

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

Fullerton Redevelopment Opportunity

October–December 2023



City of Cleveland, Department of Community Development

in partnership with

Slavic Village Development

Councilwoman Rebecca Maurer

Cleveland Metropolitan School District

601 Lakeside Ave. E. | Room 320 | Cleveland, OH 44114 |

E: assetredevelopment@clevelandohio.gov | clevelandohio.gov



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Introduction to Redevelopment Opportunity

In 2021, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and City of Cleveland began collaborating on an approach to redevelop the District's surplus real estate holdings. Through property exchange agreements, Request for Qualifications processes and in coordination with state co-funded building segments, the City and District continue to build on this partnership to create redevelopment opportunities across Cleveland neighborhoods.

The Fullerton Redevelopment Opportunity will make available approximately 2.6 acres of vacant land for redevelopment in Cleveland's Slavic Village neighborhood. The site is located at 5810 Fullerton Avenue. The extant building was constructed in 1973 and has been vacant for approximately 10 years. The structure will be abated and demolished, graded and seeded between December 2023 – April 2024, and a formal Request for Qualifications process is expected to occur in early 2024.

This development opportunity is being spearheaded by The City of Cleveland's Department of Community Development, the mission statement of which reads, *The City of Cleveland's Department of Community Development envisions a Cleveland where stakeholders are empowered to build the pathway to equity. This vision is realized by creating quality housing and vibrant neighborhoods that serve as the foundation for generational wealth and community prosperity.* The Department recognizes the importance of active community engagement as an integral part of the development process. We aim to ensure that City-facilitated projects align with the needs and aspirations of the communities we serve. We are pleased to provide you with a summary of initial community engagement activities related to the former Fullerton School site, which have been undertaken to gather valuable insights and perspectives that will inform the Department's forthcoming development Request for Qualifications (RFQ).

Community Engagement Activities

Community Visioning Open House

The first step taken to engage the community regarding the former Fullerton Elementary School site was to facilitate the Community Visioning Open House. This



event provided partners with a platform to update residents on project timelines and processes, listen to concerns, and seek input on various aspects of the proposed redevelopment opportunity at this site.

The Community Visioning Open House was held on November 2, 2023, from 4pm–7pm at the Polish-American Cultural Center. Slavic Village Development (SVD), the City of Cleveland, and Councilwoman Maurer collaboratively planned and staffed the event.



FIGURE 1: PARTNERS FROM THE CITY'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING DEPARTMENTS AND SLAVIC VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT STAFF GATHER FOLLOWING THE COMMUNITY VISIONING OPEN HOUSE

This open house sought to capture community input through stations set up around the room that asked various questions pertaining to community priorities, challenges, and site preferences. Each station was staffed by a representative from SVD, the City of Cleveland, or Councilwoman Maurer's team. Staff members conversed with residents and collected their input. 17 participants attended the Open House.

Community Visioning Survey

In continuity with the Community Visioning Open House, the Community Visioning Survey was collaboratively produced by representatives from SVD, the City of Cleveland, and Councilwoman Maurer. Microsoft Forms was used as the primary platform, and hard copies were circulated to increase accessibility. The survey opened one week prior to the open house (October 26, 2023) and responses were captured through December 31, 2023.¹ Survey questions echoed those asked in the open house, seeking to increase accessibility for community input to those who were

¹ The Community Visioning Survey will remain open through Spring 2024. An addendum to this report will be provided after that time.



not able to attend in person. The data collected from this survey and the open house has helped us understand community priorities, identify potential challenges, and refine the upcoming redevelopment opportunity so that it is specific to and reflective of the Slavic Village community. The questions included in the survey and the open house are as follows:

1. What makes a neighborhood great?
2. Five years from now, what would make you proudest to be a member of this community?
3. What originally drew you to this community?
4. Asset Mapping: Take a look at the map linked below that lists a number of neighborhood assets within a 1-mile radius of the Fullerton site and use the test box to list any assets that are missing.
5. What gaps in services and amenities are you experiencing in your immediate neighborhood?
6. What are your community values (i.e. caring for your neighbor, diversity, honoring legacy, safety, supporting youth, etc.)?
7. In what ways can new investments help support what you value?
8. If housing is considered for this site, what factors will be important for the development proposal to consider (scale, style, price, etc.)?
9. What other thoughts do you have that we may have missed asking about?

