

SURVIVING AND THRIVING THROUGH THE WORK OF MANY

ANNUAL REPORT
2020

The pandemic of 2020 was not an event many of us thought we'd ever experience in our lifetimes. But it did happen and, thankfully, many of us are still here to share our stories of not just survival, but thrival! COVID-19 threw our lives into disarray, and we had to come up with new ways of continuing our life stories. The key component of this multi-faceted story is found in our residents, the very people from all walks of life who give life to Fairfax and the Greater Cleveland metro area.

That story and journey is one we'd love to share with you now, a chance to meet the people, businesses, organizations, and agencies positively impacting Northeast Ohio with their energy, outreach, caring, creativity, growth, progress, and innovation.

Executive Director & Board President Story

"...to strengthen neighborhoods in Northeast Ohio through comprehensive community development." That is the enduring mission of FRDC, something that was really put to the test during 2020—and we not only weathered the storm but significantly helped create an even more tight-knit community by consistently keeping the lines of communication open and services humming during the height of the pandemic. Our primary focus was not simply bricks & mortar, but the residents, working people, agencies, and organizations of Fairfax. Our story is their story.

Throughout the year, we were able to maintain our programming as our staff pivoted to working remotely part of the year to ensure our services at the city, county, state, and federal levels were still available to our community members. Our monthly newsletter continued without interruption, which was vital in keeping people informed, in touch, and supported. That also entailed working to arrange for digital connectivity for residents, especially during this stressful time.

Meanwhile, we strengthened our existing partnerships and developed new ones with fraternities, businesses, foundations, advocacy groups and other nonprofits. Ongoing projects continued to move forward, including pre-development activities for Innovation Square and the New Economy Neighborhood. We continued to plan for the East 100th Street Initiative with Cleveland Clinic.

As you tour FRDC, you'll discover just how resilient the community of Fairfax is, as well as inspiring. At the end of your tour, we'll circle back to FRDC headquarters with an invitation for you to join us—to add your story to the Fairfax story and help rebuild neighborhoods!



Denise VanLeer
Executive Director



J. Stefan Holmes
President, Board of Directors



We Can't Survive Alone

The 2020 Census

Every ten years, America adds an addendum to its multi-faceted story: the Census. COVID-19 restrictions, the digital divide, and the presidential election in progress hampered the execution of the 2020 census, but through a combined effort of the Cleveland Department of Aging, Councilman Blaine A. Griffin, PNC Fairfax Connection, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Bolton Elementary School, FRDC and numerous volunteers, the census was accomplished via what can only be described as a Census Blitz.

FRDC, a member of the Ohio Census Advocacy Coalition, received a \$5,000 Cleveland Census Micro Grant from the Cleveland Foundation in support of census outreach, and FRDC used it to great effect.

From yard signs to community meetings, outdoor events in Quincy Park, to partnering with PNC Fairfax Connection, to providing information sessions with census representatives, to pounding the pavement and a phone bank, the push was on. Fairfax residents were encouraged to register to vote, complete mail-in ballot applications, and complete their census registration. They learned about the importance of the census and were assisted in using computer resources.

“If our residents aren’t counted by September 30, it will have negative impacts on Medicaid, Medicare, healthcare, Head Start, and so many other vital public service programs across the region for the next decade and beyond,” said Marcia Egbert, The George Gund Foundation program director for thriving families and social justice.

All Fairfax residents were invited to complete the census at FRDC’s computer lab and computer tablets were used by census canvassers to help residents complete their forms at home. So, despite many seniors not being digitally connected or computer fluent, they were brought squarely into the 21st century in the middle of a pandemic!

Meanwhile, the first presidential debate of 2020 was held in the Fairfax neighborhood. FRDC partnered with Councilman Blaine A. Griffin, Cleveland Police, Cleveland Clinic Police, and others, to address residents’ concerns about the event, at a multi-purpose community meeting held in Quincy Park. Residents were informed who to contact concerning suspicious activity, neighborhood clubs made sure their streets were well lit, and the event was held without incident.

So, in spite of the pandemic, computer challenges and the presidential race, the census was a resounding success. Congrats to everyone involved and may our contribution to the addendum of America’s story be that much more grand!





Innovation Square Continues

During 2020, FRDC continued to work on moving Innovation Square forward. The project is envisioned as a mixed income, mixed use development. Green spaces, walking paths, stormwater treatment installations, playgrounds, open spaces for community gatherings, and a grocery superstore are all in the overall design.

The first phase of Innovation Square, Playwright Park, is complete. The green space is designed to celebrate the neighborhood's rich cultural history and neighborhood asset, Karamu House, the first multicultural theater in the United States.

The plan leverages a section of the neighborhood in close proximity to anchor institution development and Opportunity Corridor, a long-promised transportation project now completed in the Fairfax area and still under construction in the Buckeye, Central and Slavic Village neighborhoods.

The City of Cleveland has committed to building two new roadways (extensions of Hudson and Frank Avenues) to break up the superblock between East 103rd and 105th Streets to help support the creation of a more walkable, family-friendly neighborhood design.

The project will better connect one of the city's most vital job centers to its surrounding neighborhoods, placing residents near numerous job opportunities and providing housing options to area employees. Delivering workforce-housing opportunities near the hospital will also help stabilize employment by reducing barriers such as commute times and costs for employees.

The Innovation Square Fairfax Neighborhood Plan also catalyzes real estate development initiatives in the Fairfax neighborhood by providing new, better, and more varied, full-spectrum housing options that will bring new employment and cultural opportunities to the neighborhood. Once complete, it will offer over 600 new mixed-income housing units to be built between East 95th and 105th Streets, between Cedar and Quincy Avenues. In 2020, Knez Homes, the builder for these homes, sold one and began construction on four more.

The housing complements this new mixed-use retail development, with the national grocery store at the corner of East 105th and Cedar Avenue.

By ensuring a diversity of housing types, from for sale to rental, at various income tiers, Innovation Square will promote community building and help ensure the sustainability of the area.





COVID-19
giveaways
were held at
Cleveland Clinic's
Langston Hughes
Community
Health &
Education Center.



A Huge Team Effort

Throughout 2020, it was imperative that FRDC services continue unabated. Many residents were feeling confused, stranded, and left without needed supplies and resources.

