



Larchmere Holiday Stroll

Friday, Nov. 29, & Saturday, Nov. 30

Jumpstart your holiday shopping with a holly jolly tour of Larchmere merchants. Many are preparing special themed promotions, including warm beverages, delicious treats and retail bargains. Some shops will open that Sunday afternoon as well.

Season's Greetings from Shaker Square

Saturday, Dec. 7, 2 to 6 p.m.

This family-friendly afternoon will be filled with good cheer, music, entertainment, and activities specially designed for the holiday season. Visit storefront open houses and get your picture taken with Santa Claus.

North Union Farmers Market

Winter hours, Saturdays,

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Bundle up for the last outdoor day of the weekly market at Shaker

Square on Dec. 21. Then set your GPS starting Jan. 4 for the indoor market at Van Aken Market Hall, 3441 Tuttle Road, Shaker Heights. The market will return to Shaker Square in April.



Neighbor Up

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Here's a comfortable way to meet nice folks who live near you, as Neighborhood Connections sponsors regular gatherings to create "authentic relationships through open dialogue." Next up: 6 p.m. Nov. 25, Dec. 23, and Jan. 27. *Go to neighborupcle.org.*

Dining

Blog fuels rumors on possible EDWINS exit

Chrostowski says no Nighttown deal is in place, but he's 'exploring options'

By Chris Ball



Brandon Chrostowski says he has no plans to move his EDWINS and EDWINS Too restaurants from Shaker Square to vacant Nighttown in Cleveland Heights, calling a blog report on his intentions "pathetic journalism."

"I've looked at Nighttown," he said, but no deal is in place. "I'm always exploring options."

The report is based on an anonymously leaked letter. "Someone from Cleveland Neighborhood Progress leaked a story that isn't true," Chrostowski said.

While nothing is imminent, he didn't rule a move out. But before he could move, "it would take a release from Shaker Square," he said, as he still has three years remaining on his lease at EDWINS and two years at EDWINS Too.

But he has kicked the tires on the former jazz club on Cedar Road, which closed in August nine months after reopening. "A big space just became available, and Shaker Square is still working through its issues," he said.

Crime in Shaker Square is his chief concern, though Cleveland police say it's down recently in the area.

"Maybe some crime is down, but violent crime is certainly up," Chrostowski said, citing a carjacking and other recent incidents.

He recently launched a website, Victims of SHSQ, at shsqvictims.org. It doubles as a donation site and a way to collect crime information. It asks for contributions to assist victims of crimes, from broken windows to stolen vehicles. And it asks crime victims in Shaker Square to register. "We look to offer some relief," the site says. "If you or anyone you know has been affected please contact us."

Chrostowski opened EDWINS 11 years ago and lives nearby, but he said he wouldn't let personal feelings get in the way of a business decision if he does move to Nighttown. "Not if we just go four minutes down the hill," he said. "Of course, you always have sentimental feelings if that happens, like you always have with your first kiss, but no."



CNP's CEO defends their efforts to deter crime on Shaker Square

By Thomas Jewell

A letter leaked to a local blog sent shock waves through Shaker Square in October.

Cleveland Neighborhood Progress CEO and President Tania Menesse sent the letter Oct. 15 to about 50 board members with CNP and its subsidiary, New Village Corp.

"I am writing you all this morning because Brandon Chrostowski with Edwins Leadership Institute has started calling board members and former board members regarding his interest in moving his restaurants out of Shaker Square," Menesse wrote.

The letter was intended to be internal but was not considered confidential, said a spokesman for the nonprofit CNP, which owns Shaker Square with Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc.

In it, Menesse said Chrostowski "initially couched this interest in safety concerns, sending a legal letter several weeks ago indicating that we were not in compliance with our lease."

The owners have since put out some "general safety" fact sheets to show that "although there have been some incidents, any suggestion that Shaker Square is facing out-of-control crime is not based in reality."

Some incidents have been publicized, including a shattered picture window at Zanzibar restaurant, now repaired.

A man convicted of multiple storefront "smash-and-grab" break-ins last winter could now serve up to three years, eight months in prison. (*See story, Page 10.*)

Meanwhile, Shaker Square representatives continued to check to see what other incident reports have been filed in a timely manner by EDWINS staff with Fourth District Cleveland police.

"Our attorney assures us that [Chrostowski] has no standing in this claim, as we have gone above and beyond to secure Shaker Square and its safety," Menesse wrote to board members.

In the letter, Menesse added that on Oct. 10, Chrostowski called her to request a meeting and "let me know he has a tentative deal at the former Nighttown that will allow him to consolidate his business and take on more students."

"While we don't want to stand in the way of his plans, he has three years left on his lease at EDWINS and two years on EDWINS Too," Menesse said.

Menesse and BBC Executive Director Joy Johnson maintain that the biggest deterrent to crime remains increased sidewalk traffic among busy storefronts.



Artists finished a 720-foot-long mural on Woodhill Road in October that captures local historical landmarks, including Shaker Square. *See stories, Page 7.*

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U.S. Rep. Shontel Brown presented an \$800,000 federal grant to Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. Administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the grant will fund several key initiatives for community development and infrastructure improvements at Shaker Square, including: creation of 29 jobs at Shaker Square businesses, with 75% of these positions allocated for low-income individuals; partnership with local community action agency Step Forward, to provide employment support services; installation of an elevator in the northeast quadrant of Shaker Square; renovation of Dave's Markets grocery store; and additional capital improvements around Shaker Square. This funding is a vital investment in the community, aimed at enhancing both employment opportunities and the overall infrastructure of the Square.



SAVE THE DATE!

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Mingle with neighborhood friends and help raise funds for SHAD at Sip & Savor, a benefit party **Friday, Feb. 28**, at UnBar Café, 12635 Larchmere Blvd.

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Ad artwork is due no later than: **January 31, 2025**.

Send artwork to Jim at jgdalessandro@gmail.com.

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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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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apartment Corridor• CHALK• Drexmore/Chadbourne• Historic Shaker Square• Larchmere• Ludlow	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shaker Square• Larchmere Blvd.• Van Aken Plaza• Shaker Boulevard West

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Hampton Road tenants hold out despite threats, loss of utilities

By Thomas Jewell

Before he took his grandkids out trick-or-treating that night, Jay Westbrook arrived Halloween afternoon at an abandoned-looking apartment building near Shaker Square.

His game plan was simple: to help one of the few remaining tenants move out.

“It’s gone from 40 legitimately occupied apartments down to about 10 people,” the former Cleveland councilman and Morelands Group co-founder said, noting that some squatters are living inside as well.

The Morelands Group, a nonprofit tenant advocacy organization around Shaker Square, has been “on the ground” with distressed tenants since the building’s water and electricity were shut off in early August.

“We’ve been blessed with some money we’ve raised to help these people out,” Westbrook said. “They don’t want to be coming home every day wondering if the doors are going to be boarded up.”

In fact, those kinds of threats have already been made by a realtor claiming to represent Aliarse Holdings LLC, the latest in a succession of absentee owners of the 48-unit complex at the corner of Hampton and South Woodland roads.

Westbrook shared a photo of a sign the agent posted that said, “Notice to vacate – Everyone has to be gone by Monday morning, 9 a.m. We will be boarding up this building and shutting everything down.”

In smaller print at the bottom of the message, it closes with “Everybody has had plenty of time to find housing.”

The problem is Aliarse took the tenants’ rent, sometimes months in advance, and disappeared.

“Those are totally false pretenses,” Westbrook said of the proxy directive. “They forfeited control of this property a long time ago.”

Aliarse officials have never shown up to answer to a 54-count criminal complaint filed in Cleveland Housing Court on a wide array of charges stemming from utterly deplorable living conditions.

After issuing its own notice to vacate in August, the city turned the water back on, realizing that some tenants had nowhere to go.

But those tenants – and squatters – remaining by the end of October said there was “no hot” water in the building.

A shutoff notice that The Illuminating Co. stuck in one of the apartment doors seeks payment of \$4,626, although Westbrook said electricity may have still been on in some apartments.

Westbrook had also learned that Cleveland City Council was considering

issuing American Rescue Plan Act funds through the United Way to various assistance organizations – like Morelands Group.

A city spokesman was unable to provide an update on the situation in early November.

“This building has been in trouble under three different ownerships,” Westbrook said. “We need to slam the door on speculative investments.”

Mary Boyle with the Morelands Group said Cleveland City Council introduced legislation Nov. 4 that would designate United Way as the enabling nonprofit agency to administer as much as \$1 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for “tenant emergency needs.”

Boyle said Council President Blaine Griffin (Ward 6) and Councilwoman Deborah Gray (Ward 4) are very receptive to setting aside ARPA funds for distressed tenants “when they are at risk of becoming homeless.”

“They forfeited control of this property a long time ago.”

– Jay Westbrook

Safer streets

City sets the table for slowing cars on East 127th Street cut-through

By Christine Jindra

A new speed table in front of John Ballom’s house on East 127th Street is part of the city of Cleveland’s plan to force speeders to slow down on residential streets.

“It definitely slows down the traffic,” said Ballom. But drivers speed up again right away, he said.

Speed tables are blacktop bumps that are wider but not as jarring as rounder speed bumps. The city installed three

speed tables in October on East 127th – a favorite (and only) cut-through between Fairhill Road, largely a commuter road, and Larchmere Boulevard, which connects Cleveland with eastern suburbs.

