



Kevin J. Nowak, Executive Director of CHN Housing Network, was one of the panelists at a Brown Bag Forum held at Cleveland State University's College of Urban Affairs on September 27th titled "How should American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds address housing issues in Cleveland." The forum was sponsored by the Ohio Fair Lending Coalition and Cleveland State University's College of Urban Affairs.

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Plain Press

Cleveland's Near Westside Newspaper

Housing experts work to address Cleveland's housing issues

by Bruce Checefsky

An overwhelming number of vacant and abandoned properties in the City of Cleveland from decades of mortgage foreclosures and people moving out has created a dramatic rise in business buyers of single-family homes. Out-of-town investors are flooding the housing market, with

thousands of residents losing their homes. Cleveland government is left to handle the resulting blight of an overwhelming number of vacant and abandoned properties. Lack of access to credit in low-and-moderate income areas undermines the problem.

Sally Martin, Director of Building and Housing for the City of Cleveland,

addressed the issue at a recent Ohio Fair Lending Coalition and Cleveland State University Levin College of Urban Affairs forum, *How Should ARPA Funds Address Housing Issues in Cleveland?*

Housing experts on the panel included Kevin Nowak (CHN Housing Network), Antoinette Smith, Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People (ESOP), Zach Germaniuk (Slavic Village Development), Chris Knestrick, Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless (NEOCH), and Ed Stockhausen, Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, (CNP).

In 2021, the City of Cleveland received the eighth largest allocation of American Rescue Plan & Recovery Act (ARPA) funds, totaling \$512 million over two years, with half of the funds received in fall 2021. The remaining balance is available for spending. The Building and Housing Department is seeking \$50 million to incentivize housing and home repairs and create a revolving loan pool for small and minority contractors to build

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PHOTO BY ERIK AULT

Saturday, October 8, 2022; MetroHealth Community Day in the new park in front of the MetroHealth Glick Center, 2500 MetroHealth Drive: A young artist, Jae Marie Spraggins, age one, draws on the sidewalk.

Neighborhood and Community Media Association of Greater Cleveland's first press conference with Mayor Justin Bibb

At the Neighborhood and Community Media Association (NCMA) of Greater Cleveland first press conference with Mayor Justin Bibb, time allowed each news outlet just one question for the mayor. Below are the questions from the members of the Neighborhood and Community Media Association and Mayor Justin Bibb's responses.

Chuck Hoven, *Plain Press*

A number of years ago at Walton School I sat in a session with grade school kids and they were asked a what if question. What if they could have whatever they wanted for afterschool programs at their school. And the kids came up with maybe seventy or eighty things within about a half an hour –

everything from a sewing club to their own soccer field.

What I wanted to ask you about is the Comprehensive Extracurricular Activities Program. In the late 1990s the Cleveland Browns Stadium was given a tax exemption. The Cleveland Schools were promised that they would

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PHOTO BY ERIK AULT

Saturday, October 8, 2022; MetroHealth Community Day in the new park in front of the MetroHealth Glick Center, 2500 MetroHealth Drive: Nevaeh Braxter, Jordan Evans, and Chiara Koonce of the Cleveland Heights High School Gospel Choir provide some entertainment.

Jesse Owens Olympic Oak Tree wins big

by Erik Ault

Behind the racetrack at Rhodes High School stood one of Cleveland's most iconic emblems of personal achievement and social justice-- a silent witness, weathering many seasons but its time was running out.

Jesse Owens was a Cleveland transplant from Alabama. The nine-year-old arrived with his family in the twenties in search of better economic opportunities not afforded to them in the South. Jesse went to Fairmount Junior High School, where he was coached by Charles Riley in track. The east sider continued to excel in track at East Tech High, even though he would train at the James Ford Rhodes High School on the west side.

Jesse would go on to set world records while attending Ohio State University. The next year, he represented the United States in the 1936 Olympics. Despite the racial discrimination he faced as a Black man at home and under the scrutinizing eyes of the Nazi regime, Jesse won four gold medals, thus proving to the world that success is not determined by skin color.

The German government gifted the gold medalists with oak saplings. Jesse came home with one for each of his Olympic triumphs.

He planted them at various spots of personal significance to him. Three of these trees are now lost to time, and the last verifiable tree, the one at Rhodes High where he trained, was nearing its end. But its condition was not going unnoticed.

In February of 2017, someone from the Holden Arboretum contacted Jeff Verespej, who was then the executive director of the Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation, asking him about taking tree samples. According to Jeff, the arborists came and climbed the tree, taking samples called scions as tiny as his pinky. They were able to graft these onto related stock trees, thus growing exact genetic specimens. In other words, they successfully cloned Jesse Owens' original tree.

In May of 2021, the Tree Corps of Holden Arboretum planted one of these specimens in Rockefeller Park. That would also be the last year the tree at Rhodes High produced foliage. It died completely that winter, but the folks at Holden Arboretum were prepared for the inevitable.

The original tree, now completely lifeless, was trimmed back and in its shadow, one of the clones was

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PHOTO BY ERIK AULT

Wednesday, October 12, 2022; Ceremony to plant a Jesse Owens Oak tree sapling to replace the original tree; James Ford Rhodes High School, 5100 Biddulph Road: Holden Forest and Gardens Tree Corps members planted a sapling propagated from one of four English oak trees given to Clevelanders Jesse Owens upon winning his gold medals at the 1936 Olympic games in Berlin, Germany. Owens planted one of the oaks at Rhodes High School where he practiced for his track meets. Tree Corps members involved in planting the sapling: (L-R) Margaret Thresher, Jill Koski, Matt St. John, Amanda Wood, Dennis Curtindale, Melissa Dougherty and Jessica Miller (in the back on the right).



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

Saturday, October 15, 2022; Grand Opening of the reimagined Jefferson Branch of the Cleveland Public Library, 850 Jefferson Avenue: Community members gather for the reopening ceremony.

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Jefferson Library Branch opens with new improvements and quiet rooms

by Bruce Checefsky

A ribbon-cutting ceremony on October 15 marked the opening of the Cleveland Public Library's Jefferson Branch. An area for children and a teen nook, a laptop bar, two new meeting rooms, and book lockers for after-hours access to materials were just a few of the new improvements to the building.

Wanix Architects + Williams Architects Collaborative worked with Barber + Hoffman, Karpinski Engineering, and R-Engineering, to keep the historic Carnegie Library features while expanding capacity and adding a side entrance from the parking lot. Wanix Architects was founded in 2008 in Cleveland by Xin Wanwe and provides urban planning, neighborhood enhancement planning, architectural design, and interior services that enhance and transform communities. Williams Architect, established in 1974 and reorganized in 1994, is a recognized leader in professional architectural design with headquarters in Itasca, IL.

