

# **Your Voice Ohio: Vibrant Warren**

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

**September 30, 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 Trumbull County, Ohio, the number of jobs fell almost every year until 2017. Residents have also voiced their concern about the lack of public transportation, cycles of poverty, abandoned buildings and blight, a negative self-image residents have of the city, and a lack of opportunities for young people.

To confront these obstacles head-on, and identify the assets, resources, and strengths Warren has, local journalists joined together to host the community event, Your Voice Ohio: Vibrant Warren.

On Sunday, September 30, 2018, at the Warren G. Harding High School gymnasium, residents met with members of the media to explore what Warren 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 September 30, 2018, community members gathered at the Warren G. Harding High School gymnasium, 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 Warren look like if it was thriving for everyone in the community?**
- 2. What's one thing you would improve or change in Warren to make it more vibrant?**
- 3. What assets, resources, and strengths exist in Warren?**
- 4. What actions might we take to make Warren 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 WARREN LOOK LIKE IF IT WAS THRIVING FOR EVERYONE IN THE COMMUNITY?

- » Source of real employment (not make work)
- » Hard working people feeling real success.
- » Emphasis on doing good things
- » Everyone to have an opportunity for gainful employment.
- » Those unable to work have food, shelter, access to medical care.
- » Lots of fruit trees and more community gardens.
- » Improved bike trails
- » Clean/solar energy
- » Repair roads/buildings/infrastructure
- » Recycling
- » Green jobs
- » More events
- » Dog park
- » Living wages
- » Stronger education for young minds that's tweaked to individual students to help with their personal development and not a collective whole. Education is important to building community strength.
- » Alternative renewable resources in area.
- » Community programs to support the youth and struggling members of society in Warren and neighboring areas.
- » Diversity of jobs.
- » Civic participation.
- » Linkage to sub-community/subdivisions (local)
- » Living wages
- » Renewable energy
- » People gainfully employed - living wages
- » Art + amenities increase/high quality of life
- » Culture becomes about what's possible rather than what used to be
- » Infrastructure/quality of life attract and retain young professionals
- » Higher school grades

- » I think our area could be a prime example of how cultural diversity can play the biggest role in building a bright and sustainable future. If we could use the strength of our cultures and put the differences aside, we could create heaven on earth.
- » Higher school grades
- » More jobs (full time, more than minimum wage)
- » Abandon building clean up
- » People being more connected with each other and more visual street activity
- » More jobs
- » Less eye sores
- » More things to do, recreation for young people accompanied with security
- » Neighborhood watches
- » Cleaner community
- » Educated kids who contribute as adults
- » It would have people staying in Warren, not moving out.
- » Factories would come to Warren
- » Downtown would be full of people
- » No blight
- » No people wandering the streets
- » Fewer overdoses
- » No lines at food pantries
- » Better paying + more jobs
- » Downtown alive at night
- » A place people want to live
- » Higher paying jobs
- » More arts
- » Less blight
- » Appreciate what we do have
- » Transportation
- » Night life
- » Community NP Program Investment
- » Safer roads
- » Clean neighborhoods + clean roads
- » Jobs and better advertisement/sharing of jobs
- » Happy families

- » Jobs
- » People working together
- » Community groups having events for everybody/not for select
- » Events all over Warren, not select sides of town
- » Pleasantville
- » Bright
- » More job opportunities with better pay
- » A more lively social scene
- » Less corruption
- » Opportunities/atmosphere that make young people want to stay here
- » Walkable
- » River-centered
- » Diverse
- » Grounded in the past but forward-looking
- » A place where my kid wants to stay and others want to join her
- » Vibrant downtown (CBD)
- » Safe neighborhoods
- » Employment
- » Reliable public transit
- » Manufacturing jobs!
- » Good jobs
- » Entertainment
- » Health care options
- » Transportation
- » More young people
- » A more diverse economy
- » More educational opportunities
- » Better performing schools
- » Spiritual connection to Earth's resources and people's purpose to live a meaningful life by participating in our democracy, education, business, and thriving institutions with the people's involvement.

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

## Individuals wrote...

- » Activities for everyone (young, old). Neighborhood cleanups and beautification (of abandoned homes and buildings). Bring in revenue/jobs for community (federal grants, small, or large businesses → invest in local programs)
- » Beautify parks, beautify downtown.
- » Clean up properties.
- » Connections for residents.
- » Transportation
- » Parks
- » Public transit
- » Improve parks systems
- » Abandoned buildings
- » A green economy will attract new businesses, which, if taxed right, will in turn help build our infrastructure back up.
- » Citizens better organized
- » Downtown has to be full of stores. The movie theatre has to open again.
- » Drugs are driving people out of Warren.
- » Nothing for the youth...
- » City administration
- » Communication of information
- » Complacent/stuck in the past attitudes
- » Social atmosphere
- » Hope
- » Politics
- » Unions
- » Transportation
- » Communication
- » Younger people have a sense of and invest in ownership of tomorrow
- » People moving back downtown
- » Think of itself as a region
- » More jobs
- » More family involvement in education

