

Cleveland  
Heights



# visioning report

to cleveland heights council



a citizen-driven planning process

Dear Citizens:

In a process that lasted two years and involved twenty-five Cleveland Heights residents, we were charged with developing a citizen-directed vision and strategic plan for the future. Assisting and guiding the process was Pflum, Klausmeier & Gehrum consultants and the staff of the City of Cleveland Heights, whose work enabled citizen surveys, town hall meetings, special forums, and task force meetings. As a result, we developed a comprehensive vision and presented it to the City Council and the community. The major themes of this vision document were derived from the community's abiding passion for our people and places. These themes are identified in our vision statement. Our findings from working with you are summarized in this document. For greater detail on our work and recommendations to the City Council of Cleveland Heights, please contact the Department of Community Services at 216.291.2323.

Sincerely,

The Visioning Committee



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**Cheryl Stephens** *co-chair*  
**David Bauders**  
**Michael Bier**  
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**Steve Wood**

# meet

Meet your neighbors who served on the Visioning Committee

## Visioning Committee Task Forces

Community Participation and City Services

Designed and Natural Environment

Commercial, Residential and Infrastructure Development

Arts and Recreation

Learning Development and Youth Activity

Diverse Community

# Cleveland Heights: Extraordinary People and Extraordinary Places

## OUR VISION

We all come to Cleveland Heights or remain here for a reason. Cleveland Heights draws and keeps us with its vibrant interaction of extraordinary places and extraordinary people. Places that are compelling, vital and memorable, and where you get to know your neighbors and where friendships are fostered. Cleveland Heights is home to many diverse and interesting people who believe passionately in their community. People that think, learn, perform and create together. In Cleveland Heights, extraordinary people and extraordinary places combine uniquely to make a cherished home for all of us.

## PLACES

Our community enjoys places with distinctive, historic character, artistic ingenuity, passionate craftsmanship and quality. Fine natural materials and details have been carefully preserved. Human scale and a neighborly feel have endured. We maintain healthy ecosystems, natural parks and green spaces that soothe the spirit and maintain balance in our daily lives. Our community is built with reminders of earlier generations and their values, work and legacies. Our homes are for people in all stages and positions in life.

Cleveland Heights encompasses neighborhood villages, each combining distinctive residential areas and intimate neighborhood commercial districts and schools. These neighborhoods work because they embrace the everyday needs of the community in a humanistic, comfortable scale. The transitions are gentle and harmonious with well-maintained streets, sidewalks and green spaces that link neighborhoods, while creating a vibrant whole.

Our residential neighborhoods offer finely preserved architecture, distinctive character and natural beauty. Homes were built and maintained to the highest aesthetic and functional levels, regardless of size, age or location. They reflect craftsmanship, artistic passion and natural materials, while maintaining a respect and relationship to their neighborhoods.

Schools are centered in neighborhoods that care about their welfare and success. Our schools draw on unique people and institutions, representing the arts, universities and cultural institutions. Children learn to live in a diverse open society, where neighbors watch out for all children, engage them and support them. Our children engage in activities that allow them to grow, learn, socialize and enjoy themselves. They grow up prepared for life intellectually, socially and culturally enriched.

Commercial areas serve their neighborhoods first, then the larger community and region. Our commercial districts function together as a system, complementing each other, and often providing the “Main Street” destination that draws regionally. We enjoy a rich mix of offices, residences, entertainment, restaurants and shops that foster vital, neighborly commercial districts. Merchants are often our friends and neighbors, further deepening the connection between our commercial districts and neighborhoods. Our Main Street districts are based on human scale and pedestrian orientation, to support their neighbors and foster the rich social interaction that makes extraordinary places meaningful.

## PEOPLE

Cleveland Heights is an exciting and enriching place to live because of its people. Our community attracts a rich blend of diverse, interesting and talented people, all living and working in the full ranges of life stages and lifestyles. People who value differences among themselves unite in mutual respect and tolerance. Anyone from any background who upholds these values can find a home and happiness in Cleveland Heights.

Our rich mix of people can be found in our arts, culture, recreation, community events and even daily encounters. Many artists and artisans are among us, and we treasure the enriching role the arts and culture play in our lives. We support and participate in the world-class cultural, learning, and arts institutions that are our neighbors. We avidly pursue organized and individual recreational activities in leading balanced, healthy lives.

As a notably intellectual community, we expect excellent, nurturing education. We set high standards of achievement for our children that will foster a lifetime of learning and success. The lifelong endeavor of learning is supported through activities and resources that nurture intellectual growth.

Cleveland Heights citizens are engaged, active and informed. We require open, democratic, public decision-making processes.

Our time, energy, money and talents are contributed to organizations and causes that enrich our community. We expect our city government and school district to respect us as individuals; to set and attain fair, high standards for performance; and to demonstrate accountability and responsiveness. Our city government shares the weighty responsibility with its citizens for fostering, preserving and maintaining the character and beauty of the extraordinary places that we love.

When extraordinary people and extraordinary places come together, a great community is born. In Cleveland Heights, we enjoy a unique mix of people and places that make it the only place that most of us would ever want to live. No other place in our region combines these elements so meaningfully. Through all of life's stages, Cleveland Heights provides a superior personal experience for all who call it home.

Our unique community deserves our affection and commitment and investment. Our vision seeks to build upon these values, aspirations and goals, and to further improve our community. Together, we can improve the special characteristics that draw and keep us here. We can work toward a bright, healthy future that promotes the values and character that make this a great place to live.

### **THE VISIONING PROJECT: DEFINING COMMUNITY VALUES, GOALS, STRATEGIES AND PLANS**

The Visioning Project came about through an emerging consensus that our community needed to think clearly and creatively about its future. Our city enjoys unique characteristics that drew us here. At the same time, in recent years we have faced choices that called for a clearer understanding of what we wanted our community to be in the future.

We need clarity for two primary reasons. First, we need to define an internal standard for success to manage our city's affairs and satisfy our citizens' aspirations for their community. Secondly, to compete with other communities for people and businesses, we need to define a strategy that will promote success on terms that our citizens can embrace. Thus, we need to define a vision that will succeed internally, to make us happy; and externally, to help us compete well. Towards that end, the Visioning Project has set four key goals:

- Establish the community's core values
- Define a vision for our community's future
- Assess our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
- Build initiatives and plans to pursue our vision

In October of 1999, the Cleveland Heights City Council appointed a residents committee to work with an outside consulting firm to create a vision for the future of the city. The Visioning Committee designed a process to engage residents and others in the community to define goals and to secure the commitment of citizens and partners to strategic initiatives towards those goals. From the beginning, our elected officials and administration have stipulated that this process be citizen driven, without interference from the government.

The 25 members of the Visioning Committee were selected by the Cleveland Heights City Council to represent a cross section of the community's issues and perspectives. To produce the community's adopted vision statement, the Visioning Committee designed an **inclusive public process involving eight major steps**.

Step 1: Host nine neighborhood town hall meetings throughout the city to allow citizens to brainstorm the core values, opportunities and challenges associated with living in Cleveland Heights. More than 500 people attended these neighborhood meetings.

Step 2: Create and distribute a citizen survey to all households in Cleveland Heights. More than 6,000 people responded to the survey.

Step 3: Interview 24 key leaders throughout the community, including the city manager, members of City Council, members of the School Board and several key city staff members.

Step 4: Determine the areas for task force topics using the community surveys and town hall meetings with members of the Visioning Committee serving as task force leaders.

**Six task force areas** were identified.

- Community Participation and City Services
- Designed and Natural Environment
- Commercial, Residential and Infrastructure Development
- Arts and Recreation
- Learning Development and Youth Activity
- Diverse Community

Step 5: Conduct four meetings for each of the task force groups and prepare a report highlighting findings, recommendations and a vision for each task force area. About 250 citizens participated in the various task forces.

Step 6: Host a community Vision Fair to share the outcomes of the town hall meetings, citizen surveys, and task force meetings. More than 400 people attended the Vision Fair.

Step 7: Draft the vision statement to reflect an aggregate vision for the city that combines the outputs of all task force areas.

Step 8: Write the strategic plan by integrating the detailed recommendations from the task forces and using the vision statement as a guide.

## **OUR STRATEGY: A PASSIONATE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE IN OUR DISTINCTIVE ASSETS AND VALUES**

Early in the Visioning Project, it became clear that our community's greatest assets are not only valuable to us, but equally importantly, they are rare. In fact, they are precious. We also believe that our greatest assets have broad appeal that can successfully attract the people and businesses that will enable us to compete. Through this process, we discovered values, formed task forces, developed a matrix and formalized a plan.

