



Let's Celebrate a Forest Hill Success

by Les Jones



16228 FOREST HILLS BOULEVARD

There has been a lot of discussion among residents in Forest Hill over the past few months about different ways to approach the bank owned and vacant homes popping up throughout Forest Hill. The process to attack the properties can be slow and complicated but as we move forward with exploring some new ways to address this issue, it's nice to hear about great stories like this previously abandoned home on Forest Hills Boulevard, which sat vacant for over 10 YEARS. It has now been transformed into a beautiful asset to our area. Several attempts were made over the years to get the city to act on this property without success. The property was finally turned over to the Cuyahoga County Land Bank last August.

In just six short months the property has undergone a complete makeover both inside and out. The new owners, Boris Gringauz, his fiancé Jen and their two kids are now all moved in and excited about living in Forest Hill. While Boris has been working and living in downtown Cleveland for a while, Jen is new to the area, relocating from Indianapolis. When we see a young family with small children, we should all be encouraged that the beauty and splendor of Forest Hill still serves to impress and attract new young residents along with empty nesters.

I sat down with the family a few days ago to make sure they were comfortable with doing an article about their home and to help answer any questions they had about FHHO. We discussed Forest Hill history (I left with them my copy of Sharon Gregor's book on the Rockefeller Estate) along with ideas on things to do in Forest Hill and the surrounding area including Cain Park and University Circle. We laughed about the fact that the only thing they salvaged inside the interior of their home was a small section of 50's style ceramic tile flooring at the front foyer. I remarked to Boris as I entered the house that I had the exact same tile section inside my front door entrance...right down to the same colors and pattern. The family is eager to explore the parks, commercial areas and dive right into all the things they can get involved in. They've already logged onto fhho.nextdoor.com and plan to attend one of the upcoming special events at the new Forest Hill Kitchen, located in the old Rockefeller's restaurant.

As I wrapped up my visit I mentioned the wealth of talent throughout Forest Hill. They're still working on yard cleanup from the construction, starting a new lawn, building a garden and landscaping the home. I encouraged them to reach out on Nextdoor to get ideas and support from some of the master gardeners in Forest Hill. Stop by and take a look for yourself!

And More Great News on Problem Properties

Over the past three months we've seen action happening on a few other properties that were on the bank-owned list including:

15433 Brewster Road – The servicing company managing the property is finishing violation work and after inspection and approval by FHHO should be ready to transfer to HUD. We expect that it will be back on the market within the next month.

16237 Forest Hills Boulevard – The Cuyahoga Land Bank has accepted a bid from a fellow Forest Hill resident to take over the property. The new owner will begin rehab work immediately which will include restoration of the existing slate roof. Similar to the recently renovated Gringauz home featured above, this property had also been languishing vacant for more than 10 years and FHHO looks forward to its completion.

2558 Newbury Road – Another Cuyahoga Land Bank property is now soliciting bids to start rehab work. In addition, another local investor is also looking at the adjacent property at which recently went into foreclosure.

UPCOMING FHHO EVENTS

May 7, 2016

First Saturday Meet-N-Greet

The Blue Cottage – 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

May 28, 2016

5th Annual Forest Hill Garage Sale

9:00 am to 3:00 pm

June 4, 2016

First Saturday Meet-N-Greet

The Blue Cottage – 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

July 2, 2016

First Saturday Meet-N-Greet

The Blue Cottage – 7:15 pm to 9:00 pm

President's Message

by Hester Lewellen



DEAR FOREST HILL RESIDENTS

After four years as your president, I think it's time to pass the job onto someone with more youth and energy. Our Senior Vice President, Pete Grebus, is ready to take on the job, and I hope you are all ready to give him your support. I know he will be looking to recruit more volunteers. I have recently had some health issues crop up, and I need to step back. However, I intend to stay on the board as President Emerita and continue to volunteer where needed. I've had fun with the challenges of the position and will continue to help in any way I can.

