



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Tuesday, July 11, 2023; Lincoln Park, 1200 Starkweather Avenue in the Tremont neighborhood: Care Alliance Health Center President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Claude Jones accepts a \$100,000 Aflac CareGrant. The Aflac CareGrants are awarded by Aflac, an insurance company, to support organizations that are helping to close the gap around medical debt. See related story on page 7.

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Plain Press

Cleveland's Westside Newspaper

Trailblazing from Cleveland's past to a green future

by Erik Ault

Every city is a work in progress. Cleveland has known many economic bumps and headwinds which can demoralize citizens and divert political focus. Many projects languish after years of frustration and hopelessness. But Tim Donovan and Tom Yablonsky saw the decline of industry along the Cuyahoga River valley as the opening of a new opportunity. For over thirty years, they have been chipping away at the completion of a trail connecting Cleveland to the Cuyahoga Valley Na-

tional Park. And now they can see the fruits of their labor being enjoyed by all.

"Everything is people, and maybe some serendipity," Tom said at a presentation at Metropolitan Coffee on June 28th. He gave a presentation with his business partner Tim Donovan to share with a packed room all the trials, frustrations, and moments of joy in fighting to complete Cleveland's connecting trail.

It started with Tom in 1985 as the North Cuyahoga Valley Corridor Inc, which would become Canalway Partners. Tom's original idea was to link

downtown with the flats. Tom was excited about using the river valley as an artery to join the two sides of Cleveland. The Cleveland Foundation was giving away \$20,000 grants for civic development, so he wrote up a proposal and applied. It was denied. "At that point, we felt demoralized," he shared. "But someone came to the rescue."

The idea caught the attention of Lance Buell, BP's public affairs officer. Lance funded a study with the support of a couple of regional planning commissions called the "North Cuyahoga Valley Corridor Study." This study laid out the incipient vision for what could become of the Cuyahoga Valley.

Throughout the eighties, Tom and Canalway Partners' other founder Jeff Lenartz continued to pursue this idea despite setbacks and lack of action. At one point, Tom sat at Jeff's house wondering whether to fold their organization and let a larger, and potentially more efficient, non-profit organization take the reins. They had only \$11 in the bank. And then they met Tim.

Tom met Tim Donovan in 1986 at a fundraiser to beautify the warehouse district. Tim first chatted with Tom's wife Mary and learned that he and Tom went to the same high school. So, Tim got to talking to Tom, who shared his grander vision for the entire river valley, not just the warehouse district. continued on page 6



PHOTO BY ERIK AULT
Tuesday, July 11, 2023; United Bank Building; 2012 W. 25th; Tanisha Caravello, a transplant from the West Coast to the Clark-Fulton neighborhood, is often the only one riding her bike to work to the building. When asked her motivation, she responded, "I like to feel like I'm part of my environment, rather than being shut off from the outside, cooped up in a box on the way to work."



PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG
Saturday, July 15, 2023; Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish Italian Festival, 6828 Detroit Avenue: Server Sofia brings Italian fare to festival guests.

City of Cleveland needs to address the needs of those in poverty through its public policy

by Chuck Hoven

In a national call for a moral revival in America, Bishop William J. Barber II, Co-Chair of the Poor People's Campaign for Moral Revival makes a case for ending poverty in America.

"Today, poverty is the 4th leading cause of death nationwide. It is a death sentence for Americans. It is a moral travesty and a detriment to the soul of our nation that poverty kills more people than homicide yet the powers that be don't want to address it," said Bishop William J. Barber II, co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign. "There's not a scarcity of resources, but a scarcity of political will. Until our nation's leaders invest the great riches of this nation in ensuring equal justice for all, beginning with the poor and low wealth of this nation, we cannot be silent."

While Barber is speaking about the results of national public policy failing to address poverty, the same can be said about local public policy. Public policy that fails to address poverty in Cleveland is killing our citizens.

Cleveland has ranked consistently as having one of the highest poverty rates amongst big cities in the United States of America. In recent years, Cleveland has led the nation in child poverty.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The life expectancy in many of Cleveland's neighborhoods is substantially lower than the life expectancy in nearby suburban communities.

What is Cleveland doing to address this crisis? Do our political leaders act as if they see this as an urgent crisis that is killing our citizens?

Let's examine some evidence as to what kind of priority our politicians have for addressing poverty.

One recent act by Mayor Justin Bibb's administration could lead one to the conclusion that City of Cleveland administrators that advocate addressing poverty by holding developers accountable for public handouts they receive may jeopardize their employment.

City of Cleveland Economic Development Director Tessa Jackson was recently asked to relinquish her position after less than a year on the job. A look

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Panel reviews results of the 2023 Cleveland Property Survey

by Bruce Checefsky

Councilwomen Rebecca Maurer, Ward 12, released a statement a few weeks ago about the success of the first comprehensive Cleveland property survey in years.

"The data is out, and it is stunning," said Maurer. "Too many families are unknowingly exposed to lead poisoning, leading to significant health impacts on young children. We need to fix this problem

with comprehensive data about each parcel. This property inventory will be the roadmap the City can use to address this legacy pollutant and clean up Cleveland."

Maurer and City officials plan to use the study to address health and safety issues and increase lead poisoning prevention awareness to reduce childhood lead exposure.

Cleveland Mayor Justin M. Bibb

welcomed the Property Inventory and Assessment findings, saying that many of the properties in the survey have dangerous levels of toxic lead pollution that have plagued Cleveland for decades.

