

Your Voice Ohio: Vibrant Dayton

**Exploring how to make
Dayton a thriving
community for all**

September 23, 2018



A lot has changed about Ohio's economy over the last 20 years. There are nearly 152,000 fewer jobs, there's a lower average household income and higher student debt, and the state is falling behind in education. For the first time in at least a half century, Ohio did not recover from one recession before it entered the next recession. Complicating matters, the correlation between economic struggle and the addiction crisis, which is claiming lives and sucking financial vibrancy from families, communities and the state, has become clear.

But many people don't need to read these statements to tell them what's going on. We see it in our neighborhoods, from vacant blocks to payday lenders to shuttered factories.

In Dayton, while unemployment remains low, wages have stagnated and the median household income declined by 7% between 2008 and 2017. To confront these changes head-on and explore what steps could make Dayton a more vibrant place to live for all, local journalists joined together and sat down face to face with community members.

On Sunday, September 23, 2018, at the Dayton Metro Library, about 25 residents met with members of the media to explore what Dayton would like it if it was thriving for everyone in the community. During the conversation, participants settled on three main action areas to focus on: improving the quality of education, strengthening the local economy, and promotion a sense of community and inclusion.

The word "economy" can be intimidating to many because it means different things, including jobs, the overall economy, debt, poverty, income inequality, trade, and perhaps even the cost of health care. This can make it difficult for community members to easily find and provide information about what they're experiencing.

Our goal, through these community conversations, is to put people at the center of local reporting. Our collaborative aims to supply people with the information and resources they need to create smart, shared, and sustainable solutions to the struggles facing folks across Ohio.

EVENT SUMMARY

On September 23, 2018, about 25 community members gathered at the Dayton Public Library, and over the course of 2 hours, discussed their experiences and identified local solutions.

We asked these four questions to prompt the discussion:

- 1. What would Dayton look like if it was thriving for everyone in the community?**
- 2. What's one thing you would improve or change in Dayton to make it more vibrant?**
- 3. What assets, resources, and strengths exist in Dayton?**
- 4. What actions might we take to make Dayton more vibrant?**

The conversation generated important questions for the local media to explore. In the following pages, you'll find stories and ideas shared by participants during the event.



RESPONSES

WHAT WOULD DAYTON LOOK LIKE IF IT WAS THRIVING FOR EVERYONE IN THE COMMUNITY?

- » Bustling: A bustling city is one that has ample work opportunities that create discretionary income.
- » No disparities due to racism.
- » All areas of Dayton, especially urban, develop with small businesses mixed in with other big corporate businesses. That would bring good paying, competitive career choices/employment.
- » Changing laws and legislation that protect against injustice.
- » Acceptance. Compassion. Innovation. More authentic conversations.
- » A bustling downtown.
- » High paying jobs with benefits.
- » New businesses besides breweries.
- » Improved neighborhoods.
- » Dayton would look like Durham, NC: Company-friendly government; folks eager for jobs and work opportunities.
- » Access to nutritious food, prosperity (living wage), good schools, access to good healthcare in all areas of Dayton.
- » People knowing and caring about each other, mutually respectful, secure and confident, with the capacity to meet their needs and fulfill their gifts.
- » Your community is a place you love being in -- from meetings needs to approaching new adventures with confidence.
- » People would have self-esteem, and crime would be at an all-time low.
- » Businesses would be knocking at our door to come here, the schools would be achieving "A's" and crime/drugs/welfare would all be diminished.
- » Every neighborhood/jurisdiction would have access to good schools, healthcare, libraries, parks and leisure, food, jobs, clean air/water/environment, safe streets, and social services for those in need.
- » Everyone having skillset to perform their jobs to their greatest potential.
- » Constant activity, 7 days a week people are downtown and elsewhere, able to work, have housing, and perform other activities.
- » Good jobs for all who want one.
- » Blight and poverty would disappear.
- » A technological, totally self-sufficient living, smart/self-sufficient homes.
- » For all of Dayton residents to embrace all Dayton residents.
- » To reuse buildings like Memorial Hall and the Arcade.
- » To build a grocery store near downtown.

- » Equal education for all Daytonians, specifically inner city East/North/West and better preparation from high school to university.
- » Public schools would also be thriving.
- » Our poorest neighborhoods would have better access to jobs, healthcare, good neighborhoods, raising the threshold of what's our bottom line.
- » Shared vision built on trust and communication and leadership that inspires collaboration.



WHAT'S ONE THING YOU WOULD IMPROVE OR CHANGE IN DAYTON TO MAKE IT MORE VIBRANT?

Individuals wrote...