Sincerely,

Hester Lewellen – President 2012-2016

Welcome Our New Neighbors

by Dr. Mary Rice

Please extend a warm welcome to these new residents that joined our Forest Hill family from January 1 to April 10, 2016:

- Gregory and Gayle Byers – Mount Vernon
- Harold and Debra Drew – Mayfield
- Joan Fox – Rumson
- Dwayne Gbelia – Rumson
- Bruce Jones – Hereford
- Patrick Kenny – Lee
- Donte and Audrey Lee – Seaton
- Ardath Longshaw – Newbury
- Diane McLaughlin – Westover
- Patricia and David McMurray – Blackmore
- Tia Robertson – Hollister
- Thomas Ward – Chelsea
- Justin Younker and Jacqueline Naami – Oakhill

WVIZ Features "The Rockefellers"

by Les Jones



In case you missed it, Dee Perry of WVIZ channel 25 did a feature story on the construction and history of the 81 Rockefeller homes in East Cleveland. The story, part of Dee's weekly "Applause" show, was first

aired on Thursday, March 10th and featured our fellow Forest Hill residents, Trina Pruffer, Sharon Gregor and Frank Ricchi. Although the segment is only 7 minutes long it took over three hours and quite a bit of camera and lighting equipment to record the segment. You can still view the archive video by going to www.wviz.org and clicking on the Applause link.

Forest Hill Park Improvements

by Dick Secor and Les Jones

At a recent Town Hall, at Forest Hill Presbyterian Church in March, attendees were given an enlightening update on major improvement plans for the East Cleveland section of Forest Hill Park during 2016. Dick Secor, a volunteer for the East Cleveland Park Association (ECPA), discussed a host of projects on the schedule this year including:



- a major cleanup of dead trees along with pulling "invasive weeds"
- installation of a new water aerator for the pond
- installation of 10 new picnic tables and new water fountain
- repair and removal of sections of fencing along Lee Boulevard
- conversion of one tennis court to a basketball court
- landscaping and installation of new signage at two entrances
- adding new tables and benches around the playground area
- instituting a Canada geese control program
- repairing the Boathouse and upgrades to the bathrooms
- kicking off the "Save-A-Tree, Plant-A-Tree" project
- repairs to the Footbridge and older playground equipment

ECPA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit group made up of volunteers who have been granted overall responsibility to oversee the upkeep of the East Cleveland section of Forest Hill Park. Any Forest Hill resident that wishes to volunteer or donate to ECPA can visit www.ecpaohio.org for more information.

What's Going On with Medusa

CHUCK GILE OF MOTORCARS UPDATES FOREST HILL



A surprise visitor at the Town Hall meeting in March, Chuck Gile, president of Motorcars Honda-Toyota, provided a quick update on the Medusa building property at the corner of Monticello and Lee.

Chuck took over the property from a previous investor who backed out of a plan to transform the building after beginning demolition inside the facility. Many Forest Hill residents (after seeing all the cars parked) voiced concern that the property was heading toward becoming a car lot. Chuck stated that while he's still looking at options for the building, he has no immediate plans or budget to take this on during 2016. He did mention that he does plan to clean up the grounds and do some landscaping soon. He also remarked how easy it would be to accept many offers from "Family Dollar" type retail businesses but doesn't plan to go that route and believes the area deserves something better.

After making a massive, award-winning investment in his Mayfield Road dealerships over the last two years, Chuck says he's committed to the Cleveland Heights area and wants to do right by the area residents which represent their main customer base. Although he does need more space for car inventory he's open to looking at other options to secure the needed space. He does plan to use a portion of the Medusa satellite building for a call center.

Standards Report on Forest Hill Top 10 Property Eyesores

by Dale Rothenberger and Dean Sieck



Since the nationwide housing values collapse of 2007-2008, thousands of neighborhoods throughout the country have experienced vacancy and blight. These circumstances have also affected Forest Hill. Your current FHHO Standards Committee has been working on Forest Hill standards issues since mid-2012 when we drove the entire neighborhood and took note of each house. We have developed a systematic protocol for addressing complaints regarding compliance with the Forest Hill covenants and standards. Of the 998 houses in our neighborhood, there are currently 50 active cases on our list. Of these, careful inspection has distilled the list down to eight that we deem true “eyesores,” those whose appearance we judge to erode property values.

Complaints come to us from fellow residents and from our own observations. Each complaint is verified as being significant and not trivial. If the complaint is verified, the house is entered into our digital database system and the date recorded as “first complaint.” The homeowner is identified and a notice of non-compliance with specification(s) of the appropriate standard(s) is sent to the owner. This process may have to be repeated two or three times before compliance occurs.

