



**January 30, 2024**

**Public Forum Report: Dreams to Reality**

# **Akron Environmental Justice Coalition**

**Big Love Network, Save White Pond, Akron Audubon Society,  
Preserve the Valley.com, LEAD for Pollinators, Sierra Club.**

## Table Discussions



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## 1. 100 Day Asks of Mayor Malik

- Appoint Sustainability Director
- Green Ribbon Committee
- Establish Cooperative Collaborative Governance
- Regionalism in Sustainability
- Protect Akron's Water
- 15 Year Tax Abatement Resolution
- Promote Form Based Code
- Promote Merriman Valley-Gateway - Cuyahoga Valley National Park

## 2. Imagine Akron 2050 - Highlights

DISCOVER - DREAM - DESIGN - DESTINY



**Imagine Akron 2050**  
**Safe-Healthy-Vibrant**  
**City on a Hill**



## Tree Canopy

Build an Akron Tree Canopy Coalition who's efforts would expand the understanding of the net worth of a biodiverse eco-system and tree canopy throughout the community (diversification of species, safety reduction, health benefits, need for native plants, etc).





## Neighborhood Pollution

Cross pollinate neighborhood groups and resources to build solutions faster. Make existing resources for disposal more well known and more accessible. Find funding opportunities.

## Innerbelt

There is a looming distrust and guilt over the foggy history of what happened when route 59 was put in. Resources exist in the community connecting African-American history and reparative solutions in regard to the space, but there seems to be a lack of connection from Akron's African American community for grants available toward the development of the space. Efforts need to prioritize those directly impacted by letting them tell their own stories, focusing on their financial wellbeing, history, and green space access in utilization of space.



## Urban Farming

A cultural shift is important to allow for knowledge sharing, policy change, resource sharing, access to land, and financial support of urban farmers.

## Green Space

Green space access is just about that: accessibility. Green spaces should be available both in public and private spaces that are accessible through bike lanes, public transit, etc. Moreover, these spaces should be designed and interconnected thoughtfully such that they create greenways for people, plant, and animal life in a holistic environment (e.g., plants, insects, trees) that are sustainable and designed for natural thriving. Finally, access to green spaces should include food forests, flowers, and other kinds of green spaces beyond the typical recreation or forested park.



## Property Tax Abatement

The property tax abatement has stemmed from and created multiple problems, particularly the disproportionate benefit held by investors and not transferred to owners, renters, and even the city itself. Resources could stem from amending the abatement laws to be more inclusive of residents (as opposed to developments) and creating more requirements for developers to qualify for the abatement (e.g., rent requirements, green building standards).

## Green and Affordable Housing

Akron has multiple identified causes for the issues with green and affordable housing that include the available housing stock not matching need, zoning restrictions on ADUs, and capital gains upon sale. There are resources that can aid with this including federal legislation, Akron's desirable neighborhoods, parks, and CDCs, and city-owned land. The skills to create green affordable housing exist in Akron, such as developers who are revitalizing older buildings, green/sustainable businesses and innovators, city experts, and green architects.





## **Sustainability Director / Green Ribbon Committee**

First, primary issues of crime and homelessness need to be attended too as they dovetail with neighborhood cleanliness, safety, and walkability. Re-invigorate Master Planning process in neighborhoods addressing land use with engaged stakeholders. Create CDC's focusing on housing, watersheds, and neighborhood greenways. Wholistic and comprehensive view of community, economic and environmental justice.



## Akron Environmental Justice Coalition

### Public Engagement Activities

The Environmental Justice Coalition held a Primary Candidate Forum on April 1, 2023 and subsequently held 5 public listening sessions with the community around the City of Akron into the Fall along with a Riparian Setback Ordinance feedback session. A list of priorities developed from those discussions were then presented to the Mayor Elect as 100 Day Asks of Mayor Malik.

This Public Forum Report: Dreams to Reality captures the conversations held at each table the night of the forum between community members and stakeholders, City of Akron Employees, Mayor Malik and several members of the Mayor's Cabinet.

The facilitated conversation was framed by "Imaging Akron in 2050 as a Safe-Healthy-Vibrant City on a Hill." Participants were asked to address during the session two of the topics of most concern to them which emerged from the year long public process in 2023



## Akron Tree Canopy

### DISCOVER: Asset Tree

#### Root Causes:

**Narrative:** There appears to be a lack of understanding the net worth of the tree canopy throughout the community (diversification of species, safety reduction, health benefits, need for native plants, etc). Infrastructure issues such as invasive species, electric lines, and one city arborist cannot be supported by the current City budget for this work.”

- Lack of awareness and interest
- Complaints—confusing applications
- Invasive species
- Cost and skill to own and maintain
- Money (27K) for available planting sites
- Only ONE arborist
- Gun violence and community safety
- Understand need for trees
- Non-native aggressive trees
- Lack of education; costs of maintenance
- Trees and utility lines (poor planning)
- Non-native trees
- Pollinator supportive trees- trees selected to support the ecosystem
- Aging tree stock

#### Resources:

**Narrative:** There are MANY resources but not well coordinated. Summit Of Sustainability Alliance Life On Land Subcommittee is the perfect place for coordination.

