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# the SHAD Connection

FALL 2024

Vol. 48 No. 1

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

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## Larchmere Sidewalk Sale

Saturday, Aug. 31

Shop for sales inside Larchmere's unique shops, and visit vendors and artisans setting up tables on the sidewalk. From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

## Summer on the Square

Thursday, Sept. 12

Listen to Hubb's Groove play jazz and R&B, sample ice cream from Trikeable Treats, chow down at the Zanzibar Soul Fusion Food Truck, and play lawn games for all ages. *This series finale, 6 to 8:30 p.m., was rescheduled after an Aug. 8 rainout.*

## Bike Your Neighborhood

Saturday, Sept. 14

The monthly group ride leaves at 11 a.m. from Amos Norwood Park, East 128th St. & Drexmore. Go to [bikeyourneighborhood.org](http://bikeyourneighborhood.org).

## Shaker Lakes Hike & Run

Sunday, Sept. 15

The eight different events range from a 10K run to a 1-2 Mile Shaker Parklands Hike, hosted by the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes. Go to [tinyurl.com/ytw36r37](http://tinyurl.com/ytw36r37).



## Shaker Square Vision Plan

Thursday, Sept. 19

See a plan preview at the former Dewey's and Biggby's storefront on the northeast quadrant from 4 to 7 p.m. This open house and presentation will unveil results from a recent survey on retail and public space usage.



## Don't forget to vote

The deadline to register to vote in Cuyahoga County is 9 p.m. Monday, Oct. 7. Early voting begins the next day. Call 216.433.8683 (VOTE) OR go to [boe.cuyahogacounty.gov](http://boe.cuyahogacounty.gov) for details. *The general election is Tuesday, Nov. 5.*

## Larchmere Candy Run

Thursday, Oct. 31

Watch out for scary creatures in costume during this sweet Halloween event, from 5 to 8 p.m. Sponsored by the Larchmere Community Association.

## Morelands Group

Twice monthly.

This tenants rights group advocates for Shaker Square's residential apartment corridor. Meetings are the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays every month at Edwins Bakery and Zoom. Go to [morelandsgroup.org](http://morelandsgroup.org).



## Banking

# Huntington yields to pressure on Buckeye branch

By Christine Jindra

Huntington Bank will reopen the Buckeye branch that it closed Feb. 9 because of safety concerns. The bank's decision follows months of pressure by residents, businesses, nonprofits and local officials to reopen the shuttered bank at 11623 Buckeye Road.

The Buckeye group is believed to be the only effort in the nation to lobby Huntington to reopen one of the 34 branches it closed recently in the Midwest.

"It's going to slowly sink in how monumental this is," said Robert Render III, president of the East 128th Street block club. It shows that a small group of citizens can change the world, he said.

"We've been making a lot of noise," said Tamara Chappell, a community activist. "Not noise; we were telling the bank the community needs them — young people as well as seniors," Chappell said. "This is not a cellphone community, not a dot-com community. Our residents don't do online banking." Render and Chappell are among

the dozen leaders who met monthly with Huntington officials to push for the reopening, while addressing Huntington's safety worries.

Sean Richardson, Huntington's Northeast Ohio regional president, got a standing ovation in August

when he told the leaders that the 20-year-old branch would reopen by the end of October. Security issues are being discussed with the city as the bank reassembles staff.

See *Huntington yields to pressure on Buckeye branch*, page 9

## The Green Divide



Photo by Grant Segall

Greg Van Niel surveys this natural rock fissure steps away from Fairhill Road. Grant Segall reports on efforts to make Doan Gorge more welcoming. See Page 5.

## Housing

# Unlivable conditions prompt order to vacate

By Thomas Jewell

Cleveland housing officials and the Morelands Group are tracking the absentee owners of a Shaker Square-area apartment building where residents were ordered to vacate due to uninhabitable living conditions.

Tenants in at least 48 units at 2910 Hampton Road had their water shut off Aug. 2 and electricity before that in early August.

Realizing that the landlords -- Aliarse Holdings LLC, with addresses in New Mexico and southern California -- were not responding to any orders from the Building and Housing Department, the city restored water service.

But other utility reconnections were hampered by widespread power outages after severe storms hit the area Aug. 6.

The storm arrived five hours after the Morelands Group, a nonprofit tenant advocacy organization around Shaker Square, held a press conference outside the building, also subject to a 54-count criminal complaint filed in Cleveland Housing Court.

Residents and Cleveland Ward 4 Councilwoman Deborah Gray joined the meeting to discuss unlivable conditions at the time, including:

- Garbage, junk and debris on the tree lawn.
- Dumpsters overflowing with trash.
- An interior that is "not maintained in a sanitary manner."

- Severe damage by water and mold, creating "extreme health and sanitation hazards."
- A clogged, damaged or broken sanitary sewer line.

Deteriorated ceilings and floors also were mentioned. None of

these issues were evident in online advertisements showing relatively pristine apartments for lease.

Some newer tenants unwittingly took up residence there only to find living conditions beyond inhospitable.

But others have lived there more than 20 years, watching the building go from deteriorating to deplorable to unfit for occupancy.

"Once providing a quality, affordable living environment that was well-maintained by local ownership, this property demonstrates an alarming trend," said Morelands Group co-founder Jay Westbrook.

The former Cleveland councilman pointed to its purchase by out-of-state "investor-speculators," as it already showed signs of neglect and decline.

The property has changed hands several times in recent years, with Aliarse taking ownership in June 2023, paying about \$2.1 million.

See *Unlivable conditions prompt order to vacate building*, page 4

**"After draining the profits out of the properties, the untraceable owners have disappeared."**

**- Morelands Group statement**

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## Dining

# UnBar owner reinvesting \$20K JumpStart prize in cafe

Story and photo by Andrea C. Turner

Melissa Garrett-Hirsch, owner of UnBar Cafe, recently won the \$20,000 top prize at JumpStart Inc.'s Small Business Impact Program Showcase. The program gave her 30 hours of personalized advice and training in business operational and planning skills.

She's no stranger to these concepts. In addition to running her mission-driven business that has become a local hub, she's been a corporate executive for 35 years and works full time at Progressive Insurance as a technology manager. Garrett-Hirsch, a female and minority entrepreneur, likened the JumpStart program, in its 20th year, to an accelerated MBA.

Each of the five people in her cohort presented a 10-minute pitch May 7 to judges at the House of Blues in downtown Cleveland. Former Browns star Josh Cribbs and his wife, Maria, emceed the showcase. (A video of the full event is at [tinyurl.com/hyxdwpxz](https://tinyurl.com/hyxdwpxz).)

Program competitors told how their business served the city, described their strategic plans, and presented financial details.

"What we're going to do with the \$20,000 is unlock \$234,000 in revenue and add one full-time fair-wage job," she said in her pitch. "We're going to do that by investing in technology to better interact with our customers [and] reduce waste in our wine and alcohol segment."

Even though she opened UnBar during the pandemic and suffered financial losses, she said she never lost sight of her business focus. She continued to reinvest and has learned to

reinvent and tweak her business plan.

"This \$20,000 will help us to sustain eight fair-wage jobs, which represent eight households," she said. "It will also allow us to sustain a very popular community pillar, a beautiful space in the community, which is a beacon of hope, and it will also be my contribution to reducing loneliness and isolation. Why don't you come UnBar with me?"

Originally opened as a cafe with a morning and afternoon vibe, the business has expanded into an evening gathering place. Friends, neighbors and community groups can gather, socialize, and enjoy wine or specialty cocktails. The evening theme is a play on words: the "UnWine Zone." She insists she's not running a bar, as the space is brightly lit, doesn't play loud music, and is amenable to group conversations. Typically, it closes around 10 p.m.

It fits well with the business motto: "Think Better. Feel Better. Be Better." Emblazoned on their T-shirts, this mind, body and spirit approach is the secret sauce to her success, Garrett-Hirsch said. Not only does UnBar host book clubs and university-based classes, it offers healthy food and drink options including mocktails, local wines and gluten-free vodka, as well as yoga, tai chi and comedy nights. A new partnership with Phyllis Harris, executive director of the LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland, will bring in leadership training and other programs to support inclusivity.

