artists earn regional awards

Jay Henderson

Two Heights High student artists received awards for pieces they entered in the Cuyahoga County Regional Scholastic Art Competition. Their work is part of the exhibit that is currently on display at the Cleveland Institute of Art Reinberger Galleries.

Senior Lucia Tatar won a Silver Key Award for her print "Ellie" and Honorable Mention for the print "Metropolis." Freshman Meredith Maria received Honorable Mention for a mixed media piece, "Evel Skier."

Tatar comes from a family of artists; "It has always been relevant to me," she said, but after her sophomore year, when she attended a summer art program at the California College of the Arts, her interest and drive became more focused. "I learned more about printmaking and I loved seeing another department’s energy for art,” she said. She plans to attend an art institute next year.

Maria is a freshman and her favorite media are charcoal and watercolors, but she looks forward to learning more about sculpture and photography. "Art is great because there are so many areas to explore," she said. She currently takes classes at the Cleveland Institute of Art. Her other interests include lacrosse and science.

Art teacher Susan Hood-Cogan is very proud of the students. "Lucia is an introspective young woman with the artistic talent that will take her a long way in art school," she said. "Meredith is only a freshman but shows great talent; I look forward to watching her grow."

Senior Lucia Tatar and freshman Meredith Maria (inset) received awards in the Cuyahoga County Regional Scholastic Art Competition. The watercolor still life is by Tatar.

The Reinberger Galleries are located at 11141 East Boulevard in University Circle. Gallery hours are Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Fridays, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Joy Henderson is the parent/community liaison for Heights High.

CH-UH students place well in Power of the Pen tourney

Rick Bondy and Angesa Shaker

When it comes to creative writing, Cleveland Heights-University Heights middle school students showed their mettle and skill recently, posting high marks at the annual Power of the Pen (POP) competition.

POP is a statewide tournament that tests students’ creativity and writing skills through team and individual writing exercises. The recent district POP competition took place on Dec. 11 at Monticello Middle School.

"This was a great competition that really showed the strong writing skills of some of our students," said Brian Sharosky, Monticello principal. "It was a perfect example of what great things are going on in our district."

The host school performed well at this tournament, with three of its eighth grade students placing high in the top 15 finishers. Sezny Watkins finished third, Taylor Tamang came in sixth, and Kyra Germany placed tenth.

The eighth grade team earned first place honors in its division. The Monticello team is coached by Deborah Frost, MSSP teacher and tournament organizer, and by Marian Kopp, sixth grade teacher.

Top Roxboro Middle School seventh graders included Naismi Marsh in first place, Taylor Jones in second, and Emma Schubert in 14th place. Overall, the seventh grade team finished second.

In eighth grade, Celia van den Brogert came in fourth and Olivia Webster took 11th place. The Roxboro coach is Caitlyn McGrath, sixth grade teacher.

Wiley Middle School had three seventh grade students place in the top 15. Ryan Wilson took eighth place, Aviva Klein placed 12th, and Kelly Moore took 15th place. The school’s seventh grade team placed first overall. Wiley student Anna Zicari won first place for the eighth grade team, which finished fourth overall. Wiley’s seventh grade team is coached by Melanie Lesar, and the eighth grade team by Ashley Newman.

About half of the participants from the district competition will advance to the regional tournament, held at St. Joseph Academy in April. From there, the top finishers will move on to the state finals at the College of Wooster, May 26-27.

Rick Bondy is a University Heights resident. Angesa Shaker is director of communications for Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

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As seen on Diners, Drive-ins and Dives
Heights High swim team: more and better

Simone Quartell

During the 2005–06 season, the Cleveland Heights High School Tigersharks swim team had 18 female and 10 male swimmers, and finished the season with a record of 1–7 for girls and 2–6 for boys.

When Hilary Hurst took over the girls team in 2006, she started a youth swim team. Four years later, many of the youth are now Heights freshmen—and more than 50 students are on the team. The boys’ record is 4–1 at mid-season, the girls’ is 2–3.

