

Rock the Blocks

Sunday, June 8, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Kick off the summer with a parade down Larchmere, an ice cream social and more.

rocktheblocks.info

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Bikeyourneighborhoodcle.org

Larchmere PorchFest

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With 30 bands on 30 porches, this free event is a must for music lovers.

Larchmereporchfest.org

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SHAD Annual Members Meeting

Thursday, July 17, 7 p.m.

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Author Alley

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Local writers do readings and signings at Loganberry Books.

Loganberrybooks.com

Morelands Festival

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The Morelands Group hosts a community party on Shaker Square's south lawn.

Garlic Festival

Saturday & Sunday, Aug. 23 & 24, noon, Shaker Square

All things garlic, from ice cream to French fries, plus live entertainment.

clevelandgarlicfestival.org

Take to the Lake

Saturday, Aug. 23, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Rent a canoe or kayak on Lower Shaker Lake. Hosted by the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership.

Shaker Square

CNP tries to change public perceptions on crime

Story and photo by Chris Ball

Changing the public's perception of safety on Shaker Square is crucial to efforts to revitalize it, said Tania Menesse.

"People have to feel safe, it has to be lit, it has to be easy to park," said Menesse, President and CEO of Cleveland Neighborhood Progress Inc., which co-owns the Square with Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. "It really is about having it feel clean and well taken care of and that people are responsive if there's something going on, if they're behaving badly or somebody is having a mental health episode, whatever it may be, there's got to be enough else going on," she told the Shaker Heights chapter of the League of Women Voters on April 26.

Their private security contractor, Safe Choice, works closely with the city, she said. "We have 60 cameras around, so the message has gone out that if you do something at Shaker Square, you are going to get picked up," she said.

Crime rates are down in Cleveland

overall, she said. "The level of crime in Tremont and Ohio City is double what it is in Shaker Square."

But too much police presence can backfire. "If there's a lot of police someplace, people suddenly think it's less safe. So it's kind of striking that balance."

They plan to sponsor more cultural events and are hiring an "impresario" to program them. "We're at a place now where it's the fun stuff that will actually help improve that perception," she said.

See CNP tries to change public perceptions on crime, page 9



Photo by Chris Ball

Anna Fujiki and Nicholas Miller perform "Bluebird pas de deux" from "Sleeping Beauty" at an April 25 fundraiser for City Ballet of Cleveland. See story, back cover.

Commercial development

Empty storefronts worry Larchmere residents

By Christine Jindra

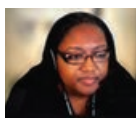
Larchmere residents took Cleveland officials on a walk this winter down the boulevard to point out eyesores – building violations that distract from the historic and quirky features.

The officials noted 23 violations and left letters, not formal citations.

Eleven property owners responded, promising to correct issues, said Sherita Mullins of Cleveland's economic development department in April. The rest may be cited after reinspections, she said.

The walk, coordinated by Shaker Square Alliance, is just one of hundreds of actions taken over the years by those who love the neighborhood and work to keep it exciting and thriving.

Asked about the challenges, merchants, residents, landlords, and community and city officials just as often named businesses they celebrate.



Sherita Mullins

They pointed to at least four new condo and apartment buildings that stabilized and improved property values.

These include working to get the blighted Sedlack building at East 127th Street condemned by the city and then renovated by a private developer, with the help of SHAD, into 14 stunning apartments and retail space. UnBar Café moved into that space.

The advocates also praised the popular street festivals that bring visitors to the shops and restaurants.

Among the nearly 70 storefronts are eight restaurants, three resale/vintage shops, a yoga studio, a bakery, a convenience store, six hair salons or barbershops, a café, and shops for spices, yarn, hats, artisan crafts, Jamaican apparel, designer clothes, import car maintenance and auto body repair.

Unlike nearby Shaker Square, owned by two community development groups, no marketing agency concentrates on Larchmere. That worries some who

point to a dozen empty storefronts.

"Merchants need help," said James Boyd, owner of Polished Professionals barbershop for 16 years. "Someone with passion who can think about the future. We are too busy to take that on."

"We need a leader who's creative and proactive," said Liz Tekus, owner of Fine Points yarn shop for 23 years. "This is a hard time to start a business, and people are scared."

One merchant stepping up is Fiddlehead Gallery owner Susan Rozman. She's rejuvenating the Larchmere Merchants Association (Larchmere.com) while running her 12-year-old business. She organizes get-togethers to connect merchants, spark ideas and ask about their needs. She also encourages landlords to market vacancies.

Merchants met for cocktails April 3 at Adun Spice Co. A few restaurateurs discussed joint projects, such as a

See Empty storefronts worry Larchmere residents, page 11

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SIP & Savor

Thank you, members, friends, and neighbors, for making SHAD's Sip & Savor fundraiser a smashing success! It was great fun to meet and mingle over a fabulous assortment of Larchmere restaurant fare, good music, and fun prizes – and raise funds, too!

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS:

- **UnBar Café and UnWine Zone, our host**
- **Benjamin Rose Institute**
- **Cosmopolitan Dermatology**
- **City Architects**

And the many Larchmere and Shaker Square businesses who donated prizes for the Raffle Pull!

Thank you for celebrating our vibrant, unique community with us, and remember to shop local and support our merchants.

Larchmere After Dark

Scorpacciata's drinks pair nicely with its fresh pasta and pizza

Story and photo by Chris Ball

You can sit at a bar and order an adult beverage at half a dozen Larchmere establishments. Here's a closer look at one of the newer options. The drink menu changes with the seasons, as does the food. **Scorpacciata Pasta Co.**

Address: 13051 Larchmere Blvd.

Phone: 216.279.9800.

Website: scorpacciatapastaco.com

Email: Scorpacciata@yahoo.com.

Opened: July 4, 2024.

Summer hours: Tuesday to Friday, 5 to 10 p.m.; Saturday, 4 to 10:30 p.m.; Sunday, 4 to 9 p.m.; closed Monday.

Happy hour: Dine-in only. Tuesday to Thursday, 5 to 7 p.m.; Sunday, 4 to 7 p.m. Limited selections, from a 12-ounce Einstein Toasted Porter (\$5) to a Contratto Spritz (\$10). Food options include Vad Mac and Cheese (\$11) or Polenta Fries (\$10) to Piccino Board with a choice of three meats and cheeses (\$17).

TVs: One large screen for sports.

Bar manager: Sarah Edgerton, chef-owner Peter Reuter's sister-in-law. He stole her from the Wine Spot on Lee Road in Cleveland Heights, where she worked for seven years. He let her design the drink menu while he focused on the fresh pasta and pizza.

Bartenders: Lexi Hohe, Tammy, Jeremiah, Kyle.

The wait staff is cross-trained to work the bar.

Vibe: It mostly draws a mix of Larchmere residents. "Most of the people who sit at our bar are regulars," Edgerton said. "I'm glad it's been welcomed into the neighborhood."

Beer: None on tap, because there's no basement to run tap lines. Eight beer choices in cans and bottles. From Forst Premium Italian Lager (\$4.75) to Headhunter IPA (\$7).



Lexi Hohe serves a cocktail at Scorpacciata Pasta Co.

Wine: Six reds, six whites, a rosé, a sweet wine, and a couple sparklings, ranging from \$10 to \$14 per glass, or \$40 to \$56 for a bottle. Also, five bottle-only options, including Champagne (\$30 for a 375 ml split from France). Plus a nice variety of amaros, aperitifs and digestifs.

Cocktails: Thirteen selections, from \$13 to \$15.

Three stand out. The Scorps Reviver No. 2 is a riff on a Corpse Reviver No. 2 with a raspberry hibiscus syrup added. The Lavender Earl, Edgerton's personal favorite, is a gin cocktail with earl grey simple syrup and a lavender-infused blanc vermouth. "Both the Scorps Reviver No. 2 and the Lavender Earl are floral and bright for springtime," she said. The Rooted-Rita is a Margarita riff with a spiced carrot shrub. "The earthiness from the carrot shrub makes it a good cocktail for the transitional season," she said.

Mocktails: Three options, including the St.

Agrestis Phony Negroni (\$9).

Events: Ticketed wine dinners coming soon.

Signature drink: Limoncello (\$10), one ounce, served right from the freezer. Edgerton is especially proud of this family recipe that her grandparents developed during their travels in Italy. It takes her two months to make a batch, starting with 190 proof Everclear grain alcohol as a base. She includes the zest of 15 lemons, and then the lemon peels sit in it for three weeks before she strains it.

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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
- Ludlow

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- Larchmere Blvd.
- Van Aken Plaza
- Shaker Boulevard West

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Shaker Square Alliance

Gund issues \$100K grant to boost group’s banking advocacy efforts



Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb records a video at Huntington Bank’s reopening celebration at its Buckeye Road branch on Oct. 26, 2024.

By Christine Jindra

The Shaker Square Alliance’s role in pressuring Huntington Bank to reopen its Buckeye branch helped earn the advocacy group a \$100,000 grant from The George Gund Foundation to improve area banking.

The success of reopening the bank will hopefully beget more success, according to a Gund Foundation official.

Chip Bromley, the Alliance’s director, announced the two-year grant at a recent meeting of the volunteer group. They will use the money to organize block clubs and other groups and to convince area banks to follow good community reinvestment and fair lending practices, Bromley said. How to do this is an evolving process, he said.

The Alliance worked with a coalition of Buckeye-Shaker residents, businesses, nonprofits and local officials to pressure Huntington to reopen its branch at 11623 Buckeye Road. The doors reopened Oct. 28, nine months after closing.