It all ties together Garrett-Hirsch's holistic, community-oriented approach. She shares the responsibility with her family. Her son Rorry Garrett is general



Melissa Garrett-Hirsch hopes her UnBar Cafe will help reduce loneliness and isolation in the community.

manager, alongside Tara Mitchell. When her mother became critically ill in 2019, Garrett-Hirsch had to leave her job to be her caretaker. This led to a plan to create a comfortable and safe place outside of the house where she could take her mom, which is now UnBar.

Her "boutique" space at the corner of Larchmere and East 127th Street can hold up to 60 people comfortably and is available for rent by nonprofits and for private parties.

"I want to expand and eventually franchise, because that's where this will really matter as a business to our communities, when we can bottle this and put it in other communities throughout the city," she said.

UnBar Cafe is at 12635 Larchmere Blvd., 216.293.4480, [unbarcafe.com](https://unbarcafe.com).

## Advertise!

### The SHAD Connection Deadlines Winter Issue

For advertising rate and ad size information and media kit go to [shad.org](https://shad.org) or email [jgdalessandro@gmail.com](mailto:jgdalessandro@gmail.com).

Reserve ad space for *the SHAD Connection* Winter issue covering December, January and February by **October 9, 2024**. Ad artwork is due no later than: **October 23, 2024**.

Send artwork to Jim at [jgdalessandro@gmail.com](mailto:jgdalessandro@gmail.com).

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### SHAD MISSION STATEMENT

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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- Apartment Corridor
- CHALK
- Drexmore/Chadbourne
- Historic Shaker Square
- Larchmere
- Ludlow

### COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS

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

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#### The SHAD Connection

is a free, non-profit tabloid-size newspaper published by Shaker Square Area Development Corporation four times a year in September, November, March, and June. Circulation: 6,500 per issue and online at [shad.org](https://shad.org)

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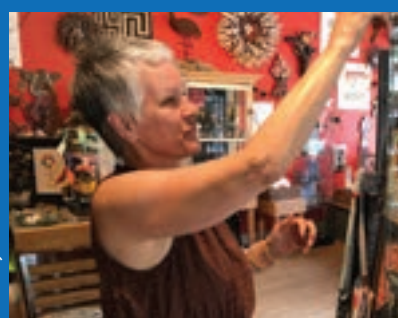
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### THE SHAD CONNECTION

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## People of SHAD

SUSAN ROZMAN, OWNER OF FIDDLEHEAD GALLERY, 12736 LARCHMERE BLVD., REVEALED AT THE JULY 22 NEIGHBOR UP MEETING AT CUMMINS HALL THAT SHE MADE A PERSONAL PLEDGE AFTER SEEING A TV DISCUSSION ABOUT THE NOVEMBER ELECTION. WE ASKED HER TO EXPLAIN THIS PLEDGE. — CHRIS BALL



**Rozman:** "Katie Couric was interviewing a group of women, and Katie Porter from California was answering questions to the audience about the predicament we are in with our politics, and a young person stood up and said, 'What can we do? How can we get more people involved?' It was just, we need to encourage people to vote. So she threw out, 'You need to talk to 30 different new people. And if you just did that, if everybody in this room talked to 30 new people about why you vote, what you need to vote on, what it might mean to young people coming up.' I was, like, 'That's brilliant. That's easy.' Because I just need to give myself a goal."

**Buckeye Road**

# City Council loans \$3.9M to BBC to redevelop commercial corridor

By Douglas J. Guth

Cleveland City Council has awarded a \$3.9 million forgivable loan to Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. (BBC) for the reimagining of Buckeye Road.

Approved June 25, the loan will help stabilize 10 vacant mixed-use commercial buildings and parking lots on the east side commercial corridor. The refurbishment is part of a Black-led arts, culture and technology district proposed for the struggling enclave.

Leading this transformation effort is BBC, a community development corporation covering a four-square-mile block of Cleveland neighborhoods. Cleaning up empty structures along Buckeye Road brings the larger plan one step closer to reality, said BBC Executive Director Joy Johnson.

“There has been a lot of work behind the scenes,” Johnson said. “These buildings have just been sitting there, so we’re working on stabilizing them.”

Some of the structures have been vacant for years, requiring environmental testing, asbestos removal and additional infrastructure improvements. Although former Mayor Frank Jackson’s administration had earmarked the \$3.9 million loan, the subsequent leadership turnover delayed funding, Johnson said.

With dollars in hand, BBC is fast-tracking restoration of four buildings in the best condition. Among them is Moreland Theater at 11820 Buckeye Road – the vacant movie house is also

the intended cornerstone of an arts district centered on Black creators and entrepreneurs. Preservation of the theater will encompass roof repair, improved stormwater management and foundation renovations.

Meanwhile, Johnson and her team are pitching the community on the arts and innovation concept. Black creators and entrepreneurs would lead the charge, ideally introducing workforce-building new technologies in art production.

“If there is a technology for printing, we would teach people how to use it,” Johnson said. “There is a workforce development component, plus an entrepreneurial component because we are helping artists monetize their intellectual property.”

If all goes to plan, a lively arts enclave would attract the recession-proof businesses – coffee shops, laundromats and more – crucial to a healthy community, Johnson said.

“You just don’t open a gallery and then it’s profitable,” Johnson said. “If we have this draw – this cool Black arts and technology experience – that’s an anchor for coffee shops. The neighborhood needs a catalyst so the private market can fill in the gaps.”

BBC covers the Central, Kinsman and Buckeye neighborhoods, as well as portions of Fairfax and Union Miles. The organization has implemented master plans throughout its coverage area, including Buckeye, in an area

struck by decimated housing wealth due to the Great Recession and late-aughts foreclosure crisis.

The Buckeye plan calls for construction of new and affordable housing, improved internet and transit service, and additional

**“These buildings have just been sitting there, so we’re working on stabilizing them.”**

**– Joy Johnson**



The vacant Moreland Theater Building at the corner of Buckeye Road and East 119th Street may become the cornerstone of an arts district centered on Black creators and entrepreneurs.

parcs and public spaces. A \$2 million joint initiative from Fifth Third Bank and nonprofit Enterprise Community Partners supports residents purchasing rehabilitated single-family and two-story homes, along with money for existing homeowners to make needed repairs.

New owners would live in one unit while providing a quality affordable home to another family, preventing resident displacement while building wealth for themselves, said Johnson. BBC is also applying for funding to rehabilitate 20 area apartments into affordable rental housing.

Other recent improvements to BBC’s coverage area include a Buckeye Road repaving and new streetscapes west of Moreland Boulevard. Continued activity will only elevate a community that has been down far too long, Johnson said.

“When people drive down the street, they’ll see that vibrancy as well as people like them who are committed to the neighborhood,” Johnson said. “People want to see a reflection of themselves in the community – that their commitment is not in vain.”

This story first appeared online at *The Land*: [tinyurl.com/4p9n8a7n](http://tinyurl.com/4p9n8a7n). Used with permission.

Photos by Chris Ball



“Moreland” is carved above the doorway of the vacant Moreland Theater Building, built in 1927.



Photo by Chris Ball

Akron’s Ninth Avenue Street Circus turns Shaker Square into a circus-like stage June 27.





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# Unlivable conditions prompt order to vacate

Continued from page 1

By February, the building already faced foreclosure action, with at least \$60,000 owed in back taxes and late penalties from the first half of 2023.

That amount possibly doubled for the remainder of the year, Cuyahoga County records show.

“Needless to say, all of this money manipulation is done without regard for the rights or well-being of tenants,” Westbrook said.

City officials followed up with a new notice Aug. 9 stating, “This structure constitutes an immediate hazard to human life and health and shall be vacated.”

Before their press conference, Morelands Group representatives called for accountability and action.

“After draining the profits out of the properties, the untraceable owners have disappeared,” a joint statement said. “Tenants want their rights, and community supporters want to save the buildings.”

There appeared to be some flexibility in the tenants’ notice to vacate, because finding quality affordable housing on very short notice takes time, Westbrook said.

Cleveland officials concurred. In

addition to some help relocating from the Morelands Group, the Red Cross had also been contacted, said city communications strategist Tyler Sinclair.

He cited numerous complaints filed in recent months with a myriad of violations pending, all first-degree misdemeanors punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 for each of the 54 counts.

Sinclair went on to call Aliarse Holdings an “out-of-state and out-of-touch limited liability company (LLC) who clearly has no intention of making repairs.”

“The jig is up now as they’ll have to answer to their neglect in court,” Sinclair said.

The city also called in a plumber to restore water in the building, with plans to bill Aliarse for the work.