The Tigersharks are coached by Jim Miller, Ted Arnold, Katie Blazetic and Cassie Ritzmann. Now in his ninth season, Miller thinks interest has increased due to the community youth programs, and because students “see how much fun the team members have together and how much fun it is to be on a team. There is a lot of camaraderie and we are known for good sportsmanship,” Miller said. Kristin Hughes, athletic director, has stepped up commitment to the swim team. After years without a scoreboard, for example, the team received a new one in 2010.

Coaches and swimmers recruit prospective team members by going to eighth-grade parent nights at the middle schools, and to the district’s fourth-grade athletics day at the Cleveland Heights Recreation Center. Middle school students serve as timers at meets to “start becoming part of the team,” said Miller.

Girls captain Andrea Chan reflects that “we have had our ups and downs, but the end result is having a much stronger team, both in terms of speed and connection with one another,” which she finds “really rewarding.” Boys captain Sean Delvalle said the team has improved steadily throughout his four years. “We have lots of strong, experienced swimmers coming in, but the inexperienced swimmers are improving as well.” Miller expects especially strong performances from senior boys Nick Negenborn and Delvalle, and juniors Jeremy Apple and Joe Eyreman, while on the girls team, he points to seniors Chan and Lydia Resnik and freshmen Monica Chan, Lillie Hall, Ellen Posch and Casandra Espenchied. The team hopes to send swimmers to the district meet in February. The boys 400-meter freestyle relay team of Negenborn, Delvalle, Apple and Eyreman is strongest, said Miller. Last season, Negenborn swam the 500-meter freestyle at the district meet.

The team has participated in several invitational meets. At the Bedford Lions relays in early December, the boys finished third, the girls fourth. When Heights hosted its annual Holiday Relays on Dec. 31, the boys were “very excited” to finish second, while the girls finished sixth in a “very competitive field,” said Miller.

One of the most exciting recent meets was against Mentor where, according to Miller, the team did much better than usual against the Cardinals. Miller says swimmers and coaches are looking forward to the Lake Erie League Championships at Bedford and the sectional meet at Mayfield, where most swimmers post their best times of the season.

The team hopes to hold a fundraiser soon for the Rea Robinson Foundation in memory of Andrea “Rea” Robinson, a 2009 Heights graduate and a four-year swimmer who died of meningitis last year while at college. Chan says “anything with Rea” is her favorite memory of her four years on the team.

The Tigersharks have put much energy into giving back to the community this season. So far, they have raked leaves at the homes of shut-ins in Cleveland Heights, and volunteered at the library’s book sale. Their final dual meet, Feb. 4 against West Geauga, doubles as a charity fundraiser, with bake sale proceeds going to cancer research. The two teams will also have “penny wars,” where each team will have a jar into which spectators can drop coins. The team with the most points at the end of the night will win a prize. Miller hopes to make this an annual event. The Feb. 4 meet, which will be held at the high school pool at 6 p.m., will also be Senior Recognition Night.

Simone Quartell is a 2009 graduate of Cleveland Heights High School and is studying journalism at Kent State University.

Students chosen for middle school honor choir

Roxboro Middle school students (l-r) Miranda Coble, Alice Janigro, Jessica Klein, Graham Ball, Orion Brock, Flannery Jewell and Chawakorn Chaichanawirote were selected to participate in the District 7 OMEA Middle School Honor Choir and performed at Solon High school on Jan. 15.
Small Schools will go from five to four at CHHS

Angie Shaker

Driven by the desire to enhance educational results at Cleveland Heights High School, the district’s administrative team made three recommendations at the Jan. 4 board of education meeting: reduce the number of small schools from five to four; create a Freshman Experience program; and implement a flexible/alternative schedule to create more opportunities for students.

