

Salem Lamplighter

Vol. 15 No. 4 November 2021



At the October meeting of the Salem Civic Association, representatives of the developer, Preferred Living, LLC, presented their proposed plans for a multi-unit housing development in Salem. The project would require the city to change the zoning of three large lots on the west side of Sinclair Road, currently zoned for single-family dwellings, to multi-family dwellings and razing the existing homes. The complex proposes 144 apartment units in seven buildings—four of which are three stories, the three in front having been changed to two stories—a clubhouse, and some garages.

The project was presented as “a continuation” of what’s happening on Sinclair, referring to the businesses, apartments, and church built decades ago. In fact, the proposed plan includes two paths that end abruptly at the property line but lead to the next residential lot—an obvious nod to expected future “continuation” of development along Sinclair.

Most of the articles in this issue of the Lamplighter address the project to some extent.

At the next SCA meeting, we will get a report on the efforts so far to coordinate a response to the rezoning request.

Please come!



The Reason for a Civic Association

by Jake Wheeler, SCA Membership Officer

One of the first things my wife and I did before we purchased our home in Salem was attend a Salem Civic Association meeting. We were seriously considering moving to the neighborhood and had already viewed several houses up for sale. I thought it would be worthwhile to check out the local civic association to get a better feel for the area.

The meeting we attended was incredibly boring. There was some talk about local trash clean-up efforts and the upcoming potluck at the next meeting. We drank some cheap coffee that was provided and listened to our assigned police liaison officer talk about crime prevention and answer a few questions from residents. I was bored out of my mind and felt out of place being the youngest person there by about thirty years. However, it was a very friendly and welcoming group that seemed to positively impact the neighborhood.

We purchased our house in January 2015 and moved to Salem. Over the next few years, I attended SCA meetings occasionally but only as an

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Development Proposed for Salem...Look Out!

by Scott Williams

The October Salem Civic Association meeting engaged in dialogue with a developer (Preferred Living, LLC) seeking to convert single family residential property to a high density “market-rate” apartment complex on the 5555, 5567, and 5591 lots along the west side of Sinclair Road. The response by residents was a firm “no” to their plans for requesting the city to approve rezoning of the lots from low density to high density housing use. But as I visited with a resident sitting next to me at the meeting, I learned of another development: the city plans to make significant improvements to Sinclair from Morse Road up to my own street of Strimple—on the southern border of our residential community. While I was told that Sinclair was to be widened, the city’s dedicated web page for “Sinclair-Road-Improvements” only states Sinclair is to be resurfaced, along with its other improvements as listed. We have a new

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Salem Civic Association

The next Civic Association meeting is Tuesday, November 23. Meetings are held at Salem Baptist Church on Sinclair Road at 7:00 p.m. All residents are welcome and encouraged to attend!

October 26, 2021

Salem Civic Association Meeting Minutes

Motion made to accept September 2021 minutes. Passed

New Columbus Police Liaison - Daniel Yandrich

Contact: 614-645-1418; dyandrich@columbuspolice.org

• 20 years in Linden; here since July • Residents will see more officers with beards, tattoos, ball caps, etc. • When cars are parked on the street longer than usual, please dial 311. Impound lots are full—cars can be ticketed but not impounded. Speeding cars, also dial 311 • Police are aware of the problems at 841 E. Lincoln and he will start working on that property—owner is well known • Hotel nuisance properties are being worked on by CPD • Theft at gas stations—advised residents to keep purses in your locked car • Reminded residents that CPD is short-handed • Ferocious animals—please call animal control 24/7.

Guest Speakers—Jared Smith, Preferred Living Chief Development Officer; Dave Perry, Attorney consultant; Re: 5555-5591 Sinclair Road.

Representatives from Preferred Living (PL) are here for feedback and to address concerns before they present to the Northland Development Committee meeting on 12/1. Sam Shy reminded residents that PL is looking to develop the Sinclair Road property. Whether NCC approves or disapproves the variance request has no bearing on whether the City Development Commission approves or disapproves it.

Dave Perry—consultant on project: PL has been in business 25 years and is regarded as one of the premier apartment builders in central OH. Application has been made to the city and all property owners within 125 feet of property have been notified in writing of council/city development meetings.

Slides were shown of an aerial view of the property which totals 6.8 acres. If the site is developed, three homes currently on properties will be removed.