“We understand how these issues have a significant impact on our residents’ lives, which is why we deployed a team last week to assess the extent of that impact.”

From there, immediate next steps focused on relocating tenants to more stable housing, “as the owner’s lack of ongoing maintenance has created a hazardous and unsustainable living situation for tenants.”



Residents have been ordered to vacate an apartment building at 2910 Hampton Road due to uninhabitable living conditions.

Photos by Chris Ball



Photo by Mary Ann Kovach

A new sidewalk behind Dave’s Market was finished this summer.

## Retail

# City loan to help improve Dave’s Market at Shaker Square

By Anastazia Vanisko

Dave’s Market in Shaker Square is set to receive a \$250,000 forgivable loan from the city of Cleveland. City Council passed legislation approving the funds for improvements to the store July 10.

In a committee meeting discussing the proposal, Tania Menesse, president and CEO of Cleveland Neighborhood Progress (CNP), emphasized to council members the loan’s importance for keeping Dave’s Market in the Shaker Square district. Their lease at Shaker Square ends in December, but they have agreed to renew through 2029, said David Saltzman, vice president of Operations, Finance and Strategy for Dave’s Supermarkets.

The loan would fund improvements such as replacing the flooring, upgrading signage and expanding the prepared food section, Saltzman said.

The work funded by the loan would meet requirements of the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) with Shaker Square, said Tyson Mitchell, director of the Mayor’s Office of Equal Opportunity. Shaker Square was bought in 2022 by CNP and Burton, Bell, Carr Development Inc.

The CBA requires that 10% of the

contractors hired be women-owned businesses and 20% be minority-owned, he said. Shaker Square has also agreed to a workforce development agreement that will give Ohio Means Jobs participants priority for work with Shaker Square merchants, he said.

Although council members unanimously passed this legislation, some questioned the grocer’s decision to withdraw from other Cleveland neighborhoods in recent years.

Councilman Michael Polensek criticized the decision to close Dave’s Collinwood, Central, and Payne Avenue locations. Residents are left to rely on corner stores and dollar stores for their groceries, he said.

Saltzman countered that when they closed the Central and Payne Avenue locations, it was due to a move to a new location in Midtown. The Central location had been losing money for several years, he said.

Dave’s Shaker Square location is also losing money, Menesse said. She said she doesn’t think that will change until improvements are made.

*This story first appeared online at Signal Cleveland: [tinyurl.com/ycyrxbns](https://www.signal-cleveland.com/story/2024/07/10/cleveland-loan-daves-market-shaker-square/). Used with permission.*

## People of SHAD



Photo by Chris Ball

Jay Westbrook greets a friend before embarking on a Bike Your Neighborhood ride July 13.

AS CLEVELAND’S POPULATION DECLINES, CITY COUNCIL MUST REDRAW ITS WARD BOUNDARIES, PER A 2008 CHARTER AMENDMENT. COUNCIL WILL LOSE TWO OF ITS 17 MEMBERS AFTER THE NOVEMBER 2025 GENERAL ELECTION. THE LAST TIME THIS HAPPENED, A DECADE AGO, COUNCIL SHRANK FROM 19 TO 17 MEMBERS. TO EASE THAT PROCESS, LONGTIME COUNCILMAN JAY WESTBROOK VOLUNTARILY STEPPED DOWN. HE NOW RESIDES IN THE SHAKER SQUARE AREA. WE ASKED HIM WHAT HE THINKS WILL HAPPEN THIS TIME TO SHAD’S TWO WARDS. REPRESENTING SHAD ARE COUNCIL PRESIDENT BLAINE GRIFFIN (WARD 6) AND COUNCILWOMAN DEBORAH GRAY (WARD 4). — CHRIS BALL



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Greg Van Niel, founder of Friends of Doan Gorge, stands atop a gushing waterfall in Doan Gorge.

## Nature

# Take a deep dive into Doan Gorge, an overlooked oasis of lush beauty

Story and photo by Grant Segall

Between busy city streets, a hidden wilderness lies.

Many nearby residents don't know about the Doan Gorge, and many others fear the lush, rugged, unmarked, secluded place, according to a 2020 survey for the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership.

Greg Van Niel is trying to make the gorge more welcoming.

The gorge runs between Fairhill Road, North Park Boulevard, Coventry Road and, depending on who's delineating it, Martin Luther King Boulevard or as far west as Rogers Park at University Circle. Going by the widest boundaries, it contains about 75 acres and 1.5 miles of the Doan Brook, which continues downstream through the Circle to Lake Erie.

Intrepid hikers and mountain bikers who brave the gorge can barely see or hear the bustle beyond. Instead, they see a waterfall estimated at 10 feet high or more, a colorful structure known as Graffiti Dam, a few 19th century steps, a tall sandstone fissure, a debris rack that catches branches rushing downstream, a rear view of the historic Fairmount Road Group Development (better known as Belgian Village), and abutments for two former bridges rumored to have been razed by delinquents.

"It's pretty wild," says Van Niel, "an unknown gem hiding in here."

Van Niel is a retiree, hiker, and nearby resident in Cleveland Heights. He belongs to the Friends of Lower Lake and founded the Friends of Doan Gorge in 2021. He has recruited a few other volunteers, won some \$15,000 in grants and donations, and spent countless hours removing invasive species and planting native ones. He's also planning other improvements.

The Friends report to the Doan Partnership, whose executive director, Mo Drinkard, says of the gorge, "Most people are unaware of what an incredible, beautiful space that is. It feels like something you might find in the heart of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, and yet it's right in a very urbanized section."

On Sunday, Oct. 20, the annual 5-mile Edwins Run for Re-Entry will

scale the gorge's steep dam and plunge through a culvert there. The website of Edwins Leadership and Restaurant Institute in Shaker Square calls the run "a battle between you and the terrain."

Cleveland owns the gorge and governs some of it. Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights govern the rest while leasing and maintaining it all.

The gorge was quarried during the 19th century for sandstone for the booming city downstream, according

to Roy Larick, who consults for the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District. The gorge was much wider then and included the site of what's now Roxboro Middle School across North Park Boulevard.

The quarries gradually closed and became parts of private parks owned by John D. Rockefeller of Standard Oil and Nathan Ambler of the Ambler Heights neighborhood in Cleveland Heights. The owners put in the steps and a carriage trail. In 1896, they gave the parks to Cleveland in honor of its centennial.

Early in the 20th century, crews excavating the vast Baldwin Reservoir nearby filled the gorge with their diggings. The Doan gradually carved a narrow, V-shaped path there, with little floodplain to protect the city downstream. The place has remained public but obscure ever since.

Van Niel has raised money for the gorge from the Lake Erie Allegheny Partnership, Western Reserve Land Conservancy, and mostly Dominion East Ohio. He's focused so far on improving the gorge's southern side from the Shaker Heights line to Belgian Village.

He's pulled and sprayed swaths of invasive privet, buckthorn, honeysuckle and other species. He's planted about 100 native shrubs and trees, including oaks, redwoods, serviceberries, willows, magnolias, and dogwoods, some free from Holden Arboretum.

He's planted most of the trees on the lawn along Fairhill, where Shaker has removed many dying trees. He's thinking about putting a bike rack, benches, and picnic tables there. He also plans to groom the trails and mark them. He figures the more attractive the area, the more residents it will draw and reward.

To learn more or volunteer, contact the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership, 216.325.7781, doanbrookpartnership.org.

**"Most people are unaware of what an incredible, beautiful space that is."**

**- Mo Drinkard, about Doan Gorge**



Courtney Richardson, right, an instructor at Larchmere Fire Works, shows Hanna Alwine how to get creative at high temperatures.

## Arts and crafts

# The heat is on as Larchmere Fire Works adds instructor

By Hanna Alwine

The Larchmere Fire Works studio is relatively innocuous. To passersby, it isn't immediately obvious that behind the green and white paneled house, two forges heat glass to more than 1,000°F. As Courtney Richardson, the newest addition to the Fire Works team would tell you, it's as hot as lava.

"It's magical. It's magic. The raw glass is mostly silica, sand, soda, ash and lime. You heat those up to about the same temperature, around 2,200°F or so. And it gets all gooey, about the consistency of honey, and then you scoop it on a big metal straw and you use different tools to shape the glass. Almost like shaping Play-Doh that you can't touch with your fingers."