Despite the statewide shutdown and COVID restrictions, FRDC staff, fraternities, Cleveland Clinic, Councilman Blaine A. Griffin and Ward 6 volunteers distributed PPE, toiletries and cleaning supplies to over 1,000 people. Supplies were provided by Meijer, an American superstore chain throughout the Midwest, with its corporate headquarters in Walker, Michigan.

Helping with efforts, area churches served or delivered food to residents who were homebound and unable to get to a Food Bank. Not only was food served, but hope, which gave residents a sense that they were not alone, that they are integral and cared for community members, and their lives and stories are a precious resource to the larger mosaic that is Fairfax.



Economic Business Development

One of the latest expansion projects of which Cleveland Clinic is a partner, is a Biorepository. A what?

Yes, a Biorepository—a 21,000 sq. ft., 400 freezer facility that will house human tissue samples that researchers will study for an array of conditions including cancer, heart disease, and epilepsy. There is an increasing demand for human tissue for biomarker and drug development research, and growing use of stem cells in regenerative medicine, targeted cell therapy, and pharmacological testing on cells and tissues.

Serpil Erzurum, MD, chair of Cleveland Clinic Lerner Research Institute, said, “As a leading healthcare organization, this provides an unparalleled opportunity to advance understanding of many different diseases, enabling us to make discoveries that are directly benefitting our patients.”

The building will include a community room where area residents can learn about and donate specimens for clinical trials at the hospital. Local students will be able to meet healthcare professionals on site and learn about careers in health and medicine.

Cleveland Clinic, MetroHealth System, University Hospitals, Case Western Reserve University and Cleveland State University will work together on research projects. The goal is to bring 20,000 jobs to Ohio within the next decade.

Councilman Blaine A. Griffin expressed hope that research at the Biorepository will result in a better understanding of, and approach to, health problems in the surrounding low-income, largely African American neighborhoods.

The project will feature an art installation based on residents’ recollection of the area’s history, norms and customs.



In 2020, FRDC staff provided technical assistance to 24 businesses to submit applications for the Payroll Protection Program (PPP). Eight of the businesses received a PPP Loan. Another three businesses received financial assistance from the City of Cleveland and six businesses received financial assistance from Cuyahoga County. Total dollars received from all sources in 2020 was over one million dollars (\$1,025,204). FRDC continued to work with a national bank who will build a new branch at the corner of East 79th and Carnegie Avenue. Construction is expected to be completed in the fall of 2021.

Land Acquisition

FRDC acquired 12 parcels in 2020 for projects in Innovation Square and the New Economy Neighborhood.

Surviving and Thriving—Our Most Precious Resources

One of FRDC’s great joys is found in several community-engagement programs that, despite the pandemic and a year of social distancing and isolation, still had a positive effect on the residents of Fairfax. The many stories that have been built upon from year to year were added to with an even greater sense of connection and depth as we all waded through the challenges brought on by COVID-19. Our world has changed, yet we’ve adapted, transformed, stayed active, and remained steadfast in our striving to thrive.

Yarn Exchange

The Yarn Exchange was a joint project between the Community at St. Peters (CSP) and FRDC. It was initiated by Marie Dietrich, a member of CSP, who contacted FRDC seeking our help assisting with toy distribution for the children of Griot Village. Griot is one of only seven housing developments in the nation designed for seniors raising children.

Partners of CSP made 100 knitted hats and contributed 100 skeins of yarn. A portion of the hats were distributed by CSP and FRDC to the Fairfax community over the 2019-2020 holiday season and on into the months prior to spring. Hats and the skeins of yarn were given to the children of Griot Village and Bolton Elementary School to keep their heads warm, hands busy, and minds creatively engaged with craft materials.

As a surprise for FRDC, the Community at St. Peters awarded FRDC with a \$3,000 grant to assist with the distribution of emergency food and PPE supplies due to that winter’s spike in COVID-19 cases.

“With music, one’s whole future life is brightened. Music is nourishment, a comforting elixir. Music multiplies all that is beautiful and of value in life.”
— Zoltan Kodaly



Classical Revolution Cleveland

What do Snoop Dog, Mozart, and Dr. Dre have in common? FRDC and the Cleveland Institute of Music—now that’s a different story!

In February of 2020, FRDC attended Case Western Reserve University’s “Innovators Monthly Meetups,” which is hosted by the Community Innovation Network. During the Meetup, small breakout groups called “Learning Circles” were formed to discuss the need for an arts presence in marginalized communities.

It was in the focus group that FRDC met a representative from the Cleveland Institute of Music, as well as Ariel Clayton Karas of Classical Revolution Cleveland. The Institute and FRDC formed a partnership that culminated in a performance by Bolton students at Olivet Institutional Baptist Church. Hence, a program of Snoop Dog, Mozart, and Dr. Dre.

The day before the concert, Ms. Karas, founder of the Cleveland-based ensemble, OPUS 216, and director of Classical Revolution Cleveland, gave the students a demonstration on performance comportment. Ms. Karas wrote in her monthly blog that the students learned “how to approach performing with an ensemble, how to stand, how to speak, how to carry oneself, and how to engage an audience.” It’s a memory our young people won’t soon forget!

Life in Griot Village

Griot Village was faced with a lack of access to technology while some residents struggled with health issues. The tight-knit community, though, was able to be attentive to residents’ needs by initiating computer-based programs and some in-person events.

- February**
11 participants joined the Black History Paint & Punch Program
- April**
30 Easter Baskets to children under 12 were presented by Emmanuel Baptist Church
- July**
5 young people joined a 1-week virtual summer book club
- August**
45 back to school bookbags and supplies were donated by Making A Difference Consulting
- September**
4 residents took part in the stress management presentation “What’s On Your Plate?”
- October**
5 residents attended a 2-session, on-line discussion on grief
- November**
6 residents participated in the 8-week Ohio State Extension Culinary Program
- December**
40 Holiday Gift Baskets and PPE were donated by a private donor



Breawna and Michaela

Griot Village is also home to Breawna and Michaela Daniels. Another highlight of 2020 occurred on March 20, International Women's Day, when the girls were sponsored by the Cavs Youth Sports Academy to participate in the Cavs Girls Clinics held at Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse.