Nan Weir, an architect from Williams Architects and principal designer for the project, said the Jefferson Branch was a Carnegie conversion meant to keep the original features intact while creating a second entrance consistent with the main design of the building.

"We were respectful of the historical character of the original building while adding an addition to enhance the library experience," said Weir. "Scale and detailing are similar. We opened-up the space. All interior furniture is on casters to create a flexible environment."

Jefferson Branch is one of the most utilized libraries in the city, especially by after-school groups, she added. Social zoning and laptop bars with enhanced Wi-fi service are available, and a laptop lending program is underway. Senior groups can reserve the study room by signing up.

"More than 60 children use the library every day after school," said Weir.

Philanthropist Andrew Carnegie built 2,509 Carnegie libraries between 1883 and 1929, including the Jefferson Branch, built-in 1918. Cleveland architect and artist Ora Colman worked for Cleveland Public Library as a supervising architect and building inspector who oversaw the construction of three branch libraries, including Jefferson. Colman moved to Cleveland to study law in the 1880s but abandoned that career to become an artist. He took classes at the Cleveland School of Art (The Cleveland Institute of Art) and studied with William Merritt Chase at the Art Students League in New York City. The 6,900-square-foot branch was last updated in 1981.

A Cleveland Public Library Facilities Master Plan, a 10-year, \$100 million plan released in 2019, identified Jefferson, Walz, Lorain Carnegie, Eastman, and Brooklyn branches in Group 1A. The plan will eventually renew all 27 library branches, followed by a \$65 million renovation of the Main Library downtown.

Voters backed the branch work in 2017 by a 69% margin with a tax increase of 2 mills, costing \$35 per year for a \$50,000 home. Other funding comes from grants, fines and fees, and investments. With over 800,000 visitors a year, CPL circulates one of the most extensive collections in the country, with close to ten million items.

Tremont resident Eric Hooper started going to the Jefferson Branch in 1966. Hooper owns the oldest urban farm in Cleveland. His acre of land in Tremont has been active for over 38 years. The library was a haven for kids and minorities, a place to keep them off the streets. It opened his eyes to other possibilities and people in the world and inspired him to attend college and further his education.

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OLYMPIC OAK
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planted. A dedication ceremony was held at the school on October 12. In attendance was Jeff Vesperej; Tyrone Owens, a cousin of Jesse and former football coach at Rhodes High; and a team from Holden Arboretum; as well as students and school faculty. The replica

was planted by some of Holden Arboretum's Tree Corps: Dennis Curtindale, Matt St. John, Melissa Dougherty, and Amanda Wood (facilitator).

There are more saplings yet to be planted. It is hoped that these may be planted around our community to live as a reminder of what Jesse Owens accomplished and inspire others to aim higher in spite of insurmountable odds.

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County executive candidates Chris Ronayne and Lee Weingart offer different visions for Cuyahoga County

by Bruce Checefsky

Democratic candidate Chis Ronayne and Republican hopeful Lee Weingart, candidates for Cuyahoga County Executive, could not be more different. Ronayne wants to build on his long-standing relationships with civic leaders and work with the nonprofit sector to bring support and reform to many social programs. Weingart would leverage the private sector in a \$600 million program to fund minority-owned and small businesses and the acquisition, construction, and renovation of 10,000 private homes for Cuyahoga County citizens by 2026. A coalition of community organizations held a forum on October

6 at Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry Richard Sering Center on Superior Avenue in Cleveland, focused on health, human services, and critical need issues. Topics ranged from MetroHealth Hospital to racial equity issues to the Department of Child and Family Services. Cleveland journalist Rachel Dissell moderated. Other forums took place at Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry hosted by the Cuyahoga County Stakeholder Group and First Suburbs Consortium & Cleveland Community Development Forum on Shared Priorities, hosted by Cleveland Neighborhood Progress and the First Suburbs Consortium. Ronayne, former President of

University Circle Inc (UCI), stepped down in 2021 after serving sixteen years to campaign for Cuyahoga County Executive. UCI is the nonprofit development, service, and advocacy organization responsible for the growth of University Circle. UCI neighborhoods faced accelerated growth and redevelopment pressures during his tenure. The increase in expensive residential housing construction and the lack of investment in the existing housing stock pushed out those in the middle-income bracket creating economic disparities in Greater University Circle (GUC) communities, according to continued on page 6

Cleveland Schools' Segment 8 plans are taking shape

by Erik Ault

Plans for renovation and new construction of several schools on Cleveland's west side are finalizing. The Segment 8 construction program affects the Marion C. Seltzer, Clark, Joseph M. Gallagher and Lincoln West schools. Several community meetings have been presented to give updates about the progress of this program. On September 21, a presentation was held at the former Garrett Morgan High School to update the community about Joseph M. Gallagher Prek-8 School located on W. 65th in between Franklin and Bridge avenues. Jeffery Henderson of TDA Architecture, which is

leading the new school plans, gave the building updates. The current building will be renovated with some interior demolition as well as expansions of the administration and media areas. There will be more parking spots added. There will be two playgrounds, one for PreK-K, and the other one will be for the elementary school students. The inside will be completely renovated, including improvements to heating, air conditioning and plumbing. The only entrance into the building will be from W. 65th and the only exit will face Bridge Ave. No trees will be cut down. Construction will start in spring of '23 and is planned to be completed by fall of '24.

On September 28, a presentation was held at Clark school, located on Clark Avenue between W. 53rd and W. 56th streets, to give updates about its future. Jeff Henderson of TDA Architecture delivered the updates. The school will be completely demolished starting in the spring of '23 and completion is intended by the start of the school year of '25. Until then, students will be attending school at the former H. Barbara Booker school on W. 67th just south of Lorain Avenue. The school district has purchased more properties on the block near Clark School to expand construction capabilities. There will be an emphasis on student safety. The school will also showcase culturally appropriate artwork and warmer, richer colors. Several parents voiced concerns about traffic backing up as well as the safety of the students. In relation to the potential traffic problems, Mr. Henderson iterated that space on this block is limited, but they are doing what they can to maximize traffic flow. Regarding student safety, he stressed that there will be only one, secured entrance which is the norm for school buildings. Furthermore, a school official stressed that student safety will be overseen by the new Safe Routes to School Coordinator, Jack Brancatelli. But Mr. Henderson welcomes feedback on the proposed design. The community is encouraged to see updates and share feedback online at www.clevelandmetroschools.org/Segment8.

