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Volume 15  
 Number 4  
 April 1, 2022

# HEIGHTS OBSERVER

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Written by volunteers for Cleveland Heights and University Heights • Read more at [www.heightsobserver.org](http://www.heightsobserver.org)

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 Free parking continues at all Cleveland Heights meters

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FutureHeights  
 2843 Washington Blvd. #105  
 Cleveland Heights, OH 44118

## Best of the Heights 2022

**Belle Espinal**  
 Over a period of six weeks, Jan. 1 through Feb. 15, Heights residents cast their votes in the annual Best of the Heights awards, in recognition of the businesses that serve Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

As in prior years, FutureHeights, a nonprofit community development corporation and publisher of the *Heights Observer*, created a list of 10 unique award categories, showcasing the wide variety of establishments that call the Heights home, and asked residents to vote by writing in the names of their favorites in each category.

This year's categories, which included Best Opened-Our-Doors-During-a-Pandemic Business, Best Pandemic-Safe Dining and Best Care for a Community During a Pandemic, recognized that the global pandemic has upended everyone's lives and forced local entrepreneurs to innovate while keeping customers and employees safe.



M Mock, David McHale, and Emma Schubert of On the Rise Artisan Breads, winner of Best Made-It-Easy Online Ordering.

"Thank you to all our supportive customers," said Rachel Gross, owner of Bialy's Bagels, which won Best University Heights Business.

"I am so appreciative to be recognized, and it's my passion to introduce new foods to our community!" said Douglas Katz, owner of Chimi, winner of the Best Innovative Product or Service During a Pandemic.

Despite the pandemic, several new businesses opened in the

Heights.

Both S'il Vous Play and Koko Bakery were finalists in the category of Best Opened-Our-Doors-During-a-Pandemic. "We are so grateful this community voted for us," said Koko Bakery employee Nancy Chen. Marchant Manor Cheese won the category. Shane Kearns, store manager of Marchant Manor exclaimed, "We are delighted to receive this award!"

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### CH council confirms Sinnott as city administrator

**Kim Sergio Inglis**  
 At the March 21 Cleveland Heights City Council meeting, council members voted 6-0 to confirm Mayor Kahlil Seren's appointment of Joseph Sinnott, a former mayor of Erie, Pa., to the position of city administrator. (Council Member Davida Russell was not present at the meeting.)

Seren announced his appointment of Sinnott in a March 4 news release from the city. At city council's May 7 meeting, Seren formally proposed a resolution, on first reading, asking council to confirm Sinnott's appointment.

On March 14, city council conducted a public interview with Sinnott during its Committee of the Whole meeting.

In remarks at that meeting, Seren commented on the im-

portance of the city administrator post, noting that the position had been mandated by the city's 2019 charter change.



Joseph Sinnott

Seren reported that the city had received more than 50 applications for the position.

In his Administrative Services Committee report on March 21, Council Member Craig Cobb presented Resolution 24-2022 (AS), on second reading, "confirming the mayor's appointment of Joseph E. Sinnott as city administrator for the city of Cleveland Heights, and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective as an emergency measure."

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### April 6 forum will explore Issue 9: proposed CLM park

**Maryann Barnes**

A public forum on CH Ballot Issue 9, which proposes a public activity park on Lee Road, between Tullamore Road and Meadowbrook Boulevard, will take place Wednesday, April 6, 7-8:30 p.m., at the Lee Road Library, 2345 Lee Road. It has been placed on the May 3 ballot by a citizen's initiative.

Cleveland Heights voters will vote 'yes' or 'no' for the proposed park ordinance, Issue 9 on the May 3 Primary Election ballot. The ballot language is simple: "Shall the proposed ordinance requiring the City to create a public activity park on the 1.07 acres of City owned land at the corner of Lee Road, Tullamore Road and Meadowbrook Boulevard be adopted?"

The public is invited to attend the free forum. In addition to taking place in-person at the library, it will be live-streamed and recorded for later viewing on the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland (LWVGC) YouTube channel. The live-stream link will be available on the LWVGC website, <https://lwvgreatercleveland.org/cbuh>, before the start of the April 6 forum.

The forum's panel will comprise two groups of citizens, one supporting and one opposing Issue 9. It will be moderated by a trained LWV moderator. The format will be similar to the candidate and issue

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### MetroHealth brings free health fair to CH April 28

**Angela Townsend**

The MetroHealth System's Minority Men's Health Fair is coming to Cleveland Heights. The free event, featuring health screenings and information, will be held on Thursday, April 28, 5-8:30 p.m., at MetroHealth Cleveland Heights Medical Center at 10 Severance Circle.

Although the word "minority" is part of the name, MetroHealth's event is fully inclusive. Men from all racial and ethnic backgrounds can take advantage of more than 30 free health screenings and health

examinations, for prostate cancer, hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and dozens of other conditions and illnesses. Women are also invited to attend and access health screenings.



Charles Modlin, M.D.

MetroHealth physicians and specialists will be on hand to answer questions during the health fair. Prescription medication assistance, health education and patient

navigation services also will be available.

Visit [www.metrohealth.org/mmbf](http://www.metrohealth.org/mmbf) to register in advance to attend. Walk-ins will be welcome the day of the event, but attendees are encouraged to register to ensure access to health screenings. Those who want to volunteer, or apply to become an event exhibitor at no cost, can visit the Web page for information.

Charles Modlin, M.D., conceived the idea of a free health fair for minority men nearly 20 years ago. "I wanted to do my part to help

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## Letters Policy

The *Heights Observer* welcomes letters to the editor. They must be submitted electronically, along with the writer's name, phone number and e-mail address, to: [www.heightsobserver.org/members](http://www.heightsobserver.org/members).

## HEIGHTS OBSERVER

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# Maintaining balance in covering Issue 9



## OPENING THE OBSERVER

Bob Rosenbaum

The *Heights Observer* doesn't endorse political candidates or issues, and the Issue 9 ballot referendum in Cleveland Heights is no exception.

But Issue 9 represents the biggest challenge we've had to date in making this claim. That's because FutureHeights, which publishes the *Observer*, has taken a public position on the matter.

FutureHeights receives federal grant money, allocated by the city of Cleveland Heights, to work as a community development corporation on the city's behalf. It was involved in planning for the development project that gave rise to Issue 9. I don't think it's unreasonable for FutureHeights to have a strong opinion on the matter.

But how can the *Observer* claim impartiality when its publisher has taken a side? It's admittedly a fine hair to split.

First, those of us who produce the *Observer* tend not to get involved in other FutureHeights activities; we're here to publish, and that's enough work for a part-time job. And separating emotions from the job of producing a publication is no great feat; it's a discipline that we practice every month.

It's also relevant that the *Observer* doesn't receive any of that grant money; it's funded solely through its advertising. So the *Observer* owes its continued existence not to FutureHeights, but to our advertisers. We keep our advertisers by serving our readers—and we do that by producing a paper that reflects the community rather than the policy concerns of the publisher.

Of course, Editor Kim Sergio Inglis and I have our own opinions on the big community issues, and (not speaking for Kim) I'd love to participate in the debates as much as anyone. But whatever either of us might say would be interpreted by some as bias in the publication. So, for the most part, we keep our mouths shut and take satisfaction in the idea that *Observer* itself is more

There are no plans to publish further opinions about Issue 9 in print, because the next edition comes out just three days before the May 3 primary election. We also don't have staff resources to promise that any new articles or opinions on the issue will be edited for use online.

That could change if significant new information or a meaningfully different perspective comes to light. But outside of unforeseen circumstances, this edition of the *Observer* is effectively the last to address Issue 9 before it's decided at the polls.

important to the community than one more point of view.

People who do express opinions in the *Observer*—including those directly connected with FutureHeights—must all meet the same standards in submitting an article or opinion for publication. They must:

- Make the submission under the byline of an individual, not an institution;
- Disclose any relevant relationships in a sentence at the bottom of the article;
- Submit the article through our automated system;

*continued on page 7*

## Vote 'yes' on Issue 9 to ensure public green space

To the Editor:

I've seen a lot of proposals from developers in Cleveland Heights and

Cuyahoga County. They always show lots of pretty drawings and lots of amazing financial projections. In general, these stories about the future are fantasies.

I've read and heard some of our neighbors' concerns about the developer's so-called "commitment" at the Top Of The Hill to build certain walls out of bricks, in order to match the neighborhood's historic look and feel. And according to these neighbors—including architects and engineers—all we got was some brick-colored paint, not even as thin as a playing card. I guess it was in the fine print.

Joe Pesci's character, Vinny Gambini, in "My Cousin Vinny" offers this sage advice about the prosecution to the two "yutes":

Vinny Gambini: "Let me show you something." [He holds up a playing card, with the face toward Billy.] "He's going to show you the bricks. He'll show you they got straight sides. He'll show you how they got the right shape. He'll show them to you in a very special way, so that they appear to have everything a brick should have. But there's one thing he's not gonna show you." [He turns the card, so that its edge is toward Billy.] "When you look at the bricks from the right angle, they're as thin as this playing card."

Heck, all we got was paint.

Well, the city of Cleveland Heights and that very same developer are at it again—this time at Meadowbrook and Lee. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

Vote Yes on May 3 for Issue 9—the public square at Meadowbrook and Lee. It's the only way we're going to get that 1.07-acre public green space.

Garry Kanter  
Cleveland Heights  
[Kanter is treasurer of the Friends of the Meadowbrook-Lee Public Square PAC.]

## Support equitable spending, vote 'no' on Issue 9

To the Editor:

Proponents of Issue 9 want the city to spend millions, that's millions, constructing a new 1-acre public space at Lee Road and Meadowbrook Boulevard, even as a developer has agreed to pay for and build a one-third-acre public space in conjunction with plans for new housing and retail.

As a matter of fairness and equity, shouldn't the city spend money on neighborhoods that are currently struggling to attract new investment, like the Noble and Taylor road neighborhoods? Doesn't it make more sense for the city to focus efforts and resources making overdue improvements, and offering incentives in underserved neighborhoods to catalyze private investments, like the private investment currently occurring in Cedar Lee and Cedar Fairmount?

If Issue 9 park advocates are truly interested in better parks for our community, then how about advocating for city funds, and working with the city, to improve conditions at Barbara Boyd (Caledonia) Park, or Denison Park, so residents in these neighborhoods can enjoy quality green/recreational spaces?

Let's practice environmental justice, let's commit to spending our scarce city funds in a fair-minded and strategic manner, and let's support the public/private development at Lee and Meadowbrook that already includes a one-third-acre public space/park and 2 acres of green-space in total. Vote No on Issue 9 for the betterment of all Cleveland Heights neighborhoods.

Micah Kirman  
Cleveland Heights  
[Kirman is a former FutureHeights board member and past chair of its Planning and Development Committee.]

## About the Observer

The *Heights Observer* is not a conventional newspaper; it is a nonprofit publication for residents of Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

The *Heights Observer* has no writing staff; it is written by you—the readers.

Individuals throughout the community decide what stories they want to write, then submit them for publication. Anyone in University Heights or Cleveland Heights is welcome to contribute regularly, occasionally or even just once.

Is there something you think should be covered in the *Heights Observer*? If so, please write it on your own, or with friends, neighbors or colleagues. Our volunteer editors will make sure it's ready to publish, and contact you with any questions.

If you're writing a news article, it should be clear and factual. If you want to express an opinion, submit it as a letter to the editor or an opinion piece. Either way, make sure it's about something specific to our two cities.

- To make a submission of any kind, go to [www.heightsobserver.org](http://www.heightsobserver.org) and click on "Member Center" at the left.
- For information about writing style, article length, etc., click on "Become an Observer" at the left. For questions that aren't answered there, call the FutureHeights office at 216-320-1423 or e-mail [info@futureheights.org](mailto:info@futureheights.org).

Articles to be considered for the May issue must be submitted by April 11. We publish some articles online only. We also publish an e-newsletter each Tuesday.

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## Issue 9 is more anti-development than pro-park

To the Editor:

Don't be fooled that Issue 9 is about creating a park. It's about stopping progress in Cleveland Heights by killing new housing, retail, and vibrancy for Cedar Lee. That's why I'm voting "no on 9."

Consider two facts:

1. A top Issue 9 proponent posted this reply on NextDoor when I asked if they'd support development if the city had not provided economic incentives: "If the developers paid for their development, no subsidies, I would have no objection."

2. The city-approved proposal includes 2-plus acres of green space. Issue 9 is only 1.07 acres.

If you want green space AND progress, vote "no on 9." We've been looking at grass at Lee-Meadowbrook for a decade-plus. Vote "no" and it becomes part of a shining, nearly 5-acre project that also replaces dilapidated buildings on Cedar Road that thousands of commuters see every day.

A 'yes' vote likely means more grass for more decades. The city has \$0 for a park that proponents said could cost \$2 million—money we could spend on more pressing needs if we had it. The developer is paying to create twice the green space and [provide] maintenance.

Join the effort. Make a donation. Get a yard sign. Share why you'll vote

"no on 9" with others. Keep progress moving forward at Cedar-Lee-Meadowbrook. Visit [www.buildclm.com](http://www.buildclm.com) or @buildCLM on Facebook to get started.

Michael Bennett  
Cleveland Heights  
[Bennett is a member of the Heights Observer Advisory Committee. The opinions expressed here are his alone.]

## CH's point-of-sale inspection is essential tool

To the Editor:

I strongly disagree with Alan Rapoport that our city should consider eliminating the Point-of-Sale (POS) Inspection program because, as he stated in his February 2022 *Heights Observer* opinion, "Private inspection at buyer expense now is standard practice, regardless of whether brokers are involved."

I do not believe obtaining a private inspection is a standard practice of investors—yet investors continue to purchase significant numbers of properties in our city's most at-risk neighborhoods.

For example, in June 2021 the Greater Cleveland Congregations (GCC) Cleveland Heights Housing Team that I chair researched the 120 most recent title transfers in the Caledonia section of the Noble neighborhood. It found that 40 percent of all purchases (49 of 120), were by investor. Of course, not all investors are what we call "bad apples," but a good number are, and that is a major concern.

The POS inspection with the escrow requirement is the one tool we have to hold investors accountable to bring a property to community standards. The POS inspection of rental properties also provides important protection for tenants who seek to live in our community, and who have the right to safe and decent housing.

If the current POS inspection presents challenges for buyers who will own and live in the property, then we should look for solutions to ease that burden, but we cannot allow bad investors free run to further damage our neighborhoods. The POS inspection is an absolutely essential tool in our city's toolbox.

Diana Woodbridge  
Cleveland Heights

## Vote 'yes' on Issue 10 for a more productive Cleveland Heights City Council

Tony Cuda

As part of the transition to an elected mayor-council form of government, CH City Council is asking for your support for an important amendment to our city charter. A YES vote on May 3 will allow the clerk of council to work directly for the legislative branch of government, rather than the executive branch.

Currently, the clerk of council, who is also the finance director, works for and serves at the pleasure of the mayor. The finance director, in turn, hires an assistant clerk of council. This outdated provision not only greatly burdens our finance director, but also provides city council members with no staff to support them with their legislative duties. With this charter amendment, that position will be shifted to work directly for, and to serve, city council.