Breawna, thirteen, and Michaela, twelve, attend Mary B. Martin School. They are young girls following in the footsteps of pioneers. Mrs. Martin, whom the school is named after, was an educator, a participant in the women's suffrage movement, and the first Black woman elected to the Cleveland Board of Education. Ranked in the top 20% of public schools in Ohio, Mary B. Martin School offers a comprehensive education focusing on English language arts, math, science, social studies, and the visual and musical arts. Breawna's favorite subject: math. Michaela's favorite subject: social studies.

"Breawna and Michaela are very articulate young ladies with natural leadership skills, and always willing to help," says Angela Flowers, case manager at Griot Village. Ms. Flowers has assisted families with resources and enjoys taking the young people on field trips, conversing with them about their hopes and dreams, and checking in on their academic progress and grades. They are very involved members of Griot and enjoy it.

The International Women's Day theme for 2020 was "#EachforEqual; a reminder that we're all responsible for building a more just and equitable world." We're sure Breawna will be an integral contributor to that!



"It was an exciting and fun day," the girls reported. They learned the fundamentals of basketball including skills like dribbling and passing to warm-up drills, sportsmanship, and team building. In addition to the many activities of the 1-day camp, the girls were given basketballs, jerseys, and other merchandise, plus tickets to attend a Cavaliers Game.

JCU Student Project

John Carroll University's mission is to guide students in becoming "inspired leaders with the knowledge, character, and heart to serve the greater good." Their curriculum is designed to create an education that "prepares students for complexity, change, and social responsibility." The "complexity" in this case came in the form of COVID-19.

2020's pandemic halted any in-person tutoring for the children of Griot Village, but it didn't deter students from following through on their school's mission. So, the JCU students, who were in a management and human resources class, produced a marketing video about Griot and they developed a virtual learning project, as well as additional programming that allowed residents to work and study remotely.

Front Yard Concerts

One of the joys of summer is spending more time out of doors. Back in the day, residents would venture to a park with a bandstand to enjoy evening concerts and partake of ice cream delights while socializing with friends and neighbors. In June, the concert came to residents via Ariel Clayton Karas and her group, Classical Revolution Cleveland.

Residents were treated to not only classical music but favorites by Marvin Gaye and Etta James, all under an idyllic summer sky that offered a brief, but much-needed respite from 2020's challenges. We're looking forward to more magical summertime evenings.

Digital Equity Coalition & the Digital Divide

In Cleveland, 30% of residents don't have internet or reliable high-speed service. As you might expect, the Fairfax neighborhood is included in that data. Though FRDC continues its ongoing partnership with DigitalC, there are still substantial obstacles in meeting the technical needs of Fairfax residents.

Historically, Minority neighborhoods such as Fairfax were not considered desirable customers, so the infrastructure required for internet capabilities wasn't installed. With the onset of COVID-19, FRDC worked with area schools to distribute Chromebooks and hotspots, but without the digital infrastructure, attempts to establish connectivity were stymied.

Though classes were offered to help train residents, few ventured from their homes, and many were afraid to open their doors to volunteer tech trainers due to COVID-19. The good news is that the digital divide issue is on everyone's minds so it's just a matter of time before decisionmakers and policymakers catch up to the idea of bringing well-deserving City of Cleveland residents into the 21st century.

Thanksgiving Ensured

The holidays are often a challenging time for people and 2020 was especially so because of the pandemic. To ensure residents didn't go without, FRDC and Councilman Blaine A. Griffin gave out 500 Dave's Thanksgiving gift cards to residents in Ward 6 during November. FRDC also partnered with Meijer superstore and Cleveland Clinic to hand out complete Thanksgiving Day meals and bags filled with PPE and toiletries. Once again, the Fairfax community pulled together to provide needed sustenance and support for body, mind, and spirit. That's a story that will never get old!

||| "Thank you for everything, including my leggings and doll," Ri'kya Graham told us. |||

Adopt A Family

Christmas toys were delivered door to door to five families. FRDC worked with Westfield Insurance Company and the Women's Ministry of Antioch Baptist Church to create a socially distanced Adopt-A-Family during the pandemic's holiday season. Sponsors purchased gifts and gift cards from Amazon wish lists and FRDC staff delivered the items. FRDC and Councilman Blaine A. Griffin partnered again to distribute 500 gift cards at Christmas. We were six feet apart, but we found a way to make it through together. And the responses warmed our hearts!

||| "I can't just pick one thing I'm grateful for. I love it all," said Armonee Benison. |||

||| "My 14-year-old granddaughter, Anastasia Johnson, was born 1 pound, 3 ounces and she's developmentally delayed because of Cerebral Palsy. Since she's non-verbal for the most part, I know how she feels by her expressions. When she opened one of her presents—a large, stuffed Minnie Mouse—I knew how happy she was because of her enormous smile. I am so appreciative that FRDC even thought about our family," Alfredia Varner remarked. |||



2020 Louis Stokes Community Visionary Award

The importance of sharing our stories, passing down from generation to generation the legacies of our hearts and souls, is paramount. The strivings of each precious life is a testament to our resilience, ingenuity, and extraordinary depth and breadth. It's something we honor in our daily interactions, in our storytelling, in our recognition of each person's heritage and cherished life experience.

Our multi-faceted legacies are something to celebrate, something FRDC has now done for twenty years via the Louis Stokes Community Visionary Award. In 2020, the Award was presented to Henry Louis "Skip" Gates, the Emmy and Peabody Award-winning filmmaker, literary scholar, professor, journalist, cultural critic, historian, and institution builder.

Louis Stokes was an American attorney, civil rights pioneer, and politician. He served 15 terms in the US House of Representatives representing the east side of Cleveland and was the first African American congressman elected in the state of Ohio.

Mr. Gates has published extensively on appreciating African American literature as part of the Western literary tradition. "Every Black American text must confess to a complex ancestry, one high and low but also one White and Black ... there can be no doubt that White texts inform and influence Black texts (and vice versa), so that a thoroughly integrated canon of American literature is not only politically sound, it is intellectually sound as well."