Site plan shown—168 apartment units, and a one-story clubhouse. They have already taken off 24 units to create two-story buildings instead of three stories. They explained they adjusted the variance for 15' perimeter setback instead of 25' in order to move the buildings south, making north setback 40' instead of 25'. A traffic access study will be required by the city and it is likely that a northbound turn lane will be required.

QUESTIONS FROM RESIDENTS:

Q: Will parking face the residential properties? PL: There will be a 40' perimeter to the north with a 6' basket weave fence. Garages will provide a natural barrier against railroad tracks.

Q: Who is financing the project? PL: Preferred Living, LLC is purchasing the property and financing the construction.

Q: A resident expressed concerns that increased traffic will affect the proper values of the homes on Shore Drive. PL: A traffic access study will be performed to decide how to mitigate traffic. All work will be bonded.

Density/apartments studies in residential areas do not show that apartments singly affect home values. PL explained that the project will be market rate apartments with the city requirement that 10% be rented to individuals earning 100% of area median income

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Salem Lamplighter

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and 10% to individuals earning 80% of median income.

Q: A resident asked PL why they made the statement that their project will enhance and stabilize the area. She feels that apartment tenants are not invested in the area. PL: Because someone rents a property versus owning the property does not mean they are not invested in the community. If this was not a desirable community, they would not be building the complex. Residents will be investing in the community by shopping in the area.

Q: Who will be on site to manage and secure the property? PL: There will be a property manager, leasing agent, and a maintenance technician during working hours. There will be lighting but no security officer.

Q: Why should residents be excited about apartments coming as there are already enough?

PL: We are experts at determining where there is demand. When asked, they responded that PL is required by law to accept government subsidies.

Q: A resident stated this may be good for the community and asked if there will be sidewalks on Sinclair. PL: The city requires sidewalks on the property frontage (west side of Sinclair). City capital improvements of the Al Rosa project will also require sidewalks when the road is widened in that area.

Sidewalks are not planned from Strimple to this site.
Q: A resident adjacent to the property expressed concerns about the arrows on the drawing pointing in the direction of the resident's property.

PL: This was simply a land planner's pen drawing and there would be no connection without resident's permission. Nor will the city take 50' of property via eminent domain. They will have the land planner take arrows off to assure residents that no one will do anything on property without permission.

Q: Same resident discussed drainage issues on their property that may be worsened by additional hard surfaces and roofs on the apartment project.

PL: Water management will improve because they will install the underground storm system as required by the city. PL required to manage and collect all water in underground chambers on premises.

Q: Are all units for rent? PL: Yes, with lease terms averaging 9-16 months. Security deposits will range from \$300 up to one month's rent.

Q: What is square footage of apartments? PL: They will range from 700-1300 sq. ft., 1- and 2-bedroom apartments.

Q: The resident pointed out that on *apartments.com*, there are 80 units available at

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different levels in Salem. The addition of PL apartments in this small area will over-saturate an already apartment-saturated area.

Q: Does PL already own all three properties? PL: No.

Q: Why not invest in current apartments/property already zoned in your favor? No answer provided.

Q: The intersection in front of Worthington apartments has seen traffic jams, accidents and issues with water & sewer drainage. PL: Sanitary study required.

Q: Residents have seen this neighborhood go from premier to rundown as residential homes are being taken down to give room for apartments. All it takes is two homes on Sinclair to start another apartment complex. Is this really going to be better? Why not take down rundown businesses instead of residences? No answer was provided.

Q: Concerns about traffic: trash and recycling pickup, and mail delivery will interfere with traffic on Sinclair. PL: Trash will be compacted on site.

Q: Resident asked about the northbound left turn lane. Where will the easement be taken? PL: A traffic study has not been completed but they believe it would take up easement on their property.

Q: Will residents be forced to increase sanitary pipe size to keep up with the capacity of apartments? PL: Their plan will include water

pressure boosters if necessary.

Q: Who is the architect of the project? PL: CDR in Baltimore with projected costs at \$20 million for the total development. *The resident further clarified that the water collection tanks will only slow water flow, not eliminate it. He said Giant Eagle went out of business due to crime from hotels in the area.*

(Editor's note: PL had claimed Giant Eagle closed because the neighborhood could not support it, implying the increased density of their development would support local businesses). *"This association fought the gangs and will fight this zoning change because Columbus deserves this neighborhood. We have enough apartments and oppose a new one coming which will lead to the city wanting Sinclair to become a five-lane road. This project will be fought."*

Q: Does PL do all light systems in compliance with dark sky lighting standards? PL: No.