- » Gardening
- » Convert trash to fuel.
- » Solar and [...] on all empty lots.
- » Get a population with work/job enthusiasm.
- » Get away from government suppressing economic activity.
- » Investment in upgrading housing stock and amenities in neglected (lower income) neighborhoods.
- » Investment in schools.
- » Better quality jobs, support the available workforce and grow that.
- » Mental health issues, better resources and addressed thoroughly, end stigma around them. (AA (like sponsorship)).
- » Support innovation more fully: entrepreneurial businesses rather than corporations for economic recovery.
- » Income + neighborhood improvement.
- » Good paying jobs.
- » Build and reform the west side of Dayton.
- » Make mandatory training for Police departments.
- » Expedite job training
- » Advertise our region as being a great business environment. Build a career, afford a home, and raise a family.
- » Increase job opportunities that pay enough to enable families to thrive (\$15 minimum wage)
- » Better PR (for arts, parks, low prices, roads/airport). Promote business opportunity. Encourage University of Dayton/Wright State University/Sinclair Community College grads to remain after graduation.
- » "Community" schools if parents can't get kids to suburb schools that have room.
- » Draw and eliminate the "color line" in religion
- » Redefine what we expect as "economic success." If we can't guarantee hard working people a decent life, what's wrong with the model?
- » A more highly integrated, flexible education system (K-12, higher ed, public, private) designed to emphasize rapid acquisition of skill sets (soft, hard) needed to be successful in today's/tomorrow's economy.
- » Disparities due to racism/greed. Racist politicians and agenda-driven politics. All problems stem from racism/greed. The crack epidemic was not addressed as the current opiate epidemic is being addressed. Resolve the Willie Lynch Syndrome.
- » Building communication and trust across institutional and cultural boundaries. Schools improved. Community reinvestment. People being interested in the community.
- » Jobs and social justice for everyone.

- » More options for diverse populations.
- » A “real” sense of community. Invested in the community. Pride in the community.
- » Good schools. Training. Good paying jobs. Neighborhood reinvention.
- » Improve DPS.
- » Release funds from banks for neighborhood/home improvement.
- » Good paying jobs for all.
- » Money and resources to tackle the issues we face.
- » Stronger partnerships between state/federal government with local government.
- » Community and economic development assets and resources equitably distributed.
- » Eliminate redlining in lending, food, healthcare, retail.
- » Equal access to career, jobs.
- » Less politics, more change!!
- » Realign school funding.
- » Create a business development ecosystem.
- » Pride in all neighborhoods. Physically cleaning our neighborhoods. More access to affordable food, clothing, and other goods within Dayton City Limits.
- » Technology (all levels) and education (all levels)
- » Promoting new business and outside companies to move operations here to make employment more competitive, resulting in higher wages and a higher rate of people moving to the city and AWAY from it.
- » No one wants to be a teacher in inner city Dayton. Children are “bad” and not easily teachable. Increase wages for teachers in Dayton inner city through tax increases. Higher wages for a more competitive teacher selection to raise test scores and government funding.

The large group prioritized...

- » Work to resolve issues of classism, racism, and value people and what they do.
- » A flexible education system with job training for jobs that pay a family wage and encourage college grads to stay here.
- » Utilize workers who are here for innovation
- » Grow businesses rather than attract business, have a local business eco system
- » Quality education at all levels, start at elementary to build schools; too much emphasis on college
- » Build communication and trust; more engagement; eliminate cultural boundaries/prejudice
- » Links between education and economic vibrancy

WHAT ASSETS, RESOURCES, AND STRENGTHS EXIST IN DAYTON?

Individuals wrote...

- » Colleges: Sinclair workforce development; The other universities for 4-year degrees
- » Airport
- » Wright-Patterson AFB
- » Dayton Development Coalition
- » Entrepreneur Center
- » Honest people, corporations, small business, public info
- » Entrepreneurial identity, innovation and engineering skills and values, energy, identity, vision
- » Strong sense of homegrown community: family, hard work, sense of duty, mutual caring, Midwestern values, friendliness, courtesy
- » Tool and die manufacturing
- » Water (mentioned xx times)
- » Water
- » Water
- » Water
- » Lower cost of living than many of the areas in the country
- » Relatively low labor costs
- » Property values and availability
- » Senior network
- » Hard-working, resilient people
- » Technical engineering hub
- » Educational resources: U of Dayton, Sinclair CC, Wright State, Clark State etc
- » Very strong industrial and educational technical history
- » Local community colleges and universities
- » Robust inventory of colleges/universities
- » Location. Dayton is near the heart of lots of industry
- » Logistics (I-70 and I-75)
- » Business and family friendly community: Low tax rate, low crime, good median income, good housing costs, good schools, good quality of life
- » Great colleges and universities and technical schools
- » Great success by Dayton Development Coalition, chamber and economic development officials
- » Water, rivers, parks, bikeways

