From the President

My commitment to the long term success of FutureHeights is personal. My family arrived in Cleveland Heights in the early 70’s. I was raised by a single mother who deeply valued education and instilled the belief in her children that we could achieve anything that we set our mind to. She set a tremendous example by earning an undergraduate degree, immediately followed by a law degree from CWRU, all while raising three kids alone. This wouldn’t have been possible without the support of this great community.

The Heights is a unique place. While growing up here, I attended CH-UH schools exclusively, and was nurtured by this diverse community to become who I am today. This is my sixth year of serving on the FutureHeights Board of Directors and my first year serving as its president.

Through its many programs, FutureHeights fosters collaboration and empowerment to create a vibrant and sustainable future for our communities. In 2015, FutureHeights launched some exciting new programs to help strengthen our neighborhoods: we now offer a Community-Building Workshop Series for Cleveland Heights residents and mini-grants to help them build on their areas’ assets and create meaningful change in their own neighborhoods. We also hired Sruti Basu as our director of community-building programs. Sruti is a bright and energetic practitioner of Assets Based Community Development, who has the ability to work with a wide variety of people and help mentor neighborhood groups as they seek to organize and mobilize resources.

Fourteen residents from a variety of neighborhoods participated in our inaugural Community-Building Workshop Series last spring, and we awarded $2,400 to three neighborhood projects in our first round of mini-grants. As Sruti gets to know more residents, we are looking forward to working with the next group of neighborhood leaders and seeing those initial projects come to fruition.

FutureHeights is looking forward to making an impact on our neighborhood-serving commercial districts. As we work with residents from various neighborhoods, we notice that they often share common concerns about the commercial districts that border them. It is here that residents from different neighborhoods get together, whether to socialize at our diverse restaurants or patronize shops for needed goods and services. They have noticed, as we have, that many of our storefronts are vacant and many of our existing businesses are struggling.

FutureHeights had long supported our local businesses through its Shop Local and Best of the Heights Programs, and through stories and low-cost advertising opportunities in the Heights Observer, but we sensed that our city needed more.

In May, we began meeting with a group of concerned residents and business owners in the Cedar Lee area. They were concerned about ongoing negative perceptions of both their neighborhood and the city as a whole, including the potential short-term impact of construction—with the high school renovation project and the planned Cedar-Lee streetscape project—and wanted to do more to address commercial vacancies.

The group met every week, calling itself the Heights Community Development Alliance (HCDA), crafting a mission and detailing potential programs. Although the origin of the group was for Cedar Lee, group members quickly realized that the issues it outlined applied to all Cleveland Heights districts and sought to include them.

In November, HCDA became an official program of FutureHeights. We are looking forward to supporting this initial group’s efforts to strengthen our commercial districts through data-driven programs designed to attract and retain storefront businesses, and innovative ways to temporarily enliven vacant spaces. We piloted this concept by partnering with Heights Arts and Artful during the 2015 Heights Music Hop to fill four vacant spaces on Lee Road with artists during the event.

As we close out an exciting year of growth through enhanced service of our mission, we are looking forward to another year of growth in 2016. There is much to be done, but the Heights has many strengths and many assets—not the least of which are diverse, educated and engaged residents who volunteer their time in so many ways to make this community a better place. Together, we can figure this out. We can create strong neighborhoods and strong commercial districts that will ensure that this place remains a vibrant and desirable place to live and visit, and will continue to nurture its young people.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,
Richard Stewart
President
FutureHeights Board of Directors
Empowering the community to tell its own story

Through the Heights Observer, residents tell the story about our community. They contribute news stories and opinion pieces, and our local businesses support this high-local community news project through their paid advertising. In 2014, we published another 12 additional issues and 35 issues of the weekly e-news. Ninety-three new volunteers signed up in the member center to enhance our neighborhoods. Grants of up to $1000 are available to Cleveland Heights neighborhood-based groups for projects that strengthen their neighborhoods. FutureHeights intends to hold two or more grant application rounds, once in the fall and once in the spring. Applications were due for the first round on Sep 15. The second application deadline is Feb 15.

