



COUNCILMEMBER
Jenny Spencer

CUDELL
DETROIT SHOREWAY
EDGEWATER
PARTS OF OHIO CITY
& STOCKYARDS



WE ARE WARD 15

Nosotros Somos Ward 15 - Al servicio de los vecindarios de Cudell, Detroit Shoreway, Edgewater y parte de Ohio City y Stockyards

Council Office Tackles Abandoned Properties

When Ward 15 Neighborhood Advocate Heather Lazar turns on her computer each morning, the first thing she does is open her **"Problem Property" spreadsheet**. Heather began building this database in 2021 as a way to create a system for monitoring and addressing abandoned property complaints received from residents.

The Council office has learned that every abandoned property – which is a vacant home not being responsibly maintained by its owner – has its own story and requires its own strategy and approach. Since she first began working on these issues, Heather's Problem Property (PP) database has grown to a list of over 240 properties.

Because the issues and systems involved with vacant properties involve many different City departments, as well as institutions like the Cuyahoga Land Bank and Cleveland Municipal Housing Court, Councilmember Spencer realized that it was essential to have a staff member assigned to this work to be the "face" of vacant housing advocacy for our Ward. Heather is well known by officials ranging from the Building & Housing (B&H) Department to Cleveland's Municipal Housing Court Judge, and she has developed an expertise that allows the Council office to address each vacant property in the most effective manner possible.

"Our goal is to expedite certain processes and prioritize the resolution of the properties that are the worst-of-the-worst," says Councilmember Spencer. "And of course, we want to hold irresponsible owners and landlords accountable. When the Council office shows up in Housing Court to provide testimony, that says something about how seriously we're taking this issue."



BEFORE

2235 W. 104th was razed in July 2023.



AFTER

“We want to hold
irresponsible landlords and
owners accountable.”
– Jenny Spencer

What can be hardest and most frustrating for community members is how long many of these processes can take. "When you're the person living next door to a vacant or problem house, it can affect your mindset and well-being – not to mention your quality of life and perhaps even your own home's value," says Councilmember Spencer. "The sooner we can get a vacant property stabilized, the better off the community will be. For these reasons, I'm so grateful to have Heather at the helm of our vacant property work."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

A Message from Councilmember Jenny Spencer

Dear Ward 15 Residents,

The community may not be aware that Ward 15 Neighborhood Advocate Heather Lazar dedicates the majority of her time to monitoring vacant & abandoned housing across the Ward. Heather's responsibilities include conducting research on properties after complaints come in; addressing immediate needs such as board-ups or debris removal; monitoring properties as they move through foreclosure, Sheriff's sales or state forfeiture; coordinating with the City Land Bank and Cuyahoga Land Bank (CCLRC); submitting information to the City's Building & Housing Department (B&H) and Board of Building Standards & Building Appeals (BBSBA); and perhaps most importantly, gathering community input and providing testimony at Cleveland Municipal Housing Court.

There are many reasons why properties become vacant, abandoned, or problematic. Unfortunately, too often this is due to unscrupulous or irresponsible owners or investors, many of whom are registered as Limited Liability Corporations (LLCs) and may live out of state - or even out of the country. Cleveland City Council recently approved a suite of legislation known as **"Residents First"** which aims to protect Clevelanders by requiring a 'local agent in charge' with rental registrations, a new vacant property registry, and the legal authority for inspectors to issue civil tickets for nuisances, among other measures. I was proud to advocate for Residents First and to vote in favor of its passage.

Sincerely,

JMA Spencer

Un mensaje de la Concejala Jenny Spencer

Queridos residentes,

Heather Lazar en mi oficina dedica la mayor parte de su tiempo a monitorear viviendas desocupadas y abandonadas. Las responsabilidades de Heather incluyen realizar investigaciones sobre las propiedades después de que lleguen quejas; abordar necesidades inmediatas, como tapias o retirada de escombros; monitorear ventas del Sheriff o decomisos estatales; coordinar con el City Land Bank y el Cuyahoga Land Bank (CCLRC); enviar información al Departamento de Construcción y Vivienda (B&H) de la ciudad y a la Junta de Normas de Construcción y Apelaciones de Construcción (BBSBA); y quizás lo más importante, brindar testimonio en el Tribunal Municipal de Vivienda de Cleveland (Cleveland Housing Court).