- » Better job training
- » Transportation to jobs
- » Attract young people
- » Increased entertainment
- » Economic development
- » Higher test scores from high schools
- » More job opportunities
- » Self image, which affects how others view us
- » Poverty
- » There needs to be more employment opportunities in our valley (entry level to long-term jobs).
- » We obviously need to change the way we attract businesses into our community because we are not having much success.
- » Change the way schools and businesses relate to one another
- » Attract businesses that can utilize the valley's existing manufacturing infrastructure for additive manufacturing, bioscience, food production, environmental sciences
- » Apprenticeship opportunities; live-work; higher incomes; employment
- » Quality housing stock
- » Positive self-image
- » Entry level opportunities
- » Attitude adjustment - motivation to be working to grow your self
- » Point out many local opportunities that do exist
- » Transportation
- » Green space
- » Bike trails
- » Solar energy
- » Recycling
- » "Green jobs"
- » More emphasis on educational extras; less emphasis on sports
- » Cultural identity and sharing
- » Cooperation among entities
- » Connect all people to opportunity: education/training; living wage jobs; healthy, affordable food; enhanced infrastructure to support increased physical activity
- » Collaboration and cooperation among entities
- » Explore green/living wage jobs opportunities



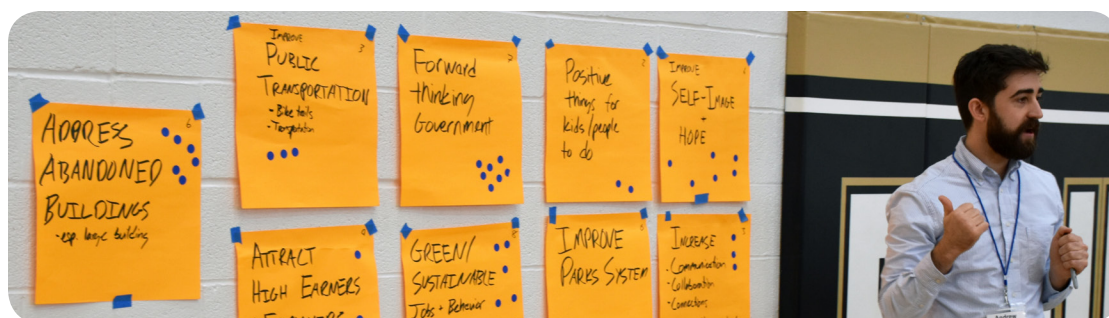
- » Bike trail!
- » Eco-friendly sustainability
- » Clean up, plant plants, community trash clean up
- » Integrate forms of renewable energy into areas in the community to better the community and create jobs in the community
- » Push for more art in the area. To bring community and beauty into the area.

## Large group responses...

- » A forward thinking progressive city administration
- » Improve communication among different groups -- make One Warren
- » Need hope to imagine what can be
- » Need useful public transportation
- » Nothing for people/kids to do, improve the parks, bike trails opportunities for engagement
- » Do something with abandoned buildings
- » Need more marketing strategies to attract employers/people, we have a negative self image
- » Need sustainable living and jobs related to sustainability
- » Need government-community collaboration

## Community issues prioritized by votes:

- 9** Attract high-earners and employers
- 8** Green/sustainable jobs and behavior
- 7** Forward-thinking government
- 6** Improve self-image/hope
- 5** Address abandoned buildings
- 3** Public transportation
- 3** Increase communication, collaboration, connections across the community
- 2** Positive things for kids/people to do
- 0** Improve parks system



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

### Individuals wrote...

- » Hardworking people to solve any task
- » Media: Business Journal, Warren Tribune Chronicle, Vindicator to apply investigative journalism with business community to diversity area's economy
- » The art community is a resource that is not utilized in the area to its full potential. That could bring the community together and make it more beautiful
- » Marketing strategies that attract employable people
- » Hardworking
- » Trumbull 100 Group and all of its members
- » Eastwood Mall complex
- » Packard Park and Music Center
- » Tribune paper (Warren Tribune Chronicle)
- » The work ethic; non-profits
- » The people
- » Highway access to rest of country
- » River/water
- » Big city amenities at low cost (concerts, art museums, local theater, higher education, library, hospitals)
- » Low cost of living
- » Manageable size
- » Church charities that help support families, young people; after-school activities
- » Cost of living
- » River
- » Sense of history/place (as long as it's not disproportionate)
- » Schools: Pre-k to grad
- » Highways
- » Airports
- » Parks; bike trail
- » Cost of living
- » Care centers/hospitals
- » Art community
- » Hard-working blue-collar workers
- » Good people/resilient, want to see the want to improve the area