## **OUR GREATEST ASSETS AND VALUES**

During the Visioning Project, a number of assets and values were identified.

- A rich diversity of people
- Arts and culture
- Public and private schools
- Neighborhoods with history, distinctive architecture and green spaces
- Intimate commercial districts
- Civic passion, commitment and involvement
- Location

## **CLEVELAND HEIGHTS COMPETES**

Cleveland Heights must compete for residents and businesses to remain vital. Every year, we must attract approximately 1,000 homeowners to our city, simply to replace those who are leaving.

Businesses have parallel cycles of entry and exit. The crucial competitive question for Cleveland Heights is not how to simply replace homeowners or businesses, but how to replace them with newcomers who embrace the values and assets that we revere.

In this competitive situation, we start with formidable advantages:

- great neighborhoods,
- intimate commercial districts, and
- deep social, cultural and artistic resources.

Besides enjoying these assets, we are fortunate from a competitive perspective that our great assets are scarce and difficult for new communities to replicate. This gives Cleveland Heights a potentially significant competitive advantage. Our community was developed during a period that created distinctive architecture, conserved green

spaces and crafted intimate, human-scale commercial districts. Over time, we also have attracted a rich mix of people and fostered an artistic, cultural and social environment. Cleveland Heights enjoys physical and social assets that are precious to our region. At the same time, we face powerful societal forces that challenge our vitality and success, such as:

- out-migration from older suburbs to new green-field suburbs;
- government funding preferences for highways and new infrastructure over preservation and maintenance of existing local assets;
- societal preferences for new construction as a symbol of success;
- fears of cultural diversity;
- commercial trends that favor mammoth, green-field construction over Main Street preservation and accommodation;
- economy, excess and disposability over quality and character.

In most of these dimensions, we will never be able to, and never choose to compete. These alternatives are either contrary to our assets, or contrary to our values, or both. Although mass culture is frequently at odds with our values and assets, this culture is not universally appealing. We believe there is a successful place in the world for communities like Cleveland Heights, communities that offer real and appealing alternatives to mass culture. Increasingly, we find people choosing – and returning to – Cleveland Heights for its special people and as a place that is treasured.

## **PURSUING EXCELLENCE IN OUR GREAT ASSETS**

The assets that have drawn us to Cleveland Heights are its distinctive characteristics, neighborhoods, diverse educational opportunities, intimate commercial districts, diverse population, rich artistic and cultural environment, and public and private schools. They already exist, though frequently not to the degree, quality, or consistency that we seek. Our Visioning Project has found that although these assets pervade our community, they are often at-risk, under-productive, incomplete, or dormant.

Our neighborhoods and infrastructure are aging and face significant preservation challenges. Commercial districts have, to varying degrees, departed from the intimate design that would enable their success. Abundant artistic and cultural assets often lie dormant or under-productive. We can also improve our social connectedness, civic vitality, and learning.

Fundamentally, our strategy seeks to passionately promote excellence in these dimensions. Consequently, we believe that our citizens will enjoy a richer, more satisfying life and our city will compete very successfully in our region on its own terms.

Achieving excellence in these dimensions will not be cheap. We will need to invest heavily in our neighborhoods, commercial districts, and artistic and cultural assets. Our investments will include time, energy, passion and money. This program will test our commitment to the values that we cherish.

Our strategy is bold and exacting, but not particularly risky or speculative. We already enjoy ample examples of how gratifying and attractive our best assets are in their mature form. These assets include:

- rich culture of Cain Park and the Cedar Lee Theatre;
- diversity of residents, nonprofits and citizen-organized activities;
- social vitality and distinctive commercial success of Coventry Village;
- majesty and character of the Forest Hill and Fairmount Boulevard historic districts;
- grand apartment buildings in Euclid Heights;
- innumerable sites on great streets in our city;
- natural grandeur of Forest Hill Park; and
- rich, interesting diversity that permeates our daily life.

In their full form, our assets are formidable.

We have chosen a strategy that accelerates our best assets into unique, differentiated, competitive advantages in our region. We have organized our strategy into **six key themes**.

- Promote beautiful neighborhoods
- Build up our Main Street commercial districts
- Helping our youth realize their full potential
- Preserve diversity and civic vitality
- Identify Cleveland Heights as a home to recreation and the arts
- Maximize social capital to drive city services and accountability

In each thematic section of this Strategic Plan, the fundamental issue is how to define and attain excellence. We begin by enumerating the core values that serve as the foundation for each theme. We then proceed to articulate the vision for the future; assess our current position; and recommend programs and actions that will promote excellence. Hence, we achieve the fulfillment of the vision.

With full fruition, our mix of people and places will make Cleveland Heights a preeminent community in our region.



# Promote Beautiful Neighborhoods

## OUR VISION

We seek neighborhood villages that finely integrate parks, green spaces, schools, commercial districts and homes – easily accessible to all our citizens.

Our community – and our physical environment – celebrates the harmony of nature, people and art.

We inherited a city of exceptional natural and architectural beauty, laid out according to human-scale and pedestrian-oriented principles.

We seek to leave a community that is as ecologically vital, durable and beautiful as the one we inherited.

Cleveland Heights is, first and foremost, a residential community. We enjoy homes with distinctive architecture, rich character, durable natural materials, and abundant green spaces and parks. Our neighborhoods are pedestrian, with space to walk and places in which to walk. Because so many of us walk, we know our neighbors. As a result, our neighborhoods have a very high level of social vitality. This distinctive character and social vitality emanating from our neighborhoods are our city's defining characteristics. So: How can we promote excellence in our neighborhoods?

## PRESERVE CLEVELAND HEIGHTS

Our neighborhoods are old by government standards, which classifies old homes as those built more than 50 years ago. This is both a blessing and a challenge. On one hand, our homes offer levels of quality and character that are rare in today's economy-minded, mass-production building culture. Our parks and green spaces bring nature into our neighborhoods. Our landscaping is rich – the accumulated investment of generations – and our trees are large and mature.

At the same time, our old neighborhoods require special attention to preservation and maintenance. Old houses have a cost structure for which it is harder to plan and often need significant investments to restore their functionality or luster. Old houses with rich materials and fine architectural details are vulnerable to neglect; deferred maintenance; and insensitive repairs, upgrades, or remodeling. Due to

the high quality craftsmanship of our homes, neglect takes longer to inflict damage. Once the damage is done, however, restoration to the same quality levels can be very expensive. Faced with these costs – and with seductive economical alternatives – many homeowners will dismantle or reduce the character of their homes.

Today, most Cleveland Heights neighborhoods are fine places to live, but there is much room for improvement. Many of the homes – and some neighborhoods – are suffering from poor maintenance and neglect that threatens their economic viability. In particular, rental duplex housing, some apartment buildings and even some single-family homes have endured neglect and weak or nonexistent maintenance. There are neighborhoods where the number of homes in poor condition is approaching a level of negative impact that puts the entire neighborhood at risk. As neighborhoods weaken, their neighboring commercial districts also suffer.

Because most of our neighborhoods are fairly densely populated, the decay or neglect of one house can detract from the entire neighborhood. At pedestrian speed and proximity, details really matter. Significant architectural details and character of some homes have been dismantled in favor of economy, or low maintenance has cheapened the fabric of the neighborhood. If this trend persists, our neighborhoods' framework will fray, or fall apart.

Even our more affluent neighborhoods need more effective preservation initiatives. The challenge in these neighborhoods is maintaining the bountiful architectural character of our housing stock. The rich details and beautiful materials that distinguish these homes are also continually at risk of being dismantled or cheapened in favor of economy and convenience. We need to carefully consider the use of newer materials in our housing stock. In addition, we need to consider that the building trades needed to maintain the quality and character of our homes are fewer and less effective in promoting themselves.

Thus, our challenge is not to simply preserve the functionality and mechanics of our historic homes, but to protect their precious character while maintaining their competitiveness. The character of our housing stock is among our most valuable assets and is central to our city's vitality and success.

Historically, our city has made housing inspections a crucial element in neighborhood vitality. Although no one enjoys having his or her home inspected – and the inspection process can often seem arbitrary, inconsistent or frustrating – we all recognize the pivotal role that maintaining our housing stock plays in promoting our community's vitality.

Our Visioning Project recommends a shift of focus in this regard. The current inspections process has mostly focused on correcting immediate violations in a minimally acceptable fashion. Although the process has suffered from perceived inconsistency and inadequacy, its greater shortcoming has been its failure to protect and promote the special character and materials of historic housing.

