

**CIC CITY BEAUTIFUL COMMITTEE MINUTES
AUGUST 4, 2025
CITY OF UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS
AT HRRC HOME REPAIR RESOURCE CENTER, CLEVELAND HEIGHTS**

Present: Shawn Belt, Chair
 Michele Weiss, Vice Mayor
 Brad Bryan, Law Director
 Sheri Sax, Councilperson
 Win Weizer, Councilperson
 Markell Davis, Housing Director
 Anne Marie Goodfriend, Education Coordinator, LRRC
 Keesha Allen, Director LRRC
 Roberta Rubin, Assistant Clerk of Council

Ms. Allen commented that she would give an overview before they started with questions and she had information to pass out. They had been around for 53 years and primarily started as an organization reaching out to black and brown homeowners who were fleeing Cleveland. She looked at it in a way as homeowners trying to protect their investment and to make sure that new homeowners knew what to do to keep their homes in good repair. They originally started with grants and loans through their challenge fund loan program which was a loan guarantee program through society bank. They raised funds for different loans and their claim to fame was that they took a second chance on homeowners who did not have either the equity or the credit to repair their homes. In the 80s, they evolved a little bit more into a HUD certified counseling agency and became one of the epicenters of helping folks stay in their homes through the foreclosure situation. Back then they were still doing classes at people's houses for five dollars. They had evolved by also offering classes up to four nights a week with classes twice on site and then twice out in the community. Thanks to Ms. Goodfriend and her predecessors, they had been able to stretch their repair education program as far west as North Olmstead, Wickliffe and South Brexville. They had been working in tandem with the Buckeye Woodhill development with their century-old church, trying to revitalize it as a hub for the community as well as attending local fairs.

She became director in 2013 after seeing literature that the Repair Resource Center was the best kept secret in Cleveland Heights. She looked at their bottom line, budget, all the things they offered. Their community development block grants, CDBG, as well as some money from the foreclosure HUD counseling started to dry up once things started getting better so their board worked with her on a strategic plan and they intentionally moved into other communities with their service with the first service community being the St. Luke's area. They partnered with Euclid and Shaker Heights. With Euclid, they did something like University Heights in that they started off with a repair education program and prioritized them having classes based on their needs and the types of classes they wanted. Euclid residents received 25% off the tool library and that was based on where they were in their municipality. They were approached by Shaker Heights who wanted to embolden their housing department and wanted the LRRC to provide their expertise and administer the repair programs. They had been working with them since 2016 and had leveraged over \$2.5 million in repairs, meaning that they had a tax funded program, which was different from CDBG. With HUD, there were only certain types of repairs, and they had to do all of their qualifying based off 80%, or 120% so it was a very finite, strict guideline for obtaining it.

Shaker Heights used strictly taxpayer money from a general fund which was split up into three different programs. One was the exterior maintenance program where they had a paint program in partnership with Sherwin Williams. The LRRC provided a percentage of paint to be towards painting the project. They also had a specific Moreland model block program which abutted some of the new developments that they wanted to make. They wanted to support the homeowners in that area, like some of the work that the LRRC did with the land bank. With the circle ease project in Euclid, the land bank brought them in and they were able to support the existing homeowners even though they were building \$400,000 homes. Their goal was to do a full assessment to support those existing homeowners, to make it look good for the new homeowners, and to offer the resources and the tools to be able to thrive. Their coordinators were well versed in ensuring that they had contractors who were licensed, insured and bonded. They worked with the client and not for the client. This was their investment and she believed that homeownership was a responsibility and not a privilege. To be able to take care of that, they needed to do things like taking care of a car including maintenance. They were the one stop shop for homes from the beginning such as for example, if someone wanted to be a homeowner with their first time homebuyer education class. They were offering a \$30,000 down payment assistance benefit for homeowners right now through ARPA funds. They had financial assistance programs, benefits, grants, loans, to help through all stages. They liked to support seniors in their aging in place efforts, as well as anything that had to do with foreclosure and keeping people in their homes. They always had the desire to move to University Heights because it was so close to everything that they were doing.