The studio offers classes in glassblowing and blacksmithing for all levels. Tina Haldiman and Cassidy Anderson, married co-owners, opened for business in October 2015, but Haldiman's interest in glassblowing began as an early passion.

"I was always intrigued with glassblowing as a child," Haldiman said. "I spent all my time at Cedar Point and Sauder Village [in northwest Ohio] at the glassblower. I was gifted a class for my birthday as an adult and I fell in love with the medium."

Glassblowing produces a lot of heat. In the summer, the Larchmere studio can reach well over 100°F. Traditionally, it shuts down in July and August. In January 2023, Fire Works opened a second location in Goldhorn Brewery on East 55th Street in Cleveland. It's larger and doesn't heat up nearly as fast, allowing them to expand their summertime class offerings. They also have a mobile unit they take to festivals and street fairs around the state.

Richardson had worked for Fire Works on an unofficial basis for a few years, coming into the studio to help out for larger groups and as Anderson and Haldiman needed an extra hand. Richardson was hired as an official instructor in March 2023, soon after they opened their second location. She, too, was drawn to glass from a young age.

"My parents were always taking us kids on educational vacations, Hale Farm & Village and Colonial Williamsburg, places like that. If there was a glassblower anywhere around, that's where I would stay, and they could just wander around and pick me up later."

She chose to attend Kent State University specifically for its glassblowing program, graduating with a bachelor's degree in crafts. She has taught at a variety of glassblowing studios, including the Corning Museum of Glass in New York, Hale Farm & Village in Summit County, and the Glass Asylum in Chagrin Falls. At Fire Works, she teaches everything from single sessions to 10-week courses. The age range is wide. Students ages 3 to 80 come to learn how to blow glass and bend metal. Richardson enjoys teaching newcomers.

"With production work, you're doing the same thing over and over again," she said. "So it can get a bit tedious. It's nice when you have somebody new who's very excited. It sort of brings that excitement, that energy back into it."

Larchmere Fire Works is at 12406 Larchmere Blvd., 216.246.4716, larchmerefireworks.com



**"If there was a glassblower anywhere around, that's where I would stay."**

**- Courtney Richardson**

Dining

# Focus on fresh pasta fuels Scorpacciata chef-owner

By Chris Ball

Peter Reuter leased the former Larchmere Tavern space in early 2023. It took a year and a half, but Scorpacciata Pasta is now open. They completely redid the restaurant.

“There was nothing here,” Reuter said. “Studs. Concrete. Nothing. We had to redo all the drainage because we moved the bar. We kept the bathrooms where they were, we extended the kitchen, so we needed new drains. We did a lot.”

He wasn’t surprised. “I expected the worst. I knew we were going to hit snags,” he said. “Honestly, the worst part about it was the wait. You’re sitting there waiting and waiting. You can only plan so much.”

The drywall. The liquor license. The bar itself. “We came down to the last minute to find the bar top. We used Facebook Marketplace and actually saved some money.”

The buzz on the street was palpable. “The second we took the paper down from the windows [in February], it was nonstop, people coming up, ‘We’re ready.’ I was too.”

He opened a stand at Market Hall in Shaker Heights in late 2018 and closed it this year. “I’m used to super-small, tiny spaces from the Van Aken District,” he said. “This was a project. All these glasses and silverware and chairs and wallpaper and paint and

trim. Everything has to be picked out. It doesn’t get done for you.”

The larger space means a larger role for him personally as well. “I never enjoyed being in the spotlight,” he said. “I like to be in the back, by myself, cooking or hanging out with the kitchen staff. But it’s turned out that I can’t just do that. I have to be out there talking to people.”

He wants to spread the word about fresh, homemade pasta and use local, seasonal ingredients. He shops at the North Union Farmers Market every Saturday for fresh produce. “The only thing I really import is gnocchi flour and some tomatoes, and parmigiano reggiano and a few cheeses.”

He loves Italian cuisine but isn’t Italian. “Not even close. I’ve just been doing it, reading about it for so long, it’s been a passion of mine. I went to Italy when I was 21, and it changed my life. I just fell in love. Everything. The architecture, too, because I love the touristy stuff.”

He didn’t go to college immediately. “I started delivering pizzas as a teenager. I got a job at Marotta’s on Lee Road. It kind of turned me. I realized I can be a chef for a living.”

For two years, he was the sous chef at Marotta’s. “Putting on a chef coat for the first time felt good.”

He began to envision having his own restaurant. “The dream probably started when I was working at Fire, because I

was a sous chef there as well, and seeing the operation, seeing what Doug Katz does, and working with all the chefs there inspired me, and I thought, I could do this.”

On the side, he made fresh pasta for pleasure. “It kind of grew, and everywhere I went, all of a sudden I’m the pasta guy, I make fresh pasta, and I thought, ‘Why is anybody buying this, why aren’t people making this in their own restaurants?’ I understand it’s time consuming, but that’s the fun of it.”

He hopes to add pasta classes once they settle in. Scorpacciata, which he found in a travel book and defines as “eating seasonally,” seats 92 inside and 30 on the patio in nice weather.

And he has an original idea for part of the patio. “That’s going to be a waiting area. You can actually walk up to that bar window without coming inside and grab a drink. So you can wait for a table, hang out, chill on the couches. I’ve never seen it before. I’ve always loved the idea of a walkup bar while you’re waiting.”

And after that? “Maybe a firepit out there. Or we can get really fancy. I’d love to put a brick oven out there and do patio specials, just pizza for the patio. Even having a cooking space where somebody could watch you cook. And have fun chatting.”

*Scorpacciata Pasta Co. is at 13051 Larchmere Blvd., 216.279.9800, scorpacciatapastaco.com.*



Peter Reuter, chef and owner, supervises as Ali Rosswurm zests lemons in Scorpacciata Pasta’s kitchen.

*Peter Reuter*

**AGE:** 36

**OWNER AND CHEF:** Scorpacciata Pasta

**OPENED:** July 4

**BORN AND RAISED:** Cleveland Heights

**HIGH SCHOOL:** University School

**COLLEGE:** Tri-C, Johnson & Wales

**RESTAURANT RESUME:** Marotta’s, Fire

**WIFE:** Allison Edgerton

**FAVORITE DISH:** Spaghetti al puttanesca

Nature

# CHALK walks the talk with pollinator path for bees and butterflies

Story and photos by Grant Segall

Bees are swarming the CHALK neighborhood and being welcomed. So are butterflies.

The bees aren’t yellowjackets, the stinging wasps often confused with bees. They’re mostly honeybees, bumblebees and Mason bees, who seldom sting unless feeling threatened. The visitors are drawing nectar and spreading pollen, partly from year-old native plants in 21 yards.

CHALK, which has 84 homes on Cormere Avenue, Haddam Road,

Ardoon Avenue, Larchmere Boulevard, and Kemper Road, is one of many members of the Heights Native Pollinator Path. That path,



based in Cleveland Heights but spread throughout Cuyahoga County and Chesterland, is part of a drive to fight the worldwide decline of pollinators, which help many plants reproduce.

“We’ve destroyed our own environment for attracting our native pollinators,” says Susan Strauss, a leader of CHALK’s 2023 pollinator project. They aim to

restore it garden by garden. “Insects need contiguous host plants so they can go from plant to plant.”

CHALK won a grant last year of \$3,760 from Neighborhood Connections for the pollinator project, with the Shaker Square Area Development Corp. serving as the grant’s fiscal agent. Twenty-one residents planted 16 native species, such as coneflowers, bluestems, sunflowers, and geraniums. They used plants from Avonlea Gardens & Inn in Munson Township and soil from Buckeye Outdoor Supply in Cleveland’s Woodland Hills neighborhood. Fifteen of those residents also used boards from Lyndhurst Lumber to make 3-by-6-foot garden beds.

Devon Overley of Larchmere Boulevard’s Loganberry Books designed garden signs. Loganberry’s owner, Harriett Logan, lives in CHALK and added some of 2023’s plants to her already big butterfly garden. More bees and butterflies are coming now, she says. “The tiny pollinator gardens that CHALK put up are pit stops, which makes a more effective area for all kinds of pollinators.”

The new plants are thriving, says Meg Weingart, one of the project’s leaders. They’ve also inspired her to plant more native species elsewhere in her yard.