The survey attracted 19 responses. Out of those, one person was over the age of 80, nine were between ages 60-79, seven were ages 40-59, and one person was between the ages of 30-39. Including those who attended the open house, the racial demographics include 32 White individuals, one Black individual, and two unknowns.

Community Events

Because of the proximity of the Open House to Halloween, there were several in-person opportunities to promote engagement activities in the community in the weeks leading up to the event. Initiated by residents, the Slavic Village neighborhood hosts an annual trick-or-treat event along one of their major commercial roads, Fleet Avenue, aptly called "Trick or Treat on Fleet." This year, the event took place on October 28, 2023, from 12pm to 3pm. City staff partnered with Slavic Village



Development to pass out fliers promoting the Community Visioning Open House. Fliers included information for the event as well as a QR code to the online survey.

Similarly, on October 31, 2023, City staff attended the “Big City Boo” event at Stella Walsh Recreation Center, another Halloween event. This event focused more on children with fewer parents present, which ultimately meant fewer fliers passed out. This event was staffed by both a City employee and the Councilwoman Rebecca Maurer.



FIGURE 2: COUNCILWOMAN MAURER (LEFT) POSING WITH COMMUNITY MEMBER AND CITY OF CLEVELAND EMPLOYEE (RIGHT) AT BIG CITY BOO

On December 7, 2023, the RAISE East Side Trails

Public Meeting took place in Slavic Village at the Stella Walsh Recreation Center. We attended this meeting to continue promoting the Community Visioning Survey and to take note of further investment into the neighborhood. Flyers were placed at the check-in table of the event. It is unknown how many flyers were picked up by who that attended.

The goal of participating in these events was to meet people where they were and to increase touchpoints with community members and stakeholders, building upon pre-existing events rather than asking community members to attend additional, one-off engagement sessions. These events also provided inviting, low-risk environments to try to capture participants who are not typically engaged in the public process.

Marketing

Due to the survey being released one week prior to the Community Visioning Open House, both activities were included in marketing materials from the onset. The intention was for individuals who saw the event flyer to fill out the survey if they knew they could not attend the open house. Partners aimed to provide maximum access to information regarding the future redevelopment opportunity, as well as to create spaces for residents to provide input from the very beginning. To accomplish this, we used three primary avenues for marketing-- online advertisement (social media and email), posting flyers at local businesses, and distributing flyers at local events as described above.



In our marketing efforts, we leaned on our partners who already had established networks within the community such as Councilwoman Maurer, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD), Slavic Village Development (SVD), and the Polish American Cultural Center (PACC). For the latter two, the event flier (see Figure 3) was posted on SVD's and PACC's Facebook pages the week of the event. SVD also pushed it out in their newsletters and on Instagram and Facebook in the weeks leading up to the event and emailed a copy to relevant block clubs the week of the open house. Two weeks prior to the open house, *Neighborhood News*, a local newspaper, posted a print advertisement for the event. Flyers were also posted at the following businesses throughout Slavic Village:

- Cleveland Public Library–Fleet Branch
- Marsha's Soul Food Café
- Stella Walsh Recreation Center
- Boys and Girls Club of Cleveland
- Red Chimney
- A.B. Hart Elementary School
- Dave's Market
- MetroHealth Broadway Health Center

CMSD supported marketing efforts by including the information for the open house and survey in a postcard directly mailed to approximately 1,300 residents, the most widespread of the marketing efforts. This postcard also included information on the demolition of the site. Initially, there was an error in the QR code which led to an incorrect webpage. This error was corrected within one week of the mailing date.

Following the Community Visioning Open House, a separate flyer was created to draw attention specifically to the survey. To increase digital access, this flyer included both



FIGURE 3: FLYER USED TO MARKET THE OPEN HOUSE IN THE WEEKS LEADING UP TO THE EVENT



the QR code and the written link to the survey, as well as information on where to find hard copies of the survey to offer residents a non-digital option.