Because the city already has a position for an assistant clerk of council, a YES vote on Issue 10 will NOT add a

new staff position. Rather, this charter amendment simply shifts the role of the clerk from the executive to the legislative branch, and puts it under council's supervision—where it belongs.

A clerk of council is a position that almost all city councils have to help them perform their many important duties. Several of our neighboring cities—including Lakewood, Beachwood, Solon, University Heights, and Maple Heights—have a charter provision that places the role of clerk of council directly under city council, not the city administration.

Some of the duties a clerk of council traditionally performs include:

- Coordinating pre-council meeting tasks;
- preparing council public hearing notices for newspaper publication;
- preparing meeting agendas;
- gathering, compiling, and distributing materials and information needed by council and attendees;

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## New council, same problems

Eric Silverman

In the debate over the Cedar-Lee-Meadowbrook (CLM) development—a contest between a coterie of malcontent gadflies and civic cheerleaders who buy whatever borscht is served by City Hall—two simple yet vital math equations are unanswered, no matter how many times I ask 40 Severance Circle. In fact, I asked just the other day and, as of the time of my writing this, March 16, no one has answered the two simple questions—not our mayor, who has been in office the entire time this latest development has been negotiated, nor our council president, whose e-mail address has several abbreviations that intimate a more than basic understanding of math.

My first question has been: How long will it take for the city to recoup the cost of the land that it is leasing (and then maybe selling) to the developer for less than \$500?

By my estimation the city has spent between \$600,000 and \$1 million on these properties. Based on income tax from construction work-

ers and new residents, then savings on debt payments for the garage, the city may recoup these costs within four to six years (based on conservative numbers), so converting public assets into private ones may be a good deal—one you would think SOMEONE at City Hall would diagram on a single sheet of paper and broadcast. When I ask City Hall if my math is correct, a selling point for a controversial project, the answer is . . . silence.

The bigger question is: Am I reading correctly in the development agreement between the developer and the city, dated Dec. 9, 2021, on page 3, item H, that the project is requesting from the CH-UH school board a 100-percent/30-year TIF for the CLM project? Is this correct, that they want to have ALL of the new property tax revenue applied toward the TIF?

Based on the developer's RFP response, this project would generate \$1.5 million a year in new property taxes, BUT . . . ALL of the new revenue would pay for the TIF, meaning the school district would receive \$0

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## Cedar Lee business owner urges 'no' vote on park

Destiny Burns

On behalf of myself and other small businesses owners of the Cedar Lee Business District, I urge Cleveland Heights residents to come out to the polls on May 3 and VOTE NO on the ballot initiative (Issue 9) to create an unfunded public activity park at the corner of Lee, Meadowbrook and Tullamore. This is a critical moment in our city's history, and we need your support.

Here are the relevant facts everyone should know:

- The Cleveland Heights Master Plan, developed with significant community input, designated the Lee-Meadowbrook vacant lot's best use as mixed development, not parkland.
- The city has already made significant investments in the Lee-Meadowbrook vacant lot and in the adjacent parking garage in anticipation of, and preparation for, this development project.
- Our duly elected city council competitively selected a developer and voted unanimously in 2021 to enter into a binding development agreement and contract with Flaherty & Collins to develop 4.8 acres of city-owned land as one integrated project, including the Lee-Meadowbrook vacant lot. The 1.07 acre Lee-Meadowbrook portion cannot simply be removed from the project's scope.
- The plans and designs for this development project already have been approved by the city in a process that included significant opportunities for community visibility and input. The developer listened to citizen input about the desire for green space and incorporated it into the design.
- City council voted unanimously to reject this ballot initiative after a community forum to hear input. The feedback they received that night was overwhelmingly in favor of rejecting the park initiative and in support of the Cedar-Lee-

Meadowbrook development project. The Cedar-Lee-Meadowbrook development project will:

- Provide substantial new property tax revenues to the school district, generate income tax revenues to the city, and create jobs in our community;
- Beautify and actualize the Lee-Meadowbrook vacant lot that has negatively impacted the continuity of the Cedar Lee Business District for many years;
- Incorporate more than 2 acres of public green space, including a public park on one-third of the current Lee-Meadowbrook vacant lot, funded AND maintained at developer expense; and
- Create new housing and commercial/retail space to revitalize the business district.

In addition, the city's Law Department has advised that the state and federal Constitutions prohibit legislation that retroactively impairs the obligations of pre-existing contracts, and this provision applies with equal force to legislation passed by city council and legislation adopted directly by voters via ballot initiative. Our city must honor its contractual commitments—it is essential to the city's credibility in future development efforts, and it is simply the right thing to do.

Your Lee Road merchants have been hit hard by the impacts of the pandemic, but we still do our best and give our all every single day to support our community and make it a better place. We greatly appreciate your support—and I ask now for your help to defeat this ballot initiative so that our business district can modernize and thrive.

The Cedar-Lee-Meadowbrook development project is essential to the future of our business district and our city. Please come out to the polls on May 3 and VOTE NO on the public activity park initiative.

*Destiny Burns is the owner of CLE Urban Winery, and is also a homeowner in the Cedar Lee neighborhood.*

## Build CLM PAC forms to oppose Issue 9

Gayle Lewin

On March 6, 50 residents gathered at The Wine Spot, kicking off Friends of Build CLM's official PAC campaign. The PAC is working to ensure that the approved residential, commercial, and public-access green-space development at Cedar, Lee and Meadowbrook is not halted by a ballot initiative to mandate a park on part of the site.

"Issue 9 is an ill-conceived initiative to block development in the guise of a 1.07 acre 'public activity park,'" said Jeanne Gordon, one of the PAC's organizers. "The park proposal is an unfunded mandate that proponents say the city can pay for. The city has no funds to build or maintain it. The developer is planning to create a park there as part of more than 2 acres of green space—plus apartments and store-

fronts that will attract new residents and visitors, bring in new income and sales tax revenue, and renew vibrancy to the district."

The campaign also has the support of many district business owners, including the owners of Rudy's Pub, CLE Urban Winery, Zagara's Marketplace, the Cedar Lee Theatre, and Boss Dog Brewery.

In 2004, the city began the long process that resulted in the current development plan. A master plan for the district included urban infill and a parking garage, built to accommodate future development. The city purchased land and demolished buildings in anticipation, and issued a request for proposal [RFP] to developers. The economic recession in the late 2000s halted progress.

In October 2020, the city issued a new RFP for development in the

*continued on page 20*

## FAQs: In support of public park Issue 9

Fran Mentch

May 3 will be the only time that CH residents have been able to vote directly on a local land-use issue—it's an opportunity to decide what kind of community we want to live in, and the future we want to create. Here are some FAQs about the [proposed] public park, Issue 9:

**Will the park bring money to the city?** Yes! Based on research by city planners and economists, the right-size public space, in the right place, brings feet to the street. And money follows feet. This park is the right size in the right context. Lee Road business owners told us they do their best business during the music festival. The CH Master Plan recommends more activities to attract people who will dine, shop, and attend performances. Imagine how a concert in the public park every Friday night would help Lee Road businesses!

**How much will it cost?** The park will be designed by a community process; the more complicated the design, the more costly. Our best estimate is that \$2 million would be enough for a good foundation—a small stage, free WiFi, public restrooms, a water fountain, and a small play area for young children. Residents will work with the city on the park's design and funding. Park supporters have experience in writing grant proposals and in fundraising.

The cost to maintain the park will be modest. In 2021, maintenance of all of its parks cost the city \$241,300; extrapolating from that, the Meadowbrook-Lee park maintenance cost should be less than \$40,000 a year.

**Did you start the public park initiative to stop development?** No. It is only about the public park. Unfortunately, the two issues became conflated. The [pro-park] petitions were originally submitted [to the county board of elections] on Nov. 29. Some signatures were invalidated; additional petitions were submitted on Dec. 24. The city signed the development agreement on Dec. 6.

**Will the public square stop development?** No. Issue 9 is not responsible for the decisions of the developer; it only applies to 1.07 acres of the 5-acre site. When it passes, what happens to the development is up to the developer. Neither the developer, Flaherty & Collins (F&C), nor the city has stated there will be no development when Issue 9 passes.

**Will the park be legal?** When Issue 9 passes, it will be a binding legal ordinance with the presumption of validity afforded all passed ballot initiatives. Opponents and some city officials have stated that the ordinance authorizing the park could potentially be "set aside" as unconstitutional due to the city's pre-existing contract with F&C. Presumably, they are referring to the Retroactivity Clause of Article II, Section 28 of the Ohio Constitution, which prevents governments from passing laws that impair existing contracts. However, in a 2016 decision,

the Ohio Supreme Court held that the Retroactivity Clause does not extend to political subdivisions. Any constitutional challenge to Issue 9 will have legal obstacles to overcome.

**Why did you start the park initiative?** It was our only remaining option. Petitioners submitted proposals to build the park four times, starting in 2013. In 2021, city council refused eight requests to put the park on its agenda, and made decisions in six closed-door executive sessions. We asked council to wait to vote on the development after our new form of government was in place; it refused.

Please visit [clevelandheightspublicsquare.com](http://clevelandheightspublicsquare.com) to sign up for a yard sign, our newsletter, or to donate! It is not unusual for developers to spend \$500,000 on this kind of campaign. All contributions that will help Issue 9 win are appreciated.

*Fran Mentch initiated, and thanks the large grassroots effort that created, Issue 9. She is chair of the executive committee of the Northeast Ohio Sierra Club group, and is a community activist who worked to turn the former Oakwood Country Club into a Metropark, not a Walmart.*

## Public should control development

Gavin Andersen

Residents know best what they need—what their lives are missing, what stands between them and their goals, what they would change (if they could) to improve their quality of life.

That's why Cleveland Heights Council Member Davida Russell is asking Noble and Taylor residents directly how to spend those neighborhoods' designated American Rescue Plan Act funds during her "You Talk, I Listen" sessions. It's why Cleveland has done the same through online polls.

It's why Collinwood, Tremont, Chicago, Atlanta, Porto Alegre, Glasgow, Seoul, and other cities around the world have used participatory budgeting to determine—through deliberative democratic processes—how the People want to spend their own money. It's why California, Oregon, British Columbia, and even entire countries, such as Belgium, Denmark, and Ireland, have used randomly selected citizens' assemblies to empower ordinary people—through deliberative democratic processes that represent the entire population

rather than just its most powerful members—to decide for themselves what policies will govern them.

The key problem with the development at Cedar-Lee-Meadowbrook is that the public did not choose it.

The only choice residents make in local development is electing local representatives. At the ballot box, in a single democratic act, a lively minority (30 percent of all eligible voters in the Cleveland Heights' historic mayoral election) endows a group of residents who are privileged enough to run for office with the power to make any decision on everyone's behalf.

Between elections, the only influence residents have over representatives is their voice, and CH City Hall designates times and places where residents can demonstrate their voices' power: Every week, if you can squeeze it in, you have three minutes to state your opinion in physical proximity to city council. If—between work, errands, dinner, bath time, story time, bedtime, and third shift—you can make it to one of the engagement sessions planned

*continued on page 22*

Bustling with activity. That's how Pat Mallik and her husband Singh describe the newest

**"There are so, so many reasons we're happy at Judson."**

chapter in their lives. After the Malliks relocated from Seattle in 2018, their son and daughter-in-law quickly pointed them to nearby Judson Park. And for Pat and Singh, there's been no looking back.

Gardening, reading, staying fit, and freely sharing her beauty expertise with neighbors are everyday occurrences for Pat. "We're so busy! Just because we are retired doesn't mean we're going to sit in a chair and sleep. The exercise options are great, people are so friendly, and help is here if you need it," says Pat.

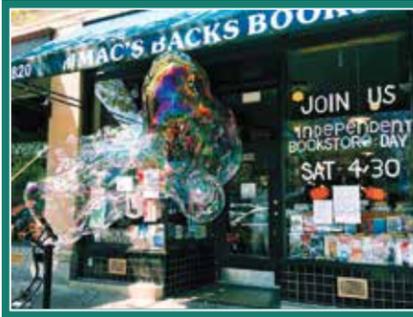
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# CH judge provides municipal court annual report highlights

J.J. Costello

At the end of March of each year, Ohio's municipal courts must submit to their city and county governments a report of their operations, including a statement of receipts and expenditures. The full 2021 Annual Report for the Cleveland Heights Municipal Court, along with reports from years past, can be found on the court's website at [www.cleveland-heightscourt.com](http://www.cleveland-heightscourt.com).

Transparency in the judiciary promotes confidence in the system, upholds the fair administration of justice, and leads to increased efficiency and effectiveness. It is worthwhile to highlight [here] some of the work performed by the court, and the improvements and community collaborations it has undertaken.

Our court continues to make technology improvements, and, as in years past, this year's upgrades were paid from sources outside of the general fund. Ours is one of the

first courts in the area to upgrade its online docket so that everyone has access to electronic images of the actual filings. Now, when someone goes to our court's online docket, rather than simply seeing that a motion was filed on a case, one can see the actual motion itself. This upgrade is designed to aid litigants and provide greater transparency on the cases we handle.

Our court also implemented a texting module that enables individualized text reminder messages to be sent automatically based on the specifics of a case. The court has seen a marked reduction in criminal warrants being issued for failures to appear now that we have fully implemented those text reminders.

The court was awarded a grant in 2021 to enable it to accept electronic traffic citations. Collaborating with the Cleveland Heights Police, Law, and IT departments, we are hopeful that this system will be implemented in the second quarter of this year.

This focus on technology was why I was appointed to the Supreme Court of Ohio's Commission on Technology and the Courts this past year. In addition to serving on that and other commissions, I was actively engaged in educational outreach programs, such as membership on the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District Strategic Planning Committee, reading and visiting with elementary school students at our schools, and participating in a discussion panel concerning virtual court hearings.

The CH Municipal Court remains one of the busiest in the area. After adjusting incoming cases to a per judge caseload, this court had the second-highest number of cases compared to the other 12 general division municipal courts in Cuyahoga County. CH Municipal Court heard 35 percent more cases than the average number of cases heard per judge in Cuyahoga County, and 41 percent more cases than the average number of cases heard per municipal court judge in Ohio.

While the court is absolutely not a revenue center—our mission is to administer justice—we once again remitted revenue to the city of Cleveland Heights in excess of our expenses. Even with an increase in services provided, and raises for court employees, our general fund expenses this past year were less than one-quarter of a percent increase over the 2020 general fund expenses.

None of this is possible without the hard work of the incredibly capable, diverse, and dedicated court staff. We look forward to continuing to serve our vital purpose of administering justice impartially, without denial or delay.