The U.S. Agriculture Department shares CHALK’s enthusiasm. Secretary Tom Vilsack recently formed a pollinator panel and issued a statement that “Healthy pollinator populations are essential to the continued success and well-being of agricultural producers, rural America and the entire U.S. economy because without them, many of our nation’s crops wouldn’t be able to produce as many fruits, nuts or vegetables.”



Meg Weingart waters her pollinator garden in the CHALK neighborhood.



Native plants welcome bees to the CHALK neighborhood.

Locally, the project has not just drawn pollinators but brought CHALK closer together, Weingart says. “Now more neighbors know each other.” She’s thinking next of a project for rain gardens or composting.

For more information about pollinators, visit Heights Native Pollinator Path at [tinyurl.com/3pesa2ed](http://tinyurl.com/3pesa2ed).

➔

Spotted June 27 next to the sidewalk north of Fairhill Road at North Moreland Boulevard.



Photo by Chris Ball

## PorchFest

# On this day, Larchmere is for lovers of good music and good times

By Eloise Rich

Larchmere PorchFest has become a neighborhood staple since its founding in 2008 — rain or shine. And PorchFest did go on June 29, despite a looming thunderstorm threat all afternoon. Undaunted, music lovers near and far ventured up and down the streets, in search of sounds of summer.

This was my first PorchFest and first exploration of the neighborhood. Fran Kalafatis calls the day “a taste of Larchmere.” I found that to be true as I tried to see as many bands as possible. The event culminated with the 6 p.m. headliners — Sam Hooper Group, and Marcus Smith and the Rapsallions — and I had the joy of seeing musicians and residents I’d met earlier dancing amongst family, friends and neighbors.

My afternoon centered around two people and one band: Edie Myhre and Michael Benz, who hosted Frida and the Mann, an indie Cleveland alt-rock group. Lead singer Frida Mann’s vocals cut through the punchy bass and twangy guitar with a classic 1970s sound.

Myhre and Benz have lived since 2018 in a charming bungalow with a wonderful front porch on Cheshire Road. Around 4 p.m., the sun came out, and their yard generated the biggest crowd I’d seen all day. Myhre and Benz are what some call “superhosts,” having hosted a handful of times before. Dawn Arrington, PorchFest president, attended the set.

“Thank you so much,” Mann said into the microphone before one of their last songs. “This is such a dream. I know you think it’s just a front lawn, but I’ll

start crying if I think about it.”

During the set, Myhre and Benz floated around the crowd. Inside, they provided an array of drinks, delectable desserts and a build-your-own taco station. This clearly wasn’t their first rodeo.

In fact, the pair had hosted a house party for years on East 127th Street, attended by family and friends, Myhre said, making their PorchFest participation a logical continuation. Myhre’s sister and husband once again flew in from Kansas City for the day.

PorchFest operates through applications, in a sense. Mike Bailey, who moved to Larchmere in 2019, volunteers as a porch coordinator and booker.

“Ninety percent of the lineup is from band-expressed interest, though I attend my fair amount of shows around Cleveland, from Beachland Ballroom ... to Happy Dog, and scout out openers who may be interested in playing,” Bailey said.

Bailey strives for an eclectic mix of sounds when booking bands. He plays matchmaker between artists and porch hosts — for example, Benz said he wanted a “big sound.”

“This year in organization, I wanted the different quadrants of PorchFest to exist as their own mini festival-like circuits,” Bailey said. “We didn’t want conflicts in time between sets and we also didn’t want one genre to be concentrated just to one area.”

Mariah Salhany, Bailey’s wife and PorchFest’s head of marketing, echoed their goal of avoiding sound bleed to ensure every band had their spotlight. She was stationed



Photo by Chris Ball

*Cecilia Reeves, 5, relaxes on the grass in front of her mother, Brittany Reeves, of Cleveland’s West Side, as Frida and the Mann perform June 29 on Cheshire Road during PorchFest.*

most of the day at the Beer Garden, which generates sizable revenue for PorchFest. In recent years, PorchFest has partnered with Market Garden Brewery. Salhany and Bailey even attended a tasting to decide what to sell.

I wrapped up the day by listening to Marcus Smith’s set. The host was Sheri Cistrunk, a resident of East 126th Street for 39 years. Several hundred people flooded the street. It was mesmerizing

and delightful to see a neighborhood come together in this way. As an outsider, I felt incredibly welcomed into the community.

*Rich is a third-year student studying comparative literature and French at Oberlin College, where she is an editor with the Oberlin Review student newspaper, a podcast intern for the Office of Communications, and treasurer for the Oberlin Student Cooperative Association.*

## Retail

# Three decades of stains and stitches for Shaker Square shop owner

Story and photo by Eloise Rich

Elina Kreymerman started as a tailor in a corner of a Shaker Square dry cleaner. Business grew, she opened her own shop, and with 30 years under her belt, she is now the longest-tenured business owner on the Square.

Kreymerman owns and operates Shaker Square Dry Cleaners & Tailoring. In addition to dry cleaning, it offers alterations, from custom suits to wedding dresses, and free delivery service to nearby residents.

She opened in 1994. After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Kreymerman and her family came to

Cleveland from Ukraine with her two young children and two suitcases in tow.

She’s seen a myriad of changes at Shaker Square. Once there were national stores like Ann Taylor and Chico’s. Now there are more local stores and privately owned businesses. Broadly speaking, development of the Square is locally oriented.

“Right now, we have construction, which is not easy to get through, but we are doing our best to get through it and hoping for the best because [the] Square is an old place, and infrastructure is very old,” Kreymerman said. “Without putting new water lines [and] electrical lines, the development of Shaker Square is limited.”

“The new owner of Shaker Square is trying to do a facelift: They’re trying to paint it, they’re also trying to take care of stuff like heating and cooling systems. It’s a lot of stuff which you cannot see on the outside, but it has to be done. They’re trying to bring new awnings, they’re trying to do something for the holidays — we used to have a lot of celebrations,

lights [and] activities,” she said.

Even with the road work, her business has held strong, mainly due to connections she made with customers over three decades, some since the beginning.

“When we see someone for so long, we know what customers like,” she said. “You know ... what look they expect when they come in. It’s very personal sometimes. You know the person, and sometimes they bring the clothes, [and] you know who that belongs [to] without even looking at the name.”

During the pandemic, Kreymerman was one of the first to make and sell masks. Demand is less now, but she has noticed another substantial change.

“After COVID, lots of [commercial] stores changed their inventory,” she said. “They don’t keep a lot of inventory in the stores, so people started to order something online. Oftentimes, you order something online and it doesn’t fit you, so that’s where they need services like us even more. Another thing we started to do was the custom clothing, bespoke, which is made to your particular body. This has changed, too;

**“Sometimes they bring the clothes, [and] you know who that belongs [to] without even looking at the name.”**

**– Elina Kreymerman**

it’s started to pick up.”

Kreymerman and her team have focused on quality and personalized care since the beginning.

“It was very, very difficult,” Kreymerman said about opening her shop herself. “You put everything financially that you have, and you

pray and hope that it’s going to work. But I learned if you work hard and love what you’re doing, you will be successful. You don’t have to be afraid, you just have to put a lot of effort and your soul.”

Celebrating 30 years in Shaker Square would not have been possible without her leap of faith in leaving Ukraine in the 1990s.

“America gives you an opportunity,” she said. “If you want to do something for yourself and for your family, you can. A lot of countries around the world have no such thing as that type of opportunity to do something by yourself and for yourself. ... That was the motivation; I can try and do something by myself.”

*Shaker Square Dry Cleaners & Tailoring is at 13107 Shaker Square, 216.751.3500, shakersquarecleaners.com.*



*Elina Kreymerman has owned and operated Shaker Square Dry Cleaners & Tailoring since 1994.*



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Larchmere residents complained during a July 29 Ward 6 safety meeting that sidewalk "bump-outs" like this one at Kendall Road are ineffective.



Photos by Chris Ball

Three traffic-calming blacktop speed tables are planned for East 127th Street between Larchmere Boulevard and Fairhill Road. This speed table was recently installed on East 130th Street south of Buckeye Road.

## Safer streets

# Traffic calming efforts are starting to pick up speed

By Christine Jindra

Shaker Square residents are learning new terms as safety for pedestrians and bikers continues to be a concern:

- Traffic calming
- Speed tables
- Bump-outs
- Mobility planning
- Vision Zero
- Bike Your Neighborhood

These are interconnected strategies.

