

# Cleveland Architecture Foundation

# NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2, No. 1, Summer 2021

## INTRODUCTION 2.0

The Cleveland Architecture Foundation (CAF) has been formed to help elevate the design culture in our community.

Initially, we are pursuing illustrated video interviews with several of our distinguished elder architects and continue to create opportunities to meet with and capture on video the words and work of the senior professionals in the region.

A core objective of the foundation is to make architectural archives, both those that currently exist in varied locations, and those yet to be created, more accessible to the public. We have begun to sponsor events which will draw attention to these archives and to the architects and architecture of northeast Ohio. The CAF is organized as a 501(c)3 charitable organization under the Internal Revenue Code.



Above: Nathan Hale Jr. High School; George M. Hopkins; 1929; demolished 2008  
Below: Amassa Stone Residence; 1877

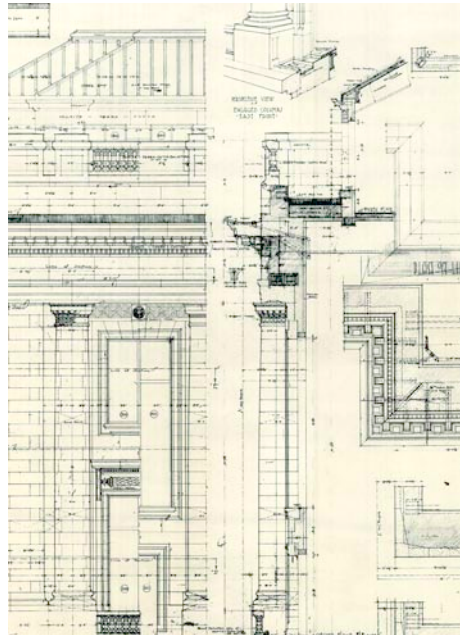


## EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

### CAF Archive Update:

John Roush AIA, chair of CAF's Archive Initiative, has achieved access to important works of Cleveland's outstanding architecture. Not only has Roush obtained access to original prints of J. Milton Dyer's First Methodist Church at East 30th and Euclid Avenue, he has obtained original tracings of all subsequent alterations undertaken by Dyer successor Travis Gower Walsh. These drawings are being scanned on the large flatbed scanner at the Cleveland Public Library by CAF Volunteer Vanina Batistella. Once metadata information has been added in accordance with the archive standards of the American Library Association, these drawings will be accessible to all.

Below: Cleveland City Hall; J. Milton Dyer, SE Corner Construction Document partial; 1907 - 1916



CAF has digitized hundreds of photographs and drawings contributed by Richard Fleischman FAIA, Piet van Dijk FAIA, Norm Perttula FAIA, Robert Little FAIA and William Blunden FAIA. As additional volunteer efforts become available, we will complete uploading the metadata descriptions for each image to render them easily searchable.

Roush has also obtained access to important school buildings from the Cleveland Schools Board of Education that are currently being digitized. Park Synagogue is also providing CAF with digitized scans of Eric Mendelsohn's original tracings for the Park Synagogue landmark design, which will compliment the 200+ photos CAF has taken of the facility.

Volunteers are needed to assist with the uploading of metadata information for each image or drawing which enables the archive to be searched. If you have an interest, please contact us. Metadata work can be done remotely.

Below: CAF Volunteer Vanina Batistella



# NEWS : Park Synagogue for Sale

## Eric Mendelsohn's Landmark Park Synagogue Listed for Sale:

The historic Park Synagogue on Mayfield Road in Cleveland Heights designed by renowned architect Eric Mendelsohn in 1949 has been listed for sale by the congregation.

Since the foundation of Cleveland's Jewish community in the early 19th century, synagogues provided for the religious needs of the Jewish community. As shules grew and congregants moved further out of the central city, new and larger synagogues were built to meet the ever expanding needs of the community.

In the 1940's, despite being in their \$1M Cleveland Jewish Center on East 105th Street for only 20 years, Park Synagogue felt pressure to follow its members further east to Cleveland Heights. While the church had conducted a mini-competition for the new facility among Cleveland architects, prior to a formal selection being made, Rabbi Armond Cohen, who had come to Park in 1934 at the age of only 25, happened upon an exhibition of Mendelsohn's work at the Museum of Modern Art while in New York.

Cohen returned to his building committee and encouraged them to consider Mendelsohn who had immigrated to the US in 1941 but did not practice until after WWII when he began working in New York and San Francisco.

