

FRONTPAGE

DEVELOPMENT

Shaker Square plan unveiled

Cleveland Neighborhood Progress and Burten, Bell, Carr Development's vision for the historic shopping center includes residential units, retail diversity and pedestrian-friendly spaces.

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Cleveland Neighborhood Partners shared its final plan for breathing new life into the historic Shaker Square. A main component of the plan includes creating new housing opportunities around the Square.

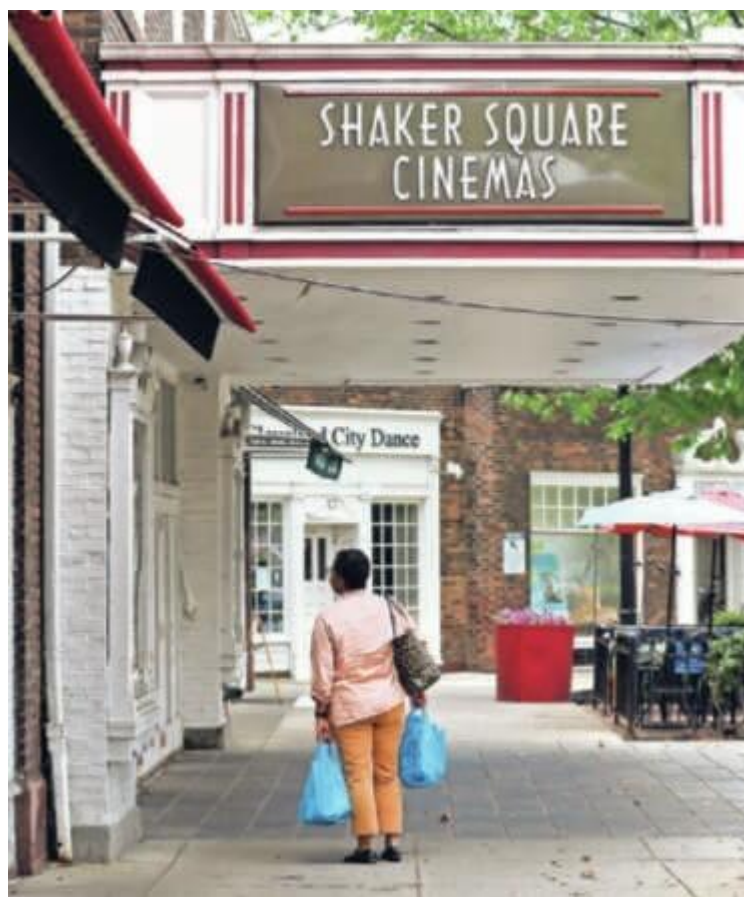
Cleveland Neighborhood Progress has revealed its plan to revitalize Shaker Square, which

includes adding more housing to the area, finding and keeping unique commercial tenants and improving outdoor amenities.

CNP, along with the Square's other nonprofit owner, Burten, Bell, Carr Development, have yet to decide whether they plan to own the property long-term, or if they plan to sell it to another buyer in the coming years.

The pair's vision for the Cleveland property — which was unveiled to the public during a Thursday evening event at the Square's Atlas Cinemas —leaves room for either outcome.

The plan is meant to shape the future of the Square no matter who eventually owns it. It comes two years after CNP and BBC acquired the historic property, established in 1929 as one of the earliest planned shopping centers in the U.S., as it faced foreclosure.



Nonprofits Cleveland Neighborhood Progress and Burten, Bell, Carr Development brought Shaker Square out of receivership in August 2022 after its previous owner, Coral Cos., defaulted on its mortgage.

The Plain Dealer photos

“We feel really good about the theme of this plan being a new era for a Cleveland classic, as it does really lean into what has made Shaker Square timeless,” said Tania Menesse, president and CEO of Cleveland Neighborhood Progress.

A main component of the plan includes creating new housing opportunities around the Square, as former residences that surround the property have become “vacant and

underutilized,” according to records provided by CNP.

The nonprofits want to restore some of the existing residential buildings that are close to the property, including several apartment buildings that are in foreclosure, Menesse said. They are also considering new construction, including the possibility of building homes on nearby parking lots.

The plan calls for the potential creation of 170-some units, including 52 row-homes on the southwest side, and three midrise apartment buildings. Many of the units are considered to be “family-sized.”

By adding more housing in the area around the Square, the nonprofits see an opportunity to diversify the property’s revenue streams, help guard against future financial troubles, keep retail rents low, and give the Square’s businesses a stronger local customer base, according to the plan.

For Menesse, the most exciting aspects of the plan are the proposed improvements to its outdoor spaces.

The plan calls for improving accessibility for RTA riders and bicyclists, and an improved pedestrian crossing across Shaker Boulevard. It calls for more event-friendly spaces, and bringing more events to the Square that would draw people from the neighborhood and around the city.

From housing to greenspace: Shaker Square plan unveiled

It hopes to deliver better connections between the green space and promenade, along with a redesign of the central green area, which could include a permanent stage, a shaded area, and a playground.

Menesse said they hope to bring the green space closer to the storefronts, so the Square’s four quadrants “don’t feel like islands.” This aspect of the plan seeks to create a space where people can feel comfortable hanging out and playing.

The owners also want to add more patio dining and hangout space on promenade itself. Improved connections are expected between the front and rear retail spaces.

The owners ultimately want to attract an array of unique tenants, including some that can fulfill unmet retail needs on Cleveland’s southeast side, such as fast-casual dining, and affordable apparel and home goods. The nonprofits also want to better utilize second-floor space, with retail businesses or perhaps offices, banks, or medical practitioners.

The Square is losing two major tenants in the coming weeks, with the looming departure of flagship fine-dining restaurant Edwins and its sister restaurant, Edwins Too. The pair are moving to the former Nighttown space in Cleveland Heights.

Edwins, along with owner Brandon Chrostowski, have been longtime staples on the Square, and Chrostowski still owns other ventures in the area. Chrostowski unsuccessfully sought to

buy the Square in 2021 before the nonprofits' acquisition.

CNP and Chrostowski, in a recent news release, said they'd arrived at an agreement on Edwins' lease that would not "jeopardiz(e) the financial stability of the Square."

The departure of Edwins could still prove to be a blow to the Square's foot traffic. But the plan notes how there is currently an oversupply of restaurants — and full-service restaurants, in particular — when compared to demand among potential visitors. Removing Edwins from the mix will get the Square closer to the plan's preferred balance of food, retail and other types of tenants.

The two nonprofits brought Shaker Square out of receivership in August 2022 after its previous owner, Coral Cos., defaulted on its mortgage. Many aspects of the property were in disrepair. The city of Cleveland provided \$12 million in loans, much of which is forgivable, which allowed the nonprofits to acquire it. The sale price was \$11 million.

Over the past two years, CNP and BBC have updated the heat, ventilation and cooling system, along with tackling other deferred maintenance. In the coming years, they hope to add elevators and make other basic improvements as they work toward implementing the new plan.

The plan was crafted with help from Agency Landscape + Planning, a woman-owned landscape architecture, planning and urban design firm based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

It lays out three options for future ownership of the Square.

Under one scenario, the nonprofits could maintain ownership long into the future, and serve as developer and manager of the Square. Under another scenario, the pair could seek to make major improvements in the coming years, and eventually sell it to another developer in better condition. Under the final scenario, the property could be sold off quicker, and the developer would be responsible for seeing through major improvements.

Mensesse said they are not yet sure which they will pursue.

She said she did not yet know the total cost of bringing the plan to fruition, nor a potential timeline.





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