**Traffic calming** is the philosophy of designing streets to slow down vehicles and make streets safer.

**Speed tables** are blacktop bumps on a street to force drivers to slow down as they drive over them. Speed tables are flat and longer, not as jarring as the rounder speed bumps most people know. Three speed tables are scheduled to be installed this year on East 127th Street to slow traffic that cuts through between Fairhill Road and Larchmere Boulevard.

**Bump-outs**, also known as curb extensions, extend the sidewalk or curb line into the parking lane to reduce street width. As part of traffic calming, bump-outs reduce the pedestrian crossing distance – and time to cross – and help pedestrians and motorists to see each other.

**Mobility planning** is Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb's strategy to devise new ways to design roads. He created five jobs in transportation and planning to implement these ideas. One of his first appointments was Calley Mersmann, a former safety

coordinator for the city's school district, as senior strategist for transit and mobility.

**Vision Zero** is the city's plan to eliminate traffic fatalities through safer street design and speed management, emphasizing that roadway deaths and serious injuries are preventable.

**Bike Your Neighborhood** is a movement dedicated to fostering community safety, connectivity and empowerment. It is one of several bike advocacy groups in the city. Bike Your Neighborhood hosts monthly Shaker Square bike rides (see story, Page 9).

City officials are deeply involved in safety planning. In 2023, 550 people were hit by cars while biking or walking in Cleveland. Nine of those crashes were fatal, according to Bike Cleveland's annual crash report. Those deaths were among the 59 city traffic fatalities in 2023, according to Cleveland's Vision Zero website, which reported 41 fatalities this year, as of June 30.

The city first installed 10 speed tables around the city. "We determined that they were effective in slowing people down," Mersmann said. "We have criteria to assess where speed tables should go. ... We know there are a lot of places that need traffic calming."

This year, the city will install 100 speed tables on streets that see 1,000 to 4,000 vehicles daily. The \$8,500 cost per table is paid with federal American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Complaints from residents about the curb bump-outs installed on Larchmere confirm that the city needs to tinker with street design.

Mersmann wants to do more traffic counts on Larchmere. Since the Opportunity Corridor opened, traffic has increased.

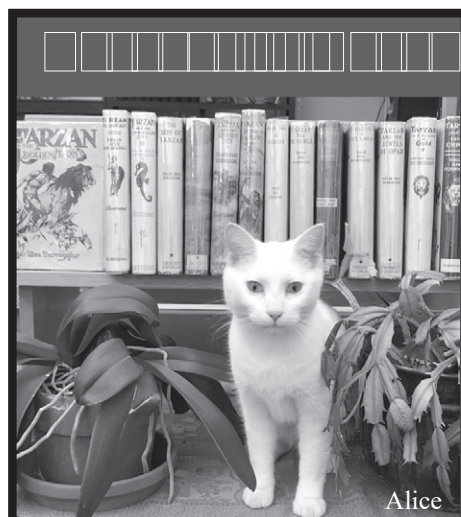
She said Larchmere sees twice the volume of cars per day "as our target criteria for speed tables. ... We're working really hard ... in building up our library of street design interventions. ... We've been putting the building blocks in place to be able to do things like speed tables, like curb extensions."

Fran Kalafitis, of East 127th Street, said at a July 29 Ward 6 safety meeting, "Larchmere with the bump-outs has become a horror disaster. People jump the curbs."

Tamara Chappell, of Cormere Avenue, said snowplows can't turn onto side streets from Larchmere because the bump-outs are in the way. "To make a turn ... you have to go in the next lane, into oncoming traffic. It's not a parking issue. People are parked correctly. ... It's a poor design."

City Council President Blaine Griffin (Ward 6) said he hears from others who want traffic lights back. "We went from traffic lights to the bump-outs because the lights were causing traffic back-ups," he said.

"There were even more accidents because people were trying to stop for the light. ... The bump-out design came to mitigate traffic. Little Italy with their major road loves bump-outs because it mitigates their traffic. Larchmere never liked it, and I get it, I understand. ... We tried something that people are unhappy with, and we are going to have to revisit it."



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## Huntington yields to pressure on Buckeye branch

Continued from page 1

“We’d like to thank all of our partners ... for joining us in committing to the safety measures and ongoing partnership. ... We look forward to continuing our investment in this historic neighborhood,” Richardson said in a statement.

When the branch reopens, customers will have to make an appointment to gain entry -- as it was before the closing. The bank’s drive-through window and ATM will be open.

Richardson said the bank will spend \$250,000 this year to support the neighborhood, including:

- \$25,000 to Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. for small business safety improvement grants;
- \$100,000 each to Community Housing Solutions and the Home Repair Resource Center to fund home repairs;
- \$30,000 to the Benjamin Rose nonprofit for free computer classes for seniors.

In the monthly meetings, Huntington officials were offered documentation showing that crime in a half-mile radius around the bank has fallen by 15 percent, with violent crime down 30 percent.

The leaders asked the bank to invest \$100 million in the area as the cornerstone to create a \$1 billion Buckeye neighborhood development fund, according to



“We are ... negotiating our brand-new banking agreement with all of our banks at the city of Cleveland, and so I intend to leverage that negotiation to make sure that Huntington does right by this neighborhood and does right by the city,” Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb told a meeting of the East 128th Street Block Club on June 6.

the Huntington Bank Citizens Group, convened by Greg Groves of Neighborhood Connections. The group’s 12-minute video on A Greater Buckeye YouTube channel, produced by Black Valve Media in Euclid, highlights reopening efforts. See it at [tinyurl.com/583y7sac](https://tinyurl.com/583y7sac).

The requested financing would add to ongoing redevelopment, including \$3.9 million City Council earmarked to develop Buckeye Road. (see story, Page 3)

Huntington officials told the leaders that they would examine their loan policies.

There are barriers, and people need help, Render said. “If

someone is disqualified for a loan, the bank should go back and give them a second look and a tutorial

on ways to improve their credit.”

Chappell asked Huntington to invest in new housing. “There are 2,200 vacant lots in Ward 4,” she said. “The bank needs to help.”

Mayor Justin Bibb, the Cleveland police department, City Council President Blaine Griffin (Ward 6), Ward 4 Councilwoman Deborah Gray and U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown all worked to get the branch open.

The mayor’s office said the city uses Huntington Bank primarily for payroll and Cleveland Public Power operations. As of July 31, about 12 percent of city funds were on deposit with Huntington.

The decrease in crime is due to increased police presence in the Buckeye neighborhood by walking the streets, talking to residents and visiting businesses, the mayor’s office said.

*Jindra, a former assistant managing editor for The Plain Dealer, spent two decades reporting on regional courts and governments.*

**“This is not a cellphone community, not a dot-com community. Our residents don’t do online banking.”**

**– Tamara Chappell**

## Housing

### City works to get new owner for vacant apartment building

By Nick Castele

A vacant apartment building near Shaker Square could be headed for new ownership.

Cleveland City Hall has been in Housing Court for a year trying to wrest control of the building at 2962 S. Moreland Blvd. from the local investor who owns it.

The city labeled the three-story brick walk-up a public nuisance in 2016. Today, the building is boarded up. Several windows are broken, and the yard is overgrown.

Housing Court Judge W. Moná Scott gave the city the go-ahead in February to bring in a receiver to take possession of the property and clean it up.

Then the building’s owner – a company called Nesvest LLC – proposed an alternative. Nesvest’s lawyer told a Housing Court magistrate in June that the company had lined up a buyer who would fix up the dilapidated building.

City Hall is open to the idea.

“If the new buyer in fact has the resources to rehab, then we’re all in favor of that,” Law Director Mark Griffin said.

The court expects to get an update on the building’s fate soon.

This building is one of a few that Mayor Justin Bibb’s administration is trying to take into receivership. Griffin characterized the legal move as a last resort for making landlords fix their housing code violations.

While receivership may be a last resort, it’s not a swift one. City Hall’s legal cases against Nesvest and another Shaker Square landlord have gone on for more than a year.

“We wish it were faster and more effective,” Griffin said. “But at some level, it’s like, what do we have left?”

*This story first appeared online at Signal Cleveland: [tinyurl.com/3dc3nbf9](https://tinyurl.com/3dc3nbf9). Used with permission.*

## Riding together in large groups is how some bikers choose to roll

By Christine Jindra

Bike Your Neighborhood sponsors monthly community bike rides during the summer and fall through Buckeye-Shaker, Larchmere, Ludlow, Mt. Pleasant, and Woodland Hills neighborhoods to promote social connections and empowerment.