Mendelsohn and his family had escaped Nazi Germany, moving to England and Palestine, where he had an illustrious career. His most admired creations were the De La Warr Pavilion

Below:  
Top: De La Warr Pavilion; Behxill, England; Eric Mendelsohn; 1935  
Bottom: Chaim-Weitzman House; Palestine; Eric Mendelsohn; 1936



in Bexhill, England, the Chaim-Weitzman House in Palestine, Expressionist-style department stores in several German cities and the Einstein Tower in Potsdam, Germany.

The skeptical Park building committee required Mendelsohn to pay his own way to the interview, where Mendelsohn sketched his ideas on a blackboard and with his passionate narrative about creating a new modern Jewish architecture for America immediately won the synagogue building committee's approval to move ahead. Of the four Mendelsohn synagogues constructed in the US, Park is acknowledged as the most bold and clear worship/ community center and is regarded as a major work of 20th-century architecture. Park's design contributed to the emergence of a distinct style of synagogue architecture in the 1950's, which departed from the traditional Near Eastern eclecticism.

The spiritual intent of Mendelsohn's plan is clearly explained in his published statements

Below:  
Einstein Tower; Potsdam, Germany; Eric Mendelsohn, 1921-1925  
Schocken Department Store; Stuttgart, Germany; Eric Mendelsohn; 1928



as he worked closely with Rabbi Cohen in its development. The main architectural form of the temple is a vast hemispheric dome symbolizing the unity of the heavens and the earth.

At 100' in diameter, it was the third-largest in the U.S. in 1950. It is constructed of reinforced concrete sprayed in place over wooden forms. The roof is clad in copper. The clear glass drum of the dome is elevated to provide views of nature to bring the congregation closer to the spirit of God. The main sanctuary is connected to a fan-shaped assembly hall with folding doors, so that the size can be almost doubled for attendance on High Holy Days.

In 2007, Park Synagogue retained Centerbrook Architects and Planners from Centerbrook, CT and completed construction of a new facility in Pepper Pike, OH which it identifies as Park East Synagogue. The original Mendelsohn building in Cleveland Heights has since been referred to as Park Main.

Mendelsohn's B'nai Amoona Synagogue in St. Louis is now a center of contemporary art. CAF hopes that the next owner of Park will be motivated to respect and maintain the architectural integrity of Mendelsohn's synagogue and safeguard the liturgical assets, all custom-fabricated to Mendelsohn's designs.



Above & Below: Park Synagogue Main; Eric Mendelsohn; 1950  
Left: Eric Mendelsohn Right: Rabbi Armond Cohen



## PROJECTS:

### CWRU Encyclopedia of Cleveland History Update:

CAF has been invited to work with Case Western Reserve University to update the Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, which was posted 25 years ago. Many new projects have been added to the landscape during that time, and significant other works merit inclusion.



Above: Tower East; Walter Gropius; 1968  
Middle: Jednota Hall, First Catholic Slovak Credit Union; Warner Katonka & Miller; 1932  
Bottom: Immaculate Conception Church; William P. Ginter; 1878



CAF has photographed approximately 800 buildings in greater Cleveland in color to place into the Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, including structures already present in the ECH in black and white, newer facilities completed after 1998 and older facilities not included in the ECH.

Volunteers for the editing of existing and the development of new narratives are beginning those tasks. Our narrative volunteers include Tom Matowitz of Freshwater Cleveland, Laura DeMarco, author of *Cleveland Then and Now* and *Lost Cleveland*, and Jeannine deNobel Love, independent art historian and author of *Cleveland Architecture 1890-1930: Building the City Beautiful*. With over 800 narratives to edit and/or create, additional volunteers with writing skills are needed.

## ARCHITECTURE SPOTLIGHT

### University Center 1974-2008 Cleveland State University Cleveland, OH

Don Hisaka FAIA designed CSU's original student center which opened in 1974. Hisaka was asked to create a student center with a grand living room for the whole campus. The poured concrete L-shaped mass located a central plaza for students as an enclosed place away from the noise of Euclid Avenue. The plaza atrium, a tall room glazed on its east and north sides, was a place to see and be seen in addition to functioning as a place for repose and events.

The project was published in *Architectural Record* in the August 1975 issue, and was credited as giving "students a bright and cheerful, year 'round, meeting-eating-relaxing place by day or evening. Student organizations set up tables here. Exhibits flourish. Community groups hold dinners, parties, dances."