The sites that hosted the hard copies of the survey were Cleveland Public Library-Fleet Branch and SVD. Similar to the first flyer, this one was posted on SVD's social media accounts, and distributed to the Cleveland Public Library and the Cleveland Southeast Side Resource Center. Additionally, the Councilwoman took the survey to the East 63rd St Block Club, promoted it on social media, and directly emailed constituents who live proximate to the site.

Key Insights and Findings

Through our community engagement activities, we gathered several key insights and findings that will be integral to shaping our upcoming Request for Qualifications process and shed light on initial community expectations and aspirations for new development.

Community Priorities

The below section presents themes that were captured repeatedly throughout our engagement.

Neighborliness

One of the top community values of Slavic Village residents is neighborliness.

Residents communicated in multiple ways that they value knowing their neighbors, helping each other out, and feeling a sense of community and being welcome. When asked what makes a neighborhood great, one resident stated, "People who know each other and work together." Another resident noted that five years from now, they would be proudest if, "We create a more connected community." There was also emphasis on spaces for community building, and the need for "continued community building resources." This speaks to the desire for the new development to be part of the existing community and include community-oriented space and/or access points.

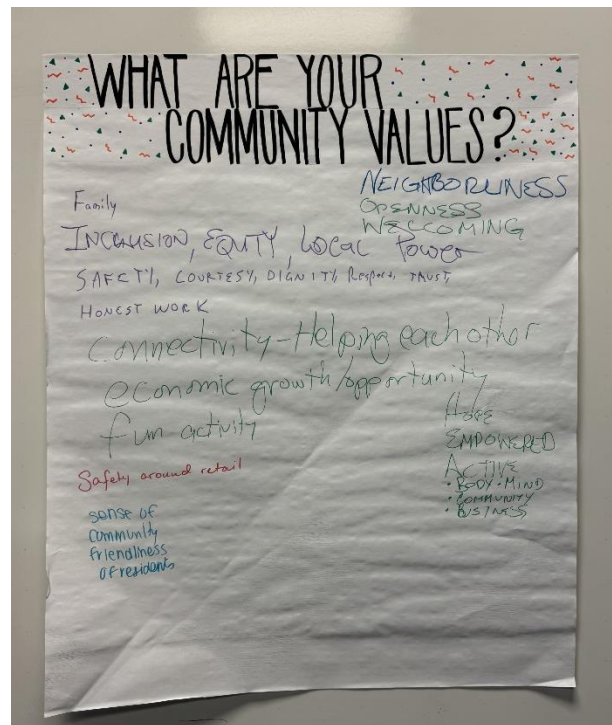


FIGURE 4: ONE OF THE POSTERS USED IN THE OPEN HOUSE EVENT ASKING PARTICIPANTS TO LIST THEIR COMMUNITY VALUES



Third Spaces

Third spaces are spaces where social interaction can take place outside of the home and workplace, and are open and accessible to the surrounding community where people can gather. Multiple residents mentioned the desire for an increase in third spaces in the community to foster current connections and increase familiarity with those they do not yet know. When asked about gaps in services and amenities in the neighborhood, one resident responded with “More access for fresh prepared meals, coffee, gathering spaces, more activities for kids and youth, [and] playgrounds on or near Fleet [Avenue].” One resident stated, “Coffee shop spurs community dialogue and connectedness,” while another expressed a desire for “more investment in recreation and green spaces.” The most popular type of third space mentioned was restaurants.



FIGURE 5: CITY OF CLEVELAND EMPLOYEES SPEAK WITH RESIDENTS AT THE OPEN HOUSE

Age in Place

Many Slavic Village residents expressed the importance of age-in-place support systems and resources. A senior center was specifically mentioned a number of times, alongside additional age-friendly resources such as senior housing and social service programming. When asked what makes a neighborhood great, one resident stated, “A senior center that does meals and activities for seniors.”

Supporting Local Businesses

Residents of Slavic Village expressed a desire for new investments to support local businesses. Similarly, a few residents mentioned the need for economic development and attracting new businesses along Fleet Avenue. Coffee shops, restaurants, and places to shop were three of the most mentioned desired businesses. While discussing economic development, one participant stated, “Residents who would become small business owners [need to] have support or guidance.” Another



participant stated the need for, “More investment into the empty storefronts, like restaurants, a pizza shop, mom and pop stores.” There was also a desire that any new development prioritizes hiring locally, whether that be permanent spaces for new businesses or labor for the construction of new buildings.