"With this property survey, we will soon have the data from surveyors who are on the ground, in the streets, identifying where the City can direct its resources to

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PHOTO BY BRUCE CHECEFSKY
Monday, July 10, 2023; Cleveland City Hall, 601 Lakeside Avenue: Molly Martin, Campaign Manager, People's Budget Cleveland (PBCLE), has a press conference on the steps of Cleveland City Hall as they deliver petitions with 10,582 signatures from Clevelanders who want to see a People's Budget on the ballot this November. The petition drive was successful and Cleveland voters will get to weigh in on the issue in November.



PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG

Sunday, June 25, 2023, Clifton Boulevard between W. 115th and W. 117th Streets, Edgewater Neighborfest: A vendor at Leo's Lemonade offering craft mocktails to festival goers, gives a thumbs up.

ARTS

ARTS IN AUGUST in Tremont's Lincoln Park from August 5 to 25th. All performances are free and family friendly. Bring a chair or blanket. The events are: Cleveland Public Theatre's Student Theatre Enrichment Program, Saturday, August 5 at 7 p.m.; Cleveland Shakesphere Festival presents *Measure for Measure*, Sunday, August 6th at 4 p.m.; Reflections Dance Theatre, Shri Kalaa Mandir - Center for Indian Performing Arts, and Mojuba Dance Collective, Thursday August 10th at 7 p.m.; Inlet Dance Theatre, Friday August 11th at 7 p.m.; Verb: Ohio Contemporary Ballet, Saturday, August 12th at 7 p.m.; Creating Lewis with Emergence Ensemble, The Church of Starry Wisdom,

Friday, August 18th at 7 p.m.; and Papo Ruiz Y La Dulzura De La Salsa, Saturday, August 25th at 7 p.m. (In the event of rain cancellation on either Thursday 8/10, Friday 8/11 or Saturday 8/12, the cancelled performance will be rescheduled for Sunday 8.13 at 7 p.m.)

THE TRANSFORMER STATION, 1460 W. 29th Street, now operated a part of the Cleveland Museum of Art, is featuring two installations "Blow" and "Obscuring Moon" by Japanese artist Tabaimo. The Tabaimo installations will run thru February 3, 2024. Summer hours are noon - 7 p.m. from Wednesday thru Saturday.

FIELD DRAWINGS WITH ALYSSA LIZZINI a collaborative exhibition at the Cleve-



land Public Library's Main Building, 325 Superior, 4th Floor, International Languages Department. Come view location-based drawings created by Lizzini and community participants that were initiated in workshops in six neighborhoods: Broadway-Slavic Village, Detroit-Shoreway, Midtown, Tremont and University Circle. The final exhibition allows the viewer to see a new vision of Cleveland through the eyes of Lizzini and all who participated in the workshops. The project strives to change viewpoints, unite neighborhoods, and solidify drawing's contemporary significance as a means for connection. The project was supported by the Satellite Fund administered by SPACES and funded by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

WALKABOUT TREMONT: Friday, August 11th. Details: WalkaboutTremont.com
CITIZEN ACTION

TRACKING MONEY IN CLEVELAND POLITICS: Follow the Money CLE is volunteer driven project founded in the idea that every Clevelander should have the same access and influence in politics as the affluent donor class. Our mission is to strengthen democracy through transparency by publishing publicly available campaign reports and making the data easy to search and aggregate. We encourage you to explore the data yourself. Explore contributions to the Cleveland City Council Leadership Fund at <https://followthemoneycycle.org/>

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY FAMILY SPACE: Families with children ages 0-5, play, learn and grow together with your library FamilySpace is a special play area and dedicated staff connecting you to resources in the community. Carnegie West Branch, 1900 Fulton Road. For more

information, dates and times visit cpl.org/familyspace or call 216-623-7114

FAMILY ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Join the Family Space Family Advisory Committee at the Carnegie West Branch Library, 1900 Fulton Road. Share your ideas about FamilySpace programs and services. Develop leadership skills. For more information about the Family Advisory Committee and to fill out the Self-Nomination Form for committee consideration visit: cpl.org/familyspace or call 216-623-7114.

0 TO 3: READ TO ME! Literacy begins at birth and every parent can learn and use simple, researched-based techniques to build language and literacy skills right from the start. Check out the Cleveland Public Library's new collection of programs designed especially for children from birth to age 3 (36 months) and parents or other adult family members. Cpl.org/readtome. Questions? Call 216-623-7114. This program is made possible with a grant from the Bruening Foundation.

WORDS ON WHEELS: Cleveland residents can get books, movies, and more by mail. All you need is a Cleveland Public Library card. Sign up for a library card or to find out if this program is right for you, call your neighborhood Cleveland Public Library branch. For more information visit cpl.org/services/at-home.

CUYAHOGA COUNTY REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services is asking local partners and service providers to pitch ideas for how to meet the needs of our community's most traumatized and at-risk youth. The goal is to develop a Child Wellness Campus that provides a safe place for children and teens to stay while receiving treatment and family resources until a more permanent and sustainable solution is established. The RFP is a joint project of the Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board of Cuyahoga county and the Cuyahoga County Board of Development Disabilities. Proposals are due by 11 a.m. on Monday, September 4th. To receive a copy of the full RFP, contact the Department of Purchasing at 216-443-7200.

DONATIONS NEEDED
CLEVELAND RAPE CRISIS CENTER'S HUMAN TRAFFICKING DROP-IN CENTER, located at 10450 Superior Avenue is seeking the following donations: large and x-large underwear and bras, sneaker and sandals - sizes 8 and up, hair products such as curl cream, edge control and shampoo, and shelf stable food. To coordinate drop off, please reach out to Jazzmin Hardman at Jazzminh@clevelandrcc.org

RED CROSS seeks blood and platelet donations. Those who give throughout the month of August will get a \$10 e-gift card to a movie merchant of their choice. Details available at RedCrossBlood.org/Movie. From August 1st thru August 15 you can donate at the Warzel Blood Donation Center, 3747 Euclid Avenue on Mondays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 7 a.m. - 3 p.m. and Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from Noon - 8 p.m.