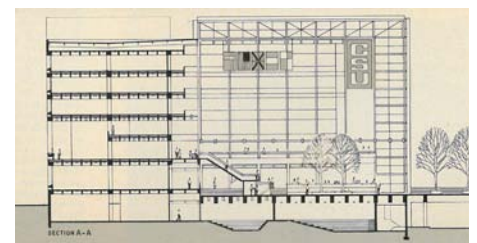
With lecture rooms and public functions on the lower three floors and offices on the upper three floors, connected enclosed bridges linked the center and its 100' high atrium to the library and classroom buildings, creating an all-weather campus. Hisaka's project cost \$9.1 million, 9% less than the \$10 million budget.

Thirty-six years later, wanting to turn a more welcoming and transparent face to the dowdly

travelled Euclid Ave., CSU demolished Hisaka's building and retained Charles Gwathmey, who delivered a pastiche of his typical forms in 2010. In an effort to justify demolishing Hisaka's gem, CSU's head of facilities told the 2006 Leadership Cleveland class that CSU felt obligated to remove the building because it was the most expensive to heat and cool of all the campus buildings. Insulated glass on the atrium would have solved that.

Hisaka came to Cleveland in 1959 to be design director at Dalton-Dalton, the city's largest architectural firm. He left after one year to start his own firm. Disappointed in the traditional design culture of Cleveland and feeling his opportunities here were limited, Hisaka left NEOH in 1978 to teach at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He later moved to Berkeley, CA and completed projects throughout the US, Japan and the UK. Don passed away in 2013. Of his many design awards, he may be best remembered for the *Progressive Architecture* National Citation Award in 1971 for his Mansfield Arts Center.

Hisaka is the only Ohio architect to be honored to design an important project in Columbus, IN, the architectural mecca of the US that features distinguished buildings by Eero Saarinen, I. M. Pei, Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer, Richard Meier, Kevin Roche/ John Dinkeloo, Robert Stern, Robert Venturi, Eliel Saarinen and many other prominent architects.



## COMMUNITY CONCERN:

# Cleveland is Playing Dirty with Our Zoning!

When the city of Cleveland promised citizens that they would be involved and have input into the city's attempt to impose a new form-based zoning code on us, they lied. It should be noted that the only appropriate motivation to develop and apply a form-based code (FBC) is the need to strengthen development guidelines and requirements to assure the compatibility of new development in existing neighborhoods.

Instead, pushed by developers who seek maximum profit and speedy approvals with no resistance to violations of any appropriate standards, the city has admitted that it's motivation for a FBC is to streamline the approval process for developers and themselves and eliminate the need for any community or municipal committee/ commission involvement in development.

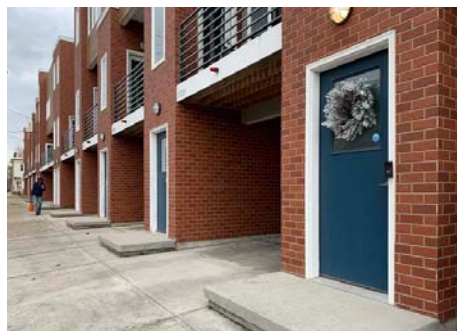
Cleveland hired the same consultant for its FBC that, according to Cincinnati's Assistant Director of City Planning, messed up the Queen City's new FBC. The consultant's contract stipulates that a Citizen Advisory Committee would be established to work with the city and the consultant. It wasn't.

The local chapter of the American Institute of Architects formed a Zoning Task Force to identify issues and work alongside the city, consultant and advisory committee. The FBC process has stumbled along in relative secrecy without any Citizen Advisory Committee and no contact with the AIA Zoning Task Force. And despite the requirements for posting notification and agendas for the boards and commission of the Planning Department, the Planning Department is run largely in secret.

In addition, the city imposed a new Townhouse Ordinance – Sect. 337.031 – which, in the words of Carol Browngardt, “is poorly written and allows for subjective judgments, arbitrary interpretation and capricious decision making by individuals without any input from Boards, Commissions or the public. There is an absence (of) measurable requirements such as minimum lot sizes, FAR standards and measurable examples of what is meant by compatibility.”

In a letter to councilmen Blaine Griffin (Ward 6) and Kevin Kelly (Ward 13), Browngardt observed, “Section 337.031 needs to be repealed or significantly amended. I believe replacement is the better option.”

Browngardt is a resident of Little Italy, a former Highland Heights city council person and is a member of the Citywide Citizens Group that opposes the existing ordinance; “Jeff Speck, author of *Walkable Cities*, believes that the daily decisions of city officials are the decisions that have a negative impact on city dwellers.



