


# the Westsider

PRESENTED BY THE  Westside Neighborhood Association  
westside.org

2024  
Vol. 1

# Welcome to the Westside!

## Hello Neighbor,

There's strength in numbers. And it shows. Since I've been on the Westside Neighborhood Association Board, I've learned a lot about the neighborhood and the Board. The best way to politely call it would be interesting.

Like a house doesn't make a home, houses don't make a neighborhood. It's the people that make a place homey. It's also the people that make up the WNA Board. However, most neighbors don't make the meetings, picnics, or other social get-togethers.

The people come to the board for problems and demand fixes. Which is fine, but often when asked for specific information things get muddled. When the Board asks for help, surprisingly the response many times has been "no". The demand for

changes remains. Since I've been president, there have been accusations of stuff that the Board has done that no one was aware of in the first place. There has been very vocal frustration about things not being done that the Board was also not made privy to. There's often reference made to how much good the Board used to do some 30 or 40 years ago.

The things that received the most commentary were a perceived uptick in crime, a Halloween incident, trees, and how to handle the Combined Sewer Overflow. The Board heard a lot more about the fate of trees than raw sewage going into the Grand River. Compared to the dismal number of people who attended the annual picnic. It hurt my heart. However, I applaud the members of the Board who have put a lot of effort into trying to keep the Board and what it does vibrant. It's a great group of people.

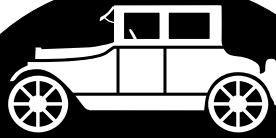
My final request as outgoing president of the Westside Neighborhood Association, please be a part of the process. There's a lot of good that could happen. There has been a suggestion to make significant changes to the WNA Board. If nothing else, you may want to know what's being discussed. Meetings are every 3rd Wednesday at Letts Community Center at 6:30 p.m. Unless it's not. Details are posted on our Facebook group and website.

I wish you more in 2024. Be well, neighbor.

~Melik







## WESTSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD

# ANNUAL MEETING JANUARY 25

It's time for the WNA Annual Meeting, an opportunity to bring together neighbors, elect Board members, and hear updates from around our community!

### Event Details

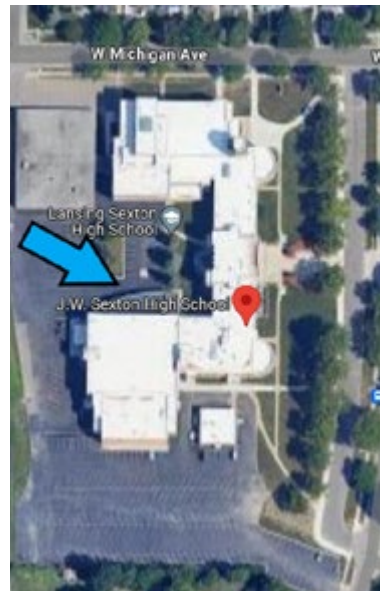
Thursday, Jan. 25 | 6-8 p.m.

**Location:** Sexton High School Cafeteria. The entrance is on the west side of the school building (see map), and we will have signs to help you find your way.

**Snow Plan:** If the Lansing School District has a snow day on Jan. 25, the event will be rescheduled for a later date.

The agenda and other meeting documents will be posted at [wnalansing.com/annual-meeting](http://wnalansing.com/annual-meeting) ahead of the meeting.

The WNA is committed to making the Annual Meeting accessible to all our neighbors. If you require an accommodation or service to fully participate, please contact [board@wnalansing.com](mailto:board@wnalansing.com).



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## 2024 WNA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Outgoing President: Melik Brown

Vice President: Mitzi Allen

Treasurer: Laura Hall

Secretary: Heath Lowry

Maya Lowry | Heidi Frei Clancy | Keshawn Mitchell-Roland | Rodney Singleton

# Get Involved!

There are many ways to contribute to your neighborhood through the Westside Neighborhood. Please see below and contact a board member at the WNA Annual Meeting or email [board@wnalansing.com](mailto:board@wnalansing.com) to get involved!

## **Serve as a WNA Board Member:**

Board members serve a two-year term and often are involved in one or more committee(s). Board meetings are typically held on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m.

## **Crime and Safety Committee:**

Chair: Mitzi Allen. Committee meetings are generally held on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m.

## **Communications:**

Sign up to write articles, design, or sell ads for the *Westsider Newsletter* and other efforts to help bring together neighbors and raise awareness about events and other activities in the Westside.

