

a rambler's guide to
the rhizome house

2174 lee rd cleveland hts OH 44118

Updated 6/26

Basics

The Rhizome House is a radical social center in Cleveland Heights, OH on occupied Erie & Wyandot land, formed by people who believe that by connecting others, we can create better worlds in the shell of the old.

Rhizome is an anarchistically minded, collectively stewarded space. The space is stewarded by an all volunteer collective and we aim to keep all events free. We do not have a party line and we cultivate diverse and alternative visions of what it looks like to build a world based on solidarity and free of oppressive systems. It is important to all of us to run a grassroots, autonomous social center free of any political parties (including vanguard parties) and independent from non-profits.

What's a Social Center? What Makes Rhizome Different?

A social center is a long running organizing model, most popular in Europe with anarchist, anti-authoritarian and autonomous Marxist organizing traditions. In line with this lineage, we provide space and support for our community to form social and political connections as an alternative to (and in defiance of) domination and oppression.

We see ourselves as “movement infrastructure.” Just like the public transit helps people get from one place to another or the electrical grid keeps the lights on, we provide physical space, white boards, crock pots, and other logistical needs to keep radical organizing happening in this city. This is a capacity building project: by helping to meet simple needs collectively and remove common barriers to organizing, we hope that more people will be able to access radical community, get plugged in, and work on inspiring new and creative projects.

“Relationship-based organizing” is at the core of our beliefs and theory of change. Our goal is to co-create a space for people to form social connections around mutual aid, discussion, reading groups, game/movie nights, various other radical project work, and, perhaps most importantly, just hanging out together. Relationships are the most fundamental unit of power and we fight for a world that centers our shared connectedness. In an alienated and fearful world, we want to nurture ground for collectively dreaming otherwise.

Values

Round these parts, shared values are important to us. We don't expect complete agreement from everyone who engages with our space, but we do ask that y'all show respect for and be open to the following:

Solidarity: Our strength comes from each other. By meeting you across the table, face to face and on even ground, by acknowledging what it took to arrive and setting aside what we carry, by showing up as our authentic selves, we can find dynamic and mutually beneficial belonging. We practice this value by supporting mutual aid projects, creating art and meaning together and centering relationships as the fundamental unit of the power we're cultivating together.

Autonomy: Our strength comes from choosing to trust one another. When we decentralize decision making, divest from hierarchy, and release our need to control others, we can find more freedom than we ever thought possible. We must bear this with responsibility. This is a tactical position (movements without leaders tend to be safer from repression) and it is a principled one (every cook can govern). We practice this by hosting skill shares, supporting autonomous action planning and distributing literature to help our community take the next step in their individual and collective political journeys.

Collective Care: Our strength comes from not treating each other as disposable. We are called to value personal growth over perfection. By committing to relationship, even when and especially when it is hard and full of conflict, we are called to do right by community and by ourselves. We practice this by (re)committing to community building, both for our activism and because it makes our lives fuller and more enriched.

Anti-capitalism and Prison Abolition: Our strength comes from taking responsibility for addressing the problems we face ourselves. When we routinely rely on people from outside our communities to handle conflict and logistics, we deprive ourselves of an opportunity to grow skills and invite outside violence upon us. We practice this by maintaining autonomy from the government and Non-Profits, by hosting free stores and mutual aid practice, and by empowering each other to take action directly in our lives and communities.

(Towards) Liberation and De-Colonization: Our strength comes from taking our dreams seriously. We fight for a world where every body can live as their full self, where nobody starves in any way (physically, socially or spiritually), not the least because of racism, misogyny, classism, ableism, transphobia, xenophobia or any other kind of fear of the othered. We fight for a world in which many worlds can fit. We practice this by hosting events for folks to meet each other and to learn more about how to actively work against systems of domination, and by committing to being a space where all are welcomed, accomodated and embraced.

What's in a Name?

A rhizome (RY-zohm) is an underground plant stem that grows both roots and shoots. Ginger and turmeric are both rhizomes. Unlike roots (which a plant uses to absorb water and nutrients from the soil) a rhizome is primarily a starchy offshoot that stores those nutrients. This allows the plant to survive over the winter or through a challenging growing season. In addition, a rhizome is capable of generating new plant materials (roots and above ground stems) and is thus an important part of asexual plant reproduction (ie: not through seeds).

In philosophy, “rhizome” (as developed by French writers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari) is used to describe interconnected and non-linear kinds of organization that are de-centralized and non-hierarchical. It's described in contrast to a tree or a pyramid, which they describe as linear, hierarchic, and based on binary connections (yes or no, left or right). A rhizome does not have a beginning or an end, nor a center nor does it repeat. A rhizome resists simplification: it cannot be ordered nor understood flatly in time or space, instead favoring a wild system of growth and propagation. Multi-pronged and organic, a rhizome adapts to pressure with the ease of water: always resilient, always somewhere new. It is an experiment, grounded in the real and present but looking towards the future.