Top: West 58th St. Townhouse Development  
Second: Ohio City Right-Angle Townhouse Development  
Above: W. 58th & Bridge Development's Autocourt  
Below: W. 47th St. Development Elevation Proposal reflecting scale incompatibility  
Bottom: “Missing Middle Housing” Illustration



Well written legislation can help alleviate the problem of poor decision making. I would also like to point out that surrounding property owners have rights equal to those of developers. Neighboring owners live daily with the results of development that is not well thought out and not compatible with existing and historic communities. Those same owners pay an economic price when abated taxes on new development cause an increase on their property taxes.”

In its short life, Sect. 337.031 has seen a number of terrible projects proposed and approved, many in historic neighborhoods that disregard the setbacks, orientation, massing, materiality and compatibility of their context.

In December 2020, the AIA CLE Zoning Task Force, chaired by CAF founder and Director David Ellison AIA, developed a Zoning Task Force Policy, calling for steps to clarify and simplify the design, permitting and approval process:

- Provide for RA-type zoning within existing 2F Two-family districts to ensure that neighbors and neighborhoods are involved in the process of changing zoning designations and protect the desirable characteristics of the city's neighborhoods by requiring architectural and spatial compatibility.
- Clarify the process by which an area's zoning may be changed to RA.
- Encourage projects that are architecturally and spatially compatible with the character of their neighborhoods where proposed.
- Establish objective criteria by which to judge whether the zoning designation and architectural design is appropriate – or not – for the specific project location.

The ZTF policy also called for changes to correct glaring deficiencies of 337.031:

- Avoid eliminating meaningful input from City Council, Planning Commission and residents, which has lead to inappropriately large or poorly designed proposals for development being introduced, reviewed and approved.
- Avoid causing the demolition of affordable or architecturally significant housing.
- Avoid inappropriately concentrating decision-making authority.

The ZTF summary of the problems with 337.031:

## COMMUNITY CONCERNS, continued:

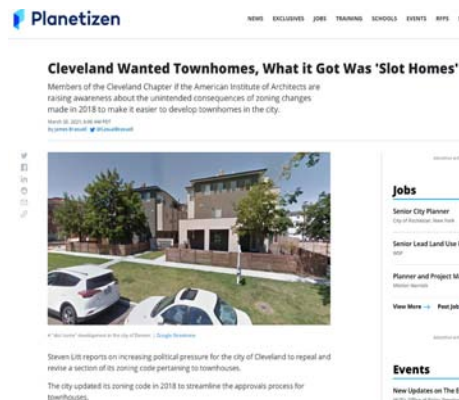
- Planning Director Freddy Collier is named as the sole arbiter of design review and the determination of compatibility. *Collier is not a design professional. Prior to working for the city, he was a branch manager for Fifth Third Bank. He has a BA in Urban Studies from CSU and he received his mail-order MPA from the University of Phoenix.*
- The Planning Commission can spot-zone properties without any notice to nearby neighbors and without action by city council. *Sidebar: Spot zoning is illegal in most communities in the US.*
- The Planning Commission is empowered to change zoning designations without city council action or approval.
- The ordinance permits and prescribes inappropriate development:
  - No minimum lot size is required per unit.
  - No minimum unit size is required.
  - Setbacks for RA-3 are far too small.
  - Setbacks do not recognize and are not sensitive to existing conditions.
- The process for design review is inadequate for landmark district protection and for effective neighborhood involvement.
- The Design Review process allows subjective and arbitrary determinations by Planning Director, City Planning Commission, landmarks Commission and the Board of Zoning appeals.
- The Design requirements incorporated in charts are too specific, too restrictive and have the potential to produce absurd results.
- The Ordinance permits sideways and backward-facing townhouse units ("Interior Frontages") which do not fit the vernacular of Cleveland.
- The Ordinance includes design requirements which are inappropriate in a zoning code and instead belong in design guidelines.
- The Charts present misleading and unrealistic illustrations of what is allowed or required.
- The Ordinance eliminated altogether minimum private and common area open space required per each unit.

The ZTF Objectives involve a replacement Ordinance that:

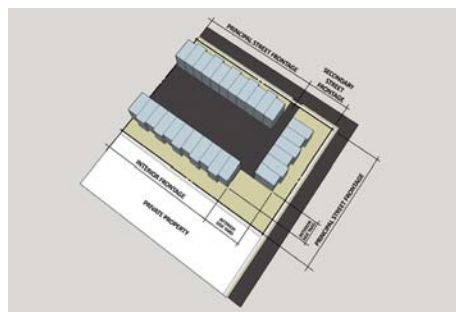
- Provides that the authority to make zoning changes remains with City Council based on recommendations by the City Planning Commission.
- Defines and enables appropriate

development.

