

From the President

I don't know about you, but I love reading the annual reports of organizations I am interested in. They represent the promise of a vision becoming the reality we see through concrete action—not to mention that a good update strengthens my connection to the work I am happy somebody else is doing.

It is with great pleasure that I look back at 2018 and the tremendous amount of growth that FutureHeights has been able to undertake because it means that our communities are getting the love they deserve.

Our Civic Engagement Committee remains as committed as ever to addressing the topics that most concern and interest our residents through informative, free public forums and administering our Neighborhood Leadership Workshop Series and mini-grants program. If you're like me, one of the things you most love about living here is the strength of relationships with neighbors that live near you, or even across the city. This cohesive spirit is a necessary, amazing gift, so having such dedicated people working at the grassroots level to foster it inspires me.

Our dedication to public discourse remains strong as the *Heights Observer* celebrated its 10th anniversary with a banner year that supported our neighborhood voices and local businesses, with work from the past 10 years sharing space with the issues dear to many residents' hearts today.

In September of this past year, we solidified a formal partnership with the city of Cleveland Heights as the city's official community development corporation, which includes a city investment to help us implement our new housing programs and real estate development projects in 2019.

FutureHeights' robust Planning & Development Committee has supported workshops to support our small business community and facilitated relationships with ethical developers, city staff, and others in order to support the growth and stabilization of our market. The committee has built on past momentum in the



Steve Presser, honoree of FutureHeights 2018 benefit, with Board President Julia Kous Zabell.

Cedar Lee Business District to move the Cedar Lee Mini-Park project forward, as well as to support engagement for the development project at Lee and Meadowbrook—both of which will be high priorities as we move into 2019.

This strong committee, with help from Greater Cleveland Congregations, was able to garner a \$70,000 grant from US Bank in order to initiate a focused planning study for the Noble Road corridor—a much needed study that will support the important Noble neighborhood of Cleveland Heights.

Through the sixth annual Heights Music Hop, we were able to bring out more than 8,500 people to enjoy free music, excellent food, and to remember how great being in the Heights is. I heard from numerous merchants who said it is always one of the best nights they have each year financially, which tells me we are meeting our goals of economic development, regional marketing, and plain old fun.

What I must note, because it blows my mind, is that all of this work has been accomplished with a fulltime staff of only two! Our hard working board of directors and committee members—not to mention partnerships with many other organizations—make a huge difference, but our staff has been carrying a heavy load and done an exceptional job. I am pleased that we will be adding another fulltime staff member in 2019 to take on the work of real estate development and build upon the already stunning capacity of this organization.

I am honored to be stepping down as president after such tremendous work done on your behalf by such gifted, committed and talented people—and I am already excited to read the annual report for 2019. I hope you are, too!

Sincerely,

Julia Kious Zabell
President
FutureHeights Board of Directors



Coventry P.E.A.C.E Campus organizations participate in the 2018 Heights Music Hop.

News and Notes

In 2018, FutureHeights formalized its relationship with the city of Cleveland Heights as its community development corporation (CDC), a goal the organization had been working on for more than two years, in order to better accomplish its mission of ensuring a vibrant and sustainable future for our community. Over the past year, through the efforts of its many volunteers, dedicated board of directors and committee members, and small staff, FutureHeights has engaged in neighborhood planning, place-making, civic engagement and neighborhood strengthening activities, and has sought to increase its capacity to make an even greater impact in the community.

Engaging and promoting our community

FutureHeights engages the community through a series of public forums that address current issues. In 2018, we convened three public forums on the topics of attracting new residents, neighborhood organizing, and creative place-making, with more than 200 people participating.

FutureHeights published the first issue of the *Heights Observer* on April 10, 2008. To commemorate this 10-year anniversary, each month, members of the project's advisory committee have been writing a column, "Opening the Observer," that takes a look back at the stories that appeared in the 10 issues that have been published for each month. We launched the *Observer* with a vision that it would become a forum for Heights residents to share information about issues that were important to them and tell their own stories about our community. We are pleased that many community members contribute news stories and opinion pieces, and that the paid advertising of our local businesses enable this hyper-local community news project to be self-sustaining.