Hay muchas razones por las que las propiedades quedan desocupadas, abandonadas o problemáticas. Desafortunadamente, muchas veces esto se debe a inversionistas sin escrúpulos o irresponsables, muchos de los cuales están registrados como Corporaciones de Responsabilidad Limitada (LLC) y pueden vivir fuera del estado, o incluso fuera del país. La Ciudad aprobó recientemente un conjunto de leyes conocidas como **Residentes Primero ("Residents First")**, cuyo objetivo es proteger a los habitantes de Cleveland exigiendo un "agente local a cargo" de los registros de alquiler y un nuevo registro de propiedades vacantes, entre otras medidas. Si le preocupa una propiedad abandonada en su vecindario, puede llamar a la oficina del Concejo al (216) 664-4235.

Atentamente,

JMA Spencer

A day in the life of the Council office

Each week, the Council office receives multiple calls and emails from residents reporting an abandoned property. Residents commonly share concerns regarding deteriorating exterior conditions. Oftentimes, we hear that a door or window has been broken and that a property is not secured. Either Heather Lazar or Joe Naser, Ward 15 Executive Assistant, immediately report board-up requests to the City's 3-1-1 system, or encourage residents to do so directly. If we have reason to believe that an abandoned property is occupied, we contact NEOCH (Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless).

Simultaneously, Heather launches a research process. Per Heather, an immeasurable amount of time is dedicated to being a detective and digging through many public websites to answer key, primary questions including:

- Who owns the property?
- When did the property transfer last?
- Does the owner have other properties within the city?
- Are the property taxes current?
- Where are the taxes being mailed?
- Are there any open code violations or permits through B&H?
- Is there an active foreclosure case?

If the home is privately owned, obituaries are searched to see if the owner is deceased and if any next-of-kin are listed. Various sites are then used to locate contact information for the owner, especially a telephone number and mailing address (if it is not the same as the tax mailing address).

Residents who report properties may contact us anytime they have questions or if they would like to know where things stand in the process.

The LLC explosion – Who Really Owns This House?

In March 2022, Cleveland's Vacant and Abandoned Property Action Council (VAPAC) released a report¹ on the impact of real estate investor activity on Cuyahoga County. This concerning report found that for the county as a whole, the percent of properties acquired by investors nearly tripled between 2004 and 2020, from 7.17% to 21.1%. Investors are defined as "a host of corporate entities both in- and out-of-state which predominantly elect the limited liability company (LLC) form to conduct business." Per VAPAC's report, "The result of this rise in investor-ownership is a housing submarket that is largely rental, no longer controlled by local actors, and with limited opportunities for new homeowners."

The report also showed that the east side of Cleveland has been hit the worst. On the east side in 2020, there were 2,938 home purchases by business (investor) buyers, representing 45.76% of all transactions. In west side Cleveland neighborhoods in 2020, 1,347 purchases were by a business buyer, representing 25.61% of all transactions.

The City of Cleveland's 2023 property inventory - a partnership between the City and the Western Reserve Land Conservancy - further verified these trends. Per the 2023 inventory, "out-of-state investors continue to purchase property in Cleveland with intent to raise rents and provide minimal upkeep and improvements." The inventory further shows that properties owned by out-of-state investors are in worse condition than those with in-state tax addresses.

To view the inventory, go to <http://bit.ly/2023CLEPropertyInventory>.

"If the property is owned by an LLC, then a larger magnifying glass is needed for the detective work," explains Heather Lazar. Per Heather, it is not uncommon to find tax mailing addresses in California, Florida, Nevada, New York, New Jersey and beyond. It is very difficult to find the name of the owner behind an LLC, so for locating that, Heather relies on countless websites to identify a contact.

Enforcement: Engaging B&H and Housing Court

After a resident reports an abandoned property, Heather also visits it so that we can have a clear and current understanding of the conditions. If the home is unsecured, a board-up request is sent immediately to 3-1-1.

If the home has an open and outdated code violation (violation notice, or VN), Heather engages B&H to let them know that the address is a priority and ask that next steps be taken to inspect and enforce any violations. If the home appears to have violations, but a VN has not been issued, Heather asks for an inspection and works with the inspectors to monitor and ensure that the owners (usually LLCs) bring the property into compliance. If the violation isn't abated, B&H will then prepare and submit a file for the Law Department (Law) to review so that prosecution in Cleveland Municipal Housing Court can follow.

The Council office attends multiple Housing Court hearings each month. To prepare, Heather collaborates with Housing Court Specialists. Outreach is made to the residents who reported the property with an invitation to provide a brief statement of the impacts that this property has created for their home and street. These "Community Impact Statements" are read to the Judge during hearings.

