# Summary Report

## City Manager's Listening Session
## Topic: Community Development
Thursday, April 25, 2019 | 6:00pm – 8:00pm
Oberlin Public Library

On Thursday, April 25, 2019, the City Manager held a community listening session to discuss *Community Development* in the City of Oberlin. This was the fourth of several listening sessions held, covering various topics. Approximately 44 individuals attended the April 25th session, including residents, City Councilmembers, City staff, representatives from non-profit organizations, and City board/commission members. Participants were encouraged to network with each other, and with City staff and non-profit organizations from 6:00pm-6:20pm.

The City Manager once again explained that the purpose of the listening sessions are to better understand what is important to the community. To facilitate the discussion, three questions were posed to the group:

- How do you define community development?
- How does the City do well in the area of community development?
- How can the City improve in the area of community development?

Participants were to respond to the questions individually from 6:20pm-6:40pm and then discuss the responses in small groups from 6:40pm-7:00pm. From 7:00pm-8:00pm, a large group discussion ensued, responding to the questions posed above. The following are key points gathered from responses to each question:

### How do you define community development?

Community development involves providing a good quality of life through quality City services and schools, the responsible use of resources, supporting the development of affordable housing for various income levels, supporting efficient transportation, and the development and maintenance of the City's infrastructure. This also includes the attraction and retention of community-friendly businesses to grow the tax revenue that sustains the quality of life within the community. Community development entails developing and maintaining relationships between the City and small and commercial businesses, as well as working toward bringing all facets of the City together, including local businesses, to function as one community. This also involves being able to adapt to the changing needs of the community in all of the aforementioned areas.

***How does the City do well in the area of community development?***

The City has access to quality education through the public schools, Oberlin College and the JVS, as well as to health care through Mercy Allen Hospital and Lorain County Health & Dentistry.  The City provides quality safety services, code enforcement, recreational programming and events, and utilities, which include a clean energy portfolio.  The City communicates with the community, and City Council and staff are accessible and available to the community.  The City values business retention, but is open to new businesses operating in the City.  The Industrial Park is nearly at capacity and the businesses that occupy the Park generally align with Oberlin's values, such as clean manufacturing.  The City also supports non-profit organizations that provide services to the community.


***How can the City improve in the area of community development?***

The City can improve its housing stock, including examining the housing study that has already been completed.  The City can also communicate more about City services and programs within the community, including code enforcement options.  The City can take a more proactive approach to attracting businesses, including better promotion of the City and improving its relationships with county/regional agencies for further business attraction.  The City can also enhance its business retention efforts and encourage resident interaction with local businesses.

Other specific suggestions include reducing taxes, improving the recycling program, enhancing town gown relationships, updating the City's comprehensive land use plan, and improving parking within the business district.