*J.J. Costello is a lifelong Cleveland Heights resident and judge of the Cleveland Heights Municipal Court.*

## Holy Week

At Communion of Saints Parish

<p><b>Holy Thursday</b> April 14, 2022 Mass of the Lord's Supper &amp; Feet Washing 8:00 pm—St. Ann Church Followed by reposition of the Blessed Sacrament until 11:00pm</p>	<p><b>Holy Saturday</b> April 16, 2022 Easter Vigil 8:30 pm—St. Ann Church</p>
<p><b>Good Friday</b> April 15, 2022 Passion of the Lord, Veneration of the Cross and Holy Communion 3:00 pm—St. Ann Church</p>	<p><b>Easter Sunday</b> April 17, 2022 10:00 am —St. Philomena Church 9:00 am and 11:00 am St. Ann Church</p>

Communion of Saints Parish | St. Ann—2175 Coventry Rd. Clev. Heights, OH 44118 | St. Philomena—13824 Euclid Ave. East Clev., OH 44112 | [www.Communionofsaintsparish.org](http://www.Communionofsaintsparish.org)



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Issue 9

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## School district leaders fail to protect students

Shari Nacson

CH-UH teachers and building-level staff provide our community's children with a nurturing, comprehensive education. While the pandemic forced our school district to re-think public education, the pandemic cannot be an excuse for long-standing problems.

Since August 2020, a group of 500-plus CH-UH school district parents and staff have collaborated to share information, and communicate issues to our elected and paid district leaders.

In 170-plus pages of routine reports, we have documented an array of community concerns and begged for solutions. We convened forums, spoke at school board meetings, and regularly communicated with leadership to activate change. Most of these issues remain unaddressed, leaving students unprotected in myriad ways.

Frustrated students, parents, staff, and community members (among them some of the 500-plus) want district leadership—to whom we entrust the care of our children—to actively study and fix persistent systemic problems, including:

- Inadequate response to student-to-student sexual assault and bullying, across buildings. (In public comments at the Dec. 21 and Jan. 4 board of education meetings, students, an alum, and others spoke about the dress code, rape culture and mishandling of a case. In two protests, one in December, the other on March 10, hundreds of students rallied outside Heights High, sharing their experiences of sexual harassment and assault, and their outrage at administrative mishandling.)
- Safety/facility issues, including unmonitored locations and inadequate classroom space despite renovations.
- Insufficient instructional quality and exclusion from building-related resources for online learners.
- Opacity about COVID relief funds and their use. With unprecedented federal funding for schools via ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funds, it is unclear how this one-time \$17 mil-

lion is being spent. Meanwhile, our buildings are understaffed, pandemic precautions falter, and mandated services are insufficient.

- Inadequate enforcement of the Title IX mandate to ensure a learning environment that is safe from sexual harassment.
- Mismatch between Code of Conduct, International Baccalaureate principles, and actual discipline practices.
- Disconnected communication and decision-making between district administrators and building-level leadership/teachers.
- Disproportionate legal fees for the district's size.

We expect solution-focused action. Yet, at a time when increased stakeholder input would serve public interest, the school board is enacting a policy that will inhibit public comments, like its recent refusal to add reasonable accommodations (Zoom or phone access) to allow public comment by those unable to attend in-person meetings.

Schools are the crux of a community's well-being. If our leadership continues to ignore these problems, other citizens must step up and run for school board.

In the meantime, it is time for our Cleveland Heights and University Heights city councils to get involved and investigate these pivotal issues, especially school safety and fund distribution.

Given the district leadership's persistent silence in response to written and in-person requests for help, I feel it is my civic duty to apprise this community of the inner workings of a beloved system that has been and actively is being mismanaged. Our children deserve better.

*Shari Nacson is a mom, social worker, and editor who is co-administrator of a Facebook group for families and educators who collaborate to optimize CH-UH student experiences during pandemic times. She spoke at the Oct. 5, 2021, CH-UH school board meeting, asking the district to respond to, and work to solve, the 170-plus pages of concerns mentioned in this opinion.*

NEW COUNCL continued from page 3

in new revenue, and the projected \$45 million in new taxes would go to cover UNSPECIFIED costs of the development—a project that has hard and soft costs of around \$52 million.

When I ask if my math and synopsis is correct, that this project will generate NO NEW REVENUE for the schools, our mayor and our council president cannot (or will not) answer with a simple yes or no. Instead, they are punting to the school board to either reject the project outright (and be the bad guys) or do the negotiating that City Hall either lacks the spine or the mind to do.

I fail to see how projects like this—where the developer receives public assets for pennies on the dollar, and which do nothing to reduce the tax burden for RESIDENTIAL property owners—squares with the alleged “progressive” ideals of CH City Council. Furthermore, if the

school board signs off on 100-percent abatement for 30 years, how can the board ever go back on the ballot with a school levy? It makes no sense to ask those who live here to pay more in taxes, while at the same time letting those who profit from our community contribute NOTHING.

As [far as] I know, the aforementioned officials have my e-mail and phone number; they should feel free to use them and let me know if my math is correct. If council (and the mayor) would like a tutorial on school funding (and basic math), I would be more than happy to provide one.

The problem with the plans for CLM and the color green is, it isn't about the grass; it's about the cash.

*Eric J. Silverman was a member of the CH-UH school board from 1994 to 2001, and again from 2014 to 2017. He was a member of the Heights Libraries board from 2003 to 2009.*

## Don't wait to make sustainability changes

Alice Jeresko

Sustainability is a broad concept, understood and interpreted at different scales. Cleveland Heights residents want the city to develop a sustainability plan—a huge and expensive task for an understaffed city. Just hammering out what aspects of sustainability to tackle will take research, analysis and agreement. Success will depend on passage of legislation, followed by implementation and enforcement. It could take years to realize positive impacts. How can we hasten mitigation of emissions-caused climate change?

Cleveland Heights doesn't have much industry requiring air-quality control. We don't have major highways, interstates, rail, or air traffic as emissions sources. We mostly have small, non-manufacturing businesses and residential properties—with a lot trees, leaves and lawns, and thousands of privately owned gas-powered vehicles and equipment.

We don't need city legislation to voluntarily, and immediately, make a difference. Activity on private property is, collectively, the biggest source of carbon emissions across the city.

Gas-powered lawn equipment is gradually being banned in many cities and even entire states (California). Reducing or eliminating this one, widespread, and devastatingly dirty type of fuel use could immediately reduce carbon emissions; toxic volatile fumes; and the amount of lead, mold spores, and fine particulates suspended in our shared air. That's the air infants and toddlers, joggers and cyclists, mail carriers, and the landscapers themselves, have no choice but to breathe into their lungs.

It's not just affecting humans. We are losing plant and insect diversity necessary to keep the biology of our planet functioning. In urban areas, like Cleveland Heights, yard crews blast away at leaf litter and regularly scalp lawns down to an

inch or two, decimating insects and microorganisms that nest and feed in leaf litter or near the soil surface. These organisms process nutrients and feed and aerate our soil; without them, the soil would be lifeless and unable to support the plants that also depend on insects for pollination.

This year, reconsider how to manage your yard and lawn:

- Switch to electric lawn mowers or blowers. They are quiet, efficient, non-polluting and affordable.
- Mow less frequently and let your lawn grow longer; experiment with no-mow plantings. Longer grass helps shade out weeds and better maintains soil moisture.
- Expand existing planting beds to reduce lawn; add trees, shrubs, grasses and perennials.
- Use leaf blowers sparingly and at gentler air speeds, preferably only to clear paved areas. Don't blow clouds of debris into the air or into the street to clog storm drains.
- If you use a landscaping service, remember that you are the client—choose a contractor who understands and supports sustainable landscaping practices.
- Generating less dust, debris, fumes and noise will allow you and your neighbors to enjoy open windows and fresh air—which means less air-conditioning emissions and expense.

We don't need to wait for legislation. We can choose to make immediate reductions in air pollutants, carbon emissions and noise, to return our neighborhoods to a quieter, cleaner and healthier normal.

*Alice Jeresko is a greenspace advocate who holds a master's in environmental studies from Cleveland State University's Levin College of Urban Affairs. She and her spouse, Tom Hudak, have maintained a home in Cleveland Heights since 1998. She returned to Cleveland Heights in 2019 after a few years in Portland, Ore., and retired from the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station.*

OPENING THE OBSERVER continued from page 2

- Accept that all submissions are subject to editing.

In past election seasons, we haven't always had space to publish every submission about controversial issues. I've previously used this column (see November 2021) to outline criteria for selecting which contributions will run.

This month, we're able to run everything that came in on the topic except for a letter that arrived so long past the article deadline that all space in the issue had already been allocated.

We're also conscious of balance in working with potential advertisers. There are three paid ads in this edition about Issue 9: one in favor and two against.

Initially, for the April issue, we didn't communicate proactively with any potential advertisers about Issue 9. But when two

groups opposing the ballot issue submitted ads on their own, we contacted the other side to make sure it had every opportunity to advertise as well. We didn't tell them what the opposition was planning; we never do that—as anybody who has run political ads in the *Observer* can confirm.

All three political advertisers in this issue paid the published nonprofit rate for their respective ads. No space was donated, and no other consideration was offered.

So, what you see in this edition about Issue 9 reflects the most even-handed treatment we were able to provide.

*Cleveland Heights resident Bob Rosenbaum is co-chair of the Heights Observer Advisory Committee, and is responsible for its advertising sales and market development.*

# Russell reports on Noble/Taylor ARPA meetings

David Russell

Residents of the Noble/Taylor communities came out in force to attend meetings in my “You Talk, I Listen” series, to address concerns in their respective neighborhoods and narrow down their “wishlists” for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds earmarked for them, in a continuation of two fall meetings.

The first meeting focused on the use of ARPA Funds earmarked for the area. Representatives from U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown’s office, the Center for Community Solutions, and Policy Matters Ohio participated. The second focused on gaining the perspective of Noble/Taylor residents, and learning what they want to see accomplished. Residents discovered that each neighborhood has different visions, but also commonalities around serious issues affecting both.

At the March 13 meeting, Noble and Taylor residents focused on narrowing down broad “wishlists” for ARPA funds, to ensure compliance with ARPA requirements.

On the table is \$5 million: \$2 mil-

lion for Noble, \$2 million for Taylor and \$1 million for all of the businesses in Cleveland Heights adversely impacted by the pandemic.

To help guide residents through their ARPA funds wishlist, Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish sent a representative from his office who was knowledgeable in ARPA funding guidelines. Also in attendance was Keesha Allen, director of Cleveland Heights’ Home Repair Resource Center. She provided information to the residents to ensure [duplication of] resources would not occur.

A lively discussion ensued. Business owners in attendance engaged in the development of a solid, doable wishlist. They wanted to be heard regarding the hardships they experienced due to the pandemic, and learned there would be an application process and eligibility criteria for ARPA funds.

To our surprise, every item business owners discussed was eligible for ARPA funding. This gave them hope that help was on the way.

As I moved through this process

with Noble/Taylor residents, I began to understand why they had insisted on closing the meeting to non-residents. They wanted an exclusive voice as to the use of ARPA monies in their neighborhoods, and were adamant about not letting outside pressures dictate what needed to be done.

I witnessed the comfort level residents had in expressing themselves to others who lived in the same neighborhoods, and their total engagement in the task. The few disagreements were resolved, and consensus reached. The meeting was extremely productive and successful.

Residents told me this was the first time they had a meeting among just themselves, to talk about their issues. They were thrilled! They felt that non-Noble/Taylor residents dominated discussions of their issues, which ended up with their concerns being ignored, or unwanted solutions imposed on them.

At the March 7 city council meeting, I was attacked for conducting a closed meeting. Ironically, this person had never attended previous open “You Talk, I Listen” meetings, nor

was [any objection raised] when the meeting was publicly announced in January.

I am so happy I was able to bring Noble/Taylor residents together, to provide a platform where they could address their issues with a strong voice. As an elected public servant representing the residents of Cleveland Heights, I will always be aggressive in listening to constituents’ concerns and representing their wishes. I will always be aggressive in giving them a voice. I believe that’s my job!

A full report will be presented to the city’s Finance Committee by Noble/Taylor residents. This will include the full wishlists of what they are looking for over the next four years, and narrowed-down wishlists of what they want immediately from ARPA funds. They have asked me to request an itemized price list for items they are prioritizing so that, if extra funds exist, they can further help their communities.

*David Russell is a Cleveland Heights council member.*

## CH council should prioritize city services

Alan Rapoport

The most important question in Cleveland Heights is, will city council give proper priority to delivering quality city services that protect health, safety and welfare?

[In his January 2022 *Heights Observer* opinion, in which he summed up the “top issues” candidates who ran for CH City Council in 2021 heard about from residents,] Council Member Tony Cuda noted that high taxes are a common complaint, but many residents said they would not mind paying them if city services were better. What he and his colleagues should ask is, to what “city services” were residents referring? And how can these services be performed better?

Candidates during the recent election campaign were more concerned about “equity and inclusion.” I do not doubt their sincerity, but I question their priorities. Municipal services affect everyone. Our city provides policing, fire suppression, ambulance service, and refuse disposal. It also pays for recreation programs, snow and leaf removal, repairs of public buildings, and purchases of equipment. Maintaining high quality municipal services is important, but candidates spent too little time on that subject. Perhaps they were taking city services for granted.

Cleveland Heights government often has spent too much time on issues unrelated to city services. One such issue was the “nuclear free zone” movement. Signs to declare that zone, decades after the end of the Cold War, have made our city the laughingstock of Cuyahoga County. Establishment of a legally non-binding “domestic partner registry” was a similar exercise in pure

virtue signaling. Supporters of the irrelevant occasionally get their way. Unfortunately, in Cleveland Heights that means an annual ceremony called “Democracy Day,” which requires a publicly funded hearing to discuss the role of money in national politics.

Time spent at public expense on such matters has not been time productively spent.

Mr. Cuda properly suggests that attention should be paid to what successful candidates said they wanted done if elected. He noted candidates raised some important municipal issues, such as the need to maintain aging housing stock and build new housing.

But one of the first actions of the new council was passage of an ordinance to adopt a “climate action plan.” That plan will sound good to some who want to save the planet, but it will not improve life on the local level. Such planning will consume time that could be spent on other projects.

Some will argue that city council can do it all, and stand for social justice while still providing for high quality city services. But council members only work part time. They must use their limited time wisely. They should concentrate on truly relevant matters. They should focus on maintaining and improving the quality of city services. They should not engage instead in ineffective ideological posturing, no matter how virtuous that makes them feel.

Taxpayers expect elected representatives to act in the true best interests of our community because of high taxes. They want their money’s worth. That is the real message [candidates heard from residents].

*Alan Rapoport, a longtime CH resident, served on CH City Council (1980–87) and as mayor (1982–87).*

## Student safety is district’s first priority

Malia Lewis

Nothing is more important than the safety and well-being of our children in CH-UH schools. Sexual harassment in schools has been a topic of much concern and conversation recently, both here in the Heights and across the nation. As a mother and as president of our CH-UH Board of Education (BOE), I take this matter extremely seriously. I know that our community members, staff, and board members do, too.

I want to share a few of the steps we are taking in order to create the safest school environment possible for our students:

- Education is a key to preventing sexual misconduct. The district is currently investigating a comprehensive, age-appropriate sex-education curriculum.
- We are exploring changes to our dress code to make it forward-thinking and appropriate for 2022, utilizing best-practice examples from school districts that have successfully instituted such changes.
- Superintendent Kirby and Heights High building leadership have been listening carefully to our students’ concerns and have taken action alongside them to create positive change. Initiatives over the last several months at Heights High include ongoing dialogue with student groups, identifying a trusted adult for each and every student, student informational assemblies, healthy-relationship workshops, and sharing resources.

