



OHIO CITY

INCORPORATED

est 1836

2014 - 2016 STRATEGIC VISION



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MISSION AND VISION



MISSION

We lead the development of Ohio City by serving a diverse community of committed people, driving new investments in and preserving the history of a unique place, and promoting an authentic urban neighborhood.

VISION

Ohio City is Cleveland's most complete neighborhood, a destination for celebrating the urban experience and an ideal setting to make a home, raise a family, start a business, serve others, and live a full life.

PLANNING PROCESS

*planning
process*

To help guide the strategic planning process, Ohio City Incorporated engaged Strategy Design Partners (SDP) as consultant and formed a steering committee of board members and community leaders. The committee was co-chaired by board members Kathleen Knittel and JoAnn Uhlik, and met regularly to provide input and feedback. SDP worked with the steering committee and staff to develop a list of individuals and groups to contact during the external scanning process.

INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUPS

Interviews and Focus Groups SDP conducted 15 individual interviews and ran eight community focus groups. The interviews were conducted one-on-one confidentially with community leaders from the residential, institutional, business, political, and funding worlds, and engaged them in conversation on, among other things, the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The focus groups were held with 4-10 participants per group, with the exception of one meeting each held at CMHA's Riverview and Lakeview Estates (those meetings had roughly 25 participants each). The groups each were asked similar questions regarding their vision for the future of the neighborhood and what role they saw Ohio City Incorporated playing in the achievement of that vision.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Community Survey Ohio City Incorporated created a community survey to gather input from Ohio City stakeholders. The survey was posted online and hard copies were distributed at the annual meeting and dropped off at OCI offices, neighborhood businesses, nonprofits, and housing developments. Data collection began late March of 2013. After two months, the survey was taken offline to perform an analysis of the data. The initial analysis revealed that the 344 individuals had responded, a high rate based on the neighborhood population. However, the demographic information within the survey revealed insufficient representation of the diverse demographic composition of Ohio City.

In light of the initial demographic trends, the Steering Committee developed several strategies to increase outreach to underrepresented populations. The survey was translated into Spanish to make it more accessible to the Spanish-speaking community members. Nonprofit organization leaders distributed surveys to their clients. The Director of Community Affairs attended block club meetings and other neighborhood group meetings to explain the survey and encourage feedback, and staff conducted regular follow-up with organizations. The survey was also re-opened online but was not advertised. These combined efforts facilitated a stronger return.

Between the end of May 2013 and the beginning of July 2013, an additional 149 participants completed the survey. The end result was a significantly broader, diverse group of perspectives and suggestions for what Ohio City needs in the next three years. In all, over 600 individuals gave input to the planning process through interviews, focus groups, and survey responses.

INTRODUCTION



RAISING THE BAR

intro

Ohio City is experiencing great momentum. Over the last three years, Ohio City Incorporated leveraged the enduring assets of the community and the hard work of many individuals to garner attention, attract investment, and improve quality of life. Some organizational accomplishments from this period include:

- Establishing Ohio City as a leader in the burgeoning artisan economy by attracting over 50 new local businesses that decreased neighborhood commercial vacancy rate of the Market District from nearly 30% to less than 5% and will create over 700 new jobs
- Collaborating to build one of the largest urban farms in the country and establish Ohio City as a regional and national leader in the local food movement
- Providing recreational programming for children and families of all income levels
- Rebranding the organization and neighborhood through strong public relations and creating a social media platform that includes over 10,000 followers on Twitter
- Creating the third special improvement district in the City of Cleveland
- Celebrating the Centennial of the West Side Market to position the Market and neighborhood for future success
- Facilitating over 30 storefront renovations, with new storefront signs and bike racks along the commercial corridors
- Partnering to rebuild Market Square Park and implement a comprehensive wayfinding system in the neighborhood
- Increasing residential demand in order to grow the population, increase property values and decrease the foreclosure rate more than any neighborhood in the City of Cleveland
- Organizing Ohio City's nonprofits through the Ohio City Dialogues by focusing on resource leveraging, collaborating human services and connecting people to employment

Individually, these accomplishments are making important and lasting contributions to the neighborhood. When combined, Ohio City becomes a national story. There is unprecedented interest in the neighborhood as a place to make a home, start a business or visit.

