

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a light-colored sweater and a necklace with a key pendant, stands behind two children. The children, a girl on the left and a boy on the right, are wearing bright orange safety vests with reflective yellow stripes. They are both holding black-handled tools, possibly shovels or rakes. The background is a light-colored wall with a window.

# SHAKER LIFE

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## ON THE COVER

Shaker Heights preschool teacher Allison Colvin and students Ayla Heller, left, and Julian Bunkley are looking forward to the new Ludlow Early Learning Center, which will open in August.

*Photo by Gus Chan*

## A Cherished School Returns with a New Mission

As the Ludlow Elementary School prepares to celebrate its 99th birthday, the venerable old building is getting a dramatic makeover.



## Good Fit

The City's infill housing program is focused on building and reinvesting, bringing new life to Shaker's neighborhoods.

## Near-Perfect Harmony

Three unrelated Latimore families occupy a row of duplexes on the street, all with the common goal of maintaining a daily connection with their families.



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## SHAKER LIFE

WINTER 2025 | VOLUME 44 | ISSUE 1

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## Following the Business

*Winter 2022*

Africa Art & Clothes opened in Shaker in 2018. Before that, Hammath Aw managed locations in the East 185th/Lakeshore area, as well as Richmond Town Square, where his inventory included rugs and furniture. The only remaining location is here in Shaker. “Basically, my Shaker customers brought me here, urging me to open a store in the area,” says Aw. “My Shaker customers have been very helpful to me over the years. I’m happy to be here.”



## Making the Pivot

*Spring 2023*

“My background has nothing to do with baking. My husband Pat and I relocated from New York City to Shaker Heights in 2015. We both wanted something that was urban, yet suburban. I run my business from our small apartment, with one oven and a four-foot countertop. During the pandemic, I made about 25 challahs a week. Now that I am working in-person full-time, I make about 10 a week, and sometimes I am booked out for months at a time,” says Meghann Hennen.



## A Youth-based Perspective

*Summer 2023*

When Wayne D. Hudson was sworn in as the new chief of police for Shaker Heights in January 2023, City Council chambers were packed with family, friends, elected officials, representatives of Shaker Schools, Shaker Police, Shaker Fire, Citizens Police Academy, and even law enforcement from surrounding cities. Hudson comes to Shaker as a man on a mission: to make the men and women responsible for law enforcement in town Shaker-centric, as much as possible, starting with a focus on the City’s youth.

## Rotary Honors Police Officer, Firefighter of the Year



From left, Detective Kevin Ishler, Mayor David Weiss, Firefighter Lieutenant Dillon Crouse.

Two Shaker Heights first responders were honored for exemplifying the Rotary Club motto of “service above self” in a ceremony at Fire Station #1 in October.

The Rotary Club of the Heights of Greater Cleveland honored Detective Kevin Ishler of the Shaker Heights Police Department as 2023 Police Officer of the Year and Firefighter Lieutenant Dillon Crouse as 2023 Firefighter of the Year.

Ishler joined the Shaker Heights Police Department in 2006 as a patrol officer and was promoted to detective in the Criminal Investigation Bureau in 2017. He has been a field training officer for patrol and investigations, an accident investigator for the EDGE (Eastside Departments Group Enforcement) multi-jurisdictional SWAT team, and is currently certified in voice stress analysis.

Shaker Heights Police Chief Wayne D. Hudson says, “Detective Ishler’s efforts in 2023 were exceptional and deserving of recognition. He displayed the hard work, dedication, and expertise needed to be a successful detective. Paul Harris, the founder of Rotary International in 1905, would be proud to see such a dedicated employee receive this award.”

Crouse began his career with the Fire Department in 2018. In early 2023, he earned the top score on his promotional test and was promoted to lieutenant. He recently took the lead on implementation of the department’s new First Due fire reporting software, scheduled to be implemented in early 2025.

Fire Chief Patrick Sweeney says, “Lieutenant Crouse is very deserving of this prestigious award for the way he lives his life both inside and outside the Fire Department. He exemplifies the Rotary Club motto of “service above self” by always doing the right thing because it is the right thing, never looking for how things will benefit him but instead, looking out for the best interest of the Fire Department and the residents of Shaker Heights.”

“Service Above Self” the Rotary Club motto



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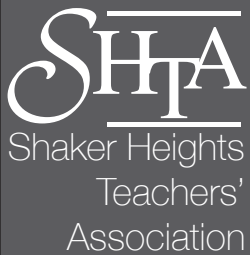
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We are Proud of Shaker's Students!



Thirteen Shaker Heights High School seniors have been named National Merit Semifinalists and Commended Students in the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program.

**National Merit Semifinalists:**

- |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Tyler Bordeaux  | Ingrid Holda      |
| Ezra Ellenbogen | Miles Lipman      |
| Lara Girault    | Zachary Nathenson |
| Rubin Harris    | Anna Rosenbaum    |

Five seniors were also recognized as National Merit Students.

**National Merit Students:**

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Nathan Ballman    | Miles Shelton    |
| Francesca Iversen | Addison Weingart |
| George Robie      |                  |

These scholastically talented seniors are considered top candidates for admission to the most selective colleges.

Shaker City News



New Safety Hires

2024 was a big year for hiring at Shaker Heights Police and Fire departments. The City welcomed eleven police officers and five firefighter/paramedics to its ranks. This new cohort is diverse, skilled, and enthusiastic about serving the Shaker Heights community.

“Our new officers are all lateral hires, which means they came to our department with prior experience,” says Chief Wayne D. Hudson of the Shaker Heights Police Department. “I’m pleased to say that these officers are not only outstanding law enforcement professionals, they have embraced our emphasis on community engagement and are excited to serve in a community that appreciates the work we do.”

Of the new hires in the Fire department, Chief Patrick Sweeney says: “We are excited to have them in our department. They are hard-working and dedicated to serving our residents to the best of their abilities. I’m looking forward to watching them grow their careers in Shaker Heights.”



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## Laurel School Welcomes Christina Breen as New Head of School



The Board of Trustees of Laurel School appointed Christina Breen as Laurel's eleventh Head of School, effective July 1, 2025. Breen comes to Laurel from Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, where she teaches English and has served as associate dean of student life and other leadership roles.

Laurel Board of Trustees Chair Megan Lum Mehalko said in announcing Breen's appointment, "Her diverse experience and exceptional skills were evident throughout her interviews and interactions with our community members. We are thrilled to welcome Ms. Breen to Laurel next summer and look forward to seeing our beloved school continue to thrive under her leadership and expertise."

In a message posted on the school's website, Breen says, "In my nearly three decades in education, I have worn every kind of hat, from college instructor, to coach, adviser, teacher, dorm parent, administrator, and trustee. My leadership philosophy has been honed by each of these professional experiences."

She notes that she is looking forward to Cleveland's cultural offerings and adds, "Shaker Heights, in particular, is a beautiful town, and I am so looking forward to integrating into the community."

Breen will succeed Ann V. Klotz, who will retire at the end of the current school year, her 21st as head of school.



Winter Activities Near Me

SHAKER HEIGHTS



**Note from Colleen:**  
**Listening Project Report**  
**Looks at Policing in Shaker**

*By Colleen Jackson, Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer*

In August 2023, City Council passed a resolution adopting a Framework for Maintaining a Safe and Just Shaker Heights. Among other initiatives, the Framework called for the City to launch a community-wide Listening Project facilitated by an independent consultant. The goal is to promote discussion of policing policies and practices in Shaker Heights, with specific emphasis on any real or perceived bias in policing in the City.

Well over a thousand of you engaged in that discussion by attending a town hall session or other meeting, serving on a focus group, talking with us at City events like Shaker Safety Day and the Chagrin-Lee Block Party, or taking the online survey.