Calling ourselves “the Rhizome House” began as a joke, actually. The name grew on us though, and we keep it in honor of both of this lineage. We appreciate the ecological metaphor, and strive to create a space rooted in the Earth and oriented towards our connections with each other. We are inspired by the call towards resilience, propagation, iteration and interconnection that the rhizome conjures. We hope we do it justice.

How Can I Book the Space?

Do you have an aligned event that you'd like to put on? We've transitioned to a Booking Jotform, which you can find at bit.ly/BookRZH. We'll get back to you within a week to let you know if we have the capacity to make it happen. We try to keep the support high and bureaucracy low. We are run by an all-volunteer collective managing this space, so we ask for your patience as we schedule and communicate further.

The biggest ground rule is that no one should ever be denied entry to RZH for lack of money. If money is collected at the door for events, it should be on a donation basis with NOTAFLOF options (No One Turned Away For Lack Of Funds). People selling goods and services can put a price to cover their expenses and labor, but we ask that prices be sliding scale to increase the accessibility and allow those with fewer resources to pay less while encouraging those with more resources contribute more.

We generally don't say yes to events that are solely based around exchanging money, such as markets, though this isn't a hard and fast rule. This is largely due to capacity--there's only so many events we can run each month and tend to prefer being a space to house other events that might not find a home so easily. If an organization that has outside funding or paid members uses the space, we ask they make a donation to RZH to help us with rent and other expenses we incur to keep the space open.

How do I get there?

Public Transit: Take route #11 Quincy - Cedar to Lee Road stop (east-west). Take route #40 Lakeview - Lee to Cedar Road stop (north-south).

Bike: Cedar and Lee roads are busy roads but bikeable. Consider riding on side streets. Euclid Avenue to Cornell/Edgehill Road to Washington Blvd is a good route if coming from the west side.

Parking: Limited street parking out front. Park on Meadowbrook Blvd, in the municipal lot on Cedar or the garage behind Cedar-Lee Theater.



What about My Kids?

We are excited about building intergenerational community and find a lot of inspiration in the energy and creativity of our youngest community members. Most of our events, unless specifically noted otherwise, are appropriate for all ages, though please note that our tone will be appropriate to the crisis at hand.

If you are in need of childcare for an event, please don't hesitate to reach out to us ahead of time. We have a network of competent and vetted folks who are willing to provide childcare for free, though we can't guarantee that we'll always be able to source--the sooner we know, the higher chance we'll be able to find someone for you. We have plenty of toys and crafts in the space as well for kids who need a little something to keep them occupied.

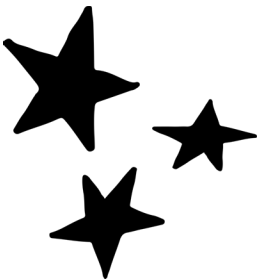
Accessibility notes:

Our storefront is at ground level and generally accessible for people who use mobility aids. Our bathroom however is not ADA compliant and on the smaller side: we have installed grab bars to assist in transfer though (to our disappointment) the room is not optimally laid out. The backyard has 3 steps up and is accessible only through a narrow-ish alley or hallway. We are working on building a ramp or lift to make this space open to all.

We strongly encourage masking at nearly all of our events except while eating, and have a high volume HEPA filter for an extra layer of protection.

Additionally, we have snacks, water, coffee and tea available for all guests to help themselves to. We also have a ton of mutual aid supplies available for free, including COVID masks, tests, Narcan, Plan B, and more.

(Current as of 5/26, please check our website for up to date information at rhizomehouse.org)

