

**What's your future,**

***Green?***

**June 2019**



# Background

On June 30 2019, nearly 40 Green residents met with each other and local news media for the first 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

Relationships, acceptance of differences, acknowledgment of problems were among the things Green residents said they wanted to address to help make the city a place where everyone can live happy, fulfilled lives.

Unlike most Your Voice Ohio events, which have been in urban and rural settings from Dayton to Youngstown, the conversation in Green was in a mostly white community with levels of college education and household income significantly higher than other parts of the state.

A theme has emerged across the 28 meetings from more than 1,000 people who have participated in conversations about addiction, the economy and now local elections: Ohioans crave for relationships, respect and dignity.

The pre-election conversations began in Akron with four sessions around the city. In an area where income and education trail most surrounding communities, people identified relationships as critical to creating a happy community. In Green, that was the top issue as well – perhaps.

Also ranking high and drawing the largest audience for creative problem-solving during the two-hour session was a concern that the city is unable to acknowledge it has problems, among them hungry children, poverty, addiction and attitude issues regarding socioeconomic class.

Solutions to both – building relationships and acknowledging problems – included more community conversations, city and neighborhood parties, focus groups and courage to have frank conversation about problems coupled with examples of how those problems have been addressed successfully. Those conversations occurred within a context of residents recognizing that Green has high levels of income and education and meanwhile experiences uncomfortable conflict at both the local level and reflective of national politics.

What didn't emerge as a key concern in Green but was heard in most other urban areas was the need for jobs with living wages. Instead, residents expressed concern that too many young people pursue expensive college education when there is a need for skilled trades. An alternative, some suggested, though, was free college.

We're continuing the conversation in Green with [two follow-up events](#) in July and August. The second session, at 6 p.m. on June 17, will again explore how Green can become a community where all people can live happy and fulfilled lives. The topic for the third, at 6 p.m. on August 6, will be determined after the second session. The sessions will all be held at Greensburg United Methodist Church, 2161 Greensburg Road. These 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 would have enough to eat
- Everyone would be productive (job, volunteer)
- Everyone would have health needs met
- Leadership would motivate people to care for others, be responsible, exhibit community pride
- It would look very progressive with little to none anger amongst the citizens.
- The city council would be able to create new programs without having to protect their backs.
- No one would be on drugs.
- There would be no violence.
- Neighborhoods would perhaps be equal and well maintained.
- Color or age would not matter.
- There would be less personal attacks and ‘gotcha’ and more civil discourse
- Neighborhoods would be more friendly. And we would have more longer term residents.
- Fantastic – happy – friendly – loving – safe.
- Clean, like new. Children outside playing with no fences. Parents having time for their kids.
- Active, socially, politically.
- Co-operative.
- Environmentally aware.
- Charitable – give back.
- Looking to everyone’s safety.
- The people in my community would look happy with a smile on their face and would be doing activities to help others. The community would be diverse and committed to helping others.
- Safe on streets, homes
- Adequate safety forces
- Open neighborhood discussions to address problems and concerns.
- Schools should be getting high marks.
- It would have a mixture of homes, incomes, businesses, ethnicity, churches
- Sidewalks and front porches, golf cart pathways
- Accessible to: shopping, foods – groceries, recreation, parks, restaurants – including other than fast foods, schools, churches (The point is access to these. We have these – but NOT easy to access to all.
- People expressing themselves and their thoughts/ feelings openly and honestly (being their true selves)
- Harmony in some aspects – people working together for common goals; But not stifling individuality/creativity
- Encouraging and open to people thinking outside the box
- Open and welcoming to people from different backgrounds