Ballom, a 30-year resident of the Ward 6 street, said he didn’t know the speed tables were coming. “I came home from work one day, and they were there.”

“I guess I’m OK with it,” said his neighbor, Robin Clay, after some hesitation. She has lived on East 127th for 25 years. “Cars go entirely too fast.

Especially when I try to turn into my driveway, and they’re on my tail.”

Pat Harris frequently uses East 127th as a shortcut between Fairhill and Larchmere as she drives to her job at a nearby nursing home.

“I think the speed tables are a good thing,” Harris said. She doesn’t mind having to slow down for them. “People just speed on this street,” she said.

The street markings and signs warning about the tables are effective, Ballom said. The signs tell drivers to slow down to 10 mph as they drive over the raised asphalt.

“The good thing about it is you know they’re coming. My question is why do they need so many?”

Three seems like a lot to him for his street, which he described as a good neighborhood. He’s more familiar with smaller speed bumps and was surprised the new speed tables are so large.

They are part of the city’s Vision Zero initiative, which aims to eliminate serious injuries and deaths from crashes in Cleveland. The city installed 100 speed tables this year on residential streets after 10 speed tables installed in 2022 proved effective.

Average speeds were 7.8 mph slower after the 10 tables were installed, the city’s website says, and more than 77% of residents surveyed indicated support for more speed tables across the city.

The tables were installed on streets that see 1,000 to 4,000 vehicles daily, said Calley Mersmann, the city’s senior strategist for transit and mobility. The \$8,500 cost per table was covered by federal American Rescue Plan Act funds.



“The speed tables do the job,” said Robert Render III, a neighborhood activist who lives on East 128th Street. He knows other residents want them on their street.

“They serve the purpose,” he said. Since former Mayor Jane Campbell cut the police department’s size 20 years ago, the city hasn’t had enough officers in the traffic division, Render said.

“I’d like to see them on main streets such as Buckeye and Larchmere, but City Council President Blaine Griffin says that’s not possible because it would slow down fire and EMS vehicles.”

Griffin told The SHAD Connection that “we are assessing any opportunities to add speed bumps that are strategically placed in Ward 6” (his ward).

“I will caution everyone that it is not feasible to add one to every street. There are also some challenges with ambulance transport. We have to be careful not to oversaturate any area, because this can jeopardize the transport of patients when EMS personnel are providing sensitive care.”



Photos by Chris Ball

A driver traversing a new speed table Oct. 3 on East 127th Street discovers that if you go too fast, your car’s front will scrape the road.

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The SHAD Connection Winter 2024 3

Heard Around the Square

By Margaret Simon

Get Crafty at Plymouth Church’s Sugar Plum Workshop. Kick off your holiday season with creativity and fun at Plymouth Church’s Sugar Plum Workshop. On Saturday, Dec. 7, from 9 to 11 a.m. in the church basement, kids (with a little help from adults) can dive into a festive holiday crafting. Each child can create simple, heartfelt gifts for loved ones, surrounded by the joyful hum of holiday cheer. With a small materials fee, these unique, handmade treasures are not only affordable but become priceless keepsakes. Come for a morning of laughter and memory making.

Max Chernin, a 2008 Shaker Heights grad and BFA alum of Cincinnati’s College-Conservatory of Music, is set to star as Leo Frank in the national touring company of “Parade,” the 2023 Tony Award winner for Best Revival of a Musical. The tour stops at Playhouse Square in Cleveland from Feb. 4 to 23. For ticket details, visit playhousesquare.org.

ConGREENulations to two Shaker Heights eco-leaders! Educator **Tim Kalan** received the prestigious 2024 Elizabeth Abernathy Hull Award from The Garden Club of America, honoring his commitment to environmental education. Meanwhile, **Nancy Moore**, dedicated to urban forestry, graduated from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources’ Tree Commission Academy. Both serve on the Shaker Heights Tree Advisory Board, embodying a shared vision for a sustainable community. Let’s applaud their efforts to green our world.

It’s always powerful when history and art intersect. In September, the cast of Laurel School’s fall production of *The Crucible* welcomed special guest **Jennifer Sours Chevreux**, a direct descendant of Sarah Basset, one of the accused at the Salem witch trials. Chevreux’s expert insight added profound historical depth to Arthur Miller’s play, enriching the students’ understanding of the real events that inspired the story. The result? A performance that brought history to life

in a meaningful, unforgettable way for the Laurel thespians.

While the final game didn’t go as planned, Shaker’s women’s field hockey team has much to celebrate. Few teams make it to the state tournament, and Shaker demonstrated skill, sportsmanship, and tenacity along the way. Every player gave it their all, and even in a tough game, they stood tall, showing their character and commitment to each other. Hats off to **Coach Ashley Boorstein** and to the entire team — thank you for an unforgettable season. You may be runners-up, but in our eyes, you’re true champions.

Winners of Shaker Heights City Council’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee’s first-ever community micro-grant program have been awarded modest grants (each less than \$2,500) to a workshop and free ice-skating session, a free youth lacrosse clinic and a series of self-defense and protection classes. Visit shakeronline.com for details.

At an Oct. 2 awards ceremony hosted by the Rotary at Shaker Heights Fire Station #1, **Detective Kevin Ishler** of the Shaker Heights Police Department and **Lieutenant Dillon Crouse** of the Shaker Heights Fire Department were honored for their service. Ishler received the 2023 Police Officer of the Year award, while Crouse was named 2023 Firefighter of the Year. The event highlighted the commitment of local first responders to safety and community welfare.

Shaker Arts Council has unveiled five newly wrapped utility boxes designed by local artists who are thinking outside the box — literally — by infusing their creativity into these public structures. The participating artists and their box locations are: *Spring Birds* by Kimberly Dailey at Shaker Square, *Doan Brook Falls* by **Sheila Reingold** at the intersection of West Park and Shaker boulevards, *Flowers and Hummingbirds* by **Georgio Sabino III** at South Park and Shaker boulevards, *Reaching Out* by **Erinn Sneed** at Van Aken Boulevard and South Woodland Road, and *Friday*

Night by **Tanya Tate** at Lee Road and Parkland Drive. These utility boxes add a vibrant touch to the community. Explore the tours in person or virtually at shakerartscouncil.org/public-art-tour.html. (*See story, Page 9.*)

Local artist and newly appointed Shaker Arts Council board member **Sheri Lawrence** won Best of Show at Stella’s Art Gallery in Willoughby last summer for her acrylic piece, *Passage*. Inspired by walks on the Shaker golf course, her artwork beautifully captures the landscape’s tranquil charm.

Robert Render III, dedicated community activist and member of St. Luke’s Foundation Resident Advancement Committee, was recognized as one of the Unsung Heroes at the 2024 NAACP Cleveland Branch’s Freedom Fund event in June. This honor highlights his significant contributions to enhancing the well-being of residents in the community, showcasing his commitment to social justice and advocacy. Kudos!

Eau de vie! Looking for a red, white, or sparkling wine to accompany your fine dining experience? Then you’ll want to manger et boire chez EDWINS at Shaker Square. The bistro recently received an Award of Excellence from the Wine Spectator, which cites “restaurants that make wine a priority.” And in November, EDWINS was included among Yelp’s top 25 places to dine in Cleveland, tabulated from reviews and ratings from Yelp Elite members. Bon appetit!

The 16th edition of **Who’s Who in Black Cleveland** debuted at a sold-out event last summer at the Intercontinental Hotel. Congratulations to the 2024 Game Changers: **Michael Bowen, Kevin and Yvonne Conwell, Miranda Creel, Kenn Dowell, Blaine A. Griffin, Stefanie Brown James, Quentin James, C. Randolph Keller, Monique Cox Moore, Tracey Phelps, P.E., The Honorable Michael J. Ryan, The Honorable Melody J. Stewart and Meredith M. Turner**. Kudos to Living Legend honorees **Honorable C. Ellen Connally and Dr. Rev. Marvin A. McMickle**.

The Ohio Book Awards, established by the Ohioana Library Association, are the second oldest state literary awards in the U.S., with nearly 80 years of honoring Ohio’s literary talents. (The list of past honorees reads like a who’s who of American literature, with names like James Thurber, Toni Morrison, Mary Oliver, and Celeste Ng.) Add the 2024 Ohio Book Award-winning authors **Sarah Lohman**, known for her historical food writing; **James McBride**, lauded for his powerful novels; **Taylor Byas**, a rising poet; **Laura Meckler**, notable journalist and author; and illustrators **Joe Sutphin** and **Will Hillenbrand**. Their diverse works, spanning fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and illustration, promise an enriching reading experience. Read more at tinyurl.com/ym8jkm5p.

With Kristen Hannah’s book, “The Women,” inspiring readers to explore the experiences of women during the Vietnam War, Shaker Square resident **Mary Reynolds Powell** has offered firsthand talks to local book groups. As a nurse, Vietnam War veteran, and author of “A World of Hurt,” she brings an authentic voice to the historical narrative, providing a rare opportunity to bridge past and present through the perspective of someone who lived through intense moments in history.