In his acceptance speech for the Louis Stokes Award, Mr. Gates said, "This is no time for equivocation or false equivalences. This is a time for truth. We cannot allow the forces of reaction to turn back the clock on American racial relations obliterating the heroic efforts of legions of Americans, White and Black, Asian and Latino, Jewish and Christian, Muslim and Hindu, gay, straight, and trans who risked, and sometimes tragically and nobly, gave their lives to make certain that the arc of the moral universe bent toward justice. Too many hands today are trying to bend that arc back in another direction and those of us who love truth and justice and the principles of democracy upon which this great nation of ours was founded must stand up against those forces just as our ancestors did, just as Congressman Louis Stokes did, just as John Lewis did."

Mr. Gates also stated that "the bonds between us have never been stronger or the work before us more critical." He is so right, and it is voices like his that gave us hope and strength to weather the challenges that 2020 brought and those yet to come. Thank you, Mr. Gates!

Food and Food for Thought

Fairfax FRESH (formerly IPE Community Outreach)

Fairfax FRESH, formerly Interprofessional Practice and Education Community Outreach, was originally focused on health screening, risk assessments, and individualized nutrition-based counseling for the Fairfax community. But then, along came COVID-19, which forced the program to go virtual.

Human ingenuity being what it is, those involved in the program decided to implement a nutrition-focused community program. Collaborators on the project included FRDC, Cleveland Clinic, Case Western Reserve University "health professions" graduate students, medical students from the Health Education Campus, and Fairfax residents. The students communicated with residents via virtual meetings and phone surveys. Of the many wonderful outcomes derived, there were two important ones that developed:

1. The project was renamed Fairfax FRESH to be more in keeping with the new goal of the endeavor. FRESH stands for: Food Resources for Empowerment and Security in Healthy-Living.
2. A recipe book filled with healthy options is in the works. Once Fairfax residents have had an opportunity to test the home recipes, a beautifully published book is planned for the community and beyond.

Once again, a whole-community approach was able to overcome another daunting obstacle to keep the story of Fairfax and its enterprising community members moving forward, strengthened and more cohesive.

Students Address Real-World Issues

Fairfax, originally called Cedar-Central, began modestly in the mid-1800s and since then has seen tremendous growth that includes stores, businesses, churches, small industries, manufacturing and the former Cleveland Play House.

The Mastery School of Hawken reached out to FRDC to have students work on real world issues with community partners for a three-week challenge. Preventing gentrification in historically Black neighborhoods was the topic that the students tackled. Catondra Noye and Elle Wilson met with the students in Quincy Park and provided them with background information about Fairfax and a walking tour of the neighborhood. The students, working in teams, combined that with in-class training and independent/group research to develop potential solutions. At the conclusion of the "Challenge," the students presented their very creative ideas to FRDC and their parents.

Inspired Trust, Loyalty and Soul

Workforce Development

Life can really deal us some terrible cards at times, yet the human spirit will find a way to shine through. Community is what assists us in thriving during difficult times together, ensuring no one is left to weather life's storms alone—not even in the midst of a global pandemic.

Many residents lost their jobs and income in 2020 and had to adapt to a new world, a virtual world that for many was foreign and scary. To meet this new need, FRDC partnered throughout the year with organizations such as Cleveland Clinic, RTA, Dominion Energy, and the Census Bureau to help residents learn and work with computers and applications.

FRDC also held job fairs, provided informational sessions, and helped job seekers become familiar with navigating virtual interviews, effectively use video conferencing programs, learn proper email and virtual communications etiquette, and update their resumes and soft skills development. This effort resulted in working closely with 332 residents and placing 35 in gainful employment. One such individual was Mike Jones.

Mike, a Cleveland native, has made some mistakes in his lifetime. One led to a felony conviction for domestic violence and prison time. To turn his life around, he founded Breaking the Cycle, a nonprofit that assists ex-cons in getting re-employed. But 2020 found Mike, a father of four, unemployed himself.

Undeterred, Mike pursued several certifications to improve his chances of attaining employment, but due to his ex-con status, no one would hire him. That's when Mike discovered the FRDC Workforce Development Program. Not sure about it, he talked to some of his colleagues and then decided to attend the FRDC Census Bureau training and informational sessions. The result: Mike was hired.

His persistence and commitment to continuous improvement, with a little help from the FRDC team, has led to the start of a new career and possibilities as he in turn continues to help others back into the workforce and life. That's the kind of individual and community story that gives us all inspiration and hope.

“Attending the FRDC Workforce Program was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made,” Mike said. Since then, he has had two promotions and is currently working his way up within the organization.



Partner of the Year—Sustainable Community Associates

One of the more promising organizations in Cleveland is Sustainable Community Associates (SCA). Their mission and vision of inclusivity and diversity is at the forefront of all their building projects: “Our communities reflect our commitment to making sure our investments have ripple effects that align with larger planning, development, and sustainability goals that benefit the entire neighborhood.”

Throughout 2020, SCA was involved in registering voters, organizing food drives for neighbors in need, and they support local schools. For Griot Village, SCA donated \$50 Target gift cards to every resident to help relieve some of the financial concerns members of Griot were experiencing.

In working with and supporting community stakeholders, they state: “Our projects can and should elevate the importance of community while simultaneously strengthening the local economy. When managed and re-developed appropriately, our projects expand what people know about the neighborhoods that we work in and open their eyes to present and future possibilities.” Thank you, SCA, for your donation and support!

“We are inspired by the work of FRDC and very happy to celebrate the families of Griot Village,” says Naomi Sabel, Co-founder of SCA (pictured with her team, Josh Rosen and Ben Ezinga).

Resident of the Year Remmie Crawford

"I have a lot of people to thank, people who stood by me through good and bad times. Because of them, I am the person I am today."

Remmie is a beloved presence in the Fairfax community, having moved here with his grandmother in 1963 at 13 years of age. She raised him and was a major influence on him, teaching him life skills and helping him develop an early desire to be of service.

"My grandmother was always helping. If somebody needed something, whether it was food, dishes, pots and pans or linen, she provided it. She had all kinds of stuff. She would go to rummage sales and Goodwill and just buy stuff that we didn't need, but somebody else might. When I was in high school, my friends would come over, and later that night she'd ask, 'Do you think they need anything?' And she would put a box together and have me take it over to their house. She even canned stuff. Watching her do that had something to do with my attitude of wanting to help others."

