



COVENTRY

March 1997

VILLAGE NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF COVENTRY VILLAGE NEIGHBORS INC.

From the President's Den

ON COVENTRY YARD

AGAINST: Why destroy a corner of the neighborhood that serves to define the community.

FOR: The plaza looks like an abandoned prison yard littered with waste. Thank goodness change is coming. An exciting but controversial change has been proposed for Coventry. Exciting, because change is always exciting. Controversial, because change is always controversial. In the past, I have been criticized for not providing a rounded view of each issue. I have invited others to balance my opinions but nobody was interested, so I'll attempt to argue against and fight for this proposal.

FACT: The restaurateurs of Coventry Yard want to turn the open concrete space in front of their establishments into an outdoor dining space. While they are willing to finance the conversion privately, they need to establish ownership by acquiring a long term lease for the property from the city of Cleveland Heights.

FOR: This sounds like a wonderful plan to revive a deteriorating corner.

AGAINST: Why should the city forfeit a section of publicly owned land for the benefit of business owners.

FOR: Because of the history of our neighborhood it is very difficult to change that with which we are comfortable. Care and thought need to be invested in each decision. Coventry means a lot to many people and it represents an era to the community. For the first time, alternate opinions were loudly being expressed, alternate

lifestyles were being tested and the status quo was being challenged. These issues flowered on Coventry. Young minds said, "Why?" instead of, "Sure!" It was an exciting and volatile time and place. Memories do not want to lose that moment. We people who raised our voices are now raising the next generation and we want to believe that they will achieve similar satisfaction in the same geographic location, as if the buildings held the ideas and the young people are merely transmitters. This connection is unrealistic. Things and ideas do not occur because of planning. Connection to place cannot be scheduled. The young people of today will find their own venue, make a place for themselves and invest it with emotional attachments and cherished memories.

Coventry must move forward. Just as homeowners imbue their homes with new paint jobs and fresh landscaping, so must the business district. No one has complained that the Heights Art Theater no longer plays adult films and has changed to the Centrum. No one has bemoaned the fact that so many of the dark crumbling apartment buildings along Euclid Heights Boulevard, Hampshire and Lancashire Roads have received face lifts to prepare for the next generation of Coventry lives. No one has objected to the construction of a NEW playground at the new Coventry Elementary school. Why then is a change at this intersection an issue. The stagnant water needs stirring. New life breathed into Coventry Yard may even entice others to clean up their stores, homes and apartment buildings.

I like the change, but I don't expect it to last. As with everything, it will have a natural shelf life. When its time has passed, another fresh idea will emerge and a different group will be upset with that change.

Fond memories are difficult to displace without a fight.

AGAINST: Young people use this space as a central meeting point. It is safe for them and readily accessible. They are good kids and don't hurt anyone.

FOR: Walking through the gauntlet of hackey-sack players and unruly punks has gotten to an unreasonable point. It is no longer safe there. I no longer visit the restaurants in that location.

AGAINST: While there are many troubling aspects of the new proposal to turn the CoventrYard mini-park into a restaurant dining area, the loss of community space is the most disturbing. The reason that Coventry is the envy of so many surrounding neighborhoods is the sense of community this commons area represents. In a very small circle of land, student apartment dwellers, wealth homeowners, retired seniors and average "Joe's" reside. CoventrYard is the neighborhood back fence. Old can meet young, poor can argue with rich, white can agree with black and Jewish, gentile and atheist can debate. A restaurant dining area is the same collection of diversion, but the tables keep them equal but separate. An open commons area allows the melting pot to stir itself and the resultant community simmers into a perfect stew.

We can argue that the space is being taken over by, (choose one) slackers, derelicts, panhandlers the homeless, etc. Why not? This is the natural ebb and flow of use. Twenty years ago bikers and hippies populated the street, twelve years ago, porno fans roamed the area. In four years, who knows? That's part of the exciting vitality this space generates.

Daily, our lives drive us onto our homes and away from others. We view the world through the television and the Internet instead of face to face. We're evolving into social neophytes. Our active city center, unlike anywhere else in the county, fights the battle alone. Strangers actually talk to each other. Friends interact. People take the time to get to know each other. The space is the instigator. It provides the medium. The visitors create the results. For these reasons, it would be unfortunate to demolish this kinetic corner so that a few businesses could make a few extra dollars.

AGAINST: Where will the kids go?

FOR: Who cares where the kids will go, they don't pay for the space or patronize the merchants.

We each have our own ideas of what makes the best neighborhood. We all try and persuade our community leaders to make decisions with which we agree. Some persuasion is vocal, others impact the decision by simply moving out of the area. Everyone contributes to the discussion but only one side can ultimately win. What ever direction the city council takes it will have an impact on our community. Our job as a neighborhood organization is to watch, observe and report the byproducts of those changes.