By contrast, we recommend a preservation and maintenance focus that features the following:

- Hire a chief preservation officer and staff to lead preservation efforts for our historic homes, commercial buildings, schools and sacred landmarks.
- Provide planning assistance so that property owners can receive a preservation assessment to evaluate property condition, forecast future needs, establish budgets and financing options, understand preservation choices, then prioritize and implement improvements.
- Provide preservation education assistance to help residents understand the architecture and preservation needs of properties.
- Establish a Preservation Resource Center that provides contacts and resources, including information on maintaining historic properties.
- Establish restoration incentives in the form of grants or loans to entice property owners to use authentic materials to preserve or restore their properties.
- Ensure greater enforcement of maintenance codes that will focus on preserving our historic neighborhoods and expand attention to basic maintenance and condition of properties.
- Notify neighborhoods of critical external inspections to encourage property owners to perform regularly scheduled maintenance of internal and external systems.
- Assist elderly or other needy homeowners who cannot maintain their properties at required standards.
- Establish local historic districts while applying for National Register status.
- Install sidewalk plaques in historic districts, listing architect, style and year built.
- Develop differential housing code standards in historic districts to protect architectural character.

## **BEAUTIFY NEIGHBORHOODS, PARKS AND GREEN SPACES**

In addition to fine architecture and craftsmanship, our neighborhoods enjoy great natural beauty. Towering trees, mature parks and integrated green spaces make our city a soothing place in which to live and enjoyable to walk. Nevertheless, we have not consistently improved, or maximized our rich natural assets. Many of our streets have lost their trees; many homes need better landscaping; and our islands, medians and other green spaces have remained idle with minimal maintenance.

To achieve the full aesthetic potential of our neighborhoods, we recommend the following initiatives:

- Hire a city landscape architect.
- Develop planting plans for neighborhoods and homeowners to improve existing green spaces.
- Ensure that adequate green space is considered in the planning stages of all new development plans, which include stringent requirements for maintaining existing and creating new green spaces.
- Establish a Heights Conservation Corps, a summer program for high school students to learn civic values and practical planting and preservation skills, while beautifying our neighborhoods.
- Implement tree/shrub planting programs.
- Review public signage and infrastructure for aesthetics.
- Improve gateway signage and plantings.
- Restore backyard garbage collection.
- Develop litter control plans, particularly in and around commercial areas.

## **IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST AMENITIES**

Cleveland Heights is noted for its many citizens of all ages who enjoy walking and cycling. Our generous sidewalks, pedestrian scale and orientation, and appealing destinations encourage recreation and social vitality in our neighborhoods. Our city not only has space to walk, we also have places in which to walk. We have quiet side streets that promote safe, enjoyable cycling. Besides offering ecological transportation choices, our sidewalks and cycle routes are conducive for getting out and enjoying our neighborhoods.

Renewed attention is needed for our sidewalks and bike paths to fulfill their aesthetic beauty and functional potential. Unfortunately, the handsome stone sidewalks that once

graced our historic neighborhoods are gradually being replaced by a hodgepodge of undesirable concrete sidewalks. Our public works projects often forfeited their appeal to pedestrians and cyclists, in favor of expediting traffic and narrowing or removing tree lawns.

We recommend a bold program to pursue beauty in our neighborhoods that includes:

- shifting maintenance of sidewalks to the city, which means restoring stone sidewalks in historic districts;
- developing a cycle route system;
- expanding the number of bike paths in our parks; and
- restoring the pedestrian bridge across the ravine at North Park and Roxboro to improve the linkage between Cedar-Fairmount and newly revitalized Shaker Square.

## DEVELOP NEW HOUSING

Our city is primarily a residential community. As housing needs change, we need to upgrade our existing housing and develop compatible new housing where redevelopment is possible. Our Visioning Project indicated a strong desire for new housing types, such as cluster housing and live/work studios, that will allow residents with changing needs to remain in our community.

We also heard a consistent, forceful insistence on the need to preserve our high quality green spaces. Therefore, most of our new housing will need to occur through redevelopment of existing, non-historic residential areas; or in mixed-use sections of commercial districts. At the same time, residents expressed concern regarding the need for new housing to respect existing zoning, architecture and construction quality, while maintaining or boosting the investment levels of adjoining neighborhoods. To enjoy community support, these worthy housing options need to be sensitively developed with ample public involvement in the early stages of planning and design.

Too often, in the rush to secure new development, the city has failed to protect the investments of existing property owners by allowing incompatible housing zoning, architecture, investment levels and other affronts to occur in our neighborhoods. This failure has caused a rational, reflexive opposition to new development, to the extent that even good projects struggle to obtain approval. We need to resolve this conflict in a principled, systemic way, not through special exceptions granted to favored projects.

We recommend a zoning and building codes review that will promote innovative housing types, while protecting the greater investments of existing property owners. With citizen involvement and in conjunction with charrettes in com-

## PRESERVATION CHALLENGE SIDING AND ROOFING

Cleveland Heights homes depend on the special character of architectural details and materials. Homes built decades ago now face crucial challenges of maintaining their character.

Roofing – The slate, cedar shake, and tile roofs that symbolize the superior quality and design of our housing stock are continually at risk of dismantling due to unscrupulous contractors and vulnerable homeowners who may not understand the true life cycle, economics and architectural significance of roofing choices.

Siding – The cedar shingle siding that is so common in Cleveland Heights faces a deadly threat from increasing environmental regulations and unscrupulous contractors. Most historic homes with cedar shingle siding have many accumulated layers of paint, often including layers of lead paint. When these layers become excessive, stripping or replacing becomes necessary. Because of concerns over environmental quality, regulations require costly methods of paint stripping to protect the environment. Faced with these costs, and the superficially appealing economy of vinyl siding, many homeowners have begun dismantling this essential element of their homes' architectural appeal.

mercial districts, we should be able to develop a plan for new housing development that our community will embrace.

## IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

We need to improve the daily quality of life to make our neighborhoods more livable and enjoyable. Too often, seemingly inconsequential nuisances add up to frustrate and alienate residents. Our neighborhoods can be enhanced if we pay attention to details, such as:

- promoting traffic calming,
- enforcing no-truck routes, and
- increasing noise ordinance enforcement to lessen the effects of booming car stereos and insensitive use of power equipment.

# Build Up Our Main Street Commercial Districts

## OUR VISION

Our commercial areas serve their neighborhoods first, then the larger community and region. Our commercial districts function together as a system, each providing the basics for their neighbors, while complementing other districts and often providing the “Main Street” destination that draws regionally.

We value the rich mix of offices, residences, entertainment, restaurants, and shops that foster vital, neighborly, commercial districts. Merchants are often our friends and neighbors, further deepening the connection between our commercial districts and neighborhoods.

The Main Street districts are based on human-scale and pedestrian orientation to support their neighbors and foster the rich social interaction that makes extraordinary places meaningful.

In Cleveland Heights, our commercial districts are integral to the fabric of our neighborhood. Their distinctive merchant mix, social vitality and intimacy provide what many call a “Main Street” character. With seamless transitions from residential to commercial areas, we can enjoy districts that reinforce the unmistakable character and social vitality of our neighborhoods. In our commercial districts, we meet our neighbors and forge new friendships. At their best, these commercial districts reflect the unique people who call our city home. Our challenge is: How to promote excellence in our commercial districts?

## RESTORE THE MAIN STREET CHARACTER TO OUR COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS

Our commercial districts were established early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, before the automobile attained dominance. Since most people didn’t own cars, many districts were organized around the trolley lines to serve walking customers. This historic circumstance gave our city a precious Main Street character, indicated by the following characteristics:

- Multi-story, mixed-use buildings – Most of our commercial districts were built with retail on the first floor and offices or apartments on the second and third floors. This arrangement makes efficient use of land and infrastructure, while contributing to street vitality throughout the day. The multi-story buildings also visually frame the streetscape, fostering the sense of enclosure and intimacy in these public spaces.
- Continuous storefronts – To maintain interest and orientation to pedestrians, our districts were built to minimize curb cuts and other disruptions to storefronts.
- Human scale and pedestrian orientation – Storefronts blend into the streetscape, without oversized stores dominating the others. Where greater volume is desired, it extends deeper into the lot or vertically to additional floors.
- Curbside and off-street parking – Our districts were designed with curbside parking in front and parking lots located out of sight in the rear. This arrangement promoted a more attractive environment, while enhancing pedestrian comfort and safety.

## OUR COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS

- Cedar-Fairmount
- Fairmount and South Taylor
- Coventry Village
- Cedar Lee
- Cain Park Village
- Cedar Taylor
- Heights Rockefeller Community
- Center Mayfield
- Noble-Monticello
- Noble-Nela

As automobiles became more common after World War II, our city's development philosophy shifted to accommodate them. Cleveland Heights and other older suburbs nationwide attempted to mimic the planning principles of new post-war suburbs with new emphasis on competition. Thus, older pedestrian-oriented commercial districts saw buildings leveled to make way for surface parking and driveways. New construction adhered to different standards to provide storefront parking lots. Older, classic facades were covered up with modern facings.

