OHIO CITY

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STRATEGIC PLAN

2025 ★ 2030

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AN INTRODUCTION

Ohio City is a historic neighborhood in Cleveland. Originally incorporated as its own municipality in 1836, it was annexed by the City in 1854. Its rich history includes President Garfield's regular preaching at Franklin Circle Christian Church, St. John's Episcopal Church's stop on the Underground Railroad, and hosting Cleveland's first public celebration of Pride and Black Pride.

Home to nearly 9000 people, the community has seen rapid growth in recent years, attracting families and young professionals, while still supporting long-time residents. While diverse, the neighborhood is majority white (56.1%), with a significant population of African Americans (25.1%) and growing populations of Hispanic (15.9%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (3.7%) residents. The community is economically diverse as well. Nearly 35% of households earn less than $25,000 per year while nearly 10% earn more than $200,000 per year. Over 38% of residents have incomes above the 400% Federal Poverty Threshold while nearly 31% of families live in poverty (Center for Community Solutions, 2024).

Broadly seen as one of Cleveland's most trendy neighborhoods, restaurants, breweries, and local businesses have flourished. According to the American Community Survey 2022 5-year Estimates, nearly 74% of residents rent their homes while 26% of residents own their own home (Center for Community Solutions, 2024).

Anchor institutions include West Side Market, Garrett Morgan School of Leadership and Innovation, St. Ignatius High School, the Carnegie West Branch of the Cleveland Public Library, the Urban Community School, and Lutheran Hospital – Cleveland Clinic.

Ohio City Incorporated (OCI) was founded in 1975 as the community development corporation responsible for preserving, promoting and developing the Ohio City neighborhood. OCI serves residents and businesses through advocacy, housing, community engagement, neighborhood planning, and special events. OCI owns multiple properties, including Fairview Gardens, a senior affordable housing complex, and partners with Ohio City Detroit Shoreway in three other affordable housing ventures. OCI also manages the Special Improvement District, serving Ohio City's commercial corridors, and runs Near West Recreation programs.

While Ohio City has and continues to change, it remains an attractive place to live, work, and play. Stakeholders are passionate about the community and celebrate its diversity in residents and businesses, its unique atmosphere, and its energy. Ohio City has a "vibe" that's hip yet historic; at times funky and eclectic; open and vibrant. It is a community that brings neighbors and visitors to common spaces to unwind and have fun. As the community changes, though, it finds itself at a crossroads and the challenge to hold onto Ohio City's vibe becomes harder.

As OCI maps out its future, it must recognize these community intersections, made more difficult by its diverse populations and disparate stakeholder expectations. OCI will need to clarify its role in the neighborhood. To be successful, it cannot be all things to all people and must focus on its core strengths. As an advocate, convener, and place maker, OCI can protect Ohio City's "vibe" – the community's way of life - now and into the future.
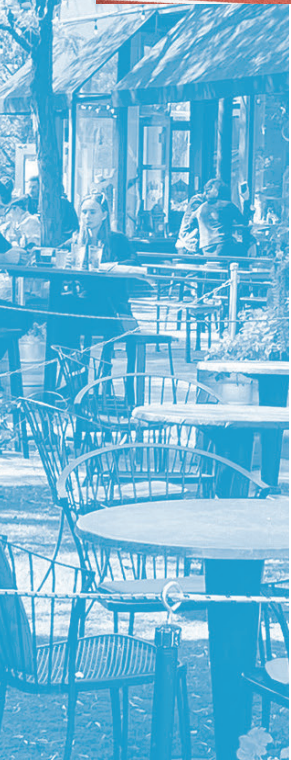
THE PLANNING PROCESS

OCI is at a pivotal moment, having not revisited its strategic plan since 2019. Leadership changes within the organization and the Board of Trustees, as well as the evolution of Ohio City itself, create an opportunity to align OCI's mission, vision, and goals with the current and future needs of the community.

OCI engaged Pelham Advisors to develop their new strategic plan, meaningfully engaging multiple stakeholders, assessing the organization, and conducting strategic planning workshops. In the development of this Plan, Pelham conducted 40 interviews and 4 focus groups, facilitated one community meeting, deployed a survey completed by 270 residents, and held a day-long session with board and staff members around Mission, Vision and Values.