Why do vegans make the best friends? Because they never have a beef with you! Looking for good friends and good vegan food? Try the **Vegan Club** on Shaker Square. Cleveland.com included it in its July listing of the area’s top vegan restaurants, highlighting its “Fun Buns” menu with “classic takes on American sammies with vegan substitutes for chicken, bacon, beef and more.” Treat yourself ... and keep your ears open for me.

Email news items to heardaroundthesquare@gmail.com.

Dining

Batuqui heads west two doors into former church

By Christine Jindra

Carla Batista’s love affair with Larchmere Boulevard will continue when she and Gustavo Nogueira, her business partner and husband, move Batuqui to a more spacious building two doors west. They opened the celebrated Brazilian restaurant nine years ago in a “little” house on Larchmere.

In mid-December, they will relocate Batuqui 130 feet west to 12624 Larchmere Blvd., in the former St. Paul’s Evangelical Church, a 100-year-old church that closed decades ago.

The relocation will be another bold move for the couple. Three years ago, they opened a successful second Batuqui in Chagrin Falls, in a renovated Victorian house similar but much larger than the first.

The existing Larchmere restaurant will stay open until it changes location. “We will close at the end of business on a Sunday and move in 48 hours, opening up on a Tuesday,” Batista said.

Diners will enter the 5,000-square-foot new Batuqui by walking up two sets of stairs into an open dining room. Sixty deep green leather seats at tables are

surrounded by stained-glass windows, rich wood accents and Brazilian artifacts along the walls. Notable are the orixas, small statues over the bar, recognized in Brazil as the divine energy of nature.

The restaurant’s vibe is serene yet vibrant. Curtains on the stained-glass windows are multicolored Brazilian fishermen nets, adding drama as light filters through their open weave.

A former confessional box is now a sink in a tranquil room where patrons can wash their hands, a Brazilian custom, Batista said.

A second downstairs dining room/event center will seat 70, giving the new Batuqui space for 130 to 140 patrons.

Batista, who designed the \$500,000 renovation, added a 10-seat bar upstairs, a smaller bar downstairs and a private dining area in the former sanctuary.

A 700-square-foot mercadinho, or mini-market, to sell Brazilian products and Batuqui carryout foods has a separate entrance. An elevator, like the one at Chagrin Falls, will carry diners to the lower level. A patio is planned for spring.

Batista hopes to eventually open for lunch and music, hopefully jazz, once a week. Until then, hours at both locations

will remain 5 to 10 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays; 3 to 9 p.m. Sundays; with a 3 to 6 p.m. happy hour.

Moving their restaurant to a larger space while staying on Larchmere was important. Batista loves the neighborhood, and three years ago she and Nogueira bought a condo across the street from the first Batuqui (12706 Larchmere).

The name Batuqui, meaning “sound of drums” and pronounced “Baa-too-kee,” has thrived, drawing patrons from Northeast Ohio, Columbus and Pittsburgh.

“My heart is in the beautiful little house, and the neighborhood has such a vibe,” Batista said. “But we need to move; we’ve outgrown it.”

The current cozy Batuqui seats 38. During Covid, the couple added 140 seats in a backyard tent and a front patio, a concept that doesn’t work well in cooler weather, she said.

At both restaurants, Batista and Nogueira will continue serving foods from their homeland as well as Brazilian wines and craft cocktails. Batista said Nogueira is the master of churrasco (steaks) and other meats, while she handles the seafood menu.

Photo by Chris Ball



This cornerstone on Batuqui’s new Larchmere location reveals some of the building’s history.

They were both chefs at Brazilian restaurants when they met 19 years ago. Nogueira was at the now-closed Brasa Grill in Cleveland’s Warehouse District, and Batista worked with Sergio Abramof, a trailblazing chef with restaurants at Shaker Square and University Circle. Nogueira soon joined Abramof’s team, and the three planned a new restaurant before Abramof died 11 years ago.

“I miss him so much,” Batista said of Abramof.

Batista and Nogueira carried on when they opened Batuqui.

‘Visioning’ process comes up with three guiding principles for revival

By Thomas Jewell

When it comes to re-establishing Shaker Square as a genuine destination hub on Cleveland’s East Side, Brie Hensold already has a point of reference.

The lead consultant on the year-long “visioning” process for Ohio’s oldest shopping district, Hensold grew up in Shaker Heights less than a mile from the Square in the 1980s and 1990s.

“I have a lot of memories,” Hensold said. “When I was a little girl, we would stop at the newsstand on Shaker Square after church so my dad could pick up the Sunday edition of the Chicago Tribune. And I would always get some candy.”

A few years later, she would head to Shaker Square for regular stops at Arabica Cafe with its coffee, ice cream and other treats.

“When you were a teenager, that’s where you would hang out and spend your babysitting money,” Hensold said.

Tania Menesse, president and CEO of Cleveland Neighborhood Progress (CNP), one of the nonprofit owners of Shaker Square, also remembers those Arabica days. She would ride the Greater Cleveland RTA “rapid” train from her home in Shaker to the Square.

“Then on Friday night, there was Captain Tony’s for pizza,” Hensold said. “This was the place to be.”

The visioning goal is bringing people back to a rejuvenated Shaker Square with new attractions for everyone.

Captain Tony is still there, having weathered the Great Recession and a global pandemic as well as cyclical upticks in crime and panhandling.

It was fitting that Hensold and co-founder Gina Ford’s Boston-based firm, Agency Landscaping + Planning, hosted a recent stakeholders’ visioning update in the future Cafe Indigo, which will feature coffee and ice cream in the former Dewey’s space.

The visioning goal is bringing people back to a rejuvenated Shaker Square with new attractions for everyone from young families to seniors.

With the help of a steering committee, Square co-owners CNP and Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc., and an initial 600 responses to the Vision Plan survey, the consulting team set forth three guiding principles on the project:

- 1 Restore and strengthen the original design and function of Shaker Square, building on its unique history and authenticity as the key asset;
- 2 Ensure that retail can survive in a changing environment, including growth opportunities for full-service restaurants, as well as home goods and clothing;
- 3 Make Shaker Square both a destination for visitors citywide and a walkable and bikeable neighborhood hub for the densely populated residential area surrounding it.



Photo by Chris Ball

Michaela Difiore of Zygote Press silkscreens the Shaker Square logo onto canvas tote bags. The bags were given to participants in Shaker Square’s Vision Plan update Sept. 19 at the future Cafe Indigo.

In reaffirming a sense of place, retail demand alone will not fill all of the space available, the consulting team said. In “creating your own demand” for the future, Hensold and Ford said the final version of the \$250,000 Vision Plan will also recommend improvements to public space, along with easier and safer access to more family attractions. The vision plan comes after more than a year of shoring up the nearly century-old Square with over \$5 million in improvements to address deferred maintenance. In 2022, City Council voted to finance

\$12 million allowing the local nonprofits to step in and get Shaker Square out of court-ordered receivership and possible sheriff’s sale. The city has since put another \$7 million toward infrastructure improvements – much of it underground utilities – starting in spring 2023. Closing off access to one quadrant at a time, crews wrapped up paving and striping this fall. The team is already excited about rolling out the final version with specific recommendations in early 2025 at another public consensus-building meeting, Hensold said.

Real estate

Busy broker manages Shaker Square’s diverse mix

By Christine Jindra

Real estate broker Akil Hameed, a trailblazer in commercial real estate, is the go-to man for Shaker Square’s retail and office space leases. Thanks to him, only one storefront in the Square is without a tenant.

Hameed, founder and president of FASS Real Estate Services, won the contract to handle the Square after nonprofits Cleveland Neighborhood Progress (CNP) and Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. (BBC) purchased the financially troubled property in 2022 with loans from the city of Cleveland.

The nonprofits have since spent more than \$5 million on long-neglected capital improvements, including replacing roofs, heating and cooling, electrical, masonry and rotting wood.

As the restoration progressed, Hameed found tenants for two of the Square’s highly visible empty storefronts.

Melissa Garrett-Hirsch signed a lease to open Café Indigo in the former Dewey/Biggby coffee shop in the Square’s northeast quadrant near CVS Pharmacy. (See story, Page 11)

On the adjacent corner, experienced restaurateur Rey Galindo and his partners are opening Coyoacán Taqueria & Brew where Balaton restaurant had been. (See story, Page 6)

Hameed had stayed in contact with Garrett-Hirsch after he helped her lease UnBar Café, which she opened in 2020 at 12635 Larchmere Blvd.

“Melissa wanted to offer something slightly different from UnBar, so she came up with the Indigo concept. Her goal is to offer ice cream in addition to the coffee,” Hameed said. “That will bring more of a family-oriented space.”

Coyoacán, Hameed said, is “going to be super exciting because Rey has a nice concept, to bring a Mexican brewery with a fast casual concept.”

When he became leasing agent, Hameed knew the nonprofits wanted someone who could manage the various neighborhoods that view Shaker Square as their own and handle leases for a diverse tenant mix.

Hameed was comfortable with that mission.

“We work closely with CNP, BBC ... daily we are on the ground; we manage all first-floor merchants, all the businesses on the second floor. And when I say manage, we are collecting all the rents. ... The second floor [office] occupancy rate is 72%.” (Before Hameed stepped in, it was 55%.)