The next three years are crucial for both neighborhood and organization. Ohio City will continue to grow. A recent market study opined that unmet demand exists for up to 1,800 new units of housing in the neighborhood. Inquiries from potential new businesses and developers have increased significantly. Ohio City Incorporated must work to ensure that the neighborhood and organization grow in sustainable and inclusive ways that encourage the neighborhood to flourish while preserving its physical and social character.

PEOPLE, PLACE, PROMOTION & POLICY

intro

Maintaining balance as Ohio City grows is critical to the future success of Cleveland and can serve as a national example of integrated growth. Demographic trends clearly show renewed interest in urban living that will have a dramatic impact on real estate development over the next generation. This growing interest is driven predominantly by college-educated individuals moving into from outside of the city. Unfortunately, trends also show that existing city residents are increasingly choosing to move to suburban communities and to leave regions like Cleveland entirely—Ohio City Incorporated believes this trend can and will be reversed through specific and intentional actions.

Ohio City Incorporated will work to retain new and existing residents of all ages and backgrounds, ensuring that the neighborhood is safe, has quality housing stock, and provides amenities desired by residents of choice. Ohio City must work to accelerate new residents' commitment and investment while intentionally preserving and nurturing opportunities for existing residents to foster an integrated, intergenerational community for residents of all backgrounds.

To accomplish all goals, Ohio City Incorporated will focus its efforts over the next three years on

People, Place, Promotion, & Policy:

- **By serving our People**, Ohio City Incorporated will improve the quality of life in Ohio City by making everyone feel safe, welcome, and connected by providing access to meaningful opportunities for enrichment.
- **By cultivating Place**, Ohio City Incorporated will improve the places and spaces within Ohio City, by planning for, attracting, and guiding appropriate physical development.
- **By leading Promotion**, Ohio City Incorporated will tell the neighborhood's story in a way that makes stakeholders proud and creates a desire to be part of the community.
- **By strengthening Policy**, Ohio City Incorporated will improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness by strengthening governance, streamlining and supporting operations, and engaging in meaningful collaborations.

PEOPLE



The people of Ohio City are its greatest asset. The neighborhood is a community of individuals who live, work, or spend time here. Ohio City Incorporated's goal is to enrich and improve the quality of life for all people in the neighborhood, regardless of age, cultural background, or economic circumstances. Ohio City Incorporated will accomplish this through connecting residents with opportunities to interact with neighbors, enhance neighborhood safety, eliminate blight, and access resources that will enrich their lives.

Ohio City continues to evolve, as do the needs of its people. Demand for housing in the neighborhood places increasing importance on strengthening connections between residents from different backgrounds. Ohio City is uniquely situated to serve as a national model of economic and cultural integration. This will require intentional efforts to ensure the neighborhood has affordable options for housing and that investment brings opportunity for all. Most importantly, it means connecting people through amenities that serve everyone, including excellent schools, parks, recreation, local healthy food, public transportation, and access to every day needs within walking distance.

SUPPORT SAFETY & ENGAGE THROUGH OUTREACH

people

SUPPORT SAFETY

Ohio City stakeholders place a high priority on neighborhood safety. Ohio City Incorporated will continue to empower residents to connect, partner, organize, and explore strategies to make the neighborhood unattractive to criminals. Ohio City Incorporated will also build a long-term foundation for neighborhood safety by providing economic opportunity, eliminating blight, introducing families to each other, and connecting neighborhood youth to educational, vocational and recreational activities that put them on a path to success. Ohio City Incorporated's safety activities will include:

- **Connect to Police:** Link to resources and act as liaison to law enforcement
- **Partner for Proactive Solutions:** Continue 2nd District partnership to provide free safety audits. Create a matching grant program to incentivize residents to make security improvements to their property.
- **Organize:** Empower residents to develop ideas around safety and organize volunteers; i.e. block clubs, Ohio City Shines, and conducting Court Watch
- **Create a Clean, Safe, and Attractive Community:** Explore opportunities to expand scope of services within existing Market District Improvement Corporation and consider geographic expansion to improve and broaden existing services
- **Strengthen Safety Partnerships with Neighborhood Institutions:** Coordinate with partners such as Lutheran Hospital, Saint Ignatius High School, West Side

Market, Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority, and others (banks, retailers, small business, etc.) to promote safety

ENGAGE THROUGH OUTREACH

Ohio City Incorporated will create an aggressive outreach plan to connect the organization to all stakeholders using focused, intentional efforts.