This plan incorporates stakeholders' feedback, identifies organizational priorities, and creates measurable objectives, all of which align with new Mission and Vision statements. When implemented, the organization's financial and organizational infrastructure will support its needs so that OCI can continue its contributions in making Ohio City a thriving community.

MISSION AND VISION

Mission: OCI strives to enhance the quality of life for those who live, work, and play in our historic, urban and diverse neighborhood by advocating, collaborating, and convening forums for community promotion and problem solving, by creating space for gathering, and by improving the community's beauty and safety.

Vision: Ohio City is a unique and historic neighborhood celebrating the urban experience that offers an ideal setting to create a home, raise a family, run a business, celebrate diversity, serve others and live a full life.

Strategic Initiatives

Ohio City is a special place. Unique energies converge on its street corners and course through the community. It is home to an economically and racially diverse population. Small businesses thrive in its commercial corridors. The history of social and community service runs deep through the neighborhood. Visitors come from far and wide to experience Ohio City's vibe.

Maintaining that vibe is a top priority; however, we know that every community lives and breathes. Change is inevitable.

The following initiatives are what Ohio City Incorporated, in an uncertain political and funding atmosphere, hopes to implement to protect Ohio City's environment, facilitate positive change, and elevate the community's shared history.

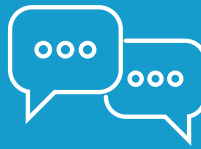|			
Placemaking: Activating and Revitalizing Public Spaces	*Supporting Small Businesses*	*Youth and Family Services*	*Elevating Neighborhood History*
Affecting Quality of Life	*Advocating for Ohio City*	*Getting the Word Out*	*Holding Ourselves Accountable*

Placemaking:
Activating and Revitalizing Public Spaces

Neighborhood programming brings the community together and creates a vibrant place to live, work and visit. It creates positive momentum and exemplifies Ohio City's way of life. New and renovated public infrastructure defines Ohio City as a neighborhood, supporting families and enhancing its vibrant atmosphere. By activating public spaces like Market Square Park, OCI helps drive out negative activities and provides an attractive space for the community to gather.

Public infrastructure improvements. OCI has played a pivotal role in the plans for Irishtown Bend Park. The vision for the park has been shaped by the community and elevates collaboration and equity. When complete, the park will connect the 101-mile Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail and Lake Erie, preserving open space and improving community health. OCI will work to connect Ohio City to the park through wayfinding and planning, drawing residents to the Park and park visitors to Ohio City's businesses.

OCI will continue to lead on several additional infrastructure improvements that are planned for the Ohio City community: Cleveland Midway - Lorain Avenue, roadway improvements including curb, sidewalk, traffic signal, and bike lane improvements; Franklin Circle Fountain; and upgrades to Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority system, among others. These investments allow OCI to help facilitate additional placemaking opportunities such as public art or parking plans, either as part of the individual projects or immediately adjacent to them. OCI will actively engage with the planning of these projects by advocating for commonsense policy solutions and convening related parties.

Mobility. Much of Ohio City's energy is achieved through the ability to get place to place freely, easily, and safely. Protecting and enhancing this infrastructure is important to retaining the neighborhood's feel. OCI will explore targets and strategies to encourage walking, biking, and taking transit. By championing a multimodal mobility system, OCI supports a safe, sustainable, and equitable transportation infrastructure.

Marketing and events. OCI is a community convener and a strong presenter of public events. OCI will continue organizing and supporting events, recognizing that a strong volunteer base and meaningful partnerships and collaborations are needed to continue this work. Engaging businesses early in event planning is vital to build their support and buy-in. OCI will continue (or restart) events such as the Evening in Ohio City, The Historic Homes Tour, an Oktoberfest community event, Spring Jam, and others.

Additionally, OCI will explore new events such as Restaurant Week, First Fridays (where galleries and retailers stay open late to attract new audiences), community garage sales, a neighborhood-wide volunteer day, and will cross-promote/co-host events with Ohio City institutions such as the West Side Market.

OCI is also an event resource. Supporting other nonprofits and businesses to host their own special events will be a force multiplier. OCI can advise on permitting, street closures, liquor licenses, and logistics.

Tree canopy. OCI currently receives grant dollars to expand the urban tree canopy. As long as this funding is available, these investments will continue, enhancing Ohio City's environmental, social, economic, and health outcomes. By collaborating with City agencies, nonprofits, and residents, OCI will contribute to and maintain its street trees.

