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SPRING 2025

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FOR THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE, WORK AND SHOP IN THE SHAKER SQUARE AREA

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Winter Warmup: Wine & Cheese Night



Friday, March 7, 6 to 8 p.m.
Nature Center at Shaker Lakes.

North Union Farmers Market



Saturday, April 5
Food vendors return to Shaker Square
after wintering at Van Aken District.

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Sunday, April 6, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
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Historical Society

Larchmere

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and DJ at Talent Stage.

Larchmere PorchFest

Saturday, June 28
2 to 11 p.m.



The 17th annual music event.
Details at larchmereporchfest.org.

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Shaker Square

Opinions are divided on split into two wards

By Thomas Jewell

Around Shaker Square, the newly redrawn Cleveland city ward map looks like a split decision – right down the middle.

The same can be said for initial reaction to the switch, with the four commercial quadrants now divided into two wards.

Some see that as a “win-win,” with separate Cleveland City Council members on either side of North and South Moreland boulevards.

But criticism also stems from the speed with which City Council introduced the redistricting measure and then overwhelmingly passed it less than a month later.

Declining population forced council to reduce the total number of wards from 17 to 15. What used to be largely Ward 4 has now been consigned to the west side of town.

In its place, Shaker Square’s ward boundaries have been “bisected,” as former Cleveland councilman Jay Westbrook puts it.

North and South Moreland Boulevard now serve as the border line between Wards 3 and 6.

“It used to be East 130th Street was the demarcation, which has now moved a block over to Moreland Boulevard,” said Peggy Gallagher, previously a Ward 4 Democratic

precinct committee person.

Under the reconfiguration, residences and businesses on the west side of Moreland will fall into Ward 6, as will Cleveland’s end of Larchmere Boulevard, represented by

See Opinions divided on split into 2 wards, page 9



Figure skaters gather on the Cleveland Skating Club rink Feb. 4 for a moment of silence in honor of those who lost their lives Jan. 29 in a midair collision in Washington, D.C. A young Cleveland skater recently competed against two of the skaters who died in the crash, and some Cleveland coaches knew the Russian coaches. The somber ceremony focused on a single lit candle placed on the ice in the center of a circle of skaters.

Dining

Search for new tenants begins as EDWINS exits

By Christine Jindra

It’s happened, and the powers that be are moving on and even see a silver lining to what initially blindsided Shaker Square.

“It” is the move out of the Square by Brandon Chrostowski and his EDWINS and EDWINS Too restaurants, despite three years remaining on his EDWINS lease and two years on EDWINS Too.

When news of his move leaked last October, Chrostowski described a report as “pathetic journalism.” The truth came out in January when he announced he would move the two eateries to the old Nighttown at the top of Cedar Hill in Cleveland Heights.

The “powers that be” are the owners of Shaker Square: Cleveland Neighborhood Progress (CNP) and Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. (BBC), who see potential in finding new tenants for the two closed restaurants.

Tania Menesse, CEO and president of CNP, said Chrostowski “will be the first one to understand that EDWINS

Too was challenging because it was only open a couple days a week.”

“So it’s really an opportunity to bring a new concept. EDWINS is wonderful, but that very high-end eatery only fits for a certain clientele, a few times a year,” she said.

“It’s not what we wanted, but sometimes that can be a good way to bring new people, new energy, new ideas,” she said. “From a planning perspective, we couldn’t have asked for better timing in that, even for the psyche of the community.” Two new restaurants are opening soon at the Square, she said (see story, Page 7).

The Square’s finances are stable after the owners pumped some \$5 million into building repairs, Menesse said. A new vision plan for the Square calls for greatly increasing activity in its public spaces and developing housing or restoring existing housing in a handful of outlying parcels that are vacant or underutilized. The housing would provide income, take pressure off retail rents and bring new

customers to Square businesses.

Even before EDWINS decided to move, there was a need for more restaurants at the Square and to “right size” the mix, said the Square’s real estate broker, Akil Hameed, president of FASS Real Estate Services.

“We want to fill it with positive energy and see these two vacancies as a way to” do that, Hameed said.

“We’ve had a lot of leads and have had inquiries [for] a sports bar, a martini bar and an Asian food concept” for the two restaurant spaces, he said.

Hameed expects to find tenants in two or three months and then work with them to present an offer of intent.

“They will have to have a business plan and present financials for three to five years for us to be sure of getting the right tenants,” he said.

Shaker Square will work with the new tenants, offering architectural services to design the spaces and potentially some remodeling dollars from a \$800,000 federal grant

See Search for new tenants begins as EDWINS exits, page 11

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In Memoriam

Jim Diener



Jim Diener, 91, of Sarasota, Fla., died Dec. 19, 2024. Born on May 31, 1933, in Cleveland, Jim was a lifelong resident of the Shaker Square neighborhood. Jim's mother was

a Shaker Heights High School alumni living at 14215 Larchmere Blvd., in a home built for his grandparents in 1926. It was later sold to George Szell, music director of the Cleveland Orchestra, and then Jim repurchased the home, moving within the Boulevard neighborhood, from Weymouth Road back to the family home from 1971 to 2016. He was an alumnus of Onaway, Woodbury and Shaker Heights High, class of 1951. He earned his bachelor of science degree from Purdue University and his master of science degree in industrial engineering from Case Institute of Technology. Jim worked at Lincoln Electric for 41 years. He was predeceased by his parents, Blanche and Stanley Diener, and siblings, Tommy and Susan Diener. Jim is survived by his beloved wife of 69 years, Nathalie Robbins Diener; adored children, Ken Diener (Amy Litt) of McMinnville, Ore.; Lakshmi Linda (Ravi) Sirois of Ipswich, Mass.; Sam Diener (Valerie Sperling) of Arlington, Mass.; and Ruth Diener (Larry) Platt of Brooklyn, N.Y.; six grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Jim's sage maxims included: "If all else fails, read the instructions," and "You learn something new every day— if you're not careful."

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To provide the Shaker Square area with the leadership needed to re-imagine and foster well-maintained, diverse and vibrant neighborhoods.

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- Drexmore/Chadbourne
- Historic Shaker Square
- Larchmere
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- Larchmere Blvd.
- Van Aken Plaza
- Shaker Boulevard West

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The SHAD Connection

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Housing

No heat and then no water forces tenants to evacuate their building

Photos by Chris Ball



This apartment building at 13654 Fairhill Road was evacuated in early January first for no heat and then for no water.

By Thomas Jewell

A new boiler arrived at a Fairhill Road apartment building about three weeks after the city of Shaker Heights issued an order to vacate due to lack of heat Jan. 3.

But even with the heat back on, the Beachwood hotel stay continued into mid-February for tenants in the 19-unit complex after water pipes burst at some point.

“Therefore, with no running water, the building is still uninhabitable,” Shaker Building and Housing Director Kyle Krewson said Feb. 10.

The earliest the management company, Brick and Mortar Property Management, anticipated getting water restored was Valentine’s Day, leading to at least a six-week hotel odyssey for tenants, Krewson said.

The owner of the building for more than a year, Pero Real Estate in Erie, Pa., and its local affiliate, Shaker Seven Topaz LLC, continued to put them up throughout the ordeal.

A similar situation occurred in late 2023 when the boiler failed at the 20-unit Shaker-Kemper apartment building, just days after Pero took title to that property.

The city still held about \$6,000 in rent escrow for 24 outstanding point-of-sale violations at the apartment building at 13654 Fairhill Road at the time the order to vacate was issued.

But the boilers in question cost roughly \$50,000 apiece, if not more, Krewson said after the latest installation, with boiler inspections not part of the city’s point-of-sale requirements.

Then, once the contractor chased down any remaining issues with the radiator connections, management

discovered the water pipes had burst.

In January, the Shaker Square Alliance sent a letter to Shaker Heights City Council taking note of such ongoing heating issues in recent years.

Writing on behalf of the organization, Greg Bonanno made several recommendations for a more proactive approach on the city’s part, including:

- The annual certificate of occupancy should be contingent on an inspection of major building components, such as roofs, electrical, lighting, water, gas, heating and cooling.
- Landlords should be required to demonstrate proof of preventative maintenance activities based on a schedule set by the city.
- Increased inspections to individual units at random.
- Cooperation between Building and Housing inspectors and first responders, “who may observe things about units and buildings that might cause concern about livability.”
- Funds or loans made available from the city to landlords for capital improvements.

On the whole, members of City Council and Mayor David Weiss were receptive to the recommendations, although potential costs remained a consideration, with further internal discussions planned.

In the meantime, once the heat and water were restored to the apartments on Fairhill, the city planned to lift its order to vacate and allow tenants to move back in.

Krewson told the Alliance that city staff continues to work through point-of-sale inspections for many of the roughly 40% of apartment buildings that have transferred ownership over the last five years.

Housing

Uprooted Fairhill Road tenants describe their chilling situation

By Chris Ball

Kristene Knop returned to her Fairhill Road apartment to grab some things a few days after evacuating Jan. 3 because they had no heat. She picked up a jar of teriyaki sauce on her kitchen counter. It was frozen.

Gabriel Lawrence also returned to the evacuated building at 13654 Fairhill Road to get stuff. “My temperature gauge read 41 degrees in the building,” he said.

Brenda Andrews didn’t get word to vacate right away. She left at 1 a.m. with her dog. “Everyone in my family doesn’t like dogs or is scared of dogs,” she said. So that first night, she slept in her car.

“I didn’t tell anybody because I knew they would feel bad, and I’m trying to make it on my own, but then when I told them, they said, ‘Ma, why are you in a car? You shouldn’t be in a car.’ But I tried to suck it up. But they’re like, ‘Ma, don’t. You can’t.’”

The 19-unit building’s tenants received temporary housing at Extended Suites in Beachwood. But not right away. Lawrence said he was told, “Technically, we have 24 hours after the notice is posted to find you a place to stay. ... She literally pulled that card.”

Lawrence stayed in an AirBnB that first night. Knop went to her father’s house. “I don’t know who these people are,” she said of her landlord. “I have never met anybody other than maintenance. It’s always by email. You can’t get ahold of anybody.”

