



Coventry Village News

September, 1988

The Newsletter of Coventry Neighbors, Inc.

Volume 12 No. 8

Meeting is September 13, 7:45 PM, at the Library

Elections in October

A regular monthly meeting of Coventry Neighbors, Inc. (CNI) will be held on Tuesday, September 13, 7:45 PM, at the Coventry Village Library, 1925 Coventry Road. Everyone is invited, but only folks whose dues have been paid for at least thirty days are eligible to vote.

CNI will hold its annual elections of officers at its meeting of October 11. Six positions will be up for grabs: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and two Trusteeships. A trustee of the Heights Community Congress will also be selected.

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In early August, several CNI activists met with City staff and the architects who are developing plans for the rebuilding of the small park in front of Coventry Yard. Those plans are in very preliminary form now. They show a substantial increase in the amount of seating. The grass is mostly gone. CNI will have several more opportunities to review these plans as they become more detailed and specific. Any member who wants to participate in this review process is welcome. Please call us at 371-6095 if you want to be informed of these review sessions.

Construction of the project is tentatively set for the early spring.

Join
Coventry Neighbors, Inc.
today.

Please use the form on the back page.

Coventry Cinema closes its doors Was neighborhood institution

With "Au Revoir" on its marquee, as if that were the title of a foreign movie playing there, the Coventry Cinema, formerly Heights Art Theatre, died quietly late in the evening of August 29.

George Fitzpatrick, an artist and Coventry Village resident who was always quick to contribute to good local causes, had managed the theater for twenty-four years.

He had warned us for years that the theater was ailing. Although owned by a Phoenix, Arizona, concern, its manage-

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Irv's Delicatessen reverts to its old management

Dianne Javier, who with several partners operated Irv's Deli (1798 Coventry Road) for eleven months, has been evicted. An eviction action brought by Irving Gulko, owner of the building and former operator of the business, had been pending for months. On August 18, David Goodwin, a referee for the Cleveland Heights Municipal Court, ruled for Mr. Gulko. Ms. Javier and her partners had missed several rent payments.

Mr. Gulko apparently intends to resume operating the business. A large, hand-lettered sign in its window reads, "Open soon under new management."

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Coventry location sought for franchise pizza shop

A University Heights man is seeking space in Coventry Village for the first Cleveland-area franchise of Captain Tony's Pizza and Pasta Emporium, a two-year-old operation based in Rochester, New York. Numerous Captain Tony's franchises are in operation in New York State, on the West Coast, and in England.

Michael Friedman, a University Heights resident who now works as Sales and Marketing Director for Beachwood Security Systems, had hoped to bring his proposal for a Captain Tony's before the City's Board of Zoning

Appeals this month. He had hoped to take over the space soon to be vacated by Vidstar Systems, the video tape rental shop at 1856 1/2 Coventry Road. Vidstar plans to move to the long-vacant former location of Coventry Books, at 1824 Coventry Road.

Mr. Friedman's negotiations for that space, however, have broken off.

Mr. Friedman expresses strong confidence in the health and vitality of the Coventry commercial area. He says that it is by far his first choice for the location of the restaurant he wants to open. He has initiated conversations with the owners of several other Coventry sites which might be suitable to his business.

In addition to pasta and pizza, Captain Tony's menu includes calzones, eggplant Parmesan, chicken wings, and six sorts of submarine sandwiches.

A pizza delivery aspect of the business uses radio-dispatched trucks. According to promotional literature for the franchise, the truck's "humidity-controlled ovens can hold 40 ... popular pizzas for up to 2 hours with no loss of quality. Side coolers hold 24 liters of Coke. So you can deliver 40 pizzas with no return trips."

The Coventry Village News is published monthly, except in August, by Coventry Neighbors, Inc., in cooperation with the Heights Community Congress.

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Anyone wishing to submit copy to the *Coventry Village News* may do so by sending it to the Editor, *Coventry Village News*, 2776 Hampshire Road, Apt. 1-B, Cleveland Heights, Ohio, 44106.

The deadline for each month is the 16th day of the preceding month. While no unsigned material will be used, names may be withheld from publication at the writer's request.

Phone: 371-6095.

Coventry Village . . .
*where we all get along together
pretty well.*

Painting, landscaping help is still available from the City of Cleveland Heights

As much as \$1,500 towards the cost of painting homes in Coventry Village North—that's the part of Coventry Village in Cleveland Heights north of Mayfield Road—is still available from a federally-funded program.

That program also offers up to \$300 for improvements to landscaping.

The program is administered by Jay Gardner at City Hall. Call him at 291-4818.

Join
Coventry Neighbors
today!

An editorial . . .

The parking shortage: it's time for Rock Court

A severe shortage of parking—more by far than any other factor—restricts the healthy economic development of Coventry Village. Without a substantial increase in the supply of parking easily available to business patrons, the the level of commercial activity cannot continue to grow.

