Lefferts Manor ECHO
{ FALL 2026 }

Lincoln II Homeowner Named University of Michigan President

By David Flumenbaum

On December 1, Lincoln II homeowner and former resident C. Cybele Raver will take office as the 17th president of the University of Michigan. For the last five years, Raver has served as the provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs at Vanderbilt University, where she helped oversee a period of remarkable growth for the school. From 2014-2021, prior to moving to Nashville, Raver lived on Lincoln Road with her spouse and research collaborator Clancy Blair (who has sadly since passed away). The Echo caught up with Raver about her time spent in Lefferts Manor, her new role, and how her time in the neighborhood helped propel her into one of the nation's most prestigious university president roles.

David Flumenbaum: Congrats on your new position as the president of University of Michigan! When do you move to Ann Arbor?

C. Cybele Raver: Thank you, David, that means a lot coming from you both as a fantastic neighbor and as such a dedicated UM alum! My tenure as the 17th president of the University of Michigan officially begins on December 1. Over the last few months, I've spent time in Ann Arbor getting to know students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Everyone has been so welcoming, I already feel like a Wolverine! I'm looking forward to putting down roots in Ann Arbor and continuing to explore Michigan.

DF: What drew you to Prospect Lefferts Gardens, and what did you know about it before you moved in?

CCR: We were drawn to the neighborhood's wonderful sense of community and PLG's great mix of cultures and history. We loved having the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the Brooklyn Public Library, the Brooklyn Museum and Prospect Park so close by. Living in PLG and getting to know our neighbors reaffirmed all the ways that it is so special.

DF: When you think about your career and life as an academic, how did the seven years you spent in Lefferts Manor help shape your career?

CCR: Lefferts Manor was home during some very formative years for me, Clancy, and our family. My daughter Natalie is studying urban planning at University of Pennsylvania right now. We talk a lot about ways this neighborhood has really shaped our hopes and dreams for what communities can offer, whether it's pride in our gardens or the ease of public transportation or the beauty of Prospect Park. As I took on more leadership responsibilities, it meant a great deal to me to feel part of such a supportive network where we look out for one another. That experience has reinforced something I carry into my work today: People can do extraordinary things when they have a community behind them.

DF: When you took the job at Vanderbilt, how hard was it to leave your life in PLG behind?

CCR: Harder than I can convey. We were saying goodbye to a home, friendships, and so many memories. But I took those relationships and experiences with me to Nashville, and I'll carry them with me to Ann Arbor, too. PLG will always have a very special place in my heart.

DF: PLG has such a long, strong tradition of community activism and participation. Were you involved in any local causes or groups here?

CCR: That spirit of participation is one of the things I remember and value most about the neighborhood! I loved simple things like swapping seedlings with neighbors in springtime or collaborating across our stoops to make a fun, safe Halloween experience for families from our own and adjoining neighborhoods. People care deeply about where they live and are willing to put time and energy into making it better. That commitment to one another is a big part of what made it feel like home.



Photo: University of Michigan

DF: Are there any lessons you learned from living in Lefferts Manor that will help you lead the university community at Michigan?

CCR: The importance of community and taking the time to listen to the people around you. At Michigan, there's a familiar refrain: "The team. The team. The team." That resonates with what I value about Lefferts Manor, where people brought different experiences and talents to something they care

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PLG's Ultimate Gift Destination Primary Source Reopens on Rogers Avenue

By Daisy Woelfling

Primary Source, a neighborhood gift and home store, reopens to the public November 14, after relocating to a new commercial space at 447 Rogers Avenue, just a few blocks north of its original location between Rutland and Fenimore.

Primary Source is the brainchild of Marysa Greenawalt-Katz, a former photojournalist at TIME Magazine and The New York Times, turned shop owner. The store's name refers to both Greenawalt-Katz's past career as a journalist and the shop's reputation as a destination for unique and handmade gifts and housewares.

Greenawalt-Katz and her family moved to PLG in 2023 and soon after made the life-altering decision to quit her job after an over-decade-long career in journalism. Becoming a parent largely prompted the transition, as the demands of her job kept her from spending time with her newborn. However, her move to PLG also factored into her decision. Becoming a business owner was always in the back of Greenawalt-Katz's mind. She knew she would inevitably burn out from the fast-paced environment of journalism and opening up her own shop could be a second act.