EDUCATION

CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT (CMSD) IT CONNECT CENTER is available 24 hours a day for free technical support with any CMSD devices. Families can either come to the IT Connect Center on the first floor of East Professional Center Monday thru Friday from 7:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. or call 216-838-0440 for around the clock support provided by Delaware Delivery Center.

ELECTION

SPECIAL ELECTION AUGUST 8TH: Polls will be open from 6:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m. For more information or to view the ballot language visit boe.cuyahogacounty.gov

EMPLOYMENT

EMPLOYMENT AND RESOURCE SUCCESS FAIR: Friday, August 4th at Cleveland Huntington Convention Center, 300 Lakeside Ave. <https://ohiomeansjobs1.timetap.com/#/> Shuttle services provided. Limited parking passes available. Registration at 11 a.m. Success Fair Noon - 4 p.m. Bring copies of your resume to give to employers. Fair will offer: Expungement Workshop, Second Chance Employers, Onsite Interviews, Resume Printing, Veterans Services, DFSC B.O.W. - Dress for Success, Cleveland Boutique on Wheels. Fair will feature over 125 employers and over 100 resources.

ENVIRONMENT

NORTHEAST OHIO AREA WIDE COORDINATING AGENCY (NOACA) is conducting regional climate action planning for Northeast Ohio as part of a carbon reduction program. There will be a meeting for Cuyahoga County residents on Thursday August 17 from 5:30 - 7 p.m. at Cuyahoga Community College Jerry Sue Thornton Center, Ford Room at 2500 E. 22nd. The meeting will give residents the opportunity to give their input on climate concerns, resiliency strategies, and what criterion should be used to evaluate possible actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There is no need to register.

EVENTS

NIGHT OUT AGAINST CRIME: Learn how to create safer places to live, work and play in the City of Cleveland. August 1st from 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. at Steelyard Commons, 2447 Steelyard Dr. and Halloran Park, 3550 W. 117th Street.

IN THE MARKET SPEAKER SERIES: In the Market for Resiliency: Climate Resiliency at Cleveland's Public Market, Wednesday, August 2nd at 5:30 p.m. at Market Garden Ohio City Room, 1947 W. 25th Street. Free. Advance registration required. To register visit: www.westsidemarket.org/inthemarket
BORDERLIGHT FRINGE FESTIVAL: August 3-5 in Playhouse Square District features three special events that are free and open to the public (suggested donation of \$10): Opening Night Party on Thursday, August 3rd from 9-11:30 p.m. at Cibreo Privato; Silent Disco on Friday, August 4th from 9-11 p.m. at US Bank Plaza in Playhouse

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Thursday & Friday, Open 6pm - 10pm; Villa Restaurant 6pm - 9pm with the Avanti Band playing 6:30pm - 10pm; Outdoor Bands: Thursday 7-10 pm BRONX COUNTRY, Friday 7 - 10pm SHOUT; Casino 6pm - 11pm ; Drive Thru 6pm - 8pm

Saturday, Open 3pm - 10pm; Outdoor Bands: 3-6pm FM77, 7-10pm MEDUSA; Casino 6pm - 11pm; Villa Restaurant 6 - 9pm, with Avanti Band 6:30pm-10pm; Drive Thru 3pm - 8pm

Sunday, Solemn Mass 10:00am and Procession thru streets: Festival Open: 1pm - 10pm; Outdoor Bands: 1-3pm CAVALIERI REALE / 3-6pm THE SUAVECITO PROJECT / 7-10pm DISCO INFERNO, Villa Restaurant 1pm - 9pm with Avanti Band 6:30pm - 10pm; Casino 5pm - 11pm; Drive Thru 1pm - 8pm

Monday, Open 1pm - 10pm; Greasy Pole 2pm; Outdoor Bands: 3-6pm BILLY MORRIS AND THE SUNSET STRIP / 7-10pm OLD SKOOL; Villa Restaurant 1pm - 9pm with Avanti Band 6:30pm - 10pm; Casino 5pm - 11pm; Drive Thru 1pm - 8pm **Grand Drawing 7pm!**

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Why You Should Vote NO on Issue 1

by Bruce Checefsky

In a special election on August 8, Ohio voters will decide on Issue 1 to determine whether the threshold to pass citizen-proposed constitutional amendments should be raised from 50% plus one to 60%. That would basically end the 111-year-old right of Ohio voters to petition lawmakers at the ballot box.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The proposed amendment would require signatures from at least 5% of voters in the last gubernatorial election in all 88 counties. (Currently it requires 5% from 44 counties.) A “yes” vote on Issue 1 would approve the changes, while “no” would reject them.

State Rep. Brian Stewart, a chief proponent of the change, made it clear that the ballot measure is intended to block a citizen-led amendment to protect abortion access, which is aiming for the November ballot, according to *The Columbus Dispatch*. It’s currently polling at 58-59% in favor.

David Brock, chair of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party, said at the recent Ward 7 Democratic Club meeting that Republicans are making it harder to vote, and refuse to raise the minimum wage or legalize marijuana. He suggested they could even ban birth control.

“What the Republicans are trying to do on August 8 is significant,” said Brock. “If passed, the floodgates will open.”

Cleveland Ward 7 executive precinct committeeman Mike Seals said Republicans have a supermajority in both chambers of the Ohio Legislature and are in the driver’s seat. “It is not just about abortion,” said Seals. “If the ballot measure passes, we are robbed of our choices and democracy.”