Thank you to all who participated and shared ideas. DEI Coordinator Jonathan Ballom and I met many of you in meaningful conversations that I hope turn into lasting relationships.

It has been exciting to see that we have so many engaged community members, from all nine Shaker neighborhoods. We were particularly pleased to hear from participants who told us it was their first time engaging with anything like this.

Thanks also to our consultants at Strategy Matters who met many of you at events they attended and facilitated. They learned much about Shaker Heights and recognized what makes our city unique. They studied the survey responses, meeting notes, and all the information they gathered about policing in Shaker Heights and presented a final report to City Council in October. We also held a town-hall-

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style presentation and discussion of the findings in November.

It was gratifying to find that many of the consultants' findings aligned with Police Chief Wayne D. Hudson's philosophy of community-oriented policing.

Thank you to the Shaker Heights Police Department for engaging in deep, intentional listening to the project results. Your commitment to service is a gift.

As I write, members of our new Community Advisory Group are considering these findings and will make recommendations to the Mayor, City Council, Chief Administrative Officer, and Police Chief.

The work of maintaining a safe and just Shaker Heights is ongoing.

Use this QR code to read the full report or go to [shakerheightsoh.gov/listening](http://shakerheightsoh.gov/listening).

You may contact me at 216-491-3201 or [colleen.jackson@shakerheightsoh.gov](mailto:colleen.jackson@shakerheightsoh.gov).



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## 2025 Snow Removal Reminders

We're not out of the woods yet when it comes to winter weather.

Use this QR code to view some helpful reminders regarding snow removal in Shaker Heights.

Or, visit [shakerheightsoh.gov/346/Ice-Snow-Removal](http://shakerheightsoh.gov/346/Ice-Snow-Removal)



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### 2025 Recycling Events

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Get full details at [shakerheightsoh.gov/recycling-events](http://shakerheightsoh.gov/recycling-events)

> **Community Shredding**  
Saturdays, 9am-1pm, April 5 and October 11

> **Computer, Electronics, and Small Appliances Roundup**  
Saturdays and Sundays, 8am-4pm, April 12-13 and 19-20 and August 2-3 and 9-10

> **Habitat for Humanity Restore Collection**  
Saturday, 9am-12 pm, August 23

> **Household Hazardous Waste Roundup**  
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## Lower Lake Multipurpose Trail Completed

Bundle up for a stroll or roll around Lower Shaker Lake on the new, 10-foot wide, asphalt, multi-purpose trail completed late last year. This ADA-accessible trail runs along South Park Boulevard from Coventry Road to North Woodland Road.

“This trail is a great new amenity for our Lower Lake Park and it also means you can now walk, roll, or ride on a paved path all around Lower Lake,” says Joyce Braverman, the City’s planning director.

## Lead Service Line Replacement Program

In November 2024, many Shaker Heights residents received letters from Cleveland Water asking them to report their service line material. Service lines bring water from the water main beneath the street into a home or building and end at the main shut off valve.

Residents are encouraged to visit [clevelandwater.com/line](http://clevelandwater.com/line) and select the Service Line Material Reporting Form link. Then, follow the steps for the magnet and penny test and submit photos of your service line to help Cleveland Water determine where lines need to be replaced.

In 2023, Cleveland Water launched a proactive program to replace all lead service lines in its system. New federal law requires public water systems nationwide to notify all customers that have a lead water service line or a service line made from an unknown material.

Cleveland Water meets all requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act. Its treatment methods have been proven effective for lead corrosion control for nearly 30 years.

*For more information, visit [clevelandwater.com/lead](http://clevelandwater.com/lead), email [LeadLookup@ClevelandWater.com](mailto:LeadLookup@ClevelandWater.com), or call the lead inquiry line at 216-664-2882. For assistance, call Shaker Heights Public Works at 216-491-1490.*



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Learn more: [shakerlakes.org](http://shakerlakes.org)  
216-321-5935

## Laurel School

Grades: Preschool – Grade 12  
Description: Traditional day and specialty camps  
Learn more: [laurelschool.org/summer](http://laurelschool.org/summer)  
216-455-3025

## Early Childhood Enrichment Center

Grades: K to 2  
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## University School

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## Cleveland City Dance

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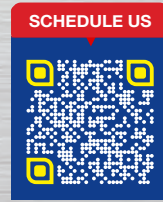


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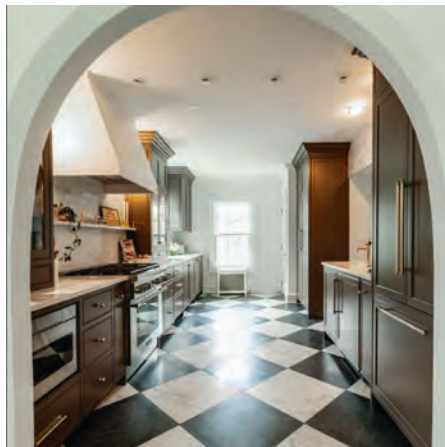
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# Landmark Commission's 2024 PRESERVATION AWARDS

Honoring residents who preserve, improve Shaker's inspiring structures

Shaker's architecturally distinctive homes continue to attract residents and awards. In the fall, the Shaker Heights Landmark Commission announced the 2024 winners of the Preservation Awards, recognizing those who preserve and improve Shaker Heights properties with a particular commitment to the heritage, craftsmanship, original materials, and their continuing potential as viable and inspiring structures. Established in 1998, the Preservation Awards are published biennially.

"Preserving historic architecture while renovating for today's needs is a choice that the recipients of the 2024 Landmark Commission Preservation Awards have made, notwithstanding the rigors and costs their projects entailed. We should all celebrate these values that continue to make Shaker such a special place to call home," says Councilmember and Landmark Commission Chair Nancy Moore. The following properties received recognition.



## *Retention of Original Materials*

**HORN RESIDENCE | LEIGHTON ROAD**

William A. Bingham, Architect. Constructed in 1922.

Homeowners identified that the visible part of two steel lintels supporting the brick parapets above an open porch were rusted and crumbling. The contractor provided a full replacement of the rusted beams and restored the existing brick. Every brick was salvaged and reused, restoring the original appearance of the porch. To complete the porch ceiling, a carpenter from Tuscarawas County was brought in and installed tongue and groove ceilings made from Amish milled pine that matched the original wood ceiling.



## *Excellence in Stewardship*

### CONN RESIDENCE | SUTHERLAND ROAD

H.W. Grieme, Architect. Constructed in 1927.

As a result of natural weathering, the original cedar shake roof reached the end of its life. The contractor stepped in and installed a new cedar shake roof that mirrored the original roof design and materials. Replacing the roof with another cedar shake roof upheld the property's historic character and exhibits the aesthetic quality that can be achieved by utilizing historic materials.

## *Excellence in Stewardship*

### PULVER RESIDENCE | STANFORD ROAD

J.S. Kelly, Architect. Constructed in 1936.

After purchasing their Western Reserve Colonial, homeowners began a variety of exterior restorations, including garage renovations, new landscaping, a roof replacement, and front door restoration. They reconfigured the garage to allow space for two cars and storage. Additionally, the flat roof and window trim was removed and a new roof was installed. The front door and its brass hardware underwent a thorough, two-month restoration, and the original, overgrown landscaping was dug out, and a new landscape design and plan were implemented. The crew was able to salvage the rear patio hardscaping which was installed in the 1960s.





## *Distinguished Landscape*

### **MORELAND COURTS CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION | SHAKER BOULEVARD**

Alfred W. Harris, Philip Small, and Small & Rowley, Architects. Constructed in 1928.