Knop, a lab technician at the Cleveland Clinic’s main campus, moved into the building in June 2023. The owner, Heights Pointe, was responsive. Inspections came a few months later. “What they weren’t telling us was they were selling the building,” she said.

The new owner is Pero Real Estate in Erie, Pa. “I was utterly shocked,” Knop said. “I had no idea that was even in the process. And when you go online and look at their reviews, it’s horrible.”

Problems quickly multiplied. Knop and Lawrence cited trouble with mice, cockroaches, the elevator, a broken lobby intercom, dirty hallways, flooding in the basement, and an unplowed driveway. “I killed four mice in my kitchen in a week, between Christmas and New Year’s,” Knop said.

“Because we’ve been dealing with this for so long, for me, it’s just become habit,” Lawrence said. “I

don’t even think about it anymore, until I’m talking with my friends or my family about the situation. And they’re like, ‘What?’ And then I’m reminded, oh wait, Gabriel, this is not normal, snap out of it.”

But he was locked in a lease. “These living conditions are uninhabitable,” he said. “And it’s inhumane the way they expect us to live and still ask for rent every month.”

Worst of all, he said, is the lack of communication. “No phones are ever answered, emails are never answered. ... You won’t be able to reach them,” he predicted. He was correct. Multiple messages left at the Erie office were not returned.

An email in late January told them to leave the hotel immediately and move back in because the boiler was fixed. “We were all scrambling,” Andrews said. Then they learned the water wasn’t turned on, so they had to go back for three more days.

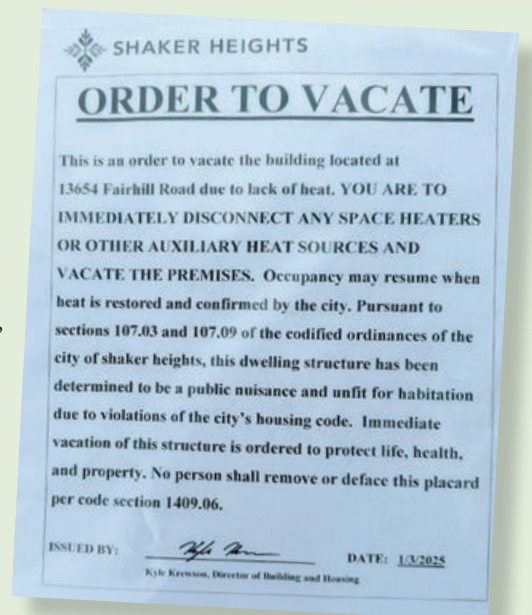
A month later, Knop has moved into an apartment on North Moreland Boulevard. Her rent rose

from \$985 to \$1,140, but she’s happy. Lawrence moved to University Heights. Andrews is staying with her sister in Garfield Heights until she figures out where to go, perhaps Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

“I’m just so upset and frustrated and angry,” said Andrews, 55. Her lease was up Jan. 31. She’s on disability, and clearing out her third-floor unit was difficult. “I left clothes, I left medication,” she said. “It was one of those moves from hell. It was so frantic, no sleep. I couldn’t sleep because I knew, how am I going to get that stuff?”

“It was a big mess. How do you clean an apartment with no water, no boiler, no heat, no working elevator?”

“These living conditions are uninhabitable.”
- Gabriel Lawrence



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Heard Around the Square

By Margaret Simon

Crain's Cleveland Business has named **Tania Menesse**, CEO and President of Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, a "Newsmaker of the Year" in recognition of her leadership in community development. Under her guidance, the organization has refocused its efforts on strengthening community development corporations, investing in middle neighborhoods, and playing a key role in stabilizing Shaker Square. Her work has helped ensure more equitable and sustainable development across Cleveland's neighborhoods.

The Shaker Lakes Nature Center is showcasing the vibrant oil pastels of **Leslye Arian**. In her exhibit, *Moving Vehicle: "Drive By" Landscape Series*, Arian captures the ever-changing beauty of the seasons as seen from the road. These small yet evocative works reflect her sense of wonder and humility, an acknowledgment of being but a tiny speck in the vast universe. The exhibit runs through March 27, and the art is available for sale, with a portion of the proceeds benefiting the Nature Center.

Tuesday, April 22, is Earth Day, a time to celebrate and protect our planet. Recently, the Nature Center recognized the dedication of local people who have made an impact with their environmental stewardship. Larchmere/CHALK resident and Cuyahoga County Master Gardener **Sue Strauss** was honored for her years of volunteer service. Through her extensive gardening knowledge and commitment to sustainability, she has played a vital role in fostering a greener community. Also, Shaker Heights High School students **Neko Tien** and **Hailey Seifert** were recognized for their outstanding contributions through the Youth Stewardship program. Their efforts in conservation, habitat restoration, and community engagement serve as an inspiration for future generations of environmental advocates. As we celebrate Earth Day, take a moment to appreciate their dedication and reflect on ways we can all contribute to a healthier planet. Whether through volunteering, sustainable gardening, or small daily changes, every action counts.

Got gently used books looking for a new home? Bring them to the Shaker Heights Main Library parking lot from

10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, March 15, and help them "Fill the Van." Volunteers will be on hand to unload your donations and provide a receipt. Every book you give helps support the library and our community of readers. See you there, and thanks for keeping great books in circulation.

Cleveland State Law's loss is Baldwin Wallace's gain. **Lee Fisher**, a Shaker Heights High School Hall of Famer, is set to become the 10th president of Baldwin Wallace University on July 1. After nine years as dean of Cleveland State University College of Law, Fisher brings a wealth of experience across public, private, nonprofit, and academic sectors. BW gets a leader with vision, and CSU bids farewell to a transformative force.

After more than a decade at Shaker Square, Chef **Brandon Chrostowski** has moved his EDWINS and EDWINS Too restaurants to the former Nighttown in Cleveland Heights. The new location embraces a Parisian vibe to complement his French menu. EDWINS brought so much life, not just with the restaurant but with its mission and community presence. That space will feel empty without it.

Shaker Boulevard's **Susan and Tim Gall**, co-founders of FactCite — an award-winning collection of affordable databases from Lincoln Library Press Inc. — are eagerly awaiting a new "edition" to their family. Their son Adam and his wife, Grace, of Boulder, Colorado, are expecting their first grandchild soon.



Last winter, Onaway's Skating Pond got a new ice mower thanks

to a dedicated group of neighbors who believe there's snow place like an ice rink. The group effort proves that skaters are great at making friends because they know how to break the ice.

In the Shaker hockey world, Huntington Road's **Sarah Abbott Brown** wants girls to experience the fun of playing hockey on a girls' team. Why should boys have all the fun? According to Brown, playing hockey on a girls' team builds confidence, teamwork, and

resilience while fostering leadership and lifelong friendships. It's a fast, fierce, and fun way to prove that girls belong and thrive on the ice.

Tada the Magician captivated a joyful crowd at Shaker Library on February's *Take Your Child to the Library Day*. Thanks to the creativity and planning of Youth Services Manager **Jessica Smith**, families were treated to an unforgettable performance full of wonder and excitement. A special shout-out goes to Friends of the Shaker Library, which not only helped bring this magical experience to life by underwriting the event but also hosted a charming mini pop-up book sale, proving again there's magic in a good book.

Cleveland Public Library Executive Director and CEO **Felton Thomas Jr.**, an Onaway Road resident, will receive the 2024 American Library Association Equality Award. The award, for an outstanding contribution toward promoting equality in the library profession, consists of a \$1,000 stipend and a framed citation to be presented June 30 at the group's annual conference in San Diego.

Calling All Artists: The Shaker Arts Council is back with *Painting the Town*, a juried art competition to transform utility boxes into stunning public art. If you're 21 or older and live, work, or have ties to Shaker Heights, this is your chance to leave your creative mark on the city. Winning designs will be turned into vinyl wraps and showcased on utility boxes citywide. Deadline is March 21. Ready to paint the town? Apply now and bring your vision to life.

Winter snippets: Larchmere Boulevard's knitwear designer **Liz Tekus** recently took her Fine Points yarns and clothing to the Big Apple for the Vogue Trunk Show. ... **Jeff Rosenberg**, Shaker Heights High School Class of 2000, received a 2024 Directors Guild of America Award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in a Comedy Series for "Hacks." ... *Cleveland Scene* magazine named the 25 best brunch spots, and Big Al's Diner on Larchmere made the list. Their freshly cut home-fried potatoes are terrific. ... Zanzibar Restaurant honored Black History Month with a special event featuring mystery writer **Abby Collette**, sponsored by Cleveland, Euclid, and Shaker

libraries. The *Wall Street Journal* best-selling author and native Clevelander discussed her book series, steeped in soul food culture, while guests enjoyed delicious samples from Zanzibar's menu.

Looking for a fun event nearby? Warm up with the Nature Center's Winter Warmup Wine & Cheese Night on Friday, March 7, from 6 to 8 p.m. For \$35 per person, enjoy three wine tastings and take home a reusable Nature Center-branded wine tumbler. Registration is required.

History lovers, step back in time with the Historic Homes Tour: Parkland Proximity, presented by the Shaker Historical Society and the Nature Center. On Sunday, April 6, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., start with a brunch and presentation, then hop on a trolley tour of four stunning historic homes. For tickets and details, visit givebutter.com/homestour2025.

Don't forget to rock the night away at the Shaker Schools Foundation's 33rd annual A Night for the Red & White. This year's gala takes over the Agora Theatre and Ballroom on Saturday, March 8, with a Student Showcase headlined by Grammy- and Tony-nominated **Michael McElroy** (Shaker Heights High School Class of 1985).



Photo courtesy of Helen Sheehan

Helen Sheehan, a political consultant, Democratic community activist, elected delegate to the Democratic National Committee and Weybridge Road resident, was spotted wearing her hat adorned with political campaign buttons in Chicago last summer and was asked to send it to the Smithsonian for consideration for its collection. The unique piece of history reflects her commitment to the Democratic Party and the spirit of civic engagement that transcends party lines. If it finds a home in the Smithsonian, it would honor her decades-long contribution to the democratic process. Hats off to Helen.

