CWRU

Neighborhood Advisory Council



2025 - 2026 REPORT



https://case.edu/gcr/NAC

A Summary of NAC Activity

December 2025 through November 2026

- Overview
- Accomplishments
- Collaborations
- Work in Progress
- Future Plans

Letter from the Co-Chairs



Ainsley Buckner

Makerspace Director, Sears think[box], CWRU



Dr. Vincent Holland

Glenville Resident, Retired Counselor, Educator, and CWRU Alum

Over the past year, the Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) has further strengthened relationships between Case Western Reserve University and its surrounding communities.

Building on previous efforts, the NAC has prioritized meaningful engagement, collaboration, and community-driven action.

This year featured several key milestones. Our annual NAC retreat provided an opportunity to reflect on progress, strengthen member connections, and set future priorities.

We also launched the inaugural OneCWRU Community and Campus Day, which united the university and neighboring communities and celebrated the people, organizations, and relationships that define our community.

Finally, we are pleased to announce the launch of the NAC Neighborhood Ideas in Action Grant this November. This initiative will help turn ideas into projects that address community interests and priorities. It reflects our belief that strong partnerships require both collaboration and action.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to fostering trust, strengthening relationships, and ensuring community voices guide the NAC's work. We appreciate the dedication of our council members, community partners, university collaborators, the Community Innovation Network, and the ongoing support from the Office of Local Government and Community Relations and President Eric W. Kaler.

We look forward to building on this past year's momentum and continuing to create a stronger, more connected community.

Ainsley Buckner

Vincent Holland, Ph.D.

Overview



The inaugural NAC group in 2021.

Mission

The CWRU Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) serves as the community representative to University Leadership and advises on relevant issues, programs and projects that significantly impact people in East Cleveland and campus-adjacent Cleveland neighborhoods.

Member Objectives & Responsibilities

- Attend monthly meetings during the academic year and special meetings/events in the summer.
- Foster a sense of welcoming on campus to engage neighbors in university activities.
- Build trust and respect between neighborhood residents and CWRU through relationship building, programming, dialogue, and transparency.
- Identify community needs and collaborate to develop solutions that benefit the common good.
- Assist in sharing events and opportunities available at the university and conversely promote neighborhood resources across campus.
- Support the work of CWRU organizations that are committed to community engagement.







Accomplishments

The Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) welcomed six new members in 2026, and continues its mission of building a welcoming campus while also creating initiatives that strengthen ties between CWRU and adjacent communities.



Meetings

Starting with the 2026 cohort, the NAC opted to modify the monthly meeting schedule to allow for more opportunities for relationship-building within the council. The schedule now includes bi-monthly "regular" meetings that alternate with team-building workshops. Meeting topics have included Reverse Ride-Alongs with Lt. Zevnik and other members of the Community Engagement Unit in Public Safety, learning about and discussing the CWRU Master Plan with campus architect Michael Bruder, and creating the framework for the Neighborhood Ideas In Action Grant. Team-building involved the annual retreat at CWRU Farm, activities at the think[box] and a trip to Café Indigo.



NAC Campus & Community Engagement

- Spreading the word about the Wade Park Community Engagement Center has increased programming there
- Sharing information about resources and benefits at CWRU such as the CWRU Community Card, Pre-Collegiate programs, and open events
- Collaborating with other CWRU and neighborhood partners on large events and activities such as Parade the Circle, Heritage Fest, Hessler Street Fair, Learning Circles, and piloting the first OneCWRU Campus Community Day
- Responding to shared local concerns





NAC in Action

Membership

The Membership Action Committee was created in response to a desire by the NAC to broaden community representation and build relationships within the NAC. On May 14, 2026, the committee planned the second annual retreat at the CWRU Farm which included a “concentric circles” activity led by Mark Chupp of the Community Innovation Network, and “choose your own adventure” opportunities to create community art, learn about bluebirds, play games, and enjoy time together in fun and fellowship.





