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The developers of Cleveland's future casino are buying the land that is the site of the Cleveland Rowing Foundation's boathouse, which serves as the base of operation for Case Crew and other regional groups. The groups are now raising money to buy a new boathouse.

Casino Row-yale

New casino to displace Case Crew

By: Greg Meyer

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Case Crew is one of the most established club sports on campus. For over 20 years, the team has been comprised of serious and novice rowers who compete against other collegiate and recreational teams during their fall and spring seasons. Now, it looks like their future might be in jeopardy.

On Nov. 3 of last year, Ohioans passed Issue 3, which opened up Ohio to casinos. One of the most anticipated sites for the new casinos is in Cleveland, specifically the Flats. Proponents, including Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson and Cavaliers owner Dan Gilbert, say that the new casino will create jobs and help in the redevelopment of the downtown area according to The Cleveland Plain Dealer.

However, the proposed location will almost inevitably disrupt the Cleveland Rowing Foundation's (CRF) boathouse, which is located in The Flats off of Carter Road. The boathouse acts as the base of operations for Case Western Reserve University and nine other scholastic institutions, both high school and collegiate, plus several serious recreational clubs. The boathouse, which was built in the 1980s, is the only one in Northeast Ohio and supports over 850 rowers.

"If we don't have a facility, we can't row," said Margaret Wilkes, the current president of the Case Crew Club. "There will be no more Crew at Case."

Plans have been developed by CRF to create a new boathouse and waterfront park called the Rivergate Park. The park is proposed in the location of the former Commodore Club Marina and will give the all the organizations in association with CRF over 1,100 feet of access to the Cuyahoga River. Also being proposed in the new park is the possibility of a "boathouse row", where each club will have its own bay and storage area as opposed to the large warehouse storage facility at the current boathouse.

The park is also designed to include bike trails, hiking trails, and access for kayaks. The vision is to have the

park act as a compliment to the existing parks in the immediate area, Canal Basin Park and Towpath Trail.

However funding this project has become a large, but more importantly, urgent hurdle. The CRF has partnered with The Trust for Public Land in order to secure an option to acquire the site; however the entire project will cost 3.6 million dollars to complete. Right now the CRF and its members have only raised 500,000 dollars and have a March 31 deadline to raise the rest of the money.

This is where Case Crew is pitching in. The team was originally scheduled to host the Hammer Ergatta, an indoor rowing competition between John Carroll University, Cleveland State University, and Case during the winter, but have instead let CRF take charge and turn it into a fundraiser with the majority of the funds raised going to the boathouse.

The team is still very involved in the planning and running of the event and is expecting around 250 rowers at the event which is being held at St. Ignatius High School on February 21. The team is also looking into possibilities of receiving funds from other members of the Case community in order to keep their team afloat. "We are just a bunch of college students, so throwing out thousands of dollars in donations was not an option," said Wilkes. "We thought this would be the best way we could contribute and pull our weight."

All those interested in donating can contact Margaret Wilkes of the Case Crew Team or visit the Cleveland Rowing Foundation's website at www.clevelandrows.org.

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