A new era for Shaker Square is coming, with programming, signage, and housing to increase patronage. New events will be brought to the Square as early as this summer, so plan to join me, and keep your ears open for me.

Email news items to heardaroundthesquare@gmail.com

Housing

Tenants win major court ruling on 3 Shaker Boulevard buildings

By Christine Jindra

The Morelands Group, tenants of three Shaker Boulevard apartment buildings and the city of Cleveland won a significant victory Jan. 23 when Cleveland Housing Court placed the three properties under community control for three years and ordered payment of \$1.2 million in back taxes.

Housing advocates have tried for three years to hold the New York owners of 12500 and 12600 Shaker (Vista apartments) and 12701 Shaker (Residences) responsible for lack of heat, nonworking elevators and other issues at the buildings' 249 units.

Cleveland Housing Court Judge W. Moná Scott made her far-reaching ruling against Shaker Heights Apartments Owner LLC, (SHAO), representative of the owners. She ruled after hearing evidence in three criminal cases involving SHAO's 27 housing violations.

Tenants at the buildings have reported chronic plumbing, electrical, trash collection and elevator issues, with lack of hot water and heat the largest problem.

In a statement on behalf of Shaker Square and Greater Buckeye residents, Meg Weingart, Morelands Group convener, told Scott about untenable living conditions.

The statement noted that:

- Many units are uninhabitable, forcing tenants to live in unsafe conditions or face displacement and potential homelessness.
- Tenants have endured severe neglect, including flooding that collapsed ceilings and walls, pervasive black mold and prolonged heating issues with some units without consistent heat for three winters.
- Broken elevators have forced tenants, including those with mobility challenges, to climb five to eight flights of stairs, leading to injuries.
- Despite numerous complaints, management's responses were inadequate.

The judge ruled that beginning in March all tenants must deposit rents in a court-controlled escrow account. Scott's order requires the owners to report monthly to Chief Housing

Court Specialist Carl Kannenberg about the repairs she ordered.

Additionally, the judge ordered SHAO to pay \$1.2 million in back property taxes from 2023 and 2024 or enter a payment plan. They must submit to Kannenberg all contracts and invoices for repairs.

Once the court approves, money in escrow will be released to pay for those repairs, Kannenberg said, providing that back taxes have been paid, or the owners have completed three months of a repayment plan.

The judge said Kannenberg must be given all tenants' names and addresses; the amount of rent SHAO collects from each; and a list of which units are occupied and which are vacant. The Morelands Group and other advocates have noted that some apartment owners don't seek tenants for vacant units.

All rent deposit cases are stayed, the judge ruled, and there will be no retaliation if tenants report violations, she said. She ordered SHAO to hire a local management company to respond to tenant issues and SHAO to complete the rental registration process recently

required by Cleveland City Council.

All 14 elevator and 13 other violations must be fixed, a cleaning and maintenance plan submitted, and the buildings cannot be sold or deeds transferred without Scott's approval.

The properties are under community control until Jan. 23, 2028.

Yaacov Amar, representing the owners, attended the hearing, held on Zoom, as he walked down a New York street, according to Sarah Wean, chair of the Moreland Group's research committee, which tracks ownership and housing violations of Shaker Square apartments.

"We saw the power of a judge to collect all the evidence and deliver justice," said Jay Westbrook, chair of the Moreland Group's code compliance committee.

In a separate case weaving its way through the court, Cleveland seeks to place the three buildings in receivership because of the maintenance violations. On Zoom, Amar pleaded his Fifth Amendment rights. The outside firm the city hired in the receivership case also wants attorney fees and court costs paid by the owners.

SHAO bought the three buildings in January 2022 for \$12.4 million.

Want to plug in? These local groups will gladly welcome you



The Shaker Square Alliance at its Jan. 9 meeting at Our Lady of Peace Rectory. They often get more attendees online than in person.

By Christine Jindra

If you are new to Shaker Square, Larchmere or Buckeye and looking to plug in, or if you've just been feeling the urge recently to get more involved, here is a primer on six organizations with a hyperlocal focus. The members are residents who have successfully worked to achieve change. Even with their admirable track records, these groups are always glad to get new members. Some people even belong to more than one of these community efforts. As the saying goes, "Think globally, act locally."

Buckeye Better Streets Committee

Focus: Grassroots advocacy for safe streets. The group, organized in May 2024 by Bike Cleveland, helps empower residents to improve street safety comfort and accessibility of streets, promote bicycling, advocate for safe and equitable transportation, promote alternative transportation, and strategize on ways to eliminate serious injuries and deaths from crashes.

Meets: 6 p.m. the third Wednesday of each month at The Tavern Coffee House, 12302 Buckeye Road. No membership dues.

Website: bikecleveland.org/our-work/better-streets-committees or tinyurl.com/msy6wwdd.

Leader: Jerrod Amir Shakir, community organizer for Bike Cleveland. Email jerrod@bikecleveland.org

Bragging rights: Advocated, along with Bike Cleveland, for bike lanes when North and South Moreland boulevards were redesigned. City of Cleveland agreed to bike lanes on South Moreland but only sharrows – bike symbols stenciled on traffic lanes that indicate a shared lane for bicycles and vehicles – along North Moreland.

Ongoing: Collaborates with residents to identify safety projects to work on, such as advocating for roundabouts, speed tables and curb extensions. Supports Vision Zero Cleveland's goal of eliminating serious injuries and deaths caused by traffic crashes on Cleveland's roads. Also supports Cleveland Moves, the city's five-year plan to make it safer, more comfortable and more convenient to walk, bike and take transit in the city.

Larchmere Community Association

Focus: Bylaws say the group will work to preserve the area from property blight, deterioration and decay; keep peace and tranquility by cooperation

with law enforcement; inspire a spirit of rapport and friendliness; aid residents, community groups and businesses sharing their goals; and function in the American democratic tradition by abiding by federal, state and local governments.

Organized in 1970 to serve a smaller area, the group now works to help those from Fairhill Road to Shaker Boulevard and from MLK Boulevard to Kemper Road. Its logo, which appears to be a dandelion, at closer look reveals a series of hands reaching out to each other.

Meets: 7 p.m. the second Wednesday of April, June, August, October and December at Fairhill Partners, 12200 Fairhill Road, or sometimes at community organizations. The meetings usually feature a guest speaker from a community organization. Membership is \$15 a year, send checks to 12200 Fairhill Road, 44120.

Online: No website. Basic information on Facebook under Larchmere Community Association and Larchmere Life. **Email:** larchmerecommunity@gmail.com.

Leadership: Diane Pride-Mays, president; Carol Mitchem, 1st vice president; Susan Price, treasurer; Lisa Hopps, secretary.

Bragging rights: Promotes the area through the bimonthly Larchmere Life newsletter to coincide with its bimonthly meetings. The newsletter publicizes community events, ward meetings, 4th District police commander meetings, new business openings and neighborhood residents. Its 1,750 issues are distributed to every residence and business along Larchmere. Annual plant sale in May raises funds for the group. Also supports PorchFest and Rock the Blocks summer festivals. Has helped organize and participated in neighborhood and Doan Brook cleanups. In the group's early days, it paid a security company to patrol the area in 12-hour evening shifts.

Ongoing: Encourages and prioritizes block clubs to form and work on issues on their streets. Works with other volunteer groups to promote Larchmere residents and businesses in safety, economic development and quality of life concerns, as well as issues in Shaker Square and Buckeye.

Morelands Group

Focus: Organized four years ago to preserve, protect and advocate for the residents of 2,200 units in 83

multifamily properties within a three-block radius of Shaker Square. Nearly half of the units are at risk of requiring serious enforcement action by the city of Cleveland. Draws its name from North and South Moreland boulevards which intersect with Shaker Boulevard to define Shaker Square. The group's primary goal is to restore stable affordable rental housing units with fair and equitable treatment of tenants.

Meets: 9:30 a.m. first and third Tuesdays of each month at the new Shaker Square Visitors Center, southeast quadrant, in person and by Zoom. No membership dues.

Website: morelandsgroup.org

Email: info@morelandsgroup.org

Leadership: Meg Weingart, convener.

Steering committees and chairmen are: Tenant Engagement: Ronald James and Regina Burton. Safety and Security: Robert L. Render III.

Code Compliance: Jay Westbrook.

Owner Engagement: Tamara Chappell.

Research: Sarah Wean.

Beautification: Joanne Blanchard and Susan Rotatori.

Ad Hoc: Mary Boyle and Eunice Jones.

Bragging rights: Successfully lobbied Cleveland city and court officials to act against owners, many out of state, not providing working elevators, heat and other utilities. Several buildings were sold to new owners after going into receivership; others have court-ordered maintenance schedules. Channeled grant money to help apartment owners install outside security cameras and lighting; directs tenants to legal and financial resources; provided relocation assistance to 40 tenants at a building abandoned by the owner and condemned by Cleveland; provided paid legal representation for 17 eviction cases. Holds events, including a summer festival to connect tenants with resource organizations and community leaders; neighborhood safety BBQs to help residents meet with local police officials; and an annual tenant leadership holiday reception. Advocated for reopening of Buckeye Road's Huntington Bank branch.

Ongoing: A robust group of volunteers works to engage tenants, track compliance of building code violations in the courts, and work on safety and beautification issues. Builds relationships with apartment owners and managers; provides technical assistance, research and data to the community; and works on Helen Simpson Park beautification.

NeighborUp / Neighborhood Connections

Focus: Started in 2013 as an extension of Neighborhood Connections, a small grants program started a decade earlier by the Cleveland Foundation. It transitioned into a community-building network, with monthly meetings to connect people to try to create a just and equitable world where they live, foster collaboration, and spark local solutions in the Buckeye-Larchmere-Woodland Hills-Shaker Square area. A Greater Buckeye emerged in 2019 as a resident-led media (youtube.com/@agreaterbuckeye) and storytelling offshoot, focusing on hyperlocal journalism. It has produced 18 videos about local residents and businesses.