On Aug 31, FutureHeights welcomed Sruti Basu as director of community-building programs. Sruti comes to us with a wealth of experience in working with community groups. She has a Masters of Public Administration from the Bernard Baruch College at City University of New York, is a graduate of the National Urban Fellows Program, and holds a Bachelor of Science in Social Administration from the Mandell School of Applied Social Science at Case Western Reserve University. She has worked for the Greater Houston Community Foundation, the Cleveland Foundation, Neighborhood Development and Slot Vera Community Development Corporation. In this new full-time staff position with FutureHeights, Sruti will attend neighborhood meetings; identify potential leaders; work with existing groups and assist in starting new groups. FutureHeights continues to work with several community-based groups—acting as fiscal sponsor for Sustainable Heights Network, Montecello Community Garden Association, Spire Create, Port One Tree and Growing Heights (formerly the Heights Community Garden Network)—enabling them to seek funding and present programs that enhance our community.

Strengthening our local economy

The locally owned, independent businesses that comprise our 14 business districts are strong contributors to our local economy and the unique character of our community. Through “shop local” programs, such as the Heights Observer’s Holiday Gift Guide, Online Auctions, and other promotions designed to encourage the community, we encourage residents to patronize these businesses and help keep our community vibrant. We also sponsor and present several special events designed to showcase our community, bring people together and stimulate the local economy. We have presented a series of Welcome Home events, featuring some of the amazing people who make their home in the Heights. Among them are chefs, locals and restaurateurs, artists and poets; and musicians. We are a sponsor of community events, such as the Cedar Fairmont Special Improvement District’s Distant Drums, Cedar Fairmont Farmers Market, Cleveland Heights High School Alumni Foundation’s Pancake Breakfast. We are a co-sponsor of the City’s Shaker Heights Art and Craft Fair, which brings hundreds of costumed children and families to interact with our local businesses. Our newest annual event, the Heights Music Hop, is a celebration of local music that takes place in several venues along Lee Road and is free to the public. With the help of our many partners and sponsors, we have been able to increase the number of venues and hours of music each year since the inaugural event in 2013. In 2015, we worked with Heights Arts and a new group called ARTFUL to enhance empty storefronts along Lee Road with pop-up arts. We are looking forward to continuing to present community-building events like these in coming years.

Investing in our organization

FutureHeights continues to look for ways to become more efficient, more effective and more visible in what we do. In March 2014, we moved into shared office space at Heights Heights, a nonprofit that supports public education in the Heights. Since then, we have been able to reduce our costs incurred in community policing. A second forum on the topic of “Re-Imagining Severson” took place Oct 21. Topics for future forums will be determined by our Community Engagement Committee in response to needs expressed by the community-builders.

We announced the creation of a Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program to facilitate improvement of the physical and social environment of neighborhoods. Grants of up to $1000 are available to Cleveland Heights neighborhood-based groups for projects that strengthen their neighborhoods. FutureHeights intends to hold two or more grant application rounds, one in the fall and one in the spring. Applications were due for the first round on Sep 15. The second application deadline is Feb 15.

Meet the 2015 FutureHeights Board of Directors

Richard Stewart President Owner of Digimark Media • Raised in the Heights and attended Fairfax, Kirtland and Heights High • Closer neighbor of Cleveland Heights than 19 others in the state of Ohio • Businesses to be proud of • Loves his friendly neighbors on East Paris Road

Daniel Budni Vice President Works for Disciples of Pardes and Cleveland Heights Jewish High School • Lifelong resident of Cleveland Heights • Loves the vibrancy of the Heights

Mike Kimella Secretary/Treasurer Resident of the Heights for 15 years • Loves the diversity of the city and the community • Loves his active and engaged citizenry

Mark Chupp Planning Manager, Community Relations for the Heights Community Foundation • Loves being close to many fabulous bakers

Kathleen Tark Architect, urban designer and owner of Metropolitan Architectural Studio • Loves being close to many fabulous bakers

Rebecca Price Estate Planning & Probate Attorney, Law Office of Rebecca Price PLLC • 15-year resident of Cleveland Heights • Loves the beautiful historic walkable neighborhoods and the fantastic independent restaurants!