Immanuel Lutheran celebrates Arts & Culture

by Erik Ault

On October 9, Immanuel Lutheran Church at 2928 Scranton Road celebrated an afternoon of arts and culture presented by Immanuel Arts and Music. The church building, standing on the corner of Scranton and Seymour since 1879, has weathered many cultural and physical changes in the area but the congregation is still active and has been meeting regularly since then. The audience was welcomed by the current pastor Rev. Jerry Jablonski: "I have always loved having a good organ and a good organist. That way, if on some Sunday my preaching is not so good, the people can say, 'The sermon was not great but at least the organ was super!'" After his remarks were Scriptural readings by congregants. In attendance was the retired Rev. Horst Hoyer, who started pastoring the congregation in 1956. He guided the congregation toward acquiring a new organ, which is still in place. It was dedicated on September 13, 1964. The celebration started with an organ performance by Shane Brandes. The concert was entitled, "Bugs and Bach" which were various bug-related pieces interspersed be-

tween selections of Bach. "Because Bach is considered beyond all the other organ composers, the others tend to get squished between his works like bugs," Shane said, giving him inspiration. So, he set out to include pieces that specifically referenced bugs, such as "Flight of the Bumblebee" by Rimsky-Korsakov and even "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" by the Beatles. After the recital, a reception in the fellowship hall followed where artists displayed their works, and Salena Stewart serenaded the gathering with the saxophone. Drinks were provided by Forest City Brewery and Vito Veritas Cellars. Immanuel Lutheran meets every Sunday for a 9AM service in German and a 10:30AM service in English.



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Thursday, September 29, 2022: Frank Giglio's yard on W. 14th Street, Friends of Frank Giglio send some messages to him and to the community with their artwork. The messages read: "Frank We Love & Support You." and "The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."

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PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Sunday, October 16, 2022; The dome of the former St. Nicholas Byelorussian Orthodox Church which used to stand at 3518 Scranton Road. The church was torn down by MetroHealth. The hospital plans to make additional park space where the church once stood. The hospital promised to save the dome and incorporate it into the park with a marker noting the history of the community the church once served.

NCMA PRESS CONFERENCE

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be made whole – they wouldn’t lose the tax dollars that would have come from the stadium. It was supposed to be two million dollars a year. And for the first decade it was \$2 million dollars a year. Then it just slipped down to \$1 million. And one of the regulars at the Board of Education meeting, Gene Tracy, a retired teacher, noticed the discrepancy and he brought it up at almost every School Board meeting for over

a decade. This money was basically promised to the Cleveland school kids. For these extracurricular programs, there are more kids that want to be in them than there are slots. And when kids attend these programs, their attendance goes up. When kids go to school, their grades go up and their graduation rates go up. This is a very important program. And the monies that were passed. [Editor’s Note: Ordinance 1025-A-95]. There were three taxes passed at the time – I think a parking tax, an admissions tax and some kind of fee for rental vehicles. I think they run maybe from \$10 million to \$19 million a year – they were running. I don’t know what they are running now. But just two million of that was to go to after school programs, most of the rest went to the Browns stadium for repairs and some to city programs. At some point they took \$1 million from the afterschool program

allocation and shifted it to the Browns. I’ve asked the previous mayor the same question. Would you restore that money to the after school programs and give them the back dollars from the years they were shorted? – I think it is over a decade now.

Mayor Justin Bibb’s response:

Mayor Justin Bibb responded saying, “First and foremost, I’m not familiar with the aspects of that deal. So, I would have to have my Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Law Director look at that.

Secondly, what I have done is as we prepare for a pending new deal for the Browns, as their lease is up in 2028, I have already started looking at the analysis of whether or not the City has been getting the right return on investment for supporting the stadium for the last decade or so.

The answer is no we haven’t. It was not the best deal that benefited the residents of Cleveland. So, as we prepare for this process, it is my intention to structure a deal that is going to serve the residents of Cleveland. Limit the general exposure I’m going to have to our general fund and budget, because I don’t believe I should be subsidizing billionaires to create more fancy stadiums if I still have potholes to fix, streets to plow and young people to support in our community. So, structuring a deal that benefits the residents of Cleveland will be my priority as we enter into this process. But we have a long way to go in order to get there.

To your point about the broader need for afterschool programming and out of school programming for young people in the district, it is an important priority for me as mayor. We have done a couple of things to address that already in the first ten months.

Number one: I’ve hired a Chief of Youth and Family Success Sonia Prior Jones. Her job has been to really examine all of the recreation center programs, school programs and the out of school time programs that we have across the broader community and make sure they are coordinated with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) first and foremost.

Secondly, next year we will be launching something I campaigned on, a Children’s Cabinet – where we can make sure the city, the county and all our core social service providers are all aligned on how we have the right social and emotional supports for young people across the city.

Thirdly, as we prepare for the next Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of CMSD – I want to say at the onset Eric Gordon has served the city admirably as the head of schools and we have a strong foundation to build on because of his leadership – But, one thing we are really going to focus on with our next CEO is making sure every school in the district has the right resourcing and afterschool programming to serve young people. This is going to take an all of government approach and a more intentional and thoughtful approach of both the City and CMSD to make sure young people can thrive long term.

One thing we are doing already to address that is for the first time in our City’s history, we’ve done a true master planning process for all of our parks. We

have never done a complete study of how we are doing on parks and what’s the quality of parks in our city.

Another thing we intend on doing is to create a separate Department of Parks and Recreation in Cleveland – like you have in cities like Denver and New York City – so you have a dedicated leadership team that is just focused on parks and recreation. Right now, Public Works has too much under its portfolio. So, we need dedicated leadership focused on parks and recreation.

So, that just gives you a snapshot of what we are focused on for young people. But it is important that in the future we structure these deals in a way that is going to benefit the residents of Cleveland, not billionaires.

Ken Schneck, Editor of the *Buckeye Flame*

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Clevelanders enjoy protections only a fraction of people in the state enjoy. Almost certainly in the next few weeks during lame duck session here in Oho there will be bans on gender affirming care, bans on teaching divisive concepts in school around race and LGBTQ identity, banning trans-youth from participating in school sports, and forcing all teachers and school staff to out LGBTQ students to parents. Cleveland is in Ohio, so that will apply to us here. What will you say about how you plan on navigating that.

Mayor Justin Bibb’s response:

Ken I’m sure you recognize this -- being a Democratic mayor in a red state is very hard. Columbus has not been helpful on guns. Columbus has not been helpful on reproductive freedom. And Columbus has not been helpful on making this a city where it is hard for me to execute policies that I want to because they have undermined home rule for me as mayor for a long time.