They had originally met with Mr. Engelbrecht. They were not stepping on any toes of what housing departments were already doing but trying to support them in the best way they could. She would pass out a sample of the contract that they had with the Shaker online program. It broke down what the LRRC did and what was required of them. As a partner city, they would know and they had already locked in for core classes. Their scout class schedule would be included in their package. If they decided to do that ministry work, they would not charge an additional MOU. How they did it was taking the administrative fee which was a small fee to be able to get the project from start to finish. They provided monthly, quarterly, and yearly reporting and had their own personal time management system, where they could retrieve data. They included the Heights and followed a five-year inspection cycle. They were mostly following the violations. Many of their programs were outside of violations. They showed up to housing court twice a month, just to make sure that they were abreast of any current problems. They were the frontline for the housing preservation office in the building department, meaning that if someone received a violation, their name and information was on the back. They wanted people to know to reach out to them so they could wrap their arms around them and support them so they did not reach the point where they were getting more and shorter. She then asked if there were any questions or comments.

Mr. Bryan asked that as far as the violations, did they wait for people to call them?

Ms. Allen responded that being in court, they saw the docket so they were proactive and worked with Mr. Buchanan, the one who issued violations.

Mr. Bryan stated that they went to Shaker court.

Ms. Allen responded that they did not go to Shaker Court. They worked with Laura and Theo over at the department and they would give them the heads up about the violations.

Mrs. Weiss asked if Shaker was the only city that they had such a robust contract with or other places as well?

Ms. Allen responded that there was Shaker and the St. Luke's Foundation so Buckeye would help. It was funded through St. Luke's Foundation and Huntington so that contract was a little bit different. She could show them the one from Euclid which was more bare bones, and they were doing that administration. Shaker was their largest municipality outside of Cleveland. Cleveland Heights had their contracts a little bit bigger and those were from CDBG funded communities and they received about 1.3 million from ARPA.

Mr. Bryan asked if they could send them the Euclid example just so they could see the range and might want something in between.

Ms. Allen responded that they could absolutely do that.

Mr. Shawn commented that the goal was to do two sets of four and that the first four were the basics.

Ms. Weizer stated that they had two sets of four classes, but they were going to talk about how the second set right would be constructed.

Ms. Allen affirmed that they wanted specifics to their housing stock and concerns.

Ms. Goodfriend commented that their basic curriculum was Power Pulse 101, followed by carpentry and drywall, and electrical switches and outlets. Then the final class B basic plumbing repairs.

Mr. Belt stated that in the second four, they were looking at possibly tailoring to what they usually saw on their exterior maintenance issues on their houses. Right now the goal was to work on the top four violations like tuck pointing.

Ms. Goodfriend commented that they had one instructor who was consistent with them twice a year and would need him to host a class at the center if they wanted to do tuck pointing. Per the University Heights contract, residents would not have a charge when they would come. It was hard to get tuck pointing, especially when violations came around.

Ms. Weizer mentioned that they had discussed holding the classes at the center and could travel there by bus if they did not have a car.

Ms. Goodfriend agreed that that for tuck pointing, driveways and concrete violations to go ahead and host those at the center. It would be a mixed group including people outside of University Heights. They would do the standard MOU.

Mr. Belt asked Ms. Davis if they retained information on something like a spreadsheet based on what violations the inspectors found?

Ms. Davis responded that it was the sidewalks. Give or take some days, they should have been finished but she was waiting for hers. He was off for a few days, but she asked the

group to do it because she knew they had wanted to know about most of the violations that people have seen with the sidewalks.

Mr. Belt mentioned that Council was currently discussing it so they were getting prepared. For the next four classes, they did not quite know yet what they would like to do.

Ms. Weizer commented that part of the reason why they were receiving mostly sidewalks was because of the restrictions to go onto the property unless the inspectors knocked on the resident's door and asked permission.

Ms. Goodfriend suggested that one of their housing inspectors from University Heights could host a class on housing violations, and preventatives. They had hosted that class here for their community and it had gone quite well.

Mr. Belt asked if they could send him information on it.

Mrs. Weiss commented that she believed they were going to have everything at the HRRC and wanted to verify.

Ms. Allen commented that when they were walking out of the last meeting, there was a mention of hosting it at the center.

Ms. Weizer agreed that it made more sense.