Demolition

Too many homes have been demolished over the years throughout our Ward. Unfortunately, some homes have been the victims of neglect beyond repair and there are no other viable options. The Council office partners with B&H's demolition bureau to share our priorities for which properties should or should not be demolished, which is led by resident input. We receive regular updates of those properties that Law has approved for demolition. We communicate closely with the demo bureau so that we know when the property may be razed and make a point to share that with residents. Following demolition, demolition contractors are required to plant grass seed so that the lot does not remain a nuisance.

When Your Neighbors Need Help

In some cases, a house may have code violations but the resident lives within their home. If you know an owner-occupant who may need assistance, the best step is to connect them with a Healthy Homes Specialist, who can provide them with information and application assistance for various home repair programs. Ward 15's Healthy Homes Specialist is Kena Chappell at Northwest Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation. Kena can be reached at kchappell@nwneighborhoods.org or (216) 961-4242 x 223. If the owner-occupant is over the age of 60 or has a disability, they may wish to contact the City of Cleveland's Department of Aging for assistance at (216) 664-2833.

SUCCESS STORY: Community involvement from the Edgewater Parke Block Club



Nikki Hudson (left) and Heather Lazar near a home that they worked on together to stabilize. The home is near Desmond Ave., which is the spine of the Edgewater Parke Block Club.

Since 2017, Nikki Hudson has led the Cudell neighborhood's Edgewater Parke Block Club. During that time, she has built close relationships with fellow neighbors and developed a deep knowledge of city processes and a list of contacts to effectively resolve issues within her neighborhood. Nikki states that "building a network of neighbors can make the difference and push the needle in the right direction." This network has proved pivotal in collecting accurate and heartfelt statements that depict the impact of problem properties on their community. The Council office values this collaboration to create a path for positive results as Housing Court holds the personal statements provided by neighbors with the highest regard.

SUCCESS STORY: Community Control

Irresponsible property owners regularly find themselves pleading their cases before the Housing Court's Judge. The bench has consistently ruled with strict sentences on LLCs through "Community Control," which applies to an owner's entire portfolio. Through ongoing, routine property inspections, regular communication with Housing Court Specialists, and attending monthly status update hearings, Heather's testimonies have resulted in court orders that ensure that owners and LLCs are held accountable. Currently, Heather is participating in Community Control status hearings for two (2) individuals who operate under five (5) differently named LLCs and, combined, own over 20 problem properties in the Ward.



W. 106th St. BEFORE: Overgrowth at an unmaintained back yard on W. 106th St. was a haven for rodents.

W. 106th St. AFTER: Community Control required the yard to be cleared.

W. 104th St. BEFORE: Debris littered the yard and porch, while the exterior surfaces had peeling paint.

W. 104th St. AFTER: Community Control required the debris to be removed and the structure be painted.

What Can Residents do?

If you find an abandoned property with tall grass, junk or debris in the yard, exterior code violations, or that any of the first floor doors are open and allowing access, please call the **City's Call Center at 3-1-1 or send an email to Cleveland311@clevelandohio.gov**. Complaints will be directed to the appropriate department to address the issue.

If you believe an un-housed individual may be living within an abandoned property, contact the Council office or NEOCH (see www.neoch.org/what-to-do).

If you have reported a property to 3-1-1 and would like to know more about the property or receive updates regarding its ongoing status, please call the Council office at (216) 664-4235 or send an email to Heather Lazar, Neighborhood Advocate, at council15@clevelandcitycouncil.org.

¹ https://posting.clevescene.com/media/pdf/the_impact_of_investor_activity_in_cuyahoga_county_3-6-22_formatted.pdf

Total Solar Eclipse Path Includes Ward 15

La ruta del eclipse solar total incluye Cleveland



What will you be doing between 1:59 - 4:29 pm on April 8th? Hopefully you will be witnessing* the total solar eclipse, which hasn't happened in Ohio since 1806. If you skip this one, then you will have to wait until 2044 for the next time Cleveland will be in the path of the moon completely covering the sun. Totality itself will occur at 3:13pm and last approximately 4 (four) minutes. (*Be sure to wear specialty solar eclipse glasses. Exposing your eyes to the sun without proper eye protection can result in permanent eye damage.)

Great Lakes Science Center and its partners, NASA's Glenn Research Center and The Cleveland Orchestra, are hosting Total Eclipse Fest 2024 from April 6-8. This free, three-day celestial celebration will be held at downtown's North Coast Harbor. This family-friendly event will feature hands-on

science activities, a free community concert performance by The Cleveland Orchestra on Sunday, April 7, food vendors, entertainment, and free eclipse viewing glasses (while supplies last). Go to www.greatscience.com for more information.

Other eclipse information and resources are available at www.eclipseovercleveland.com and www.thisiscleveland.com/2024-solar-eclipse.

