



COVENTRY VILLAGE NEWS

February, 1991

Coventry Neighbors, Inc.

CNI Members Respond to Comprehensive Plan

Members of Coventry Neighbors, Inc. (CNI) took advantage of the opportunity to give statements, make suggestions and ask questions at the series of public meetings regarding the Coventry Village Business District Comprehensive Development Plan. Those plans were discussed at our membership meetings, too. This letter was sent to Cheryl Stephens, City of Cleveland Heights, Planning Director. It conveys the general consensus of the members present at our January 8th meeting.

First, we are pleased the City is giving serious consideration to the development of the Coventry commercial district. We feel, however, that most if not all our recent problems have been caused by lethargic, intractable landlords. Landlords for whom the timely repair and maintenance of their property is not a pressing issue. Landlords who have not sought to balance the retail area through a mix of stores that draw or serve Coventry's diverse clientele.

What's more, it must be recognized that Coventry Village is a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood that has thrived on a symbiotic relationship between the commercial and residential areas. This symbiosis is the life blood of Coventry Village. Our people have chosen to live where their needs can be met. Where they can walk to the grocery store (now missing!), the book store, the dry cleaners, the library, the coffee shop.

Call them weird, eccentric, old-fashioned, colorful, or distinctive, but recognize that these people play

a key role in making Coventry Village attractive. And the commercial strip must serve their needs first. Otherwise, Coventry Village will no longer be a village. It will be a Lee Road, a Taylor Road, a Noble Road. And nobody drives from Lakewood to visit "Lee."

With those thoughts in mind, we feel there is a consensus to go ahead with Phase I of the development plan. Our understanding is that it includes: filling vacancies in existing storefronts, upgrading the streetscape (including curbs, crosswalks, and signage), improving building facades, consolidating rear deliveries to avoid traffic congestion on the street, involving local artists in creating themes that will maintain and expand upon Coventry's unique identification.

Regarding Phase II, CNI members are not convinced that this is desirable for Coventry Village as those plans now stand. Going back to that symbiotic relationship between the commercial and residential areas that makes Coventry Village great... How great? Within a one mile radius of the street live the highest concentration of population in Cleveland Heights - - approximately 25,000. Coventry Village is the most prominently known and visited area in our City. Cleveland Heights is identified by many people of Cuyahoga County as "Coventry."

With respect to the parking garage, the proposed facility should certainly spare Rock Court. The garage should be located on Coventry with a height consistent with the cornice lines of the street. Small shops should be located on the main floor facing the street with entrances and exits on Coventry.

This has proven effective in urban areas of Toronto and Chicago. And it could be so here.

Phase III focuses on the north end of Coventry. Perhaps this focus needs to occur before Phase II. Rather than focus on the site where there are two thriving businesses (Revco/Dairy Mart), primary efforts should be spent in reclaiming Raj Mathur's highly visible, dilapidated building for positive economic development. As it stands, the building is a major blighting influence and serves to undermine any hopes of improving Coventry's reputation with the thousands of commuters traversing the Coventry-Mayfield intersection daily. Any thoughts of delaying action on this distressed property would be a major disservice to the community.

Additionally, parking is sorely needed at this end of the street. The purchase of the small and mostly vacant Anna apartment should be considered as the number of potential parking spaces would at least be maximized due to the municipal lot that is currently next to it.

Finally, members of CNI share general concerns about the development plan. The big question is financing. The nation is in recession. Where is the financing for all of this going to come from? Another concern is zoning. Of what significance is the S2 rating on the east side of the street? Are there plans of which we are not aware?

Everyone agrees the commercial district needs to be improved. The controversy comes in figuring out the proper approach. The key is to maintain some sort of balance

between the needs of the people who live here and the desires of all others. We are eager to work with you in the implementation of Phase I. Our survival as a village depends on it.

Copies of the Coventry Village Development Plan are available in the library. These can be borrowed for 3 days. Also, two reference copies are on hand to look at in the library

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

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The deadline for each month is the 18th day of the preceding month. While no unsigned material will be used, names may be withheld from publication at the writer's request.

Phone: 321-1835

AROUND & ABOUT COVENTRY

Merchant Tenants in the "Center Building" continue to negotiate the deal on the purchase of that building. It is the largest building on the block, and it fills the west side of the street from Hampshire to Lancashire. Some of Coventry's most popular stores are in that building. City officials continue to support this group in its efforts. Neighborhood leaders feel this project is the first step -- and key to redeveloping the commercial strip.

The **Coventry Village Library** is 75 years old this year. Celebrate the anniversary by boosting circulation. Why not take a book or two out the second Tuesday of each month. You're there for the CNI meeting anyway, right?

Food Co-op Survey Response -- 75 people called the HOC to say "Yes, I will commit to using a retail food co-op on Coventry. Petitions are also being circulated. Next possible steps will be discussed at our CNI meeting, February 14.

