



## Office of the Mayor

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Annette M. Blackwell, Mayor

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

November 25, 2020

### **New Housing Lays Foundation for Racial Justice**

**Maple Heights, Ohio** - In partnership with the Cuyahoga Land Bank, the City of Maple Heights is seeing the first new homes constructed in the City in 10 years on Jefferson Avenue in the Presidents Row neighborhood.

The 2 new homes are set on approximately 0.2 acre lots on the south side of Jefferson Avenue adjacent to Broadway Avenue in the Presidents Row neighborhood. The homes are modular construction, built by Unibilt of Vandalia, Ohio. Each home, which is delivered approximately 85% complete, is made up of 2 sections that are trucked in from Unibilt's facility to Maple Heights, lifted by crane, and set on their foundations. The sections were set on their foundations on November 19<sup>th</sup> and November 20<sup>th</sup>. The finishing touches, including constructing the interior finishes, attached garage, and driveway, will be completed in the next several weeks. The homes will feature 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms in 1,200 square feet with an attached garage. The homes are expected to hit the market shortly.

Choosing to construct the homes in Presidents Row was intentional. Given its history of redlining and disinvestment, building new homes in Presidents Row is designed to establish comps and encourage private investment in the local housing stock and to underscore the City's commitment to addressing systemic racism.

As a section of the first home was lifted into place, Mayor Annette M. Blackwell said, "This feels good. This work is dedicated to righting a wrong and investing in an area that has not seen significant outside investment in a really long time. For decades Black families were told they could only live in Maple Heights if they lived in Presidents Row."

Reflecting on the City Council's resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis passed October 21, 2020, Economic Development Director Patrick Grogan-Myers said, "The City is demonstrating that acknowledging racial inequalities and systemic racism is not enough. The work to address systemic racism comes from the human, financial, and physical investment in people, businesses, and areas that have been impacted by systemic racism."

#### **Background on Presidents Row**

First settled around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Presidents Row was a flat, wooded, 54-acre area west of Broadway Avenue and east of the Pennsylvania Railroad rail tracks. As the area was developed and streets platted, the streets were named after U.S. Presidents (Washington Avenue, Jefferson Avenue, Adams Avenue); over time, the area became known as "Presidents Row." Seeking to boost homeownership and with the backing of the federal government, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) broke the City of Maple Heights into sections in 1940, rating each by the relative security of an investment in real estate. HOLC redlined Presidents Row, restricting Black families' access to capital and the opportunity to purchase

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homes elsewhere in Maple Heights. HOLC records indicate that during the 1930s there was a system in place to change the racial makeup of the neighborhood resulting in 23 of the 73 Black families Presidents Row moving out of the neighborhood.<sup>1</sup> Some of these families were moved using city funds.

Since the 1930s and 1940s, significant disinvestment in homes in Presidents Row has led to several homes being demolished and numerous homes left vacant and in disrepair. Today, residents of Presidents Row tirelessly work to see this historic area of Maple Heights is improved and maintained for the next generation.

For questions or more information on the Jefferson Avenue project, contact the City's Economic Development Director, Patrick Grogan-Myers, at (216) 587-9031 or [pgrogan@mapleheightsohio.com](mailto:pgrogan@mapleheightsohio.com), or Andrea Bruno, Cuyahoga Land Bank Real Estate Officer, at (216) 698-2311 or [abruno@cuyahogalandbank.org](mailto:abruno@cuyahogalandbank.org).

### **About the City of Maple Heights**

For more information on the City of Maple Heights, visit the City's website, [www.citymapleheights.com](http://www.citymapleheights.com), Twitter at [@citymapleheight](https://twitter.com/citymapleheight), or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/maplehtsohio/>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Ohio State University Libraries, 2013. Federal HOLC "Redlining" Maps for Ohio Cities.