The new model created an environment of wide streets, curb cuts, storefront parking lots, storefront gaps, out-of-scale stores and traffic that threatened or burdened pedestrians. It oriented people to go from the parking lot to a specific store, thereby diminishing the social dimension of our commercial districts.

Wherever the new paradigm achieved predominance, commercial districts lost much of their connectivity to neighborhoods. Homeowners lost the convenience, appeal and social value that the districts once provided. Commercial districts lost the local customer base central to their success. Once people felt the need to get in the car, there was no compelling reason to shop locally. Second- and third-floor offices and apartments were additional casualties, depriving the districts of the vitality that supported their social dimension.

We now face a situation where our commercial districts need significant rebuilding. To varying degrees, they are structured poorly or are incomplete. In some cases, the damage has been severe with businesses clearly struggling. In these districts, there are significant development challenges due to vacancies and marginal occupants, buildings in poor repair and a general sense of decay. Other districts are stronger, but there are still buildings or merchant-mix gaps that need to be filled.

Our central task now is to develop coherent physical and commercial plans for our districts to restore their Main Street character and vitality. Success depends on concentrating investments in a thoughtful, intentional way with extensive public involvement during the early stage. We recommend a methodical approach to rebuilding our commercial districts which include:

- Charrettes – Public workshops will be held to assess the neighborhoods' aspirations for their districts, accompanied by skilled moderators and planners to translate the ideas into actionable development plans.
- Master development plans – For each district, a rigorous plan will outline building, infrastructure and commercial mix needs.
- New urbanist building and zoning codes – Building and zoning codes will be revised to support the desired Main Street character.
- Community Development Corporations (CDCs) – CDCs will be formed as catalytic agents for districts where development needs are especially heavy.
- Land banking to facilitate redevelopment – The city will need to collect small parcels to attain appropriate scale needed for redevelopment.
- Public investment – New investment in public amenities are needed to support new investments and redevelopment, such as off-street parking decks, mini-parks, public art, traffic-calming measures, burying utilities, handicapped access and other streetscape improvements.
- Coordinated private investment – Promote the formation of Special Improvement Districts to ensure a higher level of new construction, renovation, maintenance and beautification, plantings, signage and other improvements.

With aggressive efforts in these areas, we can rebuild our commercial districts to be the vital, thriving neighborhood assets we desire.

## **ATTRACT HIGH-QUALITY BUSINESSES TO OUR CITY**

To compete effectively with other suburbs and to create a desirable place to live for our residents, we need to actively pursue redevelopment that caters to our core strengths of extraordinary people and places. We must seek enterprises that will support the physical and social assets our community values, rather than pursuing transient big-box retailers or manufacturers, which would harm the character of our community. Instead, we should attract higher-value enterprises with well-educated and well-compensated employees. In addition, we should seek quality national retailers that are willing to make an investment in our community and adhere to our high development standards.

We have an excellent opportunity to attract new businesses because of our proximity to the region's intellectual center,

University Circle – many of whose employees live in Cleveland Heights. The arts, health care, science and technology are all industries of the future, which could be located in our city. Our challenge is to provide an environment that can tap into these assets and attract them to our city. Small and mid-size enterprises could fit nicely into our revitalized commercial districts, while larger enterprises could find homes in a revitalized and refocused Mayfield Road and Severance Circle. Our community is well positioned to pursue this strategy.

We have the sense of place and community that people who own and work in these businesses demand. We have quality housing stock at a variety of price levels; rich diversity, culture, and arts; parks and green spaces; and an educated workforce upon which these enterprises depend. The owners and employees of such businesses are extremely mobile and readily move to communities that offer a superior quality of life. We must strive to make Cleveland Heights the community of choice.

As a city, we can do much more to promote our intellectual enterprise future.

- Develop a High-Tech Enterprise Plan – Identify locations for our technology centers. We must determine, with real estate experts, the types of facilities needed and how they will relate to our existing commercial districts and neighborhoods.
- Invest in infrastructure – Invest in, or attract investments for communication and other technology infrastructure that support high technology enterprise.
- Promote redevelopment – form a Technology Redevelopment Corporation to assist in land banking and create selective incentives for redevelopment.

Our challenge is not to try to pick high-tech winners and losers, but to support the building of assets that will attract successful enterprises. We will need to carefully choose our investments from our wide range of prospects available.



# Helping Our Youth Realize Their Full Potential

## SET HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

There's a funny commercial on television these days. Maybe you've seen it!

**A little boy, with an enormous smile and bright, shining eyes, is wearing a grown man's suit. The sleeves and pants are clearly too long. The camera zooms in and the boy emphatically and enthusiastically belts out, "I want to work all the way up to middle management!" The picture switches to yet another smiling face, eyes also beaming, who proudly states, "I want to be a yes man!" Still another child states, "I want to work long hours, for little pay, and no rewards or recognition."**

**It's a funny commercial that certainly illustrates what we in Cleveland Heights don't want our children to aspire toward. We have great hopes and expectations for our children, and we want them to stand up for what they believe. We will love and support them wherever they end up, but we want them – and our community – to strive for much more.**

## OUR CHARGE

The Learning and Youth Activities Task Force sought to create a vision for learning that our whole community could aspire toward, get excited about and rally behind. Our residents value education and make a significant investment in our public, private and parochial schools. We have high expectations for our children and for all the schools.

For years, people came to Cleveland Heights seeking a higher quality of life. They came to live in a community that valued its children and was committed to helping them realize their full potential. They came to give their children access to excellent schools and to exciting, diverse opportunities to learn, play, grow and make a positive difference in the lives of others. This still holds true today.

A quality education is crucial to our youth. We want our children to enjoy learning, to be curious and to have many opportunities to develop their individual talents and interests. We want our children to come home from school happy, excited to share what they learned that day and to look forward to learning more. Our expectation is that our children will receive an excellent education, one that goes far beyond academic excellence and the mastery of the core subject areas.

Excellent schools are vital to our community's future and contribute significantly to our city's vitality. They enhance our ability to retain existing residents and compete for new home buyers. The quality of our schools will heavily influence the prices of our homes. Home buyers will pay a premium for close proximity to good schools. In a largely built-up community like Cleveland Heights, our schools offer tremendous resources for all our citizens to utilize and enjoy. But more importantly, they play a significant role in educating our more than 7,000 children.

We believe that all children can achieve at high levels, if only given the opportunity. In addition, we believe that the people of Cleveland Heights can – and will continue – to make the difference in our community. Thus, embedded in our vision and strategies is a strong desire to tap and cultivate the talents of our residents to prepare our youth for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## OUR VISION

Our neighborhoods care about the welfare and success of our residents. Our schools draw upon the resources of the unique people, universities and artistic and cultural institutions of our region.

In our community, children learn to live in a diverse, open society. Neighbors watch out for all children, engage them and support them. Children have places and activities to grow, learn, get together and enjoy themselves. They grow up prepared for life intellectually, socially and culturally enriched.

A notably intellectual community, we expect excellent, nurturing teaching. We set high standards of achievement for our children to foster their lifelong learning and success. We believe that learning is a lifelong endeavor, and support the activities and resources that nurture intellectual growth.

## **SET HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR DRAMATIC ACHIEVEMENT THAT OUR WHOLE COMMUNITY CAN EMBRACE**

We have exceedingly high expectations for each of our children, yet we also strive for much more. United as a community – public and private schools, small business owners and corporate executives, craftsmen, rank and file workers, members of our faith-based community, civic organizations, parents, neighbors and volunteers – we strive to provide the opportunities, inspiration and encouragement our children need to reach the high expectations we have set for them.

It is our belief that a community that works together is more likely to set high, long-term expectations. We envision the creation of a bold new public process, broadly supported by our residents, nonprofit community and many civic organizations that support youth. We see this process bringing our elected officials, school board and city council together to collaborate and listen to the citizens.

Our vision is of a new era of cooperation between our public institutions and the residents they serve. It begins with our community working together to set high expectations for all our children – and ourselves – and making a formal pledge to help our children meet those expectations.

