

# Your Voice Ohio: Vibrant Cleveland

Exploring how to make  
Cleveland a thriving  
community for all

October 3, 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.

Out of Ohio's metro areas, Cleveland boasts the largest economy, which has continued to grow in recent years. The region's strong manufacturing industry, and increase in mining, natural resources, and construction industries have strengthened the economy and led to a lower unemployment rate.

However, a low unemployment rate doesn't mean the community is thriving. Many journalists have written about the "skills gap" in NE Ohio, referring to what job seekers know and what companies need. This gap can keep potential skilled workers in low-paying jobs, preventing the economy from moving forward for everyone. One distinct area where this is happening in Cleveland is the tech industry, which has many open software jobs and few people to fill the positions. To help residents explore how to tap this potential, local journalists joined together to host Your Voice Ohio: Vibrant Cleveland.

On Wednesday October 3, 2018, at Lab Studios, residents met with members of the media to explore what Cleveland would like it if it was thriving for everyone in the community.

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 October 3, 2018, community members gathered at the Lab Studios in Cleveland, and over the course of 2 hours, discussed their experiences and identified local economic solutions.

We asked these four questions to prompt the discussion:

- 1. What would Cleveland look like if it was thriving for everyone in the community?**
- 2. What's one thing you would improve or change in Cleveland to make it more vibrant?**
- 3. What assets, resources, and strengths exist in Cleveland?**
- 4. What actions might we take to make Cleveland 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 CLEVELAND LOOK LIKE IF IT WAS THRIVING FOR EVERYONE IN THE COMMUNITY?

- » There would be jobs for everyone that wanted one. Jobs includes entrepreneurship.
- » The city would be clean because there would be enough workers maintaining the city.
- » There would be healthcare and adult/childcare for those that needed it.
- » The best educational system because people would value education.
- » Everyone has access to a free, quality K-college education so they have opportunities to pursue their dreams
- » A diverse economy would support a variety of jobs, educational opportunities, and social change. The economy would boost public transportation, transparent government, and public discourse about the city and the region, and their futures.
- » Public transportation / all over bike lanes network
- » Green spaces - not only a public square
- » Accessible fresh food and a way to get it
- » Walkable communities
- » Clean
- » Access to Lake Erie for everyone
- » Green jobs where everyone contributes to economy
- » Religion
- » Not a lot of vacant buildings like on this street - addresses, maybe signage, posters, art, color
- » Not a lot of vacant scrub lots when you ride the rapid
- » If there is no use for a block of buildings, they could make community gardens.
- » People of all ages in downtown area in the evening, not just when a special event is in town. Shops open. Restaurants open. People of all ages enjoying the city in the evening and throughout the year. Feeling safe.
- » Diverse, optimistic population.
- » Greater employment and real wages.
- » Maximum “deployment” of waterfront.
- » Maximum creativity on all fronts to continue to grow by maximizing our unique strengths.
- » More evenly cared for
- » Services would be better across city
- » Higher paying jobs
- » Fresh food in large amounts

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

## Individuals wrote...

- » Visionary leadership that doesn't have a personal agenda
- » Development of lakefront
- » Someone/organization that can pull together available resources for the good of the whole
- » Invest in human development for equitable, inclusive connected communities (40 percent of the city is marginalized)
- » Public transportation
- » Transparent government (A greater sense of community and inclusiveness and pride, who Cleveland is, a sense of neighborhood, at a young age
- » Green spaces/plant more trees
- » More bike lanes through neighborhoods to get around more easily (not only downtown and Ohio City)
- » Improve city services (street division)
- » More affordable housing downtown
- » Improve educational system
- » Wide-ranging education that offers opportunities
- » Better housing
- » Cleveland Foundation -- improve or change
- » Affordable housing so more people can live downtown
- » Public transportation
- » Green spaces
- » Leadership without an agenda
- » Education
- » Streets
- » Community development that doesn't divide
- » Make quality K-16 education free and exciting for everyone so that they can achieve their dreams
- » Help people of different life experiences appreciate/respect each other
- » Better transportation
- » Less segregation
- » Jobs -- better paying
- » Waterfront access and usage
- » Housing

## Large group responses...

- » Housing
- » Safety
- » Education -- Library, Lynde.com, brings people together at young ages, create variety of opportunities, teach child, different learning styles
- » Build capacity for people to achieve self sufficiency
- » Community members take responsibility/action outside of institutions, happening without investment
- » Fragmented, need more connections and awareness; easy to provide website for opportunities
- » Need vision
- » Sense of community/neighborhood -- inclusive
- » Sense of who Cleveland is
- » Family/neighborhood pride, culture
- » Transportation that works
- » Places to go