I will say this. We pride ourselves in this city on being very LGBTQ friendly. We want to have the most inclusive city in the state, and one of the most inclusive cities in the country. I just signed a bill earlier this week on banning conversion therapy because you know our young children should be able to live their authentic selves without fear of harm and fear of hurt. I’m really supportive and proud of the work of the Trevor Project.

As you have seen we have really beefed up our lobbying efforts, not just in the District of Columbia (D.C.), but in Columbus. We’ve joined for the first time in the City’s history the Ohio Mayors’ Alliance, where big city mayors across the state lobby and advocate for issues affecting our respective cities. We have a lobbyist dedicated in Columbus to execute my policy agenda as mayor.

I’d welcome the opportunity to organize and mobilize with City Council in the LGBTQ community to prepare for whatever may come down from this lame duck session to make sure we protect your rights and all the rights of all our citizens in this city.

Shelli Reeves, *Reframe History*

So, thinking about community development and redevelopment of the East Side of Cleveland often some historic landmarks as well as the stories of those who have been in the community for so long kind of are getting pushed aside.

As you continue your efforts of re-

developing and really putting money into the East Side of Cleveland, do you have any plans really herded toward those historic landmarks -buildings that are getting redeveloped as well as community elders whose stories may be getting lost?

Mayor Justin Bibb’s response:

A really important point Shelli. It is so important that we think about development, not just of the East Side, but of the broader city, through an anti-racism, anti-gentrification lens.

There is amazing work in development right now on Buckeye with Burton Bell Carr and the St. Luke’s Foundation that is really focused on what does anti-gentrification planning look like. I have instructed my planning department to look into how we imbed that point of view not just in the East Side but in a broader master plan for the city long-term.

It is important that we balance new development while also protecting historical landmarks in our city. Things like the Civil Rights Trail that’s been moving forward in Cleveland. And making sure we support our Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and grass roots organizations to go after historical tax credits at the state level to protect those as well assets too.

So, I think it is a ‘both and’ - in many ways. But let’s be clear about this. We need more people – living, working, and playing—on the East Side. And we need more targeted, concentrated development on the East Side of Cleveland. My administration is in the early stages of designing and developing a Marshall Plan for the East Side. As I said on the campaign trail, I’m going to try to raise between \$5 billion in capital over the next ten to fifteen years and make the East Side a thriving part of the city. It is the last missing piece, in addition to the lakefront, to really make us a globally competitive city long-term.

As a native son of the Southeast Side specifically, this is an important priority to me as Mayor. Probably my most important priority as Mayor is revitalizing the East Side of the city.

Jae Williams, General Manager *WOBU Cleveland 95.9 FM*

Mr. Mayor, as the son of a former police officer, how important are the police to you in making the city safe?

Mayor Justin Bibb’s response:

It is important. I have a dual mandate. One - keep the city as safe as possible. I am really proud to say it is in the data. In almost every major category violent crime is down – homicides, the shootings, the felonious assaults. It’s positive. It is going in the right direction.

We made some inroads on some of the training and talent attraction issues in our department.

We got a new police contract with the union in four months – an 11% raise over the next three years. New officers out of the police academy will start now at \$20 per hour, which is a huge step in the right direction.

Prior to us taking office, our officers were not allowed to wear baseball hats, have beards, or have tattoos. Now they can. We were losing officers -- not because of pay, but because they could not wear a ball cap, have a beard, or have a tattoo -- to Shaker and other suburban theaters. So, we are trying to do some big and small changes and to increase moral and change the culture.

Another thing that is important is making sure we hold police accountable when they step out of line. In the next week or so we will be announcing my appointments to the new Community Police Commission that was created via Issue 24. Now that is called Charter Section 115. I’m really excited about the appointments we have to that commission because I think they reflect the diversity of the city and commitment not just to public safety but to true police accountability and constitutional appropriate policing.

We are also seeing in the data that the Consent Decree is working. Use of force cases are down in double digits, complaints against officers are also down. And we are using our crisis intervention model in more cases than we ever have as a department.

We have allocated up to \$30 million from the American Rescue Plan to fund my vision around violence prevention. Expanding our core response model in the five police districts and exploring the care response model of policing so mental health professionals can also take advantage of taking care of those nonviolent 911 calls that don’t require a true police response. So, we are putting the

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building blocks in place for public safety. It will always be my number one priority as mayor, because if you can't keep people safe, nothing else works.

Richard T. Andrews, *The Real Deal Press*
Will you talk about the role that you played in the conference that is coming here – Future Land?

Mayor Justin Bibb's response:
For those that don't know, we put together a conference in just a couple of months really – called Future Land. Really the vision behind it is to elevate Cleveland as a mecca for black and brown tech entrepreneurs. Prior to becoming mayor, when I was out of town traveling the country going to Austin, at South by Southwest, Afro-tech, Silicon Valley and seeing black and brown entrepreneurs thrive and showcase their talent. I always wondered, as a majority black city, how come we didn't do that in Cleveland.

So Future Land will be our pilot version of our attempt to make Cleveland a mecca of black and brown entrepreneurship and native tech talent. We are going to bring in folks like Rich Paul, who is a native Cleveland, and others to talk about what they are doing on technology, what they are doing in crypto, what they are doing on entrepreneurship because we should always be striving to make Cleveland a destination for our children and grandchildren to move to, not move from.

If you can't see yourself in work, if you are a black and professional you are going to go to D.C., and to go to Atlanta, and go to New York. How to keep that talent here. So, want to make sure we start to build an ecosystem to attract that kind of talent. That is really the goal of Future Land.

Shana Black, *Black Girl Media*
My question is kind of continuing that thought. Lately, I'm hearing from a lot of our readers, almost weekly, that they are moving and that they are telling their children – get out of Cleveland. Get out of Northeast Ohio. Do not come back here, there is no opportunity. And small business owners, too. I hear there is a lot of friction to do business here.

I know there is a commission for black women after the study by Micro Solutions. I guess, what is message for that? Or what is the help to increase the likelihood to stay? Future Land is a great step.

Mayor Justin Bibb's response:
Listen. I can't fix it in ten months.

This is a systemic problem and systemic change takes time. But I think the early progress that we made shows. I think it is a good testament to show folks that the trend lines are moving in the right direction.

I can leave you with a couple of things. Number one, we hired, for the first time ever, a black woman leading economic development. A board trained economic development professional to help us think about how we do incentives differently to support black women to start a business.

I intend to launch relatively soon a universal basic income program for women of color to start a business so they can create good jobs in the local economy. We will be launching sometime next year a small business task force to look at how do we make this an easy place to do business in Cleveland.