The New OCI Welcome Center: OCI's offices and staff should be a touchstone for visitors, businesses, and residents – a place where all feel welcome and important community information is accessible. When resources are available, OCI will dedicate a portion of its administrative space to serve as a neighborhood welcome center, providing information on local businesses, Ohio City's history, attractions, available properties, and other resources. Whether a first-time visitor or a long-time resident, they will be greeted enthusiastically by a volunteer board member or staff member with extensive knowledge of Ohio City. Any questions or service requests will be followed up timely. The Welcome Center will have visuals and interior design that reflect the neighborhood's vibrance and diversity and will be ADA compliant so that the space is accessible to all.
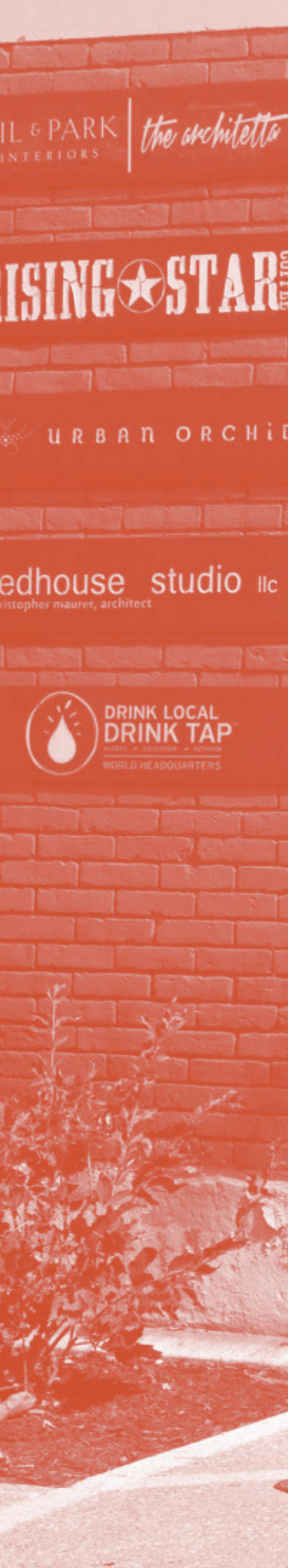
Supporting Small Businesses

Small local businesses thrive on Ohio City's commercial corridors, helping create the hip environment that defines the neighborhood. Those businesses, though, are under constant threat. Economic conditions, changes in demographics, and competition from national chains all create challenges for new and existing businesses in the neighborhood. OCI is committed to helping its small business ecosystem prosper.

Special Improvement District (SID). The SID is an important tool for Ohio City residents and businesses, providing cleaning, maintenance, and safety services. Like a mall maintenance corporation, the SID assesses each property a fee to provide these services. Currently, the SID specific commercial corridors are on W 25th Street, Detroit Avenue, and Lorain Avenue. The SID currently has no staff. Under the ordinance authorizing the SID, there is a formal managerial relationship with OCI. While the SID and OCI are separate entities, OCI historically staffed the SID.

★   OCI will require service level agreements for the services the SID provides and regularly report on those services to the Board and stakeholders.

★   OCI and the SID will develop appropriate and reasonable expectations to respond to stakeholders' requests.

While the SID was not reauthorized in 2024 as required, OCI recognizes the importance of the SID, its services, and the need for professional staff to manage those services. Should the SID and OCI's relationship continue, OCI will formalize its agreement with the SID. Formal roles and responsibilities will be established, accountability structures placed, and financial terms renegotiated.

Small business incubation and incentives. Ohio City's small business community is part of what makes the neighborhood unique. Finding ways to support new and fledgling businesses will protect the neighborhood's character.

★ For assets it owns and in accordance with a detailed business plan, OCI will offer below market rent for priority business uses.

★ OCI will work with the City to identify and develop other incentives to attract local businesses and support existing locally owned businesses.

A resource for small businesses. It is hard to run a business. Managing employees, inventory, and satisfying customers takes up all of a business owner's time. When issues outside the store come up, businesses need to know where to turn. OCI will be the place that can answer their questions, address their concerns, and help solve their problems.

★ OCI will know the business community. It will have a complete inventory of its businesses and property owners. Staff and board members will conduct regular outreach to business owners to understand their concerns.

