

Future Heights

FutureHeights works to inspire and facilitate collaboration and empowerment to ensure a vibrant and sustainable future for our community.

From the President



North Coventry residents give an update on their Neighborhood MiniGrant Project.



FutureHeights at the 2019 University Heights Memorial Day Parade.



FutureHeights held a community open house at one of its FutureHomes program houses.



A band performs in the revitalized Cedar Lee Mini-Park at the 2019 Heights Music Hop.

Five years ago, when I retired from my job as City Planning Director in Cleveland, I began looking for a way to engage in similar work as a volunteer in my home community of Cleveland Heights.

I soon found my “match” at the FutureHeights organization, where I joined a large contingent of talented and skilled local residents, linked by a commitment to the civic good, that had been drawn to this community-based organization for over a decade.

In January 2019 I was honored to be asked to begin a two-year term as President of the Board of Directors of FutureHeights. It is an auspicious time to participate in the leadership of this organization, as 2019 was truly a historic year for FutureHeights.

After working for 16 years as an advocate for community revitalization, 2019 was the organization’s first year serving the community as a full-fledged Community Development Corporation (CDC), formally recognized in this role by the administration and City Council of Cleveland Heights.

What does it mean for FutureHeights to be a CDC? As a CDC, FutureHeights today is more than an advocate for revitalizing and rebuilding the community; it is now a very direct participant in that mission—partnering with local contractors to rehabilitate distressed vacant houses and build new houses on vacant lots.

As it takes on this new role in housing rehabilitation and development, FutureHeights continues to update and intensify its broader work program, designed to uplift the Cleveland Heights and University Heights communities, including publication of the award-winning Heights Observer.

These community-building activities—ranging from a plan to revitalize the Noble Road corridor to training sessions and grants for residents seeking to improve their neighborhoods, along with workshops for our small business owners—are described by FutureHeights Executive Director Deanna Bremer Fisher in the pages of this annual report.

All of this activity by the talented staff, board members and committee members of FutureHeights, working in partnership with other organizations and our city governments, makes me confident that we will succeed in making Cleveland Heights and University Heights even better places to live, work and visit.

We hope that you will join us through your participation and your financial contributions.

Sincerely,

Robert N Brown, President

FutureHeights Board of Directors

News and Notes

With the city of Cleveland Heights' recognition of FutureHeights as its community development corporation (CDC) in 2019, FutureHeights is truly fulfilling the vision of its forward-thinking founders. Today our citizen-led organization works hand-in-hand with the city to ensure a vibrant and sustainable future for our community. Through its advocacy, community-enhancing projects, public forums and mini-grants program, FutureHeights strengthens Cleveland Heights' historic neighborhoods and walkable business districts.

Strengthening our neighborhoods

Our historic housing stock is one of our city's most valuable assets. The foreclosure crisis left many vacant and abandoned homes in its wake and many of our neighborhoods are still struggling to recover. In March 2019, we launched the FutureHomes Program to address this problem. In partnership with the city of Cleveland Heights and the Cuyahoga Land Bank, FutureHeights secures vacant, abandoned homes and facilitates their rehabilitation with trusted contractor partners. We develop a scope of work, monitor the process, and assist with the marketing of the completed property to a new owner occupant.

During the first year, we targeted the neighborhood surrounding Cleveland Heights High School. Hoping to leverage the school's recent renovation, the new Cedar-Lee streetscape and its adjacency to amenities, such as Cain Park and Zagara's Marketplace, we feel this area can be especially attractive to new Cleveland Heights residents. Our first home at 2009 Goodnor, was renovated from top to bottom, with an upgraded kitchen and baths, new electrical and heating systems, a new front porch, and more. It sold within three days of listing to a new homeowner. We hosted an open house on Dec. 8 when renovations at 2036 Hampstead Road were complete. Four more homes are currently under rehabilitation, one of which is located directly across the street from the high school.

In 2020, we plan to continue working in our first target neighborhood, while expanding the program to other distressed neighborhoods in Cleveland Heights. To address the many vacant lots in these neighborhoods we are working on a plan for new home construction.

In addition, our Community Capacity-Building Program continues to help residents leverage neighborhood assets by providing tools to solve neighborhood challenges.

In spring 2019, FutureHeights held its fifth-annual Neighborhood Leadership Workshop Series where 13 participants were trained in effective community-building and place-making practices. Dates have been set for the 2020 workshop series. Applications are due Jan. 17, 2019.

Since its inception in fall 2015, the FutureHeights Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program has awarded 35 grants totaling \$23,386 in eight 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 2019, we awarded \$6,000 in grants to eight projects, including efforts to support pollinator and learning gardens, a neighborhood play yard, neighborhood asset identification, and the creation of a pocket park. Two grant application rounds are held each year, one in the fall and one in the spring. The next application deadline is March 15, 2020.

FutureHeights continues to work with community-based groups, acting as fiscal sponsor for Noble Neighbors, Spirit Corner, Cleveland Heights Garden Walk and Heights Tree People. This support enables the organizations to seek funding and present programs that enhance our community.