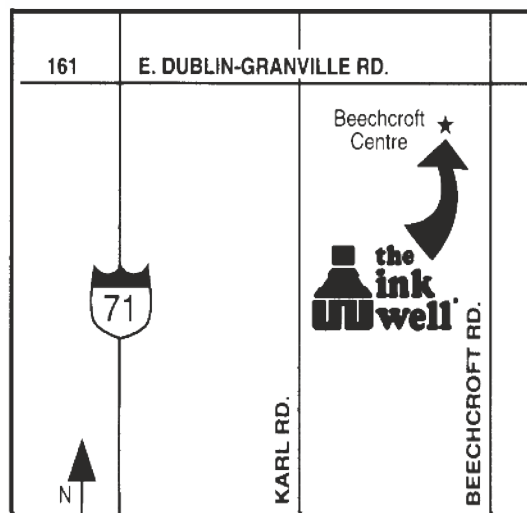
Q: What is the minimum number of apartments needed to meet PL profit margin? No answer.

Q: How will PL pitch this project to the city to justify having this residential property rezoned to PL's benefit? PL: The city has designated this corridor as a community reinvestment area and they believe it is consistent with city designation. It was designated as a single family home because it has always been there.

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Curious Salem is a new feature included in each newsletter so that we can all learn about the history of our neighborhood and community.

It is written by Grace Freeman, a local librarian specializing in genealogy and local history. She and her husband recently moved to their home on Sinclair Road. Grace loves learning about her new community and wants to share what she's finding with the rest of Salem.

If you have questions about our neighborhood, email them to Grace at curious.salem.oh@gmail.com and she will try to find answers to share in an upcoming newsletter!

Curious Salem

by Grace Freeman

What was here *before* Salem?

Before Salem was established, the land was home to a polo club. El Rancho 961 was a private polo club headed by local real estate developer, Walter Shapter, built in 1953. Mid-century real estate listings note residential properties abutted the polo fields, and local newspaper articles provided information about the club. Walter




Shapter (see photo) was an avid rider and known as one of Ohio's best polo players. (Images courtesy Worthington News newspaper collection, June 24, 1954; and Columbus Metropolitan Library digital collection)

Walter J. Shapter, Jr., 112 Aldrich, veteran Harbor Hills polo player, has built a stable and training grounds for horses on Route 161, one mile east of Worthington. The establishment, known as "El Rancho 961", was constructed this past winter.

The setting for "El Rancho 961" is 70 acres of wooded, gently rolling lands, just east of Sinclair Road. A small, but attractive stable has been erected, and in addition a training track has been constructed, and ground has also been graded, seeded and drainage installed for a future polo field.

Shapter, generally considered the best No. 4 polo player in Ohio, joined the Harbor Hills team in 1928. This year the club is celebrating its silver anniversary, marking the 25th active season of polo at Harbor Hills. Founded in 1926, the club has played polo every season since, with the exception of a few years during World War II.



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A Call to Action

by the SCA Trustees

Many of you may not know it, but the Salem Civic Association was born in the fires of resistance.

It all started in the early 2000's, when neighbors got wind of a plan by the city to widen Sinclair Road to five lanes. During a meeting with city officials, we Salemites persuaded the representatives that a five-lane highway through the middle of a residential neighborhood was inappropriate and the city backed off.

Shortly after this confrontation, Hesus Church, in an effort to expand their eldercare ministry, desired to build senior housing apartments on property the church owns on Sinclair Road. Per the plans submitted by the architect, this apartment building would have been pushed to the back of the lot and would have negatively impacted the residences behind them on Crawford Avenue. Further, it would require the rezoning of the existing single-family residential to multi-family, endangering the unique residential enclave along Sinclair. After meeting and discussing the pros and cons of their project, Hesus decided to shelve their proposal. In the end, National Church Residences built the senior housing facility on vacant property at the north end of Roche Drive. This became a win for everyone.

Following these two instances requiring the neighborhood to stand together, all involved determined that this unity needed to be incorporated into an organization. Thus, the Salem Civic Association was born. Little did we know, a much bigger challenge was on the horizon.

