

## Tri-County Business Journal December 2010

### Focus: Eastern Cuyahoga South Euclid ponders keys to future success

By Maria Shine Stewart

"A college town for all ages" is the bold vision of city leaders, college officials and business owners embracing a revitalized downtown South Euclid.

"Berea did a transformation of its downtown," says city development assistant Michael Love, a graduate of Baldwin-Wallace College, itself a focal point in Berea.

Love sees a similar opportunity in South Euclid of showcasing a local college. "Notre Dame College is one of the fastest growing colleges in America," he says.

With 2,119 full-time and part-time students, up from 1,872 last fall, and hiring growth as well, the NDC campus presence less than a mile from downtown is palpable.

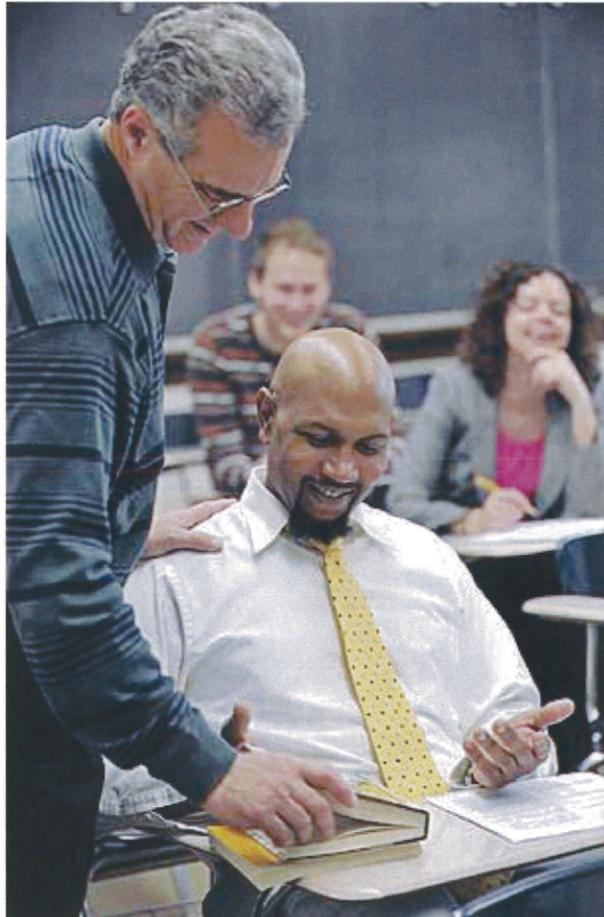
Last fall, the city approached an NDC marketing class for input on what the city might do to appeal to a student demographic. A study, conducted from September to November 2009, explored the question. Then students met with city officials around Thanksgiving and with the city's business advisory board of civic and business leaders in February.

#### **Bold vision**

The result is interest in what could become a "Falcon Corner" or "Falcon Square" motif downtown. The falcon is the NDC mascot.

A store offering supplies, texts and apparel might be a draw. Other student ideas included a sports bar or more of an "eatery," as Love puts it. An art gallery to showcase the college and Brush High School students' work is another possibility.

A sample of Brush students' creativity is a mural in soothing tones of blue and green on a downtown building adjacent to Phoenix Coffee House, a popular gathering place. Motorists and pedestrians can't miss it.



Dr. John Galovic, chair of the Education Department at Notre Dame College, works with student Apache Williams. Small classes and personal attention are hallmarks of a Notre Dame education.

As well as putting college officials and business owners' heads together at future meetings, Love wants to see citizens voice their opinions. Community meetings were held in each of the city's wards, with the option of signing up for citizens' advisory committees. Early in 2011, the process of citizen engagement will continue.

"South Euclid 2020 plan is our master plan update," Love says. "It is a citizen-driven process," unlike some cities that might begin with a consultant's input. Citizen groups will address topics such as finance/budget, police, service, fire, economic development and building/housing. A consultant may be brought in later after data and ideas are gathered.

"We like to be the first in things, the innovators," Love says.

### **Several hubs**

Although revitalization of the downtown area around the Mayfield-Green intersection tops the to-do list, South Euclid spans several hubs, including the busy intersections of Cedar and Green roads (with the south side belonging to University Heights and the north side to South Euclid) and a bustling Cedar and Warrensville intersection.

North Cedar Center, near the latter intersection, was razed in early 2009. Future tenants may include Mexican and Chinese restaurant venues, Love says. GFS Marketplace will begin construction soon and scheduled to open in fall 2011. Eventually, housing may be developed on the site, including some for residents over age 55 and for college students (juniors, seniors and graduate students).

### **Business retention**

"We obviously don't want to lose current businesses," Love says. Even if talk of regionalization is much in the news, "we have to ultimately do what's best for South Euclid."