*What would your community look like if everyone was happy?*

- Inclusive and represented but understanding and accepting and working towards various values
- Able to happily compromise when needed on behalf of someone else's happiness
- Efficient traffic and road system
- No crime
- Good school system 1-12!
- Facilities for recreation and other group activities
- There would be no poverty and everyone would have jobs. The roads would be in perfect condition. There would be affordable housing for all.
- Clean environment
- Healthcare- affordable, accessible
- Neighbors helping neighbors
- Parks-activities for all ages
- Transportation services for those needing assistance
- Jobs – that are meaningful
- Opportunities for all to live how they would like to live
- Like Green now... harmonious flow, family-oriented, community-oriented
- Extremely attractive to those outside
- We would be a leader in service to citizens
- I would be ecstatic because the community would look exactly as it needed to in order for everyone to be happy. Quality of life investments would be expected and not resisted. And our community would be leaders in development of not just buildings, but lives and minds.
- More smiles on peoples' faces
- Less development – more open green spaces
- More ethnic diversity
- No hungry children
- Caring government oversight
- "Safety net" options for people in need
- Adequate parks and recreation facilities/ organizations
- Thoughtful zoning/planning
- Appropriate police/fire protections
- Good schools
- Parks (Safe/clean)
- Safe – with good police
- Churches – friendly to whole community
- Community activities – family friendly
- No arguing over inconsequential matters
- People seeing good in all
- Big picture
- Neighborhoods
- People would be open to new ideas and willing to work towards the community goals.
- Races working together for positive change
- Plenty of well paying jobs
- Local government a good representative of population.
- Children not afraid in school
- Quality schools
- Less crime
- Everyone would possibly accept people for who they are
- No food insecurity
- All able to access and afford healthcare
- Neighbors helping neighbors
- More civility
- People would see their roles, regardless of what they are, and others' roles as equally important and appreciated.
- Trust is important – trust that would eliminate some of the fear that exists between different people.
- Understanding that we are not all the same – so we need to help one another to have all the basic needs met.
- Friendly.
- More community events.
- A happy, pleasant place people would be considerate and accepting of others. People would do their part in taking care of the community property and people. People would work together.
- Safe, loving, tolerant
- Meaningful jobs (and Income)
- Lots of green health environments

*What would your community look like if everyone was happy?*

- Lots of caring neighbors
- Diverse
- Community problems would be drastically reduced including: Crime (except outsiders), drug use, even better schools – preschool for all, reduced poverty
- Our differences we celebrated, our similarities understood
- Low to zero unemployment
- No need for free and reduced lunches in school/ eliminate blessings
- All learning disabilities could/would be “solved” (for both young people and adults)
- No crime
- Great partnerships between all demographics (i.e. schools and senior citizens, schools and business, business and the city)
- Addiction a sign of the past
- Little to no crime
- People involved in their community
- Equitable food access
- Universal health insurance
- Non-discriminatory policies for racial/ethnic & LGBTQ+ minorities concerning housing, finances, and banking
- A fair built environment for all areas of Green, not just near the business.
- Education is a priority.
- People would be able to reach out to surrounding communities to help since our needs (poverty, crime, etc) would not be an issue.
- We would be financially stable
- More friendly involvement in the neighborhoods
- No fear
- More respect for one another.
- Housing for all
- Everyone being heard
- Jobs for all
- Access to education
- Reduce drug use – clinics



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

- Encourage neighborhood talk sessions over the back fence
- Create an open forum to address issues in the community
- Listen to one another; government listen to all
- Involve the community more in important decisions; initiatives for advisory opinions
- Sidewalks so kids can visit friends, not walk in the streets; Community involvement in decisions and get together
- Well-paying jobs with opportunities; Financial stress and burden is a root cause of much: Limits education, creates waves; community value of including everyone connecting, seeking information
- Not much; better road system
- Awareness – using systems to share needs, eliminate silos of resources and possibilities; community connections to work together and support efforts together
- Open areas for community kids and groups to meet and play together; safe zones for teens
- Reduce income inequality
- Community education/involvement; encourage diversity (people moving into the area); community needs assessment/information dissemination
- Get everyone involved in their community, less focused on themselves
- Get people to listen before speaking and forming an opinions
- I have lived here for 25 years and still do not feel a community cohesiveness city or rural community?
- Election of council members and executive working together; Better transportation
- Cost of living; basic needs met for every person; less access to drugs; reduce teen pregnancy
- Community/neighbors/people would interact, work together, care for one another; listen, meet regularly to discuss, plan and act
- I would change the quality of life if I could. So many people need more basic things that we take for granted
- Improve schools – skills that are marketable; stricter enforcement of drug laws; more affordable housing; communication
- People need to be more concerned about others instead of self; People need to work for the good of community instead of own agenda; work with addicts to meet their needs – get into rehab, get a job (60 minutes report about W.Va. reform)
- Eliminate the shame and stigma that cloud troubled areas of our lives; remove the idea of embarrassment so we as a community can discuss and resolve problems; be known as a welcoming community towards minorities so they feel more comfortable moving here; Deter addiction and actively ask for help and recognize severity of the disease; get to know our neighbors better; courage in leadership; partner with Stark State and Kent State Stark.
- Eliminate concept of keeping up with the Joneses; help people not feel like they have to maintain a certain lifestyle/status/home and trying to achieve perfection – but instead just be happy and live life to the fullest without trying to be better than your neighbors
- Communicate between government and citizens; some way to foster wider participation in civic affairs
- Higher education at no cost to students
- Community interaction with schools regarding safety, food security, transportation, respect
- Inclusion and acceptance admitting there are things to fix (i.e. hunger, safe schools)
- Communication between others
- Incivility and lack of transparency in government; be respectful of citizens even if you don't agree with them
- Be held responsible for our actions, speech, children, etc.; accountable
- Have more help in the community with the drug problem

