

What's your future,

Green?

July 2019



Background

On June 17 2019, 22 Green residents met with each other and local news media for the second of three pre-election community conversations sponsored by the Your Voice Ohio media project, which is listening to people across the state discuss how they envision better places to live – and how to get there. Your Voice Ohio is a statewide collaborative that uses community engagement to rebuild trust between Ohioans and Ohio media.

The following report documents notes collected from this two-hour community problem-solving conversation.

Conversation Summary

In [two community meetings this summer](#), a theme emerged that Green’s culture often avoids problems that exist in families, neighborhoods and the community.

There was concern for:

- Attitudes toward residents dealing with addiction.
- Attitudes towards young people who choose skilled trades over college.
- Concern that the city was attracting wealthy elderly people, perhaps alienating young adults and failing to provide for seniors unable to afford the more expensive lifestyle.
- Attitudes regarding residents in poverty -- while Green’s median household income is far higher than the national and state rates, the city still has about 2,500 people living in poverty.
- And pointed concern about lack of diversity in a city that is 93 percent white

Brainstorming about how to create a better Green, one person wrote: “Everyone is forced to get to know one person outside of the social circle/comfort zone.”

Another: “Get everyone involved in their community, less focused on themselves.”

After participants zeroed in on the most important problem-solving conversations, the session entitled “admit problems” drew the largest group.

The meetings are designed and run by the state-wide news-media collaborative Your Voice Ohio, which is listening to residents all over the state in order to better represent their concerns and solutions in the news and in democratic processes. Nearly 30 meetings with more than 1,000 people have been held in communities from Cincinnati to Youngstown and Lima to Marietta.

Your Voice Ohio will continue the conversation in Green with [a follow-up event](#) in August. The final session, at 6 p.m. on August 6, will explore ways Green can become comfortable with diversity as a community asset. The session will be held at Greensburg United Methodist Church, 2161 Greensburg Road. Ideas from these meetings will be used to shape local issue coverage ahead of the 2019 local and 2020 national elections, giving the community a voice in the democratic process.

Doug Oplinger, Your Voice Ohio



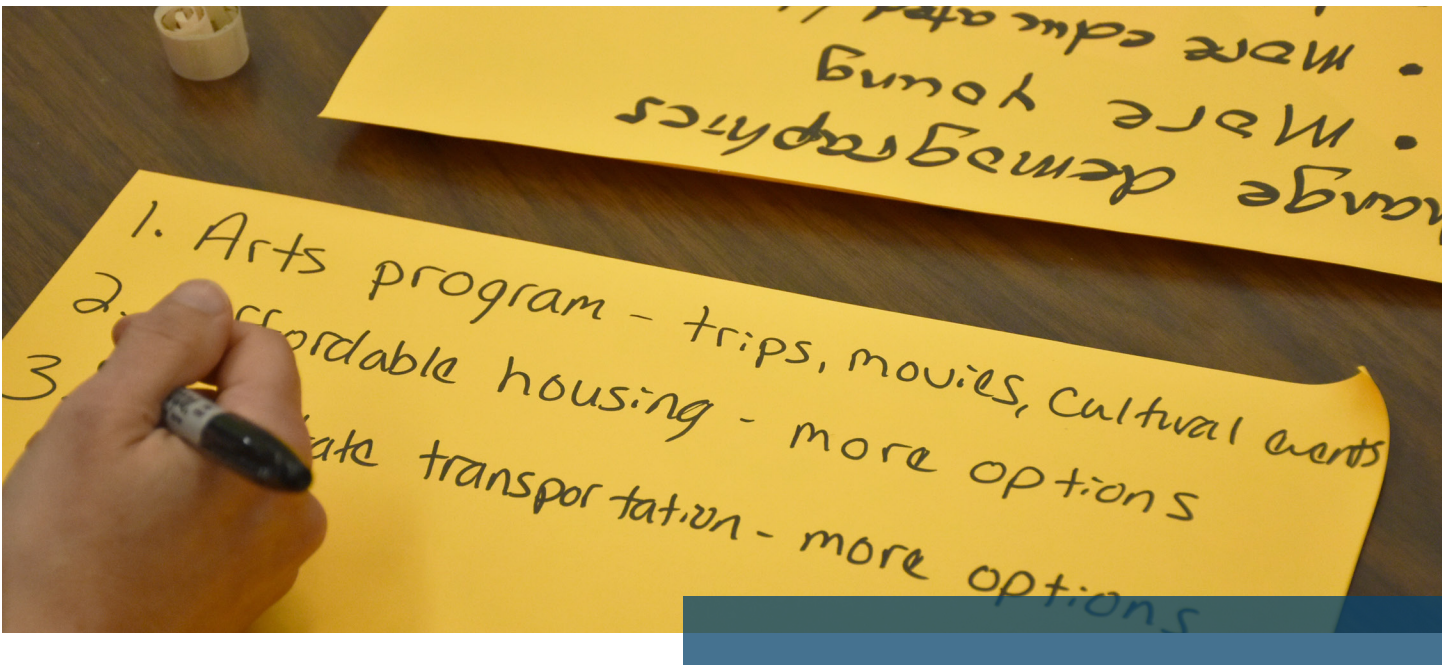
Participants were asked to initially write their answer to a question, then discuss with their neighbors at a table conversation, and finally report back to the large group.