★ OCI will be a resource. OCI will know and understand the small business funding environment and be able to help businesses navigate City processes. When business owners need information about how to run or grow their business, OCI will have the knowledge to help and provide advice on the business owners' next steps. Staff will understand business development, small business trends, and trends in technology. And if they don't know the answer, they'll be able to point business owners to someone that will.

★ OCI will be a connector. OCI will spot synergies between stakeholders, make introductions, and refer stakeholders with common interests to one another.

★ OCI will create roadmaps and guides to be available on its website to answer common questions like how to open a new business, how to apply for permits, or how to appeal property tax assessments.

★ OCI will set expectations. OCI will post and communicate with property owners regarding appropriate property maintenance and their individual responsibilities to the collective whole.

★ OCI will support small businesses. Building on Tremont West's business incubator model, OCI will develop a detailed plan that identifies appropriate storefront space that could be dedicated to assist in a local business's growth.

Youth and Family Services

Ohio City thrives by attracting young families that appreciate its location, its walkability, and its public amenities. Ohio City's future depends on retaining those families by providing the types of activities families care about.

Near West Recreation. Near West Recreation provides athletic activities for over 1300 participants. Year-round programming includes basketball, volleyball, baseball, soccer, softball, track, and Learn to Play clinics for sports like lacrosse, squash, tennis, and yoga. The programming they provide is critical to attracting and retaining families. OCI should consider:

★ Formalizing a partnership with Urban Community School for access to its new athletic facilities. Whether managing the space full-time or gaining access to the facility, a formal partnership provides a centralized location for youth activities and frees up space for new opportunities.

★ Developing new community programming for youth and adults that could include pottery, dancing, painting, or other activities. By surveying the community, programming can be developed that fits potential participants' wants. To date, space has been a limiting factor to providing this type of programming but should sports activities shift to the Urban Community School, space in churches and schools can be repurposed for these new activities.

★ Launch a flag football program. While many suburbs have founded flag football leagues, the City of Cleveland lacks an NFL FLAG program. Establishing a league allows Near West Recreation to grow its programming and revenues, operate in an exclusive territory, and become an important resource for the rest of the City.

★ Establishing sport-themed summer camps to provide additional extracurricular summer activities, improve childcare options, and raise revenues.

★ Rebranding Near West Recreation to clearly tie it to OCI. A phrase like "Near West Recreation: Powered by OCI" on signage, T-shirts, and printed material does not water down Near West Recreation's name but ties it to its sponsor organization.

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Family Events. OCI already hosts or co-sponsors a number of family events including an Easter Egg Hunt, Unity in the Community, movie nights in the park, a Halloween Walk, and more. These events should be intentional and designed to be fun and welcoming events for all. Event plans should be recorded and after-actions held to strive for continuous improvement.

Convener. Through MyCom Cleveland, OCI convenes schools and out-of-school time providers to identify gaps, share resources, and partner on issues related to youth and families. These convenings should continue and an inventory of providers conducted to ensure that the meetings are inclusive and diverse perspectives are elevated.

Connector. OCI is not a direct service provider; however, they serve people that need services. Knowing what services are available and being able to refer participants to those services is important to a family's long-term health and well-being.

Parks and Recreation Department. In 2024, the City of Cleveland established a new Department of Parks and Recreation. A new director with a clear vision for the City's recreation programming provides an opportunity for Near West Recreation to find a willing partner to advance their shared goals. A formal, written partnership clarifying roles and responsibilities would provide long-term stability.

... a recreation league that encourages youth, parents, residents, and business owners to take control of their neighborhood and feel a sense of ownership and pride for their community.

Enhancing our Quality-of-Life

OCI can't address all of Ohio City's challenges. It alone cannot solve homelessness, housing affordability, or food insecurity. However, OCI can better connect residents to core city services, hold property owners accountable, and improve how it leverages its own assets to support small businesses and housing affordability.

Connector. Residents and businesses have significant needs. People experiencing homelessness, food and housing insecurity, and landlord/tenant disputes are too common in Ohio City. Likewise, potholes, snow clearing, and trash collection are quality of life issues that often go unaddressed. While OCI may not be able to provide city or social services, it can take steps to address these challenges. OCI will:

★ Know and understand the social service environment in and near Ohio City. More importantly, OCI will foster relationships with those agencies to understand their challenges and develop realistic expectations. When a resident or business presents a problem, OCI doesn't just refer them to a provider, but refers them to a partner with shared goals.