Reduce the number of small schools from five to four

“Too many students have core classes outside of their small school,” Superintendent Douglas Heuer stated. “When done right, the small school experience ensures that teachers know the needs and ability level of each student, and can make sure they are engaged and challenged each day. We currently don’t have enough staff at the high school to allow for all of our students to reap the benefits of a small school, personalized experience.

“To remedy this, we would need to hire about 20 more teachers, which budgetary considerations won’t allow. By reducing the number of small schools from five to four, we will be able reallocate staff to provide distinct, meaningful program choices for students.”

Student surveys, student performance, and clearly delineated programs were the primary factors used to determine which school to eliminate. P.R.I.D.E. school will be closing, Re- naissance, LEGACy, M.O.S.A.I.C. and R.E.A.L. will be retained.

Freshman Experience

Jeffery Talbert, assistant superintendent, explained to the board how eliminating a small school and reassigning staff will facilitate the creation of a “freshman experience” within each small school without adding staff.

“While the freshman achievement rate has improved under the small schools initiative, about 20 percent of the freshman students still continue to struggle. Building a strong foundation in the 9th-grade year allows for more rigorous course work in the 10-12th grade years,” he said. Instead of taking core classes outside of their small school, 9th grade students will take advanced classes and keep the same teachers for one half of the day and then take electives during the other half.

Flexible schedule

Thanks to the collaborative efforts of teachers and administrators, the Heights High School day has been lengthened to give students more learning time.

The next step is to work with teachers to reorganize the time gained so that students will have more options and opportunities for deeper learning. The current schedule gives students seven class periods and a 50-minute lunch. The district wants to move to a true eight-period day with the state standard 30-minute lunch.

For those courses that are more rigorous, or include a lab, teachers need the ability to offer a double-block on alternating days. The double-block would enable teachers to use a variety of instructional approaches and decrease the number of class changes.

“This change will put us more in line with peer districts and state standards for classroom time. Additionally, it will enhance student achievement by increasing time for classroom instruction. This is all the more important because state and federal graduation standards will rise in 2014 and again in 2016,” Superintendent Heuer said.

Next steps

Dialogue sessions will be held for staff to share questions, concerns, and ideas about the Freshman Experience. Current P.R.I.D.E. students will re-select their small school following a further presentation on the four small schools.

Teacher reassignments will be determined by student enrollments, teacher certification, and a process designed by school and building leadership teams.

The middle school and high school scheduling process begins in January and should be completed by the end of February.

Angie Shaker is the coordinator of communications and community engagement for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

Kuk Sool Won master leads martial arts classes at Cleveland Heights Community Center

Caroline Koepke

Robert Carson, martial arts instructor at the Cleveland Heights Community Center and director of NEON Health Services, was promoted to master level, fifth degree black belt at the 2010 World Kuk Sool Association Tournament and Master Demonstration in Houston, Texas.

Seven of Carson’s students also attended and earned first degree black belts: Tony Calabro and daughter Sydney; David Pritts, and daughter Ava and son Will; Caroline Koepke; and Nate Wilson. Carson and his students all live in Cleveland Heights.

“Earning a first degree black belt from the World Kuk Sool Association takes four to five years of practice; becoming a master requires at least 15 years of training in the art,” said David Pritts. “There are fewer than 100 masters in the world right now,” he added, estimating that there are 1 million students practicing the art.

Kuk Sool Won is a systematic study of all of the traditional fighting arts, which together make up the martial arts history of Korea. Kuk Sool Won seeks to integrate and explore the entire spectrum of established Asian fighting arts, body conditioning techniques, mental development, and traditional weapons training,” as described at www.KukSoolWon.com.

Carson’s newly promoted students will assist his other Kuk Sool Won instructors at the Cleveland Heights Community Center: second degree black belt candidates Dennis Kless of Cleveland Heights, Gerald Kramer of Cleveland and Dee Marsky of Shaker Heights.

“Learning Kuk Sool Won has enhanced the confidence of both my daughter and son. It has changed my family’s whole outlook,” said Pritts.