What would your community look like if everyone was happy?

- Everyone has a place at the table and feels welcome to participate in civic and leadership roles
- Crime free
- Friendly neighbors- help others more
- Kids could play freely
- No crime
- No unemployment
- Everyone matters
- Good high school graduation rate
- People helping people
- No health care issues
- No addiction
- No pollution
- Inclusive
- Diverse
- Healthy
- Respectful
- Part of a community: community can mean many things, online, neighborhood, local group
- Contributing
- No one in my community would be in poverty or starving and everyone would be able to attend schools. Also everyone would be able to do what they want to do with their life.
- Low unemployment
- Diverse/inclusive
- Low crime rate
- More engagement with neighbors
- High performing schools
- Eliminate addiction
- It would have a sense of unity not around people or officials, but a desire for everyone to share in all that is good about the community
- There would be no opioid epidemic
- Crime would be virtually non-existent
- Racism and bigotry would greatly decrease
- Every school kid would go to school with full bellies and ready to learn
- Safe family oriented environment
- Access to quality support for those in need
- Low crime
- Caring, accepting neighbors that value diversity
- Hold strong values and collaborate natured (?) community
- No hunger
- All people living in safety-shelter and emotional safety
- Those who wish to work have jobs that provide a strong standard of living and fulfillment
- Access to arts

What would your community look like if everyone was happy?

- Neighbors would all know each other and show concern for another
- People would walk out and about freely without concerns for safety
- Schools would thrive without concerns for funding
- Everyone is truthfully informed of laws and news events
- Establish atmosphere of promoting educational pursuits
- Honest relationships
- Volunteering to help others, e.g. elderly disabled
- Everyone would respect and care for each other
- Fully inclusive and more diverse
- Healthier
- Comfortable discussing issues
- Respectful with different ideologies
- A greater sense of community
- Grateful and appreciative of one another
- Supportive
- Better job equality and opportunity
- Connected to one another
- If there was need readily known and responded to that need
- Neighborhoods, out and engaging
- It would be a community where everyone respected each other's values and opinions, despite differences
- Looks good
- Houses kept up
- Crime would be down
- Everyone would have everything they want.
- No one would be poor and have any opportunity they want.
- Little or no crime
- Citizens have enough to eat
- Little or no illicit drug use
- Everyone would be smiling and friendly their neighbors



What would you change about your community so that everyone can live a happy, fulfilled life?

- Have more neighborhood events so you could get to know your neighbors and be more friendly to them -- bonfires, parties.
- Create forums in which all citizens feel empowered to share their thoughts on what it is like in the community; create action plans addressing the feedback at forums
- Good job opportunities; financial and emotional support for families in need so kids can go to school and learn
- Shorten labor hours; mandatory community meetings
- Make local government more accountable to the people
- Hopeful, wise, forward-thinking leadership that listens to the people and acts with those voices in mind
- Everyone is forced to get to know 1 person outside of the social circle/comfort zone
- Bike trails/walking trails throughout the city
- Crime/sense of safety; more patrolman
- To make hunger less I would like to see food available to parties and bus and transportation available to those in need.
- Create further/stronger connections between organizations -- religious political and secular -- to partner together to work towards identification needs, issues in the community
- More education and job opportunities
- Demographics: Get younger, more diverse more educated (talented)
- I would change the level of trust in our leaders
- Solution-focused and putting individual interests aside for the greater good; less admiring of the problems/perceived problems and more involvement/volunteering, less social media
- Improve communication
- Work to remove the stigma around poverty, addiction and mental illness
- Hold more open events that allow everyone to come together to know each other with games of movies, etc in the central park or a central part of Green so more people can get to know their neighbors.
- Attract and welcome new and diverse young families without alienating existing citizens with civic engagement; literacy program; recognize affluence
- Increase civic involvement/participation



What are the assets, resources and strengths that exist in your community?