The group was started last year by Ashley Evans and Robert Render III, members of the Saint Luke’s Foundation’s Resident Advancement Committee, working with community organizer Deidre McPherson.

City leaders who participated this year include Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb and City Council President Blaine Griffin (Ward 6).

“Cleveland is doing so much work to have more protected bike lanes to make it easier for bikers all across the city,” Bibb told a crowd of 100 bikers July 13 at Amos Norwood Park.

“We’re doing a brand-new, five-year survey to make sure we have the right strategies and insights and policies to make our streets safer for all of our bike riders.”

Bibb urged residents to fill out the survey at Cleveland Moves ([tinyurl.com/mt739dn2](https://tinyurl.com/mt739dn2)).

The remaining two 2024 Bike Your Neighborhood rides will be:

• 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., **Saturday, Sept. 14**, with community artists. Departs from Amos Norwood Park, Drexmore Road and East 128th Street. Arrive at 10:30 a.m. with a photo ID if you want a free bike rental.

• 7 to 9 p.m. **Monday, Oct. 7** with Slow Roll Cleveland and Cuyahoga County Executive Chris Ronayne. It departs from the CVS store at Shaker Square. Arrive at 6:30 if you want to borrow a bike.

Slow Roll is a social group bike ride that meets in a different neighborhood

most Monday nights in good weather for a 10-mile ride ([slowrollcleveland.org](https://slowrollcleveland.org)).

Bike Cleveland is the most well-known bike advocacy group in the region. It was formed in 2011 out of a grassroots effort to empower Cleveland residents to improve the safety, comfort, and accessibility of our streets.

Jerrod Amir Shakir is a community organizer for Bike Cleveland and lives in the Buckeye neighborhood. Shakir’s job is to work with local community groups, businesses and elected officials to develop support for improved streets

and to work with neighborhood bicycle and pedestrian committees.

Advocacy is at the heart of Bike Cleveland. One of its programs is a seven-week transportation academy. Weekly sessions teach bikers and walkers why streets look the way they do and how to organize their community to make them better. Participants must apply, and they receive a small stipend once they finish the course. This year’s class is filled, but information can be found under the advocacy tab at [bikecleveland.org](https://bikecleveland.org).



A group of 100 bikers exits the parking lot behind Amos Norwood Park for a July 13 group ride organized by Bike Your Neighborhood.

# Up and Down the Boulevard

Photo by Celeste Gabrielle



Happy customer



For sale



Abide Yoga



Adun Spice

By Andrea C. Turner

## Larchmere named a Best Place to Live in Cleveland

We'll take good press over bad any day. In May, Cleveland Magazine published "Larchmere Ready to Stand Out: Best Places to Live." Writer Ken Schneck says Larchmere is "making a name for itself." The article features local entrepreneurs who chose to locate in Larchmere, including Hope Hamling, who is celebrating her 10th year owning the Abide Yoga studio. Matthew Chasney (the article's photographer) moved to Larchmere two years ago and says, "There's just so much to do here for us [he and his kids]. We skateboard in the church parking lot, walk the trails by Doan Brook and, of course, hang out in the bookstore." Read more in the full article: [tinyurl.com/2yh8b6ck](https://tinyurl.com/2yh8b6ck).

## Get your cool shaved ice here

Just in the nick of time for summer, KC & J Hawaiian Shaved Ice and Lemonade opened a storefront, next door to Larchmere Imports, so residents could cool off with a sweet treat. Cleveland native Jon Sizemore, 68, a retired teacher and for 20 years a retail manager, previously operated a food truck, but it was stolen two years ago, he said. His shop specializes in a Hawaiian-style delicacy: vanilla ice cream on the bottom, then shaved ice, then your choice of 31 flavors of syrup, and he covers it all with sweet cream. His seasonal shop will close at the end of October and reopen next year, with improved signage, he hopes. "I love Larchmere," he said (twice). What will he do in the winter? "Travel." The shop is at 12303 Larchmere Blvd., 216.536.2361.

## Larchmere is getting spicy

Adun Spice Co. plans to relocate soon from the Van Aken District to 12721 Larchmere Blvd., in a storefront next door to Monarch Boutique. The Cleveland-based spice company, founded by chef and creative Ramat Wiley, offers high quality, unique spices from across the globe. Before opening her storefront, the former food stylist sold spices and seasoning blends at farmers markets, pop-up markets and online as a pandemic pivot. The name "Adun" means flavor, sweet and sweetness in the Yoruba language, a tribute to her Nigerian heritage. From single origin spices, to creating that one-of-a-kind hand-crafted blend, Wiley gives careful attention to each product, believing that food is the key to life.

"We are excited to be a part of such a phenomenal neighborhood that has always been so warm, welcoming, and full of art, charm, and culture," Wiley said.

## You could win \$500

Have you tried out the pizza or pasta at Scorpacciata Pasta Co. yet? If you write a dish review to help other diners decide what to order, you just might win \$500. Visit their website for details: [scorpacciatapastaco.com](https://scorpacciatapastaco.com). Drawing is Sept. 1. Just a reminder — the kitchen closes 15 minutes before the end of the day. Scorpacciata does not take reservations, operating on a walk-in basis only. Buon appetito! (See story on Page 6.)

## Help with Bill

**Gardner's recovery**  
Shaker Quality Auto Body is seeking

assistance for friend and co-worker Bill Gardner, service manager. After suffering debilitating injuries from a fire that engulfed his home May 1 in Shalersville, Gardner was life flighted to Akron Children's Hospital Burn Center to be treated for third-degree burns over half of his body. Co-workers set up a GoFundMe account for his hospital care. So far, more than \$17,000 has been raised of the initial \$25,000 goal. Luckily, Gardner's wife, Christine, escaped the blaze. But he fearlessly went back into the burning house to rescue his two beloved dogs, two birds and cat until he was overcome by the thick smoke and searing flames. He was unable to retrieve his treasured pets and crawled out only to see his home destroyed by flames. Gardner visited to show his support for the Larchmere PorchFest in June. *Donate to: [tinyurl.com/mtwdf84v](https://tinyurl.com/mtwdf84v).*

## Loganberry Books hosts Author Alley reception

Guests mingled with talented authors while enjoying wine and snacks at an Aug. 9 ticketed reception, kicking off Loganberry's Author's Alley weekend. Ticket-goers also had the option of taking home a blind book pick or a piece of Loganberry swag. Authors participating in the reception were Ashley B., Lauren Brooks, Jayke Brown, Tiara Brown, Jermel Carr, S.A. Ferguson, Sam Gorovitz, Joanna Hardis, Angela Henry, Ivan Luiz Hernandez, Don Hilton, Melissa Hintz, Thomas Johnston, DiAndra Liccardo, Judi Lifton, Jamie Lynn Owens, Alana Pedalino, Linda Robertson Reinhardt, Mark Sullivan, Meg Thomson, John Vacha, Sharda Webb and Lucy Chase Williams.

**Sidenote:** Are you the bookish type? Looking for a part-time job? Send your resume and cover letter explaining why you'd be a perfect addition to the Loganberry team to [elisabeth@logan.com](mailto:elisabeth@logan.com).

## Unserious Thursdays at UnBar Cafe

UnBar launched Unserious Thursdays on Aug. 15, for an evening of laughs, trivia, and tasty deals. Every Thursday, doors open at 7 p.m. for a trivia showdown to test your knowledge on a variety of fun and quirky topics. At 8 p.m., come for laughs as the stage transforms into a comedy nightclub. Join in for the open mic comedy session where all are welcome to give stand-up a try. No experience necessary — just bring your humor and get ready to make the crowd laugh. Grab the \$5 hotdog meal deal with fries, and don't miss out on the drink specials to keep the good times rolling. Whether you're a trivia master, an undiscovered comedian, or just out for a fun night with great food and drinks, Unserious Thursdays at Unbar is the place to be on Thursdays from 7 to 10:30 p.m.

## Real estate gem

We've often walked by and wondered about the brick building at 12610-12612 Larchmere Blvd., with a white "Gallery" on a black awning. It used to be the home of Corcoran Arts & Appraisals (whose sign is still on the west wall). Now the building and its adjacent parking lot, just east of Big Al's Diner, are on the market for \$695,000. The 4,461-square-foot space could be your first-floor business and second-floor residence. Or split them up. You could operate a business on the first floor and make the second-floor apartment a rental. Or rent the first floor and live upstairs. The first floor is a flexible commercial space. The upstairs apartment features three bedrooms with closet space and two full bathrooms. Included are a walk-up attic for storage and a large basement that could be a separate office space. Call Howard Hanna Real Estate Service's Rob Telecky at 216.406.2914 or view the listing at [tinyurl.com/yzkr2hed](https://tinyurl.com/yzkr2hed).