## **Fundraising:**

Volunteers are needed to develop ideas and lead fundraising efforts for the WNA. Funds would be used for neighborhood improvement projects, events, and other needs in the Westside.

## **Annual Picnic Planning:**

Help us plan a fun, family-friendly summer event to bring together neighbors at St. Joe's Park. We are interested in including a vendor fair to showcase Westside businesses. Volunteers are needed to organize the event and help us make it bigger and better than ever!

## **Grants/Neighborhood Improvement Projects:**

Interested in tackling a project in the neighborhood? Funding might be available! We will be submitting applications for grants from the city to fund neighborhood improvements. You can join us and lead a project you are passionate about or contribute to other projects.

To learn more, join us at the WNA Annual Meeting on January 25, or contact us at [board@wnalansing.com](mailto:board@wnalansing.com).

# In the Know: Lansing's Security Camera Registry

The Lansing Police Department values the members of the community and operates with a pronounced community-oriented policing philosophy. One of the most valuable resources for solving crimes and catching criminals is having video footage of the act.

Today, more and more citizens and businesses are installing private security cameras to help protect the inside and outside of their property. As a citizen or business owner, you may not be aware that your cameras may have unknowingly captured valuable footage that can help solve crimes.



This footage, if accessible to the police department, has the ability to keep our community safer. The Security Camera Registry and Mapping (SCRAM) creates a stronger community-police partnership by sharing additional resources that help solve crimes and apprehend criminals.

The goal of the camera registry program is to deter crime and promote public safety through collaboration between the Lansing Police Department and the community.

Accordingly, all camera registrants agree to the following terms and conditions:

- Any footage containing or related to criminal activity may be collected by the Lansing Police Department for use as evidence during any stage of a criminal proceeding.
- Relevant information is reserved for official use by the Lansing Police Department and will not be released to any member of the general public or media.
- If necessary, the Lansing Police Department will contact you directly, using the information provided on this form, to request the appropriate video surveillance footage.
- Under no circumstances shall registrants construe that they are acting as an agent/or employee of the Lansing Police Department through the camera registry program.
- Under no circumstances shall the Lansing Police Department utilize any information obtained to view footage/feeds directly from cameras owned by registrants.

If you have a security camera and would like to register it as part of the SCRAM program, go to <https://edocs.lansingmi.gov/Forms/CameraRegistryForm>.

# Join Now: Neighborhood Watch

A Westside Neighborhood Watch Facebook page has been created for those who are interested. Neighbors can help by identifying, observing, and reporting any suspicious activity taking place. A Neighborhood Watch can reduce the incident of crime or reduce the damage done during criminal activity. It takes a village to keep crime down so we hope you can join the page. If you need further information, you can reach out to Jana Nicol at [jananicol1925@gmail.com](mailto:jananicol1925@gmail.com).



To find the Facebook group, scan the QR code or visit [Facebook.com/groups/1289243091695346/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1289243091695346/).

*Scan the QR code with your mobile device to join the new Westside Neighborhood Watch Facebook group.*

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## Black History: Gerald “Bill” Lett

Gerald “Bill” Lett, long time resident of our historic neighborhood, passed Thursday, September 21, 2023.

A Westside icon, Mr. Lett owned a highly successful women clothing store and later bridal shop in Lansing. For years, his store was located on West St Joseph before relocating to Butler and eventually Grand River. However long before there was a brick-and-mortar store, Lett got his start, working out of his car selling women nylons.

Fate showed its cruel hand in 1950 when the eldest son of Bill and his wife Ruby was born with a club foot. The needed surgery would cost \$7,000 that Lett couldn't afford. At the time he was making \$32 a week working at Oldsmobile's Atlas Drop Forge and busing tables at Hotel Olds. Determined to get the much-needed surgery, Lett told the story in an interview that he withdrew his life savings of \$50 from the bank, purchased nylons from a Detroit jobber and sold nylons out of his car on Sunday mornings. He managed to come up with the money, paying the doctor in full the day of the surgery.

Lett decided to sell stockings because they were hard to get during the war and after. Stores would have a sale once a year where each woman was limited to one pair. The line going downtown would start at St. Joseph Street! His mother always took Bill with her so they both could buy a pair. He figured, if women would stand in line at 5 o'clock in the morning to buy stockings, that item is in demand. It wasn't long before women were depending on him coming to their homes Sunday morning with stockings so they could go to church.

Lett worked hard going house-to-house selling nylons and later included a few clothes items. Eventually he managed to save up \$750 to start his small business. With the support of his family, and some help from his mother, Lett rented a tiny building on West St. Joseph Hwy. and began taking catalog orders for various goods.