In 2018, Moreland Courts' Landmark Committee undertook a significant garden creation project to amplify the stately facade of the Point Building and enhance its surroundings. The contractor planted new garden beds with a mixture of native and non-native plants. Special attention was paid to selecting the ornamental trees in the oval to provide seasonal interest. To complete the garden, the northeast side of the triangle was planted with mature spruce trees. The result is a magnificent, oval English-style garden space for residents.

## *Other: Exterior Renovation*

### **LASKY RESIDENCE | SHELBURNE ROAD**

H.B. Burdick, Architect. Constructed in 1926.

The porch on the west side of the house was severely deteriorated, and the contractor removed the porch and rebuilt it to match the original exterior design. The original sandstone accent pieces were preserved and repurposed, and new custom brick was used to match that of the existing house.



## **\* 2025 PRESERVATION MONTH PHOTO CONTEST OPENS MARCH 1**

Grab your phone or camera, point, click, and capture the beauty of Shaker Heights. The annual Preservation Month Photo Contest officially kicks off on March 1 to showcase photos illustrating what makes Shaker 'Shaker.'

The contest was created in observance of National Preservation Month, which is celebrated each May by preservation organizations across the country. Residents are invited to hashtag photos #PreserveSH25 on Instagram, then upload to [shakerheightsoh.gov/preserve2025](https://shakerheightsoh.gov/preserve2025). Please retain a high-resolution version of the photo, in case you're a winner. For questions, contact [anna.mates@shakerheightsoh.gov](mailto:anna.mates@shakerheightsoh.gov). View the 2023 entries on Instagram at #preservesh2023.



### *Other: Interior and Exterior Renovation*

#### **MEDVEDEV RESIDENCE | SOUTH PARK BOULEVARD**

J. W. C. Corbusier, Architect. Constructed in 1908.

After moving into their house, the homeowners undertook various interior and exterior projects, including relocating windows, creating a new rear entrance, adding a new rear patio, and demolishing and reconfiguring the kitchen spaces. The homeowners matched architectural details and had base moldings and door casings custom-made to the original architect's specifications, and where possible, they salvaged and re-used doors, cabinetry, hardware, fixtures, and fittings.



### *Other: Excellence in Rehabilitation*

#### **FERNWAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | FERNWAY ROAD**

C. S. Schneider, Architect. Constructed in 1926.

The Shaker Heights City School District made an investment to restore Fernway Elementary School after it was damaged by fire, smoke, and water. The entire roof structure was rebuilt and roofed with new green slate and copper flashing that matched the original details. Damaged sections of the original limestone cornice were replaced in kind, and the original cupola was recreated using historic photographs to ensure the details were replicated. Three building additions were incorporated into the project and mimic the existing building massing, fenestration, cornice, entry details, and roofing.

# Church Receives Landmark Status



## HEIGHTS CHRISTIAN CHURCH | now East View United Church of Christ

The former Heights Christian Church, 17300 Van Aken Blvd., was granted historic landmark status by Shaker Heights City Council on the recommendation of the Cleveland Restoration Society and the City's Landmark and Planning commissions. The building, now home to East View United Church of Christ, was built between 1934 and 1960 and is one of the venues in Greater Cleveland where the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke.

Unwelcome inside the church, King gave a speech from the northwest porch on July 28, 1965. To view video footage of King's stirring remarks, go to [heightschristianchurch.org/history](https://heightschristianchurch.org/history).

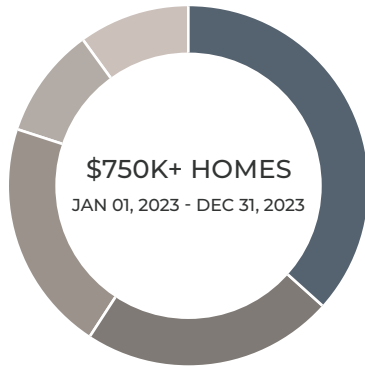
The church met the following landmark designation criteria:

- \* Character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City of Shaker Heights, the State of Ohio, or the United States.
- \* Location as a site of a significant historic event.
- \* Identification with a person or persons who significantly contribute to the culture and development of the City.
- \* Exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, or historic heritage of the City.
- \* Portrayal of the environment of a group of people in an era of history.

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\*Top Producer - Market Share Report published Dec. 2023. Analysis dates are 12/1/2022 through 11/30/2023 based on all property types sold at \$750,000 and above.

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Prices for the sold Shaker Heights listings reflect the listing price for each home, not the sold price.

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# Shaker Schools News

## Meghan Shelby Named Director of Student Services

Meghan Shelby is the new Director of Student Services for the Shaker Heights City School District. She succeeds Elizabeth Kimmel, who served as Director of Exceptional Children.

Shelby came to the District after serving as Director of Special Pupil Services for the Maple Heights City School District, where she managed all special education programs and services, District nursing services, foster care services, and coordinated the District's crisis response team. During her time in Maple Heights, Shelby was instrumental in expanding social-emotional support for students. She also provided the support necessary to enable students with disabilities to learn in the least restrictive environment.

Shelby earned a doctorate in school psychology and a master's degree in school psychology from the University of South Carolina after earning a bachelor's degree in psychology from Ohio State University. She has served as past president of both the Ohio School Psychologists Association and the Cleveland Association of School Psychologists. Shelby has resided in Shaker Heights for 20 years, with both of her children graduating from the District.



## Ray Ratcliffe Named Assistant Transportation Supervisor

Ray Ratcliffe has been named Assistant Transportation Supervisor for the Shaker Heights City School District. In his new role, Ratcliffe will assist in the day-to-day management of school bus operations to ensure that students receive safe and efficient transportation to and from school and co-curricular activities.

Ratcliffe previously served 11 years as an Education Support Specialist at Lomond Elementary School. In that role, he assisted in the development and administration of school programs, and helped promote a school environment that was safe and conducive to student learning. Before that, he worked as an Independent Living Coordinator with the Cleveland Job Corps.

Ratcliffe, a Shaker Heights resident, holds a bachelor's degree in behavioral and social science from North Carolina Central University.



## Singer and Songwriter MGK (SHHS '08) Surprises Homecoming Attendees

Colson Baker – better known as MGK – made a surprise appearance at Shaker Heights High School's 2024 Homecoming Dance this fall. A 2008 Shaker Heights graduate, MGK returned to his alma mater to the excitement of students and staff. His unexpected visit added an extra level of energy to the evening, with MGK performing briefly for the crowd. It was a memorable night for all, and a special moment for Shaker Heights to welcome back one of its own!



## A Night for the Red & White

**Saturday, March 8, 2025 at 7pm**

Join Shaker friends, neighbors, and community members as the curtain goes up at *A Night for the Red & White*, the Shaker Schools Foundation's 33rd annual fundraising gala benefiting the Shaker Heights City School District.

What's new this year?

- > The Agora Theater & Ballroom is the renovated venue for our event.
- > Walk the red carpet and pose for the paparazzi.
- > Lively brass dance band and DJ will entertain us with tunes.

As always, the Shaker Schools Foundation's focus is to:

- > Educate, empower, and engage our Shaker students by raising funds.
- > Showcase our students' talents.
- > Bring our community together in support of our schools.

Anyone can participate in an exciting online Silent Auction and purchase tickets for one of two unique raffle packages. Mark your calendar for March 8 for another unforgettable community event!



Discounted tickets are available for first-time attendees, young Shaker alumni, and staff. Purchase your tickets today! Questions? Call 216-295-4325, email [redandwhite@shaker.org](mailto:redandwhite@shaker.org), or scan this QR code to purchase tickets.