Moving to PLG gave Greenawalt-Katz the final push she needed to embark on this next chapter. She recalls the fulfillment she got from finding a special item or an unexpected gift for someone while shopping at boutiques in New York City. Living in PLG, she noticed a prominent gap in the market for these kinds of shops. "There are other gift shops, other retail establishments, but there wasn't anything that had the magic that I was trying to create," she explains. "I just had this vision of what if I can share the things that I pick up in these shops that bring me joy with my neighborhood."

Whether it's glitter-trimmed ribbon made in Italy or art nouveau floral claw clips, everything sold in Primary Source has a certain je ne sais quoi. The eye Greenawalt-Katz honed for years as a photo editor lends itself to the curation of the shop's offerings. Every item she stocks is high-



Photo: Daisy Woelfling

quality, ethically-sourced and environmentally-friendly. Greenawalt-Katz describes her ethos: "Our goal is to be a destination for people to buy things that they will keep or gifts for people that aren't going to be regifted -- things that will be used and enjoyed."

On December 7, 2024, Primary Source opened at 537 Rogers to warm reception from the neighborhood. "It's hard to imagine having this type of business in a neighborhood that isn't where I live," says Greenawalt-Katz. She explains she always envisioned knowing her clientele and her customers as neighbors. Greenawalt-Katz also found an unexpected community of fellow business owners on Rogers, united by the particular set of challenges that they face. While more commercial space on the street is becoming available, Greenawalt-Katz explains the foot traffic isn't as high as on Flatbush or Nostrand Avenues, or even commercial strips in other neighborhoods like 5th Avenue in Park Slope or Vanderbilt Avenue in Prospect Heights. As a result, the businesses on Rogers have suffered. To combat this, the new business owners have rallied together by forming a WhatsApp group where they share resources. "A lot of people who live in this neighborhood are really invested in

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What City's ADU Rules Mean for Manor Residents

By Roberta Woelfling

You may have heard the term "ADU" recently and wondered what it stands for. The answer is Ancillary (or Accessory) Dwelling Unit.

This fall the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) and the Department of Buildings (DOB) held an online seminar for homeowners in NYC about the possibility of creating ADUs in homes located in historic districts. The city's ADU handbook highlights the importance of carefully researching your property to confirm eligibility before proceeding: "In New York City, deed restrictions, also called restrictive covenants, can determine what you can build or modify, and how you use your land. These are binding legal conditions that run with the land and apply to all future owners." They are recorded in public records and "restrictions can be enforced by City agencies, previous owners, or homeowners' associations."

Lefferts Manor Association reminds you that our neighborhood, Lefferts Manor, has a restrictive covenant that limits the houses to being single-family. When the Lefferts farm was subdivided and sold off for development starting in the 1890s, deed restrictions were filed and recorded. They predate both zoning and landmarking laws, and courts have ruled that our covenant is enforceable regardless of what other zoning or building regulations exist. To summarize, adding an ADU in Lefferts Manor turns a property into a 2-family dwelling, and with the change of use, a new Certificate of Occupancy is required by the DOB. This clearly would be in violation of the covenant.

LMA was founded in 1919 to uphold the single-family covenant as well as to bring together residents for their social and mutual benefit. It welcomes the partnership of its residents in maintaining the covenant which has helped create and maintain a special, diverse, close-knit community -- not a common thing in New York City these days!

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Owners of Acclaimed Brooklyn Restaurant to Open New PLG Eatery in Early 2027

By Melissa Smith

PLG resident and restaurateur Damon Gorton will be opening Parade early next year at 453 Rogers Avenue with his sister and business partner, Lindsey Gorton. Former proprietors of now-closed Park Slope favorite Flatbush Farm and current owners of the well-regarded Sisters in Clinton Hill, this duo knows how to deliver tasty food in an enjoyable, lively, family-friendly spot -- just what PLG needs!

Damon hails from Minneapolis, and the new restaurant pays homage to the artist Prince and the 40th anniversary of his album "Parade." The restaurant will serve Neapolitan pizzas and bar food, with gluten-free options, and a weekend brunch. The space will maintain the layout of Names, the previous restaurant in the space, with a dining room, bar and bar seating on one side, and a large bar serving food on the other.