Our student leaders are focused on developing solutions and we will continue to collaborate with them. [In a March letter to Heights High staff, students and families] Superintendent Kirby documented just some of the ongoing efforts designed to support our students.

- We will continue to enhance staff training on how to respond to sexual harass-

ment allegations and how to effectively implement students’ safety plans. We will expand this training to even more adults working in our building[s], increase the frequency of such training, and build upon our current professional development curriculum.

- Education around Title IX and sexual harassment is ongoing. During the second semester student assemblies, our school social workers and district Title IX officers shared presentations about Title IX and sexual harassment, as well as information from the Cleveland Heights Police Department.
- In January, Superintendent Kirby convened a committee of stakeholders to work on a root-cause analysis of the district’s needs in this area. The committee is composed of students, parents and staff across multiple roles in CH-UH. The committee leaders will share its findings and district recommendations at the April 19 BOE work session.

We will continue to communicate with our students, teachers, and community about our ongoing efforts in these areas. Sexual misconduct will not be tolerated in our schools. We appreciate the courage and strength it takes to report these highly sensitive matters, and we urge any student who has been the victim of sexual harassment or sexual assault to promptly report that information to the district’s Title IX coordinators or to another trusted member of our staff. Our commitment is steadfast in responding promptly, effectively and equitably to all reports of sexual misconduct, and we are determined to make our school the safe, welcoming facility we all want and deserve.

*Malia Lewis is president of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education, parent of two Heights High graduates (2019), and a small-business owner.*

# On May 3 vote 'no' on 9, 'yes' on 10



**HEIGHTS OF DEMOCRACY**

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

There is a great deal wrong with the way economic development gets done, not just in Northeast Ohio but throughout the United States. Governments of older cities and suburbs have little clout when seeking to redevelop blighted districts or attract new housing, commercial or industrial projects. Tax abatements are *de rigueur*. Private sector developers hold the cards and can easily move to the next town over if city officials stand in the way of maximum profit.

This system needs fixing, but cities like ours do not have the luxury of deferring development until some unspecified time when conditions are perfect, or even when incremental reform has occurred. Aging municipalities needing revitalization must work with what exists *now*.

Cedar-Lee-Meadowbrook is important—not just for Cleveland Heights.

New housing and amenities in close-in suburbs can attract residents who might otherwise live near or beyond I-271. Curbing sprawl, counteracting the drive to pave over remaining forest and farmland, is an environmental imperative for the entire region.

As longtime Cedar-Lee neighbors, we saw the city-owned parking garage on Tullamore Road rise in 2007 to sweeten the deal for prospective developers, only to watch the plan for a mixed-use development collapse in the recession of 2008.

Although we are not planners or designers, we have long envisioned retail and housing on the vacant lot at Tullamore and Lee roads, making the fractured commercial district whole.

Along with new residential units on the site of the current municipal parking lot, the currently planned mixed-use building, given final approval by the city's Architectural Board of Review in March, will add density and the urban energy that comes with it. It will also complement the existing apartment buildings at Meadowbrook and Lee.

Not all Cleveland Heights residents favor building on the Lee Road site. A small but vocal group has been agitating for several years to turn it into a park. Not satisfied with the current plan for a smaller park and additional green space, they have masterminded Issue 9, which will appear on the May 3 ballot.

It asks, "Shall the proposed ordinance creating a public activity

park on the 1.07 acres of City owned land at the corner of Lee Road, Tullamore Road and Meadowbrook Boulevard be adopted?"

The notion peddled by Issue 9 proponents (which has morphed over the years from a "world-class park," to an "activity park," and lately to a "public square") is little more than a pipe dream. Its supporters have proposed no way for our cash-strapped city to fund construction or maintenance.

Even if Issue 9 passes, it is unlikely the ordinance can go into effect.

First, its wording is self-contradictory, stating both that, "a public activity park be created," and that "[a]ll construction activities associated with the Site be suspended . . ." Without "construction activities" there can be no park unless it materializes by magic.

Second, according to the city's

law director, the initiative, if passed, could "run afoul of state and federal constitutional provisions barring laws that result in the 'retroactive impairment of a contract'"—in this case, the city's agreement with the developer. If the campaign to ratify Issue 9 succeeds, the city will undoubtedly face the cost of a legal challenge.

The Friends of Build CLM PAC is the campaign to defeat Issue 9. To contribute and request a lawn sign, go to [www.buildclm.com](http://www.buildclm.com).

Unlike Issue 9, Issue 10 is not

controversial. It will change the city's charter to permit city council to hire and direct its own clerk. We have written in support of this revision, and are glad council voted to put it before the voters.

On May 3, please join us in voting a resounding "no" on Issue 9, and a hearty "yes" for Issue 10!

*Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg are writers, editors and longtime residents of Cleveland Heights. Contact them at [heightsdemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:heightsdemocracy@gmail.com).*

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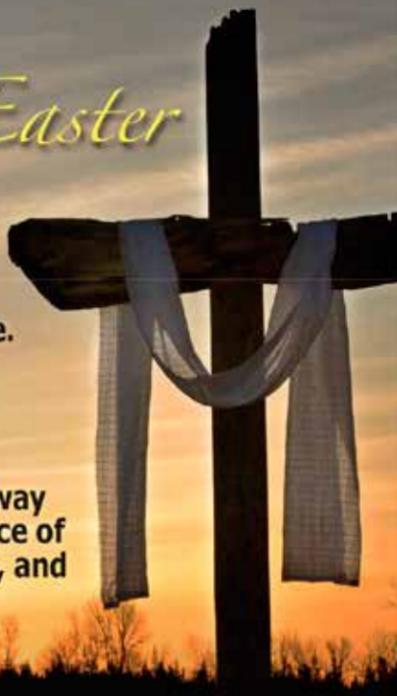
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## Gratitude for our elders



THE COMMON GOOD

Susie Kaeser

During this winter's last throes, our community lost two wonderful elders—Betty Nelson on Feb. 22, at age 92, and Judith Van Kleef on March 10, at 95. Both exemplified the engaged community member. They were role models for me.

Their activism began 50 years ago, when they were among the residents who changed Cleveland Heights, a suburb developed as a white enclave, into a racially diverse community. They both had the persistence needed to work for a more equitable world, and they simply never quit.

Nelson grew up in Concord, Tenn., and arrived in Cleveland in 1946, where she started her career with the IRS. She moved to Washington Boulevard in Cleveland Heights in 1971, looking for better housing and schools, when her daughter was in third grade. She joined the Committee to Improve Community Relations (CICR), a Black parent organization that focused on ensuring that the benefits of suburban life were enjoyed by African American residents. The organization started a scholarship fund to help Heights High graduates translate their education into access to college, and she ran the program until its last scholarship was awarded in 2007.

According to Doris Allen, a friend and CICR member, Nelson was a no-nonsense person who kept the organization and its members on task.

In 1974, after Heights High students working with CICR won a decree from the U.S. Department of Justice, the school district instituted one of the first holidays honoring Martin Luther King Jr. Nelson was proud of that, and adamant that Black history is American history.

Nelson was also an active volunteer with the Heights Community Congress and Reaching Heights. [She was] a regal woman,

whether in her blue jeans at home or elegantly dressed for a Reaching Heights benefit at Severance Hall.

I feel fortunate that she shared insights with me about how to navigate racism and not give up hope. Her philosophy: "If you don't forgive, you suffer. Never walk with your head down." She never did.

Van Kleef and her husband, Howard, arrived in Cleveland from New York in 1949. He was a steelworker and union leader, and she was a chemist who worked in a hospital lab. In 1964 the couple was ready to buy a house. They wanted the benefits of the public schools, arts opportunities, and the religious diversity of Cleveland Heights for their two daughters, and moved to East Overlook Road.

They were not deterred by a furnace explosion, or by real estate solicitors who used fear tactics to encourage them to move. Instead, they formed a street club, worked to solve local problems, and stayed for 50 years.

Petite and unassuming, Van Kleef was a force. She organized other people and often recruited me to one of her letter-writing campaigns, or asked for my help in promoting a school levy. She walked door to door during elections.

Women Speak Out for Peace and Justice was just one of the organizations that benefited from her fierce commitment to a just and humane world.

When the couple moved to a condo on Mayfield Road in 2014, she organized potlucks and advocated for a recycling program. She wanted people to be informed and engaged; those qualities defined her very being.

It was always fun to spot the couple at community meetings, school events, or as ushers at Cain Park or Severance Hall. They were everywhere.

Betty Nelson and Judith Van Kleef had strong beliefs and were confident in themselves. They acted on their values and inspired others to join them. I am grateful that they spent their lives in our community.

*Susie Kaeser has been a proud Cleveland Heights resident since 1979. She is the former director of Reaching Heights, and is active with the Heights Coalition for Public Education and the League of Women Voters.*



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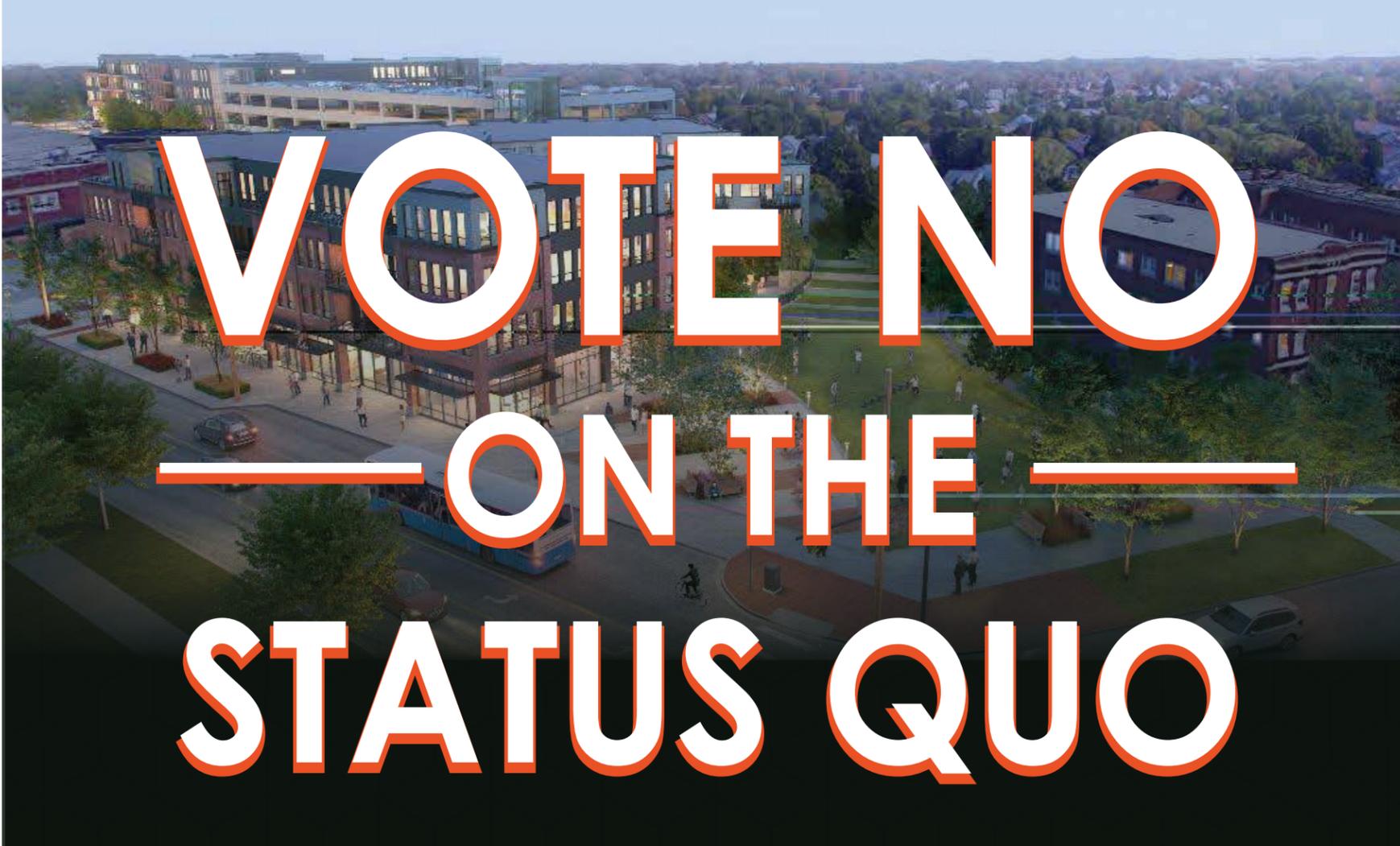
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May 3rd, 2022**

*Your Cedar-Lee merchants urge you to come out to the polls on May 3rd and VOTE NO on the Issue 9 unfunded park mandate. We strongly support the Cedar-Lee-Meadowbrook development – this project is vital to our economic recovery and will help our business district grow and thrive.*

*Your NO vote on Issue 9 will ensure this critical project proceeds without delay, bringing new residents, tax revenues, housing options and economic vitality to our community!  
Thank you for your support!*

*Sincerely,* \_\_\_\_\_

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Michael Herschman, Owner, MOJO World Eats • Jim Grenwis, Owner, The Social Room  
Bob Sferra, Owner, Sophie La Gourmande • Chris Armington, Owner, The Tavern Company  
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# Cedar Lee development receives final design approval

Jessica Schantz and Alena Bower

On Dec. 6, 2021, Cleveland Heights City Council unanimously approved a development agreement with Flaherty & Collins (F&C) to build a mixed-use development in the Cedar Lee Business District. The agreement was signed by the city and the developer on Dec. 9. F&C is working with City Architecture to design the project. On March 2, the team's proposal received final design approval from the city's Architectural Board of Review (ABR).

The development comprises two city-owned parcels (approximately 5 acres total): the Meadowbrook site, a 1.07-acre plot of land between Lee Road, Meadowbrook Boulevard, and Tullamore Road; and the larger Cedar-Lee site, which encompasses the existing parking lot and parking garage between Tullamore and Cedar roads, behind the Lee Road businesses on that block.

Information on the city's website, at [www.clevelandheights.com/clm](http://www.clevelandheights.com/clm), contains the signed development agreement, as well as other documents about, and renderings of, the current project; a summary and timeline of the city's efforts to develop the site; and an overview of public meetings held.

A March 1 presentation by city Planning Department staff included a brief "history of the redevelopment area," which traced the Meadowbrook site back to the 1930s through 1950s, when the "Meadowbrook site



A site plan for the Meadowbrook portion of the CLM development project.

housed two gas stations." The site was rezoned in 2004 to accommodate mixed-use development. In 2006, an EPA grant-funded brownfield remediation was completed at the Meadowbrook parcel. The city constructed the parking garage the following year. The city's 2017 Master Plan formally designated the site's future land use as "Mixed Use: Commercial + Retail."