“Without Kuk Sool Won, I definitely would not be where I am today, having lost over 30 pounds since joining the World Kuk Sool Association. I want other people to recognize the benefits of practicing Kuk Sool Won. We concentrate on improving inside and out, in every single way. That’s what
Heights Guitars' new owners expand offerings

Kelli Fontenot

Heights Guitars, the instrument shop at 2128 Lee Road, is now operating under new ownership, but it still exudes a welcoming atmosphere to accommodate regulars and newcomers. Customers amble in to chat and try out the new merchandise at the store, which offers a wide range of instruments and accessories, and specializes in hard-to-find vintage items and instrument repair.

Former Heights Guitars owner Gregory Stiles died last February, John Garden and Jim Ross, who operate the Vintage City shop in Toledo, took ownership of the Heights store in October, which employs salespeople and repair techs.

Varying musical tastes help the store's sales staff cater to local buyers, according to Samantha Wandtke, district manager for Heights Guitars and Vintage City. Wandtke, who is also a vocalist and drummer for the local rock band Fangs Out, notes her style differs from that of the new store manager, local resident Darrell Branch. His genre of choice, she says, is bluegrass, a perfect fit for the shop's roots.

“When we took over, it was more of a bluegrass boutique-style shop,” Wandtke said, explaining that the store now carries drums, keyboards, wind and brass instruments, and an expanded assortment of accessories. “We’re now a full-on instrument store.”

With guitars ranging in price from $40 to $5,000, recognizable Fender and Gibson electrics line the showroom walls. But the store also aims to maintain its local, little-guy-style, seeking vintage and locally handcrafted items, as well as products from suppliers in Akron and other nearby cities.

Unique products at the shop include a Burgundy Mist Gibson ES 335 12-string, an 1890s Harp parlor guitar, a 1920s Dixon banjo-mandola and a Gibson GA-5 Les Paul Jr. amplifier from 1956. The shop also offers vintage pedals from manufacturers Ross, Electro-Harmonix and Morley.

The shop provides lessons, which not all larger stores offer, Wandtke says. Five teachers at the store share their expertise in guitar, bass, banjo and vocals. Wandtke adds that Heights Guitars aims to host more events, inviting customers to hear bands play and get to know the shop's staff.

Knowledge is a key asset to the new business, according to Wandtke, who says she has about 10 years of experience in the industry, having previously worked at Peeler Music. Erik Erdman, whom Wandtke and Branch refer to as the shop’s “tech guru,” expertly lends instruments that customers bring in for repairs. Though Branch’s background is in IT management, he assured that he could name every guitar in the shop before he took on his sales role and later became store manager.

A longtime friend of Stiles, Branch says he used to come to the store often to visit with the store owner, a retired teacher who repaired guitars and greeted customers at the front desk. “He was a good friend,” Branch says. “We knew each other for more than eight years.”

Today, Branch aims to continue his friend’s respectful treatment of both clients and coworkers, and maintains Stiles had a major impact on neighborhood youth. “Kids would come in all the time who knew him. They'd come in after school to play instruments or just hang out,” he said. “Greg always considered this place a sort of safe house. Instead of hanging out on the street, kids could come here. And they still do.”

Wandtke says that stores like this are becoming increasingly rare. “There aren’t many music shops left in the world, let alone in Cleveland,” she says. “And 10 years ago, there were so many cool independents, and now none of them are left. ‘We need to be competitive with those big-box stores, and it’s about finding the right people to work with.’”

Kelli Fontenot is a journalist living in Cleveland Heights.

Rockefeller’s opens in historic banking hall

Deanna Bremer Fisher

Longtime Heights resident Michael Adams is opening Rockefeller’s, an upscale lounge and fine dining establishment, in the former banking hall of the historic Heights Rockefeller Building on Feb. 1. The space had most recently been operated as a party center by building owner Jim Barle.