★ Know and understand city services. OCI, with the help of the City Council, will develop policies and procedures for addressing city service concerns. They will continue to foster relationships with key city personnel including Public Safety, Building & Housing, Aging, Public Works, and Public Utilities. Staff will understand what service level agreements are in place for specific services and develop points of contact to get things done.

Leverage OCI's real estate assets. OCI maintains a significant real estate portfolio. For every asset it owns, OCI should develop a business plan. Assets with financial losses should be sold or repositioned for better financial outcomes. Sales proceeds should be reserved to support OCI's financial stability. Where possible, assets should be used to increase affordable housing and support locally owned businesses. Existing affordable housing projects, like Fairview Gardens, should be positioned so that affordability is retained long term.

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Support affordable housing. Historically, OCI has developed and partnered to develop affordable housing like Fairview Gardens. More recently, OCI partnered with Penrose, LLC to pursue Low Income Housing Tax Credits for the development of affordable housing at McCafferty Health Center. However, given the current funding environment and OCI's current real estate assets and financial position, projects like these will be difficult to pursue in the future. Its long-term commitment to economic diversity, however, can be retained with smaller but intentional investment.

★ Near West Land Trust (Trust). The Trust was established as a partnership between Tremont Community Development Corporation and OCI, although it is supported wholly by OCI. The Trust is an important tool for affordable housing. With state funds, it has purchased vacant property or property from the Land Bank and builds a mix of affordable and market-rate housing. The sales of the market-rate housing subsidize the affordability of the other units. To fully leverage the tool and the available state funding, OCI should develop a strategic and business plan outlining its goals, the number and type of units to purchase or build with the available state funding, and the long-term financial model. The Trust should explore using Ohio's Nuisance Property Abatement Law and develop a model for property acquisition and disposition.

★ Maintaining affordability. Across the country, affordable housing is being converted into market rate housing as tax credits and subsidy requirements expire. OCI should proactively identify at-risk projects and work with the city to develop strategies to maintain affordability throughout the neighborhood.

Property maintenance. For Ohio City to be a premier destination, facades, sidewalks and street furniture must be adequately maintained. OCI is committed to providing quality services, but business and property owners must also do their part. To encourage investment, OCI will:

★ Property owner outreach. To tackle commercial and residential vacancy and facade improvement, OCI will proactively reach out to property owners, so they know what funding and programs are available to them.

★ When appropriate, OCI will use Ohio's Nuisance Abatement Law to address severe blight and neglect.

★ Ensure code enforcement. When properties do have maintenance issues, OCI will communicate with property owners to encourage code compliance; however, if improvements are not made, OCI will work with City code officials to make sure appropriate action is taken.

★ Explore other fund sources and grant opportunities. Infrastructure improvements and placemaking demand significant investment. OCI will explore corporate, government, foundation, and individual investments to support its work.

Elevating History

Ohio City is home to several important landmarks and events. Buildings like the Carnegie West Branch library, the Ohio City Firehouse, and St. Patrick's contribute to the community's atmosphere. The West Side Market offers a unique, architecturally significant, and culturally important shopping destination for thousands in Cleveland for more than a century. Milestones and events that celebrate Cleveland's queer community, roles in the Underground Railroad, important demographic migrations, and more have been at the heart of Ohio City's identity. In the process of facilitating neighborhood change, OCI will also elevate Ohio City's history.

Ohio City Historic District. The Ohio City Historic District celebrates and preserves the community's unique architectural heritage. While distinct from OCI, the Historic Design Review Committee is an important partner that helps protect the area's historic integrity. In collaboration with the Committee, OCI will:

Develop and distribute resources for property owners that either own historic properties or want to comply with historic guidelines.

Inventory and create an architectural tour that identifies key landmarks and their role in Ohio City's history.

Explore the feasibility of expanding the Historic District to capture additional properties areas that deserve preservation.

Advocate for the protection of and respect for the Historic District in all development.