A coalition of organizations called Protect Choice Ohio, led by Ohio Physicians for Reproductive Rights (OPRR) is spearheading the effort to pass the constitutional amendment to guarantee reproductive rights in Ohio. The Right to Make Reproductive Decisions Including the Abortion Initiative is modeled after Reproductive Freedom for All measure that Michigan voters approved in 2022 by 55.5% of the vote. An anti-choice group called Protect Ohio Women is opposing the

amendment.

One Person One Vote in Ohio, a nonpartisan coalition against Issue 1, sued to change the ballot language they call biased in the proposed amendment. The Republican-leaning Ohio Supreme Court granted part of their request to make the language more precise and accurate, although it still fails to include the current 50% requirement, so voters understand that Issue 1 is making it harder to pass such a ballot issue.

Committeeman Seals was not surprised that Ohio Republicans have tried to push for a special election ahead of the November general election, saying it is part of their strategy to gain power and control with a preemptive strike.

“At the end of the day, the Republican agenda is to make it harder for democracy,” he added. “Issue 1 is not just about abortion rights. It is about controlling us.”

Ward 7 Councilwoman Stephanie Howse encouraged residents to engage in the process, with voter registration open until July 10, and early voting starting July 11 and ending on Sunday, August 6.

“For over 100 years, citizens of Ohio had the opportunity to bring issues to the ballot

and vote on them,” said Howse. “To change it now is very troubling. This is not off-brand with what Republicans have done in the past. They are consistent cheaters. They have been cheaters. It is the only way they know how to expand their powers.”

Growing up in Alabama, Mary Smith, a precinct leader in Ward 7, was taught civics in public school, where voting was part of education. The City of Cleveland, especially in her ward, has some of the lowest turnout numbers in the state, with less than 51% turnout compared to 74% in entire state in 2020. People do not know how to vote or register, she said.

“We are going to vote no matter what,” said Smith. “Growing up in the South, we realized the power in that pen. You can vote for whoever you want, but you will vote for somebody. We must teach our children to vote, tell it to our neighbors, and tell it to our grandchildren.”

Loss of community spirit has disillusioned Smith. She finds getting back to it hard but has not given up.

“I will bring my grandchildren to vote,” she said. “One house at a time, one child at a time, one neighbor at a time.”

Article courtesy of CoolCleveland

Plain Press delivery van stolen

To the Editor and my dear Clevelanders,

First off, I want to thank the Cleveland Police Officers that found the van that was stolen from my brother, Chuck Hoven.

The van is used in service of bringing the *Plain Press* to you.

I believed that the van would be found because my mother’s prayer: “Tony, Tony turn around, something is lost and must be found.” (Tony AKA St. Anthony.)

So, the fools that stole the van also did ridiculous damage, costing repairs: such as a hole in the gas tank; key damage to both the door and steering column; removed catalytic converter; cut battery cables to take the battery; plus to-be-discovered repair needs.

The tow into the impoundment lot creates costs of \$69.00 to get it out, and due to the damage another \$85.00 to move it from the lot to the street for Triple A to take it to a mechanic.

It would be helpful for the City to support its residents by having the City impoundment lot create the service of moving a car to the street given the lot fee.

So given that the van is in service to the community and Chuck is not the only one in the city or state dealing with the hassle of stolen vehicles and cost incurred, I challenge my Clevelanders to look out for each other better.

Karma has a way of dealing with the fools that took my brother’s vehicle. One hope is restorative justice. Anyone who has acted out in such a negative way in their community can work to do 10 to 1000 good deeds to clear their Karma.

Poverty itself can be a mindset. Lifting each other up by random acts of kindness can change the perspectives and the dynamics.

Clevelanders, the joke in my youth was “Cleveland, best location in the nation, or mistake on the lake.”

My question for you is what can you/



PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG Sunday, July 16, 2023; Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish’s procession through the neighborhood: Parishioners carry a float with a statue of St. Anthony carrying a child.

we each do today to make the world a better place. One is stop stressing each other out and don’t take and wreck stuff that isn’t yours. Change begins at home. Cleveland, I learned to love my roots.

Do better!
Mary Jo Hoven

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PROPERTY SURVEY

continued from page one

make a difference for neighbors and their communities," said Bibb. "We are working to identify the 'B' and 'C' properties that need rehabilitation, not demolition."

Exactly how City officials will help with rehabilitation remains unclear.

Of the 170,000 land parcels, over 7% are vacant structures characterized by cracking, rotting wood, broken or missing windows, missing brick and siding, and open holes, and are demolition targets, according to the City of Cleveland Building and Housing Department.

The Ohio Fair Lending Coalition and Cleveland State University Levin College of Urban Affairs and Education hosted a virtual forum to review the findings moderated by former Cleveland Councilman Tony Brancatelli. Presenters and panelists included Isaac Robb, Vice President, Western Reserve Land Conservancy; Sally Martin-O'Toole, Director, Building & Housing Department, City of Cleveland; Timothy F. Kobie, Ph.D., Manager Strategic Code, Enforcement Initiatives, Building & Housing Department, City of Cleveland; Frank Ford, Senior Policy Advisor, The Fair Housing Center; and Councilman Kris Harsh, Ward 13, Cleveland City Council.

"We asked more questions of this survey than any other time," said Martin-O'Toole. "We can use the results to retool the code enforcement to pivot towards a proactive direction and away from a reactive directive which is how the department has functioned for many decades."

The Building and Housing Department intends to take a no-holds-barred approach to predatory investors and hold them accountable with a cross-collaboration of stakeholders to reform existing legislation to modernize and attack bulk investors.

"Data does not make us smarter, but it does keep us more informed," said Robb during his presentation.

The findings showed a continued increase in vacant land in Southeast Cleveland after years of demolition. Between 2006 and 2018, Cleveland spent \$72 million demolishing 9,700 abandoned or blighted structures, according to an archived news release.