The *Heights Observer* has published more than 8,649 stories since the beginning of the project. In 2018, we published another 12 issues of the print edition and 50 issues of the weekly e-news. One hundred twelve new volunteers signed up in the member center to write, edit and distribute the paper, which brings the total number of people engaged through the *Observer* to 1,447. In 2018, the print edition averaged 25 pages and 84 advertisers each month. The e-news, which is published each Tuesday, reaches more than 5,000 people and averages a 29.7% open rate and a 25.6% click rate.

FutureHeights programs, such as the *Heights Observer's* Holiday Gift Guide, and Best of the Heights, and low-cost advertising opportunities in the *Observer*, support the locally owned, independent businesses that make up the majority of businesses in the Heights. These businesses add to the quality of life and unique character of our residential community. Through "shop local" programs, such as these, we encourage residents to patronize these businesses and help keep our community vibrant.

Strengthening our neighborhoods

FutureHeights works to strengthen Heights neighborhoods through its Community Capacity-Building Program, which helps residents leverage neighborhood assets and provides tools to solve neighborhood challenges.

In spring 2018, We held our fourth annual Neighborhood Leadership Workshop Series to train participants in effective community-building and place-making practices. Nine new Community Builders learned about effective community-building and place-making practices. Dates have been set for the 2019 workshop series, and applications are due Jan.4, 2019.

Since its inception in fall 2015, the FutureHeights Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program has awarded 27 grants totaling \$17,386 in six grant cycles. Cleveland Heights neighborhood groups may apply for a grant of up to \$1,000 to fund a project that will improve the physical and social environment of their neighborhoods. In 2018, we awarded \$5,002 in grants to nine projects that support neighborhood beautification, a pop-up program in a vacant storefront, community gardens, a garden tour and a neighborhood talent show. We hold two grant application rounds each year, one in the fall and one in the spring. The next application deadline is March 15, 2019.

FutureHeights continues to work with community-based groups—acting as fiscal sponsor for Noble Neighbors and Spirit Corner—enabling them to seek funding and present programs that enhance our community.



The FutureHeights crew at the 2018 University Heights Memorial Day Parade.

Supporting our commercial districts

Building on the findings of the 2016 Cedar Lee planning study that it commissioned, FutureHeights began a place-making project to transform the city-owned land adjacent to the Cedar Lee Theatre into a unique public space—the Cedar Lee Mini-Park. We have facilitated conversations with the city, the Cedar Lee Special Improvement District, merchants, residents and other stakeholders to find ways to enliven the space through public art, wayfinding signage, and other amenities. We raised \$6,850 for the project at our annual benefit and were allocated \$10,000 in CDBG funds from the city of Cleveland Heights. Design refinement and additional fundraising for the project will continue in 2019. In addition, We were pleased to be asked by Cedar Lee Connection, LLC, the group selected by the city to develop the city-owned lot at Lee Road and Meadowbrook Boulevard, to help facilitate civic engagement during the project.

In 2018, FutureHeights partnered with the Small Business Development Center in the Lee Road Library to host three workshops to assist existing business owners in all city districts. Topics included the use of social media, signage and merchandising, and assistance programs, such as the city's Storefront Renovation Program.

In April 2018, ownership of the Coventry building (where FutureHeights' offices are located) was transferred from the school district to Heights Libraries. We have continued to work with the tenants, who have organized themselves as Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus, and the library to chart a way forward so that the site can continue to be a community gathering place, playground, and arts and culture center.

Building on the work it began in 2017—a merchant survey, vacancy study, and two visioning workshops—FutureHeights kicked off a \$70,000 planning study of the Noble Road corridor in 2018. Working in cooperation with Noble Neighbors; the cities of Cleveland Heights and East Cleveland; and Northeast Ohio Alliance for Hope, the CDC for East Cleveland; FutureHeights hired Camiros, Ltd., a nationally recognized urban planning firm, and The Riddle Company, a real estate and economic development marketing consulting practice, to prepare a development and revitalization plan focusing on three commercial/mixed-use districts along Noble Road between Mayfield Road and Euclid Avenue. Among the many goals of the project are to address current vacant and underutilized sites along the corridor, enhance the image of the neighborhood, and improve the quality of life for residents. In the meantime, we have worked with Noble Neighbors to enliven a vacant lot in the Noble-Nela area, as part of our temporary site activation strategy.