The Alliance is good at community organizing and data monitoring, said Treye Johnson, Gund’s program director for vibrant neighborhoods and inclusive economy.

“The Alliance will track the lending of Huntington Bank and others to make sure that more is done than just reopening,” Johnson said.

Banks must improve services and meet the community’s banking needs, he said. Pledges have been made to invest in the community, but little has yet been done, he said.

Bromley said his group is organizing a lending table at the June 8 Rock the Blocks festival on Larchmere. The group asked local banks to contribute to the event and wants four or five banks to be there to talk about making loans, he said.

He also hopes to use the Buckeye Summer Soul Series of events to connect residents with banks.

“They should have a sign saying: ‘We’re Making Loans Now.’

“We want to use the event to connect

the community with the banks,” Bromley said. In addition to Huntington, KeyBank, Dollar Bank, Fifth Third Bank, US Bank, and PNC Bank have branches or kiosks in the Buckeye-Shaker neighborhood.

Gund’s Johnson said the Alliance has leeway to do the work as it sees fit.

“There is no limit of how the funds can be used nor is the grant a reimbursement of their successful work on getting Huntington to reopen,” Johnson said.

“The idea is for them to figure out how to best deliver their philosophy,” he said.

“This type of work is more an art than a science. It requires building relationships and long-term negotiations with the bank and others. You can’t fix it in two years.”

The Gund board recently approved a change to focus the foundation on community power building, he said.

“The Alliance fits in with our evolving goals,” Johnson said.

“For too long, residents did not have power. ... Power was defined as who were the leaders and their titles, not the residents. We want to build community-level power through residents.”

The Alliance and others still meet with Huntington officials, Bromley said. Recently, the bank told the group it made three loans this year in the neighborhood – “which is better than the two loans they made in 2024,” Bromley said.

Making the bank more accessible – entry inside is by appointment only – and getting it to invest in the ongoing redevelopment of Buckeye Road are Alliance goals.

There’s no reason the bank couldn’t reach out to the neighborhood, go door to door to educate about its loan process, or develop vacant land, Bromley said.

The Alliance was formed in 2010 to address the closure of a bank branch in the area. It has worked to reopen the Huntington branch and the local post office; lobbied Cleveland Housing Court to find new owners for a condemned apartment building and then rehabilitate it; and pressured owners on Larchmere Boulevard and Buckeye Road to clean up trash.

Crime

Bold robbery damages showroom, shocking Larchmere Imports owner

Larchmere Imports owner John Negus gives an interview to a local TV station March 18 in front of his damaged storefront, eight days after the bold theft of three luxury cars.



By Thomas Jewell

More than a month after the brazen and destructive heist of three luxury cars, Larchmere Imports owner John Negus surveyed the boards over his showroom windows.

That’s where one of the thieves plowed through with the last car taken March 10, a convertible BMW that he came back and climbed into while his accomplices waited across the street.

“They were out there sitting on 124th Street in my Range Rover when he walked back over to the building,” Negus said.

Negus received an alert for a building alarm going off at 5:47 a.m. But a lot of the damage was done before then.

The as-yet-unidentified suspects first jumped the gate to the driveway between the dealership’s two buildings, leading to the outdoor rear lot.

From there, they probably used a metal punch or a ball-peen hammer to break the tempered glass on the door into the showroom.

“They knew what they were doing – the noise of the shattering glass did not trigger the alarm,” said Negus, who grew up in Cleveland Heights and opened Larchmere Imports in 1988.

The fact that they seemed to know right where the keys were – and eluded interior motion detectors in the process – led police to first suspect an “inside job.”

But Negus has learned that criminals can use electronic devices to detect the transmitters in key fobs, which were grabbed and taken out to the rear lot.

The intruders moved a Mercedes-Benz SUV out of the way to get to the Range Rover and a BMW sedan, crashing through the gate they initially climbed to gain entry.

“The alarm had yet to go off,” Negus said – perhaps right up until the BMW convertible crashed through the front showroom.

As of late April, the sedan still had not been found, although insurance deems stolen cars as “totaled” generally after 30 days.

The Range Rover and BMW convertible actually were totaled when they were later recovered in Cleveland.

To further dispel the theory of an inside job, Negus said he and police have seen videos of similar break-ins at other dealerships in Euclid and Cleveland’s

near west side in the same time frame.

“These are very bold people,” Negus said. “They’re all wearing hoodies so you can’t see their faces. But there are resemblances and similarities -- including the same ‘M.O.’” or “modus operandi.”

The burglary was “not random,” interim Fourth District Police Commander Heather Miksch told the Larchmere Community Association on April 9, noting that the business was not ransacked.

The department has some leads in the case as well as scientific evidence still undergoing crime lab analysis that can take three to six months to process.

“It’s not like ‘C.S.I.’ on TV, where I submit something, then an hour or two later I have lab results and I’m out arresting somebody,” Miksch said.

Restoration of the front of the building will commence soon, Negus said in an April 25 follow-up interview.

As for the future, Negus said he planned to stay put, with some changes in store.

“The bottom line for me, whether or not they find them is a moot point,” Negus said. “I have to change the way I do things.”

Recently, Larchmere Imports, 12311 Larchmere Blvd., had brought in a salesman with a marketing background, rapidly increasing the number of cars they were selling.

“But if you’re attracting attention, you’re going to get attention,” Negus said. “And it gets to the point where you don’t know all of the people who are coming in.”

He believes some “customers” may have been casing the place to get an idea of the layout in order to return after hours.

“It’s pretty heartbreaking to see this happen to my business, which has been my baby all these years,” Negus said. “I’m not going to build a fortress around it.”

Along with added security measures, Negus will scale back the marketing strategy, returning to the more low-key approach of the past.

“It doesn’t change how I feel about the neighborhood,” Negus said. “It’s still a cool place.”

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Restaurant roundup

Dining options on Shaker Square are getting a lot more interesting

By Christine Jindra

Photos by Chris Ball

Restaurant and retail spaces may be headed for a shakeup at Shaker Square as its owners try to create “a vibrant mix of storefront tenants.”

They are working to fill two vacant restaurant spaces after EDWINS and EDWINS Too broke their leases and left this year. Other spaces also are available, ranging from 2,900 to 5,000 square feet, the owners said in a Request for Proposals.

“Shaker Square has benefited from great momentum recently, and that brings us to a critical moment where it’s vital for us to conduct a comprehensive search for a lasting retail mix in line with what the neighborhood is looking for,” said Tania Menesse, president and CEO, Cleveland Neighborhood Progress Inc., a nonprofit that co-owns the shopping center with Burten, Bell, Carr Development, Inc.

The Square’s vision plan, unveiled last year, received citizen input on what the neighborhood wants, she said. That process showed a desire for full-service and fast-casual dining options as well as general merchandise, apparel, furniture and home goods stores.

“Community members made it clear in the process: They want to spend more time and support businesses in Shaker Square,” Menesse said in a statement. “... This is a unique opportunity for merchants.”

COYOACÁN: Early June is when owner Rey Galindo expects to open Coyoacán Taqueria & Brew in the former Balaton restaurant space, 13133 Shaker Square. He had hoped to open late last year, but the permit and license process delayed it.

“We are so excited,” is all he would say about that.

Coyoacán (meaning “place of coyotes” in Aztec) will be two concepts: a fast-food carryout when you walk in, and a larger restaurant with a microbrewery in a second room, specializing in Mexican-style lagers brewed on site. The dining room is named La Casa de Luchita’s as a tribute to his mom, Maria de la Luz Galindo, who opened Luchita, Cleveland’s first Mexican restaurant, in 1981 on the West Side.

Galindo said Luchita will be open for dinner only: 4 to 10 p.m. Monday to Thursday, and 4 to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

Luchita’s preview menu has mouth-watering photos of appetizers and entrees, including octopus, ceviche, beef cheeks, mole dishes, empanadas, masa cakes, grouper and pork shanks.

The takeout menu is at coyoacanoh.com.



Coyoacán Taqueria & Brew is opening soon in Shaker Square’s northwest quadrant.

LOVED BAYOU: There’s a ghost inside The Breakfast Club restaurant at 13228 Shaker Square.

Actually, it’s Loved Bayou/Creole Fusion, a ghost kitchen – a restaurant that prepares food ordered online and only sold for delivery or takeout.

Owner Shawn Wynn relies on Grubhub, DoorDash, Uber Eats and word of mouth for his business. Its online menu includes gumbos, crawfish, okra and jambalaya. (216.465.1047, lovedbayoucle.com)

Loved Bayou operates Thursday and Sunday, 5 to 10 p.m.; and Friday and Saturday, 5 to 11 p.m. It uses The Breakfast Club kitchen.

Loved Bayou replaced The Vegan Club, which didn’t have enough traction, said Wynn, who runs the restaurant with his brother Akin Affrica, owner of Zanzibar

Soul Fusion across the street.

The Breakfast Club restaurant is still open for dining in Monday to Friday, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.; and Saturday and Sunday, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

BATUQUI: Still no word when Batuqui’s Brazilian restaurant will move two doors west to more spacious quarters at 12624 Larchmere Blvd.

However, there are signs of hope. Recently, shrubs were delivered to the front yard, and work appeared to be done on the water lines.

CITY FRESH: The farm box program will deliver fresh produce outside Adun Spice Co., 12721 Larchmere, on Fridays from 3:30 to 5 p.m. starting June 10.

Produce needs to be pre-ordered, but farmers’ trucks often show up with more, and there will be live music and cooking demos. Information and pricing at cityfresh.org.