- **Recruit Ohio City Incorporated Volunteers:** Develop consistent opportunities for dedicated volunteers to connect to the mission of Ohio City Incorporated and foster further support of the organization
- **Connect to Marginalized Populations:** Bring Ohio City Incorporated to Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority. Meaningfully engage the Hispanic population as well as other disconnected areas and populations through events or partnerships.
- **Plan for Transparency:** Create transparent community processes that provide legitimacy for Ohio City Incorporated as a facilitator of community conversations and consistency for both neighborhood residents and individuals looking to invest and become a part of Ohio City
- **Ohio City Dialogues:** Foster continued partnership with neighborhood nonprofits in order to ensure that Ohio City remains known as a welcoming community, and that neighborhood nonprofits have meaningful relationships with community members and are contributing members to the Ohio City economy

CREATE THIRD SPACES & LIFELONG RESIDENTS

people

DEVELOP “THIRD SPACES”

Ohio City Incorporated will strive to develop and program “Third Spaces”- publicly accessible spaces that appeal to a broad range of people and provide opportunity for meaningful community interaction. These spaces include public parks, trails, certain retail and service businesses, churches, the library and community centers. As the neighborhood continues to evolve demographically, it is important to focus on opportunities for interaction between residents from different backgrounds and to ensure amenities exist for all neighborhood residents. Examples include park programming and Near West Recreation as well as partnering with existing “Third Spaces” such as the Carnegie-West Library and the West Side Market.

CREATE LIFELONG RESIDENTS

Ohio City Incorporated will continue to attract and retain residents by providing opportunities in the neighborhood for residents of all ages and backgrounds. By building an integrated and inclusive neighborhood that celebrates its diversity, Ohio City can serve as a local and national model.

Develop partnerships to engage youth:

- **Programming:** Expand and diversify programming options to include a broader range of activities for more children, including the expansion of Near West Recreation
- **Partnership:** Engage schools, religious institutions, and others to connect families to quality schools and support Ohio City’s children. Examples include partnering with Miami University’s Cleveland Urban Teaching Cohort, the Cleveland Transformation Alliance, Tremont West Development, Detroit Shoreway Development, the Near West Family Network, and Saint Ignatius’ Arrupe program

Provide Intergenerational Amenities: Provide amenities to promote an intergenerational neighborhood of choice for every stage of life

- **Families:** Connect children to schools of excellence and opportunities for enrichment
- **Seniors:** Work to ensure neighborhood is senior friendly, i.e. examine feasibility of Senior discounts and conduct a senior mobility audit that focuses on the ability of seniors to meet their day to day needs in a safe and efficient way
- **Millennials:** Continue to attract young adults into Ohio City and create a retention strategy to convert them into long-term residents

PLACE



Ohio City endeavors to be Cleveland's most complete neighborhood. It benefits from historic architecture, a walkable street grid, beautiful parks, intact commercial districts, smart and tasteful infill development, robust public transportation, multiple anchor institutions and proximity to economic opportunities. All this provides Ohio City with a huge competitive advantage and has spurred ongoing investment. To maintain and build upon these assets in a sustainable and inclusive fashion, Ohio City Incorporated must be visionary, creative, and focused in leading physical development.

Ohio City Incorporated will strive to create 21st century infrastructure that allows individuals to travel safely on bicycle and foot, as well as to connect the region to Ohio City through a strong public transportation system. This infrastructure will ensure that the neighborhood is accessible and navigable for the millions of people who visit annually. It will continue to support local businesses and serve as a magnet for entrepreneurs.