Engaging and promoting our community

FutureHeights encourages public dialog on issues that are important to the community. In July 2019, we convened a public forum on the topic of how small improvements, such as planting flowers, can have a big impact on a neighborhood. More than 70 people attended, and all panelists were from Cleveland Heights-based groups, which inspired participants to build community and take action in their own neighborhoods.

In this local election year, FutureHeights encouraged public conversation about local candidates and issues in the pages of the *Heights Observer*. We did not take a position on Issue 26, the referendum to enable residents to vote directly for a mayor, in order to better facilitate conversations on both sides of the issue. We are pleased that so many community members saw the *Observer* as a space for community dialogue and contributed letters and opinions outlining the pros and cons of the proposal.



Suzanne Degaetano (left) and Tommy Fello (right) at the Roaring 20's Garden Party in the Inglewood Historic District.

The *Heights Observer* has published more than 9,407 stories since its inception. In 2019, we published 12 issues of the print edition and 50 issues of the weekly e-news. One hundred twenty-four 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 1,571. In 2019, the print edition averaged 25 pages and 81 advertisers each month. The e-news, which is published each Tuesday, reaches more than 5,250 people and averages a 28.8% open rate and a 24.6% 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 Heights businesses and help keep our community vibrant. Paid advertising from our local businesses enables this hyper-local community news project to be self-sustaining.

In addition, with the support of U.S. Bank, and other community partners, we held three workshops for small business owners on topics such as social media and contemplating a move "from home-based to store-front."

Supporting our commercial districts through planning and place-making

In 2019, we continued our work to transform the Cedar Lee Mini-Park, the walkway from the parking lot behind the Cedar Lee Theatre to it and other businesses on Lee Road. We've gathered community input, seeking to realize the site's potential to become a vibrant community space. Throughout the summer, artist Tom Masaveg and five local students planted flowers, weeded beds and created artistic signage to ensure the space was beautiful, vibrant, and welcoming. We installed café tables and chairs, a Little Free Library, and an interactive mural that uses augmented reality through a smart phone to enable luna moths to appear. We are in the process of selecting a design firm to finalize concepts and implement long-term improvements to the space.

FutureHeights continues to work with the nonprofit tenant organizations housed within Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus, the former school building that is now owned by Heights Libraries. We are working with nonprofit consultants IFF to conduct a facility feasibility study that will inform a way forward so that the site can continue to be a community gathering place, playground, and arts and culture center.

Working with Noble Neighbors, the cities of Cleveland Heights and East Cleveland, and Northeast Ohio Alliance for Hope (the CDC for East Cleveland), FutureHeights completed a \$70,000 planning study of the Noble Road corridor in 2019. Camiros, Ltd., a nationally recognized urban planning firm, and The Riddle Company, a real estate and economic development marketing consulting practice, are working with FutureHeights to prepare the development and revitalization plan focusing on four commercial/mixed-use districts along Noble Road between Mayfield Road and Euclid Avenue.



Members of the 2019 Neighborhood Leadership Workshop Series cohort at the FutureHeights Annual Meeting.

The consultants prepared a plan to address current vacant and underutilized sites along the corridor, enhance the image of the neighborhood and improve the quality of life for residents. While three follow-up studies are needed to further define the plan and several of the recommendations will require years to implement, we are working with our partners on Early Action Projects in order to foster a cohesive identity, and utilize beautification as a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization.

This year's Heights Music Hop was memorable. In its seventh year, the Hop was held in three Cleveland Heights business districts. Eighty-two live musical acts performed in 34 venues. The three-day event attracted more than 8,500 people to Cleveland Heights' unique business districts and has become a signature event for the city. This year, we had the added challenge of a micro-burst that tore through town on Friday evening as the Hop

was underway at Cedar Fairmount. The impact of the storm was felt throughout the city, especially in the Cedar Fairmount and Cedar Lee neighborhoods where many homeowners and businesses suffered damage and lost power. Despite the lack of power, the show was able to go on. We are proud that our residents were able to come together to celebrate our diverse city through music.

Strengthening our organization

As the city of Cleveland Heights' CDC and because of our membership in the Ohio CDC Association (OCDCA), FutureHeights is able to access new staffing resources and training opportunities. In February 2019, Abby Lawless joined the staff as our fulltime real estate development director, in charge of housing and other planning and development programs. In 2019, we hosted two fulltime Americorps VISTA members through OCDCA, each for a one-year period. Joe Royer, who served as an Americorps VISTA from August 2018 to August 2019, helped develop our new housing programs. Hannah Morgan started in July 2019 and will be supporting our civic engagement initiatives through July 2020.

In addition to these full-time resources, strong partnerships with area universities and foundations have enabled us to add part-time help. Sarah Wolfe, a graduate student from Case Western Reserve University's Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences (MSASS) is doing her field placement with us this fall. She is assisting with our small business workshops, communications and outreach, and will continue this spring. We were also fortunate to have a summer intern from the Cleveland Foundation's program this year: Calvin Gibson assisted us with community outreach for the Noble Road Corridor Planning Project.