Additional resources for owner-occupied housing are needed. Hit by the foreclosure crisis, redlining, and the COVID-19 pandemic, people need support. Research to find owners of vacant structures is compulsory to hold them accountable for back taxes and repair.

Over two-thirds of the occupied housing stock is pre-1978. Lead hazards are frequent.

Most out-of-state ownership structures are an 'F' Hazardous to 'C' Fair, causing concern for City officials.

"We recognize there is bias in any data collection of this nature, but the possibilities of data analysis are endless," Robb said.

Brancatelli called the survey a sidewalk survey. Over 30 surveyors paid \$18 - \$20/hour graded properties on appearance based on 53 questions without leaving the sidewalk. They spent about two minutes per property.

Kobie said his department is ready to operationalize the findings. He plans to focus on the C-Graded Structures representing 37% of all parcels, and increase code enforcement to prevent homes from sliding into a D or F. Most C-Graded Structures are in Slavic Village, Lee/Harvard, and North Shore Collinwood.

Sixty-six percent of occupied structures showed low lead risk, while 64% of vacant structures are risk classified. Areas of Mount Pleasant, Union Miles, and Lee Harvard topped the list.

"Our next step is to focus on inspecting vacant D and F structures and condemning and razing where appropriate, then pivot to proactive code enforcement," said Kobie, "which includes occupied C, D, and F

properties."

Comparatively, in recent surveys in 2015 and 2018 (east side only), occupied structures decreased by more than 9%, said Ford, while vacant and demolished properties, increased.

"You see fewer vacant structures in 2023 than in 2015," he said. "Vacant land is on the increase due in part to demolition. Blight, which undermines health, safety, and homeowner wealth, has been removed on the east side."

Property grades are subjective, he added. Surveyors see the same thing but grade them differently. Two properties on different sides of the city look similar in condition and can have markedly different grades.

"You need to approach survey grades with caution," said Ford. "We should not emphasize the grades. The grades are not the greatest value of the survey."

Councilman Kris Harsh, Ward 13, identified two areas of interest for the City Council, operational and legal, and said the data shows which areas need the most investment.

Balancing the issues is easier with the data at hand. Code enforcement needs to be separated between owner-occupied and investment properties to keep residents from paying too much of the burden. Community Development Corporations offer a lighter hand with code enforcement rather than Building and Housing, which, according to him, is too bureaucratic.

"I ask homeowners if they need help with code enforcement," he added, "and let investors know there will be consequences for violations."

Harsh would like City of Cleveland building and housing ordinances and laws to include the treatment of Out of State LLCs, separate them from homeowners, and deal with Airbnbs, construction, and permitting. His takeaway from the survey is that Cleveland is one-third vacant.



PHOTO BY BRUCE CHECEFSKY
Tuesday, June 27, 2023; Forum on the Cleveland Property Survey, Cleveland State University Levin College of Public Affairs and Education: Ward 13 Cleveland City Council Representative Chris Harsh participates in the discussion about the condition of housing in Cleveland.

Rightsizing, which can mean eliminating services to largely empty neighborhoods or demolishing thousands of buildings, does not fit his vision.

"I believe Cleveland can and should be a growing city by attracting new residents. Cleveland will not look like it did thirty or forty years ago," he said. "We have to come to terms on how we permit and allow more modular and manufactured housing. We need affordable housing. We cannot build entire city blocks of \$350,000 to \$400,000 houses."

Data-driven decisions do not necessarily result in better overall outcomes or make a decision more or less valid, critics argue, but they can help to break down complex issues. Businesses can pinpoint ideal store

locations using data like demographics and traffic patterns to determine the likelihood of success for a particular site before taking on a new investment. Flawed analysis of data can lead to millions of dollars wasted. Poor communication and faulty execution can undermine the process, according to *Forbes*. Not all data-driven decisions will produce the anticipated results.

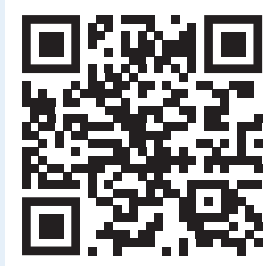
The City of Cleveland and Western Reserve Land Conservancy Partner for the Property Inventory and Assessment survey cost \$170,000. The survey was paid for by Rocket Community Fund, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), and the Cleveland Foundation. To watch the forum, visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_2NVXzmjls

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PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG

Sunday, July 16, 2023; Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish's procession through the neighborhood: Parishioners carry a float with statue of Mary and the Christ child in the procession.

TRAILBLAZING

continued from page one

This excited Tim. Jeff took Tim out on a hike on the canal way to give him an idea of what could be. By 1991, Tim left his job in city hall to become the first full time executive director of Canalway Partners.

But the path forward was not set in stone. They first explored the idea of turning it into a national park, but it did not meet the criteria. However, there was another option: a National Heritage Area. According to the National Parks

Service, a National Heritage Area is a "place where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape." The Cuyahoga Valley definitely fit the bill. So, Tim and Tom produced the necessary studies and brought the proposal to the area's congressional bipartisan representation: Ralph Regula and Tom Sawyer.

In 1994, it was brought before the House of Representatives for a vote. Each National Heritage Area has to be individually approved by Congress. But it was filibustered by a representative

from Louisiana. The bill was withdrawn. It seemed like another setback, but the bill did not include funding. In addition, it would have set up even more bureaucracy for Tim to deal with. They were already dealing with multiple jurisdictions trying to map this trail across numerous cities and counties and could not fathom dealing with even more on a federal level. The bill's defeat did not seem so bitter. "Sometimes you win by losing," Tim said. "We were lucky to not have that legislation go through."

So, in 1996, they tried again. This time it was passed- with money. The canal way was on the map and open for federal investment. Due to work spearheaded by Senator Portman, in

2022 this designation was reauthorized unanimously for another 15 years by the Senate.