Heights Music Hop, now in its sixth year, has become one of the primary place-making events in Cleveland Heights. In 2018, the festival took place over a three-day weekend in three districts and attracted more than 8,500 people to the Heights to enjoy free music and visit our unique local businesses. The 2018 lineup included performances by 72 musical acts in 31 venues. Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus organizations joined with Heights Libraries to enliven the park with children's activities, poetry and performances in between musical sets under the P.E.A.C.E. arch. REV Drive Northeast Ohio brought an electric vehicle fleet to the vacant lot at Lee Road and Meadowbrook Boulevard. A new video shot during the festival includes areal drone footage and showcases the vibrancy of our business districts.



Luna Bakery Café was one of several venues at the 2018 Heights Music Hop.

Strengthening our organization

Following the successful conclusion of a CDC Working Group process with the city of Cleveland Heights in March 2018, the city approved an initial services agreement that will enable FutureHeights to create a stronger partnership with the city and work cooperatively on shared goals. The first of those goals is to strengthen the housing stock in Cleveland Heights neighborhoods, particularly those that are still struggling to recover from the foreclosure crisis.

The city will support FutureHeights with \$70,000 in funding for each of two years so that we can hire a real estate development professional and launch a housing program that will rehabilitate vacant homes and construct new homes on vacant lots. We hope to have the position filled and the program up and running by the start of the new year.

For the second year in a row, FutureHeights held a successful gala to raise much-needed operational support. The Living is Big Fun in Cleveland Heights event was held at the lovingly restored home of Anya and John Rudd in August 2018. Guests celebrated the best of Cleveland Heights while listening to our Cleveland Heights Poet Laureate and local musicians, sipping the Purple Presser cocktail and locally hand-crafted wine and beer, and sampling delicious bites from many of our local restaurants. We also honored Steve Presser, whose quirky personality and steadfast championing of independent businesses has added so much to our community.

As a member of the Ohio CDC Association, FutureHeights has been able to access new resources and training opportunities. In 2018, FutureHeights hosted two fulltime Americorps VISTA members through OCDCA: Courtney Arbogast for the summer and Joe Royer, who joined FutureHeights in August and will be with us through August 2019. Courtney helped us conduct greater outreach to the North Coventry neighborhood, culminating in August with her organizing the first block party for the area in many years. Joe is working on helping us develop our new housing programs.

FutureHeights continues its strong partnerships with area universities. In 2018, we hosted two student interns from Case Western Reserve University's Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences (MSASS): Ranen Reichstein in the spring and Malumbo Kabula, a graduate student from Malawi, Africa, in the fall. In addition, Matthew Kerri from Cleveland State University's Levin College of Urban Affairs began work in the spring on our new housing programs. And Emily Benson, a Heights High graduate and student at Loyola University in Chicago, interned with us in the summer, assisting in a number of initiatives, including our second annual benefit.

All of our volunteers and interns greatly expand our capacity, and we are grateful for their contributions. We are fortunate to be able to draw on the talents and experiences of many engaged residents and business owners who volunteer on our board-led committees and task forces.

As we look ahead to 2019, we are grateful for your support and will continue to invest your donation dollars wisely to engage Heights residents in building a better place.

Thank you!

Deanna Bremer Fisher

Executive Director



Board members Vince Reddy (L) and Calvin Singleton (R) at the North Coventry Block Party 2018.

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 Herb's Plumbing
 Hospice of the Western Reserve
 Howard Hanna Real Estate
 Imaginet
 Integrity Contracting
 Jazzercise
 John Rach for UH Council
 Judson Services, Inc.
 Keller Insurance
 Lake Erie Ink
 Lakeview Cemetery Foundation
 Lawn Lad
 Lopez
 Luna Bakery Café
 Mac's Backs Books
 Mamai Theatre Co.
 Marilyn Marks Violin
 Mitchell's Chocolate
 MJM Window Restoration
 Montessori High School
 Montlack Realty
 Nadeen Hayden for Judge
 Neff Landscaping
 Neubert Painting
 No. 1 Roofing
 Noble Road Presbyterian Church
 Pacific East
 Panini's Coventry
 PC Handyman
 Plato's Closet
 Quality Plumbing
 Quintana's Barber & Dream Spa
 Revolve
 Ripley ENT Tree Service
 Ruffing Montessori
 Scott Haigh-Howard Hanna
 Selective Homes / Amish Garage
 Simons Automotive Services
 Skettle Electric
 SmarteSoil
 South African Journeys
 St. James Anglican
 St. Paul's Episcopal Church
 State Farm - Betsy Warner
 Stone Oven
 Studio How-To
 Supreme Window & Glass
 Susan Delaney - Howard Hanna
 Susan Infeld for Mayor of UH
 Swedish Solution
 Table 45
 Tas Nadas for Council
 The Tavern Company
 The Music Settlement
 Tommy's
 University Circle Inc.
 Urban Oak School
 Uston Roof Restoration
 Vegfest
 Vern & Ellsworth Hann
 Walters DDS
 Washington & Lee Service
 The Winespot
 Wohl Financial Services
 Wood Trader
 Yasinow-Ungar for Council
 Zoma