Drugs moved into Salem. In the Late 2000's, our neighborhood became the northern terminus for a pipeline originating in Mexico for the importation of black tar heroin. The drugs brought gangs, crime, and fear. The hotels along 161 became flop houses for petty criminals, prostitutes, addicts and drug dealers. When it was stated in one of our monthly meetings that our elder neighbors were intimidated and afraid to drive north out of the neighborhood, it became obvious that we were in a fight for the survival of Salem. We sent letters to political and administration officials across Franklin County, inviting them to an SCA meeting to discuss this crisis. 120 Salem residents, the Columbus Director of Public Safety, our State Senator, the County Prosecutor, the Columbus Police Department's Chief of Detectives, Chief of Vice, along with various officers and staff, met at the Salem Baptist Church.

At the conclusion of this passion-filled and frank meeting, a coalition was formed to find and implement ways to fight back. CPD dedicated Community Task Force officers to clean out the criminals. City Council passed an ordinance to fight nuisance properties, over time closing down five hotels that had become hotbeds of criminal activity. Salem residents were taught how to look for and report suspicious activity happening in the neighborhood to CPD. After several years, we, the city, CPD and Salem, had beaten back the cartels, gangs and criminals. We have been blessed with a peaceful and stable neighborhood over the last handful of years as a result of this determined and sustained effort.

Now we find ourselves confronted with a new issue that must be confronted to preserve our neighborhood.

The homes along Sinclair Road north of Lincoln form a unique residential area in Columbus. Poste Lake, with the surrounding Pincater properties and the deep two acre lots lining Sinclair are a rare opportunity for home ownership in an urban setting. Now, a developer has begun the process of asking the city to rezone three of these lots (or 6.8 acres) from single- to multi-family housing, proposing to build 144 apartments in two- and three-story buildings just north of the Lifebridge Church. This would be the second new apartment complex along Sinclair Road, including the 180 units soon to begin construction on the Alrosa Villa property. SCA and its members believe this newest complex is an inappropriate change of use and a potential threat to all of Sinclair Road. We are asking for your help to stand against this latest challenge.

At the next SCA meeting, we will give a report on our efforts so far to coordinate a response to the rezoning request.

We are asking that you become involved and attend the Tuesday, November 23 meeting at 7:00 in the Salem Baptist Church on Sinclair Road. It is very important that Salem presents a large and united front.

Please come!

Happy Thanksgiving!

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high-density “modest-income” apartment complex being built where Bill Moose Run flows under the new Sinclair Road bridge at Alrosa Nightclub (RIP). Our civic association has a representative on the Northland Community Council (NCC) Development Committee which recommended approval of this project, and such housing is highly needed in our growing city. Similar high-need apartment projects for low-income senior housing operated by National Church Residences have been, and are being, built in Salem along the commercial corridor of 161 with our civic association’s and NCC Development Committee’s recommended approval, too.

Suddenly, traffic flow and our aquatic landscape is being challenged and changed by the plans of the city and private developers.

With our city’s population rapidly rising, the traffic flow increase on Sinclair is obvious. A “tiny,” very short left-hand turn lane going north on Sinclair at the Lincoln traffic light was recently installed by the city (but not one going south!). The market-rate apartment developer, Preferred LLC, said they may be required to install a similar northbound left-hand turn lane along two-lane Sinclair where they hope to build. This issue raises multiple zoning questions involving city traffic and utility departments. We

have open storm water conduits along a narrow and raised-bed Sinclair on that residential section. Will city funds be used to help turn Sinclair into three lanes and for how long a stretch? Will there be an increased traffic study for all of us heading east on Lincoln to the light at Sinclair? Traffic heading east, at times, I have noticed, backs up to the railroad tracks (ah yes, cars suddenly trapped when the railroad gates descend!). But with regard to forthcoming Sinclair Road improvements, I will be pleading for a 35-mph speed limit rather than its present and often exceeded 45-mph limit. Sorry, my Salem hot car friends!

My true interest in writing this article is to explore Salem’s aquatic environment. We are home to Poste Lake and the source of Bill Moose Run, a spring located in the southeast corner of our zoned residential community. From my limited research, it appears that Salem’s residential area was *originally* part of an “upland” forested natural wetlands with scattered ponds before our residential area was built. We likely see remnants of this driving north along Sinclair with its wonderful set-back residences and very deep plots, which on its east side share a modest undulating valley to handle excess rain—one map I found shows an actual stream. Indeed, much

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Reason con't. from page 1

observer. They remained boring and I remained disinterested.