A History Installation: Both through its daily work as well as through a dedicated project, OCI will celebrate and embody the neighborhood's rich history of social change. A photographic or video timeline will be installed in the Welcome Center and be available on OCI's website. Social media will be used to highlight milestones. These include but are not limited to:

★ Cleveland's queer community: LGBT center, Cleveland's first public celebration of Pride and Black Pride

★ The first HIV/AIDS resource center in Cleveland

★ The migration of the Puerto Rican community in the 1960's to work in manufacturing

★ St. John's Church (which was part of the Underground Railroad)

★ Ohio City's first social services agency that opened its doors

★ Eleanor Roosevelt opened one of the first public housing communities in the country welcoming veterans

Community stakeholders will be invited to contribute milestones to feature.
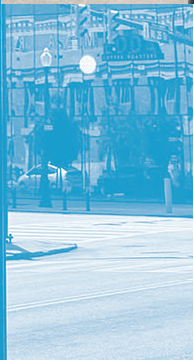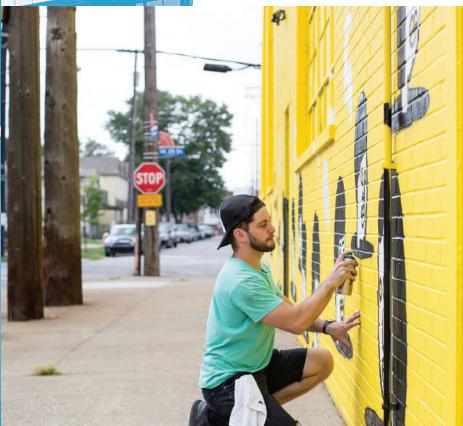
... OCI's history is a story of struggle, acceptance, fight but there's not a lot of their places nationally where all of those stories happen in one neighborhood. OCI should absolutely reflect, honor and celebrate that, with both future facing and historical perspectives, from a staffing and action perspective.

Advocating for Ohio City

Advocacy is a central focus of OCI's work. OCI is uniquely positioned to advocate for resident and business needs in its interactions with municipal government, developers and other stakeholders. OCI will continue to be a respected, fair and measured voice in all levels of advocacy.

Residents: OCI will be an advocate and resource for all Ohio City residents, which includes but is not limited to homeowners, renters, residents of public housing, residents of single- and multi-family homes, and residents in condominiums and apartment buildings. In an inclusive manner, OCI will advocate on behalf of its residents when it comes to:

★ Neighborhood planning and development.

★ Ensuring a retail mix that is representative of the entire community's needs and desires.

★ Navigating and connecting to municipal and social services.

★ Advocating for residents when a new municipal policy is in the early stages of development.

★ Advocating new policies that advance residents' interests.

★ Helping residents understand and navigate government processes (e.g. permitting, renters' rights).

★ Support and participate in Block Clubs. If requested, OCI will provide information on how Block Clubs could structure their meetings. Additional training will be available that includes city planning, zoning, and development so that block club meetings are structured and represent what residents are facing on a localized level. The training will help block clubs frame their needs and concerns as they relate to the larger Ohio City community.

★ Working with the police department to address residents' public safety concerns, communicating the community's priorities and connecting them to the appropriate resources.

Businesses: OCI will be an advocate and resource for small business owners to help their businesses thrive. OCI will live its commitment to neighborhood social entrepreneurship by offering the following support:

★   Working with new business owners to understand and navigate municipal processes, as well as identifying space suitable for their business.

★   Helping small businesses understand and navigate government processes (e.g. permitting, licensing, etc.).

★   Promoting and marketing the work of local entrepreneurs and driving public awareness of the Ohio City business district.

★   Creating events and promotional activities that feature business engagement and build a vibrant community.

★   Ensuring that commercial corridors and adjacent areas are clean, safe, and well kept.

★   Creating a program to incubate new small businesses in order to give them the support they need in the early stages of their development.

★   Restarting the Merchant Association to ensure that Ohio City businesses have a regular line of communication with OCI and among each other, regardless of whether they are in the SID boundaries.

★   OCI will address businesses' unique public safety concerns through a close collaboration with the police department and other city agencies to ensure local businesses prosper.

Institutions: Non-profits, Government, Schools, and Service Providers: OCI recognizes the neighborhood's rich history in providing social services for Cleveland's most vulnerable community members. The community's commitment has earned it a reputation for being Cleveland's neighborhood of service. OCI honors the expertise and experience of these social service agencies, their staff, and their volunteers. OCI pledges to partner with them in their missions and in service to the community members who benefit from these special and critical places. OCI will:

★ Acknowledge that OCI is not a social service provider. OCI will not replicate services of social service agencies but be equipped with information on where to direct community members to resources they seek.