Ms. Allen stated that if they could tailor it and if there was resounding attendance, they could close it. It was up to 20, depending on the type of class and they could even host a little bit more. When they did the Shaker classes, they went to Stephanie Jones Community Center and promoted it 100%. If they had some stragglers coming in or took an interest in the topic, and were unable make it to Shaker, then they would go to the LRRC. If they could prioritize it and leave it to University Heights to do the marketing on their social media or other communications, they would handle the registry. They had their own program called Mind Body, which they used to host all their classes. It was a link that they would give University Heights the link for whatever advertising and marketing they were doing and get this directly registered. It had been really good with the library and they received all that information.

Mr. Belt commented that this would work.

Ms. Weizer mentioned that she was glad that Ms. Allen was present because Ms. Goodfriend had mentioned that she also did grants and if they had the money for a specific grant that the LRRC administered. That was the next thing to think about and to see how it fit with the CIC and or the city.

Mr. Belt stated that they could probably figure out to do it through the city or through the CIC. The money was the biggest thing. If the LRRC was providing the expertise, and University Heights was providing the funds, he did not see why they could not partner with another city.

Ms. Allen commented that for the Euclid, or the St. Luke's area, what they had been offering was not to scale as the five, four different programs that they were running. They were in the presence, meaning that, on violations or any type of repair information, on technical

assistance, contractor evaluations, discount or free, depending on income, free access to the tool library, classes, and then like with St. Luke's, there was a small portion of dollars that were only for grants. If they were asking for \$60,000, they took their admin at 10 to 12%, and then they placed all the rest of that money back into the grants and split it up as many as they could. It was the same thing they did with ARPA and Cleveland Heights, and they tried to make sure they maximized the benefit. It cost to provide their services, but it was no tax other than their flat fee that they were asking for.

Mr. Bryan stated that it would be helpful on the sidewalk and driveway violations to have technical expertise where somebody could assess it, give ideas of how one could most economically repair it, and list the contractors.

Ms. Allen commented that it did not have to be big, The carrot was, and it went well with what she said, if people were putting some “skin in the game,” there was a little bit of a carrot there. At the end of the day, it was their responsibility. They learned the process and how to budget.

Ms. Weizer asked Ms. Davis if she knew how many new homeowners had come into University Heights in a year or even in a month?

Ms. Davis responded that it was hard to say. At the end of last year when the point-of-sale applications was pulled, it went to 200 plus for 2024.

Ms. Weizer commented that the city did a welcome packet. There was a class for new homeowners because many of these houses were flipped. Flippers sneaked something in and, and then the next person ended up with it. Having an education program might be something that they could consider.

Ms. Goodfriend stated that they offer that class once a month. It was a four weeklong class, post on zoom by Denise Wallace, who worked there.

Ms. Allen commented that for the maintenance portion, they had a one off for that meaning that they discussed seasonal maintenance. They had handouts and could easily do a seasonal first-time homebuyer repair focused class.

Mrs. Weiss asked if they went back to the marketing piece a little bit, did they have digital and paper marketing materials that were ready to go or was it something that they should create?

Ms. Allen responded that Ms. Goodfriend did many of their feeds and everything on Facebook as well as their newsletter. If it was something that they wanted to promote, they could insert something in their archives to say they had this series they were running with habitat and then send it to her. If they needed to be of some help with that in the beginning, they were great with that.

Ms. Weizer commented that they had a quarterly newsletter that went out from the city but they would have the CIC connected into that quarterly.

Mrs. Weiss mentioned that the charge might be waived in the Heights Observer.

Ms. Allen commented that they had a good relationship with the Observer, if it was something that came up, and Ms. Goodfriend had for almost every class.

Ms. Goodfriend commented that for their women's series she had flyers that she did every month, and they had archives of everything.

Ms. Allen commented that the CIC banner would appear straight to their link on their web page. They had stocks of material that would be the CIC logo and the HRRC would insert, the topic and the time.

Ms. Weizer stated that the city's newsletter went out on MailChimp but they needed access to it.

Ms. Goodfriend commented that if they did go forward with partnering, they could give the CIC access and host their email within their MailChimp program.

Ms. Allen commented that grant funded accumulated quickly. What they learned from Shaker was because they were using private money, were protecting the homeowner, meaning it was owner occupied, current on taxes and mortgage, and received a satisfaction letter afterwards, they could alleviate that red tape. Some of these other programs that people did not want to have anything to do with, was because they had so many requirements as far as funding was concerned.

Mrs. Weiss mentioned that she was familiar with 100% pop 150% poverty level. What did AMI stand for?