Housing

Shaker Heights may try ‘proactive approach’ to building inspections

By Thomas Jewell

Owners of more than 100 apartment buildings in Shaker Heights could be looking at additional “proactive” inspections by the city to help curb recurring housing code violations.

Many of those roughly 5,640 apartments are located around Shaker Square and Larchmere, one of the most densely populated areas of Greater Cleveland.

In a March work session, Shaker Heights Building and Housing Director Kyle Krewson presented City Council with a “Proactive Approach to Code Enforcement for Rental Properties.”

At least some of the initiatives -- which could be introduced in budget hearings this year -- came in response to concerns raised by the Shaker Square Alliance in a January letter to council.

City officials disputed some of the Alliance’s contentions, saying apartments

are checked more frequently than just point-of-sale inspections and on complaints from tenants.

The city has been playing catch-up on rental inspections in general since nearly half of Shaker’s apartment buildings have changed ownership since the pandemic began -- an “astronomical number,” Krewson said.

Some ongoing issues involved periodic “catastrophic boiler failures,” the most recent involving a 19-unit building at 13654 Fairhill Road this winter whose tenants had to move to a hotel for more than two months.

Boilers can be difficult to gauge, Krewson said, and the state Division of Industrial Compliance handles annual inspections.

On its end, the city can revoke a rental license at any time for issues affecting habitability.

The Alliance also recommended making annual certificates of occupancy

contingent on an inspection of major building components: roofs, heating and cooling, electrical, lighting, water and gas.

Another possibility could entail imposing civil penalties against “problem” landlords in Shaker, similar to the city of Cleveland’s “Residents First” legislation that took effect this year.

In current enforcement, Krewson likened the “cyclical” process— inspecting, issuing violation notices, clearing them when they appear to be corrected, then doing it all over again— to “constantly chasing our tail.”

The importance of open and direct communications between landlords, the city and tenants cannot be overstated, Krewson said.

But a “revolving door” of property managers can be difficult to keep up with, Councilwoman Nancy Moore said.

“I’m interested in hearing from the Law Department on what can be done to address repetitive nuisance complaints in

buildings, similar to police fines,” Moore said.

Those legal discussions have gone on for several years now, said Assistant Law Director Lisa Gold-Scott.

She and Law Director William Ondrey Gruber may bring proposals back that would require some legislative changes from council.

“We’re talking about the same buildings and coming at it from a different angle,” Shaker Chief Administrative Officer Jeri Chaikin told council.

As long as the city does not appear “arbitrary or capricious,” Krewson said, “if there is an owner that we can identify who is not adhering to the bar, then we can take added enforcement measures.”

The city may need additional building and housing department staff to implement the changes, said several council members.

Safety

Shaker Heights adds more license plate-reading cameras at borders

By Thomas Jewell

Shaker Heights’ installation of additional Flock Safety cameras at all of the city’s main entry points includes two on Larchmere Boulevard along the Cleveland border.

Although the historic Shaker Square commercial district sits within the city of Cleveland, another license plate-reading camera has been installed at a boundary line nearby, this one at Kemper and North Moreland roads.

In its 2022 pilot project, Shaker Heights placed one of its original Flock Safety cameras along South Woodland Road at southbound Van Aken Boulevard, already in fairly close proximity to the Square.

On Larchmere Boulevard, the new cameras went in at the Kemper intersection, as well as East 127th

Street, which also has a new installation at the Shaker Heights-Cleveland border on Fairhill Road.

Shaker Heights Police Chief Wayne Hudson told City Council in February the cameras will boost coordination of patrols between Shaker Heights and Cleveland around the Square, as called for in a cooperative agreement reached last year.

Mayors Justin Bibb and David Weiss signed a joint letter in November outlining further collaboration to enhance security and enforcement along the border, as well as on mutual aid calls.

About 80% of the Larchmere commercial district lies in Cleveland, with the other 20% in Shaker Heights.

“With this in mind, the Cleveland and Shaker Heights police have been discussing ways to work together to enhance security in this area, which straddles the border of our communities,”

the mayors’ letter said.

Shaker Heights has more than doubled its number of Flock cameras to 18. The technology continues to prove its worth, said Shaker Police Commander Timothy Kohanski.

Crime data and court filings get fed into the system to identify passing cars involved in everything from Amber alerts and other missing person cases to stolen vehicles, protection orders and felony warrants.

Hudson emphasized that contrary to popular belief, police do not use Flock Safety cameras to issue traffic tickets.

“These cameras are not made for

“These cameras are not made for surveillance beyond the information that we put into the system.”

– Wayne Hudson

surveillance beyond the information that we put into the system,” Hudson said. “That’s the only time we see an alert, based on input to the database.”

Under the terms of its contract, Kohanski said, Flock Safety does not sell any of its customer data to third parties – another privacy concern raised.

Shaker’s drones could provide another tool on mutual aid calls, Hudson said earlier, including a large crowd that spilled onto Larchmere, possibly from a short-term rental home on East 124th Street in Cleveland last July.

At the time, Shaker had not purchased its first drone. Cleveland police have since forwarded a request to the U.S. Department of Justice to acquire drones for restricted use, namely emergencies.

Housing

Tenant advocates ask courts for help with out-of-state owners

By Christine Jindra

A cyber attack, a suicide, a receivership, a court reversal and a foreclosure sale played out this year as tenant advocates tried to hold out-of-state owners accountable for poor living conditions at three Shaker Square apartment complexes.

Cleveland officials, with the support of the Morelands Group, had asked city, state and federal courts to help tenants who often lived without heat, electricity, water or working elevators.

Their goal: to address problems at more than 600 units in 19 buildings under three different ownership groups.

One case saw a victory when a receiver was appointed to take over 15 buildings in foreclosure – distressed properties largely along North and South Moreland boulevards. (*See box.*)

That was after the owner, New York investor Mendel Steiner, killed himself in January in a swanky Manhattan hotel room. News reports said he controlled some financially troubled 3,300 apartment units in 10 states.

He was in default of a \$22.7 million federal Fannie Mae loan he used to purchase the Cleveland properties.

Court filings show Steiner so badly managed them that occupancy dropped from 99% to 25%, and remaining tenants often had gas shutoffs and other issues.

On Feb. 28, Cleveland’s U.S. District Court appointed real estate broker Michael Guggenheim to manage the 308 units and bring the 15 buildings up to code to sell.

The Morelands Group and local nonprofits hope to work with Guggenheim to help evaluate potential buyers, with an eye to keeping ownership local. Guggenheim hired a management firm for the buildings and told city officials he needs 12 to 18 months to analyze issues.

The situation is less clear for 249 units in three buildings along Shaker Boulevard (12500, 12600 and 12701) west of Shaker Square, also referred to as The Vistas and the Residences at Shaker Square.

In late January, Cleveland Housing Court Judge W. Moná Scott, fed up with the owner failing to fix problems including broken elevators and no heat, placed the buildings under community control.

New York owner Michael Chetrit was ordered to correct housing violations and pay \$1.45 million in back taxes. The judge gave the court’s chief housing specialist the power to collect rents and use the funds for repairs.

However, an appellate court stayed that order in April, pending appeal. Property taxes remain unpaid and few repairs completed.

To complicate matters, Cleveland has a separate case in housing court, seeking an appointment of a receiver for the same three buildings so their 107 housing violations are fixed.

That case’s trial was delayed in February when a cyber attack shut down the court’s computer system for weeks. Litigation is pending on that case and the community control appeal.

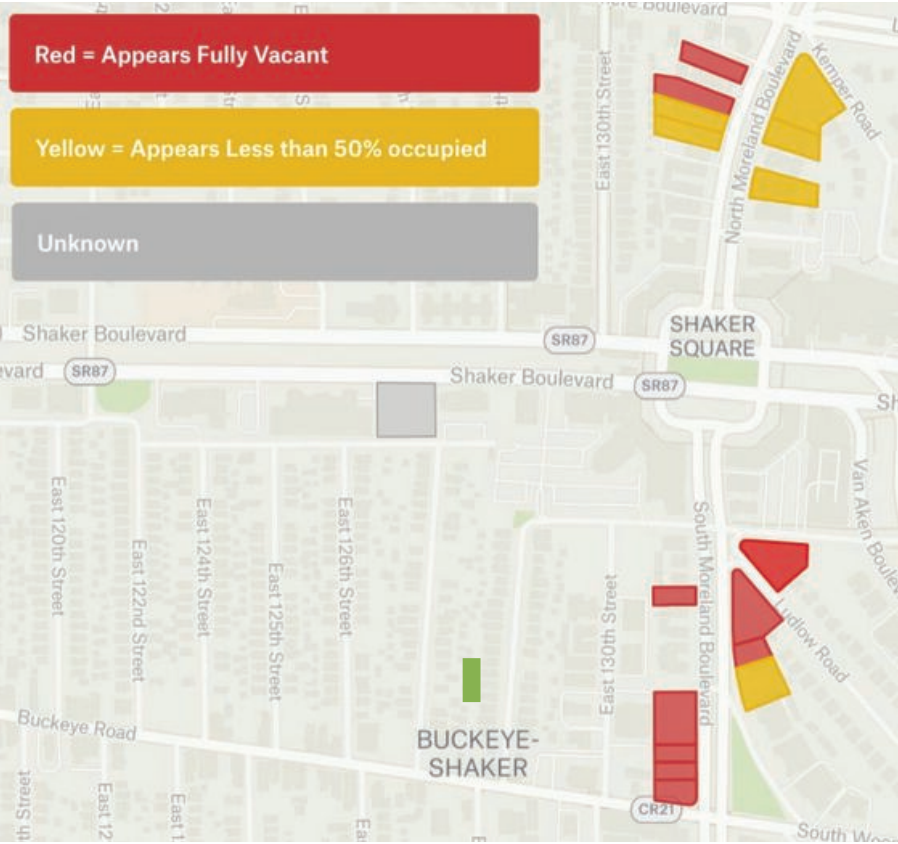
A third case ended after Cleveland condemned a building at 2910 Hampton Road, at South Woodland Road, and tenants were forced to move.