*What is one thing you would change about the community?*

- More interaction between diverse groups: ages, socioeconomic class, etc.
- Cost of living; community opportunities (get to know your neighbors), community perception
- Courage in leadership
- More participation from the community in assisting those with food insecurity
- Improve the flow of traffic; community meetings/ brainstorming; community events/interaction
- Respect of others regarding all areas: Political, religious, race, age
- Acceptance of diversity
- People would listen to each other; cooperate with one another; get to know each other
- Get along – put aside differences, respect political, religious, economic [differences]; Acceptance; parenting of social media; listening



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

- 1. Our people! (adult and kids) Some may need more guidance but people are our greatest strength; 2 Schools - welcome questions, visits, etc. alumni greatly untapped resource; 3 Parks; 4. Our “look” zoning may be a pain, but purposeful; 5. Media - sub, leader, ABJ; 6. AC Airport; 7. Sheriff; 8. Medical care; 9. Shopping
- Develop-able land; great parks; wealth of experience and knowledge as a result of suburban sprawl; airport and highways; fast emergency care; would like to have an old timey main street
- Planning/oversight; good school facilities; parks/recreation; trying to keep up with traffic issues; friendly businesses / more jobs
- 1. Very friendly; 2. Safe; 3. Good schools; 4. Parks; 5. Great, easy to get to, medical care
- Good schools; park system; roads; clean community; roundabouts; shopping; senior living
- Wealth; PLCC; pre-existing build environment; business collaborations; airport; gov’t available for interaction; Kent/stark state; church communities
- Judy; green has good schools; good sports program for kids; several parks; good neighbors to help people in need
- Schools; meetings like this; silent zones (no cell no wifi)
- Good safety services; extensive parks surplus in budget; many willing and concerned people to be guided to for change
- Many community groups; schools & gov’t trying to bring some groups together. Some overlap starting; these conversations
- Clean community; most people are friendly & support school functions
- Education; resources; location; room for expansion
- Lots of parks; good fire stations/personnel; airport; sheriff stations; good schools
- Money; lots of people seem to have time to volunteer for issues that are important to them; space to do those events
- Schools; community outreach; church partnership
- Schools, churches, organizations, government > working together toward common goals, using the resources, strengths, and assets of each to accomplish something big & bring meaningful change; embracing diverse interests & offering; social media - broad reach communications; parks - utilize beautiful spaces available to offer
- Strengths and assets; more community activities; good schools (mark); affordable housing (double edged sword)
- Communication vehicles - green newsletter, green leader, suburbanite, social media, website, etc.; use our government to bring the city together; schools
- Strengths + assets; electronics; growing community; diversity in businesses; those people that are active in the community bringing in more people; the face that we have money to help; the fact that we have a lot of people in the community
- Need to be able to focus on priorities < school system; local businesses; government committees; green leader
- What are the strengths and assets of our community to achieve...; we have the financial resources, both government and residents; we have good people, with [a] good mix of education; we have great parks & recreational areas; we have good schools
- Assets; schools; Green Good Neighbors; churches; gov’t programs (parks, hiking trails (b)); business groups congregating(); tax base
- Education; encouragement; enthusiasm; creativity; use of resources in creative ways; “you listen to my idea & I’ll listen to yours”
- Tax Base < focus use of money where concerns exist; talent in community; people who care and want to be involved
- 1. Companies be involved with training h.s. Seniors; 2. local politicians display respect and civility; 3. Churches interact with each other often; 4.
- Good schools (including PLCC); good roads, infrastructure; CAK; Diverse businesses; green auto mile; park system; good govt svcs (Charter); portage lakes