As a teen, Remmie was involved with TEACH—The Teen Eastern Area Community Helpers. This organization of West Side teens from the suburbs would go to Antioch Baptist Church on the second Saturday of each month to work with inner-city kids. Everyone was divided into teams and sent out to assist in neighborhood projects. On the fourth Saturday of each month, Fairfax teens would reciprocate by travelling to the West Side neighborhoods to work with Torch-Teen Outreach Through Christian Help. For two summers, Remmie attended work camps at the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota and then on the Pineridge Indian Reservation in Arizona, again, working on community projects like school repairs and painting.

After joining the army in 1971 and serving in Germany, he married Patrice, who later joined the service herself, and they moved to Columbus, GA while she was stationed at



Ft. Benning. While stationed there, Remmie earned an associates degree in Graphic Arts and Offset Printing. Upon their return to Cleveland, their family having expanded to include two children, he enrolled in Tri-C for journalism and then technical theater.

In 1988, Patrice passed away while Remmie's young children were four and six years old. His life spiraled out of control as he got involved with drugs, alcohol and some criminal activities. Despite that troubling period, Remmie was the stagehand and theatre technician for the Tri-C Theatre Department and served as technical director for the internationally known dance instructor Christine Buster.

Significantly, deep within Remmie, the desire to be of service that his grandmother had embodied so selflessly was working its magic. Over the years, and during 2020, Remmie and his wife, Diane, invested time and effort in community service such as neighborhood cleanups, painting, food giveaways, delivering newspapers to keep residents informed, canvassing for the census, and other projects. And, he's quick to add, "her support has been invaluable."

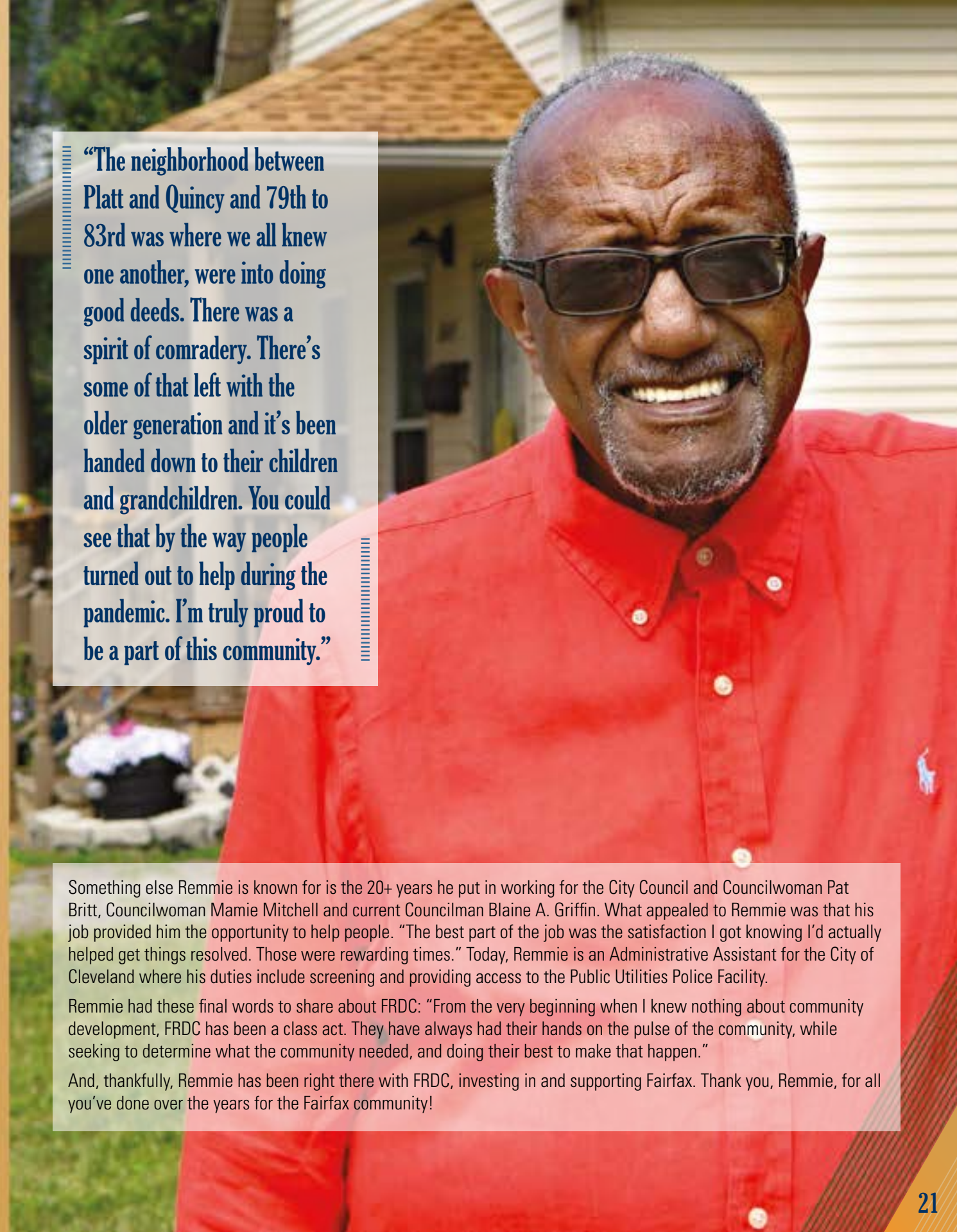
Remmie credits the churches in the Fairfax community and FRDC with making sure community help was always available when and where it was truly needed. "They were the places to go to get strength and you could feel that in the community. I don't think anyone wanted for anything in the Fairfax community in 2020."

"The neighborhood between Platt and Quincy and 79th to 83rd was where we all knew one another, were into doing good deeds. There was a spirit of comradery. There's some of that left with the older generation and it's been handed down to their children and grandchildren. You could see that by the way people turned out to help during the pandemic. I'm truly proud to be a part of this community."

Something else Remmie is known for is the 20+ years he put in working for the City Council and Councilwoman Pat Britt, Councilwoman Mamie Mitchell and current Councilman Blaine A. Griffin. What appealed to Remmie was that his job provided him the opportunity to help people. "The best part of the job was the satisfaction I got knowing I'd actually helped get things resolved. Those were rewarding times." Today, Remmie is an Administrative Assistant for the City of Cleveland where his duties include screening and providing access to the Public Utilities Police Facility.