There are a lot of structural things we need to fix in order to get there. But I think there is a lot of progress to be made in small victories. And, so you guys have to keep repeating that story. If you see an impression, let my team know, and elevate that to my team so we can address the material pain point issues you might be seeing, but I think we are making solid progress.

Rosie Palfy, *Rosiepalfry.com* and freelance journalist

Sir, I made a public comment Monday about Crisis Intervention. Thank you for commenting on that when you saw me the following day. I was going to ask a question, but based on your response to Jae, I'm going to change it a little bit. What I wanted to know is you know the standard for using force with police is objective reasonability. And I see hiring a lot of consultants, taking a look at things in different departments.

And so, I was going to ask two things. One: Would you consider hiring a consultant to look at the job the monitoring team has done over the last seven years. Because as someone who has been involved on a committee with reform that was created by the consent decree that supposedly has had the most progress, I can tell you that in my opinion, any objectively reasonable person who read the consent decree and looked at what is actually happening would see that it is not as good as people say it is.

So, I'm not suggestion that any contracts be terminated, but that it might be a good idea to take a look at that with fresh set of eyes.

Mayor Justin Bibb's response: I think the monitor would tell me that they share your opinion that we haven't made enough progress. Is that what you are saying?

Palfy: I'm sorry Sir. No. I mean what the monitor is doing. When I read the semi-annual reports following the court. The crisis intervention portion -- it reads like a work of

fiction to me.

Mayor Bibb: Oh. The CIT work is what you are saying.

Palfy. Yes. What I am saying is we have not made as much progress as they are saying.

And, then my other question sir is, I'm a member of the Mental Health Response Advisory Committee, and my public comment is Would you take a look at the memorandum of understanding between the Alcohol Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board and the City? Neither party is following it, so it has opened them both up to potential liability. And I think with the new Charter Amendment it is time to take off the training wheels and have the City have their own Mental Health Response Advisory Committee that is staffed by them.

Bibb: So, I have already instructed my Law Department to take a look at the Memorandum of Understanding -- so we can find what's working and what's not working so I can get an objective analysis.

And then as you may have heard we are going to be hiring an executive director of police accountability. So, we really need that conduit between my administration, the police department and the monitoring by the Department of Justice (DOJ) to really identify what does street compliance look like and how do we sustain the reforms over time.

Now, I'll tell you this: It is important that we have very clear focus on how to get compliant and quality controls around that compliance. Because I think that is key. But at the same time, I'm not going to keep the City under a consent decree forever, either. Because it has been \$2 million to \$3 million dollars a year. And, at the end of the day, I'm the duly elected mayor. I appoint the Chief of Police. I'm in charge of this department, not the monitoring team. And so, we want to make sure we have a thoughtful road to compliance and get out of the consent decree in collaboration with DOJ and Judge Solomon Oliver. But I'm not going to wait for that to happen. We are going to lead the charge and be proactive about getting there.

Palfy: We haven't been told about the police accountability team we're generally not kept informed -- we have to read about it.

Mayor Bibb: We can have Marie share all the information you need about it. When did we make that announcement?

Mayor's Staff: A couple of weeks ago.
Ron Calhoun, *The Cleveland Observer*

I want to circle back around. It seems to me that the focus, particularly at City Planning, your focus is density. Getting more people into the city through development. There are a lot of incentives around development. Isn't the City's budget based on income tax? **Mayor Bibb:** It's a dual thing.

Calhoun: But it's about 60% income tax? **Mayor Bibb:** 60% income tax.

Calhoun: The question I have is why not incentivize business? Because I live and built in Cleveland, and I send my money out to the suburbs.

Mayor Bibb: What kind of business?

Calhoun: *The Cleveland Observer*
Mayor Bibb: ok

Calhoun: The question is, if that same focus on incentivizing development went into business, wouldn't that benefit the City more? I get the mentality --build it and they will come. But I've been here for a long time, 30 years, and I go out of the city to get anything, because those amenities are not here.

Mayor Bibb: I don't disagree with you. I don't have the luxury of choosing one or the other as Mayor. The economy got so disrupted after the pandemic. But in many ways the post pandemic economy really fits into our strengths.

We are moving from a world where we don't just have a central business district, we have what I call a community business district. We can work anywhere, anytime, anyplace in the world. Right? What we learned in the pandemic is that the amenities of a neighborhood matter. Whether you are in Lee Harvard, Downtown or in Tremont.

What I want to do is -- how do I make sure is regardless of whether you are in Lee Harvard, or Westpark there is a grocery store where you can get fresh fruits and vegetables withing fifteen minutes, there is a park that is well programmed and well-lit within fifteen minutes, there is reliable transit that comes on time within fifteen minutes, and there is maybe a job that you can walk to or get to within fifteen minutes? That is the North Star that I've instructed my planning team to focus on.

By doing that, not only do we help those that have been fighting the fight for a long time, but we become a destination city as well too. Right? Because not only to I have to maintain and expand the pie with what we have, but we have to grow as well. Right? Because we are competing for capital, competing for tax dollars, and competing for resources.

I agree with you the best thing we can do to grow our city is to take care of our own. Absolutely. But I also have to tell people



PHOTO BY ERIK AULT
Saturday, October 8, 2022; MetroHealth Community Day in the new park in front of the MetroHealth Glick Center, 2500 MetroHealth Drive: Kinga Taylor of the Cuyahoga County Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) at MetroHealth passes out popcorn balls to Community Day guests.

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PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Tuesday, October 4, 2022; Police Promotion Ceremony, Cleveland City Hall Rotunda, E. 6th and Lakeside Avenue: Cleveland Police Officers celebrate their promotions. Mayor Justin Bibb and City Council President Blaine Griffin were among the City officials at the ceremony pledging their support to Cleveland Police Officers.

HOUSING EXPERTS

continued from page one

in underserved neighborhoods.

While reviewing the Center for Economic Recovery Process Overview, part of Mayor Bibb’s Rescue & Transformation Plan, Martin said there were seven progressive stages in assessing applications for ARPA funding. The stages include developing a strategic framework to prioritize the funds, assessing and evaluating the Center’s recommendations, strengthening proposals with input from the Center for Economic Recovery, reviewing legal ramifications, and reconciliation with City Council.

The Center for Economic Recovery consists of eleven members. Ten members are from the Bibb administration. They were selected from chief officer and director level positions. Brad Whitehead, Senior Fellow at Brookings Institute, is also a member of the Center for Economic Recovery.

Evaluation criteria for ARAP funding will include strategic alignment, measurable outcomes, racial equity & inclusion, community impact, global competitiveness, financial leverage, longevity, and environmental sustainability. Examples include \$35 million for Gap Financing Housing Projects to provide grants and equity stake in projects to incentivize renovation and construction of affordable workforce housing projects, mixed-income, and market rate projects among vulnerable populations. The desired outcome, according to Martin, would be the development of 1,500 affordable housing units and 1,650 market-rate housing units.