- Limits the number of units per square foot of lot area.
- Requires minimum-sized units. The previous code min. was 950 sf; a small mobile home is 500 sf.
- Requires adequate and context-sensitive setbacks and yard requirements.
- Requires entry doors to face the street or side street or an internal autocourt, eliminating backwards or sideways interior frontages.
- Provides for effective design review by qualified professionals and for meaningful public involvement.
- Requires Home Owner Associations to be formed in developments with contiguous units.
- Provides for minimum common and private open spaces per unit.
- Provides for adequate landscaping and adequate pedestrian space and that adequate sideyard and sidewalk areas must be provided if a development faces an alley.
- Charts must portray realistic scenarios.
- If permitted, autocourts must have adequate landscaping and pedestrian accommodations.



Above: Planetizen Article  
Below: CLE Zoning Setback Isometric



Ward 3 Councilman Kerry McCormack supports Ellison's proposal, which he forwarded to council's legal staff to turn it into legislation so council could begin debating it.

*Plain Dealer* architecture critic Steven Litt has written two sharply critical articles in 2021. In his first, he stated that the city wants to change the zoning code to allow "controversial, oversized townhouses, 'slot homes.'" Litt quoted AIA CLE President David Craun who stated that the city's effort to provide flexibility for developers was "being abused," particularly on the West Side, which is why Craun noted that the Ordinance's problems are so severe that "repeal and replace" is necessary.

Litt noted that the "new zoning has made it easier for developers to cram rows of boxy, three- and four-story townhouses onto vacant "infill" lots in neighborhoods filled with traditional wood-frame houses." Drive down Franklin Blvd. in Ohio City to observe the damage to the architectural integrity of the neighborhood.

Litt characterizes parallel rows of townhouse set at right angles to street with a central driveway lined with garage doors running down the middle as "even worse." Litt notes that such projects were outlawed in Denver in 2018 because such projects dramatically changed the appearance and density in historic neighborhoods. Litt quoted Denver architect Christine Franck who coined the term "Slot House:" "In the future, these are going to be slums. Nobody's going to want to live in them because they're so poorly designed." Frank Jackson and Freddy Collier don't care. They want the density and the money.

In attempts to justify their 2018 Ordinance, city officials refer to an illustration in San Francisco architect Daniel Parolek's book "Missing Middle Housing." But as Litt noted, Parolek is opposed to the kind of townhouses the Cleveland 337.031 Ordinance which allow garages on the ground floor on scattered infill sites throughout established neighborhoods; "It's a very car-driven housing type. It belongs in the suburbs. It's compromising walkable urban neighborhoods across the country. Cities really need to be aware."

City Planner Kyle Reisz admits that 25 townhouse projects have been approved under the new Ordinance. He has admitted that some of the language is "fuzzy" and has led to confusion. But in May, Reisz and Freddy Collier met privately with Ellison, AIA CLE President Craun and others and was uncooperative.

Litt followed up his original article, noting that AIA Cleveland's Board endorsed Ellison's 44-page document outlining how to Repeal and Replace the Ordinance. A Citywide Citizens Group is now in direct communication with Councilmen McCormack and Brancatelli regarding the legislative process and the political liability of imposing the currently permitted townhouse developments in the city's one- and two-bedroom

## ZONING, cont'd:

districts and designated historic neighborhoods that Jackson and Collier have abused.

Planning staff has downplayed the fundamental flaws with the new ordinance, but have acknowledged that the Landmarks Commission's authority extends to new Townhouse projects planned within historic districts. City Planners have also admitted that the new requirements are geared specifically toward facilitating the approval of speculative infill projects in historic neighborhoods but apply uniformly to all of Cleveland's one- and two-family districts where their implementation will likely result in even more dramatic political opposition and resident outrage.

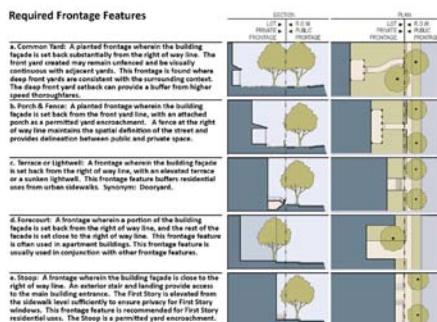
Director Collier and his staff have braced themselves for possible replacement by a new administration and are resisting any substantive changes to the density allowed or approval process prescribed by the 2018 ordinance. In a cynical and undemocratic move, City Council and the Mayor have extended emergency provisions created by the pandemic. City of Cleveland Emergency Ordinance No. 482-2021 of June 7, 2021 amending public notice requirements to a mere 12 hours!