## The group prioritized these categories for change:

- » Community members taking action – 7 votes
- » Build inclusive communities – 4 votes
- » Safety – 3 votes
- » Transportation that works – 2 votes
- » Educational opportunities – 2 votes
- » Housing – 0 votes



# WHAT ASSETS, RESOURCES, AND STRENGTHS EXIST IN CLEVELAND?

## Individuals wrote...

- » Great examples of innovation that connect grassroots, neighbors and institutions
- » Strong interconnected roots and relationships
- » Neighbor Up Network
- » Neighborhood connections grants
- » Lake and water
- » Orchestra/arts
- » Research hospitals
- » People with money
- » Organizations that advocate for those without money/disadvantaged/victims
- » Good media
- » Strong neighborhoods
- » People -- diverse
- » Philanthropy
- » The lake
- » The river
- » Healthcare systems
- » Damn good newspaper
- » Hospitals
- » Museums and theaters
- » Senior programs
- » Religious community
- » Colleges/higher education
- » Urban farming
- » The lake/fresh water
- » Cleveland metro parks/beaches/green spaces
- » Inexpensive housing
- » Playhouse square, cultural places
- » Free stuff
- » Diversity
- » Longevity
- » Businesses with global reach



- » Transportation
- » Young population returning to downtown
- » Exciting sports/entertainment
- » Cost of living
- » Reserves, Cuyahoga and metro parks
- » Library
- » Metro parks
- » Cleveland Foundation
- » Beachfront
- » Tourism
- » Flats/river
- » Jewish community
- » Churches
- » Corporations
- » Builders
- » Artists
- » Museums
- » Unemployed
- » Colleges
- » Teens
- » Downtown shops
- » Fresh water
- » Malls
- » Hospitals
- » Medical facilities
- » World-renowned employers
- » Arts
- » Lake Erie
- » Weather -- no real extreme weather
- » Strong grassroots groups
- » Smaller communities
- » Untapped potential
- » Arts community



- » We are NOT on the coasts
- » Lake Erie
- » Marketable attractions to bring dollars into community

### Large group responses:

- » Identify → neighborhoods, city
- » Water/Lake Erie
- » Arts and culture
- » Parks
- » Money in town, including philanthropy
- » Emerging infrastructure (biking and walkability)
- » Senior programs
- » Religious community
- » Strong anchor institutions: healthcare, higher education
- » Weather → few deadly natural disasters
- » Newspaper
- » Strong roots / interconnected and close relationships; less egotistical; but segregation
- » Unemployed and teenagers → untapped potential
- » Innovation: emerging networks (like Cleveland 2019) to connect grassroots innovation and institutions



# WHAT ACTIONS MIGHT WE TAKE TO MAKE CLEVELAND MORE VIBRANT?

## Community members take action

- » There needs to be a vision. Example: community development corporations in our neighborhoods. No silos. A simple collective conversation.
- » Leadership that has the IT factor (something everyone wants to be around). That is good for the community. Caring, Compassionate. Accessible.
- » Change in mentality. Not just the leaders but the community itself.
- » Direct money to where it is needed. Money hasn't changed much
- » Bring the leaders together with a neutral voice to say 'this is what we need.'

## Build inclusive communities

- » Need people with ideas and talent
- » Need month to build and attract
- » Need to attract youth
- » Need locations for youth -- rec centers
- » Need sense of community and purpose
- » Answer question: How has online reach impacted interaction?
- » Non-profits need support
- » Groups want to talk about youth but never bring them to the table
- » We need to listen and take action
- » Cultural garden -- diverse -- maybe better than exclusive cultural celebrations
- » Media is too negative