Meets: 6:30 p.m., fourth Monday of the month, Rice branch of the Cleveland Public Library, 11535 Shaker Blvd. Subgroups hold follow-up meetings to discuss issues raised. No membership dues.

Website: neighborupcle.org/ neighborhood-networks or tinyurl.com/bh8dzem2.

Leadership: Julian Khan, network builder, jkhan@neighborhoodgrants.org; Carlie Freeman, network nights and action clinics; Greg Groves, network building; and Tyler Hughley, A Greater Buckeye.

Bragging rights: The successful grassroots effort to reopen Buckeye Road's Huntington Bank branch in 2024 started at a NeighborUp meeting. Its members were among local leaders who lobbied for reopening and helped gather 1,300 signatures in support. A Greater Buckeye video, "Banking on Buckeye: Rallying for Huntington Bank," helped shape the discussion. When Giant Eagle closed at Buckeye Plaza in 2017, members mobilized and pushed for a local grocery. Simon's Supermarket opened 16 months later, thanks to city, county and private grants and loans.

Ongoing: Supports the Sunbeam School as a neighborhood hub, resource fairs at the Rice Library and the Buckeye Summer Soul Series of community resource fairs and block parties to forge healthy relationships in the neighborhood. NeighborUp efforts include men's discussion groups, wellness classes, food access, economic development, job fairs, civic forums and voter engagement. Monthly meetings draw 25 to 50 residents.

See *Want to plug in? These local groups will gladly welcome you*, page 7

Odds and ends from the SHAD Connection's editor

By Chris Ball

Ralph Valentino, police commander for the Fourth District covering Cleveland's southeast side, was reassigned in January pending an internal affairs investigation. The move prompted a "Statement of Community Support" letter Jan. 28 signed by 13 local leaders. "We feel compelled to express our deep respect and appreciation for the leadership and dedication Commander Valentino has consistently demonstrated in service to our community," the letter said. The group cited his efforts to improve safety in the area, leading Huntington Bank to reopen its branch at Buckeye Road and East 116th Street. "While we respect the investigative process and its protocols, we want to affirm our unwavering support for Commander Valentino based on his proven character, commitment, and exceptional service to Cleveland's largest police district," the letter said. Signing the letter were **Charles Bromley, Rev. Gary Chmura, Peggy Gallagher, Rev. Jimmy Gates, Fran Kalafatis, Julian Khan, Mary Ann Kovach, Diane Pride-Mays, Tania Menesse, Tom O'Brien, R.L. "Bob" Render III, Meg Weingart and Jay Westbrook**. WEWS Channel 5 reported that Valentino proposed cash prizes for officers issuing the most traffic citations, but the idea was dropped. A police spokesman said they have no quotas for traffic tickets. In an interview, Render said he believes someone involved had an ax to grind. "I think in the end, he'll be OK. It has to run its course." Meanwhile, Capt. **Heather Miksch** was named acting commander. ...

Some apartment buildings in the SHAD area have older elevators that break down now and then. Finding the right parts to repair them can be difficult, resulting in long waits. We learned that at Empire Place, 14014 Shaker Blvd., the elevator recently was out of order, so tenants on the lower floors were organizing to help those on the fifth and sixth floors carry groceries and packages up the stairs. When a *SHAD Connection* reporter tried to write a story about this inspiring act of neighborliness, the building manager, Prestige Management Inc., based in Bronx, New York,

declined to be interviewed. And they instructed the tenants not to speak with our reporter. ...

Huntington Bank is donating \$35,000 toward a mural on their Buckeye Road branch, working with Land Studio, **DaQuavion Roston** of Burten Bell Carr Development Inc. told Morelands Group activists at their Feb. 4 meeting. The bank, which reopened the branch Oct. 28, also has donated \$25,000 for safety and security measures on Buckeye Road, updating equipment and training. ...

"September 5," a riveting docudrama that played in local theaters in February, depicts the 1972 Munich Olympics hostage crisis. **Ronny Herman** plays **David Berger**, a 1962 Shaker Heights High School graduate. The weightlifter was one of 11 Israeli athletes killed in the tragedy. Berger is buried in Mayfield Cemetery in Cleveland Heights. The film earned an Oscar nomination for best original screenplay. ... Two secondary characters in "A Real Pain" identify themselves as a married couple from Shaker Heights. The film, which also played recently in local theaters, is about two cousins on a Holocaust tour in modern-day Poland. It is streaming on Hulu. ...

Travis Kelce and **CC Sabathia** gave shout-outs to Shaker Square during a December chat on the popular podcast "New Heights," which Travis co-hosts with his brother, **Jason**. Travis, who grew up on Coleridge Road in Cleveland Heights, reminisced about walking to Shaker Square to ride the Rapid downtown to see Sabathia pitch. The southpaw, who played for Cleveland from 2001 to 2008 and won the A.L. Cy Young Award in 2007, shared happy memories about shopping at Shaker Square. Sabathia was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame on the first ballot in



January. Travis has won three Super Bowls as tight end for the Kansas City Chiefs, but not this year. ...

Doan Brook Watershed Partnership and the Morelands Group both are hiring. Doan Brook is looking for a Watershed Program Coordinator. The hybrid, part-time position pays \$17 an hour for 22 hours a week. Go to doanbrookpartnership.org. ... Morelands Group seeks a Tenant and Community Support Specialist. Salary range is \$46,000 to \$50,000. Apply at morelandsgroup@gmail.com.



Although Providence House moved its administrative offices into its new East Side campus on Buckeye Road at East 118th Street last year, work continued on the first floor in January as the nonprofit agency prepared to open a crisis nursery.

Providence House, which opened a Family Resiliency Center and administrative offices in the renovated Weizer building on Buckeye Road in February. The nonprofit agency, which works to keep children out of foster care and with their families, began on Cleveland's West Side in 1981. The East Side crisis nursery will serve up to 20 children at a time. Next, they are raising funds to open a community services hub on its East Side campus. Social service partners would be able to rent space in the hub. They hope to break ground on construction in 2027. ...

Don't Tell Comedy held a secret comedy show Dec. 14 somewhere on Larchmere. We saw it promoted on social media. Where did it happen? You needed a ticket to find out. (We don't know. It's still a secret to us.) ...

Good health news for **Franz Welser-Möst**, who lives at Moreland Courts. The Cleveland Orchestra's music director is getting back to work sooner than expected after taking off most of the

fall to recuperate from medical treatments. Welser-Möst, 64, had a cancerous tumor removed in 2023. Look for him to take the podium Feb. 27, 28 and March 1, conducting a concert of works by Beethoven and Shostakovich. ...

Grammy-winning singer-songwriter **Marc Cohn**, 65, who lived on Larchmere Boulevard and attended Boulevard Elementary in Shaker Heights, revealed Jan. 30 that he has Parkinson's disease. The "Walking in Memphis" star said he was diagnosed five years ago but waited to share the news because he needed to process it. He plans to continue performing for as long as possible. ...

Local group Bike Your Neighborhood received a Guardians of Sustainable Transportation Award from Bike Cleveland at their annual meeting Jan. 28. The grassroots program leads monthly community bike rides from June to

October, each centering on a different neighborhood: Buckeye-Shaker, Larchmere, Ludlow, Mt. Pleasant, and Woodland Hills. ...

With the passing of **President Jimmy Carter** on Dec. 29, we are reminded that he tapped the late **Steve Minter** to help start the U.S. Department of Education in 1980. Minter, who passed away in 2019, lived for many years on Woodbury Road in Shaker Heights. Carter appointed him to be the department's first undersecretary. He later became a program officer for the Cleveland Foundation. Minter and Carter shared the vision that education is the key to equal opportunity.

Photo courtesy of Robyn Minter Smyers



Just to the right of President Jimmy Carter is Steven Minter at a 1980 reception after his swearing-in ceremony as the first undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

Dining

From Naples with love, pizza obsession fires up La Pecora's owner

By Christine Jindra

La Pecora Pizzabar, the new restaurant and craft cocktail bar on Larchmere Boulevard, is a love letter to the neighborhood and to his former landlord, said owner Juan Vergara.

The Neapolitan-style pizza venture at 12712 Larchmere is the latest for the Columbian-born restaurateur who also owns, with his father, Carlos, the Barroco Larchmere restaurant next door and Barroco restaurants in Lakewood and at Crocker Park, all serving Latin American food.

Vergara named La Pecora, which means sheep in Italian, in tribute to Lynne Alfred, his former landlord and a longtime Larchmere advocate. She owned The Dancing Sheep, a wearable arts boutique that was in the same space now home to La Pecora.

Alfred became Vergara's landlord in 2017 when he opened Barroco (baroque in Spanish) next door.

"She was one of the best landlords ever," Vergara said of Alfred. "She

did everything in her power to help us. And we appreciated her."

When Alfred retired and closed her store in 2021, Vergara started planning how to use the boutique space. When Alfred died two years later, Vergara purchased the building that now houses both restaurants. In late October, he opened La Pecora.

Alfred's neon sign, featuring three dancing sheep, remains over La Pecora, as a beacon to the neighborhood. Entrance to La Pecora is through Barroco.

"What I am doing here is sort of a love letter to the neighborhood," Vergara said.

It also helps him. "I recently became obsessed with pizza," he said, going back to his teen job at a pizza shop.

In 2023, Vergara went to Naples, Italy, "to do the down-and-dirty work of making pizza: tossing the pizza dough, getting yelled at, seeing what people liked."

He worked for three weeks at a pizzeria in Naples' Spanish quarter, "where the locals went."

"The secret to pizza is stretching the dough and the fermentation [72 hours] of the yeast," Vergara

said. "It's an art, and I learned.

"Flour – where it comes from and who handles it – is important," he said. "The flipping is not for show. It helps make the best dough."

It didn't hurt that the Naples restaurant had the same type of wood-burning oven as La Pecora. The baking temperature is important, Vergara said.

He uses good, basic ingredients for his dough and sauce, he said: flour from Italy, tomatoes grown in the volcanic ash at the base of the Mount Vesuvius volcano, carefully sourced basil, good-quality salt. In the garlic-no garlic debate, Vergara said his tomato sauce has no garlic. It goes raw on top of the pizza dough and cooks while the pizza bakes.