Hameed also helped Shaker Square sign leases for:

- Zanzibar Soul Fusion, recently repurchased by Akin Affrica, the restaurant’s first owner.
- Dave’s Market, which signed a six-year renewal, agreeing with the nonprofits to evenly split the \$700,000 cost of renovations.
- The Vegan Club, which shared space with The Breakfast Club before moving to 13114 Shaker Square.
- The Greater Cleveland Urban Film Festival, for second-floor office space.
- Cleveland City Dance, for an additional 2,300 square feet above Dave’s for a new studio. A new hallway connects that studio with the dance company’s storefront in the southwest quad.
- Kamron Khan Photography, moved to a storefront at 13200 Shaker Square.
- Employment Specialists International, opened next to Captain Tony’s Pizza. The job placement



Akil Hameed

firm signed a three-year lease. Hameed started FASS in 2006 as a real estate agent; five years later, he became a broker. Soon, he got involved and thrived in commercial real estate and is one of the few minorities in that field. He credits David Browning, former senior vice president at CRBE, a global commercial real estate firm, for mentoring him. Today, FASS handles development projects ranging from \$5 million to \$50 million and commercial sales, leasing, consulting services and management of several hundred residential and commercial properties. Hameed, the first black male to be elected president of the Akron Cleveland Association of Realtors (in 2023), is active in the National Association of Realtors and the Ohio Realtors.

“What they said about Akil Hameed:

“Akil is a key partner in our efforts to create a thriving future for Shaker Square. His real estate estate experience and the relationships he fosters with current and prospective merchants is invaluable to our team,” said Tania Menesse, President and CEO, Cleveland Neighborhood Progress.

“The neighborhoods our organization serves benefit from many of the amenities at Shaker Square, which is why we’re grateful for the hard work and dedication Akil demonstrates around the clock to improve this iconic destination,” said Joy D. Johnson, Executive Director, Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc.

In addition to increasing the Square’s occupancy rate and aiding in the capital repairs, Hameed “has been instrumental in helping to improve communications with merchants,” said Briana Perry, CNP’s senior vice president of equitable neighborhood revitalization.

Luchita’s chef returns to Shaker Square with new restaurant concept

By Christine Jindra

Rey Galindo will enjoy a homecoming when he opens Coyoacán Taqueria & Brew in the former Balaton restaurant at Shaker Square in November.

Galindo and his partners have a dynamic new concept. They are combining a fast-food restaurant and a microbrewery, with extended hours for those seeking interesting food, beer or both. Thanksgiving week is their opening target.

Long a fan of Shaker Square, Galindo was chef for 20 years at Luchita’s in the Square, owned by his mother, Maria de la Luz Galindo. She opened Cleveland’s first Mexican restaurant in 1981 and later expanded to the Square and other locations.

The last Luchita’s closed in 2022, but Galindo, who became an investment adviser, and his team are planning their own restaurant dynasty, starting with Coyoacán at 13133 Shaker Square.

Meaning “place of coyotes” in Aztec and named for Galindo’s Mexico City neighborhood, Coyoacán (pronounced KOY-oh-ə-KAHN) will be two concepts under one roof.

The first will be a fast-casual dining area similar to the local Cilantro Taqueria chain owned by Galindo’s brother. It will offer tacos, burritos, tortas and empanadas, prepared to order for takeout or enjoyed at eight tables.

Coyoacán’s second room will be a brewpub specializing in Mexican-style lagers brewed on-site in four 200-liter tanks most recently used at a Mexican brewery. Joining the microbrewery’s six beers will be six craft beers from the Compass Rose Brewery in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The Coyoacán brewery will be full-service dining with a bar and 14 tables seating 70. The menu will include enchiladas, chile rellenos and monthly offerings geared to festivals in the restaurant’s namesake neighborhood.

“Whatever festival is going on in Coyoacán, we’re going to serve the same,” Galindo said. “Now it’s the month of enchiladas. All restaurants serve enchiladas. When they serve chile rellenos, we are going to do it here.”

A conference room for 10 is available for small business use, and a front patio is planned for the spring.

Hours will be 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily

and 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. weekends, closed Sundays or Mondays. The brewery, with big-screen televisions, will be geared to sporting events and a younger crowd.

As part of the \$220,000 renovation, Galindo is keeping Balaton’s elegant crystal chandeliers. The walls, painted two shades of blue and white, will have photos of Coyoacán native artist Frida Kahlo, the Mexican neighborhood and Day of the Dead art. Benches and chairs will be upholstered in colorful fabrics.

Galindo, trained as a chef by his mom and at a cooking school in Mexico, will head the kitchen but will train others to take over. He is working with Rose Carroll of Restaurant Solutions to develop staff training manuals and a software program to monitor daily sales.

Galindo and his nephew Jorge Sierra are partners with Elisa Maria Galindo, Antonio Mendez, Francisco Lujano and José Luis Martínez, all from the culinary industry.

Once the Shaker Square restaurant is thriving, Galindo will move into phase two: The Compass Rose Brewery will become a Coyoacán Restaurant & Brew. He and his partners plan to open three additional Coyoacáns in Raleigh



Photo by Chris Ball

Rey Galindo, right, and his partner and nephew, Jorge Sierra, discuss construction plans Nov. 4 for the interior of his new restaurant, Coyoacán Taqueria & Brew, opening soon on Shaker Square.

and three more in Northeast Ohio. Galindo also wants to open two Luchita’s restaurants – one east, one west, both close to highways – to satisfy Luchita’s fans.

But for now, Shaker Square is the excitement. Four months ago, Galindo had breakfast on the Square and was impressed by all the renovation. Soon, he talked to the city and the two nonprofits managing the Square to see what was available. After looking at several properties, Galindo settled on the old Balaton for his restaurant/brewery. “It’s perfect for us. I’m happy to be back,” he said.

Health care

Village of Healing expands to serve minorities in Buckeye-Shaker

By Jason Novak

Dána M. Langford and Tenisha Gaines were working for a local hospital system when they noticed a disturbing trend in health care for minorities.

“We were attending lots of meetings about infant mortality, and we saw that almost no one on these committees looked like us,” Langford said. “The community that was most affected was not being asked what they needed.” So she and Gaines decided to provide care catered to the Black community.

The pair opened The Village of Healing

in Euclid in February 2022 to provide OB/GYN, pediatric, mental health, and primary health services to the Black community. In two years, the health center provided care to hundreds of families from all around the Cleveland area.

Then they noticed something else. Around 40% of their patients came from the Buckeye-Shaker area, they said. “You can’t talk about access to culturally sensitive care when you have to drive 20 to 30 minutes or take however many buses to get to an appointment. We want to be in the communities to provide that access.”

The St. Luke’s Foundation awarded them a grant to open a new office soon

in Suite 230 of the Yosemite Enterprise Campus at 11201 Shaker Blvd.

In Euclid, the Village of Healing office sets itself apart from other health clinics. The brightly painted walls are adorned with artwork from local Black artists. The exam rooms are named for Black people who were important to medicine, from doctors and nurses to slaves who were experimented on by white doctors, each with a plaque offering a history lesson about each person. Most importantly, though, the staff are all members of the Black community.

When Langford and Gaines started the Village of Healing, they underestimated

the demand. “That first year, my vision was to help 40 women,” Langford said. “We saw 643 women.” They soon began offering general practice services to families, including men and children. “This last fiscal year, we saw 1,200 families — men, women, and children across the spectrum — for over 2,500 visits.”

They plan to have a soft opening and begin seeing some patients Nov. 25 at the Buckeye-Shaker office. A grand opening is set for Feb. 14. The new campus will offer pediatrics, primary care, and mental health services. New patients can call 216.815.4325 for an appointment.

Retail

Loganberry Books owner turns the page after 30 years on Larchmere

Story and photo by Grant Segall

Two very different volumes were standing side by side recently at the 30-year-old Loganberry Books. A dull green binding held a 1916 autobiography by Charles Frances Adams Jr., historian, railroad official, and descendant of two presidents. A vivid magenta and orange one held a 2007 biography of New York Congresswoman “Battlin” Bella Abzug,” known for brash hats and opinions.

Loganberry is packed from its wooden floors to tin ceilings with some 110,000 tomes from many times, places and viewpoints. It also offers a wide range of knickknacks, such as maps, china, socks, and stuffed creatures called Jellycats.

“A well-organized bookstore is a bit of an art,” owner Harriett Logan says at the 13015 Larchmere Blvd. store. “It’s also personal. It’s quirky.”

Her quirky store will celebrate its 30th anniversary from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7, with music, cake, and appearances by local authors.

Nowadays, many people buy books and read them online, but Loganberry is one of at least 17 independent bookstores surviving in Cuyahoga, Summit and Medina counties, along with a few chain outlets.

“Readers appreciate a deep browse in the physical stacks,” Logan says. “Online, you have algorithms and paid advertising leading your way. In person, you have happenstance and association, tactual discovery, and understanding.”

People gather at Loganberry not just for goods but company. The store hosts many author talks and signings, story times, art shows, and meetings of groups like the Northern Ohio Bibliophilic Society, Political Dystopia Book Club, Queer Book Club, and Rebel Readers. Before the pandemic, Loganberry also hosted an annual Edible Books Festival, when customers brought in tasty tomes and comestible characters.

The store’s name is Logan’s longtime nickname, inspired by the fruit. Her family moved a couple times before settling in Pepper Pike when she was 9. She graduated from Orange High School, Lehigh University, and the University of Illinois at Champaign, where she earned a master’s degree in theater history and worked in a bookstore.