If compliance is not achieved, we will notify the appropriate city to identify what the city has done and to encourage action on the part of the city. There are some cases where corrective action has not occurred. Below is the list of addresses and standards activity for each house (in alpha order by street) that can be called a persistent eyesore, or more correctly, a chronic problem home.

3325 Chelsea Drive – Cleveland Heights: Individual owned, may not be owner occupied. First Contact 7/24/14: application for siding and an addition. It then evolved into an extended non-maintenance complaint as progress was not evident. The owner bought the home from Fannie Mae with the intent of fixing it up and remodeling, but for a variety of mostly unknown reasons work has not proceeded. Owner has had two different contractors and been before CH Architectural Review board twice – approved 7/22/15. Beyond the house needing paint, gutter replacement, and removal of debris piled in the backyard, a foundation has been started on the backyard, but is currently unfinished. No contact with absentee homeowner for eight months. Contractor has been called, but is currently out of the country. Rick Wagner, Cleveland Heights Housing Director, said on 4/12/16 that owner was granted an extension for scrape and paint until 6/1/16, and the building permit expires 5/19/16.

15780 Cleviden Road – East Cleveland: Individual owned, but not occupied. First complaint: April of 2013 – hole in the front roof caused by a falling tree limb. The hole was patched with a sheet of wood, but the roof was not repaired. In addition, the gutters are full, and there is a hole in the back roof into the house. No response from the owner to a notice sent 4/10/13. Taxes are paid for all of 2016. The city was notified 8/19/15 and the last record of inspection was 8/20/15, according to Ms. Solandra Wallace, Building and Housing Manager of East Cleveland on 4/11/16. She said it will be scheduled for inspection within a week.

15820 Forest Hills Boulevard – East Cleveland: Bank owned. First Contact: 7/22/15. Owner was advised of need to repair landscaping wall but had lost her job. Now foreclosed. The front wall of the bed has completely collapsed; lawn and bed is full of weeds. Anchor Preservations, servicing agent for New York Mellon Bank received property January 2016. Servicer was contacted 4/11/16. Lawn will be mowed twice monthly, and Standards Committee has requested repair of wall. Vacant Property registration fee of \$500 was paid to East Cleveland on 2/11/16 per Ms. Solandra Wallace, Building and Housing Manager of East Cleveland on 4/11/16. She had no prior records on this house.

15922 Forest Hills Boulevard – East Cleveland: Vacant. First contact 6/16/14: Allegedly, the owner died about nine years ago. According to daughter who comes to pick up mail, he was a contractor who put up the home as collateral for building material loans, then died approximately 2006. Because of the liens, the house could not be sold. It now is badly in need of painting, and the roof leaks. Several notices were sent and ignored. Over \$69,000 in taxes are owed. Property is in foreclosure per County Fiscal Department and will go to Sheriff’s sale. Meeting with Solandra Wallace, Building and Housing manager of East Cleveland on 4/11/16 determined no record on this house.

15725 Glynn Road – East Cleveland: (not in covenant area). Owner occupied. First Complaint 9/16/14: This house needs painting so badly that probably close to 50 percent of the siding is showing bare wood. Soon it will need new siding. Notices have been sent and ignored. Solandra Wallace, Building and Housing manager of East Cleveland on 8/19/15 promised to investigate. Meeting with Solandra Wallace, East Cleveland Building and Housing Manager on 4/11/16 determined last inspection in 2013 when an extension was granted, but no work has been done. She said it will be scheduled for inspection within a week.

1315 Hereford Road – Cleveland Heights: Vacant. First Complaint 3-10-11: The owner bought the house from Fannie Mae in 2011 and undertook extensive remodeling, including putting artificial stone over the existing wood siding and architectural detail. By 2013, the work stopped suddenly with construction materials and debris strewn about the yard and the work half finished. Numerous notices have been sent and returned as undeliverable, but delinquent tax notices sent to the house address have been paid. City issued warrants for the owner on 1/17/13, 5/20/15, and 6/1/15. City believes the owner is not living in U.S.