"It's all very simple and different from Latin food that is big and bold," Vergara said.

La Pecora is more low key than his Barroco restaurants, he said. "If you find us, great; you will tell others about us. We know we are good because we get a lot of Italians here."

The 60-seat restaurant is warm and inviting, with navy blue walls and chairs



Diners can view La Pecora's wood-burning pizza oven through the bar area.

upholstered in lime green fabric. Vergara kept The Dancing Sheep's balcony, with its view of the street. Posters and photos of Naples and soccer legend Diego Maradona, who had a colorful career in Naples, are on the walls.

La Pecora's menu is small: seven red-sauce pizzas, five with white sauce, three salads, a split-pea soup that draws raves online, meatballs and burrata. It has five signature cocktails – one is called An Offer You Can't Refuse – and an assortment of beers and Italian sodas.

Hours: 5 to 9 p.m. Tuesday to Thursday; 5 to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Reservations: 216-938-5025. lapecorapizzabar.com.

Dining

Café Indigo and Coyoacán prepare to open doors on Shaker Square

By Christine Jindra

Two highly anticipated new restaurants for Shaker Square – Café Indigo and Coyoacán Taqueria & Brew – appear to have the go-ahead to open in late February, once all city inspections are done.

With North Moreland Boulevard dividing them, the two eateries will be across from each other on the north side of the Square, each filling a legendary restaurant space with different, but hopefully complimentary, concepts.

Melissa Garrett-Hirsch plans to open Café Indigo, her second establishment, Feb. 25 in the former Biggby's and Dewey's space. It will be both a coffee shop and ice cream parlor, said Garrett-Hirsch, owner of UnBar Café, 12635 Larchmere Blvd.

Besides a range of coffee drinks, Café Indigo will feature locally sourced baked goods, soups, sandwiches and 24 flavors of Hershey's Ice Cream along with sundaes and banana splits.

Coyoacán Taqueria & Brew's opening

date in February in the former Balaton restaurant space hopefully will be set soon, said owner Rey Galindo.

However, Galindo has tweaked the Coyoacán Taqueria concept. The new restaurant will pay homage to his mother, the owner of the legendary Luchita's Mexican restaurant chain that once had a Shaker Square location.

Galindo and his partners always planned two concepts under one roof: a fast-food carryout when you walk in, and a larger restaurant with a microbrewery in a second room.

When Coyoacán (meaning "place of coyotes in Aztec and pronounced KOY-oh-ə-KAHN) opens, the larger room will be called La Casa de Luchita's as an appreciative nod to his mom's restaurant.

La Casa de Luchita's will feature Mexican regional food, with a menu that changes every two months. "One month, we may have foods of the Yucatan; next, it may be time for Veracruz," Galindo said.

He is training his staff in two crews: one for Coyoacán takeout that will operate like a taqueria with eight tables; and the other for La Casa de Luchita, with seating

for 70.

Coyoacán's second room will be a brewpub specializing in Mexican-style lagers brewed on site in four 200-liter tanks most recently used at a Mexican brewery.

MORE UPDATES:

Immigration: Galindo and other restaurant owners are spending a lot of time with immigration lawyers, making sure their workers are legal and have the proper paperwork as a federal crackdown on immigrants continues.

He is working with immigration lawyer Margaret Wong to find workers who have all the legal paperwork. "I might even hire Ukrainians who are in this county seeking asylum," he said.

Juan Vergara, owner of La Pecora Pizzeria on Larchmere, is also working with lawyers to make sure his employees have the proper paperwork.

The Luxe Café: Manuel Freeman (Chef Manny) and his sister have opened a lunch and dinner restaurant at 12210 Larchmere, with winter hours 1 to 8 p.m., Thursday through Sunday.

Freeman has operated Sizzle Sauce &

In a ceremonial passing of the torch Jan. 17, Café Indigo owner Melissa Garrett-Hirsch invited former Dewey's Coffee owner Dewey Forward to see changes she's made to the Shaker Square location.

Photo by Chris Ball



Spice Catering Co., 3915 Carnegie Ave., for 12 years as a family-owned catering company.

Luxe's interesting menu features seafood, sandwiches, breakfast and kids offerings, including Sunday brunch. 216-415-5097, theluxecafeonlarchmere.com. The business is unrelated to Luxe Kitchen & Lounge in Cleveland's Gordon Square neighborhood.

Batuqui Larchmere: The move by Carla Batista and Gustavo Nogueira to relocate their 9-year-old Brazilian restaurant two doors east to 12624 Larchmere Blvd. is on hold, with no moving date set. A request for an update resulted in a message saying there is no information at this time.

Law enforcement

Shaker Heights and Cleveland reach agreement on policing efforts

By Thomas Jewell

The mayors of Cleveland and Shaker Heights have signed a joint letter outlining collaborative policing efforts taking place in Shaker Square and along Larchmere Boulevard.

"Both cities recognize and celebrate the importance of these areas to the entire region," says the letter from Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb and Shaker Heights Mayor David Weiss, released to residents in mid-November 2024.

Earlier, leaders in both cities had been discussing a formal agreement known

as a "memorandum of understanding" to allow extra patrols around Shaker Square, which actually lies entirely within the city of Cleveland.

"We also understand that the safety and security of residents, businesses, patrons, and RTA riders is critically important for the stability and livability of these neighborhoods," the mayors' letter said.

In holding off on a binding memorandum, Shaker Heights officials had pointed to the amount of red tape involved in crossing the border on anything other than direct mutual aid calls.

They declined to comment on whether the federal consent decree imposed on Cleveland police since 2015 by the U.S. Department of Justice had been a factor as well.

The two cities continue to implement and explore new opportunities for cooperation between their respective police, said Shaker Heights Law Director William Ondrey Gruber.

"But we've determined that it is not practical to have Shaker Heights patrols in Cleveland due to significant regulatory requirements that would likely apply to the SHPD," Gruber said.

Toward the goal of enhanced cooperation, the mayors noted the following initiatives:

- Continued use of mutual aid, which had already been deployed last summer along Larchmere Boulevard for an unruly crowd at a short-term rental property in Cleveland.
- Sharing of enhanced video camera footage.
- Continued sharing of intelligence regarding crime and threats to safety.
- Sharing of certain crime reports and crime data.

See *Shaker Heights and Cleveland reach agreement on policing efforts*, page 9

Want to plug in? These local groups will gladly welcome you *Continued from page 5*

Shaker Square Area

Development Corp. (SHAD)

Focus: Founded in 1976 as Friends of Shaker Square, a volunteer citizen-led organization to support and preserve Shaker Square for apartment dwellers and the adjacent neighborhoods of Larchmere, Ludlow, Drexmore/Chadbourne, Buckeye and CHALK (named for the streets Cormere, Haddam, Ardoon, Larchmere and Kemper). Name changed to SHAD in 1996. **Mission:** advocate for Shaker Square and Larchmere as regional shopping, entertainment and business districts; promote and advocate for the preservation of 4,000 residential units; promote home ownership and housing maintenance; preserve, protect and enhance the area's landmark architecture, public spaces and green spaces; address security and quality of life issues; foster pride and collaboration. Membership starts at \$35 a year.

Meets: Annual meeting at Our Lady of Peace Church in July. The 2025 date has not been set. The officers and board meet monthly.

Website: shad.org

Email: info@shad.org

Leadership: Mary Ann Kovach, president; Melissa Garrett-Hirsch, 1st vice president; Brian E. Siggers, 2nd vice president; China Brown, secretary; and Kristen Schmidt, treasurer. Trustees: Lynda Bernays, Theresa Pollard

Hughley, Frances Kalafatis, Peter Linberger, Lisa McGuthry, Karen Nelson, Harriet Niles, Mary Norris-Pack, Johnnie Spates-Greene and Emma Visnic.

Bragging rights: SHAD has been integral in working with city leaders and civic organizations on communication for and advocacy of Shaker Square and its adjacent neighborhoods. Worked on initiatives such as the redesign of Sunbeam School, the Larchmere Boulevard streetscape, and blight reduction at East 130th Street and Drexmore Road.

Ongoing: The group publishes *The SHAD Connection*, an award-winning quarterly newspaper providing news about Shaker Square and its communities. SHAD members distribute 6,500 copies of each issue to area newsstands. SHAD uses social media to reach out to its 200 members and more than 500 stakeholders. Members receive discounts at local businesses.

Shaker Square Alliance

Focus: To improve living conditions for tenants and help define and solve neighborhood issues, including safety and revitalization. The group was started in 2010 to protest the closing of the former Ohio Savings Bank at Larchmere Boulevard and North Moreland Road. Works with



This screen grab of the Morelands Group's Jan. 7 meeting shows (from left) Meg Weingart; DaQuavion Roston of Burton, Bell, Carr; and Cory Riordan of Cleveland Neighborhood Progress.

Organize Ohio (organizeohio.org). **Meets:** 10 a.m. first Thursday of the month at Our Lady of Peace Rectory, 12507 Buckingham Ave., across from Cummins Hall, in person and by Zoom. Details and changes on Facebook, at tinyurl.com/w83tprfc. **Website:** tinyurl.com/yhz8srnt. **Leadership:** Chip Bromley, director, bromleycharles@yahoo.com. Fran Kalafatis, convener, fran.kalafatis@icloud.com.

Gregory Bonanno, project manager, gregory.bonanno@gmail.com. **Bragging rights:** Successfully lobbied the U.S. Post Office to reopen its 2855 East 130th St. office a year after it abruptly closed; lobbied Cleveland Housing Court to find new owners for a condemned apartment building at

East 130th and Buckeye Road and then rehabilitate it; pressured business owners on Larchmere Boulevard and Buckeye Road to clean up trash; advocated in 2024 for reopening Buckeye Road's Huntington Bank branch. **Ongoing:** Asking the city of Shaker Heights to strengthen inspection of multi-unit buildings by checking heating and cooling systems, roofs, electricity and gas and to require landlords to provide proof of maintenance on a city-mandated schedule. Strong advocacy for tenants and businesses in the area. Kalafatis describes the Alliance as "the glue that keeps other [advocacy] groups together. We give voice to residents and are a place to bring concerns. We help identify issues and then work together to resolve them."