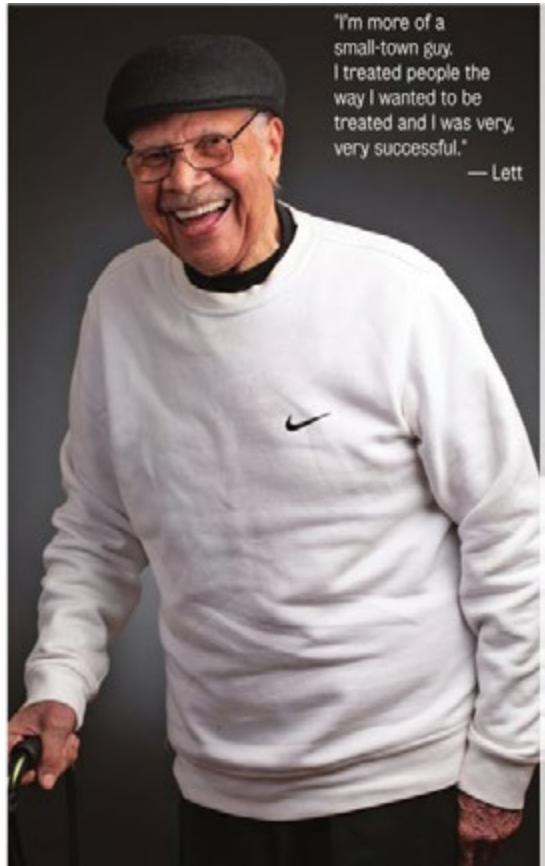
Slowly the business grew, and in the early 1960s, Lett expanded and decided to take a trip to New York City, which was a game-changer for his business.

Lett started carrying women's sportswear and began competing with other businesses, and by this time he had built a reputation for carrying high-quality, stylish clothes. He had the eye for high style and traveled to New York one week per month for 25 years, to which he also attributed much of his success.

Within five years, Lett went from making \$200,000 a year to \$800,000 a year. Then the early '90s left many department stores in bankruptcy. Eventually, the sportswear business went broke, and Lett thought he was done. However, his wife knew differently. Armed with Ruby's encouragement, Lett went to a bridal show the next day and bought enough inventory to launch Lett's Bridal.

While it was a slow process getting the bridal business off the ground, failure was not an option for Lett. The store continued to grow and gain fame. At the pinnacle of his career, fate dealt another devastating blow. Within two years his wife and both sons passed. Injuries received in a car accident on St. Patrick's Day in 2009 caused Mr. Lett to retire.

Voted Best of Weddings by *The Knot*, Lett's Bridal eventually closed but will always hold a special place in the memory of many Lansing residents.



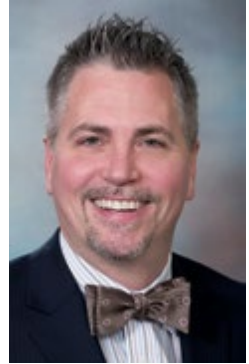
# City Clerk Update

Submitted by Lansing City Clerk Chris Swope

## Sign Up for the NEW Permanent Ballot List and Never Miss an Election; Clerk's Election Office has Moved

Lansing voters have more choices which make it easier to vote. Voters can sign up for the Permanent Ballot List, vote early at one of two early voting locations in Lansing, or vote on Election Day. With four elections in 2024, I'm pleased to be able to offer these options to make voting more convenient for Lansing residents.

Never worry about missing an election again because you can now sign up for the **Permanent Ballot List**. Voters who complete this new application won't have to complete another absentee ballot application. I encourage every voter to take advantage of the opportunity to vote from home. Absentee ballot applications are available at [lansingvotes.gov](https://lansingvotes.gov). Make sure you check the box for permanent ballot to receive a ballot for every election automatically.



Applications and absentee ballots can be returned for free via US Mail, or by utilizing one of Lansing's 14 drop boxes. There is a drop box in the Westside Neighborhood at Letts Community Center.

Lansing voters now have the right to cast a ballot in person at designated early voting sites before Election Day. Lansing voters can feed their own ballot into the tabulator in a similar process to voting on Election Day. Early Voting sites in 2024 will be Foster Community Center, 200 N Foster Ave and the new Reo Elections Office, 1221 Reo Rd.