Ms. Allen commented that it was Average median income. This was much higher than probably the county's poverty level. 80% was where most HUD. So CDBG 80% yeah. Then when they start talking about ARPA or programs such as that, they could go up to 120% or 200% below. Her team was great at calculating all that. 80% was affecting and impacting low to moderate income folks. When you were at 120%, you were getting that sweet spot of people, a family of four still only making 60 or \$70,000. You could stretch the benefit a little bit. 80 percent was hard because people usually did not have the money or the resources in to pay their portion as well as get the grant benefits. That was why ARPA had been a good benefit in showing them to show other funders that the 80% moniker was not helping enough folks because so many people were at 80% or below.

Ms. Weizer commented that they had an existing program where the council put \$15,000 into it every year. One grant was issued over the years, because of the income being so high or low. Their population did not meet that. The problem came in when they went to do a leveling of a block and were charged \$1200 dollars for it and that \$1200 could be their meds.

Ms. Allen commented that they all had to flex if it was not taxed so when they discussed federal funding, or HUD and CDBG, was why they had rules. If it was taxpayer money, you could be a little bit more creative as to how you provide your benefit. Staying below 200% was always easier. They could weed out the people who were making \$500,000. With our with their new ARPA program with Cleveland Heights, they sometimes went up to 200%.

Ms. Weizer commented that it might be more prevalent on the western end of the city because the homes at the western end, especially near Cleveland Heights, were starter homes

North of Cedar. They only had two or three so there would probably be one. Even in the west end, they were inching up to around 300k a house after it had been flipped. In 2013-14, they were anywhere between \$70,000 and \$100,000. Now they were approaching \$180,000, \$190,000 for loan financing

Ms. Allen commented that the new development going down across from Save Alive was helping. People were buying and it was becoming more affordable. They had a great down payment assistance program. People were getting \$30,000 and \$50,000 to move there. As long as they remained 80% to 120%, there was a range of folks they were able to help.

Mr. Belt asked if they had the ability to look at data to see the average percentage? It would be smart for them to try and figure out where the penalty percentage should be.

Ms. Weizer stated that she could run that.

Mrs. Sax suggested some targeted mailings.

Ms. Allen commented that they could do a block grant if they wanted to do something around the park or down by campus or do a model block where they saw the improvements so people could visually see it. If they wanted to concentrate it and emphasize the work that they were doing, that was what they did in the more rural area.

Mrs. Weiss commented that this was a great document and a great start. They needed a meeting just to review all the possibilities.

Ms. Allen commented that they could do the census data. They could query the county data to see who had exemptions. That was an easy way to figure out the senior population. Some quick ideas were \$500 for seniors or 62, and to make sure they could go all the way down to 55. As their homeowner is working with HRRC, the contractor could not pay charge taxes, because they were the payers. It was another bit of a discount for the homeowner. Contractors were not paid unless permits were pulled, closed, and they received a finance satisfaction letter. They could make sure they had to be registered with them. Shaker had its own registry. University Heights had its own housing department.

Ms. Weizer commented that their housing department covered a great deal.

Ms. Allen commented that they worked on violation infill because when the city came to them, they had worked with the land bank and the CCLC, acquired properties and worked with developers and were able to get health insurance for our for their team. Because of the current market, they had no interest in doing it. They went with the flow is and made sure that they were not diluting their products. However, they had always wanted to expand but they were almost expanding too far but being close to home was positive and could accommodate what the CIC was looking for. She would send over the Euclid-type of form and one similar to the St. Luke's, one of their original MOUs. They did the basic Buckeye area senior incentive grant which was approximately \$1,500 coupled with all their services. They were only able to help about 10 folks a year, but it made a difference. What they did with Shaker programs, was each homeowner had to pay 10%, which was money left for more projects. The money went directly to the contractor. When all the funds' projects were done, then they paid the contract rest. The difference with CDBG and Cleveland Heights was they did not charge a 10% unless it was in the harbor program.

Ms. Weizer commented that the paint program may turn out to be something to be considered at the CIC level. They could set aside a certain amount for a particular type of paint. The grant would pay for it, as long as they were providing it to a contractor or able-bodied person who could do it.

Ms. Allen commented that young homeowners could do it on their own homes and they could come rent their tools, laid ladders, weights, boards and everything else. Euclid had a discount on their tool library. It cost \$25 a year. It used to be where you would have to take a class to be eligible but for the most part, there were income discounts for registering for class.