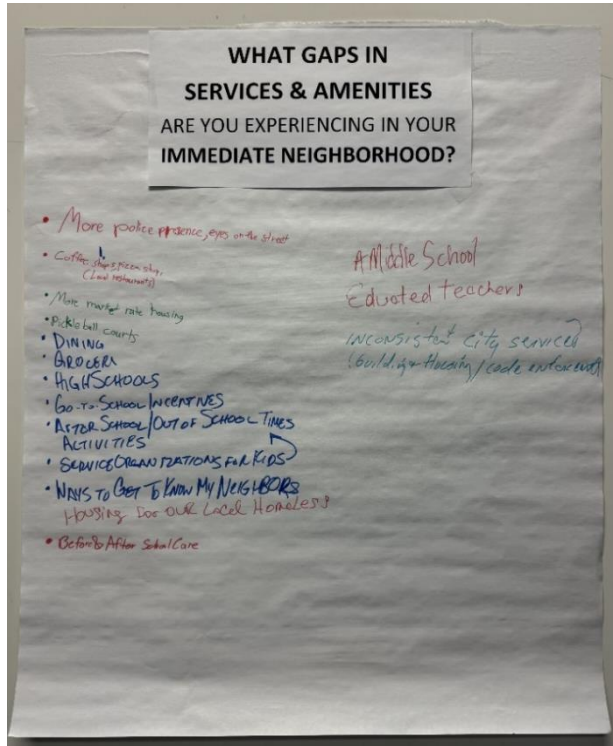


FIGURE 6: A POSTER USED DURING THE OPEN HOUSE ASKING PARTICIPANTS TO DESCRIBE THE GAPS THEY SEE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD

Community Resources

Community resources emerged as a priority due to the feedback of needing both additional social service-oriented resources and investment in already existing resources. Among those mentioned were a senior center, composting site, youth programming, affordable grocery stores, support for homeowners, and new investments in the neighborhood library and recreation center. When asked about gaps in neighborhood amenities and services, one resident stated, “It’d be nice if there was a site for composting through Rustbelt Riders,” and another mentioned, “While there is a recreation center, it needs serious investment.”

Honoring Legacy

Honoring legacy was heavily supported by residents throughout the engagement process as a way for new investments to help support what they value. This could include supporting existing block clubs, highlighting neighborhood history, creating public art, and enhancing connections with existing neighborhood organizations. When asked what originally drew them to the neighborhood, one resident responded, “Back in the ‘80s when we moved here, more mom-and-pop stores, easy walking in the area, everything you needed was in walking distance.” Another lifelong resident similarly stated, “I have lived in North Broadway my whole life. Raised my family here. I have been here since the heyday of Broadway. All the stores we had. The shops kept their storefronts cleaned every day. This place was beautiful.”



Healthy Schools

The need for healthy schools was mentioned by several residents. Residents indicated that support for teachers, incentives to go to school for students, and quality education available in the neighborhood needed attention. Participants also mentioned a desire for more middle schools and high schools in the neighborhood. When asked about gaps in services and amenities, one resident simply responded, "Schools do not have the support that they need."

Support for Existing Residents

Participants conveyed that support for existing residents is a critical component of new investments in the neighborhood. This could include funding for home repair and rehab, creating safeguards against displacement, or code enforcement to ensure safe housing options are readily available. While discussing what support for existing residents looks like, one resident responded, "Help existing homeowners maintain their property such as repairs and painting."

Attracting New Residents

Finally, attracting new residents was a priority for participants as they gave feedback on where new investments should be directed. This could include increasing housing options, creating tools to draw young families, and increasing the number of nearby amenities. Connections were made between increasing residents in the neighborhood, and how that could positively impact the ability of businesses and other institutions like schools and libraries to be more successful and well-utilized. When residents were asked what would make them proudest to be a member of this community five years from now, one response stated, "That we recognize new faces in our community and welcome them individually and as a neighborhood".