In April, the 45-unit building, owned by a New Mexico company, was sold at sheriff’s sale. A Utah company with a \$1.4 million mortgage on the building purchased it. The company owner told The SHAD Connection he is trying to decide what to do with it.

The former owner in New Mexico had paid \$2.1 million for the building in 2023 and managed to get three mortgages for it. Total mortgage debt is nearly \$3.5 million, according to a Common Pleas Court report. Another \$178,000 is owed in back taxes.

After the building was condemned and tenants ordered to move, the Morelands Group helped 30 households find stable housing.

The Morelands Group’s Meg Weingart said it worked with 10 families to gather documentation to apply for \$45,000 in rental assistance, available from federal COVID relief funds via the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless and EDEN Inc., a housing advocacy group.



STEINER PROPERTIES IN FORECLOSURE	
The Arborview	2843 S. Moreland Blvd.
The Court at Wales	2622 N. Moreland Blvd.
Drexmore Mansion	2805 Ludlow Road
The Galloway	2870 S. Moreland Blvd.
The Granby	2822 S. Moreland Blvd.
Hampton Court	2851 Hampton Road
The Larchmere	2621 S. Moreland Blvd.
Lucy Manor	2635 N. Moreland Blvd.
Ludlow Castle	2825 S. Moreland Blvd.
Oliver Manor	2653 N. Moreland Blvd.
Sheffield Court	2636 N. Moreland Blvd.
Sheffield Court	2630 N. Moreland Blvd
The Stratford	2642 N. Moreland Blvd.
Weatherwood Estates	2880 S. Moreland Blvd.
Woodland Park	14101 S. Woodland Road

Arts and culture

Cats rule but bookmarks make their mark in Loganberry contest

Story and photos by Chris Ball

Bookmarks help readers keep their place, but not all bookmarks know theirs. Loganberry Books held a Bookmark Contest in March, and some of the entries are begging to be put on display rather than stuck between some pages.

Five Loganberry staffers gathered April 2 for an hour of judging and joking. Contestants who entered 10 bookmarks were vying for a \$50 store gift card and the honor of seeing their art reproduced 5,000 times.

The winning entry, “Kitty Reading Party,” by Mel Mintz, will be available for free at the store counter while supplies last.

Mintz’s bookmark faced tough competition but clawed its way to the top by a whisker.

“The winner is adorable,” said store owner and judge Harriett Logan. “It has cats reading books. And it’s purple. And it says Happy 30th Anniversary. Clear winner.”

It should be noted that cats are high in the corporate hierarchy at the bookstore, 13015 Larchmere Blvd.

Judges ranked each entry on a scale of one to five in three categories: artistic skill; bookishness; and creativity / originality.

They were disappointed that no one under the age of 15 entered the contest. One entry was downgraded because it looked like it used Canva, an online graphic design tool. The contest was notably low tech, as all but one judge used pencils with erasers to mark their scoresheets. Technology was not being helpful that day.

“We’ve been having all sorts of computer shenanigans going on,” Logan said. “I opened up my laptop, I can’t remember my password. I don’t know my own name. I’m screwed. I’ll remember it tomorrow.”

Adding up all the scoresheet numbers took longer than the actual judging. “That’s two different thought processes,” Logan said.

The event might become the first annual contest, Logan said. Then she remembered they did it once before, in



Here are the Bookmark Contest winners, first to third places, from left to right.



Judges get down to the business of judging April 2 as Loganberry Books’ Bookmark Contest nears its conclusion.

2020, during COVID. It sort of replaced Loganberry’s Edible Books Contest, which ran for a number of years until they’d had their fill of it.

The two contests don’t quite tie together, because edible bookmarks aren’t really a thing, though a few judges said they probably have used fruit leather as

a bookmark at some point. Bacon was considered but ruled out. Too messy.

Second place went to Alexi Andre Orquidea for “Where you left off.” This was the only two-sided entry. The third-place winner was Amber Ganoe for “Stellaluna wisdom.”

Look out, Larchmere, the word is out that open mic poets have landed

Story and photos by Chris Ball

Be careful walking down Larchmere these days. You might bump into a poet.

Open mic nights are happening at four venues in close proximity on the busy boulevard. You can read a poem or essay in front of an appreciative audience if you can summon the nerve. Or you can sit back and soak up the spoken word for an evening of inspiring entertainment.

The vibe varies from hushed to rowdy but respectful at the four locations: Larchmere Arts, Literary Cleveland, Loganberry Books and UnBar Café.

“I think open mic poetry is part cathartic, part creative,” said Vince Robinson. He has hosted spoken word events around Cleveland since 1997.

“The most important thing is they give people an opportunity to say what’s on their mind in a public event,” he said. “That’s the beauty of it.”

In 2016, he opened Larchmere Arts, where he holds two or three jazz or spoken word events a month, with featured artists. “Generally, if I do a spoken word event, I save space for open mic just so folks who are on the rise have an opportunity to do what they do,” he said.

Down the street at Literary Cleveland, “One Mic Open” is in its second year. Eric Odum has hosted it at various locations for 11 years. “Literary Cleveland probably has been the best venue I’ve worked with, especially on the marketing side,” he said. “They’re really helpful.”

Larchmere is a nice fit for poetry events, he said. “It’s in the middle of a neighborhood, draws people going there for bars and food, stores. It’s a highly concentrated arts area, similar to Gordon Square.”

Odum aims to provide a platform for poets of all experience levels. “People think they have to be this seasoned, amazing artist who’s been doing it for years.” Not true, he said. “As long as you create space for all of them, that creates energy for a good open mic.”

Three rows of folding chairs were filled in Literary Cleveland’s converted storefront at the March and April events. Some came to support a friend. Others were trying to decide whether to take the mic someday.

“Seeing other people being vulnerable without fear encourages those who might have some hesitation to break past those barriers and share something, to be vulnerable,” Odum said. “And I know that’s not easy for a lot of people, but once they do it for the first time, they continue to have that urge to share that deeply personal work.”

Audience members snap their fingers instead of clap during a poem if a line resonates with them.

“I like the format, it’s pretty leisurely and down to earth,” said Rosary Kennedy, an active poet for 30 years.

“It’s therapy,” said Tajuan Richards, a Boardman barista. “I try to let my words



“One Mic Open” host Eric Odum introduces the next poet April 11 at Literary Cleveland.



The joint was jumping April 4 for “Unbarrrd Poetry Open Mic.”

help others ... to create this cycle of healing. ... It’s also just very fun, all of it. You can’t forget about that part.”

As host, Odum keeps the mood light, assisted by co-host Michelle Smith. “Madame Voice of God has spoken,” he playfully announces after she reads who’s next on the sign-up sheet. “Me and Eric cultivate a lot of humor,” Smith said. “We have a whole rapport. We both lean into that a lot. I think we’re both incredibly vulnerable, too.”

Smith, who recently was named Poet Laureate of Cleveland Heights, also has hosted Loganberry Books’ monthly “Broad­sides & Ephemera Open Mic” since October. “It’s a bookstore, so what I’m really trying to do is give these poets in the area who have books exposure and give them book sales,” she said. “Cleveland has a tremendous literary community.”

A featured poet reads a handful of works, and then it opens up. March’s event saw a modest turnout. “A lot of people don’t realize that it’s an open mic, too,” Smith said. She hopes it will grow.

UnBar Café was packed April 4 for “Unbarrrd Poetry Open Mic.” Jerrod Amir Shakir hosts the twice-monthly event, which debuted in September. “Uncensored, unfiltered, unapologetic” is its slogan. “I want people to be themselves when they’re on that stage and

feel free to do that, to express themselves, because that’s what’s really freeing, and that’s why most of us do this,” he said.

Start time is listed at 8 p.m., but it didn’t get rolling until after 9. A deejay blasted tunes as a warmup. A bar serving drinks in the back contributed to the boisterous energy.

“The audience here is more chill,” said Mary, who calls herself the Naked Artist. “No one shows up on time.”

At several points, people talking in the back prompted chants in the front of “Respect the mic.” Shakir said that was unusual.

It’s all part of the power of poetry. “An open mic is a place of community but also maybe a bit of a laboratory and maybe a bit of a classroom,” Smith said. “That first time when you speak those words, and they reverberate through a room, and you realize that you have a room full of people, and they are hanging on your words, it’s power. And power for some people, it’s intoxicating, it’s what they seek, it’s what they want, but for some people, power is scary. Some people get very comfortable with being a vessel of power, and some people never do.”



Michelle Smith

Poem delivered, message received, poet exhausted

Story and photo by Chris Ball

Deborah Taddeo brought several poems to read at “One Mic Open.” Which one would she pick? She was nervous about her top choice.

Previously, she decided not to read “People Say the Darnedest Things” at a different open mic event because she felt it was too raw. “However, I wanted people to hear the poem to understand that you can’t let the messages you receive, no matter who they are from, define you,” she said.

Now it was her turn in the middle of Literary Cleveland’s April 11 program. “Oddly enough, the person prior to my name being called to read [had] read a poem that had the same message. I decided I had to try to read the poem,” she said.