Saranya Queen Tabor Development Director for Cleveland Kids in Need Resource Center • Wife and mother of two true TigerNation kids • NYC Center • Loves being close to many fabulous bakers

Amanda Shaffer Professional coach at Case Western Reserve University • Dedicated to equity, inclusion, community and social justice • Lives in Cleveland Heights since 2000 because all three things are possible here

Kathleen Turk Architect, urban designer and owner of Metropolitan Architectural Studio • Lifelong resident of Cleveland Heights • Loves the Garden City and the unique architecture in our walkable community

Douglas Whipple Lawyer at www.whipple-law.com • Loves the place of praise in the Heights

Fatti Carlyle Writer, activist and NorthEton native • Heights University resident • Loves being close to the 295 UT school district

Amanda Shaffer Ohio native • University Heights University resident • Loves being close to the 295 UT school district

Hannah Baldwin Loves the diversity of the Heights and its niche neighborhoods

Kathleen Tark Appreciates the unique character and benefits of living in Cleveland Heights • Committed to preserving and enhancing our communities and neighborhoods for all ages

Julia Kious Zabell Owner of Digizoom Media • Holds a B.F.A. in Design and Production from Texas Tech University • Loves being close to many fabulous bakers

Joan Moore Boomerang resident of Cleveland Heights • Active participant in the multifaceted local movement to make Cleveland Heights the most beautiful and accessible neighborhood in the Cleveland Heights

Juana Montes Economist • Planning Manager, Community Relations for the Heights Community Foundation • Loves being close to many fabulous bakers

Sam Fischler Owner of the Heights • Loves Cleveland Heights

Susan Christopher Riehenreiter Senior Marketing & Communications Officer for the Cleveland Foundation • 15-year Heights resident • Loves the collaboration, pride and long-term commitment of homeowners in the Noble neighborhood

Michael Roth, Sagree Sharma, Kevin Smith and Clare Taft for their dedicated service to the mission of FutureHeights

April Urban MSSA, CWRU, is a researcher at the Center in Urban Poverty and Community Development • University Heights University resident since 1995 • Loves Cleveland Heights • Loves the Character of Cleveland Heights

Richard Stewart Resident of Digimark Media • Raised in the Heights and attended Fairfax, Kirtland and Heights High • Closer neighbor of Cleveland Heights than 19 others in the state of Ohio • Businesses to be proud of • Loves his friendly neighbors on East Paris Road

Dan Lasker loves the parks and areas for outdoor activities, wonderful restaurants and coffee shops • Appreciates the caring and interesting people


Heights Neighborhoods for list...
Join Us

Your tax-deductible membership contribution goes directly to supporting the community-based programs and projects of FutureHeights that help strengthen our wonderful neighborhoods. Join online today at our secure website, www.futureheights.org, or by calling 216-320-1423.

FutureHeights Executive Director Deanna Bremer Fisher (middle row, left), and board member Mark Chupp (front row, 2nd from left), meet with the inaugural class of community builders.

Our Mission

FutureHeights works to inspire and facilitate collaboration and empowerment across our communities to ensure a vibrant and sustainable future for Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

FutureHeights values:
• Diverse, inclusive, active and informed citizen participation in community decision making
• Appreciation for the time, talent and various forms of support offered to our organization
• Innovative ideas in addressing the challenges in our communities
• Open and effective communication and partnerships among nonprofits, schools, local business, city government and citizens
• Thriving local business community
• Preservation of historic neighborhoods and commercial districts
• High quality sustainability in design and architecture
• Regional approach to innovation, planning and development

2014 Financial Statement

Unaudited condensed statement of activities

Revenue and Support

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Other Fundraisers</td>
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<td>Earned Income</td>
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<td>Misc.</td>
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<td><strong>Total Revenue and Support</strong></td>
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Expenses

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<td>Fiscal Agency Expense</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td>Depreciation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$227,101</strong></td>
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Change in Net Assets

- Change in Net Assets: (11,632)
- Net Assets at Beginning of Year: 76,016
- Net Assets at End of Year: $64,384

The FutureHeights financial year begins January 1 and ends December 31.

FutureHeights is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Contributions to FutureHeights are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. FutureHeights participates in GuideStar, the online standard for nonprofit accountability. Please visit GuideStar.org to view the organization’s Annual Form 990 and other organizational information.
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