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

- Friendly; long standing members of community; history; good parks and utilizing the parks/ golf courses, freedom fest - brought outside people to community
- Parks; Community centers; intelligent/diverse populations; opportunity to bring people together to share ideas/get to know one another; economic strength; excellent schools > opportunity to engage/improve; lots of volunteer/city opportunities
- Schools & Colleges close; Good road system to get to other areas; many parks and open areas; business; many historical building preserved and appreciated
- Assets; Schools; access to jobs; upper income community; form of government (non-partisan); security; road system
- Good schools; good job opportunities; nice neighborhoods; Good churches; nice parks; lots of shopping & restaurants
- Assets; assisted living; public services - library; parks - trails; GUMC (Facilities) YMCA, Green Good Neighbors; Tax base (good); people; good schools; grocery stores: urgent cares
- Schools; churches - but need to working together; community groups; charitable groups - good neighbors; blessings in a backpack
- Airport; schools; higher ed proximity; highway; \$20 million in unspent revenue; caring community; parks; grocery stores anyone?; ERs; community-minded businesses
- Good school system; educated people; good people willing to help
- Strong finances (govt); good economy; good schools
- Good schools; parks; location
- Assets: location; schools; parks; accessibility to larger cities and what they offer; physical environment; good people; recreation opportunities
- Positive government -(stable) moves forward despite some few disagreements; good school system - even if somewhat isolated from the community; excellent parks system



## 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.

### **Relationships: friendly, civil, respectful, connected, cohesive, caring, in government – 22 votes**

- Opportunities for conversations/meetings
- Neighborhood challenges
- Small groups
- City of Green yard sale
- Neighborhood parties
- Adopt a road/park clean
- Splash pad activities for families
- Trivia teams
- Yoga in the park – more activities

### **Admit/discuss problems, such as drugs and poverty – 21 votes (drew largest conversation group)**

1. Hire a specialist to work individually with people with problems
2. Destigmatize the problem so people will admit to issues
3. Share ways on how to succeed
4. Courage to address the issues
5. Focus groups to address problems and demographics
6. Awareness campaign to find out how people get and receive information and what is successful
7. Break out of comfort zone to see address problems

*What should leaders, people and journalists do?*

- Leaders: address # 1, 4, 5, 6
- People: # 2, 4, 7
- Journalists: # 3, 5, 6

### **Open communication with government, schools/ transparency – 15 votes**

- Vote
- Instead of complaining, go to someone in charge and talk
- Attend meetings
- Internet accessibility -- challenge in a diverse community
- Signs to give information on what's happening each day, such as city council
- Reach out to senior centers and housing

*What should leaders, people and journalists do?*

- Leaders: Use the Bulldog Blast
- People: Road alerts are useful, how alerts on what is happening

### **Education that is accessible, provides flexibility/ opportunity – 10 votes**

- Need to talk about opportunities for both college and technical training
- Earlier and more volume of information on technical school opportunity
- Economics of both

*What should leaders, people and journalists do?*

- Leaders: Career councils; business involvement with schools
- People: Career days, actual experiences, kids go to see
- Journalists: More articles on technical achievements and opportunities

### **Good jobs with opportunity: equity – 5 votes**

- Did not discuss

### **Better parenting – no votes**

- Did not discuss

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

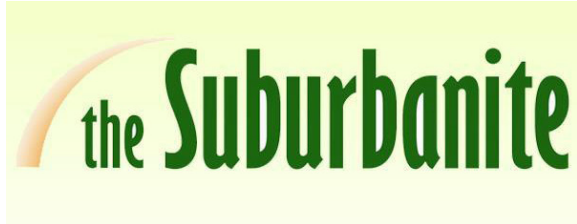
- Participate in career counseling sessions
- Talk with others about attending these meetings and other events
- Go to more city/community events; learn about/act on key issues in Green
- Work to improve, push down communications
- Be more active in expressing my views to representatives
- Invite someone to a meeting or an event
- Get to know more people in my community
- I will try to participate at city meetings
- Invite people to the July 17 meeting
- Be an encourager: Voting, church attendance, neighbors know each other
- I will attempt to be involved in my neighborhood
- Participate in more town activities
- Work on education beyond high school at low cost
- Report on issues people are concerned about
- Ask the questions of others as were asked in this meeting
- Communicate with neighbors better
- Create type of survey for communication preferences w/new senior community
- I live in Jackson and care what happens in Green
- I am willing to step out of my comfort zone and get to know different persons -- and connect with the neighbors I have to meet
- Work on making an inclusive LGBTQ environment
- I will get involved once I recognize a need
- Go to more meetings to try to come up with better ideas to help act on these ideas
- I want to continue to be part of conversations to help bring change. Then I want to have courage to take action and BE CHANGE.
- I would like to continue being involved in solving some issues addressed in this meeting.
- Public health activity
- Volunteer at a hospital
- Get to know more people in my community
- Meet more neighbors



# FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Doug Oplinger @ [doug@yourvoiceohio.org](mailto:doug@yourvoiceohio.org)

## Participating Newsrooms



## Participating Organizations