In the past, BZA would announce their agendas and send notices to neighbors two weeks in advance. The Landmarks Commission would typically announce their agendas at least a week in advance, but the City Planning Commission rarely announced their agendas and when it did, it did so only as a convenience to the public rather than an element of a functional, democratically-organized governmental process.

Typically, the city has required public comments on issues to be submitted at least 24 hours in advance of a meeting or hearing. With its remote Web-ex meetings, the city has now required citizens to telephone or email a request to be granted access in advance of any meeting. With as few as 12-hour notice, meaningful public participation in Board of Zoning Appeals, City Planning Commission or Landmarks Commission hearings will become non-existent.

A city that mismanages its design and zoning affairs in such an idiosyncratic, covert and irresponsible manner can never achieve satisfactory results, let alone greatness.

Below: CLE Zoning Ordinance misleading Setback isometric



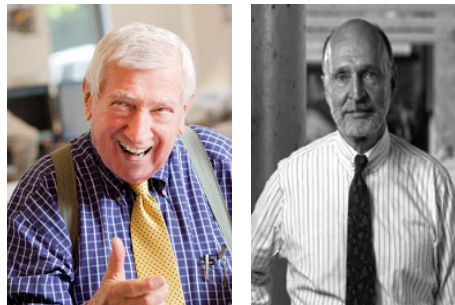
## CAF VIDEO UPDATE:

### CAF's Video Interview Initiative:

A key factor that motivated us to create CAF as a non-profit was the realization that we have been blessed with a number of accomplished senior architects who are advancing in age, and who have a remarkable wealth of experience and knowledge to share with us - if only we could provide a format for this transfer.

Currently, CAF's video interviews with noted Cleveland architects Richard Fleischman FAIA and Piet van Dijk FAIA can be accessed through the CAF web site as well as the oral history initiative of the Cleveland Public Library.

When the pandemic hit, we had begun working with our partner the Cleveland Public Library on editing over five hours of video taken in three sittings with noted Cleveland architect Norman Pertulla FAIA. Sadly, Norman passed away on December 27, 2020. We are again at work on editing the Pertulla interview, which we hope to release in the Fall of 2021. We are also in preparation for an interview with William Blunden FAIA, which is planned for this fall.



Above Left: Richard Fleischman, FAIA, 1929-2020  
 Above Right: Piet van Dijk, FAIA, 1929 - 2019  
 Below Left: Normal Pertulla, FAIA, 1927 - 2020  
 Below Right: William Blunden, FAIA



Our initial interviewees are all recipients of the Cleveland Arts Prize and have been honored with scores of design awards for their exemplary work. We are pleased to have been able to interview Piet van Dijk just weeks before he passed away. The edited interviews are over one hour in length and are informative and entertaining. We have a list of candidates for additional interviews and hope to add approximately four each year to the resources vault. The interviews can be found at:

Fleischman: <https://youtu.be/QlaQLBWOLro>  
 van Dijk: <https://youtu.be/GnHNOsUfj8>

## POSITION OPEN:

### Director of Development:

Our original Chairperson of our Fundraising Initiative has moved to Texas with her family. CAF is in need of a mature individual with the ability to donate 4-8 hours per week on CAF's development and fundraising tasks. If you are interested, please contact us for a copy of the position description which we will gladly email to you.

Info@ClevelandArchitectureFoundation.



Above: May Co.; Daniel Burnham; 1915  
 Below: Saints Cyril & Methodius R.C.C.; George Streeton; 1903



## WHO WE ARE:

### CAF Board:

William Eberhard AIA, IIDA; President  
 David Ellison AIA; Treasurer & Secretary  
 John Roush AIA; Chairman, CAF Archives Initiative  
 Position Open; Director of Development

### Advisors:

- Dennis Dooley; Author, Senior Consultant, Kirste Carlson Group, Inc.
- Mark Mathias; Vice President, S. E. Blueprint Co.
- Chatham Ewing, Digital Library Strategist, Cleveland Public Library
- William Barrow, Head of Special Collections, Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University, Retired

Contact: Info@ClevelandArchitectureFoundation.org