We see community conversations taking place in our neighborhoods and among citizen groups. If we want our high school graduates to have the opportunity to get into the colleges and universities of their choice, or obtain the jobs of the future, we envision discussing the following:

- **What skills and knowledge will our children need to lead successful lives as adults in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?** – *Analytical, social, communication, entrepreneurial skills.*
- **What experiences, in and out of school, must our children have to ensure the development of those skills and knowledge?** – *Exposure to cutting-edge technology and interesting careers in the workplace; service in our community; leadership; successful completion of advanced courses, specifically in the core subject areas of mathematics, English, science, and social studies.*
- **What clear goals can we set that will serve to motivate, inspire our community and indicate that we are heading in the right direction?**

## **CULTIVATE EXISTING AND CREATING BOLD NEW COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS AND LEADERSHIP**

Central to the success of our strategies is community-wide support for youth. We see schools as an integral part of our community, not isolated institutions. In addition, we want our families to have the support they require. Fortunately, we have many great assets and a history of people helping people from which to build our future.

We have a talented citizenry, capable teachers, a proud record of providing excellent public and private schools and boast a nationally recognized library system. We have great parks and an outstanding recreation system. Located close to the heart of Cleveland, we are home to several premier corporations. Our close proximity to University Circle makes us accessible to leading medical centers, fantastic museums, Case Western Reserve University, and renowned cultural institutions such as the Cleveland Orchestra. We are also minutes away from several other notable universities and institutions of higher learning.

We envision more exposure for our children to a wide variety of workplaces and industries that will give them greater opportunities for interaction with people who can inspire and motivate them. Experts and motivational speakers can mentally stimulate our children and cultivate their natural curiosity and drive. They need exposure to interesting careers, cutting-edge technology, and innovation and excellence in the workplace.

A cornerstone of our strategies is to tap this potential and utilize, as never before, our residents and our local institutions to:

- Convene an education summit to identify areas in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights (CH-UH) Strategic Plan that our city and others can help shape and implement. Attendees could include representatives from our public and private schools, library, American Association of Retired Persons, nonprofit network, faith-based community, realty organizations, small businesses, corporations, local universities, medical centers, cultural organizations and interested residents. The expectation is that this summit will spur the creation of an ongoing, education and youth collaborative.
- Create a new strategic partnership between the City of Cleveland Heights and the CH-UH School District dedicated to achieving strategic goals annually.

- Make it a top priority for the city and school district to unite to attract, retain and support the highest quality teachers and instructional leaders. A growing consensus in academic research is that quality teaching matters, perhaps more than any other single factor. Today, our schools enjoy an exceptionally well-educated faculty. Like most public school districts, we can expect significant teacher retirements over the next five to seven years and will need to attract and develop new talent in unprecedented numbers. Our community can create a competitive advantage by demonstrating that it values education and excellent teachers and by developing unified communication, marketing and teacher recruitment strategies.
- Establish a learning advisory board for the city.
- Explore and find new and innovative ways for all middle and high school teens to spend their time positively away from school. It is a good time for providing academic support and mentoring, conducting intergenerational activities, developing leadership skills and performing community service projects.

Immediately, we could develop a plan to recruit college and graduate students from John Carroll, Cleveland State and Case Western Reserve universities to mentor and tutor in our schools. Many college students are looking for leadership, community service and mentoring opportunities to enhance their resumes. In fact, Case Western Reserve University has a strategic goal to increase ties to its local community. The university is committed to providing its students with leadership and community service opportunities. Annually their business school rewards its master's degree students for such services.

At our best, Cleveland Heights residents are a passionate, uplifting people – inspired by a conviction that a quality education for everyone and lifelong learning benefits not only the individual, but our entire community. We feel a new and constant flow of energy is needed to stimulate renewed public involvement and ownership in our young people and the institutions that serve them. People are needed to mobilize, focus, engage and connect our assets.

Our recommendation is to drastically increase the number of students and adults who take on leadership roles in our community. Examples of how we will pursue this strategy include:

- **Creating a Leadership Cleveland Heights Development Program** – We envision our community providing a world-class development program, open to all interested residents who are willing to take the initiative and get involved. The program will provide a foundation of knowledge and experiences for a greater number of citizens, both adults and students. We suggest that it include a historical overview of our community and include walking tours of our community; provide experts to discuss the latest research; expose participants to our city government, schools, nonprofit, civic, and religious institutions; teach residents to facilitate sessions where neighbors generate improvement ideas and select several to implement annually; and seek to educate all participants on our strategic priorities, which includes education. Upon program completion, resident leaders would be expected to seek and create opportunities to apply their skills, talents and interests. This is a lifelong learning opportunity.
- **Reinvigorating and revamping the role of the block leaders/street captains, while significantly increasing their numbers** – Our more than 700 street captains could provide a strong foundation of citizen leaders that take personal responsibility for improving their neighborhoods and could become a network of residents to tap for communication purposes. Our city could hold a formal training program for all interested residents and/or channel these people into Leadership Cleveland Heights. We could foresee our city conducting an annual summit to generate block leader improvement ideas and solutions, list city support services available, identify other available resources, make grant funds available for street and/or neighborhood improvement projects and provide a forum to help our residents network on their own. Throughout the year, this group could be trained to conduct periodic street or neighborhood improvement idea generation workshops and to support implementation of most wanted improvements in neighborhoods. Easy to implement ideas with a big payoff could be acted upon immediately. Ideas that are difficult to implement could be forwarded to the city for a response in its annual improvement planning process.

- **Exploring the creation of a Cleveland Heights Community Foundation** – We encourage creating an entity that would be dedicated to improving life in Cleveland Heights through education, recreation and community service. To keep staff costs to a minimum, this organization could tap our active citizenry and channel their desire to give something back. We see the foundation encouraging policy changes, creating new partnerships, acting as a clearinghouse and connecting people for mutual benefits.

## INSPIRING CONFIDENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS

Public commitment to youth depends, in part, on good information about their needs and successes. We invest heavily in our public institutions and we expect to be informed through multiple means and engaged in public processes. Our belief is that listening to each other and having open and honest discussions is the best way to identify real lasting solutions.

In the absence of information, many people in the greater Cleveland area rely on our state report card and *Cleveland Magazine's* ratings of the suburbs to gauge the success of our schools. We want better information and more ways to hear about how our schools are improving on a regular basis.

Sometimes simple, everyday ways we communicate can make a difference. We know that participating in activities, such as gathering for a street fair, joining together for volunteer projects, attending block parties, or even striking up a conversation with friends over a cup of coffee, help to make Cleveland Heights truly a special community.

Recommendations emerging from this strategy include:

- Creating a Cleveland Heights community magazine full of interesting stories about its citizens, local merchants, school improvement activities, education partnerships and student successes.
- Hosting a citywide Youth Make a Difference Day.
- Conducting a joint city and school district state of the union address.
- Creating a process and a mechanism to generate student ideas, involvement and leadership in important community service projects.
- Building substantial community support for regular, ongoing teaching and curriculum audits to focus improvement efforts on those areas instrumental to student success.
- Developing collaborative marketing and communication strategies with the city and schools.



# Preserve Diversity and Civic Vitality

Cleveland Heights stands apart because of the diversity of our residents and our activism to nurture inclusion, meaningful connections, mutual respect and personal responsibility. Cleveland Heights residents value each other as individuals and work together to create a community that is welcoming to all who want to be part of this special place. Our community includes people of different ethnicities, religions, race, socio-economic status and sexual orientation. Our lives and community are enriched because our residents bring experiences and perspectives that are different from our own.

Cleveland Heights has worked hard to embrace, promote and maintain diversity, thereby creating an authentic multicultural community. While our housing stock has always provided for economic diversity, our identity as a racially diverse community developed in the 1960s and 1970s as blacks began to move to previously white suburbs. Cleveland Heights distinguished itself by actively embracing integration and fair housing. City initiative and community-based organizations – such as the Heights Citizens for Human Rights, Heights Community Congress, Heights Area Project and Home Repair Resource Center – have promoted an open housing market, peaceful integration, stability, and a welcoming and inclusive community. Cleveland Heights has gained a well-deserved national reputation for its unique qualities and successful efforts to be a truly diverse and inclusive community. This includes receipt of the “All America City Award” two years in a row.

Our Visioning Project shows that residents value and take pride in our diversity. It was among the most frequent attributes used to describe our community’s strengths. Eighty-one percent of those responding to our citizens survey indicated that our racial, ethnic and cultural diversity is something they value about our community. Among new residents, diversity is the third most frequently identified factor in their decision to move to Cleveland Heights.

How we define diversity continues to evolve. Our vision is for Cleveland Heights to be attractive to all kinds of people based on, but not limited to, age, religion, race, ethnicity, ability, economic status and sexual orientation. Not only do we want to be home to a diverse population, we want to be a connected community where people know, appreciate and enjoy each other.