Jeffrey R. Dross
President, Coventry Neighbors



I MIS-SPOKE MYSELF

Yes, I was quoted, correctly in the Sunday February 16th Plain Dealer article about the CoventrYard proposal. After speaking with the reporter for fifteen minutes, telling him about the history of Coventry and Coventry Neighbors, after explaining the concerns of neighboring residents and Coventry P.E.A.C.E.'s builders, he selected what he must have thought was my most profound statement. I now have sympathy for every politician and public figure who has ever said, "I was quoted out of context!" While it is probably not as bad as Martin Hoke's faux pas, it is a bit tackier than I care to admit having said.

Jeff

COVENTRY NEIGHBORS AND URBAN SPRAWL

At last months meeting, Lee Batdorff spoke to us about the impact of urban sprawl on neighborhoods such as ours. He explained the huge costs our various levels of government spend to supplement development and build roads. This in turn leads to the deterioration of our inner city and increases the value of property in outlying areas so farmland becomes too expensive for agriculture. Farmers sell their property to new developers and the cycle continues again.

At the conclusion of his speech, we voted to send a letter of concern to the Ohio Farmland Preservation Task Force, the group from the Ohio Department of Agriculture charged with investigating this concern. Bellow is our letter.

Coventry Neighbors, Inc. is a twenty-seven year old neighborhood organization which works for the homeowners and residents of the Coventry Village area of Cleveland Heights, Ohio. As is probably true with other "inner ring" suburbs, we have become concerned with taxpayer financed urban sprawl for the benefit of developers and residents in rural areas, but at the expense of central city and county homeowners and businesses. Urban sprawl has a continued, long term impact on neighborhoods such as ours. We struggle daily with deteriorating infrastructure and declining services while available state and county moneys are spent to improve and create the network of roadways leading away from the center city. Still more is allotted for the development at the end of those roadways. It is time to provide relief to the core, the burden has grown too great and collapse is certain.

Please help us to work for ourselves by not working against us. Consider the center, consider our neighborhood, consider us while you consider legislation and plans for the preservation of Ohio farmlands and the restrictions of urban sprawl.

TEENS 13-18 YEARS OLD!
HELP SENIOR ADULT HOMEOWNERS
 south of Cedar in the Coventry area with home/yard chores
AFTER SCHOOL & WEEKENDS
JUST SIGN UP. CALL 291-2737

THERESA ANDERSON TO SPEAK AT MARCH MEETING

At our March 11, 1997 meeting Theresa Anderson, author of Nannies, Grannies and Babysitters, will speak. For eight years, Ms. Anderson has owned Anytime In-Home Care, a placement and referral service designed to provide her customers with competent caregivers. Her experiences in this service business have afforded her the opportunity to learn the applicable tools required to make intelligent decisions before hiring care providers or selecting schools and placement services. During her speech, Ms. Anderson will share her knowledge and provide tips she feels are crucial in the selection and protection of your loved-ones care provider. She will be happy to entertain your questions afterwards. Please join us for this informative talk.

*It's Almost Spring . . .
 Enjoy the upcoming holidays!*



Happy St. Patrick's Day



Happy Easter



Happy Passover

And, don't forget to turn your clock ahead on April 6!

DON'T FORGET TO ORDER YOUR T-SHIRT!

THE COOL T-SHIRT \$15.00
 Specify: Black or Gray

THE COMBO PACK: T-SHIRT & MEMBERSHIP \$20.00

All memberships come with a subscription to The Coventry Village News.


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MAIL TO : BOB KLEMENC
c/o COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, [REDACTED]
CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OHIO 44118

Coventry Village News is published by Coventry Neighbors, Inc. The newsletter is distributed free throughout Coventry Village. Mailed subscriptions are available. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month at 7:40 p.m. at the Coventry Village Library, Euclid Heights Blvd. & Coventry Rd.

When you join Coventry Neighbors, Inc. you can be sure of having a voice in shaping your neighborhood's future. Membership includes a subscription to the Coventry Village News.

Editor: Bruce Biddle

Editorial Board: Jeff Dross, Elsa Johnson, Bob Klemenc

How to reach us: You may contact us by mail at:

Coventry Neighbors Inc.	or	Coventry Village News
c/o Jeff Dross, President		c/o Bruce Biddle, Editor
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]
Cleveland Hts., Ohio 44118		Cleveland Hts., OH 44118

Individual \$7.50 Family \$10 Senior Citizen \$5

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

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CNI needs street representatives to communicate with the local neighborhoods and assist with the delivery of the newsletter.

YES! I would like to assist CNI by becoming a CNI representative for my street.

Please return this form with your check to:

COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC.
c/o Bob Klemenc
[REDACTED]
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118

COVENTRY Village News

c/o Bruce Biddle, Editor

[REDACTED]
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118