# 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:

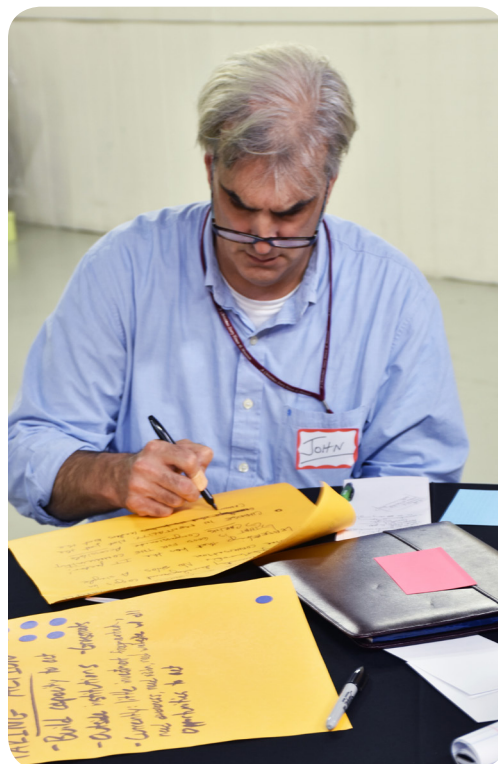
- Cleveland is a great place to live!
- I realized that we need to invest so much more in grassroots innovation outside of institutionalized settings, like the way “Birthing Beautiful Communities” emerged.
- Look into these groups: Sustainable Cleveland, Urban League, Neighbor Up
- Feeling of safety for citizens. People are concerned about our city.
- Institutions aren't built for innovation. It starts from residents. It starts from community.
- Please get involved in our community, we need your ideas.
- Cleveland has many amenities that we take for granted.
- Clevelanders want the best for each other.
- Community celebrations - in Little Italy or Greek Orthodox Church - that are intended to share that culture with others can actually make outsiders feel more excluded.



# PERSONAL ACTIONS

Using the discussion as a guide, here are the personal actions attendees will take to make Cleveland a more vibrant place for everyone in the community.

- Continue to research ways to become involved in being a part of the solution, to grow and develop Cleveland.
- In the next two weeks, I will invite neighbors to support each other at the West Park Neighbor Night, Oct 10.
- Talk to school about their before and after school activities. Recycling.
- Making sure people speak up and to their concerns about their quality of life.
- In the next two weeks, I'm going to finish a story on a vibrant community and how it got there. And hopefully my neighbors will read it, if I don't run in front of a bus first.
- Hold movie night for community as a civic engagement project.
- Be kind, try to be positive, and use less hatred language.
- Talk to John (and other staffers) about story ideas out of the meeting.
- I will look for a voice from a community that I know little about to include as an interview or genesis of story ideas.



# PROJECT MEDIA PARTNERS

[Akron Beacon Journal/Ohio.com](http://AkronBeaconJournal.com)

AKRON BEACON JOURNAL  
@OHIODOTCOM  
BJNEWS@THEBEACONJOURNAL.COM

The Akron Beacon Journal is a morning newspaper in Akron, Ohio, and is distributed throughout Northeast Ohio.

**CantonRep.com**  
CONNECTING STARK COUNTY

THE CANTON REPOSITORY  
@CANTONREPDOTCOM  
NEWS@CANTONREP.COM

The Repository is an American daily local newspaper serving the greater Canton, Stark County, Ohio, area.

**CLEVELAND Jewish News**

CLEVELAND JEWISH NEWS  
@CLEVELANDJEWISHNEWS  
ENEWS@W

The Cleveland Jewish News is a weekly Jewish newspaper covering local, national, and international news of Jewish interest.

**THE PLAIN DEALER**

 [cleveland.com](http://cleveland.com)

CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER  
@THEPLAINDEALER  
NEWS@CLEVELAND.COM

The Plain Dealer is the major daily newspaper of Cleveland, Ohio, United States.

**THE DEVIL STRIP**  
AKRON MUSIC, ART & CULTURE

THE DEVIL STRIP  
@AKRONDEVILSTRIP  
ROSALIE@THEDEVILSTRIP.COM

The Devil Strip is an Akron news, arts, music and culture organization.

**The Vindicator**

THE YOUNGSTOWN VINDICATOR  
@VINDICATOR  
NEWS@VINDY.COM

The Youngstown Vindicator is a daily newspaper serving Youngstown, Ohio, United States and the Mahoning County region as well as southern Trumbull County and northern Columbiana County.

**Tribune Chronicle**

THE WARREN TRIBUNE CHRONICLE  
@TRIBTODAY  
CONTACT@TRIBTODAY.COM

The Tribune Chronicle is a daily morning newspaper serving Warren, Ohio and the Mahoning Valley area.



WKSU  
@WKSU  
NEWS@WKSU.ORG

WKSU is a non-commercial educational radio station licensed to Kent, Ohio, primarily serving the Akron metro area, and is a service of Kent State University.



WKYC 3 CLEVELAND  
@WKYC  
CHANNEL3@WKYC.COM

WKYC is an NBC-affiliated television station licensed to Cleveland, Ohio, United States.



# 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:

**YOURVOICEOHIO.ORG**

**@YOURVOICEOHIO**

