



Stakeholder Engagement included:

- Facilitated a community meeting
- 40 one-on-one interviews
- 4 focus groups consisting of approximately 30 participants
- Survey (270 responses)

Strengths

- Convener, facilitator and communicator. OCI is seen as an organization that brings the community together and relays important information.
- Reputation. OCI is generally a trusted messenger.
- Relationship with local government and other institutions. OCI has strong ties to city government and nearby healthcare providers, schools, and service providers.
- Near West Recreation. Stakeholders, especially those with children, felt that Near West Recreation provided quality programming and brought the community together.
- Ohio City's vibe. The neighborhood has a special feeling to it that attracts residents and businesses.
- Engaged business and residential community. Residents and business owners care about their community and are interested in what is happening and how to make a difference.

Weaknesses

- What does OCI do? Stakeholders did not understand what role OCI plays in the community.
- Leadership transition. OCI's leadership transition has left many feeling that OCI is rudderless.
- Follow through. Multiple stakeholders raised concerns about OCI's ability to finish what they start.
- Financial health. OCI lacks the financial resources to always be effective.
- Relationship with developers. Many stakeholders feel that OCI's relationship with real estate developers is too close.
- Governance. OCI's board could be more effective.
- Staff morale. Employees lack clear direction and accountability.

Opportunities

- Unifying vision. Creating a unifying vision allows OCI to define roles and responsibilities.
- Stabilizing leadership and creating accountability structures. Internal and external accountability structures will allow stakeholders to understand what OCI does and why it does it.

- Shared services. Exploring shared service models with peer organizations provides financial stability.
- Planned infrastructure improvements. Planned projects like the Irishtown Bend, Lorain Midway, and public transportation improvements allow for OCI to leverage placemaking.
- Changing demographics. Young families and individuals aging in place create the need for new programs and the opportunity for a multi-generational community.
- Near West Land Trust. Affordability is a nearly universal concern. The Trust provides one tool to help mitigate rising costs.
- Intentional community engagement. Creating structures for community engagement to elevate disparate voices allows for new ideas and effective advocacy.

Threats

- Public expectations. Because roles and responsibilities are murky, OCI is expected to be all things to all people.
- Changing political environment. Changes in political leadership both locally and nationally create threats to OCI's grant revenue.
- Cost of housing. Housing costs continue to rise.
- Gaps in the retail market. Even with subsidized rents, OCI has been unable to attract certain types of retail businesses.
- Perceptions of quality of life/safety. Some stakeholders do not feel safe in Ohio City.
- Failing assets. Some real estate assets have been financially unsuccessful.
- Conflicting viewpoints. The community feels strongly but is often divided in its opinion. When OCI takes sides, some feel misrepresented.