Ms. Goodfriend that with the partner cities, Shaker Heights, Cleveland Heights and Euclid, people could get a 25% discount on their classes.

Ms. Allen commented that it was \$160 for a series if one fell into the income guidelines to get that discount. That was a six-week series where they went over different modules.

Ms. Davis asked if this in combination with the exterior grant that they had or was this to catch the people who did not qualify?

Ms. Weizer responded that if they did this, they would have to decide whether the program would still run through the housing department or would the CIC work as the vehicle who would subcontract this to HRRC? Her point was that the income level limit was way too low for anybody to qualify for it. Council could raise the amount, whereupon they were going to have numerous people saying they wanted the grant and housing would have to be able to screen all of that on top of everything else. At that point, housing would welcome the CIC to handle through HRRC.

Mr. Belt stated that they were still very new to do anything immediately, but it was good that they were thinking about it and that there was a board.

Mrs. Weiss commented that Mr. Belt was their our resident and president, three of them were on the council, and she was the vice president and a clerk.

Ms. Weizer commented that the way the CIC was currently set up, the board chose the president. It used to be that the mayor was the president, but they switched it. That freed the mayor up to go do what he needed to do, and kept the organization moving forward and made them flexible.

Mr. Belt asked Ms. Allen if she would have more printed information available for the paint program that Shaker did, or would they talk to Shaker to see if they would be able to provide that?

Ms. Allen responded that she did not know the logistics or what arrangement they had made. Shaker approached them when Colin Compton was there. They had the pool of funds and could not pay an administration fee so they did a year pro bono. Shaker used funds out, did the exterior and senior programs. They worked with Sherwin Williams to start the paint program going and then created the Model Block program. Their programs were 100% for violation repairs or a senior. It weeded out enough people and Shaker was constantly violating so their cycle was consistent, unlike theirs.

Mr. Belt commented that they should talk to Shaker Housing about the senior program, the paint program and the block program.

Ms. Allen commented that she would honestly ask them what they saw in their city that made them reach out? They still had two housing directors running their programs. What did they see as a benefit? That was one reason why Euclid's partnership was running it through their headquarter program, which did not have a defined housing director or housing staff. HRRC did not have the institutional knowledge that the housing director would know in order to implement ideas.

Mrs. Weiss asked Ms. Davis if she knew anyone in the Shaker housing department?

Ms. Davis responded that she did , but he was the first suburb consortium. There were two of them and they were usually on the meetings from Shaker.

Mrs. Weiss suggested organizing a meeting with Mr. Belt and everybody to speak to them and possibly invite them to the next meeting.

Ms. Allen commented that they usually ran out of money when they had to return to counsel. In the middle of their contract, they had to do that for the past three years. They had allowed about \$75,000 for grants and they ran through that .

Mrs. Weiss commented that it meant that people with fixing up their homes.

Ms. Allen commented that they had a specific coordinator dedicated to working with their city. It would not be a community relations person doing all the front work and making sure all the documents were taken care of. By the time they got to a coordinator within 14 to 21 days, everything was done.

Mrs. Weiss asked Ms. Davis if she had an intern assigned to her department?

Ms. Davis responded that there was one but was not specifically assigned to the housing department.

Ms. Allen stated that she would obtain contact information from their coordinator.

Mr. Belt asked if they could send over specific information for the second round of classes.

Ms. Goodfriend commented that they had made a promise to Habitat for Humanity that they would get the first choice of classes dates for next year but she had the CIC locked in. She would send some information over.

Mr. Belt commented that if they had dates locked in, they could put the notice in their Focus quarterly magazine.

Ms. Allen commented that the most important thing was to do the work, even if there was no MOU. If anyone had any questions, there was rush. They were happy to be in University Heights because that had always been a goal and dream of hers. They were leaving East Cleveland. They had just finished a program that they did with the Fair Housing Center. It

was called the Blanton Latinx Reinvestment Fund. They received about \$6 million from Fannie Mae for a red line community. They were working on finishing their 65th project and this was all in census tracts that they had identified from Clark Fulton, Bedford Heights, and Garfield Heights. They were putting out almost \$655,000, \$10,000 a piece with no strings attached.

Meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Roberta Rubin
Assistant Clerk of Council

Shawn Belt, CIC President