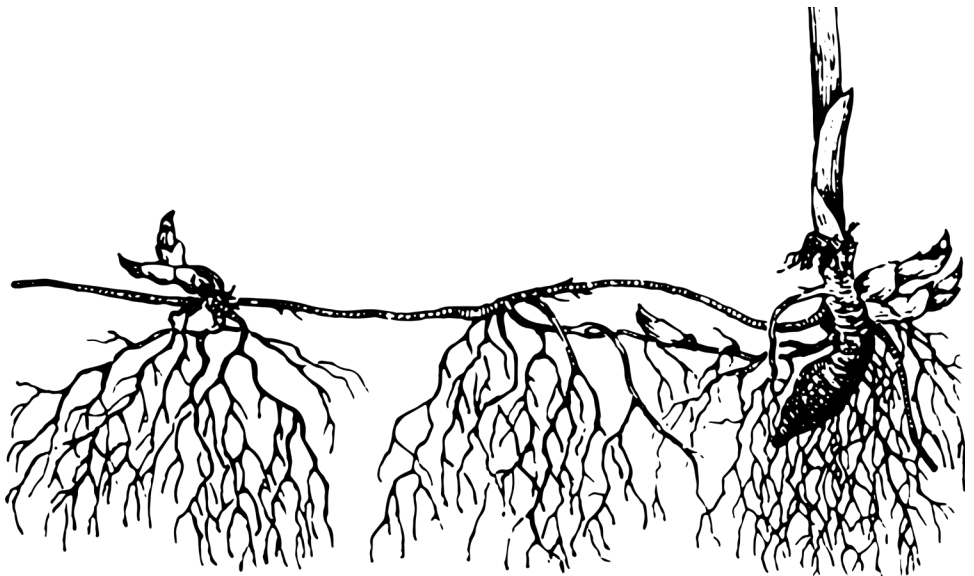


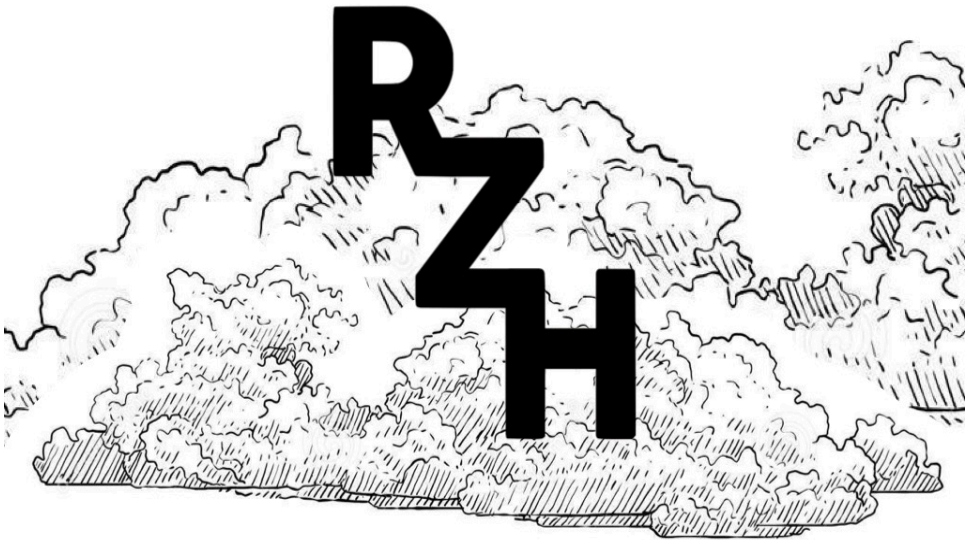
How to Support Us

The easiest way to support us is to contribute financially. Until we end capitalism, we still need to pay for stuff like rent, utilities, snacks, white board markers, and the like. You can make a one time or recurring donation at <https://opencollective.com/therhizomehousesolidarityfund>. Financial transparency is important to us, so please check that website for up to date expense estimates. We also sell a few books, all proceeds of which go back into the space. We have zines for free and a lending library, so there's always something to pick up free of charge.

If you have gently used furniture, mutual aid supplies, or anything else that you think might look good in the space, feel free to email us at therhizomehouse@protonmail.com to check if we're able to use it.

We know there are plenty of amazing places to volunteer currently, and we take your interest seriously and with gratitude. We'll usually publicize volunteer needs as they happen on a rolling basis on Instagram and our email newsletter. These are usually to help us clean up or to do outreach. The best way to be involved is to be around and get to know the other folks in the space. We have open hours every Sunday, from 1-4 pm, which kinda has library vibes, but you can talk and there's free coffee. Come see the space, get some work done and meet new folks. Once we know you, we can help you get plugged into more specific tasks.





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<https://opencollective.com/therhizomehousesolidarityfund>

 @ TheRhizomeHouse



<https://rhizomehouse.org>

<https://linktr.ee/therhizomehouse>

How Do I Find Out What's Happening at the Rhizome House?

We're most active on Instagram (@therhizomehouse), or you can add our google calendar to yours at bit.ly/RZHCal. Our full events calendar is available on our website (rhizomehouse.org), and you can sign up for our email newsletter there, which delivers at a very reasonable rate of twice per month, at rhizomehouse.org/email/. You can always keep an eye out for our physical calendars around Cleveland Heights businesses, or come to the space early in the month to pick some up for yourself.

Please come by! We're not scary
and we'd love to meet you.

With love, rage and solidarity,
-RZH