The deeply personal work drew a series of audible gasps from the supportive audience. In an evening full of intensely introspective readings, this was perhaps the showstopper. People were stunned.

“I think it’s one of the most beautifully courageous pieces I’ve ever heard,” co-host Michelle Smith said later. “For her to share it with all of us that night is a testament to her strength and bravery as an artist and person, and I think to the empathy, safety, openness, and sense of community Eric [Odum] has cultivated in the space.”

Taddeo slipped out of the storefront 10 minutes later, before the program ended.

“I was embarrassed, thinking I didn’t want people to feel sorry for me, because I didn’t read it to say ‘Here, look at me, I am a victim,’” she said. “I am not a victim, I am a survivor. I am proud that I finally woke up and moved on, and if I can get someone to see themselves for who they really are, not who others or society tells them they are, I would be so proud. I want everyone to know they have a choice.”

Taddeo has been writing regularly since taking a memoir class in 2015. It may not have prepared her for that night.

“I left because I was physically and emotionally exhausted,” she said. “When I got home, I went right to bed and slept soundly. I woke up and realized I really needed to read those words, and I realized the people that heard them understood. The people at the open mic weren’t sorry for me, they just understood.”

People Say the Darnedest Things

By Deborah Taddeo

When I was child, my mother told me I was filthy and disgusting.

When I was a child, my neighbor saw me pick up a stray cat and told me I was going to get rabies and die.

When a teenager, the speech therapist trying to help me with my lisp, said, “I can’t help you because of the structure of your mouth and with the way you speak, people are going to have difficulty understanding you, and you’ll have difficulty getting a job.”

When I was twenty, engaged for a year and pregnant from the only boy I had ever dated, my father came to my room on my wedding day to say, “Your mother and I just want you to know you don’t deserve this day.”

When my children were little and I went to my parents and told them I needed to get out of my marriage, my mother said, “We’ll help you but our lives will be over. How will you ever get a job? You have no skills.”

When my seven-year-old told my mother his father hit his five-year-old brother while I was at a PTA meeting, my mother called me and screamed, “How could you leave your children home alone with him? You know what he’s like!”

When my boys were teenagers and struggling with alcohol and drug abuse, my mother called me at my job, the job I had gotten to get myself and children away from their father. She screamed, “You are the worst mother on the face of the earth, your daughter’s going to end up in a psych ward next.”

When I finally went for a divorce, my mother said, “I feel sorry for your husband. He’s so sad.”

When my twin brother heard about the divorce, he said, “I don’t know how I feel. I have to hear both sides and then I’ll decide if I will support you.”

When they found my first born, who’d being missing two weeks, drowned in the canal behind the bar where he’d been drinking, I laid on the floor, keening and crying uncontrollably. My mother asked my father, “Why is she making that strange noise?”

When they wheeled me into a room for a colonoscopy at the hospital where I worked, to determine where I was bleeding internally, the nurse wheeling me in asked, “How do you feel knowing your son committed suicide?”

When I grew stronger, I went back and told several people what I remembered they said. I asked them why? All of them responded, they did not remember, they would have never said the words I repeated back to them.

Why does my list stop here? When no one remembered the words that had devastated and controlled me, I realized I am not dirty, filthy, undeserving, a horrible mother or powerful enough to be responsible for everything bad. Throughout my life I did the best I could with what I had. I have said things to people that hurt them. The people whose words hurt me did the best they could with what they had. I forgave them and myself. This list remains only to remind me of what should not have been remembered, held on to and believed. I stopped listening. I started living my authentic life.

“I really needed to read those words.”

- Deborah Taddeo



Demolition looms for Van Aken Plaza, doomed by its rooftop parking

By Ken Prendergast

Although the demolition of a historic retail strip adjoining Shaker Square was on the Cleveland Landmarks Commission’s docket, much of the panel’s February discussion focused on what might come next. Ultimately, the commission unanimously approved razing the two-structured Van Aken Plaza at 2742-2782 Van Aken Blvd. for a landscaped greenspace — for now.

The long-term play for the 1.7-acre site at Van Aken and Drexmore Road is to construct a 110- to 135-unit market-rate apartment building, as Paran Management Co. has considered since it acquired the property in 2018 through its affiliate Bonwit Teller LLC. Paran has marketed the site to potential development partners, but the property’s legal status has precluded any progress.

In June 2019, the owner was cited for building code violations for interior and exterior maintenance and had one month to respond. The matter was referred to Cleveland Housing Court later that year. The case is still pending, court records show.

The building’s condition is the result of a decision decades ago to build a vehicle ramp behind the retail strip and pave a layer of asphalt on its roof to allow cars to park there. The combined weight weakened the structure, causing portions of the roof to collapse, said Dan Musson, secretary and chief city planner at the Cleveland Landmarks Commission.

“It seems like the decision in the early 1950s to park on the roof of this building is ultimately what condemned it,” Musson said. “It just took us a while to get here. The building is essentially obsolete. Even

bringing it back online to add more retail to an area that’s struggling to fill retail spaces seems a bit counterproductive. It certainly contributes [architecturally] to the district, but it’s beyond its salvageable life, in our opinion.”

In October 2021, the northern part of the retail strip, a 1939-built structure, was declared unsafe and condemned by the Cleveland Building Department. Another notice was issued in January 2024 for building code violations regarding additional exterior decay, according to public records.

A second structure to the south was built in 1979. Both are vacant and were recently cleared of hazardous materials, Joe Del Balso, managing director of Paran Management, told the Landmarks Commission in February. In November 2024, Paran received \$802,369 in Ohio Brownfield Program funding to remediate and remove the 34,000-square-foot Van Aken Plaza.

“We don’t really have a transition plan at this time, other than the site being marketed toward multifamily development,” Del Balso said. “We had interested parties that are interested in the site including the ownership group themselves participating. But at this point our focus is on the demolition.”

“We need to get the property out of housing court so we can transition to the next step,” Del Balso said. “And we’ve really determined that the only way out of housing court is to get the building down.”

The owner’s demolition contractor, Sitetech Inc. of Grafton in Lorain County, submitted a demolition permit application in December with a projected cost of \$495,000. But since the building is in the Shaker Square Historic



Photos by Chris Ball

Even if you wanted to, you soon won’t be able to enter the ramp to the second-floor parking deck atop Van Aken Plaza. It’s coming down.

District, it cannot be razed without a certificate of appropriateness from the Landmarks Commission. The certificate was approved in February.

The contractor will retain all salvage rights to materials removed from the property. The exception is that the contractor will attempt to detach bulkhead panels from the demolished structures for potential reuse and repair of any damaged panels on the adjacent building at 2720 Van Aken.

A post-demolition interim use as a parking lot was considered. But when the demolition request first appeared before the Greater Cuyahoga Valley Historic Design Review Advisory Committee, it expressed concern that a parking lot would endure for decades. So a landscaped greenspace was urged instead and not objected to by Paran. Landmarks Commission echoed that recommendation.

The demolition was supported by Cleveland Neighborhood Progress (CNP), which co-owns with Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. the commercial buildings surrounding Shaker Square. The curved, two-story, 85-year-old office building at Van Aken and Shaker boulevards, also owned by Bonwit Teller, will be retained.

“We believe that by expediting the demolition of the strip center and parking lot, a longtime nuisance

will be eliminated and opened up for new development opportunities,” CNP’s letter of support to the commission read. “The retention of the [curved] Bonwit Teller Building allows for the historic nature and continuity of the building fabric of the surrounding neighborhood to be maintained.”

“I’ve lived in this area for a long, long time,” said Ward 4 Councilwoman Deborah Gray, also a member of the Landmarks Commission. “And I remember when this particular area was one of the most beautiful, inspiring, busy areas back in the day. Over time, times change, people change, demographics change, areas change.

“What’s needed for this area now is something for the community and for the future,” she said. “To see this historical building deteriorate like it did, it is time for it to go and for us to look into the future to have something new there.”

“Paying close attention to however this site moves forward is critical for the rebirth of this area,” said Landmarks Commission Chairwoman Julie Trott. “Attention to the scale and architectural character of the area will allow that future redevelopment to be successful.”

A new development could include the use of English-themed architecture like Tudor and Georgian styles which predominate Shaker Square today. But comission member Michele Anderson wanted Paran or other developers to first invest in reviving the aging apartment buildings along South Moreland, south of Shaker Square.

“I realize you’re a private developer; you can do what you want,” Anderson said. “But if there’s new construction that’s not tied into the upgrading and renovating of the existing [apartments nearby], I don’t think it’s good for either.”

“A thriving area is good for everyone,” Del Balso replied. “We see ourselves as part of the Square. So even though we’re a different ownership and disconnected, we have ties to the Square, we want to complement it and be a part of it.”

This story first appeared in the NeoTrans blog at tinyurl.com/lyrcfvaj. Used with permission.



Judge focuses on rule of law in advocacy group talks



Photo by Chris Ball

Common Pleas Judge William V.B. Vodrey recently gave speeches on the rule of law to two advocacy groups. Vodrey, who lives in Cleveland near Shaker Square, spoke at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Cleveland Heights at the Feb. 24 meeting of Indivisible NEO. In April, he spoke to a Zoom meeting of the Lady Liberty League (L3), a new group that invites speakers to address liberty, leadership and legacy. Vodrey was elected to Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court in 2020 after 19 years as a magistrate at Cleveland Municipal Court and six years as an assistant county prosecutor. A graduate of Oberlin College and the Case Western Reserve University School of Law, he’s active with St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, the American Constitution Society and the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable. He and his wife, Susan, have three grown sons. Indivisible NEO is online at linktr.ee/indivisible.neo. L3’s April meeting was organized by Susan Duschiko, a Parma Heights councilwoman. Email: ladylibertyleague@gmail.com. L3 posted Vodrey’s talk on YouTube at tinyurl.com/3j4ss6jp.

