

35 Blue Birds featured in Edgewater Hill Block Club's public art exhibit

by Chuck Hoven

(Plain Press, October 2009) On Saturday, September 19th, the Edgewater Hill Block Club unveiled a permanent public art exhibit of 35 blue birds nestled on perches on trees, buildings and telephone poles in their area from W. 76th to W. 73rd, north of Lake and Detroit Avenues. Artist Mark Reigelman and Cleveland Public Art worked closely with the residents of the neighborhood to come up with the design.

Reigelman, a Greater Cleveland native and a Cleveland Institute of Art graduate, said it took from 24 to 48 hours to cast each of the blue birds using translucent resin to which he added blue and green dye to obtain the rich blue color. He then sanded each blue bird for about eight hours to achieve the final product.

About forty people gathered for the ceremony to celebrate this new neighborhood treasure. Children in attendance were given binoculars to help them spot the bluebirds. Erin Guido of Cleveland Public Art created a map of blue bird locations in the neighborhood. The map is available at www.clevelandpublicart.org under the heading Completed Projects.

Ward 17 Councilman Matt Zone said the public art exhibition was important to the neighborhood and fit well with the development goals set in the Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization's area, which were focusing on arts and culture and sustainability. Zone said the neighborhood was making a transition from the Rust Belt to becoming an Arts Belt. Zone praised Cleveland Public Art for their role in working with the community and the artist on this project.

Edgewater Hill Block Club Co-Leader Crystal Coakley said the neighborhood residents wanted to celebrate the neighborhood's connection to Lake Erie, noting the tunnel to Edgewater beach at the foot of W. 76th Street next to the new Battery Park development. She said the blue bird sculptures help to celebrate the annual arrival of migratory birds on the shores of Lake Erie.

The Edgewater Hill Block Club and Cleveland Public Art collaborated with the Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization, Ward 17 Councilman Matt Zone, and the City of Cleveland to bring this project to completion. The project was funded by grants from the Cleveland Foundation's Neighborhood Connections Program and Neighborhood Progress Inc.