Residents on Cadwell, Radnor, Upper Hampshire, and Rock Court have formed a neighborhood organization. They are calling themselves, "Looking Over Coventry."

Poets and musicians are invited to come to Arabica Coffee & Tea for their two weekly evening programs. "Open Mike" on Mondays at 8 PM and "Poetry Night" on Wednesdays at 8 PM provide great opportunities for local talent to show their stuff. Performers are asked to sign in at 7:30 PM. See Chuck Mosbrook, emcee at both events.

Stolen! While Lee Batdorf worked to remove the holiday lights at Coventry Park, someone walked off with his yellow cycle sack. Several tools were in that sack which is specially designed for urban bicyclists. Lee depended it and the stuff in it. If the yellow bag were to show up at the Arabica lost and found, no questions will be asked.

CNI SEEKS NEW LOGO \$50 CASH PRIZE

Announcing!!! A Contest!

Coventry Neighbors, Inc. is looking for a new logo. Our current logo depicts a light fixture purchased by CNI for Coventry Park some time ago. That fixture no longer exists.

What do you think? Can you design something for us?

Entries must be received by March 1. Send your design to:

Elsa Johnson
Logo Design Contest
2753 Hampshire Rd. #1
Cleveland Heights, OH 44106

The winner will be announced in our April Newsletter.

FREE TAX HELP FOR SENIOR CITIZENS AT THE COVENTRY LIBRARY

If you are 60 years of age or older and need some help with your basic income tax forms, the Coventry Village Library can help. AARP will provide free counselling services at Coventry Library on Friday afternoons every other week from February 8 - April 12, from 1 - 5 PM.

To make an appointment, please call the library at 321-3400 V/TTY.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF COVENTRY NEIGHBORS

Coventry Neighbors, Inc. began in the late 1960's as a tenant-oriented organization reflecting the status of its young founders and members. But, its membership and scope have broadened since then. Now, more than 20 years later, a solid majority of CNI's members own houses and property in and around Coventry. Many others demonstrate their commitment by saying yes to working on committees and task force groups, by planning and organizing neighborhood festivals, and by participating in the daily life of our community.

This newsletter, with a readership estimated at more than 2,000, is CNI's most important activity. The Coventry Village News aims to provide lively reading about the neighborhood, thereby promoting and preserving the sense of community here that is slipping away in many other places. We also send the CVN to persons of influence in the media and in politics, with the aim of providing local points of view on issues facing Coventry Village.

CNI analyses various issues and proposals that arise here. Our membership takes positions on these matters, attempting to guide and encourage the renaissance of our neighborhood. For example, members at our January meeting composed a formal letter of consensus regarding the latest development plan for Coventry Village. (see page one)

Clearly, the broad, long-term goal of CNI is neighborhood revitalization. Short term goals change with the opportunities and circumstances before us, and with the wishes of CNI's leadership and members.

Much of our energy is focused on the commercial strip, because we know it is the heart and soul of Coventry Village.

CNI is a non-profit corporation with standing as a tax-deductible organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. We do what we do entirely with volunteer energy. Our revenues are used to defray operating costs and to fund projects beneficial to the neighborhood.

CNI needs your energy. So come to the monthly meetings. They are held the second Tuesday of every month, 7:40 pm at the Coventry Village Library. These meetings are open to the public, however, one must be a member to vote.

Everyone, including non-members, is invited to participate in our discussions. Even if you cannot attend our meetings, please take the time to fill out and return the form on the last page of this newsletter.

I hope that you will feel free to call me with any concerns or questions you may have about CNI or Coventry Village. My phone number is 321-1835.

Marilyn Pryor - President

COVENTRY VILLAGE...
where there is no need to call
the 1-900 talk lines.



SHOULD COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC
SPONSOR ANOTHER SUMMER EVENT???

Come to our next CNI meeting, February 12, to discuss this question. We have been sponsoring such an event for the past 4 years, and we have been paying for it out of the treasury.

Although each of those events were fun and successful (well-attended), they took a lot of time, energy, commitment, and money. Do we have it? Can we get it? Or should we be focusing our resources on another project?

Share your thoughts at the next meeting, and we'll go from there.

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Cleveland Heights, OH 44116

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DATED MATERIAL -- Please deliver before February 12

The next regular meeting of Coventry Neighbors, Inc. will be held on Tuesday, February 12, 7:40 PM at the Coventry Village Library, Euclid Heights Blvd. & Coventry Rd.

If you join Coventry Neighbors, Inc. now, your membership will continue through the end of 1991. Membership includes a subscription to The Coventry Village News.

Please indicate the kind of membership you want:

_____ Individual Membership (\$7.50) _____ Family (\$10.00)
_____ Senior Citizen (\$5.00) _____ Newsletter Subscription Only (\$5.00)

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

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