Adams, an attorney, is new to the restaurant business. “I was downsized from a law firm during the recession,” he said. “My wife Mazie and I love to entertain and I was fascinated with how restaurants work growing up in New Jersey.”

“The other places I looked at were cookie-cutter storefronts that I would have to build from scratch. When I saw this space, it fit my vision exactly and Jim is flexible and business-friendly.”

Landlord Jim Barle takes great care in selecting businesses for the mixed-use building, located at 3099 Mayfield Road. It was built in 1930 by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. as the gateway to his Forest Hill residential development, located on the site of his family’s former summer retreat. The building currently houses shops, offices and apartments. “I’d rather have the space sit empty for a time in order to make sure that the tenants are the right fit,” Barle said.

While Barle has always carefully maintained the building, Adams modernized and added new life to the elegant hall. He updated the electrical and HVAC systems; augmented the kitchen by installing a new prep area and walk-in cooler to the bank vault area, which is now connected to the kitchen for better work flow; and freshened up the décor by giving the floor a good scrubbing and adding a fresh coat of paint, new window treatments and furnishings.

The lounge area, which occupies the space closest to the kitchen and bar, features high-top tables, comfortable couches and small ottomans that can be moved around easily. Built-in banquette run the length of space in each of the three corners not occupied by the bar, adding flexibility to accommodate larger parties. Adams says he will continue to offer the space for special parties.

The largest change to the space is something most patrons won’t even notice. To bring the building up to code, Adams was required to install a sprinkler system. He did so in the most unobtrusive way possible. He attached the pipes to the hand-painted beamed ceiling and then painted them brown so that they would blend in. “They are attached in such a way,” he says, “that if someone were to find another way to protect the structure in the future, they could be easily removed with little damage to the historic character of the ceiling.”

Executive chef Jill Vedau, who has 10 years in the business and has worked in such notable restaurants as the Flying Pig, Lola, Saucy Bistro and the Wine Bar in Rocky River, has prepared an elegant and focused menu for both the lounge and fine dining sides of the restaurant. Entrees are priced between $15 and $22.

The menu will change seasonally as she takes advantage of fresh foods from local farmers.

Adams says he plans to compost nonmeat food scraps, which will be collected by a local vendor.

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Kelli Fontenot is a journalist living in Cleveland Heights.

Deanna Bremer Fisher is executive director of FutureHeights and publisher of the Heights Observer.
Heights Floral Shoppe, which has been in the Fairmount-Taylor shopping district for 44 years, is the place to go for artistic, personalized floral arrangements. “I don’t design by formula. Each arrangement is a response to a particular customer and the flowers available that day,” said Tammy L. Currier, who has owned the business since 2007. An appreciative customer once remarked to Currier, “Everything that leaves this store has a little bit of you in it.”

Two years ago, when Currier was looking for ways to cut costs, she decided to stay in the neighborhood. Recently, she moved a few doors down Fairmount Boulevard to a light, airy space inside Paysage, an interior design store on the corner of Fairmount and South Taylor Road. “This shop provides solace—the beautiful colors and wonderful smell when you walk in. I didn’t want to take that away from my customers and from people who like this shopping district,” said Currier.

Heights Floral Shoppe customers can enter though Paysage’s entrance, which faces South Taylor, or through the blue door to the left of the pergola. That entrance has a ramp, making it wheelchair accessible. The new location, which has a parking lot, makes it easier to visit the store and browse for a while. “This block is becoming a popular destination for shoppers from outside Cleveland Heights,” Currier noted.

Currier brings an unusual mix of artistic and literary talent to her floral designs. With aspirations to become a writer, Currier majored in journalism and literature at Central Michigan University, with a minor in art. She was an editor for a pioneering online bookseller in Cleveland. After working for many years as a visual merchandiser, Currier took a hiatus and spent several months painting her way through Italy and Greece. “I go to the wholesale flower market every morning. I look for the best flowers, and when I find them, I can visualize the designs I will do.” She learned the nuts and bolts of the floral business from the former owner, Jay Szabo. “In a small concern like this, you learn by doing,” she noted. “I like the freedom of owning my own business and of making my own vision a reality.”