Learning Circles

The Learning Circles Action Committee was established to bring those affiliated with CWRU and nearby neighbors to address concerns or ideas on a variety of subjects. These conversations have continued through events like OneCWRU Day and will take place in locations throughout campus-adjacent areas. The format of this type of discussion lends itself to openness, trust, and mutually beneficial outcomes to create sustainable trust.

Neighborhood Ambassadors

The Neighborhood Ambassadors Group sponsors tours of Cleveland's historic communities to highlight how campus and community gifts work together to serve all. The first tour took place as part of the OneCWRU pilot, and focused on the Greater Buckeye neighborhoods of Larchmere, Woodhill, and Buckeye. Upcoming tours planned for this academic year will include other nearby neighborhoods such as Fairfax, Collinwood, Hough, Cedar-Central, and Glenville.



Neighborhood Ideas in Action Grants



Building on Momentum: Funding Community Initiatives

The NAC is grateful to have received a generous budget to fund projects that support the interests and concerns of campus-adjacent neighbors and especially projects that build connections between the two. The grants will be made available to individuals or small groups committed to building community and positive change.

Each project will be supported by a CWRU “ally.” The ally is a CWRU faculty member, staff member, or group who will be available to assist the grant recipient throughout the project. Applications will be awarded in late January, 2027 and presented that fall.

Criteria

The council worked intentionally over the period of several months to ensure that the funding initiative would fill a funding gap in the nearby community while also providing a novel method of campus and community collaboration to adress neighborhood concerns.

Three major themes grew out of the initial brainstorming process: Reciprocity, Representation, and Access. A list of six additional considerations was then added to ensure that applicants are highly knowledgeable of their subject, and their projects are collaborative, impactful, sustainable, responsible, and local.



Work in Progress

OneCWRU

This past April, the NAC partnered with the Staff Advisory Council (SAC) and student group Know Your Neighbors (KYN) to pilot OneCWRU: One Campus/One Community Day as a way to develop co-created activities that grow beyond one day.



Community-Led Workshops

The NAC will continue developing models for community-taught & collaborative workshops and experiences on a variety of topics of high interest.

NAC Community Dinner

The next Community Dinner will take place on Friday, December 11, 2027 from 6 - 8:30 p.m. at Thwing Center in the Excelsior Ballroom.



Learning and Living Together While Building Trust



The NAC will continue to explore issues around power, place, ownership, healing, and what it means to be in community. This focus will continue to drive the purpose of our efforts, and guide ongoing discussions around how sustainable relationships are achieved and maintained.

The 2026 NAC Members



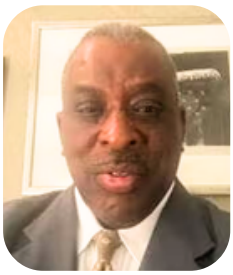
John Anoliefo
Glenville



Sandra Brinson
Glenville



André Dailey
Collinwood



Darrell Fields
East Cleveland



Gwen Graffenreed
Greater Buckeye



Gwen Garth
Central/Hough



Kevinee Gilmore
St Clair-Superior



Vincent Holland
Glenville



Diane Pride Mays
Greater Buckeye



Leon Stevenson
Glenville



Stephanie Walls
East Cleveland



Regennia Williams
Greater Buckeye



Laura Cyrocki
Hessler Assn.



Sheffia Randall-Nickerson, UCA



Jim Bindas
CWRU Staff



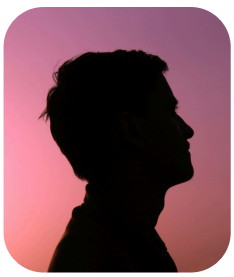
Ainsley Buckner
CWRU Staff



Erin Corwin
CWRU Staff



Francisca García-Cobián Richter
CWRU Faculty



Zareh Dechkounian
CWRU Student



Ashia Omair
CWRU Student

Non-Voting Participants

"Know Your Neighbors" student representatives; Myra Golden, Janice Eatman Williams; Carlos Lewis-Miller; Mark Chupp, Director, Community Innovation Network (CIN)

NAC Administrative Team (with Co-Chairs*)

Kate Klonowski, Director, Strategic Collaborations
Julian Rogers, Associate Vice President, Local Government & Community Relations