Remmie had these final words to share about FRDC: "From the very beginning when I knew nothing about community development, FRDC has been a class act. They have always had their hands on the pulse of the community, while seeking to determine what the community needed, and doing their best to make that happen."

And, thankfully, Remmie has been right there with FRDC, investing in and supporting Fairfax. Thank you, Remmie, for all you've done over the years for the Fairfax community!



Pride of Home Ownership

Model Block

Porch sitting—a popular pastime for many people—is a moment of peace for Ardell Moore who likes to sit and take in the passing world on sunny mornings. It's something she's enjoyed the forty-nine years she's lived in the 3-story home on Beckman.

As part of FRDC's "Model Block" program, Ardell's porch was repaired and painted in 2020 along with eight other homes. Exterior repairs and maintenance were done to the homes such as minor carpentry work, painting, gutter repair or replacement, roof repair, power washing, and landscaping. Ardell loves the spruced-up look of her porch.

Ardell's home is quite the hub of activity as her seven children and fourteen grandchildren have often gathered for holidays, birthdays, and big family dinners. Her mother purchased the house in 1972, a time when most neighbors were property owners and homes were well maintained. The neighborhood offered two major grocery stores within walking distance, a butcher, several schools, churches, and the Fairfax Recreation Center near Central Avenue. It was a safe place, people walked and when the streetlights came on in the evening, the kids knew it was time to head home.



As Ardell says, fondly, "This has been a wonderful neighborhood to grow up in and this house is truly our family home, a place of many stories. Anything that happens in the family, you come here for good and difficult times. This is the place you come to." Now retired and volunteering at Bolton Elementary, Ardell regularly had family filling the house, pre-pandemic. And she is most likely joined on the front porch by younger family members to enjoy the sunrise on Beckman Avenue.

You know your kids and neighbors are in good hands when Kelvin is around. A retired school bus driver, he ferried students for 41 years in the Cleveland and Warrensville Heights School Districts. He loved his job because he had the chance to proactively teach kids of color how to conduct themselves, to not look for handouts, to do what needs to be done. He imparted a sense of ethics and an intrinsic desire to work for what you want and to help others.

Kelvin says that his father was the father of fathers. "He was such a good man, always leading by example for the whole neighborhood. He taught me things about growing and planting and doing for myself. He was the type of man who would do something and then show you how to do it—he was always teaching me."

This eventually manifested in Kelvin's love of gardening, both flowers and vegetables, which surround the house he's lived in for the past 23 years. Speaking of which, FRDC was able to help Kelvin with his on-going house upkeep by putting a new porch on his home.

Kelvin's passion has rubbed off on his neighbors and the Fairfax community, so much so that he was interviewed by Jan Thrope for her book *Inner Visions: Grassroots Stories of Truth and Hope*, which relates the stories of individuals revitalizing inner-city Cleveland neighborhoods. She included Kelvin because he's teaching kids how to garden and develop self-discipline so they can learn to become self-sufficient.

Another significant aspect of Kelvin's life is reading, something imparted to him by his mother who was adamant about education. "My mom inspired me to be a big reader. I would read books about our people... about being strong, knowing about suffering, and knowing about the ability to get up and do for yourself."

Kelvin says that he attributes his life to having had great parents. And now he's paying that forward through his passion and support of the Fairfax community.



"You just have to connect with others, that's all. Show you care. When you show interest in a child, you discover good qualities that may not be readily apparent."



Greater Circle Living

The hallmark of a true renaissance is found in the people, businesses, enterprises, and community organizations coming together to honor and celebrate the past while seeking to move forward in ways that positively transform and transcend. Fairfax is a beacon of all that a renaissance embodies.

Greater Circle Living (GCL) has been a primary architect in the continued growth and interest in Fairfax, consistently attracting new residents to the neighborhood. GCL is an employer-assisted housing program that encourages employees of Greater University Circle (GUC) nonprofit institutions to live near work.

GCL—developed and administered by FRDC—is a partnership between Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland Clinic, Judson, the Cleveland Foundation, and FRDC. This partnership leverages foundation and institutional monies in GUC to strengthen ten adjoining neighborhoods.

Greater University Circle continues to be a nexus of ethnic, racial, and income diversity. By providing incentives to eligible employees to move into the GUC neighborhoods, current and prospective residents can receive incentives for home purchase, exterior repair, or rental assistance while at the same time expanding the community involvement of new residents. That is a true renaissance in action!

Since its relaunch in 2012, GCL program use has increased 822%. Surprisingly, during the height of the pandemic, GCL assisted 15 employees with the purchase of homes, provided the opportunity for three employees to make exterior repairs or upgrades and improvements to their existing homes, and incentivized another 80 to sign one-year leases.

“I have always wanted to buy my own home because homeownership means stability.” And that’s what Paris and her two daughters have now become—homeowners. For Paris, it’s a dream come true, something she was able to accomplish via Habitat for Humanity.

Paris, an employee at University Hospitals, shared that working with Habitat volunteers made her feel more accomplished and involved. “I just love the volunteers. I really appreciate them more than they will ever know. They made sure we stayed hands-on and included us.” Paris, Heather, and Matilda now have a stable home, something solid, a place they can call and make their own.

An Exterior Repair Success

Active, feisty, no-nonsense, and caring—those are the words that best describe Lizzie Ford. She’s always busy, always looking after others’ welfare—it gives her purpose. Having worked for Judson Senior Living Communities for 25 years, Lizzie has also provided home health care as an aide. She loves what she does.

Originally from Opelika, Alabama, you can still hear her accent even though she’s lived in Cleveland since 1965. “I still have my country accent,” she says with a laugh. In her neighborhood, she is known as “Moma,” and is highly respected by young and old.

Lizzie is also very involved in her church, Burning Bush Baptist Church in Collinwood, visiting ailing church members, preparing lunch at the church, as well as serving as a board trustee. “I’m active, alright!”

Living in her home for the past 40 years, she’s raised two boys, has two grandkids, and one great-granddaughter. Keeping up with the times, she Facetimes with them regularly.

One important quality of her neighborhood is that everyone protects and watches out for each other. That includes thriving through the pandemic. Lizzie says that despite having weathered the pandemic, the new variant has her still wearing a mask even though she’s fully vaccinated. She encourages everyone to get educated and vaccinated.