For Valentine’s Day, Currier suggests “thinking outside the red heart and beyond red roses. She suggests roses in other colors that open beautifully and can be enjoyed for several days. A fresh garden arrangement of tulips, roses, and hydrangeae—while untraditional—can turn into a lovely surprise.

Heights Floral Shoppe has both delivery and wire services. Located at 1472 Fairmount Boulevard, the shop can be reached by phone at 216-321-4114 or on the web at www.heightsfloral.com.

Meredith Holmes is a freelance writer and editor, and a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights. She was the city’s first poet laureate.
A Phiner Bistro opens on Lee

Christine McBurney

If you are looking for a finer fine dining experience, look no further than A Phiner Bistro. Named for its owner, Nigerian-born Phiner Dike-Jelden (pronounced Fena Deekay), this upscale white linen eatery, with a vibrant yellow interior, offers a fresh, organic and eclectic menu of world cuisine, as well as merchandise and classes.

A Phiner Bistro offers a unique, white linen option for dinner in the Cedar Lee business district.

A Phiner Bistro

Tues.-Thurs. 11:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Fri.-Sat. 4 to 10 p.m.
216-320-0688
www.aphinerbistro.com

Washington Place Bistro brings menu diversity to Little Italy

‘Modern American’ restaurant fills former Baricelli Inn space

Christina Klenotic

In my ten years in the Heights, I’ve dined at Little Italy restaurants countless times, but at the Baricelli Inn only once. My lone visit was memorable for both the meat and the bill. In less than two months, however, I’ve twice visited the more-accessible Washington Place Bistro & Inn, which took over the former Baricelli Inn’s digs in November.

Experienced restauranteur Scott Kahn, who also runs 8 West wine bar at Crocker Park, is adding some diversity to Little Italy’s offerings with his ‘modern American’ menu. Executive Chef Jonathan Guest focuses on locally sourced ingredients, including Baricelli cheese.

Two such menu items are the roasted beet and goat cheese salad ($9), which spotlights beets and greens from The Chef’s Garden and Mackenzie and the accompanying cauliflower gratin ($13/$18.50), which also is available for lunch, was savory and memorable.

For brunch, the monkey bread ($4) is a can’t-miss dish. During our visit, our server brought us a complimentary serving when we were seated, and it was so delightful that we ordered another. The rich biscuits and gravy ($9) with white cheddar biscuits and homemade sausage warmed the belly on a cold afternoon, but the WP burger ($10.50) was underwhelming.

The restaurant offers a number of bargains. For example, the lunch menu features a trio option for $16.50, which includes soup, salad and half of a sandwich. During the 4 to 7 p.m. happy hour, diners can take advantage of the renovated lounge and new full-service bar by enjoying appetizers and cocktails from the eclectic and extensive wine and bar menu for $5 each. The best bargain is the 2-for-$30 special on Wednesday evenings, which includes an appetizer, two entrees and a bottle of wine.

Washington Place Bistro is open five dinner seven days a week, lunch Monday through Saturday and brunch on Sundays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The bar is open later after dinner. Seven re-modeled rooms at the inn are available from her juice classes as fertilizer. “It’s better than garbage!” Dike-Jelden said.

A Phiner Bistro brings menu diversity to Little Italy ‘Modern American’ restaurant fills former Baricelli Inn space

Christine McBurney is the theatre arts department chair at Shaker Heights High School, a performer, writer, and proud Heights High soccer mom.

Washington Place Bistro

Mon. burger fries & beer night 59
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The Rainforest Car Wash, in Cleveland Heights, is now open. Located on the corner of Mayfield and Middlehurst (enter from Middlehurst), this state of the art car wash is open to the public. Featuring a rain forest theme both inside and out, The Rainforest Car Wash will be the best car wash you’ve ever had.