But there was another government employee who was paying attention to the Cuyahoga River. On September 11, 1997, President Clinton signed an executive order designating ten rivers as American Heritage Rivers which would receive special preservation and revitalization investment from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). When his advisors gave him a list of which ten rivers, President Clinton noticed the Cuyahoga was not chosen and told them to try again. They even forgot the Mississippi. Eventually the list settled which included the Cuyahoga. This allowed the canal way to become a national scenic byway.

Now came the task of blazing a tow-path trail from the Canal Basin Park to Harvard Avenue. Their initial strategy was to piecemeal it from Harvard, but there were too many environmental concerns, most notable being the old Harshaw Chemical plant which processed uranium for the Manhattan Project.

Plans were stalled until Mitchell Schneider stepped in to buy part of the old steel mill. Tim read that Mitchell wanted to honor the heritage of the area, so on a whim, they approached him with the idea of the trail. He liked it so much he offered to pay for that section of trail himself with no direct subsidies. "The reason he refused subsidies is he really didn't want the City of Cleveland to have any control over what he was doing," Tim said.

The team had to be just as creative to find sources of funding for the other sections of the trail. They applied for a grant through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) arguing that the Cuyahoga is a tributary to what is technically an inland sea, the Great Lakes. They applied for habitat restoration funds during the Obama administration when stimulus funds were delegated based on conservation

efforts. Tim even once took Bob Taft for a bike ride on the trail when he was still governor to shore up his support during a budgetary session over which the governor has final say. It worked. "Our group, with Tim, were extremely creative in winning money," Tom noted.

Canalway Partners has to compete with other groups for funding, including partners who help administer the towpath, such as Cleveland Metroparks. What tips the scales in their favor is having public expression of support. "Citizens make our best advocates," Tom underscored.

To continue to involve the community and respect the history of the area, Tim and Tom plan to incorporate artwork along the way. Their next dream is to have a mural done by John Rivera-Resto, who has many murals around Cleveland, including the northwest corner of W. 25th and Clark. They would like a mural painted on the pylons at Hart Crane Memorial Park, which is the park just north of the Columbus Road bridge in the flats.

There is still work to be done on the towpath trail, and Tim and Tom still have plans for Canal Basin Park. "We're working on that the same way- a little bit at a time," Tom declared. But the pair has accomplished much over the decades. Every inch of the trail was a small step toward an uncertain future. And now Canalway Partners has a full board and staff and many community partners to help keep the vision alive. After thirty-eight years, Tim and Tom, like all other Northeast Ohioans, can enjoy walking or biking through the reclaimed river valley with their families.

The Cuyahoga River has been through a lot over the years. But by the example of unrelenting dedication set by Tim Donovan and Tom Yablonsky with the Canalway Partners, and with incremental improvement championed by the community, Cleveland can showcase to the nation how stewardship of its natural heritage can serve the people for generations.

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Aflac donates to Care Alliance and installs a bench in Lincoln Park

On July 11th at Lincoln Park in the Tremont neighborhood Aflac insurance company awarded a \$100,000 CareGrant to Care Alliance Health Center of Cleveland and installed a commemorative park bench in Lincoln Park.

The grant to Care Alliance Health Center will support its mission of “making healthcare more accessible to underserved communities” said a statement issued by Aflac. The insurance company said, “The Aflac CareGrant comes out of Aflac’s commitment to supporting organizations that are helping to close the gap for individuals and communities currently suffering from or highly exposed to medical debt.”

Aflac commissioned a national survey to examine Americans’ awareness of and exposure to medical debt. The survey revealed that Ohio was among eleven states where the number of people with health insurance that had savings less than or equivalent to their out-of-pocket maximum was above the national average. In Ohio 68% of survey respondents fell into that financial state of being unprepared for medical debt. The national average was 63% of respondents being unprepared for medical debt.

A crowd made up largely of staff from Care Alliance Health Center and Aflac witnessed the ceremony. Speakers included Aflac President Virgil Miller, Care Alliance Health Center President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Claude Jones, and City of Cleveland Director of Public Health Dr. David Margolius.

Aflac President Miller said many Americans are a diagnosis away from financial risk. He said medical debt is high due to the high cost of health care and that “health insurance was never designed to cover all the expenses related to a medical claim.”

To help address the financial stress

caused by high medical debt, Miller said Aflac has committed \$1 million dollars a year to Aflac CareGrants to “help individuals and organizations deal with medical debt.”

In addition to the CareGrants, Aflac installs park benches in communities where it gives the grants. Miller said the idea for the park benches came from an Aflac ad which featured two people on a park bench discussing medical debt. The commemorative bench, now anchored firmly in Lincoln Park, is painted a light blue color and Aflac hopes it will serve as “a natural space of rest, reflection, peace and comfort for the Cleveland community.”

Care Alliance Health Center President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Claude Jones accepted the \$100,000 CareGrant from Aflac and shared information about Care Alliance’s role in the community. Jones said about 11,000 individuals receive care they need each year from Care Alliance. He said without Care Alliance “many would have difficulty receiving care.” He noted that Care Alliance serves about 2,500 individuals yearly who are homeless. Dr. Jones said the grant from Aflac would help Care Alliance with a planned expansion, the creation of a new health center at 7300 St. Clair Avenue.

City of Cleveland Director of Public Health Dr. David Margolius helped to cut the ribbon for the dedication of Lincoln Park’s new bench. He thanked Aflac for the donation of the bench and for the grant to Care Alliance which he called a “world class organization.”

When asked if he knew of any statistics on how many Clevelanders had lost their homes due to health care debt, Care Alliance’s Dr. Jones said he didn’t know of any existing data on the subject. He expressed interest in the subject, and

said losing your home would definitely be considered a “social determinate” contributing to your overall health outcomes.