- » We interact, see each other; we went to school mostly together; we don't need a lot of money to turn out
- » You can speak to a large number of people at one time
- » Affordability
- » A lot of kids/communal
- » Land/space
- » Cultural diversity
- » Unutilized green space
- » Unspent grants
- » Small business owners
- » Various organizations
- » Internet
- » Cultural diversity
- » Antiquated
- » People's connection to area
- » Community gems such as Mill Creek Park and The Butler Museum
- » Cost of living
- » Philanthropic resources
- » Reviving city centers
- » People who care about doing good work
- » Good work force
- » Youngstown Business Incubator; Warren Tech Belt Energy Innovation Center (TBEIC)
- » Manufacturing expertise
- » Good food
- » Great arts/culture opportunities
- » Young professionals
- » Affordable housing
- » Strong highway system
- » Cost of living
- » Low cost of living
- » Good location for distribution: Roads, rail, close to large population
- » Workforce that needs work

## The large group prioritized...

- » Warren Tribune Chronicle, Youngstown Vindicator, local media
- » People: Available, want to work
- » Location: Highways and water
- » Livable small city with amenities; low cost of living; familiarity and closeness
- » Close to many higher education opportunities
- » Access to internet
- » Great (underfunded) art community
- » Hospitals
- » Non-profits, churches, ESOP (Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People, a housing and financial support organization)
- » Small business owners



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

## Attract high-earners and employers

- » Recruiters for businesses: Low-cost of living; quality workforce; tax breaks-require hiring local folks
- » Educate the work force
- » Utilize current building for the future
- » Businesses: Past support the future; Midwest Silicone Valley; Green jobs

## Support green/sustainable jobs and behavior

- » Environmental cleanup: Make it a fun event; youth and adults participate; incentives for business and people who participate; school credit
- » Energy generation: wind, solar, water, compost/trash; buy sell energy from turbines to the city
- » Public green space: plant perennial edible gardens and pollinator plants; government funded community gardens and gardener jobs
- » Animal crossings: Fences on highways, seed bomb perennial edibles
- » Recycling programs: Public recycling attendant jobs; weekly home pickup; vending-style recycling machines; incentives to recycle

## Forward-thinking government

- » Generate income
- » Support clean-energy research and development
- » Reverse dwindling government services
- » Term-limit people who aren't doing a good job
- » Support green manufacturing

## Improve self-image/hope

- » Tell a more inclusive story about our community, with a different ending
- » Focus on our strengths
- » Use schools to give out info about things to do/opportunities
- » Parents instilling work ethic into kids

## Address abandoned buildings

- » Inventory and prioritize abandoned buildings
- » Identify responsibility and assign accountability
- » Go to resources for funding/brownfield recovery
- » Eliminate excuses
- » You cannot market a site until it's ready
- » Find a way to incentive use of existing brownfield properties

# 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:

- Our community as a whole is loving, challenging, empathetic, and resilient. We want to rise to set the example for the world again! We just need to come together on where to begin.
- Listen to one another and do your best to help.
- Have faith in trying to work on environmental conservation.
- We need to have a positive self image of our community and create a vision for our future if we are to have one.
- Happiness, hope, inspiration, motivation, health, and proactive action are vibrance. To change our community, we should live centered within these things, do our best and keep at it every day.
- Unite the community as a whole. Look into clean alternatives for power (solar, wind, etc.). Deal with/ repurpose abandoned buildings. Utilize people and space in the community. Address problems as a whole.
- Unleash the "retirees" for sustainability. Ask in local papers for help and encouraging civil involvement. Advocate for community support.
- Please keep your lawn cut.
- We make the different with action not talk.
- Community vibrancy is up to you.
- This group gives us the opportunities to share thoughts with others.
- We have a lot of strengths, but it is time for our government and economy to modernize.
- This raised my level of thinking about how we are important to build civic discussions.
- Cooperation and collaboration is critical - who leads?
- Assign responsibility and ownership.
- Focus
- You are not alone. We are all in this together.
- Work hard and take care of your family.
- There are people interested in moving this area and its story forward.
- You can do it, we can do it!
- Making an effort to be a part is the first step to change.

# PERSONAL ACTIONS

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

- Start a fire within people again by speaking about these issues more openly.
- I will investigate the abandoned property issue, and as a property maintenance professional see if I can clean them up.
- Will investigate solar power more seriously
- I will help promote a positive image of Warren/Trumbull County
- Set up community programs to address problems.
- Get public making the green/sustainable future.
- I am going to look for positive things that Warren, Ohio offers.
- Attend a City Council meeting.
- Raise money for economic development in Warren.
- Run for office to make the change we need.
- I will identify positive local developments and write stories about them.
- Research a community to visit for forward thinking government model.
- Relay this information to local government officials.
- Continue to be a part of constructive conversation and determine my role in creating/supporting solutions.
- Do more research on local unemployment - more specifics per area employers' needs.
- Working on public transit.
- Train students for work.
- I work and pay taxes which help my community.
- I will tell a story about vibrancy that people think needs to be told.
- Start talking about the good things that are happening here.



# LOCAL MEDIA PARTNERS



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.



WFMJ-TV  
@21WFMJNEWS  
NEWS@WFMJ.COM

21-WFMJ is an NBC-affiliated television station located in Youngstown, Ohio, USA.



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.



# 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**