In 1994, Loganberry Books opened on Larchmere, two blocks west of its current location. The street had long hosted independent, somewhat quirky retailers such as Sedlak Interiors, which occupied 14 buildings there.

After Sedlak left for Solon in 1987, merchants declared Larchmere an antiques district. Loganberry fit right in, starting mostly with rare and used books. It shared Sedlak’s former headquarters with Dede Moore Oriental Rugs.

In 2003, Logan’s family bought the store’s current home, a 1926 Nash Motors showroom. Its bookshelves of various woods were built in place or hauled from other buildings, including the old Shaker Heights Main Library. One of its five rooms, called the Sanctuary, holds special and rare books, plus a display near the ceiling of manual typewriters. A separate book business, Strong Bindery, leases space in the building.

Outdoors, a side wall features a huge mural by Gene Epstein of a bookshelf.

Logan’s mother, Brenda, helps run the store. The place is also a second home for Alice, a cat named for the girl who inspired Alice in Wonderland.

Among many honors over the decades, Loganberry was named Ohio’s best bookstore last year by the popular website Mental Floss. Customers echo the praise.

“I find things here that I don’t find other places,” says Jess Bruening.

“I love the way it smells, and I love all the books: old books, new books,” says Melissa Chapman.



Harriett Logan of Loganberry Books holds The Lost Steps by a sign warning customers about a step.

Logan usually walks to work from her home in the CHALK neighborhood. She has created a native wildflower garden in her front yard to nurture butterflies.

Larchmere has grown more eclectic during her decades there, Logan says. Now it “represents the community and reality better.” But she still senses unmet potential. “Larchmere has this odd and persistent characteristic of forever changing and forever feeling like it’s on the brink of something great.”

She also likes Larchmere’s view of Terminal Tower from a typically quirky vantage point. “You have to stand in the middle of the street.”

Woodhill mural goes a really long way to raise up the neighborhood



By Chris Ball

Walls don't always divide. Sometimes they bring us together.

A wall with a colorful new mural stretching 720 feet may do just that. It portrays local historical landmarks like Shaker Square's Colony Theatre and Dewey's Coffee House. And it came together with considerable community input.

A team of artists completed the public art project in October. The brick wall runs along the west side of Woodhill Road, north of Woodland Avenue. On the hillside above it, Woodhill Homes is being demolished. To the west sits a bus maintenance depot for the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, which owns the wall.

"It's going to be transporting you into different parts of the neighborhood," said Derek Brennan in September. He and Chad Fedorovich were chosen to be the lead artists out of 30 applicants in a competitive bidding process after submitting conceptual plans in the spring.

"One section will be dedicated to the Morris Black area here, across the street, in Woodhill Homes," Brennan said. "But before that, there was an amusement park there, Luna Park, so there's going to be some of that in the mural as well. Some history mixed in, locations present and past, as you go down the line."

The mural is part of Elevate the East, a public art planning process led by community residents on Cleveland's East Side, begun in 2019 in partnership with Land Studio and Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc.

"A big part of the Elevate the East project was that folks from the neighborhood just wanted to feel included,"

said Ahlon Gonzalez, project manager with Land Studio. "They just want to know what's going on, see what's going on, and feel like their voices are heard."

Public art is worth it, she said. "We see how public art contributes to people's notions of safety, of value, of how they feel about themselves and their community, and it's easy to say why would you spend that much on a public art project, but art is just as important as all of the other streetscapes and other developmental things that make a community a great community."

People understand this more these days, Gonzalez said. "Great cities have great public art programs. Artists are part of our economy. They need jobs. They need work. And this project particularly is going to put money in artists' pockets where no one else will. They contribute in the same way that any of our other civic participants do, and they deserve to have jobs and work opportunities and programs and see their work reflected in their community just like anyone else."

Gonzalez was born and raised in Larchmere. "I grew up in this area, I work in this area, and it feels really good to be able to do something creative that makes an impact and is not just for fun. It means a lot to a lot of people."

Echoing these thoughts was India Birdsong, RTA's General Manager and CEO, speaking at the mural's Oct. 25 ribbon cutting. "I say all the time, we have diamonds in the rough, we just have to know what to look for. And this is a diamond in the rough. You can see the neighborhood is transforming. We have to make sure that neighborhood is represented no matter who's in it. ... This is a reflection of our DEI work. ... This is a neighborhood that is worth investing in."



Photos by Chris Ball

Mural artists Dayz Whun (left) and Derek Brennan at the Oct. 25 debut of their Woodhill Road mural.

Mural artists brush up on local history

By Chris Ball

Derek Brennan lived and worked in Shaker Square in 2015 when he started his mural career. He has nearly 40 murals to his credit. His latest may be his most ambitious.

Brennan and Chad Fedorovich are the lead artists on a 720-foot-long mural on Woodhill Road. They bid on the job successfully in the spring, then collected design ideas. The actual painting took less than two months.

Because the brick wall has deep grooves, they couldn't use paint rollers. "We've got to think of it in terms of visibility, from how people are going to be viewing it, and how much detail we can do with this kind of situation," he said Sept. 10. "So we're going to be using a lot of spray cans. ... We did the whole primer with the sprayer."

Brennan, a West Side resident, mostly does murals on his own, while Fedorovich, who owns the Cleveland Mural Co., is more comfortable leading teams of artists. So on this mural, Brennan focused more on the design side. He also had to take a mid-September break as his wife gave birth to their second child, Nora.

The painting went quickly. "We didn't have too many rain days," Brennan said Oct 1. "We only had a couple little spritzing kind of days, and even so, we worked during those. Especially with spray paint, it dries really quickly."

Mural highlights include Buckeye Road's trumpet man statue, St. Luke's tower, Luke Easter Park, Zelma George roller rink, and scenes of children playing.

The design phase required the artists to think like local historians. They gathered input from Buckeye residents at several summer events. "The steering committee was helpful with the project," Brennan said. "Talking with neighborhood residents, identifying key things that were talked about multiple times. We'd hear a thing a couple times, and we'd think, 'OK, maybe that's something that needs to be included.' You can't fit everything in this. It's just about trying to make all of these parts work together and tell the best story."

"I'm pretty happy with it."



Mural artist Chad Fedorovich addresses an appreciative audience at the Oct. 25 ribbon cutting for the Woodhill Road mural, with most of his team around him.



Ahlon Gonzalez (left) of Land Studio and mural artist Dayz Whun compare notes Oct. 25 at the Woodhill Road mural's debut.

Local artist recalls how he used to be chased, now he's getting checks

By Chris Ball

Dayz Whun used to tag the long brick wall below Woodhill Homes when he was a young graffiti artist. Now he's one of the mural artists who just finished painting it.

"We used to tag that wall frequently, and RTA used to take the tags off all the time," he said. "So to see this wall, aw man, we always wanted this wall."

Tags are a graffiti artist's signature, in spray paint. It's like writing your name.

"The art of graffiti is getting your name out, repping, putting your tags everywhere, letting people know, 'Hey, I'm out here, this is what I do,'" he said. "We tagged that wall a lot. And RTA was very good at taking graffiti off. It's just funny because we used to get chased for this kind of stuff, and now I'm getting checks for it."

It was on his mind while working on the wall this summer. "I looked over

there, memories come back, like, man, I remember we were sitting right there, and just thinking, 'Wow, it's all gated and fenced up now, and they're tearing it down.'"

Whun lived in Woodhill Homes in 2002 and 2003. "But before I lived there, we always were in that area, off Elwell, Stoughton. We frequented the neighborhood," he said.

"It's just interesting how evolution and time, man, we went from having to duck from the police and RTA. Man, you're trying to put your name on the wall, it's the culture of graffiti and hip hop, and here it is now that a simple tag on the wall turns into doing these great pieces of work now. What a transition."

Whun, 45, lost the bid, but the winning bidders hired him for their eight-person team.

"I contributed a nice portion with the letters and design and colors," Whun said. "We all kind of added to the redesign. And

Derek [Brennan] took our sketches and crunched them into the redesign. So we all played a part. It was very collaborative. I was pleased."

Work on the mural took place in August and September.

I danced through the whole piece," Whun said. "We hopped around. We followed the blueprint of what needed to be done and not who did what ... not necessarily 'this is your section.' It was like a quilt, everybody played a part. Like a box of crayons. Everybody just dig in, let's get it done."

Whun, a 1997 graduate of Cleveland School of the Arts, owns two businesses in one space at 4030 St. Clair Ave. His mural company is 4030 Studios. And his tattoo company is Red Lion. "I've been tattooing for 21 years now. I did my first mural when I was 12."

He splits his time between the two. "Tattoos have a different outreach. They balance out everything."

He had to learn how to create art and let it go, without getting too attached.

"So now I'm creating these pieces not just for me but for the world to enjoy, right? To influence the next generation, to inspire people, or maybe just put a smile on somebody's face or just brighten up a street corner."

Street art is his passion. "People can walk out their front door and see a masterpiece on the wall. It brightens everybody's mood and spirit, especially when you see reflections of yourself. Especially in the Black community, we don't really see images of ourselves being presented in a positive nature a lot of times."

He remains a graffiti defender. "In my opinion, you wouldn't have public art if it wasn't for graffiti," he said. "Because a lot of public art comes out of graffiti culture. Painting on the walls. A lot of graffiti artists are some of the biggest public artists right now."