Huge amounts of local government resources have been devoted to new parking lots in other commercial areas all over Cleveland Heights. A classy parking deck was built in Cedar-Fairmount, and large surface lots have been built in Cedar-Lee, Noble-Monticello, and on and near South Taylor Road.

Now it's Coventry's turn.

No factor was more important to the demise of the Coventry Cinema than the shortage of parking. The development of half a dozen new restaurants, later hours for many businesses (especially Pick-n-Pay), and the growing popularity of Coventry Village as a place to shop—all these factors so strained the parking supply that the theater could no longer survive.

Further economic development of this neighborhood is essential not just to this area, but to all of Cleveland Heights. The lack of parking impedes that growth more than any other factor. It is a problem which only the government has the resources to address.

For several years, the City's Planning staff promised two important projects for Coventry's commercial district. Work is now in progress on the first of these—rebuilding the muni lot across from Tommy's Restaurant.

The other promised project offers a far more substantial increase to the parking supply. In most of the forms discussed so far, this project has involved razing the three houses on the west end of Rock Court, behind Pick-n-Pay and Heights Cleaners, and replacing them with public parking. The possibility of a parking deck there has been discussed, though funding so ambitious a project has never been imagined to be easy.

Because such projects require years of planning, the time to get serious about doing it is *now*. Funding will be a problem, as will property acquisition, which will likely involve long and unpleasant negotiations and possibly eminent domain action.

The effort must begin now, before the neighborhood loses its essential developmental momentum, and begins to slide backwards towards blight and economic decline.

Heights Heritage Tour 'Jewels of the Jazz Age' September 24 and 25

Eight Cleveland Heights homes, symbolic of the optimism, opulence, comfort and prosperity of the Jazz Era, are the subjects of the twelfth annual Heights Heritage Tour on Sunday, September 25, noon to 6:00 PM. Tickets cost \$7 (\$5 for Senior Citizens) and are available from High Tide/Rock Bottom, 1814 Coventry Road, and from numerous other merchants around town. On the day of the tour, tickets may be purchased at Cleveland Heights City Hall beginning at 11:30 AM.

Highlights of the tour include one of the earliest examples of English Tudor style in Cleveland Heights (c. 1903); a restored Traditional American Craftsman home built in the Mission Style (c. 1907); an elegant Jacobethan eclectic home (c. 1915); several Tudor Revival homes with beautifully-maintained original interior features; and a 1920 example of Georgian Revival that makes daring use of colors and textures throughout the interior.

A patrons' preview party—this year called "Gem Joint Speakeasy"—will start 4:30 PM on Saturday, September 24, and continue until midnight. Only patrons of the event—who contribute at least \$30—will be told the location of the speakeasy. That minimum gets one cocktails only; contributions of \$120 to \$500 per couple are expected for the entire evening's festivities. All proceeds benefit the Heights Community Congress (HCC).

For further information, or to volunteer as a guide, contact the HCC at 321-6775.

Coventry Cinema . . . *from page 1*

ment was completely in local hands. No one felt worse than George and his house manager, Betty Fortney, as they counted the take that last night. Revenues had gone from poor to awful in the past year or so.

Even letting Colony Theater owner and well-known showman Morrie Zyrl do the booking wasn't enough to turn the place around. Lack of exclusive second-run movies, lack of parking, and lack of warm bodies willing to walk in the door for even the old black-and-white films killed the Coventry.

The theater was built in 1919. In the late 1950's, it became part of a large chain of "art houses," and showed primarily French and Swedish films. In the early 60's, the theater was the site of a now-famous bust, when a man named Jacobellis, the manager at that time, was arrested by the Cleveland Heights cops for showing "Les Amants," ["The Lovers"]. The case worked its way to the Ohio Supreme Court, which supported the cops. But that decision was overturned by the US Supreme Court in "Jacobellis vs. Ohio." This precedent-setting decision established that a *national* standard of decency must be violated in order for there to be an obscenity violation. Fans of the First Amendment continue to applaud that landmark decision. Too bad no one ever erected a plaque in commemoration.

From the mid-sixties through the early seventies, the theater ran a combination of avant-garde and foreign films in a series of programs that changed twice a week. Schedules were published far in advance. Also run, and fondly remembered, were the Midnight Movies. How many of us saw "Reefer Madness" there for the first time (and how many were mad with reefer?) and thrilled to the nose-poking delights of 3-D naked women on swings in "Young Prison Girls"? Not so memorable were the flicks obviously made by graduate students of cinema—but who cared? It was midnight, it was Coventry Road (*not* Coventry Village), and it was Irv's afterwards for a 1:30 AM snack. A slightly younger generation gave "Rocky Horror Picture

Show" its fourteen-year run in the same time slot.