Damon gave me a quick tour of the new space, which is being developed by Home Studios, a Brooklyn-based interior architecture and design firm, that also designed Sisters. The dining area is more open than in past configurations, with benches built in along the walls. On the bar side of the space, they have installed lovely booths. The back space will remain a private room and can be rented out for dinner parties or small gatherings.

Damon has been connected to PLG for more than 25 years, and he feels ready to deliver the type of restaurant the neighborhood needs and break the so-called curse that has plagued this location through its recent years of rapid turnover. His knowledge of the area runs deep. He currently lives on Lincoln Road and spent many years involved with Maple Street School when his former wife, Wendy Jo Cole, ran the school. Damon, Wendy, and several lifelong friends moved to Brooklyn after graduating from University of Wisconsin-Madison and immediately established deep roots in the community.

Parade will be open daily. Damon hopes that locals become regulars and that folks from outside the neighborhood journey to PLG to try his new venture.

Primary Source Reopens

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this stretch of Rogers becoming more commercial because it has so much potential," adds Greenawalt-Katz.

Others have expressed concern that the introduction of stores like Primary Source will contribute to the gentrification of the neighborhood and less affordability for residents. Greenawalt-Katz has welcomed this feedback. While she believes the prices of her products are reflective of their quality, she has been conscientious about having products available at multiple price points in order to be more accessible. She has also made a concerted effort to support independent brands and local artisans from various backgrounds.

After outgrowing her original location, Greenawalt-Katz decided to move up the street between Lincoln Road and Lefferts Avenue for better visibility and more space. In July, she began a four-and-a-half month renovation of 447 Rogers, which inspired the landlord to undertake a beautification project of the building's facade. The new and improved leafy-green storefront even features hand-painted lettering by Travis Fitzsimmons, another PLG resident and owner of Travis Signs. "It was a no-brainer to work with Travis because he's talented, he knows what he's doing and he knows the neighborhood," Greenawalt-Katz said.

Along with a freshly-painted facade, the shop's interior features several display and layout improvements. Except for a new selection of children's products, the shop's stock will remain mostly the same: bath and body products, jewelry, greeting cards and stationery. Another change is the store's hours. Through extending their days of operation to Tuesday-Sunday and staying open an extra hour in the morning and evening, Greenawalt-Katz hopes to establish a greater presence in the neighborhood.

After an eight-week closure, Greenawalt-Katz is looking forward to being back in business. "I'm excited to be back in the store and having face-to-face time with my customers," she says. With the holiday season right around the corner, the reopening couldn't have come at a better time.

E&J Cut Brings the Traditional Dominican Barbershop to Flatbush Avenue

By Daisy Woelfling

Walking on Flatbush Avenue in the last year, you may have noticed a swanky storefront pop up between Rutland and Midwood. On a nice day, you might find people congregating out front on the classic wooden and cast iron park benches or playing a lively game of open-air chess on the sidewalk. At night, the illuminated red, white and blue rotating barber poles affixed to the shop's awning are like beacons beckoning passersby for their next great haircut.

This striking storefront belongs to Edwin Cepeda and Jervin Capellan, co-owners of E&J Cut. Cepeda and Capellan have lived in Prospect Lefferts Gardens for over a decade, and during this time have worked in barbershops in and around the neighborhood.

Capellan came to the United States in 2011 and has been working in barbershops ever since. His first job was sweeping hair in a barbershop in the Dominican Republic at 12 years old, and by 14 he was cutting hair. Cepeda has also been in the game for a long time. In 2015, he left the Dominican Republic and began working full time as a barber in New York City.

After years of working for other people, Cepeda and Capellan dreamed of opening their own shop and becoming business owners. But the high cost of rent was a concern. That was until they saw the commercial space at 581 Flatbush Avenue was for lease and decided to take a risk. "When they saw this location, it was like, it's perfect, it's big and it's in a great neighborhood," recounts Jessica Solares, Capellan's wife .

Cepeda and Capellan secured the space in July. As a lover of vintage aesthetics, Capellan wanted the shop's interior to have an old-school, 1970s feel, which would require significant time and renovation. Solares recalls working day and night with her husband, after she had just given birth to their youngest son in order to get the shop ready to open. After four long months of remodeling, E&J Cut opened in November 2025.