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Recreation

Safety comes first for Lower Shaker Lake boating day

By Chris Ball

People are not not allowed to boat on the Lower Shaker Lake. That’s not a typo. That’s the unusual double negative answer you may get if you ask Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights officials about it.

Still, you don’t see many watercraft on that water, except for one day a year. In 2024, that was Aug. 24, when the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership sponsored its annual Take to the Lake event.

In addition to kayak rentals from Breakaway Excursions, the fun included kayak and canoe lessons, a guided hike and music. Partner organizations set up a dozen resource tables, and Yoga Roots led a yoga class. The event, which began in 2013, usually takes place on the last Saturday in August.

The lake is shallow, but you don’t want to walk on its muddy bottom. The risk of drowning may be minimal, but event organizers take no chances.

“Everyone’s required to wear a life jacket,” said Inspector Lou Bottone, Shaker Heights fire marshal. “We have eyes on the water – spotters. We have people in the water on kayaks and people located around the lake so we can see all areas of the lake.”

Shaker Heights’ Community Emergency Response Team had four volunteers on duty in the morning and four more in the afternoon, he

said. “So it’s very safe. Very well organized.”

All kinds of boaters took advantage of the opportunity. “I’m actually really scared of water, but I just kayaked for the first time several months ago, and I decided to try again,” said Forest Knight of Shaker Heights. “I don’t really know how to swim very well. Neither of my parents know how to swim either. I’m trying to get more confident in the water. And I figure this is a very safe experiment.”

Forest’s father, Mark Knight, also was a first-time participant.

“We live across the street, and we’ve been watching it for years, and it looks like fun,” he said. “I’ve kayaked before, but not on this lake. I think they should boat every weekend. I don’t think it should be a once-a-year deal. We see people out there, not very often, but every now and then.”

J.P. Wiedemer, of Litchfield Road in Shaker Heights, joined his wife and four kids on the water. “It’s a great family event for us,” he said. “We tried to do it last year, and the line was too long, and so we’ve been looking forward to doing it this year.



Kayaks from Breakaway Excursions were for rent Aug. 24 on the Lower Shaker Lake at the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership’s annual Take to the Lake event.



You can get a nice view from the middle of the Lower Shaker Lake during the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership’s annual Take to the Lake event.

So when the email came out, we registered right away, and it’s something that’s fun for us to do as a family and be in Shaker.”

They rented five boats. “I’m excited to see the views, what it looks like from the water, and hopefully see some turtles and wildlife,” he said. “We spend a lot of time at the Nature Center, so maybe we’ll see it from that perspective.”

Education

Expanded pre-K program on track for Ludlow this fall

By Thomas Jewell

Extensive renovations underway for the Ludlow Early Learning Center should be completed in time for the 2025-26 school year.

That will be about a year ahead of the landmark building’s centennial celebration and 28 years after the Shaker Heights school district closed the elementary school in 1987.

The idea of creating an expanded pre-

Kindergarten program in the building became one of the main “pillars” of a ballot issue passed by voters in 2023.

Ludlow will be the first school to open in the district’s multiyear rollout of transformative improvements funded with a 35% share of total costs through the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission.

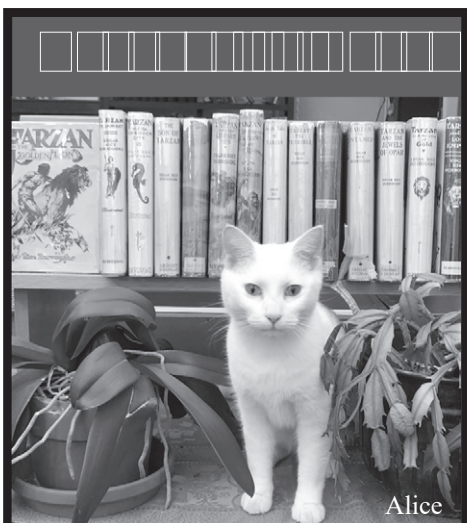
Officials plan to put \$15 million to \$20 million into Ludlow alone, creating 11 pre-K classrooms for an estimated 280 early learners ages 3 to 5.

The work starts with a single rear-entry vestibule addition off of the parking lot for secure dropoff and pickup. That phase of the project received approval this year from the city’s Architectural Board of Review.

The city’s Board of Zoning Appeals still needs to review a proposed playground along Keswick Road, said Shaker senior planner Dan Feinstein.

Neighbors and local officials – including sustainability coordinator

Continued on page 11



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Housing

Woodhill Center East opens doors, marking new chapter for residents

Story and photos by Chris Ball

The last five years have been rough for Abram Williams. But he says it's getting better.

The single father shared his story with 50 attendees of the Oct. 1 ribbon cutting at Woodhill Center East, where he is one of the first residents.

"Life was going good for my son and myself until 2019, when I had a tragic event, when my wife had passed," he said. "I became a single father. From there, I went into a great depression and lost everything, including my home."

Williams then moved into Woodhill Homes, the public housing development built in 1940 that recently was torn down. "But the good news now, I have transferred to Woodhill Center East," he said, speaking from prepared remarks. "This opportunity has changed my life in more ways than one."

"My goal is to live here for the next few years and to eventually become a homeowner, go back to school and improve my family's living situation. At this point, my goal is to become an independent truck driver and to have a home and to put my son through college."

As the audience cheered, Williams concluded, "This marks a new page in the

Woodhill neighborhood, but today also marks a new page in the lives and future plans for residents like myself and my son."

Williams' personal remarks were the most poignant of the day's dozen speakers, most of whom played a role in the project coming to fruition. The \$33.4 million Woodhill Center East, at 11309 Woodland Ave., has 77 affordable apartments, 58 of which are reserved for former Woodhill Homes residents. The two buildings feature a community room, fitness center, playground and outdoor patio.

The project is the second phase of the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority's Buckeye-Woodhill Choice redevelopment. The first phase, Buckeye Station West, opened in March at 9511 Buckeye Road. Funding sources include the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Woodhill Center East is personal for City Council President Blaine Griffin (Ward 6), who lives nearby. He told the crowd that the neighborhood has the lowest life expectancy in Cuyahoga County, according to the last U.S. Census.

"While people are running away from the problem, we are running to the problem, trying to solve the problem, trying to build community pride, and trying to make sure that the people of

this neighborhood can have pride and something to believe in," Griffin said.

The area is becoming a destination, he said. "This is the new neighborhood to be in, and it's in the shadow of the largest employer of the state of Ohio and the city of Cleveland in the Cleveland Clinic. So this investment has been strategic."

Griffin concluded by urging everyone to vote. "These things don't happen without investments that are intentional for urban environments that some people don't want you to have," he said. "So don't think that this is something that doesn't take perseverance, that doesn't take collaborative leadership."



Abram Williams, one of the first residents at Woodhill Center East, greets City Council President Blaine Griffin at the Oct. 1 ribbon cutting for the new building.



The CMHA Voices choir performed at the opening of ceremonies Oct. 1 christening Woodhill Center East.

Public art

It's ugly no more as Shaker Square utility box gets a 3-D vinyl wrap

By Cindy Hill

A big, ugly traffic utility box in Shaker Square has been transformed into a work of art after receiving a three-dimensional vinyl wrap courtesy of the Shaker Heights Arts Council.

A juried art competition, "Painting the Town," produced five winning designs, which the arts council unveiled Oct. 5. The annual competition invites Shaker Heights artists to submit designs for the wraps to cover dull utility boxes and beautify public spaces.

Eleven artists submitted 22 designs this year. Shaker Square's utility box, in the southeast quadrant, features the vibrant blue and gold art, *Spring Birds*, by Shaker Heights graphic designer Kimberly Dailey.

"Shaker Heights Arts Council is proud to bring this public art project to life," council president Andre Taylor told a crowd at the unveiling. "Each year, the art wrapped around our community's utility boxes serves as a reminder of the vibrant creativity in Shaker Heights." The goal of the project, Taylor said, is to add more visual appeal to public spaces and strengthen connections between local artists and residents.

Dailey has been a graphic designer and video production specialist for Laurel School for nearly two decades. "I wanted to bring a pop of year-round color to the Square through cheerful blue skies and whimsical birds," she said. Thousands pass her art daily as they use the busy rapid transit rail.

Artist Tanya Tate, winner of Audience Favorite for her Shaker Heights High School football scene, described the process, from design submission to vinyl wrap. "I'd done an acrylic painting of a football scene because I loved its long, purple shadows in autumn sunlight. I took a digital photograph of it and then cropped it to fit the dimensions of the utility box. The vinyl company adjusted



An art lover takes in the new design on a traffic utility box in Shaker Square on Oct. 5.



Artist Kimberly Dailey

the resolution and color balance, sending a proof back to me for approval. Then the company printed the design on vinyl and manually installed it in a couple of hours. It's much easier than painting directly on a metal box, and unlike paint, it lasts for a decade."

It started in 2016 with only one senior project art student through the support of the high school PTO. The project expanded to professional artists in 2019. A jury selects all designs, and artists receive a \$500 stipend. The designs are printed on vinyl and wrapped by Diamond Signs and Graphics.

"We're deeply grateful to the Cuyahoga arts council for their ongoing support, which helps make this project possible," Taylor said at the unveiling. Cuyahoga Arts and Culture has invested more than \$67,000 in Shaker

Heights Arts Council since 2009.