“We desperately need to fund housing development in southeast Cleveland,” said Martin. “We hope to leverage this money to entice developers.”

Kevin Nowak, executive director, CHN Housing Partner, and CEO of CHN Housing Capitol, proposed three criteria for ARPA spending, supporting Bibb administration housing incentives, including homeownership. Nowak said the best way for families to build wealth and for communities to stabilize and thrive is through homeownership, and efforts must be citywide, accessible, scaled, collaborative, and equitable.

“We have to build upon the significant investments the city and county have made during the pandemic,” he said. “Access to the capital for developers to engage in acquisition rehabilitation on a much larger scale is needed. We need a holistic approach to housing. Purchase mortgages, down payment assistance, and home

repair resources can lead to more home ownership.”

Antoinette Smith, Director of Housing and Council for Empowering and Strengthening Ohio’s People, (ESOP), a Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging subsidiary, said housing transition assistance is missing from the city-sponsored ARPA plan. Market rate housing rents are unaffordable for most seniors seeking housing assistance through ESOP. There is no senior housing available. The holistic approach is confusing for most seniors, with few resources for people caught in the complex, layered approach to financing.

“We receive at least thirty calls a day asking for utility assistance alone,” she said. “Defaulting on utilities can lead to foreclosure.”

Smith said real estate investors outbid seniors looking to purchase a home. Rental and utility assistance and property tax assistance programs are underfunded. ARAP dollars should help with multiple problems, not as a remedy for a single housing issue.

Zach Germaniuk, Director of Neighborhood Stabilization, Slavic Village Development, explained that the Slavic Village neighborhood mirrors the population of Cleveland. What happens there happens throughout the city. Working with housing insecurity, as he does almost daily as a housing advocate, Germaniuk emphasized the importance of providing the necessary wrap-around services for households struggling with multiple housing issues.



Chris Knestrick, Executive Director of the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless, was one of the panelists at a Brown Bag Forum held at Cleveland State University’s College of Urban Affairs on September 27th titled “How should American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds address housing issues in Cleveland.” The forum was sponsored by the Ohio Fair Lending Coalition and Cleveland State University’s College of Urban Affairs.

“Money is available to low and moderate-income homeowners for renovations. It does not necessarily have to be access to capital, but access to insurance is a barrier. Contractors will not work on a house without a homeowners insurance policy,” he said. “While many people have a roof over their head, support systems to help them keep it are not there.”

Germaniuk encouraged the Center for Economic Recovery to address tenant and landlord issues proactively through early intervention between a landlord and tenant. With additional support, tenants can effectively assert their rights before eviction occurs.

“Housing is a human right,” said Chris Knestrick, Executive Director of the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless. “Over 90% of the people entering our homeless shelter are people of color. We need to spend ARPA money to research how much wealth was lost by communities of color through racist housing policy or land theft and make reparations to them.”

Knestrick added that empowering renters and enforcing fair housing with ARAP funding could go a long way to support city residents, whether homeless or not. With an abundance of poor housing stock in Cleveland, people live in condemned homes. Resources to relocate them are lacking.

“We need emergency assistance for people to relocate out of these buildings, more than we need more code inspections,” he said.

The final panelist was Ed Stockhausen, Senior Vice President of Advocacy & External Relations at Cleveland Neighborhood Progress. He said there are high amounts of investments in housing in the city. The investment is happening, yet not all are benefiting. A history of redlining, racist housing policies, and predatory lending have stolen wealth and held back many Clevelanders. Stockhausen said ARPA funding should be used to level the playing field. Gap financing and preservation of existing affordable housing top his list of recommendations. Down payment assistance will increase the number of homeowners and residents, and home repairs will follow, according to him.

“Lower interest rates might encourage more home repairs,” said Stockhausen. “Add lines of credit to minority business owners to grow their businesses. It will strengthen our neighborhoods. We need to renovate old storefronts and invest in entrepreneurs. We should invest in the quality of life, from our recreation centers to multipurpose bike lanes. We want people to stay when they visit us.”

COUNTY EXECUTIVE CANDIDATES

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to a Year 7 Evaluation Report on the Greater University Circle Initiative prepared by the Center for Economic Development at the Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University.

The Cleveland Business Journal reported more than 2,000 new housing units to the neighborhood were added in the last decade. The area is one of the largest employment centers in Ohio. A wave of high-end condos and apartments also makes it one of the most expensive places to live in Cleveland.

Weingart served as County Commissioner from 1995 to 1997 and failed to win re-election, losing to Democrat Jane Campbell. He has not held elected office in 25 years. LNE Group, an advocacy and lobbying firm he founded in 2002 and continues to run as president, helped bring the Global Center to Cleveland. LNE lobbied the state to change the laws in 2007, allowing Cuyahoga County to own and manage the convention center. He later called it a “colossal waste of money.”

The Convention Facilities Development Corporation oversees the taxpayer-funded

wealth-generating opportunities to the urban core of Cuyahoga County,” he said.

Ronayne defined poverty as the most critical issue facing the county. He proposed partnering with nonprofits and creating new private/public partnerships to address poverty. More resources are needed to establish and develop these connections.

“We have to be present in the community.”

Reproductive rights were among the top issues.

The Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade earlier this year, the landmark piece of legislation that made access to an abortion a federal right in the United States. Individual states are left to curtail or outright ban abortion rights. The Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas granted a temporary restraining order in September against Senate Bill 23, a law banning abortion starting at six weeks of pregnancy. Governor Mike DeWine signed the Human Rights and Heartbeat Protection Act in 2019 to prohibit abortion in cases where a fetal heartbeat is detectable.

Weingart noted that state and federal



Cuyahoga County Executive Candidates (L-R) Chris Ronayne and Lee Weingart

center and recently voted to seek a \$46 million facelift.

In his opening statement, Weingart pledged to fix a county government that has lost its way and forgotten its purpose. He said that Cuyahoga County lost jobs and people after twenty-five years of ineffective and ineptitude leadership with higher sales tax and property taxes than other midwestern urban counties. As a result, the county has an uneducated, poor, hungry, and segregated population. He wants to connect people without money to wealth-building strategies, including homeownership, creating an entrepreneur fund for minority-owned and small businesses, and simplifying the tax collection systems.

“My vision for the county is bold. It requires a change of thinking,” said Weingart. “I have the knowledge and experience in the private sector to be successful.”