Director of Public Health Margolius said it would be difficult to isolate medical debt from other debt to determine its impact on people losing their homes. He said, “Medical debt is a big problem. The health care system is messed up.”

The Aflac Care Index survey show some of the problems insured Americans will potentially face if they receive a medical diagnosis resulting in huge medical expenses. The survey notes that “46% of insured Americans don’t have enough in savings to pay for medical expenses not covered by their health insurance.”

The summary of the Aflac Care Index cites August 2022 US medical bankruptcy statistics published by *RetireGuide* which document that, “In America, medical bills are the most common reason for bankruptcy.”

Data from the United States Census Bureau cited by the study indicates that “more than 91% of Americans reported having health insurance in 2020, but still 30% are in medical debt.”

The study takes a close look at states with high potential vulnerability to medical debt crises. In Ohio the study says: “29% of people have no retirement savings, college education account, savings account, stocks/bonds, or investment real estate property. 31% have no rainy-day fund, while 20% have \$1,000 or less. 29% of respondents report incomes less than \$29,000, and 23% are currently unemployed. 27% have had a parent or grandparent suffer from a stroke. 52% have stayed in the hospital overnight. 55% have visited an emergency room or department.”

Aflac urges Americans to learn about what their health care insurance will



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Tuesday, July 11, 2023; Lincoln Park, 1200 Starkweather Avenue in the Tremont neighborhood: Director of Public Health for the City of Cleveland Dr. David Margolius thanks Aflac for their contributions toward a healthier Cleveland. Aflac donated \$100,000 to Care Alliance Health Center and installed a commemorative park bench in Lincoln Park in the Tremont neighborhood.

cover and how much they will potentially have to pay out of pocket. The study notes that “83% of respondents in the Aflac Care Index survey incorrectly believe they have enough health insurance to protect themselves from medical debt.”

The study urges Americans to make use of financial education resources, such as the United States Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation’s Money

Smart financial education program, The American Savings Initiative, and the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, to help them plan for their financial future.

The study summary report also urges Americans to prioritize preventive care and invest in supplemental health insurance.

Tips to be a savvy consumer and how to avoid scams

by **Tonya Sams**

With so many ways for consumers to spend their money, it is easy to become a victim of scams. Eric Zell, a supervising attorney in the Economic Justice group at The Legal Aid of Society of Cleveland, offers a few tips to keep your money safe.

One way to avoid being scammed is to conduct research to find out if the person or company is legitimate. This includes understanding the products and services being offered and researching to look for any consumer complaints. Consumers should ask around to find out if others are familiar with the reputation of the person or company that they are planning to do business with.

It is also important for consumers to understand how contracts work.

“Read the contract and make sure that you understand what you’re agreeing to,” Zell said. He suggests that if it is

hard to understand to find someone who can help you understand the language.

“Any person or company that you are interacting with who is offering you a contract should allow you some time to review it,” he said. “It is not a good sign if someone is pressuring you to sign a contract right then and there. You should have an opportunity to understand what’s in it and review it, making sure that you understand what you will have to do going forward.”

After signing a contract, always keep a copy for your records. This includes keeping copies of documents that are exchanged after the contract has been signed, like payments and receipts. This will be helpful if you have any problems later and need to provide documentation.

This tip also applies when purchasing a vehicle.

“Car dealers may try to hide informa-

tion from you. They will not necessarily tell you everything up front, so you need to review the paperwork thoroughly to understand what your monthly obligations are going to be,” Zell said. “You need to understand whether there are additional fees or services added.”

Zell said that it is also important not to be fooled by low-cost or free offers.

Always read the fine print so you know what you’re agreeing to. If it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is.

“People can be scammed when they think they are signing up for a free offer, but their credit information is still collected,” Zell said. “Then down the road they are charged for other services or fees.”

Keeping your personal information safe is also important. If a company is contacting you, make sure they are who

they claim to be. Zell said that financial institutions or government entities like the social security administration or IRS will never reach out to people by phone or email out of the blue. If you have doubts, hang up the phone and call the number that you know is correct to reach them directly.

Legal Aid offers a number of online resources on consumer issues, bankruptcy and other money-related issues. Visit lasclev.org, click on the “Services & Resources” tab, click “Legal Resources,” and then select “Money.”

Do you have questions regarding money-related issues? Legal Aid may be able to help! Call Legal Aid at 888-817-3777 during normal business hours or apply online 24/7 at lasclev.org/apply.

Tonya Sams is the Development and Communications Assistant for The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

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YARD SALE: Saturday, August 5th, 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. at 3151 W. 84th Street. (South of Clark) Housewares, file cabinets, closet, clothes, holiday ornaments, & cool stuff. Special cookbook section. (Rain date: August 6th.)

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COMMUNITY BOARD

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Square District; and Closing Night Party & Fringe Festival Awards on Saturday, August 5 from 9 p.m. until midnight at the Hermit Club. RSVPs are encouraged: at <https://bit.ly/43j9iuv>.

HOUSING

CLEVELAND HOUSING COURT has a neighborhood kiosk at the South Branch Library 3096 Scranton Road. Attend housing court hearings without traveling downtown. Walk-ins welcome starting at 10 a.m. To learn more: cpl.org/legal and cleveland-housingcourt.org, or call Cleveland Housing Court Bailiff Department at 216-664-4765.

PEACE ACTION

GOLDEN RULE PEACE BOAT AT NORTH COAST HARBOR AUGUST 5-8: Welcome the Golden Rule to North Coast Harbor at noon on Saturday August 5th. The crew of the Golden Rule will join Cleveland Peace Action in commemorating Hiroshima Day with words, music an inspiration for a nuclear-free world on Sunday, August 6th at 7 p.m. at the Free Stamp, Willard Park, next to Cleveland City Hall. Limited seating. Bring a chair. All events are free.