COMMON PLEAS JUDGE WILLIAM V.B. VODREY OFFERS THESE SUGGESTIONS FOR HANDLING THE NEXT FOUR YEARS:

- Follow reliable news sources.
- Keep informed without yielding to doom scrolling.
- Remain engaged.
- Help with voter registration, vote and encourage others to do so.
- Tell elected representatives and the media your views.
- Give generously of your time, talent and treasure to worthy organizations.
- Strive to save American democracy.
- Peacefully protest at every opportunity, especially at next year’s midterms and in 2028.
- Hold fast to the Constitution.
- Obey the law; strive to change bad laws.
- And please, I ask you, don’t ever, ever lose hope.



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“Since 1972”

Buckeye Road

Renovations build on vacant Moreland Theatre’s colorful history

Story and photos by Grant Segall

A parrot used to guard the lobby of the former Moreland Theatre. Local wits held that it would squawk whenever anyone came to serve papers on the owner, who’d promptly slip out the back.

In nearly a century of ups and downs, the decaying but ornate 1927 theater has hosted many kinds of activities, including vaudeville, silent movies, talkies, concerts, rallies, go-go dances, sermons, gambling, high-stakes poker, after-hours liquor, and beach parties on three inches of sand. Former Hungarian Prime Minister Michael Karolyi spoke there in his country’s language, and so did many others, since the theater’s Buckeye neighborhood was believed to be the U.S.’s biggest for that nationality.

Now Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. has begun to renovate the Moreland building at 11810-11824 Buckeye Road as one of the agency’s many efforts to boost the struggling neighborhood.

The Moreland has suffered from leaks, flames and years. But some features survive that reflect an opulent past and maybe a rich future. “It is lavish,” Plain Dealer critic Emerson Batdorff wrote in 1975, during the Moreland’s brief run as an art cinema, “with stained glass, wrought iron, carved plaster and Hungarian murals.” The mostly baroque building also holds brick, limestone, terrazzo, lions’ heads, mythical figures called griffins and the lower half of a mural showing a woman nude except for dancing boots.

The vacant building has about 36,000



Moreland Theatre's opening ad



Chantal sings in a video recorded in March at the Moreland Theatre.

square feet on two stories, with a partial basement. The theater takes up about half the space. Storefronts, offices, dressing rooms and apartments fill the rest.

According to BBC, Plain Dealer archives, and websites called Cinema Treasures and After the Final Curtain, the Moreland was one of five area theaters owned by A.T. Wallach. It cost \$300,000 to build, the equivalent of \$9.5 million today.

The new Moreland boasted the latest equipment, including a \$40,000 Kimball organ. It opened with the Merrymakers band

and the silent movie “The Cat and the Canary,” aptly set in a spooky mansion.

Soon the Moreland changed hands, then closed in the Depression. For decades, it kept transforming, reopening and reclosing.

In the 1960s, it was briefly the Players Theatre Cafe, complete with parrot. The parrot’s master also owned several Ohio nursing homes cited for health violations and a fatal fire. He was finally indicted for larceny and fled to Louisiana, which never extradited him.

In 1968, raids before dawn at

what had become the Second Shadow Lounge nabbed illegal gambling and liquor sales. Soon a fire of unknown cause nearly gutted the lobby.

From 1978 to 2007, the Moreland was the Ohio Northwest Convention Center of the Church of God in Christ. Since then, it has belonged to community development corporations.

A few years ago, Cleveland rebuilt and landscaped much of Buckeye Road for \$4.5 million. The city also gave BBC \$300,000 in American Rescue Plan money last year for work on the Moreland and a \$3.9 million forgivable loan in January for the Moreland and other Buckeye buildings.

BBC has resurfaced the Moreland’s roof, repaired its foundation and removed its asbestos. But the building still needs much more.

In 2011, the Moreland entered the National Register of Historic Places. Last August, so did the Buckeye Commercial Historic District. BBC hopes to help Black artists develop technical and entrepreneurial skills in the district. The agency is seeking grants, developers, operators, artists, tenants, residents, retailers and others.

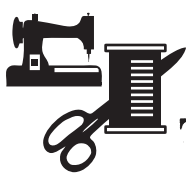
For all the theater’s chronicled history, a mystery remains. No one seems to know why the place was called the Moreland half a mile from the like-named boulevard.

For more information, see bbcdevelopment.org/buckeye.



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Retail

Adun Spice Co.’s Ramat Wiley brings flavorful ingredients to Larchmere

By Christine Jindra

The new Adun Spice Co., an artisanal spice shop on Larchmere, is a tribute to owner Ramat Wiley’s Nigerian heritage and her family’s Yoruba language. Before her father died, he taught Wiley one Yoruba word a day, and she later chose “adun,” meaning flavor or sweetness, as her company’s name.

Flavor – and sweet elegance – are what Adun Spice, 12721 Larchmere Blvd., offers up. Its shelves are full of tantalizing handcrafted salts and spices that Wiley bottles as well as a curated selection of pantry supplies.

The store sells heirloom Rancho Gordo dried beans, Nielsen-Massey Madagascar vanilla extract, local honey and maple syrups, and olive oils, marinades and sauces from small-batch providers nationwide. Look around and you’ll see tempting cookbooks, unique cutting boards, kitchen tools and food-themed puzzles.

Photos by McKinley Wiley, Ramat’s portrait and film photographer husband (thedarkroomcompany.com), are near the entrance. At the back is a massive, nine-foot by eight-foot, colorful painting that Wiley commissioned from local artist Ewuresi Archer to depict Wiley, her mother and her grandmother together in an allegorical homeland.

The store is a mecca for foodies, but nearby residents stop in to pick up spices and salts as they cook, Wiley said.

“Food creates a lot of different memories for people, and I hope most of them are good,” Wiley said. “I love helping people create their memories.”

With a culinary degree from Cuyahoga Community College, Wiley, 42, worked as a commercial food stylist and chef. During COVID, as she searched for a new career, she realized how much she loved spices.

“Fresh spices are wonderful, but dried spices offer so much complexity,” Wiley said.

“When I travel, I always look at what they’re cooking in different regions and how they use ingredients. I’ve always sought out spice shops.”

She started small – crafting nine items – and sold them at farmers markets, pop-ups and online. In 2022, Wiley opened Adun Spice in a stall at the Van Aken District. She closed in late 2023 to prepare for a major surgery.

By then, Wiley said, her business had outgrown its 200-square-foot space. “I would often have to stand outside [the stall] so customers could shop,” she said.

As she thought about her next move, Wiley said, “I had always had Larchmere on my mind.”

It took a while, but she found her current space and approached owner Anthony DiVita, of nearby DiVita’s Deli & Beverage. Since Adun Spice opened last November, it has become a neighborhood favorite.

“Ramat is a great addition to the street,” DiVita said.

Wiley’s spices are single-origin, ethically and globally sourced with no additives or anti-caking agents. Wiley uses air-tight lids to seal her glass jars – without plastic shaker lids.

“Spices are meant to be spooned out,” she said, adding that Adun sells measuring spoons that fit into her jars.

Adun now offers 110 spices and salts, including her own blends, such as citrus-garlic, salt-free jerk and golden milk. The latter blend of turmeric, cinnamon, ginger, black pepper and cardamon is used in drinks. Adun’s product list is at tinyurl.com/3w4y5yxr.

The spices are fresh – nothing on the shelves is more than 60 days old, Wiley said. Dried spices are good for eight to 12 months; for three years if they are whole spices, she said.

One of Wiley’s newest ideas – a class of 10 people meeting every three months – sold out in days.

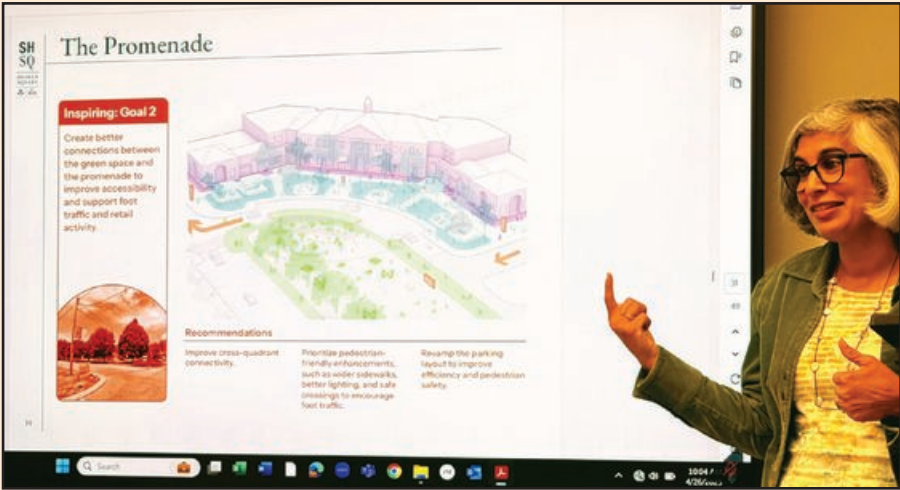
Future events will be listed at adunspiceco.com. Hours are: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Wednesday to Saturday; and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sunday.