HEIGHTS OBSERVER

A PROGRAM OF FUTUREHEIGHTS

Future Heights

2843 Washington Blvd., Suite 105
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118
www.futureheights.org
216-320-1423

Our Mission

FutureHeights works to inspire and facilitate collaboration and empowerment across our communities to ensure a vibrant and sustainable future for Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

FutureHeights values:

- Diverse, inclusive, active and informed citizen participation in community decision making
- Appreciation for the time, talent and various forms of support offered to our organization
- Innovative ideas in addressing the challenges in our communities
- Open and effective communication and partnerships among nonprofits, schools, local business, city government and citizens
- Thriving local business community
- Preservation of historic neighborhoods and commercial districts
- High quality sustainability in design and architecture
- Regional approach to innovation, planning and development

Join Us

Your tax-deductible membership contribution goes directly to supporting the community-based programs and projects of FutureHeights that help strengthen our wonderful neighborhoods. Join online today at our secure website, www.futureheights.org, or by calling 216-320-1423.



One of three public forums FutureHeights held in 2018.



Jason and Josh Sweet, owners of Boss Dog Brewing Company, which was voted Best New Business in the 2018 Best of the Heights Awards.

2017 Financial Statement

Unaudited condensed statement of activities

Revenue and Support

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Grants | \$63,572 |
| Memberships | 33,685 |
| Annual fund | 10,825 |
| Sponsorships | 14,800 |
| Fiscal Agency Administration | 274 |
| Other Fundraising | 57,165 |
| Earned Income | 147,065 |
| Misc. | 67 |
| Total Revenue and Support | \$327,453 |

Expenses

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Program | \$244,746 |
| General and Administration | 55,339 |
| Fundraising | 7,086 |
| Depreciation | 1,099 |
| Total Expenses | \$308,270 |

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Change in Net Assets | \$19,183 |
| Net Assets at Beginning of Year | 45,552 |
| Net Assets at End of Year | \$64,735 |

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Fiscal Agency Income | \$2,918 |
| Fiscal Agency Expense | 3,841 |
| Net Fiscal Agencies | \$(923) |

The FutureHeights financial year begins January 1 and ends December 31.

FutureHeights is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Contributions to FutureHeights are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. FutureHeights participates in GuideStar, the online standard for nonprofit accountability. Please visit GuideStar.org to view the organization's Annual Form 990 and other organizational information.

2018 FutureHeights Board of Directors

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Principal, Re:Invigorate

Richard Stewart
President Emeritus
President, Digizoom

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Principal, The Nonprofit Org
Doc, LLC

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E-news Manager,
Heights Observer

Kim Sergio-Inglis
Editor-In-Chief,
Heights Observer

Future Heights

Our thanks to former board members Danial Butdn, Thomas Chaney, Michael Dylan Brennan, James Henke, Saroya Queen Tabor, Allosious Snodgrass, April Urban and Paul Volpe for their dedicated service to the mission of FutureHeights.

2018 Interns

Courtney Arbogast
AmeriCorps VISTA, Summer

Emily Benson
Loyola University

Malumbo Kabula
Case Western University's Mandel
School of Applied Social Sciences

Matthew Kerri
Cleveland State University's
Levin College of Urban Affairs

Ranen Reichstein
Case Western University's
Mandel School of Applied
Social Sciences

Joe Royer
AmeriCorps VISTA



A volunteer passes out programs at the 2018 Heights Music Hop.