Concerns and Challenges

Valuable feedback has highlighted specific concerns and challenges that need to be addressed in our project planning and design.

Safety

A theme that emerged through the surveys and open house was the value of safety. Broadly, safety was identified as an integral quality that would make any neighborhood great, and "a safer community" was mentioned as a potential point of



pride for the future. Specific to the area, residents brought up safety many times when asked about community values and gaps in the neighborhood.

Housing Characteristics

When asked about potential new housing, a few residents brought up concerns over the development of multifamily housing. Some also had concerns about any new housing being entirely government-subsided or “only low-income” as opposed to having some market-rate units.

Collaboration Opportunities

By shedding light on neighborhood-specific priorities and concerns, our engagement activities have opened doors for potential collaborations with the following local organizations, businesses, and government agencies who may be able to support positive outcomes for future development projects.

- National Initiative for Mixed-Income Communities: research center housed at Case Western Reserve University that promotes urban equity and inclusion, and provides technical assistance specific to housing development projects and proposals.
- University Settlement: social services agency that works to deliver resources such as personal reading programs and community meals in the Slavic Village Neighborhood.
- Southeast Cleveland Resource Center: an accessible nonprofit center that provides “connections and resources to those in need.”
- Polish American Cultural Center: a nonprofit organization that promotes Polish culture in the U.S. both within and outside of the diaspora, and operates as an event space, museum, and green space.

Limitations

While there were several successful outcomes from the community engagement plan thus far, there were also limitations that deserve transparency. Participation in



FIGURE 7: CITY CLEVELAND EMPLOYEES SPEAK WITH RESIDENTS IN FRONT OF QUESTION BOARDS AT THE OPEN HOUSE



the planned engagement activities was less than hoped for, which made it difficult to know if the voice of the community was accurately captured. Furthermore, the racial demographics of those who participated lack diversity. A majority of the residents who provided input are White, with a small percentage being Black, and a few who chose not to identify their race. Age demographics similarly lacked diversity. The participants ranged in age from 30 to 82 years old. While this is a wide range, the results could have benefitted from the voices of youth and young adults.

A small but impactful limitation was the failure to offer one of the options on the survey at the open house. One of the survey questions states, "In what ways can new investments help support what you value?" This question has nine options to choose from, and the option of "Supporting Existing Residents" was unintentionally not offered when asked at the Open House. Due to this mistake, the numbers this option received overall were impacted. The support for this option through the survey alone, though, was high enough to name it as a community priority in the results.

The chosen timing of the engagement activities could also be analyzed as a limitation. The Community Visioning Open House and the survey were both planned and executed before the demolition of the former Fullerton Elementary School. Upon reflection, it was discussed that had these events been planned after the demolition, it may have given the community something to react to and increase participation. This resulting limitation is something that has been a learning opportunity and one that will be considered more carefully in the future.

As with all qualitative data, another limitation of these results is bias. When combing through community input to synthesize, organize, and make meaning out of what was said, there is a level of bias that ultimately shows up. Those who analyzed the data did their best to preserve the truth of what each person said, while simultaneously finding patterns to organize resident thoughts into outcomes and key findings that can offer action steps for moving forward.

Next Steps

Incorporating the insights and feedback gathered from our community engagement activities, we are in the process of finalizing our Request for Qualifications for the development opportunity. We are committed to ensuring that the RFQ reflects the



aspirations and needs of the community we serve, and will incorporate the feedback into the redevelopment opportunity in the following ways:

- I. Inform project vision and goals
- II. Incorporate into RFQ Neighborhood Narrative
- III. Incorporate into RFQ Scoring Matrix
- IV. Provide initial information for future, potential Community Benefits Agreements

This upfront engagement process also aimed to create opportunities for residents and stakeholders to engage and participate in the project from the onset and improve communication about projects that directly affect them. We hope that there will be continued buy-in and willingness to share voices throughout the redevelopment process.

Lastly and importantly, door-to-door surveying and stakeholder interviews were two engagement methods that were initially proposed as part of the engagement process, but did not occur due to lack of time and capacity; however, we still consider them vital to the mission of centering community voice. As a next step, we suggest that these engagement methods be incorporated into any future development team's community outreach and engagement plan.