★ Learn from area social service agencies the protocol for directing community members to various resources and what to do in emergency situations such as connecting an unhoused community member to shelter.

★ OCI will participate in social service roundtables and be a resource for service providers by connecting them to residents and businesses.

★ Regularly gather and report on the most frequently requested services and information (e.g. people called or stopped by OCI for information on recreational facilities, schools, getting utilities turned on, area food pantries, etc.).

★ Train staff on trauma informed care and de-escalation to better equip customer service staff with the skills for any community member that seeks guidance.

★ When requested, OCI staff will attend institutional meetings. This is an opportunity for OCI to learn from experts and to share relevant information.

★ OCI will work with institutions to define its support role for their stakeholders such as students, residents aging in place, people experiencing homelessness, or families.

Getting the Word Out

One of the city's most dynamic community development corporations, OCI is committed to clarifying and communicating its role as a responsive, strategic, and nimble entity that enhances community members' quality of life. OCI will engage in the following priorities to give the public a clear understanding of its role; to communicate important information to community members in a timely manner; to enhance its communication mechanisms and reach within the Ohio City community and to promote the people, places and activities that make Ohio City the best neighborhood:

Defining OCI's roles and responsibilities:

★ OCI will develop a memorandum of understanding with the City of Cleveland on the roles and responsibilities of each entity. This information will be distilled for public consumption.

Enhanced communications mechanisms:

★ OCI will continue to produce content for its email newsletter, social media accounts, and website in a timely and responsive manner.

★ OCI will identify an electronic resource to compile feedback on real estate developments, mobility plans, traffic/pedestrian safety, and other critical areas. The data will be referenced in board and community meetings and by city government. OCI will consider piloting a moderated online community board which can exist in the form of an email listserv. Here, participants can submit comments (to be approved) on topics related to community events, programs, business promotion, city-wide policies that affect OCI residents, and more. OCI staff can introduce topics to users as an additional way to promote services, events, programs, and to solicit feedback on specific topics when necessary. The board will be moderated by an OCI staff member with discussion topics and comments to be posted after moderator approval.

★ OCI will meet people where they are by identifying communication channels that best serve the needs of different audiences. Communication channels are likely to include social media, email, in person visits, and printed material. OCI will continue to highlight businesses, social service agencies, and community members who shape Ohio City in an impactful way and these profiles will be made available regularly on OCI's website, social media and email newsletter.

Engaging with diverse audiences:

★ OCI will ensure that engagement is available in print form, such as event flyers, surveys, and newsletters, and materials will be available in Spanish.

★ When publicizing events or inviting attendees to community meetings, OCI will develop an outreach checklist of all neighborhoods, block clubs, organizations and businesses to notify in person with flyers, and digitally via email newsletter, website and social media.

★ OCI will have a stronger in-person presence at block club meetings, community meetings not hosted by OCI, and meetings with partner organizations such as social service agencies to foster more opportunities for face-to-face feedback and connection.

★ OCI will work with the public housing community, managers of apartment and condominium buildings, and property owners to:

1. *Participate in regular community meetings at these facilities to share information, learn about what is happening in each community/how OCI can support efforts.*
2. *Distribute printed material announcing meetings, events, and important information.*
3. *Encourage property owners to develop and maintain their properties in ways that enhance the community.*

Facilitated community meetings & exploring new ways to engage:

★ OCI will explore new frameworks of facilitating community meetings so that dialogue is respectful, productive, and allows broad participation.

Making engagement more accessible:

★ OCI will transition into a quarterly community meeting schedule (meetings are currently monthly) to avoid redundancy and to ensure that time is maximized.

★ OCI will survey all community members to figure out more opportune days/times for running community meetings, as well as figuring out the best locations to host meetings so that OCI is meeting people where they already are. The survey will include questions on accessibility and the best medium and ways for people to be able to participate in meetings.