Our Election Office was relocated to the former Reo School due to construction of the new Public Safety Complex. Located off Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, our Reo Election Office will be open 40 days before each election. Voters can change their voter registration, apply for an absentee ballot, spoil their absentee ballot and register to vote. These services are also available at our office downtown, on the 9th floor of City Hall and some of these services are available online.

## Passport and Notary Services by Appointment

If you need to apply for a U.S. Passport, you need to make an appointment through our website [lansingmi.gov/clerk](https://lansingmi.gov/clerk) or call 517-483-4131. The US Department of State is facing high demand for passports. It will take many weeks to obtain a passport so don't delay. By appointment, we also provide notary services for Lansing City residents at \$5 per document.





Bradly and I are proud to have been part of the Westside Neighborhood for over 20 years and I have been proud to be your clerk for 18 years. If the City Clerk's Office can ever be of service, please contact us at [city.clerk@lansingmi.gov](mailto:city.clerk@lansingmi.gov) or 517-483-4131.



## Chris Swope Lansing City Clerk

Proud Resident and Advocate of  
The Westside Neighborhood!

New Reo Elections Office  
at 1221 Reo Rd.  
Open to the public  
on Jan 18th.

**Services of the Clerk's Office include:**

- Voter Registration
- Absentee Ballots
- Notary Public Services
- Business Licensing
- City Council Agendas & Minutes
- Passport Services by appointment



[www.facebook.com/LansingClerkSwope](https://www.facebook.com/LansingClerkSwope)  
[www.lansingmi.gov/clerk](http://www.lansingmi.gov/clerk)

Office Phone: (517) 483-4131

**EMERGENCY SIREN SURVEY**

The Office of Emergency Management wants your opinion on how effective the outdoor emergency notification siren is in keeping our community safe!

To take a survey, scan the QR code or visit:  
**LANSINGMI.GOV/SIRENSURVEY**

*Please note that outdoor warning sirens are designed to be heard when outside to alert people to go inside and receive weather updates from local media.*

# Aiming for Success, Hitting Where it Counts

*Submitted by Genesis Lodise, Westsider and Ore Creek Archery board member*

You step up to the line, placing one foot on either side. Normally people will tell you not to cross certain lines but it's expected here. You take a deep breath and slowly let it out. A week of work, school, bad TV, and more fade away as you relax your shoulders and narrow your focus. There's a square of heavy paper stuck to a foam bale set eighteen meters away on the other side of the gymnasium. Printed on the paper is a series of colored concentric circles, beginning with the dreaded white and moving from black, to blue, to red, and finally the almighty yellow at the center.



*One of the club's training tools being demonstrated.*

A whistle blows. It's a single piercing call to begin. Another breath as you raise the bow with your lead hand and pull a carbon fiber arrow from the quiver at your side with your other. One last deep pull of air as you nock the arrow and pull back the string. You try to not focus too much on the bow's sight, letting your hours of instruction and practice do the job for you. That last breath is still holding strong, waiting for the moment you release the string, sending the arrow at 150 feet per second hurtling toward that 4.8" yellow circle at the center of your target. Your back muscles flex as you reach

your draw length—the maximum length you will pull the string. It's right up against your face and you are reminded of the indentations many competitive archers bear across their mouth and nose. You have one last moment of doubt as you realize you will need to release the string. After that there's nothing else you can do. It's time to give up your control and let the arrow go where it may. You just pray it hits yellow. Ten golden points.

You can finish this game strong, maybe even get another pin to add to your ribbon. This is, after all, competition archery. The goal is to win pins!

You shove any further doubts out of your mind, steady your legs, and release the string. The arrow zips away and you finally let out the breath you've been holding for what seems like an eternity. There's a soft thump as the arrow hits the target. You go to celebrate but instead your heart sinks as you can clearly see the arrow has not struck gold

but instead red. That's eight points at best. "Great shot!" the person next to you says and you realize that compared to what you were hitting the month prior, this is a great



*Recipients of youth scholarship bows and equipment.*



*Continued on p. 12*

shot. It's not gold, but it is moving in that direction. Someone hands you a cookie and everyone cheers. You haven't hit your goal—not yet. But sometimes the journey can be as rewarding as the destination. And having good company sure makes the journey more enjoyable.



*Archers receiving achievement pins.*

Ore Creek Archery teaches youth and adult competition archery Saturdays at Letts Community Center in partnership with Lansing Parks & Recreation. Archery teaches you patience, discipline, and that good laughs are as important as winning because when you don't win, you need a good laugh. As part of its mission Ore Creek Archery seeks to ensure that all people in the community have access to the joy that is archery. Not only do we have a great time, we also have darn good cookies. We also have certified instructors as well as adult and youth scholarships provided through generous local sponsors.