## Looking Ahead!

Here are just a few of the projects the Shaker Schools Foundation is working on this year:

- > **State of the Art Podcast/Recording Studio** at SHHS in Spring 2025. Thanks to Shaker alum MGK for his support in helping us create this fantastic opportunity for our students.
- > **New Makerspace** at Shaker Heights Middle School! This new innovative space was created using the equipment and supplies moved over from Woodbury. Now these state-of-the-art materials are available to all students in grades 6-8.
- > **SHHS Mural Book** This one-of-a-kind mural book will feature the marvelous artwork students have painted on the walls over the years.
- > **Ludlow Early Learning Center Playground** will support our youngest learners in our preschool program.



Left to right: David Warren Mason, *Class of 1971*; Judy Immerman Payne, *Class of 1974*; Dr. Leslie S. Kean, *Class of 1983*; Bishop St. Clair Walker, *Class of 2008*; Jeff Epstein, *Class of 1993*; Dr. Andy Ellner, *Class of 1993*; Reverend Rachel Hollander, *Class of 1981*; Jon Leiken, *Class of 1990*

## Congratulations to the Shaker Schools Alumni Hall of Fame Class of 2024

In September eight new inductees were welcomed into the Shaker Schools Alumni Hall of Fame. The high school student assembly, induction ceremony, and dinner were exceptional. These proud Shaker graduates have made a lasting impact on the world. In their speeches they expressed gratitude for their education and gave students advice for the future.

Read more about them at [shakerschoolsfoundation.org/hall-of-fame-2024](http://shakerschoolsfoundation.org/hall-of-fame-2024).

This year's class made significant contributions to the fields of healthcare, community impact, economic development, law, architecture, engineering, the arts, K-12 education, and advocacy.

The inductees join over 330 graduates inducted into the Shaker Schools Alumni Hall of Fame since it was established in 1986. Nominations are open for the Class of 2025. Look for information at [shakerschoolsfoundation.org/alumni](http://shakerschoolsfoundation.org/alumni).

# Shaker Library News

## Shaker Library Accepting Board Member Applications through January



Shaker Library is seeking applicants to serve a seven-year term on our Board of Trustees.

Applications are available at [shakerlibrary.org](http://shakerlibrary.org) and are due Friday, January 31.

The Shaker Library Board of Trustees sets goals for the library and charts a course for staff to achieve them. They weigh in on budget, oversee fundraising efforts, and adopt plans for the library's growth and improvement.

At left are board members: Dylan Yépez, Milton Alan Turner, Laura Barnard, and Rajani Tendulkar.

## Job Coaching Offered Wednesdays at Main Library



Ann Hunter is a veteran career coach who holds office hours at Main Library each week. She can help you search for jobs, write your resume and cover letter, and prepare for an interview.

Ask for her on Wednesdays from 12-1:45pm. Just stop by – no appointment required.

This service is proudly funded by the Friends of the Shaker Library.



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Board members are expected to attend at least 75 percent of all regular and special meetings and be present for special library events. They are also expected to serve on one committee that meets monthly or every other month.

Successful applicants will demonstrate a history of civic engagement and will describe how they can contribute their strengths to assist in library planning and policy making.

We look forward to reviewing your application.



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## Friends Fill the Van Donation Drive Set for March 15

Are your bookshelves getting a little packed? The Friends of the Shaker Library can help.

Drive any clean, used books, CDs, DVDs, video games, and cookbooks you'd like to donate up to the library van parked at Main Library on Saturday, March 15 between 10am and 1pm. Volunteers in the parking lot will unload them for you (and provide a donation receipt, if needed). Please note we cannot accept textbooks.

"The Friends wanted to make it as easy and convenient as possible for people looking to donate," says Lyndsey Brennan, communications and marketing manager at Shaker Library.

All proceeds from donated books sold at our two annual book sales will help cover the cost of programming for all ages – including Summer Reading.

Visit [shakerlibrary.org/friends](http://shakerlibrary.org/friends) for more information.



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## Shaker Library to Continue Passport Services through Change in Renewal Process

You may have heard that the U.S. State Department is now allowing people to renew their passports online rather than by mail.

If you need to renew yours but have questions about the process, we're here to help. Make an appointment with one of our 13 certified passport agents at [shakerlibrary.org/passports](http://shakerlibrary.org/passports), who can review your application one-on-one with you. They can also take your 2x2 passport photo at the same appointment for a \$10.80 fee.

We help people apply for their first passport too. Visit our website to book an hour-long appointment, which can accommodate up to two applications. If your party has more than two applications to process, you will need to book an additional slot so our agents have the time they need to review all documents. We kindly request you fill out all passport forms prior to your appointment.

Visit [shakerlibrary.org/passports](http://shakerlibrary.org/passports) to see a full list of the documents, forms, and payments that may be required to complete your application.



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# The Subtle Power of Storytelling

Veteran storyteller Nicolette Petrone proves storytime offers so much more than hearing a well-told tale.

Written by **Lyndsey Brennan** | Photography by **Robert Muller**

It's a seemingly unimportant Thursday morning at Shaker Main Library.

Ten tiny pairs of feet troop up the spiral staircase and through the door of the storytime room, followed by their caregivers. Sunlight streams through the windows. The sound of a flute comes through the speakers. Strollers find parking in the back of the room.

As the families get settled in chairs and on cushions, the kids are lively, and the adults are in good spirits. There's an excited buzz in the room that tells me, "We're about to have fun."

Veteran Shaker Library employee Nicolette Petrone stands at the front of the room and introduces herself as Ms. Nicki. For the next twenty minutes, she bewitches everyone with her warm Miss-Honey-from-Matilda energy and melodic voice.

She moves from book to puppet to story to song without missing a beat. First, she's bouncing and dipping a rabbit puppet called Snowball the Bunny. Next, she's pulling plastic spiders and soft caterpillars out of a bag, smiling as the children inch closer for a better look.

She's lifting flaps in a book. She's casually inserting the names of all the children present into her storytime monologue. Then, she picks up her ukulele.

When she sings, "Now you're a monkey! Wave your arms," each parent, grandparent, and caregiver obediently lifts their arms and waves them in time with the music. Some of the toddlers join in too, while the younger ones sit with mouths agape and wide, watching eyes. Even a tattooed dad trying to lounge coolly toward the back of the room leans forward, finds his arms, and shakes them.

Everyone is under her spell now. This is the power of a veteran storyteller.



.....  
Miss Nicki leads attendees in song at storytime.  
.....



Throughout the storytime, attendees giggle, sing, and clap delightedly. They follow instructions to jump and spin and wiggle and watch. As she wraps up the session, the kids come forward to say goodbye to Snowball. Petrone makes time for each of them, bending to their level for a hug or high five. She rushes no one.

Once the room has emptied, I confess I'm envious of how engaging she was. I can hardly keep one toddler occupied for twenty minutes, let alone ten.

She humbly brushes my compliment aside, saying, "It's not always like that. I can't say the whole group is 100% engaged every time."

"That's why I have so much variety," she adds. "I go from one thing to the next pretty quickly, because I won't keep their attention otherwise."

#### THE ART – AND SCIENCE – OF STORYTIME

"Developing a storytime flow is an art that can take librarians years to master," says Shaker Library Deputy Director Maureen Brodar, who has worked with Petrone for 20 years – first as a colleague, and then as her supervisor.

"Everyone has their own style and cadence. I would say the hallmark of a Ms. Nicki storytime is her kindness and ability to put everyone at ease. Part of that is the time she takes to learn everyone's names. Part of that is the soft voice she uses.

"And then there's her puppet, Snowball," Brodar continues. "The way that she brings Snowball to life – the way that she has it interact with the kids – you start to believe that Snowball's a living creature. And if that helps them form a connection to literacy or the library, that's a good thing."

While Petrone agrees that running storytime is an art, much of her planning is informed by science.