In 2018, I had a conversation with a man who was walking his dog near my house. I felt a little awkward making small talk as he was SCA President at the time and I knew I could have been a little more involved. He explained to me that he volunteered with the SCA just in case we ever had to do anything as a neighborhood to stand up for ourselves. In the event that the city or a developer or any outside force posed a threat, we would have the ability to collectively push back. I may not have shared his skepticism but I was moved by his statements. Just in case something needed to be done, I wanted to be in a position to act.

With that in mind, I volunteered to be the membership officer for the SCA. The previous membership officer had served the maximum four year term so the position was vacant. My responsibilities are minimal and simple. I keep track of yearly memberships and encourage people to join.

I still attend every boring SCA meeting and am often the youngest person in the room by about a generation, but am always surrounded by people who care about their community. I am there just in case.

Now a developer wants to come into our neighborhood and build luxury apartments. I understand why they want to build here; it's a great place to live. However, they don't want to build on

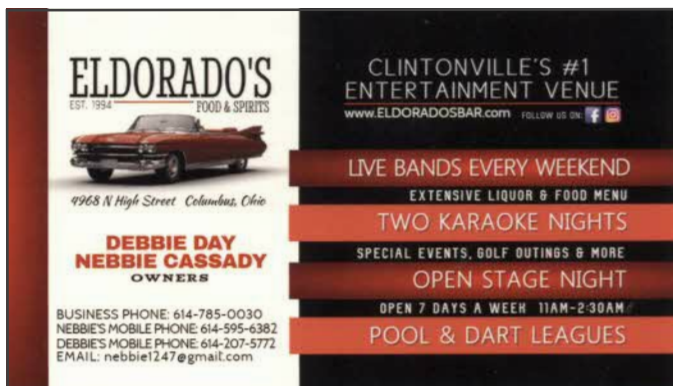
vacant land or replace existing motels that are an eyesore. They want to bulldoze three homes on Sinclair Road and squeeze apartments into the space. In an attempt to squeeze out more profit, they want to eliminate a few of the most desirable lots available in the neighborhood to build high-density housing. This is not in the best interest of our neighborhood and is unacceptable for the people of Salem.

Situations like this are why the Salem Civic Association exists. When an outside force attempts to take advantage of our neighborhood, we have a means to push back. We have a collective voice in local government. All because we have the SCA.

I encourage everyone to attend our next meeting on November 23. Come hear what the developer has proposed and help plan a response as a community. Everyone needs to know what's going on in their neighborhood. Everyone needs to be connected. Everyone needs to be involved just in case.

November is also the month the SCA holds officer elections. For the past two years the SCA has not had a treasurer or a communications officer. The current group of officers are all approaching their final year of service as allowed by our constitution. New people will need to volunteer to fill those positions. Officer responsibilities are not complicated or burdensome, but they are necessary if our neighborhood is to continue to maintain a civic association. Without volunteer officers, there is no one to be there just in case.

Become a member if you haven't already. If you are willing to volunteer with the SCA as an officer for a few hours every month, reach out to me. If you would like to get more involved in opposing the Preferred Living development, please email me or talk to me at the meeting. This isn't the first time the SCA has needed to take action and it definitely will not be the last. Join me and your neighbors to be there—just in case.





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A motion was made to table the discussion of the matter and move it to new business. Passed.

New Business: Discussion of presentation

Why don't they invest in other areas? • Why Sinclair road? • Three stories to two stories—residents' access to lake and properties. • Children from apartments will be especially drawn to lake via railroad track. • *City has plan in place: Area 23—recommendation that single-family residential plan be supported; commercial development not encouraged; lots give our neighborhood diversity the city says it wants.*

A motion was made to oppose the rezoning of the lots on Sinclair. Seconded and passed.

SCA Trustee Doug Moody stated he believes the city is against us in community redevelopment, starting with the widening of Sinclair up to Strimple. He believes the city wants five lanes of highway from Morse Road to Polaris (as PL described Sinclair as an "arterial road"). He encouraged residents to be ready to go to the NCC and City Council development meetings as this project will affect this neighborhood and would be a loss to the city of Columbus. We need to work to preserve Salem.


Sam Shy reiterated the advantage to starting dialogue with PL. There have already been concessions (three stories to two, water management, etc.) Fight *and* negotiate.

A resident stated Indianola Avenue did their project correctly—they took out old warehouses, not

imposed on residential areas.