The SHAD Connection Spring 2025 7



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"Since 1972"

Shaker Lakes

Transformation nears for Horseshoe, Lower lakes

Story and photo by Grant Segall

What's Horseshoe Lake Park without a lake?

Maybe plain Horseshoe Park.

With its artificial lake drained and its natural wetlands being restored, Shaker Heights Mayor David Weiss recently said he and others had started calling the place by the shorter name and might make it official.

That was one of many measures being considered in January to preserve both history and nature at the popular Horseshoe and Lower lakes.

Officials were expecting to help restore Horseshoe and enhance it in 2026 and 2027 at a cost of \$22.7 million to the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS), \$4.6 million to Shaker Heights (which governs about 65% of the area) and \$2.5 million to Cleveland Heights (which governs the rest). NEORS was also planning to spend \$23.3 million to replace Lower Lake's dam and add other improvements there in 2027 and 2028.

The lakes are rich in both nature and history. They host deer, sunfish, herons, migrating birds, occasional eagles, plenty of plants, and many other species. They also host "Liberty Oaks" with plaques honoring locals who died in World War I.

In the early and mid-1800s, the Shaker sect built earthen dams across Doan Brook, creating Lower and Horseshoe (also known as Upper) lakes. In 1895, developers gave 279 acres to Cleveland, including the lakes and surrounding land. Incorporated later, Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights

Closed and breached, the Horseshoe dam overlooks the recovering wetlands that had been Horseshoe Lake for parts of three centuries.

now govern, lease and maintain the site.

In 2019, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources said Horseshoe's dam was failing and ordered it breached. NEORS decided not to replace it. Officials said it was useless and dangerous. It normally didn't block enough water to matter. But, had it failed, it would have discharged too much at once, flooding Lower Lake, University Circle and other places downstream, possibly costing lives.

Dismayed residents formed the Friends of Horseshoe Lake and sued to rebuild the dam but lost. Park users recently interviewed remained split about the outcome. Susan Gall said, "I mourn the loss of Horseshoe Lake." But Craig McAdams said, "The more natural the area, the better."

In the horseshoe-shaped wetlands left behind, NEORS expected to plant native foliage, remove invasives, bank the Doan, and expand the surrounding floodplain to accommodate a 100-year storm. "This project will restore Doan Brook to its natural state, improve water quality and better manage downstream flooding," said Matt Scharver, who directs NEORS's watershed programs.

The suburbs planned to pay for several amenities. Under consideration were trails, boardwalks, a nature-themed playground, an outdoor classroom, a sensory garden, an observation terrace, and gateways from Park Drive, Lee Road, North Park and

South Park boulevards. Some old stones from the dam's walls would be reused. All current amenities above the wetlands would remain.

"We're making it much more accessible and valuable to the community," Mayor Weiss said of Horseshoe.

Shaker got a grant of \$150,000 for trail work at Horseshoe. Both suburbs were seeking other funds.

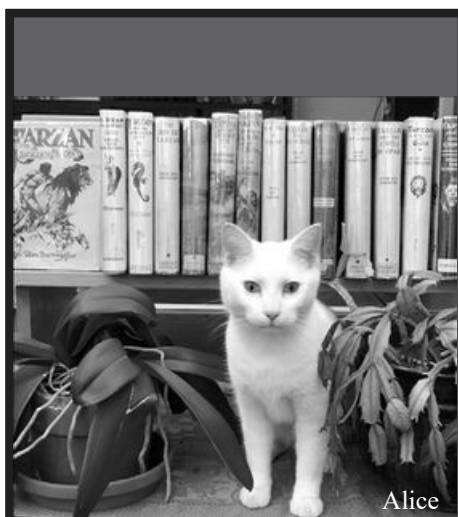
NEORS planned to continue a series of public forums about the project. Next would be a virtual session Monday, March 31, at a time to be decided, and open houses Wednesday, April 2, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 5 to 7 p.m. at Cleveland Heights-University Heights Main Library, 2345 Lee Road.

At the western end of Lower Lake, NEORS planned to replace the Shakers' dam with a bigger, stronger one and add a floodwall and a second spillway.

Visitors could walk alongside the new dam, like the current one, but no longer park there. NEORS hoped to add parking spaces nearby.

The lakes draw many walkers, joggers, bicyclists, birders, and other visitors. Weiss says the area makes Shaker "an attractive place to come and work and live and play."

For preliminary information, not all of it up-to-date at press time, see these two pages on NEORS's website: tinyurl.com/3rfmmwd7 and tinyurl.com/3bs3wdp6.



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Shaker Heights and Cleveland reach agreement on policing efforts *Continued from page 7*

- Coordination of patrols along the border between the cities.
- Inclusion of local stakeholders and residents in meetings between the two cities' police forces.
- Regular meetings aimed at sharing crime trends and community outreach efforts.

As of February, Shaker Heights Police Commanders John Cole and Timothy Kohanski said they had met with Cleveland Fourth District officials about the area and any "incidents of joint concern."

"In addition to immediately addressing concerns when they arise in the area, we have always had a robust relationship with our Fourth District partners," Cole said, adding that they are planning more formal meetings.

While Greater Cleveland RTA (GCRTA) officials were involved in discussions with Cleveland and Shaker Heights, Transit Police have not signed any

formal agreements.

"GCRTA continues to be a partner in delivering security solutions, given that the Shaker Square rapid station is a pivotal point to our light rail system and the associated bus stops and transfer centers are important areas," officials said.

To that end, GCRTA will continue to provide safety and security for those areas that benefit their Shaker Square facilities.

Meanwhile, Bibb and Weiss said in the joint letter that they were excited about the enhanced cooperation between their two cities and respective police forces.

They planned to continue to discuss "ways to work together to enhance security in this area, which straddles the border of our communities."

Both mayors pointed to "the opportunity we have to contribute to the ongoing improvements, growth and development in the Shaker Square and Larchmere neighborhoods."

Photos by Chris Ball



The two nonprofit owners of Shaker Square drew more than 100 people, mostly local residents, to Atlas Cinemas on Jan. 23 for a vision plan launch party. They saw a presentation on the final blueprint of the Square's future as prepared by an outside consultant. Speakers included the agencies' top officers, Tania Menesse of Cleveland Neighborhood Progress and Joy Johnson of Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. Titled "A New Era for a Cleveland Classic," the presentation can be seen at shakersquare.com/vision-plan.



The freezing cold may shatter flying discs and cramp leg muscles, yet these hardy souls wouldn't let a little winter weather keep them from getting their Ultimate Frisbee fix on Jan. 26. This friendly group has played at Boulevard Elementary in Shaker Heights but lately meets at University School's Lower Campus. All skill levels are welcome for pickup games on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings, which will occur with more regularity when it warms up.



Adun Spice Co. has moved from a stand at Van Aken District to its own storefront on 12721 Larchmere Blvd. The owner, Ramat Wiley, hosted a grand opening Nov. 14. We liked Fines Herbes (\$14), a French blend of chives, chervil, marjoram, parsley and tarragon. She also sells her herbs and spices online at adunspiceco.com. Or call 216.200.6367. The store is closed Mondays and Tuesdays.

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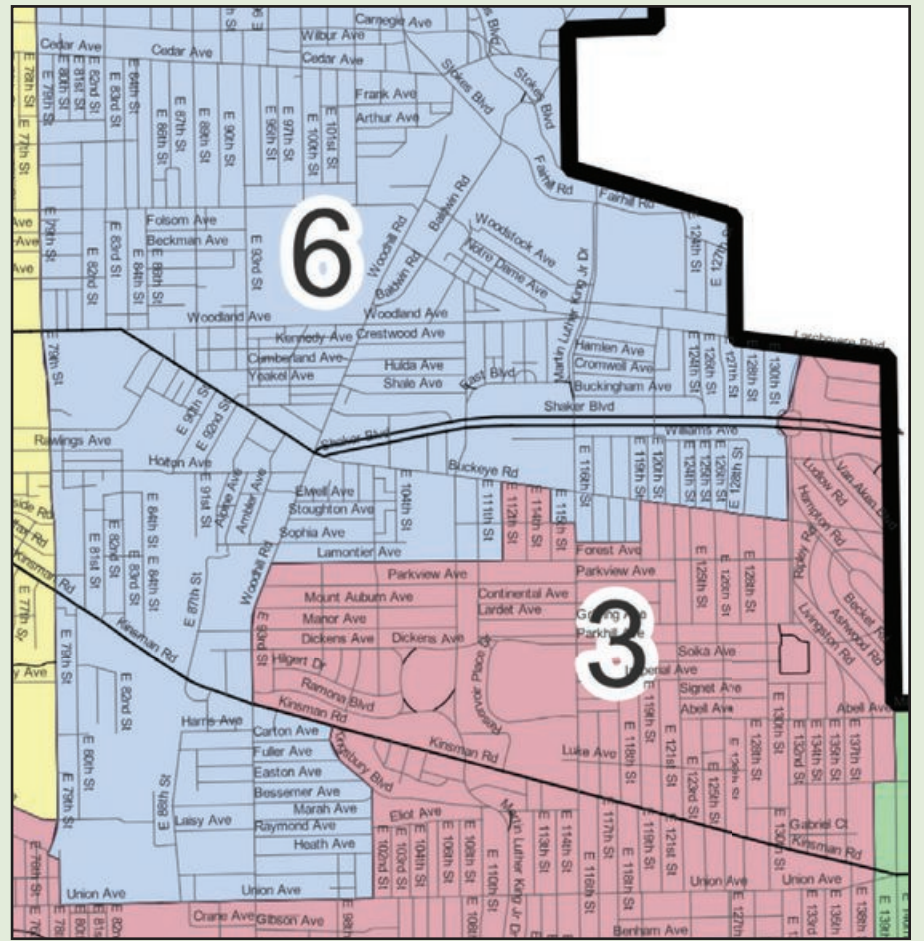
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Opinions are divided on split into two wards *Continued from page 1*



New Cleveland ward map courtesy of Cleveland City Council

Council President Blaine Griffin.