Public art lovers can tour the utility box art on display at shakerartscouncil.org. There are 19 more utility boxes available to cover. Here are the 2024 winners:

- Kimberly Dailey, Shaker Square.
- Sheila Reingold, West Park and Shaker boulevards.
- Georgio Sabino III, South Park and Shaker boulevards. This box is interactive and features augmented reality when you scan an attached QR code.
- Erinn Sneed, Van Aken Boulevard and South Woodland Road.
- Tanya Tate, Lee Road and Parkland Drive.

Cindy Hill has been a freelance writer specializing in arts, culture and the work of community nonprofits for 28 years, while raising her family in Shaker Heights.



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A water main break between 5 and 9 p.m. Oct. 14 flooded the eastbound side of Van Aken Boulevard between Southington and Onaway roads in Shaker Heights. A boil alert was in place until the next evening, and RTA's Blue Line was closed temporarily.



A new multipurpose trail is in place along South Park Boulevard on the south side of the Lower Shaker Lake. Workers contracted by the city of Shaker Heights build the passage in the photo on the left from Sept. 10. The photo on the right from Oct. 20 shows the completed trail. Pedestrians previously had to walk on the road or the grass.

Up and Down the Boulevard



Photo courtesy of La Pecora

La Pecora



Photo courtesy of Batuqui

Batuqui



Gentleman's Quarters



Photo courtesy of Fine Points Inc.

Fine Points

By Andrea C. Turner

La Pecora Pizzabar opens

What's being touted as a "Pizzabar Hideout" has opened at 12712 Larchmere Blvd. with a variety of traditional wood-fired Neapolitan pizzas, specialty cocktails, wines, beers, and you guessed it ... gelato! It's another expansion from restaurateurs Juan and Carlos Vergara, who operate Barroco Arepa Bar, Hola Tacos, Amazonia and Pulpo Beer Co. La Pecora means "sheep" in Italian, and pecorino cheese comes from latte di Pecora or sheep's milk. But the name is also an ode to the crafts shop that once occupied the space, The Dancing Sheep, and the late Lynne Alfred, its former owner and beloved Larchmere neighbor. Hours are Monday through Thursday 5 to 11 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. No reservations are required. The restaurant was featured in the Oct. 18 issue of Scene: bit.ly/LaPecora.

Luxe Cafe is latest venture

While the family-owned Sizzle Sauce & Spice Catering Co. has served the community for more than 12 years, it has opened a new local establishment: Luxe Café, at 12210 Larchmere Blvd. The cafe specializes in brunch, with a warm and welcoming atmosphere perfect for a date night, lunch break, family dinner, or special occasion. Open Tuesday through Sunday from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Closed Mondays. Note: They are NOT affiliated with Luxe Kitchen and Lounge on Detroit Avenue.

Bite into bourekas

Have you tried the specialty bourekas at HoneyBirch Bakehouse? The savory ones are flaky all-butter puff pastries filled

with your choice of roasted mushroom, garlic smashed potato, harissa feta, lemon chive feta, creamy spinach and artichoke, spiced vegetables or everything seasoned goat cheese. The sweet bourekas are loaded with your choice of strawberry cheesecake, blueberry cheesecake, apricot and cream cheese, spiced apple, or chocolate ricotta. Getting hungry? It's open Wednesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Stop in for tasty treats or book ahead for a catered gathering. They are at 12204 Larchmere Boulevard.

Adun Spice Grand Opening

After several soft opening dates, Adun Spice Co. planned to celebrate its Grand Opening Nov. 14. Owner Ramat Wiley says, "It feels really good to be back, as it's been a remarkable journey." Canopy Press is responsible for installing the storefront's attractive window signage, at 12721 Larchmere. And *Cleveland Magazine* named Adun's Citrus Garlic Blend the Best of CLE Editor's pick.

Fine Points jackets

Crochet enthusiasts have been assembling lovely granny square jackets at Fine Points, 12602 Larchmere. Owner Liz Tekus helped participants choose yarns and colors, teaching the basics of crocheting a granny square and then assembling them into a finished garment using various finishing techniques. Classes took place in the Larchmere store and via Zoom, and plans for a "Show and Tell party" of customers' projects is set for Sunday, Jan. 12. Store patrons also set a goal of creating 20 blankets to be donated to refugees. Some patrons knit, others assembled, and still more donated yarn to the initiative.

Batuqui's Mini-Market

A future "mercadinho" (mini-market) is in the works, and Batuqui's staff wants to hear from you on what kinds of products (Brazilian and otherwise) you'd like to see in their store. Email ideas to batuquicleveland@gmail.com.

Fond farewell to Gentleman's Quarters

Ideastream Public Media reported on business partners Walter Thompson of Gentleman's Quarters and Susan Geller of Frog's Legs, two longtime Larchmere clothing store owners. After dressing Clevelanders with some of the finest European designs, they closed their doors after 55 years in business at 12807 Larchmere. The pair said it's time for their run to end. Geller decided to retire, and Thompson says the business has become too much to manage, as many of their suppliers have closed since the pandemic. Find the story here: bit.ly/clothierscloseddoors.

Larchmere Fire Works Departs

We're sorry to see husband and wife team Tina Haldiman and Cassidy Anderson leave Larchmere. Word is the Larchmere Fire Works owners are departing. The couple owns a mobile kiln that they take to fairs and festivals around Ohio and is proving to be more successful. And they have established a foothold at Goldhorn Brewery at 1361 East 55th St. in Cleveland. Their hands-on glassblowing and blacksmithing classes now take place there from Thursday to Sunday, as well as various pop-up locations. We wish them the best!

UnBar Café gets busy

Have you seen the new window signage adjacent to the UnBar Cafe "UnWine Zone"? Check it out to see the space where weekly UnBar activities happen. UnBothered Mondays includes Zumba, Tai Chi, holistic vendors, Reiki, sound bowls, and guided meditations. UnSerious Thursdays combines comedy and trivia. UnBarrrd Fridays (first and third) features Poetry Open Mic, and UnSung Saturdays offers karaoke. Also, the community gathering space launched UnSeen to feature a different local artist's work each month. The artwork is available for purchase and includes an interactive activity designed by the artist.

Loganberry Books turns 30

The beloved independent bookstore plans to celebrate its 30th anniversary Saturday, Dec. 7, with an all-day party. Expect author signings with Derf Backderf, George Bilgere, Connie Schultz and Megan Whalen Turner. "We've not just lasted but grown and thrived through a very tumultuous period in American publishing," said staff member Toni Thayer. In January 2025, the store plans its annual sale on cards and calendars, and don't miss Independent Bookstore Day at the end of April.

Congratulations are in order

Sophie Rozman, daughter of Susan Rozman, both of Fiddlehead Gallery, tied the knot with husband Drew Lisy on Sept. 14. Congratulations to the newlyweds!

Email Larchmere news tips to act_one@sbcglobal.net

Crime

Serial thief sentenced to prison for 'smash-and-grab' break-ins

By Thomas Jewell

A serial "smash-and-grab" thief who broke into numerous Shaker Square and Larchmere businesses is serving a three-year, eight-month prison sentence.

Lashon Guy, 50, of Cleveland, received credit for 145 days served in the Cuyahoga County Jail as part of the combined sentences imposed by Common Pleas Judge William T. McGinty in September.

From there, Guy was transferred to the Lorain Correctional Institution.

The string included four break-ins to the Subway sandwich shop, all around the Christmas 2023 holiday, with a different window smashed out each time.

Guy also broke into the Vegan Club on the Square at least twice, first overnight

Dec. 23, then Jan. 25 after he posted a low bond set by another judge on previous charges.

A few days later, Guy was back in the county jail, with a half-dozen cases later consolidated before McGinty.

During both crime sprees, the nonprofit Shaker Square ownership provided security camera footage implicating Guy in as many as 20 break-ins.

The second time he was on the lam, police were also assisted by a victim who reportedly gave officers Guy's coordinates after using a "Where's My Phone"-type tracking app.

Guy received two 12-month sentences running consecutively for breaking and entering convictions, both from Dec. 28, 2023, in Larchmere.

In those, a cash box and a computer monitor were taken from Big Al's Diner, with checks stolen from Hola Tacos.

McGinty handed down another 18-month sentence to be served consecutively with the two years already ordered.

That case went back to November 2022 when he broke into the Livingston Park Apartments near Shaker Square, with the sentence at that time suspended.

Another 60-day consecutive sentence was tacked on for a theft charge that was incorporated into his probation violation, adding up to the full prison sentence of close to four years.

McGinty ordered the rest of the other sentences to run concurrently, including:

- Six months for breaking and entering,

60 days for theft at Sasa restaurant Dec. 23. Guy was ordered to turn over all stolen liquor bottles;

- Six months for the Dec. 23 theft from the Vegan Club, when a laptop and cookies were taken (six months);

- Another 60 days and \$40 restitution for breaking and entering at the Vegan Club on Jan. 25, when an iPhone and Grubhub tablet were stolen;

- Six months for breaking and entering at Subway on Dec. 22, along with 60 days for criminal damaging to the windows, with Guy also ordered to pay \$200 restitution;

- Six months for identity fraud and 60 days for theft in connection with a Dec. 28 incident at Shaker Square CVS involving another man's credit card and razors.