Lakefront Reservation including Edgewater Park is expected to be exceptionally busy on April 8th. Cleveland Metroparks is collaborating with the City of Cleveland Division of Police on a crowd control and safety plan for the park and our neighborhoods. Please follow Councilmember Spencer's social media (@jennyspencer on Facebook & Twitter) for updates related to neighborhood planning for the eclipse.

El 8 de abril de 2024, nuestra ciudad estará en el camino de un eclipse solar total, desde las 1:59 pm hasta las 4:29 pm (totalidad a las 3:13pm). Es muy importante utilizar lentes especiales para ver el eclipse de forma segura. Councilmember Spencer compartirá más información sobre el eclipse en sus redes sociales.

2023 Tree Planting Report

The Ward 15 Council Office works with the Ward 15 Tree Canopy Steering Committee and Northwest Neighborhoods CDC to secure grant funds for tree planting. 2023 outcomes included:

- **29 new trees planted on W. 89th Street between Desmond and Detroit.** This block lost significant tree canopy due to a Dominion gas line replacement.
- **67 new trees were planted on W. 57th and W. 58th between Franklin and Bridge** to replace canopy loss due to gas line replacement.
- *Planting is just the first step for re-establishing a healthy tree canopy. Trees need regular care including proper watering and mulching for the first 3 years in order for their root systems to establish. Ward 15-based Neighborly Tree Care LLC and its talented owner Julia Van Wagenen utilizes 'tree diapers' and monitors these newly-planted trees for health and watering.*



New Mural Unveiled at 8004 Lorain Avenue

In case you missed it, be sure to drive, bike or walk past this inspirational new mural at 8004 Lorain Avenue, a high-visibility location that serves as one of the gateways to our community. Thank you to Destination Cleveland for sponsoring the "Murals Across The City" program as well as to artist Lisa Quine, Northwest Neighborhoods CDC, and building owner Rock Green. We are certain the community will enjoy the mural for years to come.

REMINDER: Monthly 1st and 2nd District Policing Meetings



Ward 15 is served by two police districts: the 1st District west of West 85th Street and the 2nd District east of West 85th Street. Each District holds monthly policing meetings, which are an opportunity to meet directly with the District Commanders and members of the senior command staff, as well as the County Prosecutor's Office. Do you have a question about crime or crime prevention in your neighborhood, or would you simply like to get to know your police officers better? All are welcome at these recurring monthly meetings.

THE 1ST DISTRICT MEETS:	THE 2ND DISTRICT MEETS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Thursday of every month at 6 pm • Location: St. Ignatius of Antioch (Cafeteria), 10205 Lorain Ave. • Contact Tammy Hanna in the Community Relations Board for more information at thanna@clevelandohio.gov or (216) 664-6634 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Tuesday of every month at 6 pm • Location: Bridge CLE, 3389 Fulton Road (parking lot behind building off of Trowbridge Ave.) • Contact Michael McDonald in the Community Relations Board for more information at MMcDonald2@clevelandohio.gov or (216) 664-3293

Watterson-Lake School Site Update

Many Ward 15 residents are familiar with the Watterson-Lake School site, a 2-acre tract of land at the corner of West 74th Street and Detroit Avenue. In 2021, Councilmember Spencer sponsored a community engagement process to re-envision the site's future. In February 2023, the City of Cleveland issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit redevelopment proposals, based on the input found in the Community Engagement Report. In September 2023, the City announced that it had selected Bridging the Gap LLC, a minority-owned developer based in



Photo from November 2023 introduction meeting with Bridging the Gap, LLC

Pittsburgh, to redevelop the site. The website www.wattersonlakecle.com serves as an online hub of information about Watterson-Lake, including the site's history and redevelopment process. The community can check the website for updates or sign up to receive project emails. The next project update is expected in winter 2023, once Bridging the Gap has completed their State Tax Credit application.

¿Preguntas en español sobre este sitio y su reurbanización? Ud. puede contactarse con la oficina de la Concejala Spencer al (216) 664-4235 para hacer cualquier pregunta



The Watterson-Lake School site at the corner of West 74th Street and Detroit Avenue

FREE TAX PREPARATION

Preparación de Impuestos Gratis

KEEP YOUR FULL TAX REFUND

No Fees. No Catch. File Free.

APPOINTMENTS OPEN NOW!

To schedule an appointment, go to refundohio.org or call 216-293-7200.