3045 Monticello Boulevard – Cleveland Heights: Vacant. Taxes are delinquent. First Complaint 8/19/15: The house is in need of maintenance, the window blinds are in very bad condition, a gutter is down in the back, and old discarded toys and debris are scattered about the backyard. An unlicensed sedan is parked in the drive. From time to time vehicles are seen in the drive with men moving items in and out of the house. The city has the case in housing court. Owner contacted 4/4/16. Car has been removed to garage. Owner has been requested to replace blinds in windows. Owner claims house is her residence. Rick Wagner, Cleveland Heights Housing Director, said on 4/12/16 the City has bid the job to paint the property and clean up its grounds.

2268 North Taylor Road – Cleveland Heights: Occupied. Taxes are delinquent. First Complaint 11/23/14: Construction was started in 2014, including cutting in a second driveway to the rear of the lot for a free-standing garage, and the existing single car garage door on the front was removed for conversion to a bedroom. Permit was granted by the City of Cleveland Heights Building Inspection Dept. but FHHO Standards Committee was not consulted. FHHO intervened with the owner and the contractor to seek compliance with the covenants. The contractor later stopped work, and for over a year status has been the same: the curb cut is in, the driveway excavated, and a window roughed in where the garage door was. The CH Building Dept. was to send contractor a letter 8/19/15. No change to date. Rick Wagner Cleveland Heights Housing Director said on 4/12/16 the owner will be sent a 30-day notice and the building Commissioner notified of lack of progress on the property.

Forest Hill Monster Garage Sale

by Valda Lewis

The Forest Hill 5th annual Neighborhood Garage Sale is set for **Saturday, May 28th** from 9 am to 3 pm. The cost is \$5 to participate, which includes a yard sign and inclusion on all online advertising and the Google location map. All you have to do is drag your stuff outside the morning of the event and we do the rest! For an additional \$2 you can get a personalized web page on the official website <http://foresthillmonstersale.com>, where your page can contain descriptions and photographs of your items for sale. If you want to participate please provide your name, address, e-mail and phone, along with your payment to Valda Lewis at 3240 Rumson Road. You can also pay online via the website. For more information contact Valda via e-mail at vlewis@valdalewis.com or call 216-834-2407.



Have You Heard...

EAST CLEVELAND ANNEXATION COURT RULING

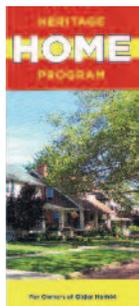
summary from *The Plain Dealer* article dated April 5th

The Plain Dealer reported on April 4th that Judge Michael Russo of Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas had agreed with East Cleveland City Council that the much-publicized municipal annexation papers submitted last fall were legally insufficient to allow for the annexation process to move further. Based on this ruling East Cleveland now has to either start a new petition effort that meets the legal requirements or look to come up with an alternative plan to address the city's financial problems. The East Cleveland City Council has suggested the city raise funds from outside sources to pay for hiring Conway MacKenzie, a nationally recognized turnaround consulting firm, to prepare a full report explaining whether there is any path forward that will satisfactorily address its financial, service and infrastructure shortcomings. Once completed the report would be presented to all East Cleveland residents and to the City of Cleveland.

Currently no agreement has been reached between Mayor Norton and City Council to pursue either drafting a new petition, or seeking funds for the consultant study, so for now all options for improving East Cleveland's future remain in limbo.

Heritage Home Program Seminar

by Les Jones



The Cleveland Restoration Society will host an information session, open the public, at the Cleveland Heights Community Center on **May 19th at 6:30 pm**. If your home is over 50 years old you can get FREE impartial advice on home repair, help with finding a contractor and reviewing estimates. They also offer information on low-interest financing options of all types of home improvement. For more information visit: www.heritagehomeprogram.org.

FHHO 2016 Dues Contributors

Your FHHO Executive Committee sends out a sincere **"THANK YOU"** to the following Forest Hill residents for their generous contributions in support of FHHO for the period **January 1 thru April 15, 2016**.