The theater made some good money in the mid-seventies with a bill of very hard-core porn. But the place was clean, well-lit, and without the sorts of problems usually associated such establishments. It was amazing just who attended the theater back then: college students, middle-class couples, municipal bureaucrats, and gaggles of girls and guys (in separate groups, of course). The lobby was a hugely incongruous place. This was where some of the neighborhood's straightest and most articulate people worked. You could wander in there for a candy bar and a cup of coffee and talk about the latest Hollywood flick—years before Arabica opened.

The neighborhood never had a problem with a porno house directly across from an elementary school. George never put showcards with racy pictures in the display windows, and fifty weeks of the year the large marquee read only, "Two Shows Daily." Whenever that marquee read "Deep Throat" or something similar, we knew that the out-of-town ownership was visiting, and that we neighbors should stay away. Thanks, George, for those years of discretion. VCR's killed the porno movies—for a couple of bucks you could watch in the privacy of your own home.

It is impossible to say what will become of the theater. When long-time employee Lee Batdorff called to tell of the closing, his biggest concern was with how the vestibule and front of the theater would be kept free of the litter and trash that accumulate so swiftly there. The building's plumbing is completely shot, and so are its HVAC and electrical systems. The place was not built for live performances, and there are no wings, dressing rooms, or stage. There are a few local folks with money who might be willing to buy the place—but the bigger question is *what to do with it?* We already have one weak mall, and probably do not need another.

Did you know that the huge balcony hasn't been used since the 1950's? And that means that it hasn't been dusted since then, either. I hope we don't get another thirty-year accumulation of dust on my favorite seat: tenth row, middle.

Irv returns . . . *from page 1*

In the past, Mr. Gulko's operation of the business has presented serious problems to the community. In November of 1982, neighborhood residents voted overwhelmingly to stop the sale there of liquor for on-premises consumption.

Though the closing of the bar solved some of the worst problems that Irv's presented to the neighborhood, many others remained.

When Ms. Javier and her partners took control of the business, they pledged to address those problems—and they did make some large improvements. Mostly, they gave the place a cleaning—something it never got while Mr. Gulko operated it.

Financing further improvements, though, was a serious problem for Ms. Javier. Her partner Sheldon Strauss, a hot-shot stock broker when he got involved with Irv's, lost his shirt (and his job) when the stock market took its October 19 tumble.

Mr. Gulko himself, according to Ms. Javier, stood directly in the way of some planned improvements. For instance, a municipal government program offered to pay much of the cost of façade improvements and the removal of the planters around the building. But Mr. Gulko refused to allow the removal of the planters, and the offer of governmental help was withdrawn. No changes were made to the exterior. The planters remain, along with the hangers-out who sit on them, often harassing pedestrians who pass by.

Mr. Gulko's problems with tax authorities further complicated Ms. Javier's efforts. After neighborhood leaders and local government officials agreed to allow the the sale of liquor for on-premises consumption, so that the bar could be opened, the State of Ohio refused to give its permission until some old tax bills—for sales taxes and withholding—were paid. Ms. Javier did not have the resources to pay these obligations, so the bar never opened. Now the State is threatening to stop even the sales of beer and wine for carry-out unless those bills are paid before October 1.

Real estate taxes on the building have not

been paid since 1982. With interest and penalties, the tax bill is now \$21,408.98; the county tax authorities have asked the prosecutor's office to begin foreclosure. Because those real estate taxes are paid through a mortgage held by Society Bank, it is nearly certain that the mortgage is also substantially in arrears. Five federal tax liens on Mr. Gulko and the corporation through which he controlled the delicatessen total \$54,737.18. More than \$100,000 is owed to the federal Small Business Administration.

—LB

Recycle glass and aluminum

On the second Saturday of each month, Heights Citizens for Recycling collects glass and aluminum in the parking lot behind the Recreation Pavilion, on the north side of Mayfield Road, between Superior Road and Monticello Boulevard.

You can receive cash payment for what you bring in, or you can designate a charity to receive that money.

Lids must be removed from glass containers, which must be rinsed and sorted by color.

Library goings-on

Extraordinary art exhibits are now on display at the Coventry Village Library.

Watercolors painted by children of the Coventry School can be seen throughout the Library. The Art Museum display case has objects in a variety of media and from a variety of cultures depicting celebrations.

Voter registration is available at all the libraries of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights System. The last day for registration for the November 8 election is October 10. Register early to avoid a wait in line.

The Coventry Village Library is now once again open on Sundays from 1:00 to 5:00 PM. Weekday hours are: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 12:00 noon to 8:30 PM; Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM.

Coventry Village . . .

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pretty well*

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The next regular meeting of Coventry Neighbors, Inc. will be held on Tuesday, September 13, at the Coventry Village Library.

Join Coventry Neighbors, Inc. Today! You must be a member for at least 30 days to vote at our meetings. ALL MEMBERSHIPS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS EXPIRE AT THE END OF EACH YEAR.

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