Our diversity is an asset. It presents real challenges in a society that is becoming more diverse and tolerant, yet often more separated. Future diversity depends in part on maintaining an attractive community that offers excellent services and housing choices, high community standards and vital commercial districts and neighborhoods. It also

depends on public policies that open the housing market in our region and support the needs of older communities such as ours. City government should continue to participate in the First Suburbs Consortium and other programs that address the needs of first-ring suburbs and open housing.

Our success as a diverse community also depends on local initiatives and daily practices that help us fully embrace our diversity and that make our residents feel connected as neighbors and friends, while nurturing understanding, self-awareness and appreciation of differences and similarities. We need to encourage inclusion and involvement by all segments of the community and offer constructive options to address conflict.

The combined efforts of our city government and other public agencies; nonprofit, religious, arts and cultural organizations; youth and elderly groups; and our activist and generous residents can deepen and spread a culture of inclusion and connection and sustain Cleveland Heights as a community that excels because all of its residents are valued and enrich each other.

## OUR VISION

Cleveland Heights is an exciting, enriching place to live because of its people. Our community attracts a rich blend of diverse, interesting and talented people, all living and working in the full ranges of life stages and lifestyles. People who value their differences unite in mutual respect and tolerance. Anyone from any background who upholds these values can find a home and happiness in Cleveland Heights.

Our rich mix of people can be found in our arts, culture, recreation, community events and even daily encounters. Many artists and artisans are among us, and we treasure the enriching role the arts and culture play in our lives. We support and participate in the world-class cultural, learning and arts institutions that are our neighbors. We avidly pursue organized and individual recreational activities in leading balanced, healthy lives.

## THE HEIGHTS FUND

### *Racial and Ethnic Diversity as a Strength*

In 1987, the City of Cleveland Heights created the Heights Fund to enhance and ensure continued integration in various neighborhoods in the cities of Cleveland Heights and University Heights. Through this program, potential homeowners are eligible for a \$5,000 interest-free loan to be used as a down payment in an area in which their race is underrepresented.

## EMBRACE DIVERSITY IN ALL ASPECTS OF CITY GOVERNMENT

We recommend that the city government embrace diversity in all aspects of its operations and policies. Our Cleveland Heights government can be a model for all public agencies and private groups by demonstrating how to effectively embrace diversity. First, the city should ensure that inclusive language is used in all city policies, guidelines and ordinances. In addition, the city should ensure that all segments of the community are encouraged to be involved in volunteer roles and city-sponsored activities, and that communication with residents is accessible to people of different needs and languages. Finally, we need to highlight our broadly-defined diversity in all marketing materials and other public documents that feature our city.

## BUILD ON OUR TRADITION OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

We would like to build on our tradition of community involvement by focusing on diversity and its role in community engagement. We have a proud tradition and history of city and community-based initiatives to promote, appreciate and sustain diversity. Creating an inclusive community is an ongoing challenge. We have great community resources and real experience. Our tradition provides a tremendous foundation for more and deeper strategies to strengthen community ties and encourage a full appreciation of our diversity. We recommend the following initiatives:

- Create a community history that captures that tradition and helps to inform and motivate our new diversity initiatives. We need to ensure that our residents have access to interesting and effective activities that promote understanding, reduce prejudice, foster relationships, build ownership and empower, and invite all segments of our community to be active citizens in areas of interest. The city should convene a Community Council for Interaction and Community Building to mobilize, coordinate, promote and even fund city and community-based ini-

tiatives that bring together our diverse community and strengthen community engagement and belonging. City government, public schools, libraries, our rich array of community organizations, street clubs, youth and senior citizen groups, and cultural, recreation and arts organizations can all contribute.

- Cultivate widespread leadership and involvement by all segments of our community to:
  - Re-create our street contact program as a way to encourage more activity at the street level and to foster neighborhood leadership and outreach.
  - Work with other public institutions and the non-profit network to design a leadership development program that would involve diverse segments of our community. It would cultivate new leaders and intensify participation of involved residents by providing a common base of knowledge about the community, networking opportunities and the chance to learn about leadership.

Both initiatives can increase involvement and secure participation by diverse segments of our population in shaping our community. In addition, there are initiatives that celebrate our diversity in fun and exciting ways. We should increase our cultural and ethnic festivals, and improve access to theatrical and music programs.

## EXPLORE A NEIGHBOR-TO-NEIGHBOR MEDIATION PROJECT

We recommend exploring a Neighbor-to-Neighbor Mediation Project. While initiatives that build understanding can help reduce conflicts and build harmony, some strategies are needed to better address conflicts that emerge among our residents. As a community we have high standards for personal responsibility. We need to explore mediation options that make it easier for residents to work together to solve problems and resolve conflicts.

## HEIGHTS COMMUNITY CONGRESS

### *Collaboration to Effect Change*

In the mid-1970s, the Heights Community Congress was created to ensure fair housing policies and to promote Cleveland Heights' housing assets. The group was created in response to a collaborative interest in integration that was shared by city staff, the City Council and community. Currently, the Heights Community Congress, with partial funding from the city, organizes the annual "Heights Heritage Home Tour" to highlight our beautiful homes and promote Cleveland Heights' ability to achieve integration while supporting housing values.

# Identify Cleveland Heights as a Home to Recreation and the Arts

## OUR VISION

Cleveland Heights will be a community that promotes an environment rich in the arts and recreation. A community commitment to the arts enriches our lives in ways that are not necessarily quantifiable: living is simply better. Arts and recreation provide people of varied backgrounds – regardless of their race, religion or culture – a comfortable way to come together and learn about each other and to strengthen the community through understanding.

***Diverse, Unique, Friendly, Progressive, Cultural, Artistic, Vital, Historic, Neighborly, Eclectic, Home***  
– *Cleveland Heights 2000 Annual Report*

Cleveland Heights should be the arts and entertainment center for Northeast Ohio. We have a solid foundation for achieving a distinctive program and have a large number of artists as residents. Public art is beginning to appear in our business districts. The CH-UH Library will soon launch an Arts and Family Center at its new building on Lee Road. We have a fabulous outdoor arts center at Cain Park, which produces one of the best five arts fairs in the country – drawing 65,000 visitors each year. We have numerous theater companies, dance companies, and are home to many artists, art enthusiasts and people involved with the region's fine museums, performing arts organizations and institutions of art and music education. Let's take advantage of these rich resources and make the arts our biggest asset. It is in our best interest to embrace the concept of Cleveland Heights as an arts community.

In a diverse community, the arts can be used as a vehicle to help people understand and accept their differences in a venue that is open and comfortable. Our arts programming is already among the best in Northeast Ohio. We offer several recognized theatrical programs, including the Dobama Theater, the Ensemble Theater, Cain Park and the Jewish Community Center. We attract national attention for the band, orchestra and vocal programs at our public high school. Artists who reside in our city represent the fine arts, literary arts, musical arts and dance, yet we have not fully tapped our arts community as the resource that it can be.

Cleveland Heights as a home for the arts can achieve three objectives:

- Boost the city economically
- Use arts as a tool for improving education
- Use art as a community-building resource

## EXPAND RESOURCES AND PROGRAMMING FOR THE ARTS

We need to provide more public art that creates an immediate impression on visitors and residents of Cleveland Heights. Upon entering our city, people should understand that we are a culturally rich community that values the arts in all forms. Artists as residents and business people provide a potential economic boost for the city by attracting tourism and entertainment dollars, while providing sales and property tax revenue. As such, we recommend the following initiatives designed to expand the arts resources and programming:

- Allocate one percent of all new development and rehabilitation budgets to a city arts budget. This money is a tax to developers and is included in the development budget. This is a program that is used in over 100 cities – including Long Beach, New Orleans, Seattle, Tampa, San Francisco and San Jose – at a rate of one-half to two percent to create a budget for the arts without burdening the taxpayer or the city budget.

## PARTNERING FOR THE ARTS

### *The Heights Arts Collaborative Mission Statement*

We recommend that the City of Cleveland Heights partner with existing arts organizations to effectively leverage and share resources. One such group, the Heights Arts Collaborative, shares our goals for an arts community. These goals are reflected in their mission statement:

*Our mission is to pool the arts resources of the Heights and to express the creative spirit of the community.*

## THE CREATION OF PUBLIC ART

### *How Local Alliances Resulted in the Beautification of the Cedar Lee Area*

An alliance of the Heights Arts Collaborative, the Cedar Lee Merchants Association and Cleveland Cinemas was created to facilitate the installation of a mural on the wall that faces municipal parking lot #5 behind the Cedar Lee Theatre.

The mural, 36 feet high by 120 feet long, will be painted on the brick wall at the back of the Cedar Lee Theatre building. Jonathan Forman, president of Cleveland Cinemas, conceived the idea for the mural because the area is a gateway to the Cedar Lee commercial district. The mural will be lit with wash lights during the evening for view by patrons of the theater and restaurants.