2016 FHHO Goal \$50,000 in donations and transfer fees along with and raising participation from 550 Forest Hill households

Currently \$10,350 has been raised from 106 Forest Hill households

Astead Green
Joseph Greene, Jr.
Helena and Edward Harrison, Jr.
Linda Johnston
Betsey Kaufman
and Bonnie Bolitho
Kathleen and Christian Kaul
Jan Milic
Hester Lewellen
and Glending Olson
Ardath Longshaw
Diane McLaughlin
David and Patricia McMurray
Trina Prufer
Harold and Dorothy Rambo
David and Dr. Mary Rice
David and Sharon Richardson
Tia Robertson
Dale and Joyce Rothenberger
Arvell and Rev. Wesley Toles

SILVER LEVEL - \$75 to \$124

Ann Baird
Margaret and George Bakale
Timothy and Michele Banks
Elizabeth and Robert Bartels
Gwendolyn Bennett
Rosa Benton and Charlotte Perry
Janet Briggs
Melissa Hoyt Carr
Robert and Judith Charlick
Brendan Chick
and Lacy Danikas-Chick
Sharon Collins
Gilbert and Doris Croley
Jane Cunin
Marilyn Ann Cunin
Jean Patrick Ducroux
Mary and Edward Eldridge

GOLD LEVEL - \$125 to \$199

Patrycja Ajdukiewicz
Julien and Veronica Ake
Grace and Michael Bailey
Beatrice and
Rev. James Bannerman
Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Kim Barney
Pam Bradley
Eda Daniel
Jeffrey Duber and William Fulton

Alisa Feingold
Germaine Gibian
Gloria Glover
Peter and Laura Grebus
James Halsell
James Harmon and Don Schmitt
Paula and Tom Harvey
Clyde Henry, Jr.
Anna Hooks
Lou Hoyt and Dennis Grey

BRONZE LEVEL - Up to \$74

Deborah Adrine
Rose Ciliberti
Mozell and Verna Greer
Leevearn and Arleat Grimes
Charlotte Horton
Shirley LeCompte
Julie and William Shaffer
David Singerman
and Molly Garfield

Need Window Restoration Help?

from the *Window Preservation Alliance*

Are you a homeowner with pre-1960 original windows? Are you being told your windows are "shot", or that because the ropes are broken, or the window is painted shut that it can't be repaired? Are you being told you'll see great energy savings if you replace your windows, but your good sense thinks otherwise? A visit to the **Window Preservation Alliance** website can help you sort through the issues of restoration vs. replacement. They share studies on the energy (and cost) efficiency of original windows, when paired with a storm windows. For more information on restoration contractors in our area please visit: www.windowpreservationalliance.org.





FHHO Response to Resident Questions from Recent Events

from the FHHO Executive Committee

Recently, questions have come up on fhho.nextdoor.com and at a meeting of concerned homeowners about specific responsibilities and actions of the Forest Hill Home Owners, Inc. (FHHO). Here are our responses to some of these concerns.

Some Homes in the Area are Chronically Bad. Why Doesn't FHHO Do Something About Them? – In the last four years the Standards Committee, under Co-Chairs Dale Rothenberger and Dean Sieck, has systematically developed a list of properties, including eight real “eyesores,” with problems which they are trying to resolve. There are about 50 properties on the list, but houses are constantly added to or subtracted from the list (subtracted when the violations are corrected).

Their procedure is straightforward and easy to explain. Homes get placed on the list in one of two ways: when they are reported by neighbors and verified by the committee or when Dale and Dean spot them on one of their frequent “drive-arounds” of the whole community. They send violation notices citing what the problem is and where in the deed restrictions it is disallowed. Many homeowners are quick to make the corrections. However, if the homeowner does not comply in a reasonable time frame, the committee then works with the Housing Departments and Housing Court staffs of Cleveland Heights and East Cleveland to bring legal enforcement to bear. They also work with bank-owned homes to inform, educate, remind, and thank staff who deal with maintenance and repair issues.

As you can imagine, every situation is different. Our Standards Committee tries very hard to work with the homeowners to find a solution whenever possible. Many circumstances get in the way of compliance. For example: Some homes go through time-consuming vacancy, foreclosure, sheriff sale and/or bank-ownership, including out-of-town owners who may not be aware of or concerned about long-standing code violations. Housing Court and city legislative options are limited and their processes can take a long time. Some homeowners pay their fines instead of making the repairs; then their cases have to be renewed. Some homeowners have serious personal issues of money and/or health that limit compliance; the courts are sometimes lenient with these people.

