**Noble Neighbors Celebrate our First Year**

Noble Neighbors celebrated its first year together with story-telling and raising our glasses in shared gratefulness. What began in a living room in January 2014 with a group of people who were concerned about a crime against one of their neighbors has grown into a much larger movement of people willing to work together to change the story of the neighborhood. Our favorite phrase from our meetings’ guest presenters is, “I had no idea so many people would be here” as one after another apologized for bringing too few business cards.

Noble neighbors are now present at every Cleveland Heights City Council meeting. We’re listening with an ear for decisions that impact our area and we’re watching for trends. Wonderfully, City Council members are listening to our concerns and are looking for ways to respond.

Block watch groups and block parties experienced resurgence all over the neighborhood. Several street groups now display block watch signs in their windows. Phone and email lists, and nextdoor.com are used by more neighbors to communicate concerns, forward contractor recommendations, and find lost cats.

As we learned that neighborhood beautification is directly linked to crime reduction, we stepped up our efforts. Pick Up for Pride was a quick-and-easy, but surprisingly powerful event that gathered 50 neighborhood residents to pick up litter along Noble. Perennial plantings were established with the help of Jan Kious. We have three new public flower beds, two at the Noble and Monticello intersection, and a third around the city sign at Monticello and Belvoir.

We’ve launched a web site, **NobleNeighbors.com** to help us tell the good story of our neighborhood. It’s providing a wonderful platform to showcase our best. People beyond our city are beginning to track our progress and it is being used to introduce new buyers and renters to the neighborhood. Our email list increased seven-fold in 2014.

Following a neighborhood-wide meeting in late April when Cleveland Heights City Council members invited us to the Police Academy to listen to our concerns, the city continues to respond. We were especially pleased to hear that the Public Works department heard our pleas about the condition of Noble Road, worked diligently to find funding, and in early January announced that our neighborhood’s main street will be repaved in 2015-16.

Cleveland Heights officials and officers have helped us champion our cause. Chief Jeffrey Robinson relocated a monthly Meet Your Police to the Police Academy and has sent officers to speak with us at our meetings. We’ve learned how to spot certain crimes and have formed a partnership between our residents and the police to report and apprehend criminals.

Our partnerships with several city departments are fruitful. Working with the city’s law office, we were able to assist in closing a nuisance business by being available to testify about chronic public safety threats. Rick Wagner of the Housing Programs office has encouraged us to report housing violations and his staff has moved quickly to address each concern. The Relocation office designed a new brochure to highlight the Noble neighborhood in the city’s relocation packet. Community Relations staff have been tremendously supportive with information, printing, and as liaisons between the city and Noble Neighbors.

Our fall event, Make Noise for Noble Neighborhood brought out kids of all ages to join Adam Kukuk and his percussion instruments for a rhythmic, noisy parade around the Noble School block. Nearby neighbors stepped onto porches to wave and cheer.

By far the most amazing change in the neighborhood is a growing and contagious sense of hope. Where neighbors felt isolated, we now have a sense of community. Where the expectation was for continued decline, we are sowing the seeds for growth. Where each perceived their voice as unheard, we see that resources are being directed our way. It is a good time to live in the Noble neighborhood. Join us!

*Brenda H May is one of the Noble Neighbors leaders. Check out our story at NobleNeighbors.com.*