"We build all sorts of pre-reading skills into our routines. For instance, using puppets and encouraging the child to follow it with their eye. That's a pre-reading skill called tracking. Exposing them to a variety of sounds and words. Showing them how to hold a book and turn pages. We're always subtly incorporating these sneaky skills in. There are some librarians who will tell the parents exactly what they're doing as they're doing it, and I will occasionally – but for me, it's the modeling that's important," Petrone says.

Much of what Petrone does in storytime can be replicated by the parents at home. "I begin every storytime with a rhyme called Bunny Bunny Bunny. I can't tell you how many times parents will say, 'My kids started doing Bunny Bunny Bunny at home.'"

"Once, at the Farmer's Market, I ran into a parent whose child was fussy. She said to me, 'One of the only things that calms him is Bunny Bunny Bunny. So I recorded myself singing it to play anytime the grandparents watched him, and it was their saving grace,'" says Petrone.

"That kind of feedback is so powerful," Petrone adds, "when you realize what an impact storytime is having, even outside of the library setting. You're helping

.....  
"Developing a storytime flow is an art that can take librarians years to master."  
.....

At the close of storytime, attendees gather around Snowball the Bunny to say their goodbyes.



develop that positive association. I'll never forget one mom told me, 'Storytime is my baby's happy place.'

Another favorite memory, Petrone shared, was when a child took her first steps toward Snowball. "I think it's a perfect metaphor for what we're trying to do – develop those first steps toward a lifelong love of learning and reading," says Petrone. "It was a beautiful moment, and the mom was so excited."

#### CELEBRITY STATUS

Petrone has always had a soft spot in her heart for libraries. She grew up in Cleveland Heights walking to the Coventry Library. "I'm the oldest of six kids, so my household was hectic and noisy, and the library was calm and peaceful and cool. I was a shy kid, but still there was something about the librarians that brought me out of my shell and made me comfortable."

Before she began working for Shaker Library in 1997, Petrone was on staff at an independent bookstore in a variety of roles, running the children's room, ordering merchandise, and building displays.

When chain bookstores moved into the area, her employer went out of business, and Petrone was out of a job – until she saw an ad for a Children's Associate at Shaker Library in the Sun Press.

"When I saw it, I thought, 'That's it. That's the job,'" says Petrone. "I love what libraries represent. I don't have to sell anything. Anybody can use the materials. It's all free. And there's a lot of variety in the job – there's always something to do."

People who lead storytimes in small communities can become almost like celebrities, and Petrone is one of them. "I often get recognized out in public, which is why I don't shop at Heinen's anymore," Petrone says, laughing.

But most of the time, says Petrone, being recognized is a gift.

"Just the other day, I ran into a man who was a stay-at-home dad years ago, and he brought his daughters to storytime. Now they're in college. He showed me their picture. He said he misses those days, their simplicity. Storytime had such an impact on his family – and I got to be part of that."

#### THE BRIDGE BUILDER

What's Petrone's favorite part of the job? "Making connections," she tells me, "whether it's between two families, two children, or between a child and an author. It's always so fulfilling."

Another special connection is between the child and the librarian, as in the case of the Smith family. When Yvonne Smith moved to Shaker Heights in 2017 with her husband and newborn son, Henry, she knew no one.

After two months of being cooped up in the house caring for a baby, she set out for Shaker Main Library and wound up at Petrone's storytime.

Henry responded positively to Petrone's songs and rhymes, and the other parents and caregivers in the room were friendly and easy to talk to.

Smith returned the next week, and the next, chatting with neighbors and swapping parenting tips, until months stretched into years.

"Storytime was our lifesaver," Smith says. "It was nice to have some routine and see familiar faces in an unfamiliar time. I saw that there were other new moms, dads, and guardians going through the same things that I was."

"What we're trying to do is develop those first steps toward a lifelong love of learning and reading."



Yvonne and Henry Smith browse the shelves in the children's area at Shaker Main Library.

Miss Nicki reads a lift-a-flap book to storytime attendees.

As the pair attended each week, Smith marveled at how Henry's vocabulary multiplied. She would sometimes catch him singing songs he learned at storytime as he played. And she loved watching him gravitate toward books.

Even though Henry has now aged out of storytime – he's a second grader at Lomond Elementary this year – he still has a special bond with Ms. Nicki, who helps him pick books based on his interests.

Says Petrone: "I remember how exciting it was the first time Henry came in and told me about a book he was loving. It wasn't even a book I recommended, but he was sharing because he now had that love of reading."

For Smith, storytime was the gateway to getting to know the community. "The library is the place that helped me meet Shaker. It introduced us to our friends. It taught us the city's history. I've used it to get two of my degrees – literally camped out in the children's section and worked on a paper while Henry's either played or read."

"It makes me a little emotional to think about it," Smith continues. "I love being able to just come in and have a safe space. I don't know what I would have done without it."

*Lyndsey Brennan is the Communications and Marketing Manager at Shaker Library.*



# A Cherished School Returns with a New Mission

This fall Ludlow Elementary School opens once again as part of the Shaker Heights City School District, welcoming the youngest Shaker students to the District's new preschool program

Written by **Scott Stephens**

Photography by **Gus Chan**



The weight of history and the hope for a brighter future dwell behind the aged brick walls of Ludlow Elementary School.

For decades, the school served as the social and educational anchor of Ludlow, a tree-lined neighborhood that straddles the border between Cleveland and Shaker Heights and boasts a storied history of supporting and fighting for racial equity, social justice, and integration.

By the 1980s, the Shaker Heights City School District was coming out of the baby boom explosion of the previous two decades. With too much space and too few students, the District decided to close schools, including Ludlow and Moreland Elementary School, both cherished neighborhood institutions with majority Black enrollments.

Now, as the Ludlow Elementary School prepares to celebrate its 99th birthday, the venerable old building is getting a dramatic makeover: new classrooms, a new gym, and playground spaces.



Ludlow School, left, turns 99 years old this year. An architect's rendering of the Ludlow Early Learning Center, right, shows a specially designed entrance for the pick-up and drop-off of preschool students. The new center will open this August.

This August, the newly renovated school will reopen as the Ludlow Early Learning Center, a facility that will be home to the District's greatly expanded preschool program. District officials believe a school that once stood as a national model for integration will soon be a national model for early childhood education, reflecting the diverse student body that makes the Shaker Heights Schools and community such a unique place.

"What truly excites me is that this investment will directly benefit the historically underserved Ludlow neighborhood, transforming it into a vital resource for our students and families," says Felecia Evans, assistant superintendent of learning and teaching. "We are reclaiming a key part of Shaker's history – one that played a pivotal role in our community's civil rights movement. By revitalizing Ludlow, we are restoring it to its rightful place as a beacon of learning and hope, offering a brighter future for our youngest citizens."

That's good news for a community that watched its beloved school close in the 1980s and sit empty until it was leased to the Positive Education Program (PEP), which serves children challenged by complex developmental trauma, mental health issues, and autism. In 2022, PEP purchased a building near University Circle and moved, leaving Ludlow empty once again. But the departure of PEP created an opportunity for the District to reconnect with the community.

"The Ludlow community is excited to have our school back and functioning after almost 40 years," says Benjamin Hsu, co-president of the Ludlow Community Association. "This reopening signifies a revival of our community spirit and a reconnection with Shaker Heights as a whole."