Completion of the \$22,000 project is expected by the fall of 2001. Fundraising efforts began June 2, 2001, when area merchants hosted an evening benefit. The event included a reception featuring Robert A. Muller, designer of the winning entry, as well as a screening of the acclaimed film, *The Anniversary Party*. All proceeds benefitted the Cedar Lee Mural Project.

- Hire a director of Arts Development to represent the city as it partners with business and arts organizations, to coordinate the scheduling of arts and performance events and to represent the city as it partners with the schools to implement more arts for our children. This director would also educate the city about good arts policy.
- Create a marketing and promotional plan that positions Cleveland Heights as a home to the arts. This plan should include consistent messages that are included in newspaper advertisements and press releases, the Cleveland Heights website, our cable access television channel and the library. We need to market this message outside of our community and within, and to involve local businesses to partner in this process.
- Create a Heights Arts Weekend/Open Studio Day that includes a concentrated number of arts events on one weekend to highlight our city's varied arts and culture. Interested artists could open their studios to the public and share their work with the community.
- Support and encourage the creation of public art – architecture, sculpture, artist-designed landscaping, signage and awnings – to enhance our streetscapes.
- Attract and nurture artist/residents by identifying more exhibition, studio, performance and live/work spaces for artisans and support these spaces with artist-friendly zoning.

## IMPROVE THE ORGANIZATION AND DISSEMINATION OF ARTS INFORMATION

As the arts become more integrated into our daily activities, we need to ensure that information about the arts is well coordinated, organized and disseminated. This can be accomplished by:

- Creating a quarterly cultural calendar to expand access to arts and cultural opportunities – including performing arts, poetry and book readings, exhibits, performances and school arts events – so that the community is well informed. Distribute calendar to residences, libraries and post on the city's website with appropriate links. This would also allow better coordination of several annual events.
- Creating a resource database including a listing of artists, architects, designers, collectors, curators and teachers. Also, include exhibit and performance spaces, rental spaces and service providers to artists – such as lawyers, accountants, foundations, galleries and printers – and possible collaborations.

## INTEGRATE ART INTO ALL LEARNING EVENTS AND RESOURCES

We need to improve the role of the arts in our education and learning events by introducing art into existing after-school programs and looking for ways to help to implement a district-wide arts curriculum. We should:

- Integrate the arts into lunchtime and after-school programs in schools, libraries and religious facilities. We could utilize the skills of instructors, visiting artists, arts organizations and mentors to teach art and work with students.
- Create a partnership between nonprofits, the CH-UH Board of Education and the city to ensure that people are working together to integrate arts into the schools and public programming.

- Increase theater productions for children by adding to after-school programs, increase drama in the middle school and developing an after-school drama program at Wiley Middle School through the Cleveland Heights Department of Recreation.
- Develop proactive fundraising for arts and cultural activities in the schools. This will not only create new funds for arts programs, but will build parental involvement and a sense of community within our schools.
- Integrate intergenerational mentoring in the arts for children that will utilize the experience of older adults.

## **EXPAND PROGRAMMING AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS**

Our recommendations fall into three general categories: physical resources and programming, recreation and education, and the organization and dissemination of information.

We want more opportunities to have fun with other community members, not just come together to rally around a problem or crisis. To do this, we need to program events that incorporate community programming, large and small events – regardless of the sponsor – that leverage our community’s unique assets while providing a venue for diverse people to interact in a setting that encourages connections and learning about each other. We should:

- Coordinate several annual events:
  - Celebration of Performing Arts at Cain Park
  - Cleveland Heights Book and Author Festival
  - Taste of Cleveland Heights Food Fair
  - Create a summer Farmers’ Market
- Schedule large-scale community events such as thematic festivals and fairs in parks and business districts – such as the Lee Road Festival in July 2001. Use fairs to attract local families, as well as attract residents to areas they may not frequent.

- Create more small community social events at parks, schools and religious facilities to bring people together in small groups for walking, gardening, biking, hiking, tai chi, storytelling, etc. These activities would connect people with similar interests from diverse backgrounds in more intimate groups and foster understanding and good personal relations.
- Design a program to preserve, protect and maintain our parks and common areas, particularly Forest Hill Park, for our citizens to use and enjoy for years to come.
- Establish a collaboration between the city, schools and library to assess and implement after-school recreation opportunities for public, parochial and private school children in arts and recreation. Children will have the opportunities to have places to grow, learn, get together and enjoy themselves.
- Our city offers two recreation catalogues, one from the Cleveland Heights Recreation Department and the other from the Board of Education’s Community Services. Both catalogues offer similar contents, but are rarely published at the same time making comparisons and choices difficult for consumers. We recommend creating one catalog that contains the current types of information and add information on the above-mentioned activities. This would coordinate services better and eliminate confusion. This type of unprecedented cooperation between the city and the Board of Education would be a model for other communities. The information should be available on a database and on the Cleveland Heights website, mailed to consumers and available in hard copy at the CH-UH Library.
- Provide an accessible indoor swimming pool that is available at a reasonable cost to citizens. A pool would provide exercise for our residents, young and old. Whether the city builds an indoor pool, converts an outdoor pool into a year-round facility, or negotiates an arrangement with an existing facility to allow our residents to swim all year, we need to address this recreation deficit.

### **THE NEW COMMUNITY CENTER**

#### *Expanding our Community Events and Programming*

The citizens of Cleveland Heights passed a bond issue in support of a new community center. This center includes two skating rinks, gym, basketball courts, aerobics room, childcare center, senior center and rooms available for programming. This community center will be a premier facility to support our youth, our seniors, our families and citizens.

# Maximize Social Capital to Drive City Services and Accountability

## LEE ROAD CHARETTE

### *Using Social Capital to Drive City Planning*

On Saturday, April 28, 2001, Cleveland Heights citizens traded a sunny afternoon for an opportunity to dream about possible development along the Lee Road corridor, from Monticello to the Main Library. Participation was voluntary and several Cleveland Heights professionals donated their time and expertise to support this event. The output was a collection of renderings of “what could be” along Lee Road.

This event highlights the critical components of our vision for several reasons. The Lee Road Charette increased social capital by allowing us to voice our vision for a critical commercial district. The event was planned by citizens, for citizens, with a final output that can be used by our elected officials to drive key planning decisions along Lee Road for several years to come.

People expect Cleveland Heights to be an enlightened, brave community. From its early days as a hearty farming community to its role as a pioneer in the integration movements, Cleveland Heights is proud of its reputation as a protector of human rights through the thoughtful provision of regulations and services that cater to a diverse population. We value community loyalty, pride and active public involvement. In exchange, we expect our government to be customer-oriented and accountable to us for decisions and practices. We value the citizen/government partnership and we rely on our civic activism to be a roadmap for our elected officials.

As Cleveland Heights citizens, we are generally comfortable with the level of services that are provided given the size and budget of the community. We envision our future city as one that continues to provide effective services in response to citizen needs. To support this vision, we need to maximize social capital and community involvement while measuring the progress of the city against established standards.

Our history as a highly active and vocal citizen body has us searching for more opportunities to interact with our City Council and administration. Currently, our city communicates with us through one-way communication channels, such as our cable television station and *Focus* magazine. We are encouraged to communicate back to our elected officials either through informal and individual means or by voicing our concerns at the ballot box.

In the past, we have leveraged our social activism to communicate key messages to City Council as a reaction to significant planning decisions. The community’s response to the Giant Eagle expansion at Cedar-Fairmount and the Community Center Development Project in Forest Hills were clear indicators that we care deeply about this community and are looking for opportunities to share our ideas with our elected officials. As these examples show, it is important to leverage the social capital inherent in Cleveland Heights citizens early in the planning and development process. Increased interactions with City Council and the city administration will maximize social capital and ultimately lead to customer-driven service delivery, strengthened government accountability and reduced social and financial costs associated with city operations and planning.

## OUR VISION

We envision a city where:

- a mutually proactive relationship between elected and appointed officials and citizens is continually developed and redeveloped, and encouraged and supported by all involved.
- city employees strive daily to deliver the highest quality services with an attitude of providing exceptional customer service.

## THE DANDELION STORY

### *Civic Activism Drives City Services*

Cleveland Heights has several boulevards with expansive grass and other plantings. A group of citizens noticed that the city was spraying these areas with powerful pesticides to control the dandelion growth. These citizens lobbied together and presented the city with a petition to cease spraying all public greenery with pesticides. Presently, public spaces in Cleveland Heights are maintained naturally as a direct result of an interested, engaged group of citizens.

## DIVERSIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

To maximize social capital, our vision holds that the city should diversify its strategy for communicating with its constituents. We would like to reduce reliance on printed city materials that simply get the word out. Rather, our goal is to increase the use of programs that provide an opportunity for citizens to interact with elected officials and key managers through in-person and technology-enabled exchanges. We would like to increase our opportunities to exchange information with our elected officials through venues, such as town hall forums and City Council meetings that rotate through various neighborhoods. We believe in strengthening the existing neighborhood network by formalizing a Citizen Information Network that advises City Council on effective communication and public input techniques, while facilitating citizen participation in critical citywide and neighborhood decisions.

We endorse the use of the Internet as a tool to promote collaboration between our citizens and our government. An expanded city website could provide electronic links for citizens and businesses to access a wealth of relevant information and websites. In addition, an interactive website will allow us to share our praises, feedback and concerns, and allow us to accomplish certain administrative tasks, such as paying taxes or requesting a permit. An expanded website will allow us to contact city staff and City Council members directly via e-mail and allow us to use the list serve capability to notify interested citizens and groups about community meetings and events.

## CONTINUE OUR PROUD TRADITION OF CIVIC ACTIVISM

We must ensure that civic activism in the community continues and that we encourage a new generation of civic leaders to come forward to participate in addressing our challenges and in assuring that the community's vision is achieved. The creation of Leadership Cleveland Heights

as a vehicle to inform, educate and nurture new community and civic leaders on a continuing basis would ensure that a new class of civic leaders is tapped periodically to bring their considerable resources forth in addressing our community's needs.

The Cleveland Heights Volunteer Center – created to serve as a matchmaker for community members seeking volunteer opportunities, and government agencies and nonprofit organizations seeking volunteers – could initially be housed in city government. It could simply be an internet-based directory of community organizations with a description of their volunteer or charitable donation needs. Over the longer term, we recommend the formation of a Cleveland Heights Community Foundation that could ultimately coordinate the Volunteer Center, the newly proposed Leadership Cleveland Heights, as well as provide a vehicle to generate new funding and other resources for community initiatives.

## REDEFINE SERVICE EXCELLENCE

As required by most inner-ring suburbs, city services in Cleveland Heights are currently optimized for cost effectiveness. In determining alternatives for services, the city assesses various options and chooses the option that is financially viable. However, the outcome is that the benchmark for city services is often defined downward, resulting in a lesser quality option for our city. For example, several years ago the city assessed the costs of backyard pickup for trash collection. A decision was made to discontinue backyard pickup and use curbside pickup instead. While this decision has saved the city money in trash collection, it has also created a visually unattractive city four to five days each week. Drive down a Cleveland Heights street on Monday through Friday and you will see lawns piled with garbage, bags that are often opened and strewn due to animals and a generally unpleasant smell throughout.

Similarly, the city has an exceptional program for beautifying the city's tree lawns. At a homeowner's request, the city will plant a tree on a tree lawn. However, the city has decided to plant young, skinny trees that are often in conflict with a neighborhood's typical trees. We see the same approach to curb replacements in Cleveland Heights. Many neighborhoods still retain the original slate curbs that were laid when the city was originally developed. Over time as these curbs have needed repairs, we have chosen to replace the slate with concrete curbs. The concrete curbs detract from our city's beauty and communicate a message that we do not treasure those assets upon which this city was founded. We need to redefine our delivery of services so that they reflect the quality and heritage of our community.

Finally, we need to ensure that the city has a specific financial plan to set priorities and achieve needed capital investments to support economic development and neighborhood quality. We recommend improving the city's annual capital investment decision-making by providing a capital investment report that identifies the city's long-range strategic goals for investment and links proposed investments with community goals. In addition to providing residents with an annual capital spending program, a capital plan report should provide a five-year outlook on capital investment issues. This report would provide data about the city's infrastructure base and its overall condition; future investment needs and the proposed funding plan over a five-year period; and funding gaps and alternatives available to address those funding needs.

### **TRASH COLLECTION AND THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY**

*Providing Customer-Driven  
City Services*

Among the diverse population in Cleveland Heights resides a community of Orthodox Jews who have provided stability for the city over the years. Annually, this community strips its kitchens of all bread-related products to prepare for the religious holiday of Passover. The result is a significant amount of garbage on Cleveland Heights tree lawns on non-garbage days. In response to this need for specialized garbage pickup, the city has implemented a program to run a special garbage route prior to Passover to accommodate the needs of the Orthodox community and ultimately provide customer-driven services for a longstanding Cleveland Heights community.

### **DELIVER CUSTOMER-DRIVEN CITY SERVICES**

Our citizens expressed concern over their ability to access the right decision-makers when contacting the city. Too often, we are left feeling that our needs are not met or that the city staff person to whom we are connected does not have the authority to see our needs through to the end. We believe that the adoption of an intensive, citywide customer service philosophy will enable a more effective response and ensure that we – as citizens – are treated as respected customers. This new customer-focused philosophy will include special training for all city personnel and reworking the approach to planning, budgeting and reporting for city services that focuses on quality, not just quantity. The ombudsman position should be replaced with a new city customer service coordinator – who should be strategically located in the front of the City Hall building and easily accessible on the city's website – as the key contact for city service issues and questions.

We strongly encourage city leaders to formally appoint single city staff members as the primary contact for various geographic areas of the city. This will ensure a single point of contact and that an advocate is working to coordinate city planning, programs and investments in each geographic area.

### **STRENGTHEN ACCOUNTABILITY AND MANAGEMENT**

As active and participatory citizens, we care about the city's annual goals, specific objectives and overall performance. Currently, the city provides this information only in terms of specific, measurable outputs without any clear linkage to how the outputs compare to goals set for the year or the level of effort and cost associated with achieving that output.

Connecting its performance from year to year will allow the city to more clearly communicate its successes and challenges. We encourage city management to adopt a strategic plan approach to annual goal setting, budget development and reporting. Elements of the new strategic approach include performance-based goal setting where goals are determined through a City Council retreat session, interdepartmental strategy sessions and public input sessions. In addition, this new strategic approach should include performance-based reporting that includes an annual report to compare adopted strategic goals to accomplished results, such as comparing performance against the plan; performance over time; and performance compared to peers.

### **IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

The City recently created a new section in their internal employee newsletter, *City Hallogram*, entitled: "Service with a Smile: Suggestions for Delivering Superior Customer Service." This section is dedicated to capturing and sharing best practices related to citizen/city staff interactions, both within Cleveland Heights and elsewhere.

# Strategic Implementation: A Call for Action

The Visioning Committee members learned a tremendous amount over the past 20 months that indicates that the vision would not be complete without a significant amount of additional work from residents, City Council members and city staff. The City Council and the senior staff of the city provided high levels of support and a platform for citizens to interact in a positive, proactive manner for the good of the community. The city must continue the work started by the Visioning Committee and create a body whose only tasks are to look to the future and ensure the continued improvement of our community.

## A COLLABORATIVE REVIEW PROCESS

The consensus of the Visioning Committee is that the process should become more than just another planning document. We need a structure for implementation. Our recommended structure is a small ongoing commission composed of two people from each of the following groups:

- City Council – The chair of the Planning Committee of City Council should be one of two City Council members assigned to the Vision Review Commission.
- Citizens at large – The citizens selected to fill the slots should not have been members of the Visioning Committee.
- Senior staff of the city - It is strongly recommended that the city manager be one of the members representing the city staff.
- Visioning Committee – This can be any of the 25 people who were members of the Visioning Project.

The primary task of the Vision Review Commission will be to review the city's ability to link and implement the goals of the Visioning Project. Staff actions in relationship to the vision will be reviewed with a focus on analyzing the city's delivery of services and use of finances. Vision Review Commission members should be appointed by City Council for a term of two years with a minimum of two required semiannual meetings.

## COMMUNICATING UPDATES ON THE VISION

It is recommended that the City Council make the vision part of the ongoing tasks of the Planning Committee of City Council for review and regular updates. The Council as a whole should have monthly updates on activities and actions undertaken that were recommended by the Visioning Project documents. The community should receive ongoing information on Visioning Project activities by the following methods.

- City's website
- *Focus Magazine*
- City's annual report

NOTE: For details on the projects and initiatives recommended for action, review the "Summary Matrix of Recommendations" attached to the PKG Report to City Council.

### ACTION

The Vision of the Committee is that change will happen. The changes will be focused actions of people committed to preserving and maintaining an extraordinary community. The members of the Visioning Committee and the participants in the task forces believe strongly that there must be a long-term investment of time and resources in the Vision for the future of Cleveland Heights. The actions of the city staff and the residents must bring together the following:

Time  
Budget  
Detailed Projects  
Commitment of the overall community