Ramat Wiley

CNP tries to change public perceptions on crime

Continued from page 1



Tania Menesse, President and CEO of Cleveland Neighborhood Progress Inc., gives an update on the Shaker Square vision plan with the Shaker Heights chapter of the League of Women Voters on April 26.

People often ask her about the Square, she said. “I’ll just be walking on Chadbourne, and they’ll be like, ‘What’s happening in the Square? We don’t know anything.’ And I kind of want to strangle the person. And then I also feel like, ‘Oh, thank goodness you’re asking.’”

And so she’s making the rounds to share their vision plan unveiled late last year. On March 31, Menesse appeared on Ideastream Public Media’s morning talk show “Sound of Ideas” for a segment on “The next chapter for Shaker Square.”

Shaker Square resident James Callihan emailed the show to disagree with the vision plan’s concept of reducing the road around the Square from two lanes to one. Menesse replied that traffic and engineering studies are still to come. “But we really do need to make this a more walkable space where people really feel comfortable,” she said.

She elaborated later, “But we won’t make any changes until we understand the turning radiuses of buses and what impact it will have from a traffic perspective.”

And the process will be public.

“People will be able to weigh in. Nothing’s going to happen in the middle of the night,” she said.

They continue to retool the retail spaces. “You really want your first floor to be active space where people are interacting,” she said. The Rape Crisis Center may move to the second floor of the northeast quadrant, where they are installing an elevator. And they are raising funds to add elevators in two other quadrants.

They want to improve pedestrian entrances to the Square, including the indoor walkway next to CVS. “We are hoping to reactivate that space, most likely with art and creativity,” she said. “It’s very stark right now. That is on the short list of simple things that we are intending to do.”

They’re working with Destination Cleveland to light the tall rear wall of Atlas Cinemas, using animated and synchronized lighting that recently debuted on Public Square.

Other changes include Fashions by Fowler clothing store possibly moving from the northwest to the southeast quadrant, but store owners Tracy and Renay Fowler declined to comment.

“It’s the fun stuff that will actually help improve that perception.”

– Tania Menesse

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By Chris Ball

Former Onaway neighborhood resident Clint O’Connor and his two sons, Jack and Kevin, who attended Onaway Elementary School, appeared recently on “Pop Culture Jeopardy.” Colin Jost hosts the new “Jeopardy” game show spinoff on Amazon Prime, and the O’Connors appear on episode 23 of season one. While chatting up the O’Connors, Jost said Clint was a movie reviewer for 30 years. Clint modestly corrected the record by merely saying “For a long time.” He worked at The Plain Dealer and later at the Akron Beacon Journal. Without revealing who won, it can be said that the O’Connors did not embarrass themselves, although they did miss a question about Shaker Heights author Celeste Ng.

Up and Down the Boulevard



Fiddlehead Gallery



Luxe Accesso Fashion



Art gallery pop-up



Ageles Studios

By Andrea C. Turner

New LCA officers

Carol Mitchem took over from Diane Pride-Mays as president of the Larchmere Community Association at its April 9 annual meeting. Pride-Mays served for three years as president and three years before that as vice president. Mitchem moves up from first vice president. Lisa Hopps is staying on as secretary, as is Susan Price as treasurer. Krista Cabrera was elected first vice president, and Andrew Guggenheim will be second vice president. All five officers were elected without opposition. In an email, Mitchem wrote, “I hope LCA continues to be viable – that we matter to the residents and merchants of the community. I hope we can continue to connect with other diverse organizations and have them share with us.”

Ageles Studios is back

The modern, vintage, designer and contemporary resale boutique has reopened at 12301 Larchmere Blvd. Hours are Saturday and Sunday from noon to 6 p.m. and Monday to Friday by appointment only. Call 216.815.3897 for an appointment to shop for chic and sophisticated clothing, shoes and accessories.

Want to break some eggs?

Big Al’s Diner is hiring. Inquire within. Diner hours are 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at 12600 Larchmere Blvd.

UnBar gets a sister

Melissa Garrett-Hirsch, owner of Larchmere’s UnBar Café, has expanded to Shaker Square with Café Indigo, 13201 Shaker Square. The Feb. 25 grand opening received strong community support and coverage from Crain’s Cleveland Business. “I’m excited for the community because I know they’ve been waiting,” she told Crain’s. Make sure to try Cafe Indigo’s ice cream this summer.

Cleveland Mag’s top eats

Two Larchmere restaurants made Cleveland Magazine’s recent list of 25 best local restaurants: Poppy and Batuqui. And the reader-voted selections for 2025’s Silver Spoon Awards named Poppy as Best East Side restaurant.

Poppy, 12502 Larchmere, opened in 2023, seats 75, and serves seasonal American classics. Key players are owner Jessica Parkison and Executive Chef Erik Kneip. Poppy’s food is classic with modern twists. Dishes range from grilled whole branzino, served with lemon cream, confit shallot, blistered cherry tomato, rice cake and fried capers, to the Poppy Burger, with a house beef patty, horseradish remoulade, smoked

cheddar, cherry peppers and arugula. The experience is inspired by the owner’s grandmother and the historic renovated house and spacious patio that it calls home. Summer happy hour is Tuesday through Thursday from 5 to 6:30 p.m.

Batuqui, 12706 Larchmere, opened in 2015, seats 32 (but is expanding to 110 soon at its new location at 12624 Larchmere Blvd.) and serves traditional Brazilian foods. Key players are owners Carla Batista and Gustavo Nogueira. Hailing from Bahia and Minas Gerais, regions renowned for their culinary prowess, Batista and Nogueira present traditional flavors like feijoada, a quintessential black bean stew; pao de queijo, cheese bread from Minas Gerais; and the national cocktail, caipirinha. “Cooking is a cherished family legacy,” says Batista.

Fiddlehead to expand

After 13 years at 12736 Larchmere Blvd., Fiddlehead Gallery is moving to a larger space nearby. The retail space will be larger, and they will add an 1,800-square-foot studio. Owner Susan Rozman is speaking with artists skilled in jewelry making (with the help of a donated enamel kiln), creature creating, costume design, sculpting, and other crafts. She seeks artists with a creative vision influenced by the natural world and the desire to upcycle using different materials. Fiddlehead will expand its craft-making classes and add classes in multimedia and product development as it looks for instructors to join its arts community. It builds upon Fiddlehead’s mission of supporting local artists and contributing to the community. Call 216.231.9400 or online at fiddleheadgallery.com.

La Pecora Happy Hour

Enjoy happy hour on La Pecora Pizzabar’s patio, 12712 Larchmere, Monday to Friday from 5 to 7 p.m. with complementary wood-fired cheesy bread (bar only).

Rug pulled out

Larchmere Oriental Rugs has closed its doors and cleared out its inventory. The 3,168-square-foot building at 12812 Larchmere is listed for sale at \$295,000 through Hanna Commercial Real Estate. Interested buyers should contact agent Julie Sabroff at 216.861.7200 or juliesabroff@HannaCRE.com

It’s a Loganberry summer

Loganberry Books, 13015 Larchmere, plans a number of summer events, including hiking, nature journaling, music and poetry. In collaboration with the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Loganberry

will host a free open house hike and workshop for kids ages 4+ on Saturday, June 14, at 11 a.m. The event is at Blue Heron Preserve, 14747 Ravenna Road in Burton. The workshop includes naturalist-led hikes through the preserve and nature journaling activities led by Sharon Dewar, author of the book “50 Hikes for Kids in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.” The workshop is free, but registration is required. Preorder a signed copy of the book from Loganberry at tinyurl.com/yj3ubeh6.

On Thursday, June 26, at 7 p.m., join string trio Renovare Music for a free concert highlighting their 2025 Documentary Songwriting project, “A Hive’s Song, the Frequency of Sisterhood,” written in collaboration with My Sistas Keeper EduApiaries (myskcle.org). These original songs reflect the stories of Black, female, urban beekeepers in Cleveland. Renovare Music is a Cleveland nonprofit that bridges divided communities and creates restorative experiences through music, storytelling, and relationships. My Sistas Keeper EduApiaries is a network of Black urban beekeepers that brings innovation and imagination to families, schools, community gardens and urban farms by creating safe education exposure experiences centered around beekeeping knowledge.

On Wednesday, July 30, at 7 p.m., Loganberry celebrates local poet Ali Black’s new poetry collection, “We Look Better Alive,” at Shaker Heights’ Main Public Library. This event is free, but registration is requested at tinyurl.com/48yb62dj.

Luxe Accesso Fashion Boutique

Breiana Mays, owner of Luxe Accesso Fashion Boutique, opened her women’s clothing store March 1 at 12801 Larchmere Blvd. Hours are Monday to Thursday, 1 to 8 p.m.; and Friday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. The color-filled interior is a welcoming space to shoppers of clothing, handbags and footwear.

Pop-Up in Storefront

You’d expect a bloom of flowers in early May, but instead an art studio popped up in the recently vacated Gentleman’s Quarters storefront, 12807 Larchmere Blvd., featuring paintings and jewelry. Check out its window display.

Reduce Anxiety with Abide Yoga

Abide Yoga East may be just the place to help combat any anxiety you may be feeling. Proprietor Hope Hamling offers sessions in Stabilizing Practices for Anxiety Management that last 60 to 75 minutes. The practices were designed to help surf the waves of uncertainty and change all that humans have to navigate. Through these practices, one can begin to create a more flexible nervous system, leading to a more spacious, joyful life. 13001 Larchmere Blvd., 216.379.0626.