As you know, FHHO has the legal right to actually go on the properties and make the corrections. We have the right to sue the homeowner. These are last ditch and often expensive solutions which we try to avoid. We will be speaking before Cleveland Heights City Council in May to present facts about our 50+ homes that are in serious disrepair and to petition for steeper fines, stricter requirements and time limits.

Lastly, the Executive Committee has begun regularly sending letters to area real estate brokers and agents to remind them of their obligation to inform buyers of Forest Hill's deed restrictions and property standards.

To report a home in violation please email the Standards Committee at Standards@fhho.org or leave a voicemail at 216-932-8952.

FHHO Blocked the Rehab of a Land Bank House – A prospective buyer for a house on Forest Hills Boulevard, owned by the Cuyahoga County Land Bank, wanted to buy the home only if he could replace the slate roof with asphalt shingles and cover the walls with vinyl siding. The Standards Committee had two slate roof experts look at the roof and they both stated that it was repairable AND at a cost LESS than an asphalt-shingle roof with a 20-year guarantee. We, therefore, acted to preserve the lifetime slate roof for the good of the community. A new buyer has now stepped forward with the intent of keeping the slate roof and foregoing the vinyl siding. This will ultimately be a win-win for the neighborhood.

Why aren't Glynn Road and Oakhill Road Homes included in the Deed Restrictions? – Forest Hill originally included only the small section at the east end of Glynn where the seven original Rockefeller homes stand. The rest of the land was owned by the Glynn family. Upon creation of the Forest Hill community, its deed restrictions could only be applied to the property Rockefeller owned. While not a part of the original covenant, all of Glynn Road has always been informally considered a part of Forest Hill. Oakhill was added informally in 1995.

There is no way, with respect to Ohio law, that the Forest Hill deed restrictions can be forced on any Ohio homeowner not already subject to them. Therefore, the deed restrictions that protect much of the neighborhood cannot automatically be applied to the Glynn and Oakhill Road residents. If, however, individual homeowners wish to add these restrictions, they can have their deed legally amended. FHHO may write letters to houses in violation there, but only if clearly stating that the covenants do not apply and that we're appealing to neighborliness.

Why aren't FHHO dues mandatory? – No one would welcome mandatory fees more than the Board of Trustees. However, that feature was not built into our covenants when the association was created in 1950. Instead it was assumed that all homeowners would automatically pay their dues annually. It is impossible for us to levy required dues retroactively. Instead we rely on the good will of neighbors to pay voluntarily.

Please note that we have also stepped up our efforts to remind real estate brokers and title companies that a transfer fee of \$125 is due from the buyer to FHHO at the sale of each Forest Hill neighborhood property.

Airing “Dirty Laundry” on the Internet – FHHO intentionally tries to present the Forest Hill community in a positive light. Fifty homes out of 1000 is only 5%. Our neighborhood is in better shape than any of the surrounding communities. Calling some problem homes “toxic” is a misrepresentation. We believe this negativity hurts our reputation, and more importantly, our property values. Unfortunately we have no oversight over residents who prefer to advertise the bad over the good.

Why doesn't the Forest Hill Home Owners do More? – The short answer for almost any such question is limited money and volunteers. FHHO operates on a tight budget of around \$20,000 per year. We have the expense of printing and postage to keep in touch with our residents. We own the Blue Cottage, built in 1930 and now on the National Register of Historic Places, and two vacant lots, for which we must pay taxes; maintenance, utilities, and repairs. Once we take care of basic expense, there is precious little left for anything else.

There are roughly 1,000 homes in Forest Hill, including Glynn and Oakhill. If each home were to contribute the suggested \$75 annually, we'd have \$75,000! With a supply of money this large, we could improve streetscapes, repair pavements (when the city delays too long), more aggressively pursue legal options when owners violate deed restrictions and, in general, improve the area. A fully funded homeowners association could make a world of difference.

Volunteers can do a lot and we definitely need more of them. We warmly invite you to be an active participant in FHHO by giving some time and skills to one of our committees. You will meet friendly, committed, and interesting neighbors and you will make a difference in the continued desirability of your neighborhood.

If you do not see your question answered here or you'd like to volunteer, please contact your Forest Hill trustee or an officer – their phone numbers are listed at www.fhho.org/trustees.asp – or call the Cottage at 216-932-8952 and leave a voicemail. You will find lots of other information on our website at www.fhho.org. By the way, an updated website is coming soon!