On July 27, FutureHeights held a Roaring '20s Garden Party in the beautiful Inglewood Historic District, located just north of Mayfield Road in the Noble Neighborhood. This successful gala raised \$50,000 in much-needed operational support. Teri and Elio DiPaola, Cecile and James Fooshe, and Helen Foley and Jim Kazura hosted the event in their backyards. Guests enjoyed learning about the neighborhood's history, architecture and interesting residents on Lolly the Trolley, courtesy of our presenting sponsor Ernie Cahoon and Chris Jurcisin of the Howard Hanna Cleveland Heights office. We truly celebrated the best of Cleveland Heights—dancing the Charleston, sipping Nighttown's Mayor Cain's Last Word and Quintana's Seelbach cocktails and locally hand-crafted wine and beer, enjoying Tommy's milkshakes, sampling delicious bites from many of our local restaurants. At the event, we honored Suzanne DeGaetano, owner of Mac's Backs, and Tommy Fello, owner of Tommy's restaurant, whose generosity, commitment and love of our community have made Coventry Village—and our city—such an extraordinary place.

As we look ahead to 2020, the Board of FutureHeights is committed to increasing our capacity to meet the needs of Heights residents. We are grateful for the continued support of our members and volunteers, who not only serve on our board-led committees and task forces, but also invest in our work through their generous donations. Thank you for helping us make the Heights a more vibrant and sustainable place!

Thank you!

Deanna Bremer Fisher
Executive Director

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Travelle Harp, Executive Director of NOAH, welcomes residents to a Noble Road Corridor planning meeting.



Cleveland Heights and East Cleveland neighbors gathered together on December 6th to celebrate the Noble Neighborhood.



2019 Heights Music Hop attendees gather outside of Mitchell's Fine Chocolates on Lee Road.

Future Heights

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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

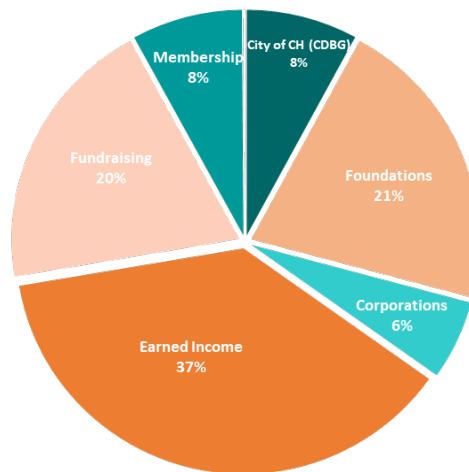
Members Of



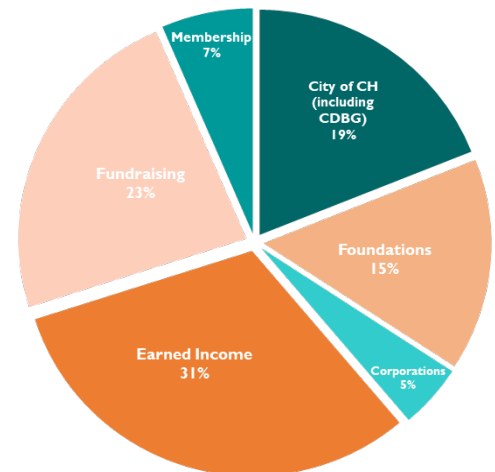
Join Us

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.

FUTUREHEIGHTS FUNDING SOURCES
2018 BUDGET



FUTUREHEIGHTS FUNDING SOURCES
2019 BUDGET



2018 Financial Statement

Audited statement of activities

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Public Support			
Grants & Contributions	\$ 47,923	\$ 56,610	\$ 104,533
Special Events	44,725	-	44,725
Government Grants	33,650	-	32,650
Membership	26,440	-	26,440
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	27,129	(27,129)	-
	<u>178,867</u>	<u>29,481</u>	<u>208,348</u>
Revenue			
Heights Observer Advertising	126,578	-	126,578
Heights Observer Subscriptions	3,960	-	3,960
Other	608	-	608
Interest Income	33	-	33
	<u>131,179</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>131,179</u>
Total Public Support and Revenue	310,046	29,481	339,527
Expenses			
Programs	272,072	-	272,072
General and Administration	36,437	-	36,437
Fundraising	21,655	-	21,655
	<u>330,164</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>330,164</u>
Total Expenses	330,164	-	330,164
Change in Net Assets	(20,118)	29,481	9,363
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	76,616	-	76,616
Net Assets at End of Year	<u>\$ 56,498</u>	<u>\$ 29,481</u>	<u>\$ 85,979</u>

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.

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AmeriCorps VISTA

Sarah Wolf
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Future Heights

Our thanks to former board members David Keller, Micah Kirman, Rebecca Price, and Vince Reddy for their dedicated service to the mission of FutureHeights.



FutureHeights staff and board members congratulate AmeriCorps VISTA member Joseph Royer on a successful year.