Larchmere Sidewalk Sale

Mark your calendar for this special day of local shopping in support of Larchmere businesses on Friday, Aug. 29, beginning at 10 a.m.

Read like a writer

The best way to improve as a writer is to write. The second best way is to read and analyze contemporary literature, says Literary Cleveland. Executive Director Matt Weinkam leads a monthly class that takes a deep dive into the craft of a short story. Unpack character, structure, dialogue, plot, details, theme, tone, cultural context and more using examples from contemporary writers representing the future of short fiction. Discuss what is learned from writing styles, projects, and processes. Join for advanced-level craft lessons, writer-centered discussions, and great reading. Each session is four parts. Session Two began in May but continues June 3, July 1 and Aug. 5. Session Three starts Sept. 2. Classes are from 7 to 8:30 p.m. remotely on Zoom. Register at tinyurl.com/4syyskwtr.

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Empty storefronts worry Larchmere residents

Continued from page 1

progressive dinner or food week, said Peter Reuter. He moved his Scorpacciata Pasta Co. from the Van Aken District (also Adun Spice’s former home) to Larchmere last year. “We will follow up when we aren’t so busy,” he said. Some properties have changed hands recently.

Juan Vergara, owner of Barroco Larchmere restaurant, purchased his building from his landlord and expanded by adding La Pecora Pizzabar next door. Carla Batista and Gustavo Nogueira also bought a building. They soon will relocate Batuqui, their Brazilian restaurant, two doors west to a larger space. Commercial brokers are marketing

“We need a leader who’s creative and proactive.”
– Liz Tekus

individual buildings, including a recently closed rug store (asking price: \$295,000), the former powerhouse building on the east end (\$295,000), and an art gallery to the west (\$695,000) that recently got a new roof. Akin Affrica, owner of Zanzibar Soul Fusion at Shaker Square, has purchased three buildings (12019 and 12015 Larchmere and 2608 East 121 St.).



Susan Rozman of Fiddlehead Gallery addresses a Larchmere Merchants Association cocktail party April 3 at Adun Spice Co. Photo by Chris Ball

He plans to open a boutique bed and breakfast in one building. The others will be for short-term rentals and retail space. “We’re going through the city’s planning process now,” he said. Tania Menesse, head of Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, the umbrella group for community development organizations, is optimistic about

Larchmere. However, federal cuts are creating challenges for development programs, she said. “Larchmere has created a community feel, an appeal that I’m really confident they’ll bounce back. But, yes, it’s difficult when you don’t have the community development support that they need and that so much of the city doesn’t have.”

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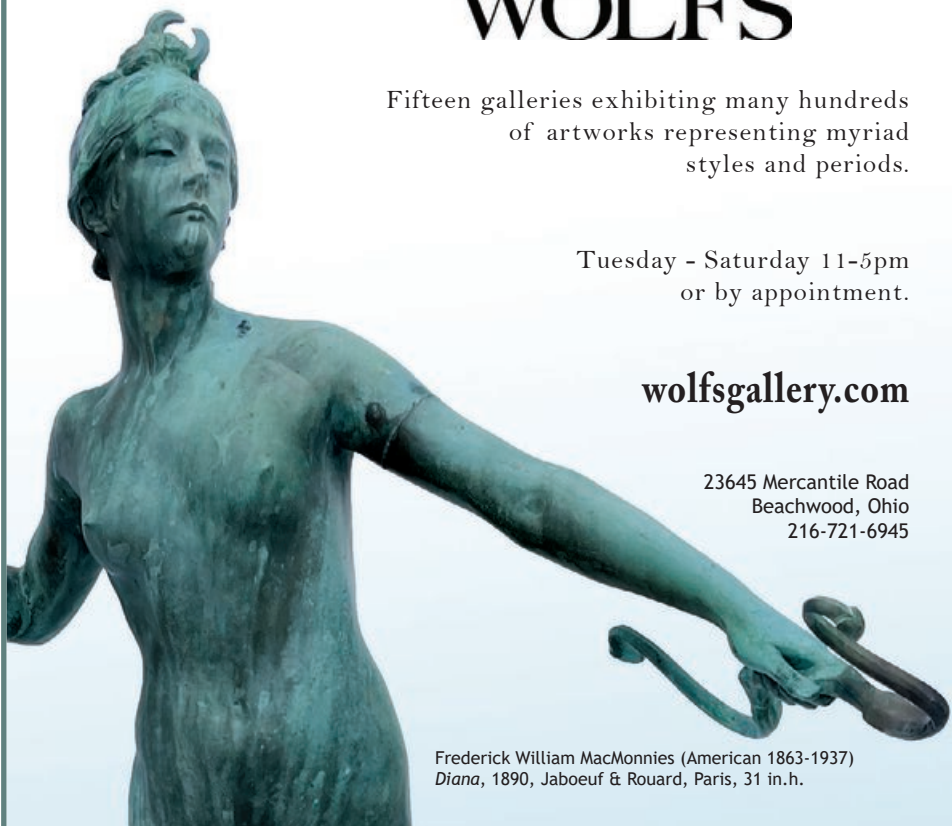
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Housing
Jarvis brings listening skills to new role

By Chris Ball



Erika Jarvis is the new senior program manager for the Morelands Group. She will work for 15 to 20 hours a week on tenant engagement for the advocacy group. Jarvis, 37, spent three years with Community Builders on Buckeye Road in a similar capacity, working with Woodhill Homes residents. In March, she started a consulting firm, Engagement Matters LLC, to help nonprofits and companies learn how to engage with residents. The hardest part of her new job, she said, will be building trust with tenants. “I think I have the ability to really listen and provide solutions at the same time,” she said. “If you present me with a problem, in my

head I’m already thinking of five or six solutions. One of the things I want to work on with the Morelands Group is not doing for people but doing with people.” Born and raised mostly in Cleveland’s Glenville neighborhood, Jarvis has also lived in Buckeye. She earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from Cleveland State University and a master’s degree in public affairs from Indiana Wesleyan University. “I want to help the Morelands Group activate these tenants, because they want to be active, but their situation is so difficult because you’re dealing with a lot of landlords who don’t even live in the country,” she said. “But we can still find ways to make sure they have power and help tenants come up with solutions. ... The Morelands Group can be that conduit to help them be where they need to go.”

Photo courtesy of North Union Farmers Market

The tradition of sheep shearing demonstrations returned this spring after a year off, as the North Union Farmers Market celebrated its return to outdoors at Shaker Square on April 5 by giving some friendly farm animals a trim.



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Good fortune follows flood as Shaker Square dance school stays in place

Story and photos by Chris Ball

Heather Young was shopping at Heinen’s last May when she got a call from work saying it was raining in the office.

“But it isn’t raining outside,” she said.

“You’re not understanding me. It’s raining in the studio from upstairs.”

Young, who is office manager and an instructor at Cleveland City Dance as well as executive director of City Ballet of Cleveland, quickly texted colleagues that a pipe had burst in their Shaker Square building. “Many people descended,” she said. “They helped us move costumes out of the basement, which was the big issue. We didn’t want the costumes to get ruined.”

The leak shut down half of their program offerings. They couldn’t use the girl’s bathroom or the third studio. “The front office was closed, so it looked like we were closed,” said Courtney Laves-Mearini, owner and director of Cleveland City Dance. “We usually get a lot of walk-in traffic. We couldn’t get that because we physically didn’t have a front door.”

But the disaster brought opportunity. “It was the good that came out of the bad because we had the big flood,” said Evelyn DeLiso, board member and treasurer for City Ballet of Cleveland. “Courtney was looking for another location for the studio to expand, because any growing endeavor needs more space. And when they were rebuilding downstairs after the flood, they discovered this doorway that came to the second floor.”

And on the second floor, down a long hallway in Shaker Square’s southwest quadrant, they found a large vacant room.

“We hadn’t imagined it like this,” said Donna Burrer, president of City Ballet of Cleveland’s board.

“We saw this space and said, well, could that be an option?” Young said. “Instead of moving and leaving Shaker Square, could we expand upstairs, and what would that look like? And it worked.”

That former office space above Dave’s Market became their fourth dance studio, and the only one with windows. It was ready to open at the end of August, right

at the start of the school year.

“And we were able to stay at the Square, where we have been since 2007,” Young said. “And that was a huge pull for our clients and really for everybody who’s come to know and love Cleveland City Dance.”

It’s a bit of a hike. “Our students go up and down the stairs,” Laves-Mearini said. “It’s a great way to warm up your hips before class. It looks like a nice hotel hallway.”

Supporters got to experience the new space during a gala fundraiser April 25, including a preview of May’s spring concert, “Sleeping Beauty.”

City Ballet of Cleveland, the nonprofit side of the operation, is a pre-professional dance company. Cleveland City Dance is a for-profit school for all ages, from pre-school to some in their 80s. “We are around 200 students now,” Laves-Mearini said. “We were closer to 260 before the May flood, when people thought we were closed.”

“We hadn’t imagined it like this.”

– Donna Burrer



Supporters help break in Cleveland City Dance’s new second-floor studio at an April 25 fundraiser for City Ballet of Cleveland.



Mairia Harris performs as Puss from “Puss and Boots.”

Dancers have gone on to work in Los Angeles, in professional ballet companies, on cruise lines and on Broadway. They teach ballet, jazz, tap, modern, hip hop, classical, musical theater and contemporary.

Cleveland City Dance is at 13108 Shaker Square, 216.295.2222, clevelandcitydance.com.



Courtney Laves-Mearini, Cleveland City Dance owner, addresses supporters at an April 25 fundraiser for City Ballet of Cleveland.



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