According to the design F&C presented to the ABR on March 1, on the larger Cedar-Lee site, plans specify four-story buildings, comprising 139 "market-rate" residential units; 1,200 square feet of retail space, and 74,230 square feet of "open space." On the Meadowbrook site, plans call for three- and four-, and "sometimes" two-story buildings, comprising 67 residential units, 7,000 square feet of retail space, and 24,737 square feet of "open space." The development agreement describes the apartments as "first-class in all respects."

Alex Pesta, principal and partner of City Architecture, said there will be 2.3 acres of "outdoor space" in total, across both parcels. Of that,



A site plan of the entire development site.

1.31 acres is designated as accessible to the public, while 0.53 acres is reserved for two residential courtyard spaces, and 0.06 acres is for a dog run for residents. The balance of open space is sidewalks, walkways and "side yard[s]," according to Pesta.

Language in the development agreement states: "Programming of the public spaces and/or their use for activity, public information, signage, etc. shall require notification to and approval from the Developer (not to be unreasonably withheld, conditioned or delayed) and may be facilitated through the City."

It's the public space that is at the crux of Ballot Issue 9, an initiative undertaken by residents who would like to see the entire 1.07-acre Meadowbrook site designated a "public activity park," according to the ballot language. Issue 9 will be on the May 3 Cleveland Heights primary ballot, prompting some

residents who favor development of the full Cedar-Lee-Meadowbrook site to organize in opposition to the Issue 9. For information on the two opposing sides of the ballot issue, visit [www.buildclm.com](http://www.buildclm.com) (anti-Issue 9) and <https://clevelandheightspublicsquare.com> (pro-Issue 9).

According to the city, "the next steps for the project involve completing building plans and reviewing the project's financials, including the approval of public financial incentives by the City of Cleveland Heights and the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District."

*Jessica Schantz is the Heights Observer's e-news editor. Alena Bower, who contributed to this article, is a member of FutureHeights' Planning and Development Committee. Darren Cross, another member of the committee, contributed to an earlier draft version of this article.*

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# CH residents reach finals in civic pitch competition

Jing Lauengco

The 8th annual Accelerate: Citizens make Change civic-pitch competition took center stage on Feb. 24, with exciting live pitching, live voting, and an in-person crowd of 300 attendees.

Sponsored by Cleveland Leadership Center and Citizens Bank, Accelerate gives Greater Cleveland entrepreneurs the chance to win seed money to enable them to launch their ideas to make the region a better place. A panel of judges and community leaders selected six finalists, with the live audience voting for the grand prize winner. Two Cleveland Heights residents were among the finalists.

Michael Bustamante is Case Western Reserve University's director of diversity and strategic initiatives. A first-generation college graduate of Mexican heritage who hails from Laredo, Texas, Bustamante lives in Cleveland Heights. He was a finalist in the Authentic Cleveland Experiences and Technovation categories.

During a trip to China, Bustamante experienced the power of self-reflective cross-cultural connection. At Accelerate, Bustamante pitched his project, Connecting Cleveland.

"Connecting Cleveland is about you and your experiences," he said. "It would be about the human experience—an actual museum and interactive experience to learn about DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) topics, identities and perspective-sharing."

Bustamante hopes to expand the Connecting Cleveland pilot into community centers, universities, and libraries nationwide.

Hathaway Brown School juniors Lauren Voinovich, of Cleveland Heights, and Marianna Steele, of Shaker Heights, teamed up to pitch their project, Second Chance, in the Quality of Life and Technovation categories, and were also names finalists.

Second Chance is a recycling tracker with an attachment that goes on a consumer's recycling bin. Using UPC and QR product codes, Second Chance creates a sophisticated database and integrated app. The goal? To empower and educate consumers on personal/municipality sustainability and recycling policy,



Authentic Cleveland Experiences finalist and sponsors, from left: Alex Harnocz, Destination Cleveland; Michael Bustamante; Jon Pinney, KJK.



Quality of Life finalists and sponsors, from left: Marcus Glanton, Growth Opps; Lauren Voinovich, Marianna Steele; and Kip Bollin, Thompson Hine LLP.

lowering the overall carbon footprint for a cleaner, greener planet for all.

Through a Hathaway Brown business and finance fellowship, Voinovich and Steele originally competed in the thinkBIG! Business Challenge sponsored by The Veale Foundation, taking second place in the high school entrepreneurial competition. A mentor recommended the young innovators apply for Accelerate.

"It was originally not a QR code," explained Voinovich, "but a tangible light-up sensor. The idea evolved, and the pitch and class allowed us to brainstorm and refine our idea. Our goal is to create a tangible product."

Voinovich's advice for other rising entrepreneurs?

"No matter how far along, or how possible it is, definitely try and

apply for Accelerate," she said. "Practice and pitch, even if you don't win. Even if you don't draw the attention of the greater crowd. You can find out what your niche is, or what you're passionate about. It's not just about grant money. The marketing and networking, connecting with legal, software, and technology, has been so helpful."

Jing Lauengco, brand strategist and chief optimist of JING INC. and Podcast host of NEXT THING WITH JING, was Accelerate's Technovation 2021 winner and Social Change finalist for OTHER BROWN GIRL, a brand platform celebrating modern diversity, design, and digital storytelling for the next generation of multicultural leaders and creative entrepreneurs. She lives in Cleveland Heights with her husband and their son.

# GardenWalk CH seeks gardens for annual July tour

Jan Kious

Cleveland Heights gardeners are invited to participate in GardenWalk Cleveland Heights 2022, the weekend of July 16 and 17. GardenWalk CH is a free, self-guided tour of flower and vegetable gardens in private and public spaces in the city of Cleveland Heights.

Its organizers know that many gardeners reading this invitation will think, "My garden is not good enough." They are not looking for perfect gardens. (Whatever that means!)

The event is intended to showcase the variety of gardens in Cleveland Heights—large, beautifully manicured gardens, as well as small patio gardens, water features, tree houses, orchards, edible gardens, and gardens for children.

In 2021, GardenWalk CH showcased 60 properties throughout the city. Visitors came from every county in Northeast Ohio, and beyond. The event introduces some visitors to Cleveland Heights, and enables them to meet one another and share tips about gardening.

If you'd like more information, or to feature your garden in this year's GardenWalk Cleveland Heights, send an e-mail to [gardenwalkclevelandheights@gmail.com](mailto:gardenwalkclevelandheights@gmail.com).

Jan Kious is the organizer of 2022 GardenWalk Cleveland Heights.

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Family-friendly service  
11:15 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
(*livestreamed*)

**Cleveland Heights City Council**

*Meeting highlights*



FEBRUARY 22, 2022

Present were Mayor Kahlil Seren, and council members Melody Joy Hart (president), Craig Cobb (vice president), Tony Cuda, Gail Larson, Anthony Mattox Jr., Josie Moore, and Davida Russell. Staff members attending included Susanna Niermann O'Neill, city manager; Amy Himmelein, clerk of council; and William Hanna, law director.

**Public comments**

Fran Mentch, spokesperson for the Lee Road-Tullamore Road-Meadowbrook Boulevard public square initiative petitioners, urged residents to approve the ordinance on the May 3 ballot [Issue 9] that would create public space as part of the Lee-Meadowbrook development.

Catalina Wagers, co-founder of the Cleveland Heights Green Team, and another resident, expressed approval of the environmental sustainability committee initiated by Josie Moore.

Lee Barbee, who had been applicant for the open city council seat [to which council appointed Gail Larson], objected to the process being used to fill the seat and [said he] has filed a request with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to investigate. He added that he'd been told that Tony Cuda had revealed council's intention not to appoint an African American. Cuda called the allegation completely false.

**Gail Larson swearing in**

The law director swore in Gail Larson as a member of council.

**Charter amendment**

Council agreed to place an amendment to the city charter [Issue 10] on the May 3 ballot. If approved by voters, it would permit council to hire a clerk of council and other employees or consultants. In a 5-2 vote (with Mattox and Hart opposed), council removed from the proposed amendment the phrase identifying the council president or designee as the clerk's supervisor.

**Park initiative**

Council approved an ordinance to place a proposal on the May 3 ballot creating a public activity park on Lee Road between Tullamore Road and Meadowbrook Boulevard. Hart noted that, as this is a certified citizen initiative, council is obligated to place it on the ballot.

**Committee of the Whole**

As part of the discussion concerning the proposed Environment Sustainability Committee, Moore outlined the reasons for a city climate action plan and a citizens' committee. Mayor Seren questioned whether a 25-member committee would be an effective method of addressing climate change and engaging citizens in the effort. Other council members voiced concerns regarding the burden on staff for supporting a large committee with several subcommittees.

LWV Observer: *Jill Tatem.*

MARCH 7, 2022

The mayor and all council members were present, as were the city manager, clerk of council, and law director.

**Public comments**

Marlene Goldheimer spoke on behalf of advocates of the Medicare for All Act of 2021 to support city council's passage of a resolution supporting the act.

Fran Mentch, spokesperson for the public park initiative, asked for volunteers and donations on behalf of Ballot Issue 9; information can be found at [clevelandheightspublicsquare.com](http://clevelandheightspublicsquare.com).

**Staff reports**

Mayor Seren introduced the city's new communications director, Mike Thomas. He succeeds Mary Trupo, who has retired.

**City administrator**

A resolution confirming the appointment of Joseph E. Sinnott as city administrator was presented on first reading.

**Made Cleveland LLC**

Council passed an agreement to lease the city-owned space at 1807 Coventry Road to Made Cleveland LLC, a locally owned market featuring items produced locally. Both the Coventry Special Improvement District and the city support adding this business to the street.

**Other council actions**

Council approved an ordinance for issuing and selling non-taxable economic development bonds. This is a long-term debt refinancing, at a lower rate, of the city's portion of the Top of the Hill development. The new rate is for 10 years.

Council approved an ordinance to adjust the 2022 expenditures budget. [It also approved] appointments to various city boards, task forces and committees, some of which still have openings. Among these are the Architectural Board of Review, which needs an additional architect, and the Racial Justice Task Force, which needs two more members.

Council passed a resolution supporting the Medicare for All Act, declaring universal access to health care as a human right.

**Council member comments**

Tony Cuda reported that the Housing and Building Committee had its first meeting and will meet again on April 4. The committee went over the Novak Report and discussed vacant and abandoned properties.

Gail Larson spoke about the war in Ukraine and the school vouchers lawsuit. Both will be subjects of future council resolutions.

Josie Moore announced a program for Women's History Month and invited all residents to nominate Cleveland Heights "Women of Distinction." Five will receive awards and all nominees will be publicized.

Davida Russell proposed a resolution supporting the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education in the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit.

LWV Observer: *Blanche Valancy.*

Meeting packets, and other information can be found at [www.clevelandheights.com/1142/2021-Agendas-and-Minutes](http://www.clevelandheights.com/1142/2021-Agendas-and-Minutes).

Videos of council meetings can be viewed at [www.youtube.com/user/ClevelandHeightsOH](http://www.youtube.com/user/ClevelandHeightsOH).



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SINNOTT continued from page 1

The six council members present voted yes, with Council President Melody Joy Hart noting Sinnott's "excellent background."

Council Member Anthony Mattox Jr. stated, "I'm looking forward to seeing his partnership with the mayor and the city, and I'm excited about this opportunity."

Cobb commented, "I think we could not have picked a better person for the position—or the mayor couldn't have recommended a better person for us than Joseph Sinnott."

*Kim Sergio Inglis is editor-in-chief of the Heights Observer, and is a Cuyahoga County master gardener volunteer.*

# Heights Earth Month events invite residents to take action



Natalie Elwell

Throughout Earth Month, April 1-30, Heights organizations and individuals will offer a range of activities and events designed to inspire awareness, action, and advocacy for a healthier and greener Heights.

“We provided a platform for our community to take action, and the community responded in force,” said Catalina Wagers, co-founder of the Cleveland Heights Green Team, which organized the month-long initiative. “We are incredibly pleased with the number and variety of events, providing everyone in the Heights with access to transformational action on behalf of our environment, our health, and the health of the community at large.”

Events include a Bike Rally for World Health Day hosted by Bike Cleveland; neighborhood, green space, and community garden clean-ups; nature walks; sustainability forums; the Heights Sustainability Fair; Cleveland Heights Earth Day 5K run; a Heights Libraries book discussion; and free trees for all University Heights and Cleveland Heights residents who would like to have one or more planted in their yards.

The complete list and schedule of events, and participating organizations, can be found at [www.chgreenteam.org/earth-month-in-the-heights/events-calendar](http://www.chgreenteam.org/earth-month-in-the-heights/events-calendar).

The bike rally will take place on April 7, at Boulevard Elementary School, and will include bike safety lessons, bike ride lessons for children, a mobile bike repair shop, and a community bike ride.

Those interested in exploring the intersectionality of environmental justice and social justice are invited to read *A Terrible Thing to Waste: Environmental Racism and its Assault on the American Mind*, by Harriet A. Washington, and participate in a discussion about the book on April 21 at the Lee Road Library.

For a more hands-on project, on April 24 volunteers will remove refuse and leaf clutter from storm drains along streets in University Heights, and pick up general refuse to help increase awareness of protecting Lake Erie and keeping our streets clean. “The environmental act of one person can make a difference in our world,” said University Heights resident Elizabeth Englehart. “Just thinking about our individual actions, and considering their environmental impact, has the power to heal this planet. CH Green Team and Earth Month gives us the chance to implement these pursuits with joy and determination.”

On April 23, Heights Libraries will host the Heights Sustainability Fair at Coventry PEACE Park, to provide a space where residents can engage in the creative process of designing a green future. Isabelle Rew, Heights Libraries’ community engagement associate, explained, “At Heights Libraries, we strive to create opportunities for community dialogue, especially around issues like this that impact all of us. We hope the fair will be a chance for members of our community to come together, learn from local sustainability experts, and begin to create a shared vision for a greener Heights.”

For Ben Sperry and Keith Mills of Fairmount Presbyterian Church, participation in Earth Month in the Heights supports their “Earth Care Pledge,” which calls for accomplishing a specific number of actions toward caring for God’s earth. “Our faith urges us to strive for eco-justice: defending and healing creation while working to assure justice for all of creation and the human beings who live in it,” Sperry explained. The church will host several events, including an open house on April 30, and a volunteer clean-up effort.

“What we love about Earth Month is that it brings together local groups and organizations, whose commitment to a more sustainable and healthier way of life in our communities is so valuable but, in some cases, not well recognized,” noted Wagers. “It brings their work into the spotlight and offers residents the opportunity to participate. This is how healthy communities are built.”