Their hard work paid off and the retro inspiration definitely comes through in the shop's design. Among the plush leather chairs and sleek, walnut barber stations, all that's missing is a cloud of cigar smoke drifting through the air as a patron gets a close shave. Large mirrors stretch up to the gold ceiling trim lining the brick-patterned walls. Cast iron and gold pendant lights and wall lanterns flood the room with warm low-light. However, the real showstopper sits on a small wooden table in the corner of the shop: a large gleaming chess board with glossy ceramic pieces.

From Washington Square Park to the streets of Santo Domingo, chess is a historically significant pastime in Dominican culture and E&J Cut chose to honor this cultural tradition within the shop. Solares explains after they introduced the chess board, coworkers and customers alike loved the addition and became invested in the game, "There's a lot of people that come just to hang out, play and relax." Fair warning: if you visit E&J Cut there's a high chance you will be challenged to a game of chess by one of the regulars.

When asked what sets E&J's apart from other barbershops in the neighborhood, Capellan answered, "family, community and the relaxed atmosphere." Solares nodded, "Every barbershop represents a little bit about themselves." She wrangles a runaway toddler as we speak. "This one in particular represents family, cleanliness and calmness." Many of the barbershops Cepeda and Capellan had worked at previously would blast loud music, but the pair wanted to do things differently. Instead, they focused on creating a relaxing experience for customers that would allow them to unwind. In a nutshell, Solares breaks down what the shop has to offer: "Nice music, good vibes, good games and families are welcome. That's mainly what this is about."

'Rutland Road' Documentary Showcases Soul of Lefferts Manor

By Roberta Woelfling

Isabel Oliver, a Rutland II resident since 2018, spent the spring of her senior year at LREI high school fulfilling the requirements of her required senior project -- an opportunity for seniors to design and carry out a project entirely of their own choosing. Oliver knew from the get-go that she wanted to make a documentary about where she lived in Lefferts Manor. The result was a 28-minute short film titled "Rutland Road," which weaves together the stories of multiple neighbors and their unique experiences in Lefferts Manor. The film screened at the November 7 LMA Fall Meeting.

"I was inspired by the feeling of being surrounded by incredible people with amazing stories, all within such a unique and special neighborhood with a rich history," Oliver said about her film, "while also recognizing that I didn't know nearly enough about my neighbors or the community around me. I wanted to use this project as an opportunity to learn more about our community while also finding a way to capture what makes it so special and share it with the other communities that I am a part of. A documentary felt like the perfect way to do that."

Oliver was thrilled to have her neighbors view her film project at the LMA meeting earlier this month, and is hoping to give the broader community more opportunities to view her film. We'll keep you posted!

Isabel is currently a first-year student at the University of Virginia.

Raver Named UofM President

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about together. As I begin my presidency, I am going to show up, learn, and work alongside the Michigan community to turn our shared hopes and ambitions into action.

DF: Lefferts Manor is a landmarked historic district with strict rules on new construction and maintaining original architecture. How do you think about balancing preservation and growth, whether in a small Brooklyn neighborhood or a large college campus?
CCR: It begins with understanding what people treasure about a place and why. Lefferts Manor has such a distinctive history and character, and Michigan has its own deeply held traditions. Honoring that history and being open to new ideas can go hand in hand.

DF: Any restaurants or special spots in our neighborhood that you wish you could take with you to Ann Arbor?
CCR: My all-time favorite on Flatbush Avenue is De Hot Pot. I haven't yet found chicken doubles or roti that can rival theirs!

DF: Do you plan on staying connected to the neighborhood in any way?
CCR: Absolutely. Some of my dearest friends and fondest memories are in Prospect Lefferts Gardens, and I look forward to coming back. It's a place I'll always feel connected to, no matter where my work takes me.

MEMBERSHIP AND HOLIDAY WREATHS

You will get a free hand-delivered wreath this holiday season with payment of your 2026 dues. Join or renew membership by December 2, 2026 to be guaranteed a wreath. Dues cover January through December, 2026. Click the QR code to the right for payment.

Dues are $30 per household or $20 per senior household (65+). Dues cover January through December.

Pay online by using QR code below or clicking on membership link at LeffertsManor.org or go to Lefferts-Manor-Association.square.site.

Or make checks payable to Lefferts Manor Association. Send or drop-off payment with your name, address and contact info noted to:

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