**A Very Specific Design**

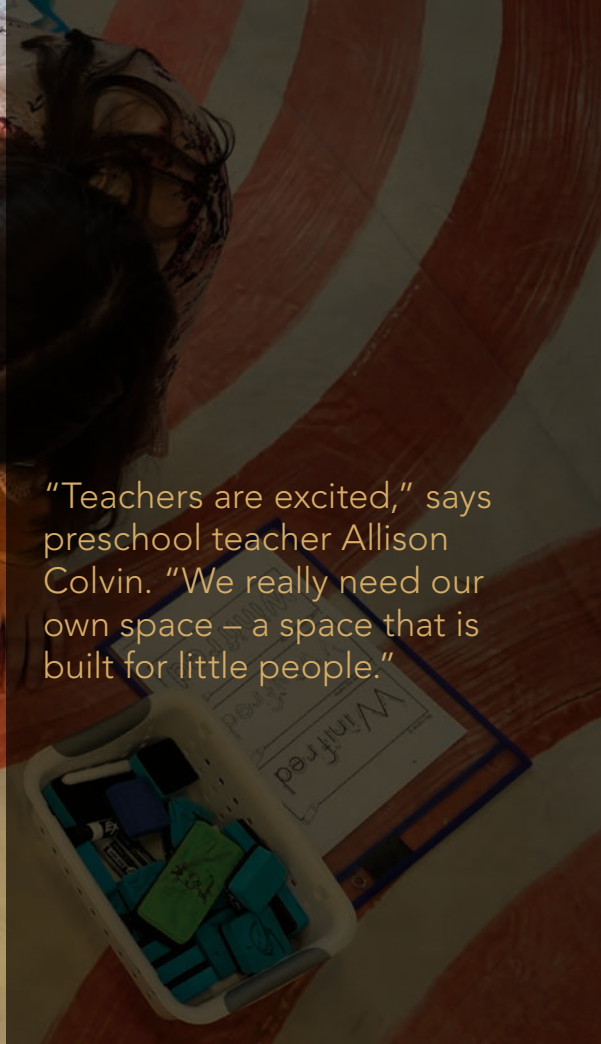
The District hired the GPD Group, an Akron-based architectural firm with vast experience in school design, to create the new center, which will include a drop-off and pick-up entry

specially designed for pint-sized students. GPD and the construction firm on the project, Gilbane Building Co., have worked closely with the neighborhood and the City on issues such as traffic flow, parking, landscaping, and preservation of the trees and athletic fields.

GPD has also worked closely with the preschool faculty and staff to design space that serves the unique needs of a preschool.

"We work very closely with teachers because this is their building," Mark Salopek, who leads the education group for GPD, told the Board of Education. "We do a lot of school work and working on a building for 3- to 5-year olds puts a smile on your face."

Educational researchers rarely agree on much, whether it's how to best teach math or what to serve for lunch in the cafeteria. But virtually no one disputes the value of a high-quality preschool program. A majority of research shows that many preschool programs benefit students in both



"Teachers are excited," says preschool teacher Allison Colvin. "We really need our own space – a space that is built for little people."



Preschool bridges gaps that  
can widen in kindergarten  
and beyond.



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## PROVEN BENEFITS OF PRESCHOOL

Increasing access to preschool provides a very large bang for the buck. Studies have shown that high-quality preschool programs can generate nearly \$17 in social benefits for every dollar invested. This profound return comes because children who attend preschool are more successful in school, work, and life – with higher levels of education and income, less involvement in crime, and better long-term health. But the impact goes even further. For families, preschool provides an affordable child care option, allowing caretakers the opportunity to pursue job training, education, or reenter the workforce – knowing their children are in a safe, nurturing, and enriching environment.

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the short- and long-run, preparing them for success in kindergarten and making them more likely to eventually walk across a commencement stage. A study released in 2023 by a Massachusetts Institute of Technology economist found that attending preschool at age 4 makes children significantly more likely to go to college.

“By investing in preschool, we create equitable opportunities for lifelong learning and academic readiness, reducing disparities and fostering future success,” says John Moore, director of curriculum and instruction. “These aspirations can be accomplished by ensuring that young learners gain essential academic, social, and emotional skills early – bridging gaps that can widen in kindergarten and beyond. A well-designed, inclusive curriculum fosters language development, critical thinking, and collaborative skills – empowering children with diverse learning needs to succeed in preschool and throughout their Shaker experience.”

Now the Board of Education is including an expanded preschool program in its long-term facilities plan. The goal: make high-quality preschool available to as many Shaker children as possible. In November 2023, voters approved a facilities funding package that included seed money for the expanded preschool program at Ludlow.

### Programming Unique To The Region

All classes will include both students who have been identified to have disabilities and those who have not been so identified. The practice of blending students in general education with those who have special needs – a “peer model” approach – provides constructive examples to students with special needs and exposes general education students to children with differences. Full-day preschoolers get a taste of all of the basic subjects their older peers get, as well as “specials” such as music, art, library, Spanish and

physical education. Half-day students get an abbreviated version of that menu. All children go on a wide variety of field trips.

“This type of programming is not being offered anywhere else in Cuyahoga County,” Evans says.

The program will be open to children between the ages of 3 and 5 who live within the District and are toilet trained. The current program is tuition-based for general education students but on a sliding scale for families who qualify for free or reduced meals. While a sliding-scale tuition system will continue, the expanded program at Ludlow will offer unprecedented access to all families, regardless of their financial means.

Last May, Cuyahoga County informed the District that it had been awarded a Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) grant from Invest in Children. UPK is a countywide initiative aimed at providing high-quality early childhood education to preschool-aged children, particularly those from

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## BUILDING ON SUCCESS WITH INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE PHILOSOPHY

The Ludlow Early Learning Center will be inheriting a preschool program already ranked at the top of its class. The program has a Gold Award in Ohio's "Step Up to Quality" rating system – the highest award given. The program recognizes child care programs that meet quality standards beyond licensing requirements. The current program is also the only one in Ohio – and one of just a few in North America – to incorporate the prestigious International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme philosophy with a continuation through the twelfth grade. IB is an inquiry-based program where students engage in researching and exploring topics that affect their classroom, school, community, and our world.

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low- and middle-income families. The award provides the District \$660,000 over three years and can be used for tuition assistance, teacher training, and family support.

Additionally, the expanded preschool program will accept vouchers. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services offers this financial assistance to eligible parents and guardians to help them with child care costs while they engage in work, education, or job training. Families can be eligible to have all or part of their monthly child care expenses paid on their behalf.

"When families can't access affordable child care, they lose wages and opportunities to provide for their future, creating a cycle that is hard to break," Evans says. "By expanding preschool spots for Shaker children, we are not only empowering families but also positively impacting our local economy and community. This is an investment that benefits everyone."

### Casting A Wide Net

As of September 2023, 81 students were enrolled in the District's preschool program housed in Onaway Elementary School – both full-day and half-day. The District hopes to at least double that number in the new Ludlow Early Learning Center, which will be able to accommodate 200 young learners.

Onaway usually maintains a long and constant preschool waiting list, confirming the belief that a market for high-quality preschool exists. But the District is leaving nothing to chance. In late 2023, it embarked on a wide-ranging marketing and enrollment campaign aimed at ensuring the community is aware of the expanded program.

This proactive, grassroots approach is aimed at reaching historically marginalized families who could benefit most from increased access to high-quality preschool, says Trina Jones, the District's family and community engagement liaison.

She and Chrystal McNeal, a paraprofessional and family and community engagement liaison at Onaway, go as far as to sit down with families who began a preschool application for their student but failed, for whatever reason, to complete it.

"We'll work with a family and talk through what the barriers are," Jones says. "What is the disconnect? Why didn't you finish the process?"

To Jones and McNeal, ensuring that the Ludlow Early Learning Center succeeds – and, in the process, reclaiming a part of Ludlow's history – is a mission more than it is a job.

"We both are in the Ludlow community," Jones says. "We live there." **SL**

*(Scott Stephens is Executive Director of Communications and Engagement for the Shaker Heights City School District)*



The District hopes to double the current enrolled preschoolers in the new Ludlow Early Learning Center, which can accommodate 200 young learners.