*Natalie Elwell is director of gender equity practice at World Resources Institute in Washington, D.C. She lives in Cleveland Heights, and is co-founder of the Cleveland Heights Green Team.*

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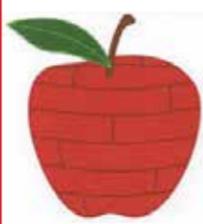
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**EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 17th**

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## Some news from Census 2020

Recent Population Compared to Highest Ever Population

Place	Highest total population ever and year of highest total		Total population in censuses 2010 and 2020		Census population as percentage of highest ever	
			2010	2020	2010	2020
Cleveland	914,808	1950	396,815	372,624	43.4	40.7
Cleveland Heights	61,813	1960	46,121	45,312	74.6	73.3
University Heights	16,641	1960	13,539	13,914	81.4	83.6
Beachwood	14,040	2020	11,953	14,040	85.1	100.0
East Cleveland	40,047	1950	17,843	13,792	44.6	34.4
Lakewood	70,509	1930	52,131	50,942	73.9	72.2
Shaker Heights	36,460	1960	28,448	29,439	78.0	80.7
South Euclid	29,579	1970	22,295	21,883	75.4	74.0
Cuyahoga suburbs	970,397	1970	883,307	892,193	91.0	91.9
Cuyahoga County	1,721,300	1970	1,280,122	1,264,817	74.4	73.5

Source of all original information: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Vince Reddy

If you have been in Greater Cleveland long enough, you probably have heard that the city of Cleveland was once home to nearly a million people, and that its population is now just a fraction of that. In fact, the population of Cleveland at the time of the 2020 census was 372,624, or 40.7 percent of its 1950 high of 914,808. While this loss of population may seem extreme, it is comparable to what has happened in the other older industrial cities that Cleveland is most closely related to, including Buffalo (now at 48 percent of its highest ever population), Detroit (at 34.6 percent), and Pittsburgh (at 44.8 percent). All four of these cities reached their population peaks in 1950; among them, only Detroit has never experienced significant population loss at the regional or metropolitan level, and only Buffalo has recently begun to regain population within its municipal boundaries.

Like many other landlocked inner suburbs, Cleveland Heights and University Heights are both less populous than they were at their peaks in 1960, but their population declines have been less severe than in the central city. University Heights registered a small population gain between the 2010 and 2020 censuses (13,539 to 13,914), and Cleveland Heights saw a smaller-than-expected drop, from 46,121 to 45,312. In 2010, University Heights had 83.6 percent of its all-time high of 16,641, and Cleveland Heights had 73.3 percent of its maximum 61,813. Taken together, the cities' 2020 population of 59,226, down slightly from 59,660 in 2010, was equal to 76 percent of

their combined 1960 total of 78,454.

Among the cities that border Cleveland Heights or University Heights, East Cleveland has lost the highest percentage of its population. It had only 13,792 inhabitants in 2020, or 34.4 percent of the 40,047 it had in 1950. Beachwood, at 14,040 (up from 11,953), is the only neighboring city that reached an all-time high in 2020. Shaker Heights, which registered a small gain between the last two censuses, was at 80.7 percent of its maximum, and South Euclid, which saw a slight drop, was at 74 percent. On the other side of town, Lakewood, which saw a population decrease from 52,131 to 50,942, had 72.2 percent of the 70,509 it had in 1930.

Cuyahoga County in its entirety has also lost significant population since its peak, which came in 1970. The 1,264,817 residents counted in 2020 equaled 73.5 percent of the 1,721,300 counted 50 years earlier. The county's percentage is virtually the same as that of Cleveland Heights, though the county's overall drop took place over 50 years, rather than 60. Suburban Cuyahoga County, defined as everything in the county except Cleveland, had a slight uptick in population between 2010 and 2020, growing from 883,307 to 892,193. This was 91.7 percent of the 1970 peak of 970,397.

The table above provides some detail. Additional census information is available from the U.S. Bureau of the Census at [data.census.gov](http://data.census.gov).

Vince Reddy is a former FutureHeights board member and a 25-year resident of Cleveland Heights. He was the city's zoning administrator from 1996 to 2005.

Chris Hann

Bill Hann

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# Volunteers restore native species to Bradford Path



Bradford Path volunteer efforts will continue this spring through fall, weather permitting.

## Peggy Spaeth

Friends of the Bradford Cinder Path (FBCP) is a group of neighbors who have been working to improve the unique pedestrian path since May 2020. The much-traveled path extends four residential blocks, from South Taylor Road to Canterbury Road, where it lies next to the Canterbury community garden.

Workdays for the upcoming FBCP season will be Mondays at 10 a.m., weather permitting. Six Saturday workdays are also planned, beginning at 10 a.m., April 16, May 21, June 18, Sept. 17, Oct. 15, and Nov. 19. Any questions about where to meet can be sent to friends.bradford.cinder.path@gmail.com.

In 2021 the historic path was designated a Cleveland Heights Landmark.

When the path was originally paved by the WPA in 1938, there were no funds for landscaping, although it appears that a few oak trees were planted. The swaths of greenery on either side of the path vary from block to block, but all have since become infested with opportunistic, non-native shrubs and weeds.

The first improvement effort was restoration of the hand-built stone bollards installed at the beginning and end of each block. The city of Cleveland Heights funded the work of an expert mason, who assessed and repaired each one according to its structural needs. He determined that the two on the west side of Queenston Road were likely original, with the other dozen built in the 1960s.

Next, volunteers began to remove invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle. Again, the city stepped up to chip the brush and remove or prune larger trees that were in decline, or hanging over wires.

Deb Franke became captain of the Princeton-Canterbury block, which has been transformed in the past two years. Neighbors joined in to improve habitat for native birds and insects by planting native shrubs such as shrubby St. John's wort, silky dogwood, buttonbush, and New Jersey tea. Understory trees such as flowering dogwood were also planted, with plans for redbuds to join

them this spring. Plants were funded by a FutureHeights Mini-Grant and donations from individuals. Many perennials, such as mistflower and mountain mint, were donated by people in the neighborhood who garden with native plants.

These plantings are more than beautification projects for the neighborhood. Resilient native plants sustain the native insects and birds that co-evolved with them, and the humans whose survival depends on them, urgently, today.

The Bradford Cinder Path is an extension of a loosely organized but significant undertaking by residents planting native species in their tree lawns or front lawns. The project originated on Bradford Road and quickly spread to neighboring streets, becoming the Heights Native Pollinator Pathway. The idea is to provide corridors of plants for pollinators. There is no formal organization, but information can be found by joining the Heights Native Pollinator Pathway group on Facebook, or at [www.ecologicalheights.com/heights-native-pollinator-pathway](http://www.ecologicalheights.com/heights-native-pollinator-pathway).

*Peggy Spaeth loosely manages the projects mentioned in this article, and also co-chairs Friends of Heights Parks and Friends of Lower Lake. She is a member of the Cleveland Heights Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.*

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# Green Team and Medwish collect supplies for Ukraine

Catalina Wagers

When the Cleveland Heights Green Team agreed to partner with MedWish International a couple of months ago, the war in Ukraine seemed almost implausible.

“We had been wanting to do a collection drive to provide a second life to discarded medical supplies and equipment as a means to repurpose rather than waste,” said Alex Sitarik, co-founder of the grassroots environmental group.

The collection had been scheduled to take place in April as part of Earth Month in the Heights.

“The drive was intended to emphasize recycling, reusing, repurposing alternatives as a mechanism to divert waste from the landfill. But sadly, that war has occurred, and instead we will be collecting supplies to distribute to relief organizations,” Sitarik explained. “It feels surreal, but we are glad we can do our part to help”.

MedWish International is a Cleveland-based nonprofit organization that works to save lives and the environment by repurposing discarded medical supplies and equipment to provide humanitarian aid to people in need. In 2021,

MedWish shipped 431,000 pounds of supplies and equipment, impacting nearly 2 million people at home and around the world.

“MedWish has had extensive experience in providing international humanitarian aid, and we are willing and able to use our strengths as an organization to provide aid to individuals and organizations who are impacted by the crisis in Ukraine,” said Allison Busser, director of development at MedWish. “Our organization is working with long-standing Ukrainian recipients to distribute medical supplies and equipment as well as basic emergency supplies to relief organizations in Ukraine and surrounding countries directly assisting those impacted by the emergency.”

For its Ukrainian-relief supply drive, MedWish is accepting basic-needs donations, such as baby wipes, crutches, walkers, personal hygiene items, sleeping bags, PPEs, and first-aid supplies; as well as medical equipment, including IV poles, microscopes, nebulizers, oxygen concentrators, scales (manual and electronic), and wheelchairs.

“We all have stuff that we no longer need taking space in closets, attics, and basements,” noted Sitarik. “As long as it is not expired, and

in working conditions, it can be repurposed and reused.”

To make it easy for residents to drop off donations, the Green Team has organized two collection drives during two community events: the World Health Day Heights Bike Crawl on April 7, 3:30–5:30 p.m., at Boulevard Elementary School, and the Heights Sustainability Fair on April 23, 1–4 p.m., at Coventry PEACE Park.

“We have been humbled by the overwhelming positive response from our community to past recycling drives,” said Sitarik. “However, this drive is different. It is an opportunity not only to do something positive for the environment, but to potentially help save lives. We know that our residents will respond in force.”

For more information and a complete list of needed/accepted supplies, visit [www.medwish.org](http://www.medwish.org) or [www.chgreenteam.org](http://www.chgreenteam.org).

*Catalina Wagers is resident of the Fairfax neighborhood. She is actively involved with several local organizations supporting causes and programs focused on the advancement of NEO through better access to education, policy advocacy, and environmental protection. She is co-founder of Cleveland Heights Green Team.*

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# LEI's Bananagrams fundraiser returns April 29 and 30

Eli Millette

In 2013, a group gathered at the home of Cynthia Larsen, co-director of Lake Erie Ink (LEI), to test a new game: Giant Bananagrams. It's a game of nerves, wit and teamwork that appeals to word lovers everywhere. Later that year, the game made its debut as a fundraiser for LEI—a massive competitive tournament for both adults and youths, played on a 30-by-30-foot board. Since then, the Giant Bananagrams fundraiser has become an enduring tradition for LEI, drawing teams of word-game enthusiasts.

The fundraising tournament returns April 29 and 30, to spread the joy of wordplay and support writing programs for young people in our community.

This year, participants are invited to play Bananagrams virtually, and complete challenges set by LEI's staff. Participants can also sign up to rent Giant Bananagrams tiles and play the game at LEI's Coventry PEACE Campus space—referee included.

LEI has also expanded the many ways people can get involved, including setting up a peer-to-peer fundraising page in support of the nonprofit, or a story hour hosted by Dana Norris, founder of Story Club Cleveland.



Amy Rosenbluth, Lake Erie Ink co-founder, wearing a Bananagrams fundraiser T-shirt.

From poetry-printing workshops to published anthologies, LEI creates meaningful opportunities for youth to find the right words to express themselves. The Giant Bananagrams fundraiser helps to further that mission. Visit <https://givebutter.com/gb2022> for more information, to set up your own LEI fundraising page, or sign up for one of the limited Giant Bananagrams slots.

*Eli Millette works as the communications and outreach director at Lake Erie Ink. He lives in Cleveland Heights.*

# Heights Libraries begins work on new STEAM Lab

Isabelle Rew

The Heights Knowledge and Innovation Center (HKIC) at Heights Libraries' Lee Road branch is undergoing changes as the library prepares to launch a new STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) Lab.

The joint makerspace and flexible-learning center will replace rows of desktop computers that inhabited HKIC's semi-enclosed computer lab, which has been closed to the public since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We wanted to take a space that wasn't ideal for use as a traditional computer lab and make it more flexible," said Heather Howler, continuing education manager.

The STEAM Lab will include two 3-D printers, a projector, moveable

tables, seating areas, whiteboards, and other maker and virtual-reality equipment.

"The STEAM Lab will serve as an enclosed, multipurpose space for visitors of all ages to explore STEAM-related technology using a hands-on approach," said Nia Turner, technology trainer. "Our community needs a space that will accommodate programs like our Tech Talks, youth technology classes, and gaming club activities. Having flexible furniture will allow staff to configure the room in whatever way we need to, whenever needed."

Unlike a traditional makerspace, in which users can access technology to complete set tasks such as 3-D printing, the programming in the STEAM Lab will equip users with a more holistic understanding of these emerging technologies.



Coming soon: A makerspace and STEAM Lab in Heights Libraries' Heights Knowledge and Innovation Center (HKIC).

"We love the concept of this space going beyond just a makerspace," said Howler. "We want it to be about education, engagement and innovation, so what better than to call it STEAM Lab, with its focus on science, art, technology, engineering and mathematics? Think of it, in a way, as a way to kind of play."

The STEAM Lab will focus primarily on lifelong learning, one of the library's core values.

"When we talk about the STEAM Lab, what we're talking about is the STEAM approach to learning," said Turner. "Lifelong learning is intertwined with STEAM education. We want this to be an intergenerational space—a place where everyone can come together and learn in a way that promotes growth and discovery as a community."

The library has taken a design-thinking approach to developing the lab, which emphasizes

experimentation and adaptation of the space based on library users' changing needs.

"If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that flexibility is key," said Turner. "Being receptive to hearing what the community needs and wants, and being able to adjust our space and programs and services to meet what they do want, will allow us to do just that. The computer area we had was very rigid, and we hope this new space won't be anything like that."

The STEAM Lab is currently in the planning and development stage, with the goal to be fully open to the public for programming by Labor Day. In the meantime, computers will continue to be available for public use in HKIC's main lobby.

*Isabelle Rew is the community engagement associate for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.*

## Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board Meeting highlights



FEBRUARY 21, 2022

Board members present were President Gabe Crenshaw, Vice President Max Gerboc, Patti Carlyle, Dana Fluellen, Annette Iwamoto, Tyler McTigue, and Vikas Turakhia.

### Public comments

Community members, Coventry PEACE Campus board members and artists commented on the relationship between Heights Libraries and the Coventry PEACE Campus tenants.

### Financial and investment report

Total cash balance across the operating accounts, Bauer Fund accounts, and investment accounts was \$20,981,554.08.

### Board resolutions

The board authorized a return to regular public service hours, effective Feb. 28, with the exception of one shift—Friday night at the Lee Road branch. The library is still down 10-12 staff positions. Masks are still required for all people ages 2 and older. Curbside service is available.

The board approved \$29,282.00 for abatement of additional asbestos found during the demolition of the property on Kirkwood Road, approved consulting services for the renovations to the Noble Neighborhood branch, and granted permission for the library to collect the vaccination status of all staff.

The board hired real estate advisory services to help structure property management of the Coventry PEACE Campus building. Proposals will be solicited from property management firms.

### Director's report

- Computers are being added to the Adult Services area at the Lee Road branch.
- Coventry Village Library upgrades are

proceeding.

- Feb. 18 was Toni Morrison Day in Ohio.
- HB 51 now permits public bodies to hold virtual meetings that allow member participation and public access. This order will expire on July 1.
- State revenues continue to exceed projections. State fiscal year 2022 tax collections are 5.5 percent above estimates.

### Public service report

The 2021–22 annual public service report will be presented in March.

Coventry Village Library staff members Jennifer Herchek, Lisa Gordon and Ben Gulyas refreshed and rearranged the AV room materials so that Maintenance Technician Leroy Hamby could remove the center shelving unit, making the space more accessible for all community members.

Noble Youth Services staff braved the cold weather to read to chickens as part of the virtual Storybook Ball. Costumed children were invited to participate in dancing, view jokes and a skit, participate in a craft, and listen to a chicken-themed Cinderella story. Families picked up Storybook Ball kits that included craft supplies, shakers, and a sparkly glow stick prior to attending.