Para programar una cita, visite refundohio.org o llame al 216-293-7200

*For Cuyahoga County residents earning up to \$60K

PRESORT STD.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CLEVELAND, OH
PERMIT NO. 2893

WE ARE WARD 15

CUDELL, DETROIT SHOREWAY, EDGEWATER, PARTS OF OHIO CITY & STOCKYARDS



WARD 15 COUNCIL MEMBER
Jenny Spencer
City Hall Office:
601 Lakeside Avenue, Room 220
Cleveland, OH 44114
@jennyspencercle



WARD 15 OFFICE STAFF:
JOSEPH MASER,
Ward 15 Executive Assistant
HEATHER LAZAR,
Ward 15 Neighborhood Advocate
Phone: 216-664-4235 Fax: 216-664-3837
Email: jspencer@clevelandcitycouncil.org
Visit ClevelandCityCouncil.org/ward-15



2024
Department of Public Works
Division of Waste Collection
CITY OF CLEVELAND
Mayor Justin M. Bibb

B Bulk Week

H One Day Delayed Collection

H Holiday with Regular Pickup

JANUARY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	H	2	3	4	5	6
B	7	8	9	10	11	12
		14	H	16	17	18
		21	22	23	24	25
		28	29	30	31	

FEBRUARY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
B	4	5	6	7	8	9
	11	12	13	14	15	16
	18	H	20	21	22	23
	25	26	27	28	29	

MARCH

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
B	3	4	5	6	7	8
	10	11	12	13	14	15
	17	18	19	20	21	22
	24	25	26	27	28	H
	31					

APRIL

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
B	7	8	9	10	11	12
	14	15	16	17	18	19
	21	22	23	24	25	26
	28	29	30			

MAY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
B	5	6	7	8	9	10
	12	13	14	15	16	17
	19	20	21	22	23	24
	26	H	28	29	30	31

JUNE

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
B	2	3	4	5	6	7
	9	10	11	12	13	14
	16	17	18	H	20	21
	23	24	25	26	27	28
	30					

JULY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	H	5
B	7	8	9	10	11	12
	14	15	16	17	18	19
	21	22	23	24	25	26
	28	29	30	31		

AUGUST

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
B	4	5	6	7	8	9
	11	12	13	14	15	16
	18	19	20	21	22	23
	25	26	27	28	29	30
	31					

SEPTEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
B	1	2	3	4	5	6
	8	9	10	11	12	13
	15	16	17	18	19	20
	22	23	24	25	26	27
	29	30				

OCTOBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
B	6	7	8	9	10	11
	13	14	15	16	17	18
	20	21	22	23	24	25
	27	28	29	30	31	

NOVEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
B	3	4	5	6	7	8
	10	11	12	13	14	15
	17	18	19	20	21	22
	24	25	26	27	H	29
	30					

DECEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
B	1	2	3	4	5	6
	8	9	10	11	12	13
	15	16	17	18	19	20
	22	23	24	H	26	27
	29	30	31			

Sept. 2nd - Labor Day
1 day delay all week

May 27th - Memorial Day
1 day delay all week

Jun 19th - Juneteenth Nat'l
Independence Day
No delay in collection

July 4th - Independence Day
Thursday collection on Friday
Friday collection on Saturday

Dec 25th - Christmas Holiday
Waste collection on Thurs., Thurs.
collection on Fri., Fri. collection on Sat.

SUMMER JOBS

Youth Opportunities Unlimited

APPLY TODAY

APPLICATION OPEN UNTIL MAY 1

\$13.50/hour and up to 25 hours/week
Earn up to \$2,000 this summer
All you need to do is apply
with your own email address

VOUCE.ORG/SVEP

SUMMER JOBS

Youth Opportunities Unlimited

APLICA HOY

SOLICITUD ABIERTA HASTA EL 1 DE MAYO

\$13.50/hora y hasta 25 horas
semana gana hasta \$2,000 este verano
Todo lo que necesitas hacer es postularte con
tu propia dirección de correo electrónico
a: VOUCE.ORG/SVEP

VOUCE.ORG/SVEP

B = BULK WEEK (3 items only)

City of Cleveland
Department of Public Works
Division of Waste Collection
5600 Carnegie Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44103
216-664-3711
www.clevelandohio.gov

Division of Waste Collection services for your convenience:

YEAR ROUND COMPUTER/CELL PHONE DROP OFF
(Only at Carr Center)

YEAR ROUND SHREDDING
at 5600 Carnegie
(Only at Carr Center)

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE
First Friday of each month
No Latex Paint
(Carr Center and Ridge Road)

5600 Carnegie (Carr Center) or 3727 Ridge Road, Mon. - Fri., 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
DO NOT leave computers, tires, trees, hazardous waste, or other debris in the drop off boxes.