Summary of Cleveland Public Meeting Facilitator Notes (Breakout Rooms)

These notes have been summarized and condensed for clarity and to remove redundancy. We have grouped them by category, as a way to identify possible working groups for our second phase of public engagement.

**Housing Conditions**

* Hard to maintain older housing, drives down property values in neighborhood
* Quality of the housing does not match the value of the property
* Need more sustainable/energy efficient development options/resources
* Need more subsidies/resources available to stop deferred maintenance of homes
* New and existing housing stock does not allow for aging-in-place with dignity

**Building/Navigating City Bureaucracy**

* Hard to build infill housing, many new or renovations that are common in the city require multiple variances
* Neighborhood plans from city and CDCs need to reflect the population who currently live there
* Disconnect between city services and the needs of the residents
* Difficult to buy adjacent/side lots from the city unless you have a personal connection
* Need to change the planning process – instead of voicing objections when the project is breaking ground, have an idea of the vision at the beginning
* Plan needs regional buy-in and cooperation to have the greatest impact – this is not just a city problem
  + Need more and better cooperation between city and county, including sharing resources
* Need better communication from the city, including an updated website (no broken links, outdated information)
* Current city programs require insider knowledge, are limited in who they help, and are not well funded to support the administration/paperwork for new homeowners or homeowners without resources
* System does not reward residents that have hung out and hung on
* City needs to provide more transparent data on home values and development costs
* Revisit the tax abatement – good in some areas, too much displacement (from new development) in other areas
* CDC helped me with my home purchase – was really easy and more should use that process to increase homeownership rates
* Land trust and community benefits agreements as a way to help the city stay affordable and inclusive
* City needs to require affordable units **in** new developments

**Homeownership**

* More options are needed for a wider variety of incomes and family sizes (minimum wage, single persons)
* Need more options/resources available for people to understand the homeownership process
* Need to protect residents on fixed or low incomes from changes in property tax bills (displacement)
* Need to protect residents from predatory buyers/investors
* Rent-to-own programs have limits, increasing evictions, destabilizing neighborhoods
* Financing options for lending/gap lending for first time or low-income homeowners are not enough to get this population into the average Cleveland home because of the cost of renovation and credit limits
  + This increases number of substandard houses because owners cannot afford to demolish/repair them
* More financing/city subsidies available for moderate/middle income homeowners
* More creative incentives such as student loan debt assistance
* We need the same amount of resources that go into homeownership that we do for maintaining and keeping homes
* Need more housing options for sober/recovering living

**Covid-19**

* More time in the home, we need more funds/zoning to maintain and modify homes
* Preparing for the evictions and foreclosures that are predicted to come after the pandemic protections end – how will the city help homeowners from going underwater on mortgages and renters from being evicted?
* Investing in universal wireless/wi-fi/internet for the city; really helps with work and school to have stable Internet
* Particular attention to impact on Black and Spanish-speaking communities, stabilizing housing and resources in these neighborhoods

**Neighborhood Conditions**

* Need to manage vacant lots – both to develop and to keep neighborhoods attractive/safe
* Need to prioritize a mix of housing. Neighborhoods should not push people out for development
* Need to identify houses that are not “re-habbable” and demolish them; substandard homes reduce property values and decrease feelings of safety
* Increasing renter population/decreasing homeowner population weaken neighborhood feeling of community/hard to feel invested in your community
* Need more transit/public transportation/bike infrastructure and options
* Crime rate and school quality are considerations when choosing housing – need to examine that
* Invest in green space in neighborhoods
* Increase access to Cleveland’s best amenities: parks, lake, trails, restaurants, museums
* Remediation and lead free housing/healthy homes
* Focus more on renovation instead of new development; renovation will help the vacant lots and deteriorating housing to attract new development (CDCs)
* Investing in city infrastructure (water, sewer, potholes)
* Need a tree plan/increased canopy
* Need more community centers and amenities to attract and keep families in neighborhoods
* Protections from out of state investors (and absentee landlords/property owners)

**Economic Opportunity/Development**

* Need to help small businessowners retain employees by offering more and different housing options (rental, homeowner for low/modest income)
* For land bank and other city owned land, need to prioritize Minority, Women, Disabled Owned Businesses for redevelopment and rehabilitation work
* Need more retail options, greater safety
* Need more employment options; wages not keeping up with housing costs – its too expensive to live in the neighborhoods with access to the best jobs
* Target investment incentives and development incentives in underinvested neighborhoods
* Better grocery stores that match the population that live and have lived in the community

**Rental Housing**

* Almost all new development prices out existing residents
* Need to create legislation requiring landlords to accept housing choice vouchers
* Create more collaboration between landlords and residents (e.g., better housing stock and conditions)
* Need to be clear about the definition of “affordable” when creating rental housing – maybe need different levels of affordability
* Need more rental housing options in different neighborhoods; homeownership-only approach is not realistic for younger residents

**How-Tos?**

* How do we keep the city affordable and diverse?
* How can we provide more options for residents with low income (so that they do not choose between safe and affordable?)
* How do we incentivize development without displacing current residents/leaving them behind?
* How do we preserve the city’s beautiful housing stock while maintaining affordability and safety?
* How do we create a mix of housing types that both value Cleveland’s existing single family housing stock and other types that increase affordability, diversity, and density?
* How do we address the east/west divide?
* How do we recognize that different neighborhoods need different housing strategies?
* How do we highlight culture and other amenities that make Cleveland great?
* How can we create equity in housing?
* How can we reach out to populations that are not able to attend meetings and participate virtually in the plan?