Lizzie’s home has also received some tender loving care. Through GCL, she had the concrete steps to the front of her house and the steps on the backside of the house removed and replaced. FRDC is glad that they could ensure Lizzie was on the receiving end for once. Cheers, Lizzie!

“I encourage young people to get the shot and everyone else whose path I cross because that’s the way out of it. We all have to watch out for each other. We have grandkids and great-grandkids—we don’t want our kids to get it,” emphasized Ms. Ford.





Keeping Fairfax Looking and Feeling Its Best

Let's Get Busy!

Neighborhood cleanups, just like housework, seem never ending and 2020 saw several major cleanups throughout the Fairfax area. Resident Rennie Crawford, spotlighted in this report, organized teams to clean up several streets. Here's an overall recap:

June

Francis Jones Pavilion Cleanup—FRDC staff members, neighborhood residents and volunteers from both the Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance and Cleveland Clinic filled eight bags with debris and trash as they landscaped and beautified the Francis Jones Pavilion greenspace on Cedar Avenue.

August

Residents and volunteers from Cleveland Clinic Office of Sustainability joined FRDC in clearing, beautifying, and landscaping 27 parcels along Quincy Avenue and East 79th Street.

September

Cleveland Clinic, residents, and the Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance once again joined FRDC staff on a beautiful fall day to landscape and beautify four parcels on East 93rd Street, filling four Davey Trucks with debris.

October

Cleanup along Lucia, Amos, and Central Avenues filled an industrial city dumpster with debris.



Cleveland winters can chill you to the bone and in the summers, you can sweat just from breathing. With the pandemic requiring many people to stay home and others homebound because they lost their jobs, keeping up with house worried many residents in Fairfax.

Groundhog Workshop

Ordinarily, one doesn't have groundhogs on their mind, but these pesky animals will eat your vegetable garden and possibly undermine your home's foundations. They've been known to excavate 5,000 pounds of earth in a year and create a tunnel system spreading over a quarter of an acre. Believe it or not, groundhogs have been caught on camera stealing packages off front steps and porches. And heaven forbid you should accidentally step into one of their holes and sprain or break your ankle or leg, or wrench your knee.

To help Fairfax residents address this issue, FRDC and GardenWalk Cleveland teamed up with Cleveland's Office of Sustainability to host an Ohio State Extension Workshop at PNC Fairfax Connection. Attendees learned about how damaging groundhogs can be to gardens, greenspaces, and building and roadway infrastructure. Residents also learned about effective groundhog management and damage prevention. The rodents may be cute but watch out!

HEAP

Thankfully, FRDC staff were able to assist approximately 2,000 residents in making financial payments to restore or prevent utilities from being disconnected. They were also helpful in determining eligibility for the Percentage of Income Program and processing applications for the Cuyahoga County Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC) Program.

For decades, FRDC has partnered with Cleveland Housing Network Housing Partners and the State of Ohio to provide HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program) services. As is the way for FRDC, they made sure the global pandemic story was transformed into a story of community resiliency and solidarity for Fairfax.

Healthy Community Initiative

The Centennial East 100th Street Healthy Community Initiative grew out of the December 2018 Community Conversation at Karamu House. It featured Ward 6 Councilman Blaine A. Griffin and the CEO of Cleveland Clinic, Dr. Tom Mihaljevic. The pilot project is a collaboration between Councilman Griffin, FRDC, Cleveland Clinic, and residents of East 100th Street.

The purpose of the effort is to support the building of community and lifelong wellness by addressing the social determinants of health. Residents and property owners who agree to participate in the initiative have access to supportive services and property improvements.

Technology Center 2.0

Though we've almost reached the quarter mark of the 21st century and technological advances have vastly expanded our horizons, computer connectivity is still an obstacle for some people, especially older residents. The pandemic, though, pushed everyone's envelopes and even with a steep learning curve, many in the Fairfax community stepped up to and surmounted the challenge.

Instrumental in keeping everyone connected, the Fairfax Neighborhood Technology Center, with its state-of-the-art training facility, was able to continue services throughout 2020. Technical assistance was available to both residents and businesses, helping them stay in touch with family, as well as ensuring that online marketing to customer services were uninterrupted. Some residents were able to take online courses, such as Jeri Campbell.

"I hadn't used a computer in 15 to 20 years and even then, that was only for word processing. Since then, I haven't understood anything technologically—that is until recently. My daughter has written a book and has an online class as a motivational speaker. I was completely missing out on that. Now, though, my daughter has set me up with an iPhone and iPad."



"I was able to take a six-week class offered online by the Technology Center and an entire new world has opened up for me. I now comfortably use Google, MSWord and YouTube. I even shop for clothes and household goods. I'm all over the Internet!"

Jeri's experience is something over 300 Fairfax residents and businesses are also enjoying—connectivity and engaging activity. As Jeri stated, "With senior citizens, socialization is important. I took the course for that reason and to have my brain start working on new things." The course Jeri is referring to was taught by FRDC's Teresa Avery.

"My Zoom class came about as a result of COVID-19. I was trying to think of a class I could teach virtually and get people connected. The class, Black Studies/Black History/Black Culture, has been ongoing since July 2020. We review documentaries, videos, news events, noteworthy people, etc. We discuss everything from politics to music to current events: elections, national and local news, the Capitol Insurrection, the history of Juneteenth, etc.," says Teresa.

Students, the majority of whom are seniors, learned how to download Zoom and connect to a meeting so now they now have the virtual skills to connect anywhere. The class also encourages students to research and find topics of interest online.

For Jeri, she can now search for things she never thought possible. The whole world is now at her fingertips, pandemic or not.

Karamu House—An Enduring Legacy

“Joyful gathering,” the meaning of Karamu in Swahili, found even greater significance in 2020 as we all hunkered down into forced quarantine and social restrictions due to COVID-19. For the Arts, productions were put on hiatus until further notice—but not for Karamu. They utilized technology to create their first virtual presentation and produced several online community dialogues. The result was increased media attention, expansion of their audience on a national level, a successful membership campaign, and a 400 percent increase in donors!

In June, Karamu was able to launch an original theatrical production titled Freedom on Juneteenth, which tells the story of Black America in music, dance, and spoken word. As part of Karamu’s Social Justice Series, the play was also a way to spotlight Karamu’s legacy of social justice through the arts, as well as their rich theatrical history.