Email news tips to [act\\_one@sbcglobal.net](mailto:act_one@sbcglobal.net).

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Photo by Chris Ball

Guest speaker Sally Martin O'Toole describes efforts by Cleveland's Building and Housing Department to crack down on absentee landlords during SHAD's 47th annual meeting July 11. At left is SHAD Board President Mary Ann Kovach.

## SHAD Annual Meeting

# Building & Housing chief updates efforts to track absentee landlords

By Jason Novak

Housing issues took center stage at SHAD's 47th annual meeting July 11, as Cleveland works to hold absentee landlords responsible for problems in their buildings.

Guest speaker Sally Martin O'Toole, director of Cleveland's Building and Housing Department, gave a progress report on the Residents First reform package that City Council approved this year.

The reforms are meant to prevent absentee landlords from neglecting properties and not to punish homeowners who simply can't afford repairs, Martin O'Toole said. "The appeals process goes through Building and Housing," she said, "so we can make sure that tickets given to the elderly are waived. We're not trying to punish someone because they've been in the hospital, for instance."

While Martin O'Toole is happy with the progress that has been made, it has not been without its shortcomings, she said. Staffing issues have slowed the process down, though the department is shuffling some roles and hiring property inspectors. Another obstacle to fully implementing the reforms is that City Council removed language at the last minute that would allow inspectors to enter properties. For now, inspectors can only conduct exterior inspections. Martin O'Toole was sad that such an important aspect of the housing code was removed but hopes to get it reinstated.

The Residents First program mandates that nonlocal owners of properties in Cleveland must have a local agent in charge of that property. This was done partly to address serious code violations and tenant complaints that absentee landlords ignore.

In the last 20 years, local ownership of Cleveland properties has fallen dramatically, as outside investors buy up real estate. And when these violations were taken to court, around 80% of defendants failed to show up.

A large part of the problem, Martin O'Toole said, was the outdated code process. Violators were able to take

advantage of a long inspection and permit process, as well as laws that made holding investors accountable for violations difficult.

Martin O'Toole's department met for eight months with attorneys and community stakeholders to draft a 60-page code to address the shortcomings of the laws. This new legislation included a mandate for out-of-county landlords to have a local agent who is legally responsible for maintaining the properties, as well as requirements for properties to be lead-safe certified and that all utility payments be current. The process of inspection and ticketing was also rewritten to be more efficient.

Martin O'Toole thanked the Morelands Group for its help in getting the Residents First program off the ground. Last year, Building and Housing, with assistance from the Morelands Group, completed a door-to-door property survey to determine where property owners were located and what tenant needs were not being addressed. The results of this survey helped to craft the new code enforcement policies.

Asked about squatters in abandoned properties, Martin O'Toole promised that every effort would be made to find assistance and relocation services for them so they would not just be sent out on the street.

Regarding the costs of demolishing abandoned properties to build new ones, Martin O'Toole said it often is less expensive to repair old buildings than to destroy them. Her department hopes to show that repairing older buildings is also more environmentally friendly.

The meeting, at the Our Lady of Peace Cummins Hall, began with the nomination of new and returning board leadership. Johnnie Spates-Green, a past board member, has returned, while Lisa McGuthry and Brian Siggers will serve their second terms.

Also, the SHAD *Connection* Legacy project is nearly finished, SHAD Board President Mary Ann Kovach said. Cleveland Public Library is digitally archiving every issue from 1977 to the present. Once the archive is complete, the issues will go online for public viewing.

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# Cuyahoga Community College



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## People of SHAD

Photo by Chris Ball



Harriett Logan, second from right, watches from the romance novels section of her bookstore as *Global Connections* performs June 29 during PorchFest.

ROMANCE NOVELS ARE ALL THE RAGE AT BOOKSTORES, SAID A FRONT-PAGE STORY IN THE NEW YORK TIMES IN JULY. WE ASKED HARRIETT LOGAN, OWNER OF LOGANBERRY BOOKS, 13015 LARCHMERE BLVD., FOR HER TAKE ON THIS HOT TREND. — CHRIS BALL

**Logan:** "Romance has been trending for quite a while, and I think the difference is that publishers are giving it more credibility and more critical acknowledgement, and indie booksellers are having more fun shelving it. Editions have changed, there are more trade paperbacks. ... Harlequin and Regency Romance still exist, but that's not what's the top seller right now. The top sellers are shorter series or one-offs, with your popular authors in trade paperback. And most importantly, I think the big trend in romantasy are elaborate and fancy editions. ... We have more space for romance, for sure. ... We used to have three shelves. Now it's four. ... Romance has also taken off particularly in its subgenres: queer romance, Latina and Black romance, neuro-diverse romance, and *romantasy* is a combination of romance and fantasy, that's a Rebecca Yarros trend. She's huge."

## Social services

# Want to grow old in your own home? Benjamin Rose Institute has a plan

By Andrea C. Turner

Nearly 90% of older adults want to stay in their homes as they age, a 2010 survey by AARP found. Aging in place is a holistic approach for older individuals to live independent, healthy, purposeful lives in their homes.

Orion (pronounced Or-ee-un) Bell knows a thing or two about Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, or NORCs. As President and CEO of Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging, he has more than 30 years of leadership experience in not-for-profit management and services for older adults, people with disabilities and family caregivers.

Unlike planned retirement communities, homes in NORCs were not designed for adults 65 and older.

NORCs typically coordinate a range of health and social services to help support older people. To be considered a NORC, communities must be comprised of at least 40% of residents in this age range — most of whom are considered to be low or moderate income by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD.

HUD originally created the NORC designation for federally funded assistance in the mid to late 1990s, Bell said. “Those federal grants ran their course and are no longer available in 2024,” he said.

Attorney Patricia Frutig, a Larchmere resident, wanted to explore if Larchmere could be designated as such.

After discussing the possibility, Benjamin Rose partnered with the Center for Community Solutions, a Cleveland nonpartisan think tank focused on health and human services policy and research. It conducted research based on mapping from the 2020 census. The goal: to see if Larchmere fit the NORC qualifications.

The report concluded that despite the Larchmere area not having 40% of residents age 65 and older, two block groups have many NORC characteristics. Larchmere has a 20% population of senior adults, but also college students and young professionals in apartment buildings. New immigrants and younger adults also dominate the area because of its affordability and subsidized housing programs.

To help older adults who want to remain at home, Bell said, Benjamin Rose joined the Village to Village Network — a membership-based nonprofit organization that brings “Villages” together to share best practices. The network provides expert guidance, resources and support for healthy, vibrant aging.

According to the Village to Village Network, based in St. Louis, “Villages” are community-based, nonprofit, grassroots organizations formed through a cadre of caring neighbors who want to change the paradigm of aging.

A “Village” incorporates many NORC concepts but is less formal and more volunteer-oriented than the original NORCs, which relied in part on public funding. The Village model helps older adults age in a place of their choosing, connected to their communities with the practical support and tools they need.

A local steering committee, including members of SHAD, the Morelands Group, Fairhill Partners, Neighbor Up, Burton Bell Carr Development Inc. and the Larchmere Community Association, is collaboratively working to develop a “Village” model to help coordinate services for residents in these areas, including volunteer opportunities for neighbor-helping-neighbor efforts. People can join for a modest fee. Membership can also be subsidized or sponsored.

“The idea is that it would work like a community intervention to forestall social problems and assure that seniors can safely age in place, navigate their homes, eat an adequate healthy amount of food, and encourage safe neighborhoods,” said Bell. “Everyone can benefit from it as it promotes access and livability for not just older adults.”

The steering committee is formalizing the program’s boundaries and deciding what services to consistently offer in the Larchmere, Buckeye-Shaker and Shaker Square neighborhoods. They hope to launch a membership drive by the end of this year.

*Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging is at 11890 Fairhill Road, 216.791.8000, benrose.org.*



Photo by Chris Ball

*People ask about Benjamin Rose programs and services during an Aug. 2 community fair in the agency’s parking lot.*



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