- » Tradition of innovation, grit, industriousness
- » Higher education institutions
- » Wright Patterson AFB
- » Low traffic
- » Cost of living reasonable
- » Advanced education institutions
- » Midwest values
- » Nature
- » Immigrants/growing ethnic community
- » History of innovation
- » Univ of Dayton and Sinclair Community College
- » Agriculture and water and natural resources
- » History of innovation
- » Universities and schools
- » A growing ethnic and cultural communities
- » Potential manufacturing development w/vacant 50-plus acres over 20 blocks in west Dayton for sale
- » Vacant lots/abandoned or neglected homes can be key point in vitalizing neighborhoods
- » Good business infrastructure: Interstates, water, universities, WPAFB, training, low traffic and cost of living
- » Welcoming attitude to immigrants and refugees
- » Appreciative of innovative business ideas
- » Strong pride in Dayton identity
- » Public-private partnerships
- » Farming, closeness to land, growing bio-intensive and potential green revolution
- » Churches have a following (black churches). Use collection money to start businesses. We need to take care of ourselves.
- » Educators
- » Community inclusion
- » The river is a connector, not a dividers
- » Non-profits, strong philanthropy
- » Foundation money (Dayton Foundation, Premier) directed to venture capital
- » Sinclair Community College
- » University of Dayton
- » Wright State University

The large group prioritized...

- » Good business infrastructure:
- » Water
- » Highways
- » Higher education
- » Wright-Patterson AFB and related companies
- » Labor costs are low/untapped resources of people who could be working
- » Low housing costs/unused real estate/buildings
- » Strong senior network/mentors
- » Agriculture
- » Culture becoming more diverse (immigration), leads to innovation
- » Honest people
- » Arts – though could improve
- » Innovative library system



WHAT ACTIONS MIGHT WE TAKE TO MAKE DAYTON MORE VIBRANT IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS?

Locally grown economy

- » Research our potential
- » Build an identity to market ourselves, global, innovation, crossroads, water/agriculture (know who we have here to know how we can adjust our markets for their needs)
- » Retain, recycle our own money, not franchise, have a business-friendly ecosystem
- » Incubators – strengthen the entrepreneurs but not only in technology

Community and inclusion

For individuals...

- » Shared meetings, meals among churches
- » Increased communication/cooperation among community groups (not looking for recognition)
- » Community groups

For community groups and government

- » Follow through on promises
- » Consistent contact and response with community
- » Community based policing based on respect for community

For employers

- » Inclusion by mission (inherent, not for numbers)
- » Accountability for inclusion of others

Quality education

- » Families must ensure that kids are ready to go to school each day
- » Resources of our wealthiest districts must be shared with the less wealthy
- » Community involvement in leading the education process
- » The economic pressures, plus the lack of family formation, makes it difficult for parents to engage in kids' education
- » Work with lower-performing districts to ensure they perform at the level similar to other schools

STATEMENT TO NEIGHBORS

At the end of the conversation, we asked participants to write down a statement they would want their neighbors to know about community vibrancy, to share with those that couldn't attend the event:

- We need to build trust among different communities
- How can we improve our daily lives as neighbors, neighborhoods, communities
- When we come together, we can tackle any issue and build a prosperous future. Everyone needs to get involved and bring their talent, energy, ideas, and insights to the table.
- There is a lot of wisdom, energy and good ideas/talent here. With a few more sessions and the right process we could help make action happen.
- There are local people interested in community problem solving and improvement. How can some system connect these people and empower all of us to act?
- The Dayton region's economic issues are a complex situation, with many solutions. Few are easy ones.
- I met more of my neighbors and now my community feels more familiar.

I believe listening and respecting every voice is foundational to our ability to address the challenges we face.

- Journalists lead the way in promoting the assets of this region. Inspire our elected officials and citizenry to market the region as a place with resources and drive to do work.
- We discussed local incentives to make Dayton more attractive to investors, business, retaining residents.
- We have more in common than differences. I appreciate you and your input.
- It's great that Daytonians care enough about these issues to be here.
- There are people who care and want to improve the entire community.
- I attended a two hour discussion with a diverse group of folks, looking into the assets and disadvantages of our community. I'm feeling most impacted by one women's work against police brutality. Her son was shot and killed in Moraine last October.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

Using the discussion as a guide, here are the questions participants want political candidates to answer, with the help of Your Voice Ohio journalists.

- What is the level of commitment to improve our economic situation for those who struggle?
- How are you going to make sure communities have the resources they need?
- How do we get more change and less politics?
- What specific initiatives would you support to engage families, businesses, educational resources and non-government organizations in preparing human capital resources to meet the challenges of a new economy?
- How can/will you hold yourself accountable on the promises made during the campaign?
- Is there a way for the state/federal government to step away from local education and allow local solutions?
- Do you share ideas on how to encourage banks to start spending money they have set aside for community investment? How can the community help implement this?
- Would you support public banking for Ohio?
- What do you plan to do to restore partnerships between state and federal government and local government?
- What will you do as governor to improve the lives of common people across the state?
- Will you support AB931 – police accountability – SB1421 – Transparency –(from Ohio families unite against police brutality.)
- Will you support Medicare Expansion?



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NEXT STEPS

Reporters across these organizations are dividing up the questions now and reporting answers back to the community.

For up-to-date information and reporting, visit:

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