To promote local businesses, the city is considering an online business directory, a paper directory, a collaborative venture with the Heights-Hillcrest Chamber of Commerce (including all member cities) and working with the South Euclid-Lyndhurst schools on a mutual project, all within the next six to seven months, Love predicts.

Attracting grant support is another activity bearing fruit. To the northwest in South Euclid, an area that stretches to the Cleveland border, the streetscape around Monticello Boulevard and South Green Road has been targeted for beautification with funds from the state and Cuyahoga County.

Nearby employers include AeroControlex on Monticello, which creates pumps, valves and mechanical controls for aircraft, the military and other applications. On Glenridge Road, Roechling Glastic Composites has developed stock products, sheets, shapes, materials and custom pultrusion capabilities for half a century. Gent Machine, on South Green north of Monticello, produces screw machine parts.

### **Healthy business**

Another South Euclid first – although it is nearly 40 years old now – was the concept that spawned University Suburban Health Center (USHC) at 1611 S. Green Road in the early 1970s.

This consolidation of medical and support services affiliated with University Hospitals in a suburban location was ahead of its time. Its model of community-based, comprehensive health care is so prevalent now that many don't know that the concept broke new ground on the land of what once was Rainbow Hospital.

With between 350,000 and 400,000 patient visits a year, USHC remains vibrant, even as other community health centers have been built. It is a short walk from downtown South Euclid.

From the Atrium Café on the first floor, USHC assistant executive director Gregory McCarthy and executive director Charles Abbey reflect on the history of health care and what may lie ahead for their building and the healing professions. New community and business collaborations may be one key to staying healthy. Programs like the Lyndhurst YMCA's "Silver Sneakers" program may be making use of a community room at USHC. These are senior citizen walkers committed to wellness and exercise, McCarthy says.

Like every business, USHC aims to keep its financial picture sound. "We are trying to keep the ship financially stable," Abbey says. As some physicians leave or relocate, "we have a keen interest in replacing those people."

With 26 years on site, Abbey recalls visitors from even Johns Hopkins interested in the building's concept in the early days. "This model was studied," he says. "You can put the bricks and mortar together," but the goal of USHC "was never just a medical building."

Doctors have a say in policies. When a major decision is to be made — on parking, for example — doctors are folded in. Although many specialists are in the building, internal medicine is not slighted. "We believe in the core business of ambulatory care," Abbey says.

"Full-service community health care," as McCarthy put it, does not stop at disease treatment. "We're civic-minded."

One sign of this is a mailing planned within a seven- to 10-mile radius offering executive and/or employee annual physicals, pre-employment physicals and other services. "We are going to be reaching out [to the business community] in the next month or two," McCarthy says. "We're very excited about the possibilities."

The physicians who started USHC were ahead of the curve, Abbey says. Today, it's still important that in-house ancillary services, such as lab, x-ray and MRI, run smoothly and reduce patient stress, while giving doctors timely, accurate answers to diagnostic questions.

McCarthy and Abbey acknowledge the possibility of collaboration with Notre Dame College. "There are some synergies between the two organizations," McCarthy says. "We have a relationship with John Carroll that we established years ago."

### **Moving forward**

A long-time business near downtown South Euclid that has taken advantage of the Cuyahoga County Storefront Renovation Program is Maher-Melbourne Funeral Home on Mayfield Road near South Belvoir Boulevard.

New windows for the second story and a new driveway apron help keep the building, which dates to 1880, in top shape. By making improvements, the business was eligible for a 30 percent refund from the county, president and owner Kevin Maher says.

A member of the city's business advisory board, Maher believes that meetings among business owners and the city allow for shared ideas and getting to know people. He believes South Euclid is facing a transitional time that is full of opportunity.

Maher continues a legacy begun by his grandfather, Harry T. Maher, who got his start driving a horse-drawn hearse in 1908 and subsequently owned one of the first motor-driven hearses in Ohio. His grandfather provided funeral services in homes, when that was the custom, and created one of Ohio's first funeral homes.

"He set the pace," Maher reflects of his grandfather's adaptability to change.

When his grandfather died, Maher's grandmother, Lucy, became one of the first licensed female funeral directors in the state. The business transferred to Maher's father and uncle and then to him.

The current location has been in the family since 1954. "My dad and uncle made the choice to move the business to South Euclid when this area was in a growth spurt," he says. "Families were moving in. (They were) following a demographic."

All businesses change, and Maher states that, in the past, more funerals were "carbon copy." The trend now is personalization — for example, a special flower or a memorial video. In one case, two horses stood at attention to help honor a fallen member of the Cleveland Mounted Police.

Maher looks forward to future developments in downtown South Euclid.

"To me, that's the center of town," he says. "For city leaders, it's going to take continued creativity and courage."

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