CONNECT THE COMMUNITY & SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS

place

CONNECT THE COMMUNITY

Ohio City will focus dense development along its major commercial corridors and ensure those corridors and developments are intentionally planned to be walkable, bikeable, and connected to transit. Adding dense multi-family and mixed use residential development along our corridors will enhance walkability and neighborhood safety by adding more eyes and ears on the street. Appropriately scaled development will accommodate the demand for growth while maintaining the affordability, family-friendliness and historic character of the interior of the neighborhood.

- **21st Century Infrastructure:** Plan and implement strategy for three major corridors, including bike infrastructure, public transit, pedestrian friendly enhancements, and parking as outlined in the Ohio City Incorporated Transportation Plan
- **Enhance Greenspace Opportunities:** Connect residents with recreation and green space infrastructure including trails, waterfronts, and neighborhood parks
- **Catalytic Real Estate Development Projects:** Identify and drive catalytic multi-family or mixed-use projects to completion
- **Eliminate Blight and Reposition Properties:** Facilitate infill projects by partnering with public and private entities to redevelop underutilized properties along major corridors
- **Create Revolving Loan Fund:** Identify self-sustaining sources to acquire and redevelop underused/problem parcels

SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS

Ohio City's culture and brand are defined in large part by its foundation of small and local businesses. Merchants, West Side Market vendors, small manufacturers and restaurateurs bring local flavor to residents and visitors alike. Ohio City Incorporated has been a strong supporter of local business development and will continue these efforts as well as focusing proactively on meeting untapped needs for specific neighborhood services and retail that do not yet exist.

- **“Third Space Retail”:** Create a plan to attract businesses that provide broad scope of uses for diverse neighborhood population
- **Expand Business Development Program:** Continue to assist in the attraction, retention and expansion of new and local businesses in Ohio City and work to integrate these businesses into the fabric of the neighborhood through expanding existing programs such as Storefront Renovation, Business Signage, and Bike Rack programs

LEVERAGE ANCHORS, HOUSING & LAND USE

place

LEVERAGE ANCHOR ASSETS

Ohio City's economy is driven in large part by the significant institutions and economic engines that call it home. Ohio City Incorporated will support and partner with key economic engines to provide jobs, services, and investment for the neighborhood.

- **West Side Market:** Develop long-term capital plan and campaign, implement transportation plan, and explore new merchant structure and policies
- **Lutheran Hospital:** Partner to position campus and services to meet neighborhood needs
- **Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority:** Nurture relationships and increase engagement with existing initiatives such as the Ohio City Farm to better connect residents to larger Ohio City community
- **Saint Ignatius High School:** Partner to integrate long-term campus plan into neighborhood

REFRAME HOUSING

To keep pace with demand and alleviate rising housing costs in the neighborhood, Ohio City Incorporated seeks to ensure that 500 new or rehabbed units of diverse housing, including at least 10% of which are affordable, have been created or are underway by the end of 2016. Ohio City Incorporated will also work to improve the existing housing stock in the neighborhood by partnering with property owners to spur reinvestment.

- **Position New Construction:** Facilitate development of 500 units of tasteful family-friendly housing that can be tailored to

diverse income levels utilizing vacant land and land bank lots. Work with local architects to develop designs that can be marketed to potential residents, and with the City of Cleveland to pre-approve designs and streamline land bank approvals

- **Maintain Affordability and Quality:** Maintain, improve, and introduce options for quality affordable housing across a spectrum of needs: single family homes, carriage-house pilot project, permanent supportive housing, ongoing CMHA conversations, and seniors in the city
- **Preserve Historic Housing Stock:** Link to resources such as a small grant program for existing housing stock (similar to Small Business Development Fund). Provide small grants to individuals in order to make minor exterior improvements to their home and make sure they are up to code. Promote use of existing partner resources, e.g., Cleveland Restoration Society and Cleveland Action to Support Housing. Partner with appropriate entities to improve code enforcement process in City of Cleveland

ENVISION THROUGH LAND USE

Ohio City Incorporated will work with neighborhood stakeholders and city officials to address neighborhood needs and growth trends by revisiting zoning code throughout the neighborhood, partnering with neighborhood stakeholders and city officials, preserving the single-family nature and historic character of the neighborhood interior, promoting continued presence of affordable homes, and priming appropriate corridors/parcels to accommodate dense development within historic context.