<https://orecreekarchery.club/classes/>



# Now Open: Westside Spirits

In 1960, there were several grocery stores providing affordable healthy foods for its residents. Schmidt's, Wrights Grocery, Don & Bills, Bobs, Alexs, and Rosie were all located in the neighborhood.

As the city prospered under the construction of I-496, the widening of what was then called Logan Street, and the building of the Capitol Loop, there was a steady decline in the neighborhood's appearance, safety, and overall quality of life happened.



Gone were the grocery stores and residents were now living in a food desert. Food deserts are areas where people have limited access to a variety of healthful foods. This may be due to having a limited income or living far away from sources of healthful and affordable food, or perhaps residents have no transportation to go to grocery stores.

Whatever the reason, Sam Zeineh, owner of Westside Spirits is working to address the food desert problem in our neighborhood. Opening a package liquor business in February 2022, that stocks top-shelf brands, Zeineh quickly saw the need to have grocery items. Neighbors were coming in daily asking for food items that usually are not stocked at a retail beer and wine store. Eggs, bacon, milk, cheese and bread were immediately added, but much more was needed.

Former First Lady Michelle Obama said: "It's not that people don't know or don't want to do the right thing; they just have to have access to the foods that they know will make their families healthier.

Today Zeineh is providing neighbors with access. Currently, Westside Spirits is in phase 1 of remodeling the store that will devote 30% of floor space to fresh produce and food items.

If you have not yet gone into Westside Spirits, consider stopping in to meet the friendly staff who will help with your selections.

*Westside Spirits is located at 200 S Martin Luther King Jr Blvd.*



# Neighbor Spotlight

After moving to the Westside in 2020, the Murphy family wasted no time in getting to know their neighbors. Shortly after moving to the neighborhood, they rolled out the red carpet, inviting anyone in the Westside to join them for safe and socially distanced socialization. Their goal was to make friends during their height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and hosting outdoor parties was a safer way to gather.



Their commitment to community has grown since that time, as the family hosts parties and events to bring neighbors together and help connect Westsiders with resources they need.

Elise and Chris Murphy both work in healthcare and moved to the Westside because Elise was attending LCC's nursing program. They chose the Westside because they are committed to raising their children immersed in different cultures and surrounded by people who look like them. More than half of their children in their blended family are biracial.

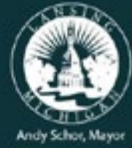
The Murphys say they do their events because they like connection, community, and helping people. They may not be rich, but they have passion and drive to secure donations and support from across the Lansing community.

"We just really want to be the helping hand ... that we've all needed at one point or another," said Elise.

One major accomplishment for the Murphy family was the Westside is the Best Side block party they hosted last summer. The block party idea originated after their home was struck by bullets from a nearby shooting, and the family decided to turn the negative event into a positive by bringing together neighbors to get to know each other and raise funds for the Mikey 23 Foundation, an anti-violence organization.

"The ability to bounce back and do that after having our house hammered with bullets is something I didn't think we'd be able to do," said Elise. "We really considered moving after that event, but I'm so glad we didn't. This community is incredible and we love everyone we've met. Our neighbors continually come together with us to love on people who need it the most and we are so grateful we get to do it beside them."

# WINTER WEATHER: STAYING INFORMED



## STAY UP TO DATE ON SNOW PLOWING AND SALTING:

Utilize the City of Lansing's Snow Plow Map that is updated in real time during a full plow of the city. To view the map, please visit:  
[www.lansingmi.gov/snowmap](http://www.lansingmi.gov/snowmap)



## SIGN UP FOR LANSING ALERT:

Stay informed on weather events including snow emergencies, salting and plowing updates by signing up for Lansing Alert. To sign up, please visit:  
[www.lansingmi.gov/lansingalert](http://www.lansingmi.gov/lansingalert)



## REVIEW THE SNOW ORDINANCE:

Remember to clear sidewalks of snow and ice within 24 hours after a snowfall. To view the snow ordinance, please visit:  
[www.lansingmi.gov/snowordinance](http://www.lansingmi.gov/snowordinance)



*Winter weather has arrived in the Westside*

# *the* **Westsider**

The Westside Neighborhood Association  
c/o Letts Community Center  
1220 W. Kalamazoo  
Lansing, MI 48915