UnBar owner fills a need at Shaker Square with Café Indigo

By Chris Ball

The guessing game on what will happen to the former Biggby's and Dewey's space on Shaker Square is over. Melissa Garrett-Hirsch will open Café Indigo in the corner location, meeting the demand for both a coffee shop and an ice cream parlor.

The grand opening will be Sunday, Dec. 1, if final preparations go as planned, said Garrett-Hirsch, owner of UnBar Café, 12635 Larchmere Blvd. "Renovations are well underway," she said Oct. 20, including indigo blue tiles on one wall and a fireplace in the center. New outdoor signage is coming in the next month.

She wants Indigo's vibe to be casual

but opulent, while not duplicating UnBar. Shaker Square is more family friendly, hence Indigo's ice cream emphasis, while Larchmere is more artsy, thus UnBar's focus on wine. Both of course will have a full range of coffee drinks as their anchor.

In addition to locally sourced baked goods, Indigo will dish up 24 flavors of Hershey Ice Cream. Look for sundaes and banana splits, too. The featured ice cream flavor will be Blue Moon. She also will spotlight the top three flavors chosen in a public survey she conducted in September. To her surprise, the top vote getter was butter pecan, followed by chocolate mousse and nondairy cookie dough.

Garrett-Hirsch is hiring four part-time workers, at 30 hours a week, to run Café

Indigo. Her son, Rory Garrett, will be the manager, moving over from UnBar. Tara Mitchell moves up to store manager at UnBar.

Café Indigo will be open seven days a week. Garrett-Hirsch is still settling on the hours of operation but thinks they will be around 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

UnBar has space for activities and public events like poetry readings and karaoke, but she doesn't see that happening at Indigo. "It looks like a big space, but the more we fill it in with equipment and seating, we won't have room for activities," she said.

Additional locations are in her long-range plans, but she won't rush them. The Shaker Heights resident recently turned

down an offer to develop another store on Cleveland's West Side. She expects to open a third store by 2026. "I've come to realize the importance of the customer experience and quality," she said.



An ice cream lover chooses her favorite flavor in a tasty survey sponsored by Melissa Garrett-Hirsch, in red, talking with Susan Rozman at a Shaker Square Vision Plan unveiling Sept. 19 in the future home of Café Indigo.



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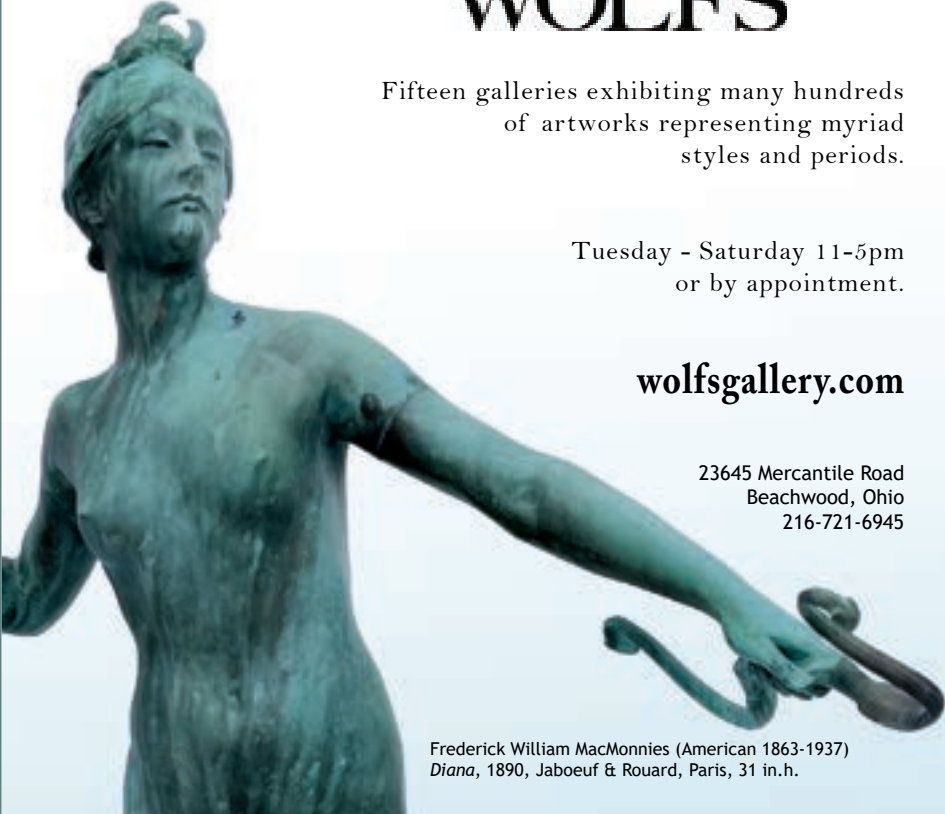
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Continued from page 8

Expanded pre-K program on track for Ludlow this fall

Michael Peters and city forester Charles Orlowski – questioned a proposed retaining wall damaging the "critical root zone" of the mature oaks lining the tree lawn.

Architects and engineers with GPD Group said they were still working on "striking a balance" with the retaining wall.

The building will feature a physical therapy room and a multipurpose room along with the revamped gymnasium.

Shaker school superintendent David Glasner said the district will pursue LEED "Silver" certification for sustainability.

With the single secure point of entry and new vestibule, students will be able to hop right out of the passenger side of cars, and teachers can help get them inside the building, GPD Group representatives said.

Visitors will be buzzed into the secured vestibule and checked in


through the reception area.

"It's a much-needed security improvement that will come with this project," said Abby Rainieri, GPD's manager of planning and design for K-12 schools.

The revamped building could also be available for afterhours use. "If the community wants to sign out space for meetings, events and other functions in the gym, they can pop right in," GPD project manager and Shaker Heights resident Leanne Andrysko said.

But the main goal for school officials will be to accommodate the expanded pre-K program, "so all Shaker students have a strong foundation for lifelong learning."

Plans to move the district's administrative office into Ludlow no longer appear likely.



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Huntington reopens Buckeye Road branch, pledging special programs

By Christine Jindra

A joyful celebration set the tone for the Oct. 28 reopening of Huntington Bank’s Buckeye branch. It was also the start of an opportunity for the Buckeye-Shaker community, which had fought to revive the neighborhood anchor, to become more prosperous. As it reopened the branch it had closed nine months earlier, Huntington pledged to invest in the community and to offer residents special loan programs. The bank’s return was celebrated the Saturday before the reopening. More than 100 residents joined bank officials and city leaders at a community resource fair set up in tents in the branch parking lot where local nonprofits provided housing, health and financial information. Huntington arranged for music performed by Vince Robinson, who owns Larchmere Arts, and his Jazz Poets band and free eats from a food truck run by Yum Village, an Afro-Caribbean restaurant. Speakers included Mayor Justin Bibb, City Council President Blaine Griffin, Ward 4 Councilwoman Deborah Gray and community leaders, who had lobbied to reopen the bank. “This shows what can be accomplished when community activists work together with the city and private businesses,” Bibb said. “This shows that grassroots efforts can work. Every resident, regardless

of where they live, deserves equitable access to resources like banks.” Griffin praised Sean Richardson, a Huntington regional president, for working to reopen the bank and said the bank’s return was a great opportunity. “The bank has great products including some geared to the community for repairs and home ownership,” Griffin said. “Now let’s use these products.” Griffin also praised Greg Groves and Julian Khan of Neighborhood

Connections; community activists Robert Render III, Tamara Chappell, Mary Boyle, Meg Weingart, Jay Westbrook, Charles Bromley and the Rev. Jimmy Gates; and Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown and U.S. Congresswoman Shontel Brown for their months-long efforts to reopen the branch. After the branch closed in February over safety concerns, a loosely formed committee of residents, community activists and government officials lobbied Huntington to reopen and to increase its investment in the neighborhood. The group, organized after a Neighbor Up residents meeting, met monthly with Huntington officials to press their concerns that the neighborhood was losing yet another bank, hurting low-income residents who lack access to online banking and would find it difficult to travel to other banks. The committee showed Huntington officials documentation gathered by

Cleveland police saying crime in a half-mile radius around the bank had dropped 15%, with violent crime down 30%. In early August, Huntington announced the reopening and that the bank in 2024 will donate \$250,000 to support local groups serving residents with home repairs, digital literacy training for seniors and safety improvements. The bank is open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday with access to banking services through its drive-up window and its lobby by appointment only, as it had been before the closing. An ATM facing the parking lot is available 24/7. Huntington is expanding into the Cleveland area its “Huntington

Home for Good” program that offers eligible borrowers such benefits as mortgage closing cost assistance and features lower down payment and debt-to-income requirements than traditional lending programs. Huntington said its program helps build generational wealth through homeownership in historically under-resourced communities. Chappell would like to see the bank work with local schools and families. “The bank could be a touchstone, teaching students and families the value of good credit,” she said. Community leaders have asked the bank, which has \$184 billion in assets, to invest \$100 million in the area, including new housing. They also plan to hold the bank accountable by looking at the number of mortgages it makes.

“This shows that grassroots efforts can work.”
- Mayor Justin Bibb



Community activists recount their months-long effort to bring back the Buckeye Road branch of Huntington Bank during a Neighbor Up meeting Aug. 26 at Cummins Hall.



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