**SUDBURY**

**SCOTTSDALE**



# GOOD FIT

## An Update on Infill Housing in Shaker

Written by **Sharon Holbrook** Photography by **Jason Miller**

Nearly 20 years ago, the mortgage crisis led to a slew of abandoned homes that ended up as vacant lots. The City's infill housing program is bringing new life to those lots and neighborhoods.

When you think of new housing construction in Shaker Heights, you might think of the Raye apartment building recently completed across from the Van Aken District. But that's not the only game in town: "infill" homes are also cropping up across Shaker, joining established neighborhoods and providing unique opportunities to buy or build a new custom home here.

In the early 2000s, there were very few vacant lots in Shaker Heights. But the 2008 mortgage and foreclosure crisis changed that. Some owners, many of whom were out-of-state investors, abandoned distressed properties and left them to further deteriorate. The Moreland neighborhood was

particularly hard-hit. For over 200 houses in Shaker, city demolition was the only practical answer, says Kyle Krewson, director of building and housing for the City of Shaker Heights.

These days, if the City demos three houses in one year, that's a lot. The focus now is on building and reinvesting – already, over a dozen homes have been built and about a dozen more are currently under construction. The City owns more than 200 vacant lots as of this writing, but it's not simply going to sell them off on the open market. Instead, it's taking a more deliberate approach and focusing on building homes that are a good fit with existing houses and neighborhoods.



Builder Ishmael Martin (left) and Kyle Krewson, director of building and housing for the City of Shaker Heights on the porch of a recently completed home by Martin.

So what does a “good fit” mean?

First, it means that residents have had a chance to weigh in on design. In 2015, the City held a design competition for prospective builders. Neighborhood residents voted on designs, and these preferences led to the City’s guidelines for infill housing and how the Architectural Board of Review evaluates plans for new homes. For example, guidelines dictate that new houses can’t have an exposed concrete foundation. Instead, foundations must be wrapped in brick to blend with surrounding historic homes.

Good fit also means that infill builders must be approved by the City of Shaker Heights. In collaboration with partners such as First Suburbs Consortium and the Cuyahoga Land Bank, the City has reached out to builders who can work with the City’s guidelines and build in accord with the

character of the neighborhoods. The City has now approved six private developers to build in Moreland, up from two only two years ago, and is focused on engaging with more minority developers. “We’re focused on ensuring our developers reflect the values of the neighborhood. All developers thus far have a local presence to the community,” says Krewson.

#### HOMEGROWN INVESTMENT

One of the city’s approved builders is Ishmael Martin, a 2006 graduate of Shaker Heights High School who is building six homes on Sudbury Road. Martin says he’s appreciated the ongoing communication with neighbors, including multiple meetings with Moreland on the Move community association, and he says he’s getting positive feedback from residents about the new construction on the street. Four of the six new Cape Cod and colonial homes, some of which include



## What is *infill housing*?

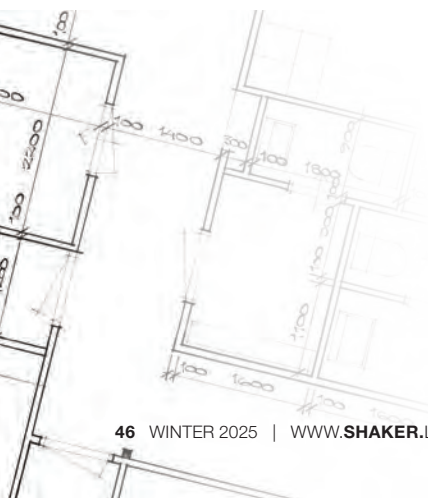
Infill housing is a term used to describe new housing being built in a ‘built-out’ or historic neighborhood. This type of housing attracts new development and residents to neighborhoods by filling vacant home sites and adding new housing options for new and current residents.



a first-floor primary bedroom and bath, have been completed as of this writing and are selling for around \$300,000. Owner-occupants of these new homes in the southern Moreland neighborhood will be eligible for a 10-year, 100% tax abatement on the new construction.

#### KEEPING THE BALANCE ON VALUE

New construction in historic neighborhoods is a balance because new homes with high design standards are inherently more expensive than surrounding existing homes due to ever rising construction and material costs, even with the City selling the lots for just one dollar each to approved builders. When these types of investments are made in historic neighborhoods, there are natural fears of gentrification and displacement. The City continues to hold community meetings and seek community feedback from neighbors in Moreland as projects progress.



Shaker has reached out to builders who can work with the City's guidelines and build in accord with the character of the neighborhood.





Martin is eager to build again in Shaker after he "completes the street" by filling the remaining six vacant lots on Sudbury Road with new homes.





Although most of Shaker has recovered, values of existing homes still have not completely bounced back from the housing crisis in the Moreland neighborhood. The City hopes that new infill homes will provide a sustainable boost to overall values in the neighborhood while existing houses remain relatively affordable. Krewson adds that when county property tax appraisals are done, older homes are only compared to older homes, and newer homes are only compared to newer homes. It's a complex process, but homeowners' tax valuations should not see a jump simply because there is a costlier new home on the street. The recent rise in appraised values was not a result of the new infill homes, but rather part of a larger trend across the state of rapidly rising home values.

What's next for infill housing? The City continues to solicit input from residents, and it is hearing continued desire for aging-in-place options (first-floor living) as well as affordable housing options. For his part, Martin is eager to build again in Shaker after he "completes the street" by filling the remaining six vacant lots on Sudbury Road with his new homes. Martin plans for his next phase to be eight homes on Pennington Road. Watch the City's e-newsletter and website for further information.

Learn more about infill housing at [shakerheightsoh.gov/infill](http://shakerheightsoh.gov/infill). **SL**







*Near-Perfect  
Harmony*

Written by **Zachary Lewis** | Photography by **Robert Muller**



Many duplexes in Shaker house individual families, without any connection other than a shared wall. But for these Latimore families maintaining their daily connection to each other is the goal.

## *In many respects,*

Latimore Road could be any other neighborhood street in Shaker Heights. It's quiet, well kept, and neatly lined with trees.

But this out-of-the-way enclave contains something others in the city do not: a row of duplexes occupied by intergenerational families.

In this stretch of three homes, three unrelated combinations of parents, siblings, and adult children live in near-perfect harmony, sharing spaces, expenses, and responsibilities in a way that's common in other cultures but uncommon in the U.S., where single-family households predominate.

About their situations, it's a toss-up which is more surprising – that their modest, traditional-looking homes are in fact spacious duplexes, or how content they are living in them.

*“We each still have our own spaces, but we live together.”*

Liz, Dawn, & Andre



*“It’s a win-win situation for the both of us.”*

Janet & Kristen



*“We get along so well ... it’s kinda fun.”*

Kathy & Gloria



## A Solution For Everyone

"We're very happy here," says estate attorney Dawn McFadden, who lives in one home with her husband and mother. "So many people say they could never do this, but it's worked out very well for us."

For McFadden, the choice to share space with her mom, Liz, was easy. Newly married and living elsewhere, she sought both to return to her native Cleveland and to be near Liz, who needed company and a smaller home following the death of her husband.

The Latimore house, built in 1936 and carefully refurbished in 2010, fit the bill perfectly, offering both mom and the new couple complete private homes,

one atop the other, each with two bedrooms, two bathrooms, and its own kitchen. All they share is a basement laundry room. McFadden's husband, Andre Taylor, also got his own basement office.

"We each still have our own spaces, but we live together," McFadden says. "We get to spend as much or as little time together as we want."

Other upsides emerged as time went on. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when other families were holing up separately, the clustered McFaddens enjoyed a larger "bubble" that permitted shared meals and other socializing. Thanksgiving, too, has proved much easier for them to handle, with two kitchens, and both parties have appreciated splitting utilities, landscaping, and taxes.