MARCH 7, 2022 – special meeting

The board lifted the mask mandate for library patrons. Library staff are still required to wear masks. Eating and drinking in the library are still not allowed.

LWV Observer: Elizabeth M. Tracy.

Information about the board, board meeting minutes and audio recordings of board meetings can be found at <https://heightslibrary.org/locations/heights-libraries-board>.

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# Heights High is home to indoor track champions

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher

Cleveland Heights High School is proud to call Ohio's fastest 400-meter runner one of its own. Senior Marius Coleman won Division 1's 400-meter dash at the Ohio Indoor Track State Championship at Spire Institute on Friday, March 4.

His impressive time of 48.58 set a new indoor record for Heights High, and was nearly half a second faster than his previous best. Coleman's victory topped off a successful night and season for the Heights Tigers, whose boys' team finished the state meet ranked eighth out of 68 teams throughout Ohio. Qualifying in five events, every Heights competitor clocked a personal best to close out the indoor season.

Freshman Jane Mueller competed in the girls' 1,600-meters, knocking seven seconds off her time, while senior Braedan Gallagher finished 13th in the state in the boys' 1,600-meter, with a personal best time of 4:24.

Two boys' relay teams, both consisting of Coleman, Jacob Rice, Keonshae Boyd Bey, and Jeremiah Dillard, had impressive races, coming in third overall. But it was the boys' 4 x 200-meter relay that Coleman said especially motivated him in his individual race. Heights boys crossed the finish line third in the fastest heat, but quickly learned that two teams from other heats had beat their time by less than eight one-hundredths of a second.

"I had anger in me . . . and drive," Coleman recalled. "I didn't like how we lost that 4 x 200, and I felt like I just had to get this win." He spent the time between the two races jumping rope and listening to soft music to clear his mind.

When it was time for his event, Coleman was ready. He recalled, "As soon as I got off the blocks, I felt confident." He took control of the race halfway through, and there was no stopping him. "When I came down that final straightaway and saw the clock, I knew the race was mine."

"To be a champion, you have to have physical ability and mental toughness," said Scott McNulty, Heights High's head track coach. "Marius has both. He is representative of all that we already have at Heights, a validation of who we are and who we can become. For Jane to be just 22 seconds away from the fastest girls' mile ever as a freshman, and for Braedan to have offers from Division 1 running programs, and for our relay teams to be beating some of the best programs in the state . . . the future of Heights running is extremely bright."

Heights High will host the 38th annual Weingart Relays on Saturday, April 9, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the high school track. With an inaugural Weingart Junior meet for middle school teams on Friday, April 8, at 4:30 p.m., the two-day event is an opportunity for the community to come out and cheer for some of the best runners in the state.



Marcus Coleman won first place in the 400-meter dash.

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher, a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, is a freelance writer under contract with the CH-UH City School District. She is Braedan Gallagher's mother.

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BUILD CLM cont. from page 4

Cedar Lee district. Park proponents did not submit a complete response to the city's RFP.

"Over 15-plus years, the city has made significant investments with both money and time in bringing new development to our community and this district in particular," said Catherine Osborn, another of the PAC's organizers. "If this initiative is successful, it will all have been wasted."

In April 2021, the city awarded the development to Flaherty & Collins (F&C), partnered with City Architecture. In June, the parties signed a memorandum of understanding. On Nov. 22, resolution number 154-2021, authorizing the city manager to enter into a development agreement with F&C, had its first reading; the second reading was Nov. 29; the legislation passed unanimously on Dec. 6. The city and F&C signed the formal development agreement on Dec. 9.

People for the Parks submitted its petition to the county board of elections (BOE) on Nov. 29, after the agreement's first reading. The BOE determined the petitioners didn't have enough [valid] signatures. It wasn't until Dec. 24, after three readings and the signing of the agreement, that park proponents submitted their official ballot initiative. Their submission of petitions after the legally binding

contract was signed has called into question whether the initiative can be legally enforced.

Rather than take a chance that Issue 9 could pass and potentially lead to costly litigation, we are working overtime to ensure it is voted down by residents who support progress, economic development, and the local merchants who give back to our community.

Over the last year, the project has been presented at over 10 meetings, for public comment and input. It won full approval of the various boards and commissions, as required by the city. The approved plans include two new buildings and over 2 acres of open space that will be open to the community, all paid for and maintained by the developer, without cost to the city or residents. The developer will also manage and maintain the parking garage, reducing the city's costs further.

The city's plans are funded, complete, and well-thought out, unlike the opposition's. Vote No on 9 to ensure this much-needed, long-anticipated development goes forward. For more information, visit [www.buildclm.com](http://www.buildclm.com), or Facebook @buildCLM.

Gayle Lewin is one of the three PAC organizers, along with Jeanne Gordon and Catherine Osborn. All are residents who live near Cedar Lee.

ISSUE 9 cont. from page 1

forums the LWV has presented in the past, with opening and closing statements from each side, and written questions from the audience—both those in the room and those watching the live-stream.

Opposing viewpoints on Issue 9 can be found on these websites:

- Friends of Build CLM: [www.build-clm.com](http://www.build-clm.com)
- Friends of Meadowbrook-Lee Public Square: <https://clevelandheightspublicsquare.com>

The forum is being presented by The League of Women Voters of

Greater Cleveland - Heights Chapter and Heights Libraries.

The LWV does not endorse candidates or support political parties. It encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The LWV is not taking a position on this issue.

Blanche Valancy, a member of the LWVGC - Heights Chapter, is coordinator of the April 6 Issue 9 forum.

# Students allege district mishandling of sexual assaults

Kate Kikel

Since December 2021, hundreds of CH-UH students have organized to protest the school district administration's response to reports of incidents of sexual violence.

The impetus for student action coalesced in December, when a female Heights High student posted on social media her account of being sexually assaulted at the high school, and what happened when she reported the assault to the school's adminis-

tration. She wrote that she was told it was a "he said/she said" situation; she was not offered supportive resources, nor was she informed of her Title IX rights. (The Title IX law ensures a public school environment free of sexual harassment.)

Among those who read about her experience was a 2020 Heights High graduate, who said that she, too, had been sexually assaulted at the school, and received a similar response from the school administration when she reported it.



Students rallying on the steps of Heights High on Thursday, March 8.

## Cleveland Heights – University Heights Board of Education

### Meeting highlights



FEBRUARY 15, 2022

Board members present were President Malia Lewis, Dan Heintz, James Posch, Jodi Sourini, and Beverly Wright. Also present were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer.

#### 2026 Strategic Plan update

Superintendent Kirby, assisted by Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Felisha Gould, Director of Data Research and Assessment Allison Byrd, and Director of Curriculum and Instruction Robert Swaggard, updated the board on the strategic plan and mid-year academics. Most of the year-one action plans are in progress or have been completed. The next steps are to share the update at the State of the Schools address on March 16 and to take it on a "roadshow" for community stakeholders.

#### Academic update

The group presented comparative data for academic years 2019-20 and 2020-21, and mid-year data for 2021-22. Achievement gaps are continuing for minority and special-needs students. The overall average for literacy achievement has remained constant during the pandemic, but math achievement has declined across all demographic groups.

Attendance dropped from 2019-20 to 2020-21. Student and staff absenteeism due to COVID infection and quarantine periods has been a challenge, as has an increase in chronic absenteeism (defined as excused and unexcused absences exceeding 10 percent of assigned classes). All students were counted as attending when only remote instruction was provided because of the pandemic (from March 16, 2020, to the end of the 2019-20 academic year), which would artificially increase documented attendance for that year.

#### Board discussion of the update

Board members generally expressed concern about the gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between students with and without disabilities. They asked for comparative data on these gaps, as well as transparency, attendance, and math achievement for other inner-ring suburban schools, if available. Several stressed the importance of summer camp, tutoring, and success coaches to help students recover from pandemic-related learning loss.

LWV Observer: Katherine Petrey.

MARCH 1, 2022

All board members were present, as were the superintendent and treasurer.

#### District calendars

Paul Lombardo, assistant superintendent for human resources and operations, presented the district calendars for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. They are posted on the district website with a link inviting community comment. After a one-month review period, the final calendars will be voted on in April. The teachers' union and PTA members participated with

school personnel in composing the calendars. Superintendent Kirby has been in discussion with five local school districts, so the calendars have similar dates for spring break and the school year start and end. Collaborating on these schedules is important for transportation planning.

#### Equity training plans

Superintendent Kirby said that districtwide equity training is being planned for March. She is vetting partners to assist with planning school board equity training and operationalizing the equity policy.

#### New COVID protocols

The district has adopted the new CDC guidance regarding quarantining and isolation. It has not changed contact-tracing procedures. The case reporting dashboard and summary reports will be updated daily.

New guidance regarding masks will be discussed at the Reopening Advisory Committee meeting after receipt of guidance from the Ohio Department of Health and the Cuyahoga County Board of Health.

Malia Lewis questioned how districts that use CH-UH transportation are complying with mask regulations, and asked that CH-UH decisions regarding COVID policies be widely disseminated. She also stated that individual families have the right to make masking decisions that meet their comfort and needs. Students who want to wear a mask must be respected.

#### Fair School Funding Plan report

Scott Gainer participated in the Fair School Funding Plan regional workshop. He said there was discussion of concerns for moving forward, especially in light of HB 290 (the "Backpack" bill). At the workshop, he discussed how the CH-UH district, in contrast to neighboring districts, is beginning with a deficit due to the previous voucher system. He also reported that, for each new biannual budget, the Fair School Funding Plan group will request advocacy for fair funding.

Dan Heintz applauded the Heights Coalition for Public Education for its advocacy and recent public forum on the "Vouchers Hurt Ohio" lawsuit that was filed Jan. 4. Held remotely, the forum attracted 165 school board members statewide.

#### Ohio House Bill 327

The Ohio House will be calling for testimony on March 9 regarding HB 327. Those who wish to submit testimony can find information at Honesty for Ohio Education, <https://www.honestyforohioeducation.info>. (Information on the bill, which prohibits "teaching, advocating, or promoting divisive concepts," can be found at <https://ohiohouse.gov/legislation/134/hb327>.)

LWV Observer: Rosemarie Fairman.

Documents for all board meetings can be accessed at [www.chuh.org/BoardofEducation.aspx](http://www.chuh.org/BoardofEducation.aspx). Board meetings are livestreamed on the district's YouTube channel ([www.youtube.com/CHUHSchools](http://www.youtube.com/CHUHSchools)) and recorded for later viewing.

In the aftermath, other students came forward, and additional reports emerged of sexual violence at Heights High and other school buildings in the district.

Students, alumni, parents and concerned residents formed Enough is Enough!—a coalition that meets weekly, via Zoom, to support students, protect survivors, and work to prevent future assaults. The coalition also connects students to resources, such as the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center.

The group planned a December walkout, to protest the district's handling of the alleged assaults, as well as what students describe as Heights High's "rape culture," in which students experience hallway harassment, and the alleged offenders continue to attend the school, rather than being moved to online learning. (In one case, for example, in summer 2019, a perpetrator was found guilty in county court; the convicted juvenile sex offender was allowed to continue his education in the same building as the person he was convicted of assaulting.) Another walkout was held on March 8, with protestors noting that perpetrators

have full privileges attending in-person school, while survivors become isolated due to trauma and fear.

Enough is Enough! also developed a list of demands for district action. The list was read aloud at the March 8 protest; distributed outside Heights High on March 16 at the time of the superintendent's State of the Schools address; and can be viewed online at [www.bit.ly/enough-CHUH](http://www.bit.ly/enough-CHUH). The demands are:

**Districtwide sex education:** An immediate districtwide commitment to comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, and ongoing sex education and consent curricula for all students pre-K to 12th grade, taught by a specialist such as the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center.

**Transparency and action:** Clear partnership and transparency among students, staff, administration, and community partners to ensure that all victims of sexual assault/harassment have the ability to report incidents and receive trauma-responsive support, including unbiased and accurate information about policies, procedures, supportive community services, and their rights.

**A modern dress code:** A revised, gender-neutral, anti-racist dress code that is consistent across buildings.

**Accountability and consequences:** Accountability for trusted adults (coaches, administrators, Miramar staff) who failed to be trustworthy; who minimize sexual violence and protect perpetrators; who undermine safety plans for victims; who fail to protect victims when they violate mandated reporting and Title IX laws.

*Kate Kikel has lived in Cleveland Heights for over 15 years and has loved raising three children here. She is a concerned community member who has a focus on uplifting the voices of people who are harmed by systemic injustice. She is not a member of Enough is Enough!*

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METROHEALTH cont. from page 1

eliminate health disparities—that is, the higher incidences of disease and poorer health outcomes among different groups of people,” said Modlin, medical director of the Office of Equity, Inclusion and Diversity at MetroHealth.

care. Never has the need for accessible preventive screenings and other health services been more critically important than they are today.”

“As a urologist and kidney transplant surgeon,” he noted, “I’ve seen first-hand the devastating effects that happen when Black and other minority men don’t have early access to health care.”

“Our work doesn’t stop when the health fair is over,” Modlin added. “Our goal is to make it easier for patients and their families to access quality and culturally competent health care.”

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Modlin founded the Minority Men’s Health Fair while working at Cleveland Clinic. After working there almost 28 years, Modlin left to join MetroHealth in September 2021. He sees patients at MetroHealth’s Cleveland Heights Medical Center and Lyndhurst Health Center.

“Black and Hispanic individuals are among the minority groups who are most often afflicted and burdened by a multitude of health disparities. But it doesn’t have to be that way. Early detection and prevention of many of these conditions is the key to saving lives and improving the quality of life for those most commonly impacted by health disparities.”

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“My role allows me to take an active part in MetroHealth’s recruitment of diverse medical staff and in helping to shape MetroHealth’s first Minority Men’s Health Fair,” Modlin said. “During my career as a physician, I’ve been honored to play a part in helping men take charge of their own health

A concurrent Minority Men’s Health Fair will be held at the MetroHealth Broadway Health Center and its Main Campus Outpatient Pavilion.

*Angela Townsend is a senior writer in the department of marketing and communications at The MetroHealth System.*

PUBLIC SHOULD CONTROL DEVELOPMENT cont. from page 5

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after city council has already decided on a development plan, then you can learn how concerned the developer is with traffic patterns and brick colors, and you can write your thoughts about those subjects on a sticky note and share them on an “idea board.”

Is your life missing a fenced-in private pool that you can’t access? Will a few extra shops on Lee Road lower the barriers between you and your goals? Will 206 apartment units that you can’t afford improve your quality of life? We could be excited about this project if it were designed to meet our needs, but instead it was designed to extract profit from consumers and—as an externality—send a bit of revenue to city hall and the school district.

Even during these circumscribed moments of public engagement, when city council invites the public onstage, it is listening to other voices. If you own a business—especially if you’ve organized with other businesses, as Special Improvement District members have—then city council gives you its attention. If you run a nonprofit—especially one with demonstrated expertise in city planning and real estate—then city council seeks your advice. If you’re a developer—especially if you’ve gained the approval of residents with close ties to economic and political power—then city council trusts that your narrow interest in making money aligns with the public’s general interest in living well.