Clarity in messaging:

OCI will communicate its function in a succinct manner and will use uniform, consistent language when communicating to stakeholders and to the public its purpose, role and responsibilities. OCI will use this language as a guide in decision making, especially when faced with controversy and new projects and programs. Suggested ways to frame OCI's work to the public include:

★ Advocate for resident priorities
★ Convener and collaborator of people and information
★ Promoter of diversity in businesses and community; municipal initiatives and programs
★ Navigator for bureaucratic processes
★ Presenter of community events
★ Activator of public spaces
★ Supporter of the small business community: works with small businesses to promote businesses and how to open a business. OCI helps with processes like permitting and finding funding.
★ Connector to residents and business owners to resources and different programs like home repair, storefront renovation.

Holding Ourselves Accountable

OCI is judged by what it does, not what it says. Our history is of accomplishment and we must create the structures for staff, the Board, and the community to hold ourselves accountable. To achieve our strategic goals, we must ensure that our structures and systems are aligned, working together, with the right organization, the right people, and sufficient resources to be successful.

Performance Management, Job Descriptions and Training. OCI's staff is its backbone. Job titles will reflect staff responsibilities, job descriptions will be refined, and expectations set to develop a performance management system. Achievement will be celebrated and professional development opportunities encouraged. OCI's budget is limited and developing a full complement of intrinsic rewards is important.

Board Training. Considering OCI's small budget and staff, active Board participation is vital. The Board is not merely a governing and finance board but a volunteer board that helps produce programs, staff events, and drive OCI into the future.

To best support the staff and organization, OCI will require **committee participation and volunteer hours** for all board members. Formal position descriptions will be developed for board members, which include time commitment, fundraising and committee expectations, and a timeframe for how long members can remain on the Board.

Fiscal Health. OCI is operating in an uncertain political and economic environment that may impact its finances. Identifying additional financial resources will be required to protect OCI into the future. OCI will explore:

★ Grants. Working with the Development Committee, staff or a consultant will explore grants to fund specific public infrastructure activities related to Public Art, Parking, recreation, and economic development.

★ Corporate Sponsorships. OCI will identify opportunities for business support through events and infrastructure sponsorship. In addition to events, opportunities for sponsorship include transportation, childcare, park and recreation improvements, and wayfinding that connects institutions or businesses. Large employers in Ohio City should be cultivated.

★ Government Support. OCI will pursue local, state, and federal funding for its operations and special projects.

★ Establish an endowment-like vehicle. From the proceeds of the sale of significant real estate assets, OCI will establish an endowment-like account that provides long-term fiscal stability for the organization.

Shared Services. Many of Cleveland's community development corporations face OCI's challenges. Working with the Cleveland Neighborhood Progress (CNP) and other individual CDCs, OCI should advocate for service delivery partnerships and shared service opportunities. Pooling resources for human resources, payroll, finance, procurement, fleet, and technological support should generate savings and improved service.

Key Performance Indicators. For every activity, OCI will develop key performance indicators and will actively record and measure progress. For example, goals will be set and activities measured for revenue, event attendees, grant dollars distributed, vacancy rates, and similar. Service level agreements will be developed and measured for common requests including but not limited to job referrals/people seeking employment, information on Near West Rec, resources and processes for business owners, social service requests, advocating to city government, and information on development projects. All activities will be measured and success defined. OCI will track progress, report to the Board, and post data online for community review.

Conclusion

Ohio City is a regional destination for people to live, work, and play. Its singular atmosphere is simultaneously bohemian and sophisticated, caters to seniors, families, and young adults, and integrates people of different races, backgrounds, and incomes. These attributes create a special place, but the disparate stakeholders create unique challenges. As Ohio City changes, Ohio City Incorporated facilitates a positive community dialogue that retains the community's character.

Despite rapid community change, a leadership transition, and political uncertainty, OCI has set a course to protect Ohio City's vibe. By aligning its programs, operations, and governance, OCI will ensure that its historic neighborhood celebrates the urban experience and offers an ideal setting to create a home, raise a family, run a business, serve others, and live a full life.

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About Pelham Advisors
Pelham Advisors brings over 20 years of high-level leadership experience in the public and non-profit sectors. Headquartered in Philadelphia, Pelham Advisors serves governments, nonprofits, and religious institutions on a local and national scope, holding a strong track record of bringing teams together, facilitating difficult stakeholder conversations, and developing creative solutions for the most challenging problems. As a mission-driven firm, we serve organizations who are in the business of helping others. **www.pelhamadvisors.com**

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