PROMOTION



Ohio City is a destination neighborhood that benefits from a strong brand and neighborhood events that attract a regional audience. The strength and reach of the Ohio City brand has grown exponentially over the past three years. The organization rebranded and renamed itself, partnered with the City of Cleveland to celebrate the West Side Market Centennial, developed social media platforms and earned media exposure for the community internationally.

Ohio City Incorporated will continue to tell the story of the neighborhood—including its people and its assets—in ways that will make existing stakeholders proud to be a part of the neighborhood and will encourage others to become part of the community. Ohio City Incorporated will drive investment in the organization and community through telling the neighborhood's unique story regionally and nationally.

EVENTS, CONTENT, DESTINATION & MARKETING

promotion

STREAMLINE EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING

Ohio City Incorporated has historically conducted several major annual events, which created an inefficient use of organizational resources. An increased number of requests from outside partners to provide neighborhood programming provide Ohio City Incorporated with an opportunity to focus its efforts on events in a new light through the following strategies:

- **Evolve from manager to partner:** Streamline to three annual events that Ohio City Incorporated hosts and manages. The new event calendar will include a Fall Festival that serves as a major regional event, an annual meeting that serves as an opportunity to celebrate the past year and connect with membership, and Evening in Ohio City, which will become the organization's major annual fundraising event
- **Partner for More Programming:** Sponsor and provide technical assistance to other entities' events that provide a neighborhood benefit through programming, e.g., Literary Lots, Ohio City Stages, and Brite Winter Festival. Evolve programs such as the Holiday Festival and Open Air in Market Square to events that Ohio City Incorporated assists with rather than directly manages. This will lead to more events for the community while allowing Ohio City Incorporated to focus on raising more resources

CREATE OHIO CITY CONTENT

The media world is changing dramatically. Individuals and organizations can reach thousands through social media platforms, while traditional mainstream media struggles to adapt. Organizations are increasingly finding opportunities to tell their story through creating content designed to support their mission.

Ohio City Incorporated will identify opportunities to position itself through content creation. These efforts will include launching a new website, designing Ohio City branded merchandise and evolving the Argus into a collection of themed publications that will each have a shelf life of one-year for specific audiences.

DRIVE THE DESTINATION

Ohio City is a growing destination for visitors. Ohio City Incorporated will leverage interest in the neighborhood and build a global brand for Ohio City to attract investment and ensure the neighborhood has the needed infrastructure to serve as a destination through the following activities:

- **Expand Hospitality Options:** Work with existing hospitality providers and identify new opportunities to increase options for visitors to stay in the neighborhood
- **Leverage the West Side Market:** Continue to partner with the City of Cleveland on the West Side Market Capital Campaign, marketing efforts, and operational reforms in order to ensure this important neighborhood asset continues to thrive for the next 100 years
- **Engage the Arts as Engine:** Partner with Ohio City's thriving arts community through supporting existing assets and events such as the Transformer Station/Cleveland Museum of Art, SPACES Gallery, the Brite Winter Festival, Ohio City Stages, Literary Lots and also develop new opportunities around the arts in the community

MARKET THE MESSAGE

Ohio City Incorporated will develop a Marketing Plan that seeks to create comprehensive and aligned strategy around brand, marketing, events, merchandise, and media platforms.

POLICY



Focusing on the People, Place & Promotion of the community is how Ohio City Incorporated will fulfill its mission. Ohio City Incorporated will create the foundation for this success by strengthening the policies related to its governance, operations and collaborations. These activities will ensure the organization is run transparently and efficiently. They will also ensure that Ohio City Incorporated is entrepreneurial in raising the resources necessary to deliver its mission.