Perhaps the greatest benefit, though, has been the one McFadden anticipated: being on hand to help mom. Happily, Liz is in good health, but living together has nonetheless been a lifesaver. Liz once took a fall and Taylor happened to be present to help her up.

At this point, McFadden concludes, "If we were to move, it would still be all of us together."



Left to right: Andre Taylor, Dawn McFadden, and Liz McFadden.



## A Way to Stay in Shaker

Next door, mother and daughter Janet and Kristen Houk's rationale for moving in together was similar but different in two key respects. One, Janet had already lived across the street on Latimore for 30 years, and two, Kristen was as eager for her mother's company as her mother was for hers.

It's true, in other words, that Janet, a retired Shaker Schools teacher, needed smaller, safer quarters, a home without stairs. But it's also true that Kristen stood – and still stands – to benefit from living in close proximity to her mother.

"She [Kristen] was in a situation where she needed help, too," Janet Houk explains. "I've been an encouragement to her, and she's been a help to me. And yet we have our privacy. It's a win-win situation for the both of us."

As with the McFaddens, living together has come in handy for the Houks in an emergency. Had she been living on her own, Janet might not have fared as well as she did the time she fainted – when Kristen was home to call an ambulance.

There have been other perks as well. The Houks, too, have appreciated the built-in companionship and ability to split expenses. Janet in particular is grateful to have been able to stay in Shaker Heights, in a neighborhood she knows and loves, rather than start over in a senior living community several miles further east.

For that reason, in part, out of gratitude, Houk says she plans to leave their home – which she owns – to Kristen after her death, thereby setting up her daughter for many more years of safety and financial security.

"She's going to have an income-generating piece of property," Houk says. "That was another big motivator for me, thinking ahead. It was the smart thing to do."



Above: Janet (left) and Kristen Houk.



## Unique Bond of Sisters

Sisters Kathy Moody and Gloria Sturghill were also thinking smartly when they bought the duplex next to the Houks. Individually, they knew, neither could afford a home of her own, but together, they could handle one easily.

What's more, this particular home on Latimore offered everything they wanted and more: two complete two-bedroom suites over 4,100 air-conditioned square feet, plus a three-car garage and an empty lot next door.

As for living together? That was just another bonus, something they'd been wanting to do for years. During the pandemic, while others struggled with loneliness, they watched movies and learned to make pizza.

"We get along so well," Sturghill says. "It's kinda fun. We do road trips together all the time. We're always going up and down, calling to each other. And then we lock it up at night and do it all over again the next day."

So far, they've seen no downsides. For them, with their different work and social schedules, it's a treat every time they find themselves at home together. Sometimes, together, they host parties on their side-lot.

Companionship has been good for their health, too. A few years ago, when Moody was recovering from partial congestive heart failure, Sturghill was able not only to visit her at the hospital but also to preside over her convalescence at home.

"I could just run up and down and get things for her," Sturghill says.

Living together with a parent or sibling isn't entirely without its headaches. Though they're content in general, the Latimore families all report occasional squabbles. In two cases, the problem is the pets – they don't get along with their housemates quite as well as the humans do.

But it's nothing they can't handle. They moved under one roof knowing exactly what they were getting into. That, therefore, is their single greatest piece of advice to anyone eyeing the benefits of buying a house with a family member: look before you leap.

"You really just have to talk to each other," Sturghill says. "If you don't, somebody's going to be moving." **SL**



Above: Kathy Moody (left) and Gloria Sturghill.



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## Scene in Shaker

# A Member of the Corps

Written by Sharon Broussard

**Shaker native Shane Williams started on the path of a dance career later than most but has made up for lost time as a new member of one of the most prestigious dance companies.**

Shane Williams doesn't know when he fell in love with dance. Was it when he was watching his sister Brynn in her dance performances at Shaker Dance Academy? Or was it his obsession with the Canadian teen dance drama "The Next Step?" He's not sure.

But the Shaker Heights native does know that he fell in love with the New York City Ballet (NYCB) a few years ago when he saw the dance company perform

*“I saw that he had the right physicality, the right mentality to pursue this art form. He was born to dance.”*

in Saratoga Springs, New York. As he watched the graceful dancers turn, leap, and soar, he said to himself, “I want to move and perform like that.”

And now he does. Last March, the prestigious ballet company, co-founded by noted choreographer George Balanchine, selected Williams to be in the corps de ballet, the ensemble which takes the stage nearly every night.

Williams was chosen after serving as an apprentice for just seven months with the School of American Ballet, the company’s official school. He is just 18 and lives in New York City.

It was a swift rise that required lots of fancy footwork from Williams and his family, who live in Onaway. Seeing how much he loved to dance, his mother Tracy Williams, the registrar for the Shaker Heights School District, enrolled him at Cleveland City Dance (CCD) while he attended Woodbury and noticed that he would practice his dance and the dances of other people. His father, Reggie, a lawyer, and his two older sisters, Grace and Brynn, took turns driving him to ballet classes.

Williams stood out although he started ballet at 11, much older than most boys who become professionals.

“I saw that he had the right physicality, the right mentality to pursue this art form. He was born to dance,” says Courtney Laves-Mearini, the executive director of CCD, who encouraged him to audition for the School of American Ballet, NYCB’s residential school. He got in but he chose to complete 10th grade at Shaker Heights High school before going to New York. He graduated from the Professional Performing Arts School in New York City.

Williams says he is grateful to everyone who helped him fulfill his dream, from his family to Cleveland City Dance. And he loves dancing with the corps.

“Being on stage – there is no other place like it,” he says. “Even if the audience has 1,000 people in it, it feels so intimate – like I am sharing something with you.” **SL**



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# Shaker Chronicles



Written by Sharon Holbrook



## Why is Shaker's rec center called Thornton Park?

It's Charles A. Thornton Park, to be exact.

In Shaker's earliest days, most public recreational activities took place on corner lots and school grounds.

As a Shaker school principal in the 1920s, Charles Thornton supervised summer activities for children on school grounds and was the City's director of playgrounds. He requested that the Shaker Heights Fire Department flood a vacant lot so children could ice skate – a winter tradition still enjoyed today.

In addition to being a science teacher and administrator at Moreland Elementary and the high school for three decades, Thornton was considered Shaker Heights' best advocate for and its decades-long leader of recreation. The City formally appointed him as its first full-time recreation director in 1956, a position he officially held for just a year before his retirement.

When Thornton Park was dedicated in 1958, it was named for Charles Thornton to honor his years of service. The 12-acre park began with the sledding hill that still faces Farnsleigh Road, along with plans to construct a swimming pool. The pool opened in 1962 and tennis courts followed soon after.

In 1964, the Recreation Department polled residents about the desire for an indoor ice rink, which was ultimately opened in late 1968. In 1969, after years of controversy, the pool and ice rink were opened to Cleveland residents who resided in the Shaker Heights school district.



1938 Moreland Elementary School class, Principal Thornton pictured on the far right of the photo.

In recent years, the Recreation Department has looked beyond Thornton Park to develop public parks and amenities for the next century of recreation here. Right now, with resident input in surveys and meetings, the City is undertaking a Recreation Strategic Plan which will evaluate recreation possibilities at Shaker Heights Middle School, Chelton Park/Shaker School District Bus Depot, and the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Community Building/Colonnade area.

For the latest information on the strategic plan, see [shakerheightsoh.gov/RecreationPlan](http://shakerheightsoh.gov/RecreationPlan)

*If you've had a burning question about Shaker's beginnings, transitions, or unique landmarks, let us know at [shaker.mag@shakerheightsoh.gov](mailto:shaker.mag@shakerheightsoh.gov). We might not be able to answer all questions, but your curiosity will help us start the digging.*

*Shaker Life appreciates research assistance for this article from staff of the Shaker Historical Society and Shaker Heights Public Library.*

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