- Make our voices heard—the time is now.
 - Important that residents attend NCC and City Council meetings.
 - Part of strategy should be to get whatever we can out of this, to have something more desirable. We can still give a thumbs down but end up with something we can live with.
 - We need to act before NCC meeting on December 1—be working with them to get adjustments—still vote down at NCC and city council. When they come back next month, dig deeper. *(Editor's note: Preferred Living has opted not to come back to the next SCA meeting, as originally planned.)*
- Motion made to adjourn.
Next meeting, officer elections.





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Development con't. from page 8

to my surprise, one can find a mysterious unnamed lake on this land--*that is not Poste Lake!* To find it, visit the Franklin County Auditor's website map and zoom into Salem. The lake is only found on this map, by the way. Woodward Park, on the east side of Salem and I-71, likely represents this old forested, vernal pools environment. This land needed a culvert under I-71 to drain it—the water now flowing into the “head waters” of Bill Moose Run.

As other maps were investigated, I discovered the residential area along Sinclair is considered a “green zone” by the city. It seems that early developers of residential Salem along Sinclair avoided creating high density housing on these wetlands, helping to preserve a “green zone,” so to speak. A federal soil map for Franklin County describes our type of soil under our thin top soil as being a type of clay *not* very water absorbent—and what precautions developers needed to take for water runoff. Preferred LLC's plan for water runoff includes underground tanks, colloquially called “French Sewers” among hydraulic engineers. How exotic! But a typical French Sewer is built to let its captured water then be absorbed into the soil at the bottom of the tank—will our clay soil say no? Even more interesting a question: will digging these tanks on their planned site hit and burst open a spring like the railroad's mine did long ago? That sprung spring gave us Poste Lake, which became a fresh water stop for steam locomotives! But perhaps the biggest flooding-risk issue is that the raised-bed railroad tracks block the natural landscape's original flooding water direction that flowed westward and southward. Now, such water is forced to flow southward *under* Salem residences, from what I can tell.

Salem's underground infrastructure is aging and, thus, is in need of increased monitoring and repair. One example was the emergency rebuilding of the Sinclair Road bridge at Alrosa. Another, more troubling, was the repair of a deeply buried storm sewer running under a residence that handles water runoff from along Sinclair Road's wetlands to the north. A truly giant shovel had to navigate into a backyard to fix the deeply buried storm sewer line. I am told they had to then sue the city to fully replace (not patch) two very damaged driveways. I laughed when I found a digital map that showed this particular storm sewer line as a stream named “Big Run”—a prophetic name for a sewer that was designed in a different era, under different assumptions.

The number of web-found digital maps showing our surface and buried rain water flows, lakes, and streams in Salem are considerable. Jurisdictions like MORPC, the county and city, and their divisions

within them, create their own maps and share data. Private web-based maps for generating ad-revenues are also to be found. One with the scary name “FloodFactor.com” identifies many residences in Salem at risk of flooding! However, if you see their “report” on Salem, it appears that much of the information is generated by an artificial intelligence computer doing it for “every” residence in America. On a good note, our city does have a program for residences in specific situations and locations which pays for a waste-water sewer (not storm) backup prevention device. The city also offers web advice on preventing such sewer back-ups that we and our neighbors can cause for one another, but not always! One engineer told me there was a 90 degree elbow turn at the end of my street's sewer line that can cause clogs, and which was no longer an acceptable construction practice. Alas, the city's sewer lines are seemingly not able to be found on web-based maps at a residential level like Salem. The old maps are not accurate, one sewer official explained. All they do is send a vacuum truck with a video line probe and GPS unit to trouble shoot any problems being reported. *Note:* the city thankfully maintains a 24/7 hotline to report such sewer back-ups at (614) 645-7102.

Finally, I share a hopeful story of how our neighbors immediately to the west of Salem stood up to help stop what would have been a devastating development! They are the good residents of Indian Hollow. The Ohio School for the Deaf's director was all too supportive of literally *giving* the northeast corner of their state-owned land to a private nonprofit developer! The development would have ruined the deep ravine of Bill Moose Run that exists under a near-pristine forested valley running all the way to High Street. Parking lots and multiple buildings were to be built on this land abutting Indianola. Covid put a halt to the plans, it seems; but also, the Indian Hollow residents did a lot of direct lobbying of politicians and collected signed petitions in opposition. So, their fight (our Salem concern, too) is not over, and they continue to request that this “unused” land be turned into permanent park land named after Bill Moose and his Wyandot tribe. Bill lived and hunted in Salem, and was a Columbus legend in his own time. Wouldn't it be great to honor him with this park, which perhaps could include a forested bike path to High Street and Graceland Shopping Center?!





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