On the east side, much of Gallagher's old precinct becomes part of Ward 3, represented by Councilwoman Deborah Gray.

This includes a section that juts north up into the CHALK streets (Cormere, Haddam, Ardoon, Larchmere and Kemper).

Ward 3 will also take in apartments and condominiums like Moreland Courts, Shaker Courts and Shaker Towers.

The east and west sides of Moreland Boulevard – and all four "quads" of the historic square – had been in the same ward for 80 years, said Arnie Berger, founder of the independent website ShakerSquare.net.

The Cleveland League of Women Voters (LWV) also questioned the split of Shaker Square on either side of Moreland Boulevard, he said.

Berger believes it could have been a relatively "simple fix" ahead of what he called City Council's "rush to passage."

Westbrook agreed with LWV that the redistricting amounted to gerrymandering with an eye toward the 2025 local elections.

Before the vote, Sarah Wean with the Morelands Group housing advocacy organization urged City Council to "go back to the drawing board and unify Shaker Square and its surroundings into one cohesive, unified neighborhood."

Berger contends the Ward 3 extension into the CHALK neighborhood could have just as easily gone over to Ward 6 as well.

He also cited a "missed opportunity" in not putting Larchmere and all of Shaker Square in the same ward.

Larchmere aside, Gallagher said she does not see it as detrimental having two separate council seats presiding over different

sections of Shaker Square.

"It's not a good thing that the city lost population, making the ward redistricting necessary," Gallagher said.

"But if we have to do it, I think the people of Shaker Square could have the best of both worlds, with two council members representing them," she said.

Both Berger and Gallagher agreed on how well Griffin led the effort in 2022 for the city to assist in getting Shaker Square out of potential foreclosure and

into the hands of local nonprofits.

Shaker Square Alliance founder Charles "Chip" Bromley said that while Griffin's Ward 6 now takes in some of the commercial hub, the bulk of residents will remain under the representation of Gray in the new Ward 3.

For that matter, Bromley added that "having the [current] president of Cleveland City Council represent a portion of Shaker Square is important to sustain funding for its projects."

What Bromley finds "truly amazing" is that where Cleveland once had 33 council members across the city, it will now have only 15 seats due to population decline.

Westbrook called the new map a "butcher job" that will weigh on the entire city for at least the next decade, "certain to usher in a continued decline in voting and other forms of citizen engagement."

Gallagher countered that citywide voting trends do not reflect those immediately around Shaker Square, which has one of the highest voter turnout rates in Cleveland.

"I have no desire to call out Cleveland City Council," Westbrook said. "However, I can't be silent when much of what I've worked for and the principles of civic responsibility are shredded just like the redistricting map itself."

"I think the people of Shaker Square could have the best of both worlds, with two council members representing them."

- Peggy Gallagher

Up and Down the Boulevard



Sign at Abide Yoga



Eclectic Eccentric



Loganberry loves Valentine's Day



Batuqui

By Andrea C. Turner

EDWINS exits

No doubt you've heard the big news – EDWINS and EDWINS Too planned to relocate to the old Nighttown Restaurant space Feb. 17 in Cleveland Heights' Cedar Fairmount neighborhood. No matter your opinion on the move, proprietor **Brandon Chrostowski** is sure to make a splash with this new venture ... and we wish him continued success for the organization.

Figure skating fundraiser

EDWINS Too held a fundraiser Feb. 8 for the U.S. Figure Skating community, dedicated in honor of the team members, coaches and family members who tragically lost their lives on American Airlines Flight 5342. In solidarity with the victims and their families, all net sales from this event will be donated to the U.S. Figure Skating clubs of those impacted. Chrostowski, an active ice hockey referee, said in a press release, "Having a daughter who figure skates in Northeast Ohio and Canada, I was shaken by the news of the plane crash. I can't imagine losing anyone who is part of the skating family, coach, parent or volunteer, let alone our daughter."

Supporting Black writers

In 2025, Loganberry Books has committed to continue hosting social reading with Nanny Patricia's Toddler Storytime, Rebel Readers, Political

Dystopia, and Queer Book Club and store read-ins. For Black History Month in February, they encouraged readers to "buy Black books, read Black stories, celebrate Black writers this month, and all year long!" Cleveland photographer **Jef Janis** was featured as its first artist in the gallery this year. View his stunning images at jefjanisphoto.com. The bookstore's next Annex Gallery reception is planned for Thursday, April 3, at 6 p.m. Artist to be announced. This exhibit will be on view through April 28.

City Architecture seeks intern

A planning and architecture firm nestled in the heart of Larchmere, City Architecture is accepting applications for its Summer 2025 Co-Op student through March 14. The firm hires students at all levels with strong portfolios and a desire to grow professionally. Their motto, "Create Space with Purpose for all, all the time," reflects their desire to develop progressive communities. If interested, email a resume and work samples to: studio@cityarch.com.

Literary Cleveland workshops

Are you a U.S. veteran with a story to tell? Do you enjoy writing poetry? Are you working on a novel or autobiography? Join Literary Cleveland's free creative writing workshop, Veterans' Voices, to get started on new writing, do in-class exercises, get feedback, read great stories, essays, and poems, and

meet other veterans. Have fun with writing. Discover your voice. Tell your story. Fiction writers, nonfiction writers, and poets are all welcome. You can be a beginner or an experienced writer. The monthly online writing workshops take place every fourth Monday from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Participants are welcome to join any month. Next sessions are March 24 and April 28. Lessons for the workshops will come from "Writing Tools: 55 Essential Strategies for Every Writer" by Roy Peter Clark. This program is for writers who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces or military and is presented in partnership with the VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System. Contact a Whole Health Team Member at 216-791-2300, ext. 45986, for details. To register, visit litcleveland.org/events.

Thrifting at Eclectic Eccentric

When's the last time you wandered through this vintage store when thrifting with friends? Located at 13005 Larchmere Blvd. between Abide Yoga and Loganberry Books, this charming shop features an uncommon, ever-changing selection of vintage clothing, accessories, housewares, furniture, and even some modern products. It also sells new artwork by many local artists as well as interesting resale items. Do you have vintage items you'd like to sell after spring cleaning? Rates are 30% retail for cash or 40% for in-store credit. Text owner **Tracey Hilbert** at 216.798.3002 to set up an appointment.

Cozy up at UnBar Café

You know how winter makes you want to curl up by the fire with a toasty treat? Maybe snuggle under a blanket on the couch? UnBar Café welcomes guests to do just that during its winter hours: Monday to Wednesday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Thursday to Saturday from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.; and Sunday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Café Indigo to open

Melissa Garrett-Hirsch, the entrepreneur who operates UnBar Café, plans to open Café Indigo in the former Biggby and Dewey's Coffee location at 13201 Shaker Square. Not only will they serve coffee and other traditional cafe items, such as sandwiches, soups and salads, but ice cream is also on the menu for dessert. Perfect for a summer cone while strolling Shaker Square. Come out to support this local female, minority-owned business when it opens Feb. 25.

Batuqui nears move

According to a Jan. 31 Instagram post, the restaurant owners say, "We are almost there ... and it is soo beautiful." The new event space, surrounded by colorful leaded glass windows filtering soft light, will soon be ready to host big events and celebrations. To start scheduling and organizing a wedding reception or other event, email batuquicatering@gmail.com or call 216.801.0227.

Email news tips to act_one@sbcglobal.net.

Doan Brook Gorge

Hunt for invasive shrubs and trees heats up in winter

Story and photo by Grant Segall

Winter might seem like a tough time to restore nature.

But after the leaves fall and the underbrush wilts, it's easier for Greg Van Niel to tramp through the normally lush Doan Brook Gorge in search of invasive shrubs and trees.

Van Niel, volunteer founder and head of the Friends of Doan Brook Gorge, cuts down and clears out invasives year-round. And, when the temperature is above freezing, he carefully cuts into them and dabs them with a little herbicide.

The nature lover calls herbicide "a necessary evil." By definition, invasive plants are unnatural in their new territories, and many of their roots are too deep to pull out.

Van Niel lives nearby in Cleveland Heights and loves the narrow, steep, rocky, secluded gorge. "The gorge is a fascinating example of archeology and botany," he said.

During their four years, the Friends

have wiped out many of the gorge's abundant knotweeds, buckthorns and other invasives. They've also planted about 300 native trees and shrubs.

The Friends have won grants of about \$18,500 from the Lake Erie Allegheny Partnership for Biodiversity and what's now Enbridge Gas Ohio, including \$3,500 for this year. In November, Van Niel was named a Watershed Hero by the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership, which sponsors his group.

The gorge straddles Cleveland, Shaker Heights, and Cleveland Heights between Stokes Boulevard, Fairhill Road, South Park Boulevard, Coventry Road and North Park Boulevard. On different maps, the western boundary lies anywhere from Martin Luther King Boulevard to Rogers Park near University Circle. Going by the westernmost version, the gorge holds about 75 acres and about 1.5 miles of the Doan Brook, which flows from eastern Shaker Heights through University Circle to Lake Erie. The gorge's highlights include a colorful "Graffiti Dam" west of MLK, a waterfall at least 10 feet high near Kemper

Road, and a rear view of the historic Fairmount Road Group Development, nicknamed Belgian Village.

According to a 2020 survey for the Watershed Partnership, many neighbors don't know about the gorge, and many others fear it. Van Niel hopes to make the place more welcoming and accessible yet more natural. "We're not trying to make it into a sculpted, groomed park."

Over the centuries, the gorge has been a sandstone quarry, a construction dump for the Baldwin Reservoir, and private parkland for oil king John D. Rockefeller and Ambler Heights developer Nathan Ambler. In 1896, the tycoons gave the gorge and other land along the Doan to Cleveland to honor the city's centennial.

Van Niel has restored several sections of the gorge east of MLK, mostly south of the waterfall. He has planted many native species, such as oaks, hickories, maples and birches in the interior and catalpas, persimmons, buckeyes, and pecans on the lawn between the gorge and Fairhill Road. "You want diversity," he said. He got



Greg Van Niel cuts invasive honeysuckle in the Doan Brook Gorge.

some of the trees for free from Holden Arboretum.