GOVERNANCE, OPERATIONS, COLLABORATION & RESOURCES

policy

GOVERNANCE

- **Conduct By-Law Review:** Empower Governance Committee to undertake complete analysis of existing by-laws and make recommendations for improvements that foster representation of a majority of elected members but also provides opportunities to take advantage of regional interest
- **Empower Board:** Eliminate ex officio seats and create full voting rights for more appointed members (including former ex officio members) while maintaining a majority elected resident board. This will create a more deeply engaged leadership body for the organization
- **Create Effective Committees:** Create an effective committee structure to manage the work of the Board and to create a clear flow of information from staff through committees to the Executive Committee and Board. The committee chairs will become members of a larger executive committee. Potential committees include: Finance, Governance & Human Resources, Land Use & Physical Development, Fundraising & Nominating, Safety and Executive
- **Evaluate Membership:** Increase benefits of membership and require membership in order to receive certain benefits (such as reduced event prices and access to small business development fund and recreation). Explore development of a fee structure for membership that takes into account ability to pay and can serve as a fundraising tool for the organization

OPERATIONS

- **Invest in Existing Headquarters:** Plan to remain in existing offices for the next three years and renovate facilities over that time to create a professional environment reflective of Ohio City Incorporated. Position the property for future market leasing opportunities
- **Explore Commercial Property:** Identify opportunities for commercial property management, e.g. 3500 Lorain and West Side UCC. Ohio City Incorporated has become a leader in identifying and working with new commercial tenants in the neighborhood. It controls commercial space in several locations and has the opportunity to generate revenue by building on its knowledge of the Ohio City office market
- **Manage Transportation:** Identify neighborhood needs and priorities, position to manage assets while receiving appropriate revenue stream, e.g., parking and valet.

COLLABORATION

- **Near West Side Partners:** Focus on Near West Side partnerships. Strengthen existing collaborations for recreation, marketing and infrastructure planning. Identify opportunities to provide greater scale to existing partnerships and to create a near west side that serves as a national model of integration and the driver of mixed-income residential growth in the City of Cleveland
- **Internal Neighborhood:** Leverage resources to create opportunity and create organizational independence. Possible examples include the creation of a neighborhood revolving loan fund, the continuation of a small grant program and neighborhood programming

RESOURCES

Create fundraising committee to develop a comprehensive fundraising strategy that taps into the regional interest in Ohio City and the increasing professionalism of Ohio City Incorporated to drive the organization's resource engine through increased grants, sponsorships and individual donations.

CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

Ohio City and the larger Near West Side are at the forefront of urban revitalization in Cleveland. This revitalization has sped up significantly over the past decade and shows no signs of slowing down. This provides a great opportunity for Ohio City to add new residents, visitors and investment. However, the investment occurring on the Near West Side also has the potential to displace residents who have lived in the community for years, a challenge that is more prevalent on the Near West Side than in other areas of the region experiencing growth such as Downtown Cleveland and University Circle.

Ohio City Incorporated believes it is in the best interest of the neighborhood and for the larger region for more individuals with choices to continue to visit and to live in urban neighborhoods. The organization seeks to accommodate growth, but to manage it in sustainable and inclusive ways. These efforts will be visible in every aspect of the organization including how it plans for development and infrastructure, how it promotes itself and, most importantly, how it intentionally seeks to connect residents from different backgrounds to one another in ways that will positively impact themselves and the neighborhood.

While Ohio City Incorporated will focus its efforts on the People, Place & Promotion of the Ohio City neighborhood, it will not do so in a vacuum. The revitalization of the Near West Side neighborhoods are of regional importance and Ohio City Incorporated will look at meaningful ways to collaborate with adjacent Near West Side neighborhoods in order to take advantage of mutual markets, assets and economies of scale in order to build something greater than the sum of its individual parts.

Ohio City Incorporated has been a leader in the community development industry through building programs and initiatives that are more focused on where community development is going rather than where it has been. Ohio City Incorporated has built on the proud history of the neighborhood but also recognizes the opportunities presented by emerging trends such as social entrepreneurialism, preferences for shopping local, and the desire of the millennial generation to live in urban communities. Over the course of the next three years Ohio City Incorporated will continue to be forward thinking through focusing on sustainable and inclusive community development that creates life-long residents and develops 21st century infrastructure that connects residents to economic, social and recreational opportunities in and outside of the neighborhood.

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