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PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Saturday, June 24, 2023; William Dean Howells Junior High Reunion, Fairview Park between Franklin and Woodbine: Students who attended William Dean Howells Junior High School from 1966 through 1977 gathered for a reunion. They were joined by Dr. Stephen Sroka, who taught at the school in the 1970s, and Chris Warren of the Plain Press. William Dean Howells was one of the few integrated schools prior to the implementation of the desegregation order in 1979. Students from segregated elementary schools (Kentucky and McGuffey) went to William Dean Howells on Woodbine for their junior high school years. Chris Warren said students largely from Sroka's classes at William Dean Howells wrote a column in the *Plain Press* in the 1970s called *Youth Speak Out*.

POVERTY

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at some of her public statements reveals her position that residents are not benefiting from all the economic development handouts that Cleveland has been giving to developers.

A *Crain's Cleveland Business* article titled "Cleveland's economic development department pulls back on incentives" by Michelle Jarboe says:

During budget hearings in February, Tessa Jackson, the City's economic development director, told Cleveland City Council members that public spending on loans, grants and other incentives over the last decade-plus has not meaningfully impacted residents' lives.

"When you look at historic poverty rates, historic unemployment rates, that money hasn't really moved the bar," she said during a public meeting. (February 22, 2023, Budget Hearing) "You can't spend a half a billion dollars on economic development and not move the bar for anybody."

The article also noted the push back from developers to Jackson's suggestion that they be held accountable to provide some benefit in terms of alleviating poverty or addressing unemployment in return for the huge subsidies they are receiving. One developer mentioned in the *Crain's* article is Doug Price of K & D Management who objected strongly to the changes Jackson proposed to limit give-a-ways to developers that were not producing clear benefits to the City of Cleveland and its citizens.

A new website (<https://followthemoneycycle.org>) called Follow the Money CLE which is dedicated to tracking donations to local politicians lists the top 15 donors to the Cleveland City Council Leadership Fund since 2002. The second highest donor by an organization to that fund was K & D Management which contributed \$42,155.52 during that time (second only to the Cleveland Browns Football Co. LLC.) Cleveland City Council's Leadership Fund is controlled by the President of Cleveland City Council. Perhaps that explains why Cleveland City Council did little to object to the firing of Cleveland Economic Development Director Tessa Jackson after being seemingly receptive to her proposals at this Year's budget hearings.

At the Budget Hearing, Jackson called upon City Council to partner with the Economic Development Department to help move the bar for citizens of Cleveland. She called for a competitive process where developers would have to prove that their projects are the highest and best use of City resources.

Cleveland City Council and the Bibb administration performed a minor tweak to the City of Cleveland's tax abatement program that will soon be taking effect. But the tax abatements, Tax Increment Financing, and other giveaways, continue to hurt the City of Cleveland's ability to collect enough tax revenue to respond effectively to the needs of its citizens. Our politicians' subservience to developers and sports team owners has seriously diverted funds that are critically needed to address the serious needs of those living in poverty.

Developers have come to expect handouts from our local politicians while offering little in return. They complain vehemently when the value of the public subsidies gets questioned. Often loans given by the City of Cleveland are not paid back and jobs

promised by developers in many cases have never been created.

The City of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, the Cleveland Public Library system, and the Cleveland MetroParks, all are deprived of revenue due to the subsidies given to developers. Residents seeking City of Cleveland services are often told there is no money, or they must wait their turn because the City's ability to respond to their need is limited.

Politicians seem reluctant to change a system that is not working. Do they truly believe despite the past record that the system of handouts will someday benefit Clevelanders? Or are they simply responding to the amount of campaign donations given to them by those who benefit from the handouts?

At any rate, there is ample evidence that continuing down the path of subsidies to developers without getting much in return for residents is not working for most Cleveland residents.

A June 20th report by Wallet Hub's financial writer Adam McCann entitled "2023's Best- and Worst-Run Cities in America" measured the effectiveness of a city's leadership "by determining a city's operating efficiency." It compares "the quality of services residents received, against the city's total budget."

Using that measurement WalletHub found

Cleveland ranked 146th out of 149 cities studied in terms of the services Cleveland residents were receiving compared to the size of the budget the City of Cleveland has available to spend.

Other items the study included in its analysis were: long-term debt per capita; high school graduation rate; infant mortality rate; violent crime rate; unemployment rate; cost of living; adjusted median annual household income; percentage of the population in poverty; quality of the roads; air pollution. Notably, Cleveland ranked 146th in terms of the percentage of its citizens living in poverty – three cities with a higher poverty rate than Cleveland were Detroit, Michigan; Gary, Indiana; and Flint, Michigan.

Cleveland ranked lower than any other city in Ohio in the quality of its services. In Quality of City services Cleveland ranked 137th. Cincinnati ranked 85th. Columbus ranked 90th. Dayton ranked 116th. Akron ranked 117th.

In measures of financial stability Cleveland ranked 114th. In measuring educational achievement Cleveland ranked 136th. In measures of health Cleveland ranked 107th. For safety Cleveland ranked 139th. For its overall economy Cleveland ranked 137th.

It is time for Cleveland politicians to re-evaluate the subsidies they are giving to

developers. The public services Clevelanders deserve depend upon increasing property tax revenue from the new development that is going up. Giving that revenue away in abatements and tax increment financing and other incentives deprives Clevelanders of much needed services. Not using limited funds to meet critical needs of Cleveland-

ers limits the effectiveness of the City of Cleveland's budget in alleviating the pains of poverty. Cleveland needs to keep its current residents, help meet their needs, and attract new residents by providing quality services, not by giving away its tax base.

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