I will vote for a park in May [Issue 9] because the public should control public development. Next time, let’s do what other communities have done, and, through a deliberative democratic process that represents all of us equally, let’s make a decision together.

In this way, a tiny choir of voices drowns out the rest.

*Gavin Andersen is an ordinary CH resident who has an education in international trade and development policy, survives by working for money, and believes all people should have equal access to what they need to live flourishing lives, and be equally empowered to contribute to the collective control of their common fate.*

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Nancy Chen and Susan Chen of Koko Bakery, Opened-Our-Doors-During-the-Pandemic finalist.

BEST OF HEIGHTS cont. from page 1

On the Rise Artisan Breads won the category of Best Made-It-Easy Online Ordering. Employee Emma Schubert said, "We're thrilled and so happy to be a part of this community."

Winners Steve and Adam Grace of Fairmount Cleaners said, "We are especially pleased to win the Best Save-the-Planet Business Practices category! Representing an industry that was once considered toxic to people, animals and the Earth is challenging. To be recognized for our efforts in promoting environmentally sound and safe practices is both humbling and gratifying! To our faithful clientele we say, 'Thank you, you are appreciated, and we will strive to maintain and further our efforts to help the environment.'"

Green Tara Yoga and Healing Arts was a finalist in several categories and winner of Best Cleveland Heights Business. A customer of Green Tara Yoga and Healing Arts commented, "I have been fortunate enough to continue studying yoga with Green Tara Yoga throughout the pandemic due to their efforts to make their teaching available online as well as in class." Owner Karen Allgire said that she is grateful to the students who have supported her for more than 20 years and to her team of teachers. "I'm also grateful to my personal teachers, who have guided me so that I have something

BEST OF HEIGHTS cont. on page 24



Adam and Stever Grace of Fairmount Cleaners, Best Save-the-Planet Business Practices winner, and Best University Heights Business finalist.



Owner Douglas Katz of Chimi, winner of Best Innovative Product or Service During a Pandemic.

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Brandon Pirl, Julia Corcoran, owner Tommy Fello, and Karla Zagari of Tommy's restaurant, Best Upbeat Spirit During a Pandemic winner, and finalist in the categories of Best Made-It-Easy Online Ordering, Best Pandemic-Safe Dining, and Best Cleveland Heights Business.



Peter David, Elizabeth Fox, and Emma Baegren of Phoenix Coffee, winner of Best Care for the Community During a Pandemic.

BEST OF HEIGHTS cont. from page 23

worthwhile to offer to those who come to work with us. I am grateful to FutureHeights for their fabulous work in promoting vitality and success in our Heights communities.”

FutureHeights purchased \$1,000 in gift certificates from a variety of Heights businesses, and entered each unique voter into a raffle, for a chance to win one of four gift-certificate packages worth \$250 each. Winners Sharece Miller, Em Ezell, Amy Yakubowskk, and Minnie Mannster were drawn on March 1.

In its ballot, FutureHeights also asked Heights residents what they missed most about shopping in pre-pandemic times. Here is a small sample of responses:

“I miss seeing people’s faces! Let’s dance!”

“I miss going to the Grog Shop.”

“I miss classes at the senior center without a mask.”

“I miss being able to eat safely in restaurants and enjoy the company of the community.”

“I miss dining indoors—I love the atmosphere, seeing what others are enjoying on their plates, the community of it.”

“I miss wandering from shop to shop and stopping in for snacks at little cafes along the way. During the pandemic, every excursion out of the house is a calculated risk. I look forward to being out in the community again after the pandemic.”

In addition, FutureHeights

asked residents what new business they would like to see in the Heights. Responses included a donut shop, an independent art store, more second-hand shops, and food trucks.

Here is a list of the 2022 Best of the Heights winners and finalists:

**Best Opened-Our-Doors-During-a-Pandemic Business**

Winner: Marchant Manor Cheese  
Finalists: Koko Bakery and S’il Vous Play

**Best Made-It-Easy Online Ordering**

Winner: On the Rise Artisan Breads  
Finalist: Tommy’s restaurant

**Best Care for the Community During a Pandemic**

Winner: Phoenix Coffee  
Finalist: Green Tara Yoga and Healing Arts

**Best Save-the-Planet Business Practices**

Winner: Fairmount Cleaners  
Finalist: Foodhisattva

**Best Innovative Product or Service During a Pandemic**

Winner: Chimi  
Finalist: Green Tara Yoga and Healing Arts

BEST OF HEIGHTS cont. on page 25

# Have you had a stroke or mini-stroke?

Researchers at University Hospitals are seeking participants for a research project designed to help African-American men learn about stroke risk factors and how to best take care of their health after a stroke.

If you are an African-American man 18 years of age or older, and you’ve suffered a stroke or mini-stroke within the last five years, you may be eligible for this study.

Participants will be compensated, and virtual intervention sessions will be available.



continued on page 19

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BEST OF HEIGHTS cont. from page 24

**Best Pandemic-Safe Dining**

Winner: MOJO world eats and drink  
Finalist: Tommy's restaurant

**Best Welcoming Storefront or Window Display**

Winner: Appletree Books  
Finalist: Marchant Manor Cheese

**Best Upbeat Spirit During a Pandemic**

Winner: Tommy's restaurant  
Finalist: Green Tara Yoga and Healing Arts

**Best University Heights Business**

Winner: Bialy's Bagels  
Finalist: Fairmount Cleaners

**Best Cleveland Heights Business**

Winner: Green Tara Yoga and Healing Arts  
Finalist: Tommy's restaurant

*Belle Espinal is the business outreach manager for FutureHeights. Her work focuses on women- and minority-owned businesses.*



Owner Karen Allgire of Green Tara Yoga and Healing Arts, Best Cleveland Heights Business winner, and finalist in the categories of Best Upbeat Spirit During a Pandemic, Best Care for the Community During a Pandemic, and Best Innovative Product or Service During a Pandemic.



Co-owner Rachel Gross of Bialy's Bagels, winner of Best University Heights Business.



Shane Kearns and Parker Bosley of Marchant Manor Cheese, Best Opened-Our-Doors-During-a-Pandemic Business finalist, and Best Welcoming Storefront or Window Display finalist.

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VOTE YES cont. from page 3

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On May 3, please vote YES on Issue 10 for a more productive CH City Council!

*This opinion was submitted by CH Council Member Tony Cuda, and signed by him and five other council members: Melody Joy Hart, Craig Cobb, Davida Russell, Josie Moore, and Gail Larson.*

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# Heights Arts celebrates National Poetry Month

Tom Masaveg

Heights Arts has decided to extend the two-year term of current Cleveland Heights Poet Laureate Ray McNiece for an additional year.

Rachel Bernstein, Heights Arts executive director, said, "Ray's original appointment unfortunately corresponded directly with the onset of the pandemic. He, and therefore the community members, were deprived of his being able to fully participate in the position. We are very pleased that he has accepted our offer to serve for an additional year, and very much look forward to his contributions in the coming year."

McNiece is eager to make the most of his last year as poet laureate, and said, "I'm looking forward for the opportunity to resume community programming in person that we were unable to fully implement during the pandemic. Spring is a great time of renewal. There is much good work left to be done."

Heights Arts will offer two poetry events in celebration of poetry month: the popular program "Ekphrastic—Artists Talk and Poets Respond," on Thursday, April 21; and the final of four Haiku Hikes in celebration of Cleveland Heights' centennial, on Saturday, April 23.

The Ekphrastic evening on April 21, at 7 p.m., is inspired by the current exhibition, *Figurative/Abstract*, along with the accompany-



Poets John Burroughs and Molly Fuller reading ekphrastic poetry at Heights Arts.

ing spotlight exhibition featuring photographs by Jane Alexander.

*Figurative/Abstract* explores the story told by the interplay between figurative and abstract artistic modes, while Alexander's depictions of Lake Erie from her balcony evoke the psychological states experienced by one woman beholding the vast presence of nature during uncertain times.

The event invites poets Shelley Chernin, Amy Hughes, Michael Loderstedt, and McNiece to raise their literary voices in response to the work on display, in a public conversation.

Hughes stated, "I find it energizing and inspiring to hear from and work with other artists who are as

passionate about their work as I am about mine, even though we may not share the same medium."

How will poets perceive the iterations of a lake landscape that deeply moved Alexander, or interpret the work of the *Figurative/Abstract* artists? The audience and artists alike can find out on April 21 at Heights Arts.

For more information on Heights Arts programs and events, including the April 23 Haiku Hike, visit [www.heightsarts.org](http://www.heightsarts.org).

*Tom Masaveg is a local public artist specializing in augmented reality installation and graphite works on paper. He's also the programs manager at Heights Arts. Contact him at [programs@heightsarts.org](mailto:programs@heightsarts.org).*

## Dobama wraps up season with award-winning comedy



Anthony Zicari

Dobama Theatre will end its 2021-22 season with the award-winning comedy "Life Sucks," by Aaron Posner. This contemporary reworking of Chekhov's classic "Uncle Vanya" won the Off-Broadway Alliance's Best New Play of 2020. Dobama audiences may remember Posner's adaptation of Chekhov's "The Seagull"—"Stupid F\*cking Bird"—which came to roost at Dobama in 2019.

Chekhov's themes of love, longing, and ennui are at the heart of this story, but Posner also highlights the humor and wit of his characters. In the play, Sonia and her Uncle Vanya are visited by her estranged father, and his third wife, Ella. Their large house is also home to Babs and Pickles, and frequented by Vanya's longtime friend, Dr. Aster. Rivalries and love triangles simmer among these passionate people, and tensions brew as personalities clash.

The frustrations of being cooped up with strong personalities will be familiar to today's audiences. "Life Sucks' feels very pandemic-y," Posner said. "Chekhov has a great quote about how any idiot can withstand a crisis. It's the day-to-day living that wears us out. Maybe that's never felt truer than these last couple years."

Critics have lauded the play, with

the *Chicago Sun Times* writing, "Life Sucks' is altogether wise, profoundly humane, hilarious, quirky, endearing and, in countless clever ways, brilliantly faithful to its source. . . . Posner has managed to find his own voice in the process, bringing a playful, far from cynical, fourth-wall-piercing originality to the story." Jesse Green of *The New York Times* wrote, "Aaron Posner's biting funny and unexpectedly touching play . . . [has] no date stamp on feeling stranded between regrets and hopes, between fancy dreams and the banality of existence."

Posner is a Helen Hayes and Barrymore Award-winning director, former artistic director of New Jersey's Two River Theatre, and founding artistic director of Philadelphia's Arden Theatre. He has directed more than 150 productions at major regional theaters throughout the country, including in the D.C. area, where he teaches at American University.

Dobama's production of "Life Sucks" is directed by Nathan Motta, and features Jourdan Lewanda, Christopher Bohan, Steve Marvel, Nicole Sumlin, Anne McEvoy, Chennelle Bryant-Harris, and Andrew Gorrell. Its runs April 22 through May 22.

For tickets and additional information, visit [www.dobama.org/life-sucks](http://www.dobama.org/life-sucks).

*Anthony Zicari is a local stage manager and current production intern at Dobama Theatre. He studied music at Oberlin College, and previously worked with Mercury Theatre Company.*

# I see a brown door and I want to paint it red



SONGS AND STORIES

David Budin

Cleveland Heights has more colorful painted doors than anywhere else in this region.

That's not a scientific fact. And I don't know if it's really true. But I'm sure it is. I mean, I drive all around everywhere and I don't see anywhere near the number, or percentage, of houses and apartment buildings with colorful front and/or side and/or back doors as I do here in Cleveland Heights.

When I was growing up here, I didn't see quite as many. I think the number was actually zero. When my wife and I moved into the house we live in now, in 1986, we painted our front door purple. I think most of our neighbors didn't like it. Most of them refused to acknowledge it at all. Only a few people complimented us on it.

When we'd talk to neighbors at our annual block party, and they'd ask which house was ours, we'd tell them the address, which rarely registers with anyone, and then we'd say, "The one with the purple door and shutters," and they'd say, "Ohhhh - that house," but not in a particularly happy way.

I was still walking quite a bit back in those days, mainly with our

kids—pushing them in strollers and, later, walking them to playgrounds, restaurants, and other places. I saw very few painted doors. And the ones I did see usually had nutty looking older women tending front-yard flower gardens—also not nearly as plentiful then—with a bunch of cats walking, running, pouncing, sleeping and rolling around.

I stopped walking for many years, until the pandemic started, two years ago. Then, that spring, I started walking every day (until the following winter—then the same pattern this year). One thing that kept me walking was being able to take pictures while walking. That became my main motivation—taking pictures and posting the best ones on Facebook.

It started with flowers, which are now in the majority of Cleveland Heights yards, in various forms, and myriad varieties. Then I noticed how many stone houses there are, especially in my part—the southwest corner—of the city; between North Park Boulevard to the south and Mayfield Road to the north, and Overlook Road to the west to around Coventry to the east, plus the Ambler Heights neighborhood at the extreme western edge. I looked up the history of this section of the city, which was the original part of what became Cleveland Heights, to understand all that stone.

Then I noticed how many public benches there are in Cleveland Heights. I ran into former Cleveland Heights City Manager Bob Downey on one of

my walks (well, maybe I should say I walked into him, because I make a point of not running, ever), and I mentioned to him about the benches. He explained to me that this was no accident; that the city placed them in as many locations as it could. I explained to him that my new slogan had become: "I shall leave no bench un-sat-in."

And I noticed how many stone walls, high and low, exist all over Cleveland Heights. And the variety of architectural styles of the houses and buildings here. And the streams that run through Cleveland Heights. And how some little areas—sometimes just a couple of buildings and a courtyard in between—remind me of New York City. And then I started seeing all the doors, painted in many colors.

I took pictures of all those things. I posted many of them. But I started amassing so many that I decided to sort them and post pictures of flowers one day, walls another, benches a few times, sidewalk art, and so on. And in those first two years, I posted, maybe, five groups of 15 painted-door pictures each. I have a growing list of new ones to photograph when the weather gets nicer and when there is grass on the ground and leaves on the trees again.

But how and when and why did that happen—the colorful door thing?

The stone houses and walls, and the architecture, and the streams and other things all have their histories. And gardening has really grown in popularity over the past two or three



Some of Cleveland Heights' colorful doors.

decades, so that's no surprise. But what about all the painted doors?

Did my wife and I start that? I doubt it; no one even liked it when we did it. And, ironically, we got a new door a few years ago, and didn't paint it.

I guess it's just another natural byproduct of Cleveland Heights becoming "Home to the Arts." That's been the city's slogan for a while. This is a community with a super-high concentration of visual artists and craftspeople, musicians, writers, actors and other theater professionals, dancers and choreographers, and other artists and many arts organizations. Maybe it's just as simple as that.

*David Budin is a freelance writer for national and local publications, the former editor of Cleveland Magazine and Northern Ohio Live, an author, and a professional musician and comedian. His writing focuses on the arts and, especially, pop-music history.*

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