Van Niel has also created five beds for native wildflowers on the lawn. He hopes to add a bike rack and either benches or picnic tables.

He has been helped by several volunteers plus Boy Scouts and Hawken School students. Local mountain bikers have cleared and smoothed some stretches of the gorge's narrow trails.

Mo Drinkard, who runs the Watershed Partnership, said of Van Niel, "He's doing ecologically appropriate work. He's making really incredible progress."

To learn more about the Friends of Doan Brook Gorge's work and many other watershed activities and projects, contact the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership, 216.325.7781, doanbrookpartnership.org.

Search for new tenants begins as EDWINS exits

Continued from page 1

that U.S. Rep. Shontel Brown helped secure, Hameed said.

He expects the new restaurants will open by the fall.

“EDWINS has been accommodating us by meeting with prospects, answering questions and sharing good information,” Hameed said.

Chrostowski said he is also looking for tenants. He wouldn't discuss his financial arrangements with CNP and BBC on his leases.

“I'm looking to fill them immediately. Why have empty spaces when you have other businesses in the neighborhood and live, as I do, there?” he said.

He has a childcare center on Larchmere Boulevard and three

“We've had a lot of leads and have had inquiries [for] a sports bar, a martini bar and an Asian food concept.”

- Akil Hameed

apartment buildings on South Moreland Boulevard. On Buckeye Road, he has a bakery-deli; around the corner, he has two houses, a park, basketball court and fitness center.

His EDWINS Leadership & Restaurant Institute trains formerly incarcerated people to work in hospitality and provides housing and support for successful re-entry into society.



Photo by Chris Ball

While EDWINS and EDWINS Too are leaving Shaker Square, other parts of the EDWINS Leadership & Restaurant Institute are staying put. Barbara Tripi-Zicarelli, an employee of EDWINS Bakery on Buckeye Road, serves a free lunch Jan. 24 to displaced tenants of South Moreland Boulevard apartment buildings, coordinated with help from Morelands Group members.

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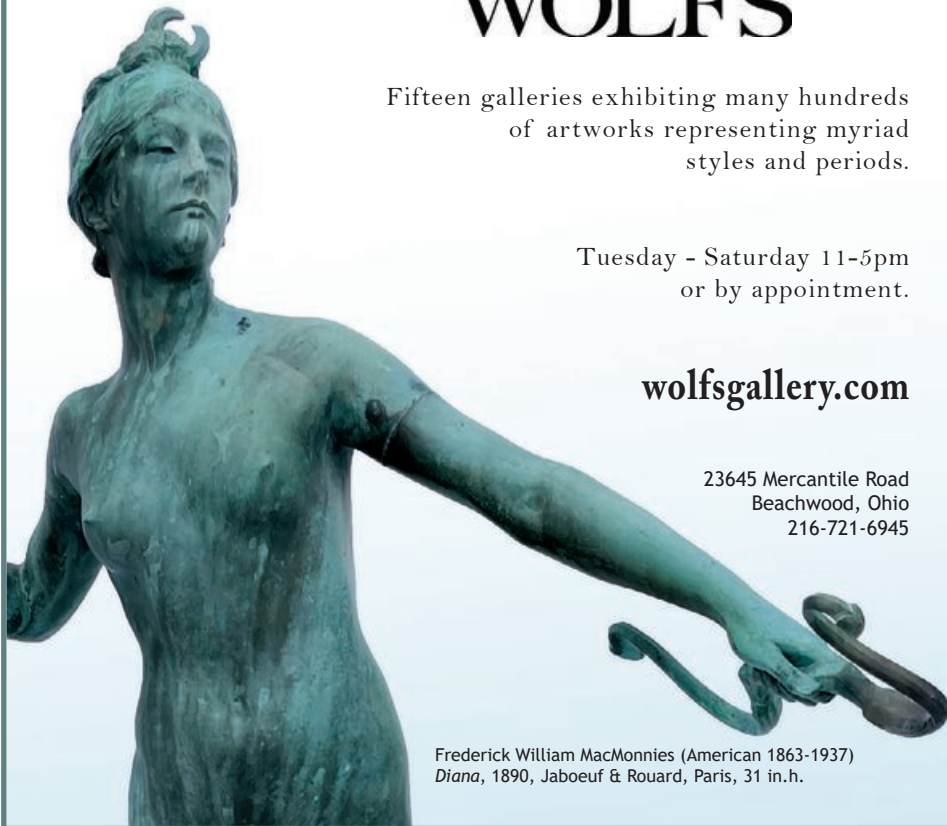
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Social services

Input sought for possible Larchmere Village project

The Benjamin Rose Institute, SHAD, and other community partners are exploring the possibility of creating a Larchmere Village - a model of organizing a neighborhood focused on people aged 60 and over, driven 100% by the needs of its residents, to help them remain in their homes. Similar to the Village in the Heights, the concept helps members receive support such as household tasks, services or resources. In exchange, they may pay regular dues.

The Village model encourages civic engagement, social connectedness, and interdependence. It benefits older residents who want to age in their homes and stay connected to their local communities.

Since a Village is a community effort, Benjamin Rose is soliciting feedback. It



asks seniors to complete a survey by scanning the QR code and filling it out online. If you prefer a paper survey, one can be picked up at Burten, Bell, Carr, Development Inc.; the Harvey Rice Library branch; Fairhill Partners; or at Benjamin Rose. Return completed paper surveys to Burten, Bell, Carr or Benjamin Rose.

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Rapid Transit fan's love of living next door to Shaker Square tracks

Story and photo by Chris Ball

Don't tell anyone, but Erin Grohe owns a car.

"Most of my friends don't think I have a car, because I never use the car to get anywhere local," the Shaker Square resident said.

A social worker, Grohe needs a car two days a week for work.

The rest of the time, she bikes, walks or rides RTA. That's why she chose her apartment, she said.

"The Rapid. Absolutely. The No. 1 reason I moved to Shaker Square is the Rapid."

She even rides the Rapid rather than drive to the Van Aken District for the North Union Farmers Market in the winter. "It's only 15 minutes, which is pretty speedy."

But mostly she takes the Rapid downtown. She buys a monthly pass and has the schedule memorized.

"I go downtown all the time, to the Playhouse or Cavs games or Guardians games."

Here's her perspective on various local topics:

Square living: "Shaker Square has a lot of gorgeous architecture and historic buildings, and the building I'm in, the apartments were a really good size for what I'm paying, so that was another pull of the Square, and then I really like that so many things are walkable, and if not, I just go on the Rapid to them. Getting downtown in 15 minutes is

such a gift, it's insane, and I explain to my friends all the time, just park at my house and then we'll go together, because you're going to save so much money not paying for parking downtown."

Train rides: "If I could take it up with whoever runs or Mayor Bibb or whoever, the last Blue or Green train to Shaker Square leaves downtown at 12:15. ... I do think it stifles people's ability to take public transit to late-night entertainment."

Plane rides: "The other thing I really appreciate about the Rapid is you can take it all the way to the airport."

Car rides: "I don't Uber. I don't feel safe in Ubers. I feel safer walking in the dark or on public transit. I don't want to get into someone's car."

Bike rides: "I love Slow Roll. That was one of the first things I encountered upon moving to Cleveland. ... The people are awesome. It's also really cool being this force of nature barreling down the street. ... I

always connect with fun people. ... And it's fun to see different neighborhoods in Cleveland. I feel like I really get around a lot, but I wouldn't necessarily take that route ... so it's kind of nice to understand this is what a residential section of Tremont looks like, or Cedar Lee, or wherever it is we're biking."

EDWINS' exit: "I love EDWINS, so I'm really upset that they're moving. ... I eat dessert there probably monthly. So even if I'm not paying for a \$50 or \$60 meal, I'm still getting flambé and



Erin Grohe (center) chats with John Kealy (left) and Sue Riley at the monthly community breakfast Jan. 25 at Our Lady of Peace Church.

bananas, which is always good. I'm worried about the logistics of how the staff that I understand is also predominantly housed on the Square is going to get there, but Brandon's a good guy, so he'll figure it out."

Coyoacán Taqueria & Brew: "I'm very excited that something's going into that space. That has been vacant since I moved here."

Square shopping: "There's some great things. Fashions by Fowler I spend time in. I get dresses there every once in a while when I need something nice. I'm on their text chain so I'm like, oh, 30% off today, so I'll go in and buy something. Subway is nice to have. I know they had some troubles with the windows getting broken, which I hate. But if we're going to have a chain thing, Subway's not a bad one to have in the Square. ... There's a good mix of stuff on the Square already, which I appreciate, so I just hope that's preserved even with EDWINS pulling out. ... I shop at Dave's for things that I can't buy at the farmers market. ... I go to brunch at EDWINS Too. I like the Vegan Club. They just changed their hours

recently. ... I'm going to eat ice cream [at Café Indigo] because I keep asking for an ice cream shop on the Square, so that will be great. I go to CVS. It's so convenient having CVS there. If I pick up meds, that's where I pick them up from."

Larchmere: "I wouldn't have moved to Larchmere for Larchmere's sake. If Larchmere didn't border the Square, I don't think it would be what it is, honestly. There's a lot of good businesses. ... People act as if the Square is vacant. I feel like there's just as many vacancies on Larchmere. ... I don't know why the Square gets a bad rap. Larchmere is incredible, I don't want to put it down. ... But it's a street, like any other street. The Square is incredible because it's the Rapid, the historic architecture. When I walk over on Larchmere, it's like, OK, there's a new, sleek building and great people who live in that area, but ... it could be anywhere, and the Square we know for a fact could not exist anywhere else."

Safety: "I'm in my 20s, smaller stature, I run, I walk around at night. I don't really understand the safety concerns about the Square. Yes, I would like it if everywhere had lighting. I think a lot of it does. I don't really have problems. ... I don't get the safety thing, I really don't."

"Getting downtown in 15 minutes is such a gift, it's insane."

- Erin Grohe



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