Ronayne said infant mortality, poor literacy rates, and a faltering justice system undermine the community. Connecting the community to working opportunities strengthens the future of the region.

“We need to create a new housing department and transportation department, and an ombudsman office that helps people navigate our system,” he said during his opening statement.

Both candidates rejected Budish’s plan for a new county jail near the Cuyahoga River at the site of a former Standard Oil refinery. Ronayne wants to review renovation plans; Weingart suggests building a jail downtown. Both candidates support rehabilitation and treatment to reduce the prison population.

Debate Moderator Rachel Dissell asked the candidates to address health and human service’s needs. Weingart said growing the economy would add new jobs, the best social program.

“People need to support their families, buy a house, and start generating wealth. For too long, we have denied building

offices impact reproductive rights, not county offices, in response to a question about reproductive rights and the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community. He pledged to protect the state law at the county level.

“We have to protect the health and lives of pregnant mothers to ensure that healthy babies are born in Cuyahoga County,” he said. “Create a fully enforced child support agency, foster care, and adoptive care services.”

Ronayne recognized the disproportionate number of LGBTQIA+ individuals in foster care and juvenile detention systems. He pledged to work with area schools and crime legislation to provide for the safety of students and individuals in the community.

“As far as a choice, I am happy to be the pro-choice candidate,” he said. “I will advocate for abortion protection as enshrined in the Ohio Constitution.”

When asked by an audience member if either candidate would invite the loser of the election to join their administration, Ronayne cited political differences but extended an open invitation. Weingart said he would extend an olive branch, too, as long as Ronayne conceded to his vision.

“Our visions are very different,” said Weingart. “I want to sell the Hilton Hotel and Medical Mart to save the county money and spend \$54 million of the CARES Act on building 10,000 new homes and give tax cuts to taxpayers.”

Ronayne vowed to focus on community-based solutions while providing more resources to nonprofit institutions as part of his plan for Cuyahoga County. Weingart agreed on the problems but disagreed on the solution. He said private homeownership and wealth-building strategies are good public policy, and that investing in the urban core creates jobs and new small businesses.

Midterm elections will be on Tuesday, November 8. Polls Open 6:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m. For more voting information: Cuyahoga County Board of Elections at <https://boe.cuyahogacounty.gov/voters>.

NCMA PRESS CONFERENCE

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directly with my new director of Equal Opportunity and Employment, Tess Mitchell. We have a cabinet level team looking at every department and studying what are the structural barriers around racism and the social determinants of health at the department level. After that study is complete it will bring those recommendations back to me, as mayor, as a clear policy agenda both internal and external so there is a citywide focus for our prescription.

Let me give you an example. There is a regulation in the books, that in order to do business with the City of Cleveland, you need to exist at least six months as a policy. Think about that as a small barrier. If you want to get a catering contract, and you are a black entrepreneur with a catering company, you got to be in business at least six months before you can get a contract. Or the bonded requirements that you need to be a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) and be registered with the City of Cleveland. That doesn't make any sense.

Crowder: And that you have to re-certify every year.

Mayor Bibb: And, so we are looking at all these regulations and seeing what doesn't make sense any more. What is further exasperating racism from a system perspective that we can alleviate and address? We are struggling to lay a foundation for that work as we speak.

Anne Ying Pu, Erie Chinese Journal

I just am talking about the Chinese Community, which is right now the Asian Community. You are already involved with so many events. Right now, the Payne Avenue is really a good opportunity for us since Dave's closed in 2019. They have lots of limits on the site, no opening of a grocery store – something like that.

This summer, the library and Middle Town, they have very good events for the parking lot. The last day – which was the close day -I was there, there were so many Chinese elders asking why they close the building. If (the former Dave's) building was open as like art – or like a cultural center -- we can go inside.

After the event we met Friday, Saturday, Sunday and I met with the group leaders for all the United States' Chinese. And they say how much money they can invest here. I just say, 5 million dollars. You know. They say ok, we can come in.

I need your help maybe this month or the next couple of months and sit down with the developing people. Because I don't know anything about it at all. Only thing, I know need the money here.

Another thing about Payne Avenue, they spend about \$1 million for the renovation of the Buddhism Temple for the 42 Street. That is a very short area to E. 55th we also have a of full bigger supermarket and five restaurants. You know this is really Asian Town. We be like a movement really good for the City of Cleveland. I need your help.

Mayor Bibb: I agree. We will work with you on that and get a pocket park for Payne.

Ying Pu: Yes. Yes. They also have an Asian supermarket—also they have over 30,000 square feet. I'm just wondering if the City can do something help for us if I have the money for the seed.

Mayor Bibb: Make sure you connect with Joyce Huang and Jeff.

Rich Weiss, Tremonster

In Tremont there are a couple of areas: one is Scranton on the way down to the Scranton Peninsula and the other is Clark on the way down Clark hill. We can see, particularly on Scranton, the pressure of large scale development creeping up on tiny little houses with long time owner-occupied residents. And, of course, they feel the pressure of the increased home price values – Cuyahoga County went around and increase home price values by algorithms.

A number of different pressures are on my poor Tremont residents. And a couple of those areas, include other things like water main breaks that take out furnaces that can't be replaced by the city. Just acts of God. Particularly Clark was that issue. As chinks in their ability to stay in their homes occur and they get closer to what it seems to me to inspections that could just end up shutting down homes in certain conditions. If we don't get to them soon enough, do they just wind up getting torn down and turned into boxy condos? Do we have more condominium living in some of the areas with some of the best views in Tremont? Is there some way to find someone other than the boy who cried LOOP? Because we have heard about the LOOP, the Long Term Owner Occupied Program, for a long time. It has been under consideration for maybe a decade but has really no advancement. I am interested in your take on those long-time owners and whether they will be able to stay in their homes as prices rise and property values increase.

Mayor Bibb: A couple of things. One: So

back to my point on making sure we have a strong and aligned policy agenda with Columbus. We will be looking actively at LOOP and as part of that agenda next legislative session next year. In addition to LOOP, here is what we have done already to date on housing policy. One -- we passed pay to stay legislation. So that's now permanent so folks can stay in their homes if they hit hard times. We are also looking at source of income protection legislation as well, so that there is no discrimination against folks who may be using a housing voucher to have a home that is safe.

We are also looking internally at how we go after these out of state LLC investors and these negligent racist property managers like Holden Wise that are predatory. So, I'm working with my housing policy team and my Director of Building and Housing Sally Martin to have an ordinance that allows any out of state investor to have a local agent that I can sue and bring into court. That is critical because right now we have a Chinese LLC buying some properties and I have no idea on how to hold them accountable. That is inexcusable.