- 3 Highway exits; schools; parks; but not the airport; medical facilities; safety services
- Schools; parks; roads; shopping/retail; safe community
- Great schools; the city has \$/resources; low crime/ safe; a lot of civic minded/caring people; a fairly tolerant community; the schools are in excellent financial shape
- Schools; money; committed residents; wrap around services; strong community leaders; families that love our city; strong business community
- School system/ career readiness; parks/nature surrounding city; sports leagues; support organizations/blessing in backpack/ good neighbors; drug task force
- Strong school system; many organizations - diverse; green good neighbors; there is an interest towards helping one another; opportunity for growth; starting to address some of the needs -> drug task force, connective trails, growing awareness of poverty (even though we may not acknowledge it)
- Schools (school systems are strong); websites (easy ways to notify the city about things that are happening in green); sports (many kids in our district are involved with sports and we have good conditions to play)
- Civic-minded businesses; city has lots of money invested in community improvements; grocery stores; churches; interchanges; airport; great schools; higher ed options are close by; generosity of heart; nice rural / suburban mix; parks
- Good school system; financial stability; city have multiple types of communication w/ citizens; people care about their community
- Relative visible affluence, but we don't really use it; great parks; developable land; emergency medical facilities; good schools
- Pride; willingness and desire to be better; locations; schools
- Great parks and school system
- A sense of pride in our community as we watched our city grow from a township to a city with excellent services and schools.
- Good schools; good infrastructure; nimisila reservoir; good parks; CAK airport
- People - untapped resources; location; schools; services
- Quality education; proximity to several business and shopping markets/economies; pride/sense of community identity
- Peoples/values, etc; schools; parks; fiscally strong city; access to 77 & proximity to Cleveland, Akron, canton; healthcare facilities; AKC Airport; safe/low crime; community activities (city, churches)
- Open communications from government through FB, newsletters, news articles, videos of monthly council meetings, and weekly or open door talks with the mayor
- A mayor who works hard with multiple departments and other governments to make improvements in the city
- Good schools; plenty of shopping, eating, etc; parks - plenty; roads - getting better + paved; places to worship
- Good school system-plcc; Caring people; long time residents; parks + golf courses
- Parks and trails - green has a lot; economic growth / new businesses; good school reputation; good property values - people want to live here; local paper / local news; recycle events

Prioritization of solutions

To prioritize the changes participants said they wanted to see, all of the ideas from Question 2 were posted on the wall. Each person received two sticky dots and was asked to stick them to the changes they thought most important. The top 4 changes with the most dots then became the focus of detailed small-group problem-solving conversations.

Improve communication; Leadership that listens – people being heard – 11 votes

1. Expect elected leaders to respect the opinions of residents
2. Encourage people to attend public meetings by creating a more welcoming environment and by better communicating meeting times
3. Fair and accurate reporting
4. Encourage people to vote and become informed about candidates
 - Leaders: address # 1 & 4
 - People: # 2 & 4
 - Journalists: # 2, 3, 4

Bring together different groups to create solutions/ Find ways to encourage civic engagement (combined) – 15 votes

People:

- Concern is that family commitments and dynamics have them over-committed or they have jobs necessitating more time than they can offer

Leaders:

- Offer programming that will get people to lean into community
- Sneak in opportunities for people to weigh in on issues, such as at community events (Freedom Fest, Celebration of Education, Health Fair)
- Partner with established events
- City/Chamber welcome packets to new residents, make aware of different events
- Job fairs

Media:

- Use social media
- Communicate events and jazz up topics offered

Facilitating people to know each other; more events to gather people, people of diversity/Change the demographics: More young, more diverse, more educated/talented workers (combined) – 10 votes

1. Arts program – trips, movies, cultural events
2. Affordable housing – more options
3. Facilitate transportation – more options
4. Emphasis on trades
5. Job options – keep younger people local
6. Better marketing of community events
7. Events targeted to groups: Singles, no kids, non-family events
 - Leaders: address all
 - People: # 1, 5, 6, 7
 - Journalists: # 2, 4, 6, 7

Support families in need/Food and transportation to meet needs – 4 votes

- Did not discuss

Remove stigma of poverty and addiction – 2 votes

- Did not discuss

Acknowledge biases and differences – 0 votes

- Did not discuss

After participating in this meeting, what action do you want to take?

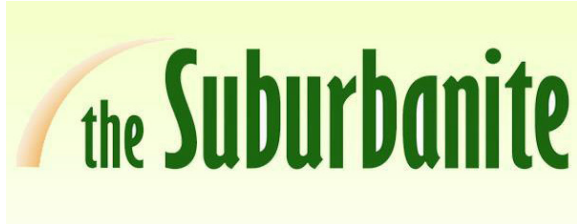
- Encourage friends and colleagues to get involved.
- Engage more with my neighbors and do some neighbor events like a bonfire
- Go to a school board or city council meeting
- Stay engaged in civic discussions
- Keep speaking out on uncomfortable issues
- Talk to more people
- Go to city council meetings
- Read and speak to others about the good in Green
- Start a film club
- Listen more
- Volunteer and participate to effectuate proposed changes
- Be more active in civic organizations
- Get contacts engaged on these important issues
- I need to check out nextdoor.com and connect with leaders and groups to build even better connections in the community
- More community events
- Get more involved in community



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Doug Oplinger @ doplinger@yourvoiceohio.org

Participating Newsrooms



Participating Organizations