Three additional virtual programs on the topics of trauma and mental health in the Black community, police violence against African Americans, and voting rights and civic engagement reached an additional 50,000+ households before the end of 2020.

Karamu’s Summer Arts Intensive for students grades 7–12 offered a best-in-class platform that featured interactive online activities, live instructional classes, and one-on-one private sessions with voice, drama, dance, costume design, and short film professionals. The online programs allowed the Karamu Arts Academy to reach not only local Clevelanders, but communities throughout Ohio and the country.

“I love Karamu House and the work you’ve been doing during the pandemic! Innovative and necessary. You’ve kept working to make change,” said one program participant.

In December, Karamu launched a virtual version of its “In the Tradition” community program series featuring “free and culturally-specific offerings speaking directly to the African American experience.” The first program was “Kwanzaa with Karamu,” an educational presentation about this holiday’s traditions.

Closing out Karamu’s 2020 season was their first-ever streaming, main-stage production of “Joyful: A Karamu Holiday Celebration.” It featured songs of multiple cultures and traditions from around the world— a wonderful way to celebrate humanity, life, and our interconnectedness no matter the obstacles. Karamu House, established in 1915, is continuing to look to the future as they continue their tradition of inclusion, collaboration, integrity, joy, excellence, and impact.





More Happiness In Giving

We hoped you've discovered our community's resilience and have been inspired by it!



Through the Work of Many

Stewards for the Good of All

Just as our residents are the lifeblood of the Fairfax neighborhood, so, too, are the team members of FRDC, who year in and year out continue to add their energy, creativity, expertise, and heart to making FRDC the community dynamo that it is!

Officers

- J. Stefan Holmes, *President*
First National Bank
- Angela Jeffries, *1st Vice President*
Hammes Company
- Matthew P. Yourkvitch, *2nd Vice President*
Yourkvitch & Dibo Ltd.
- John Malcolm, *Treasurer*
Cleveland Institute of Art
- Donte Gibbs, *Secretary*
Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park

Members

- Antoine Burts, *Resident*
- Yolanda Butler, *Resident*
- Lamont B. Davis, *Bolton Elementary*
- Regina Harper, *Resident*
- Zachary Lewis, *Resident*
- Ardell Moore, *Resident*
- Shelton L. Moore, *Resident*
- Gloria Mormon, *Resident*
- Gary Sardon, *G. Sardon Companies*
- Beverly Shipp, *Resident*
- Walter Stanley, *Resident*
- Blanton S. Tolbert, *CWRU*
- Milan Wilder, *Resident*

Staff

- Denise VanLeer, *Executive Director*
- Catondra Noye, *Assistant Executive Director*
- John Deal, *Controller*
- Anthony R. Whitfield
Economic Development Director
- Shawna Jones, *Senior Project Manager*
- Maritza Herrera-Sansom
Greater Circle Living Administrator
- Emily Hillyer, *Greater Circle Living*
Program Coordinator
- J. P. Kilroy, *Greater Circle Living*
Program Coordinator
- Ruby Raines, *Office Manager*
- Gail Powell, *Receptionist*
- Kenneth Peterson, *Facilities Manager*
- Natalie Bryan
Neighborhood Services Coordinator
- Teresa Avery
Neighborhood Technology Coordinator
- Demetrius Williams, *Program Manager*
Workforce Development
- Tamela Powell
Workforce Development Specialist
- Lakeyla, Anderson, *H.E.A.P. Intake Officer*
- Jacci Prather, *H.E.A.P. Intake Officer*
- Tracey Smith, *H.E.A.P. Intake Officer*
- Ray Brown, *Maintenance Staff*
- Diane Crawford, *Maintenance Staff*
- Latonia Goins, *Maintenance Staff*
- Brenda Ruffin, *Maintenance Staff*
- Vonda Stanford, *Maintenance Staff*

Graduate Intern

- Grace Chu, *CWRU*

Reliability and Integrity

Every organization relies on a steady circulation of funds to ensure that programs, jobs, services, and livelihoods continue unabated. FRDC’s team worked hard throughout 2020 to keep the wheels of FRDC moving steadily forward.

Fairfax Renaissance Development Corporation

Statement of Activities for the Twelve Months Ending December 31, 2020

Support & Revenue

Federal Funding Grants	554,712
Foundation & Other Grants	1,358,819
Fundraising Income	36,500
Interest Income	199,994
Development Fee Income	33,972
Rent Income	1,209,113
Other Income	1,500

Total Support & Revenues **\$ 3,394,610**

Expenses

Personnel Costs	1,215,825
General Overhead	60,778
Program Services	159,658
Property	945,329
Fundraising/Events	47,692
Other Management & General	831,118

Total Expenses **\$ 3,260,400**

Change in Unrestricted Net Assets	\$ 134,210
Beginning Net Unrestricted Assets: <i>01-01-2020</i>	\$ 13,860,081
Ending Net Unrestricted Assets: <i>12-31-2020</i>	\$ 13,994,291

Many Hands, Many Hearts

FRDC’s story and journey—founded in its principles of strengthening neighborhoods and comprehensive community development and revitalization—are what invigorates and inspires the partners, friends, and supporters of FRDC. Thank you for your invaluable support and, as we like to say, “Ever upward and onward!”

Corporations

AT&T
Chemical Bank
Meijer
PNC Bank
Western Reserve Revitalization & Management Company

Foundations/Nonprofits/ Government

Antioch Baptist Church
Case Western Reserve University
Children’s Defense Fund
CHN Housing Partners
City of Cleveland
Cleveland Clinic
Cleveland Clinic Foundation
Cleveland Foundation
Community Foundation of Western Pennsylvania and Eastern Ohio
Community of Saint Peter
Cuyahoga Title Services, LTD
McGregor Foundation
Ohio CDC Association
Ohio Community Development Finance Fund
Surety Title Agency
The George Gund Foundation
University Hospitals
Westfield Insurance Company Employees
Westfield Insurance Foundation

Individuals

Zachary & Cynthia Lewis

We hope you enjoyed our tour!
Join us and add your story
to the Fairfax story!



8111 Quincy Avenue, Suite 100
Cleveland, OH 44104

p: 216-361-8400
f: 216-361-8407

fairfaxrenaissance.org