This may be controversial, but I don't care. We should be looking at point of sale inspections in Cleveland. Right? If it is good enough for Garfield, Shaker, and our suburbs, it damn sure should be good enough for Cleveland.

I was on Mound Avenue with the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless Coalition and United Way a couple of weeks about with Sally Martin who runs Building and Housing. And in this duplex, there were two things. One was an elderly couple who were paying their rent via cash forever because the landlord would not give them a lease and the house got flipped three or four times. The other one upstairs, a single mom with two kids, the roof was caving in, and she could not get ahold of the landlord. No one should be living like that. If we had point of sale inspection that would have never happened.

So, we've stacked the deck against renters in this city. Instead of prioritizing them, we prioritize these rich, overly zealous landlords and developers who don't give a damn about working class people in this city. And so, we have a housing policy that reflects that commitment to help these families and we are working on that.

The other thing, we've through the American Rescue Plan Act home repairs, and senior home repairs are a big focus. We put \$195 million towards housing and home repair, particularly for our seniors, has a large chunk of that money through the American Rescue Plan Act.

Pierre Bejjani, Profile News Ohio

First of all I want to congratulate you on being involved especially down in Columbus for the opening of this big Intel. I was so happy to see you there. I was so proud of your being involved in this. Probably this opening can mean something to Cleveland from this attempt.

Number two I want to speak on behalf of the multinational people community. I wanted to take your input on how we proceed to do with this administration about all these different ethnic groups. Big cities have a lot of different ethnic groups. How do you plan on reaching out? The last administration, Mayor Jackson was very open to invite all the different ethnic groups and celebrate them in the city and open the city. I was very appreciative. This is how we developed this relationship with the mayor and I'm very proud of my involvement. That is when we started doing the different ethnic groups days which we will be having again this November. How do you plan on reaching out to these different ethnic groups?

As an Arabic community we have a very sizable community and a large number of businesses in this area – they are a big part of Cleveland.

I have a couple of things I would like to see. I would like to see the area of Lorain Avenue by W. 117th become an Arabian Village probably. This is where most of the Arabic businesses are. We have China town. We have Little Italy. I think an Arabic Village, we can promote it.

Another thing I would like to see some involvement from our community into your team. How to see these different diverse groups. If you have something to check on with us as a community.

I'm not saying only the Arabic community, but different ethnic community groups. And we have a lot of different groups available. We have the International Community Council that I sit on as a vice president. We are involved in the cultural garden. We were a big part of developing Global Cleveland.

And I don't even have the group here that is the different liaison persons. I don't see anybody from the Arabic Community that is on it, number one. Number two at this stage you can put a group together from the city just to inform you. To take some ideas from these different ethnicities, what is good,



PHOTO BY ERIK AULT

Saturday, October 8, 2022; MetroHealth Community Day in the new park in front of the MetroHealth Glick Center, 2500 MetroHealth Drive: Chalk artists (L-R) Hector Castellanos Lara and Wendy Mahon bring a message of Hope to those attending the Community Day celebration.

and what is bad, and what is going on. Just I wanted to give you my thoughts on this.

Mayor Justin Bibb's response: We have just been really so far working specifically with Global Cleveland as a conduit. I think it is the best organization to be that conduit.

And then, I know I have welcomed probably dozens of counselors and ambassadors to my office in this room since I took office as much as possible. But we are still ramping

up our staff. Still trying to get settled. Still trying to focus on the basics. But this still making sure we maintain strong international players is an important part of this.

Bejjani: You are open the idea of being more involved more with the ethnic communities?

Mayor Bibb: Absolutely. But there are only 24 hours in a day.

Bejjani: I know. I know this is probably

JEFFERSON LIBRARY

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“When we talk about education in America, it starts with the public libraries,” said Hooper. “The library sparks the imagination, as it did mine, and gives kids a chance to chase their curiosity.”

Hooper provides local and healthy sustainable food to area restaurants and options at events such as Hessler Street Fair and Case Western Food Justice Conference. He also cooks for City of Cleveland events and professional athletes and musicians.

Steve Capuozzo, manager of the Jefferson Branch, said he was glad to be back in the neighborhood. With new improvements, the community is excited to dig in. The addition of quiet study rooms will impact library users.

“I'm happy to be back in Tremont,” said Capuozzo. “The Grab and Go Book Lockers are a big improvement, especially for people working second shift unable to get to the library.”

The Grab and Go Book Locker system can store materials with 24-7 access in the lobby using a library card. The feature allows people to order books and safely store materials until they can pick them up later.

“Whenever you walk into a public library on any given day, you see a snapshot of the city,” said Tana Peckham, Chief Strategy Officer Cleveland Public Library. “Giving our neighborhoods new spaces is super important.”

Peckham said the renovation process has been challenging, like most facilities projects, but figuring out solutions to the problems has been overwhelmingly

successful. With talented library staff and partners in the mix, working together and reaching out to the community, the renovations make the library more useful for what people need now but also flexible enough to grow with the neighborhoods as they change. The 10-year plan is on schedule.

“As far as technology improvements, digital equity will be with us for a while,” she added. “We added flexibility to make room for children and adults to reconfigure the space as needed.”

Some branches need renovation while others will be rebuilt depending on needs. The Detroit Avenue and West 79th Street Branch will replace the 55-year-old Walz Branch with a two-story, 10,300-square-foot supplemented by a five-story, 51-unit senior living facility attached behind and above the library called Karam Senior Living. Eligible residents must be at least 55 years old and make 60% or less of the area median income to quality, which for a single person is \$31,920 or less.

A new Martin Luther King Jr branch is part of the 11-story Library Lofts apartment building, marking only the second time the library will include apartments in the same development as a new branch. Memorial-Nottingham, Rockport, and Mount Pleasant branches will be finished in a few years, while Sterling and Lorain branches are expanded and Brooklyn and Eastman branches renovated.

“We are so excited about the Jefferson Branch opening,” said Executive Director and CEO of Cleveland Public Library Felton Thomas, Jr. while overlooking the crowd gathered under the event tent and near dozens of colorful balloons leading

something probably new and you are grasping what is going around you here and I appreciate you for what you are doing. You are trying. I will have an ambassador from Lebanon during Lebanon Day here – not the ambassador to Washington, but an ambassador from Lebanon who is here and doing some affairs. Yeah, I would like to see more efforts from the administration toward the ethnic communities.

to the library entrance. It was a festive, celebratory moment.

“Tremont is our first ribbon cutting tied to our facilities master plan. We could not have done it in a more wonderful neighborhood than here. Libraries and communities change, and we need to grow with the community. We listened to what they wanted. We held onto a past but also transformed ourselves for the future.”

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