- Coordinated Sustainable conservation efforts
- Akron Zoo
- City grant
- Vacant lots
- Good soil > compost
- Tree canopy assessment
- Data base and grant for interactive 3D inventory
- Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center (every APS 2<sup>nd</sup> grader goes)
- Diverse tree population and disease
- Workforce development initiatives
- Community already engaged
- Teachers, skills, UA credit hours
- Within 1 year if tree planting - “adopt a tree” with schools.
- Tree lawns, parks, grass covered lawn
- Vacant spaces
- Native fruit trees



**Skills:**

**Narrative:** Skills need to be built in this area.

- Orchard expertise - people and organizations

**DESIGN: Mind Map**

**Narrative:**

- Specialist in trees
- Human health outcomes research
- Planning better tree placement
- More community account
- Better culture-building; social/cultural change
- In underserved communities
- \$ for best job
- Better accountability
- Know better/ plan better
- More species diversity
- Support money for a healthy understory
- Compete for best tree canopy
- Look at Green Heart of Louisville (KY) urban tree and human health research
- Private property solutions

**DESTINY: Next Steps:**

1. More money; enough for maintenance and removal in addition to plantings, Trees Canopy, Equipment, Tub, Grinder, Saw mill
  2. Build an Akron tree coalition
  3. New coordinated education/awareness campaign
- Expand mission of Akron Tree commission (is codified)
  - Build a tree army
  - Develop policies/process for trees
  - Tree removal—2 for 1
  - A tree coordination symposium
  - Build education
    - Program for H.S. kids (Davey Tree)
    - EANDC and The Well and Habitat—first home
    - School land

**Who Are We Missing in These Discussions?**

- None listed

## Innerbelt

### DISCOVER: Asset Tree

**Narrative:** There is a looming distrust and guilt over the foggy history of what happened when route 59 was put in. While there are great resources around community connections from the African American history of the space into making a reparative future impact for Akron's African American community, there seems to be a lack of connection from Akron's AA community to grants available toward the development of the space.

#### Root Causes:

- Guilt / History
- Unclear narrative of Innerbelt
- Distrust, Dishonesty, unclear communication on community history
- Branding and coherent definition of what the "Innerbelt is"
- Access to site; how does a reimagined space fit into the community

#### Resources:

- AA Rights of Passage
- City owns part of the Innerbelt
- Connect to Akron Zoo
- Green Book Cleveland is doing research on Akron's Black recreation/entertainment history
- Tiny Houses
- Need to acquire/buy additional land to achieve perfect goals
- Revive black business community displaced /lost by innerbelt
- Community knowledge and family descendants
- Reconnection
- Residents with experiences/history
- Reconnecting our communities-\$1.2M grant
- Akron Rights of Passage-role in restoring narrative
- Akron Zoo
- Univ. of Akron

#### Skills:

- Turn pain into purpose
- Concrete is naturally becoming permeable
- Hillsides are available for new uses
- Green Space + Housing possibilities
- \$1M in grant funding
- AMAATS

## DESIGN: Mind Map

**Narrative:** Prioritize those directly impacted by letting them tell their own stories, prioritizing their financial wellbeing, history, and green space access in utilization of space. Incorporate U of A students in the redesign while still prioritizing those directly impacted and create educational materials about the history of the space alongside educational training to create lasting economic prosperity towards those directly impacted. Community members are encouraged to create semi-permanent green spaces before development to get people in the space and will likely do it without permission if permission is not granted.

### Brainstorm:

- Find more ways to tell the story
- Look at who was impacted
- Find people who have a connection that can tell the story>connect to the City by place mapping
- Start making connections without permission
- People that were displaced and institutions that were responsible
- What's missing? Everything that makes community vibrant - businesses, parks, repair and replace.
- Economic impact that was displaced and the community suffered financially
- UA students design to create a project
- People that were displaced were not compensated properly and they had to be compensated; the wealth is not in comparison
- Prioritize voice of those who were impacted—restorative justice
- Acts of “guerrilla urbanism” (just do it)
- Pavement removed, regraded, create a short-term park area
- A component geared toward education/training of young people
- Look at other models for ideas
- Work to address social component honoring and incorporating the history of the community—living and dynamic component
- Restoration of opportunity
- Employment opportunities in present day
- How do we bring in innovative, long-lasting job opportunities? Training, university?

### DESTINY: Next Steps:

1. Utilize current data to see what is missing
  2. Community Neighborhood Canvass
  3. Develop a master list of who was displaced
- Redefine redlined district as an empowerment district (“green-lining”)
  - Public spaces to tell the story and add to quality of life
  - Actual value- damages, natural and cultural resources
  - Engage the institutions- City and banks that were critical in planning the de-construction; the redline district to be renamed as an empowerment district for housing and jobs/employment



## Notes from Tables

- Community neighborhood canvas; marketing plan
- Find the actual value of the damage and destruction of the displacement
- Utilize the data that we currently have- have a search team—see what we have, see what's missing
- Black homeownership and businesses to rebuild economics of community
- Develop a master list of who was displaced in all phase of Innerbelt (who was paid fair market value?)
- Build on Akron's history of innovation and incorporate into Innerbelt project

## Who Are We Missing in These Discussions?

- Akron Zoo
- Urban League
- APS
- Local businesses

## Urban Farming

### DISCOVERY: Asset Tree

**Narrative:** While there is a long list of community assets, cultural and zoning regulation shifts creating awareness and need for urban farming is needed within city and county departments. The value of “unbuilt land” protecting neighborhoods from flooding, filtering water before it flows into stream, rivers, and lakes, providing habitat for the free environmental services of predators (mammals, birds, amphibians) upon insect and rodent pests creates a healthy, sustainable environment. The City needs to assess all unbuilt, native land for its economic value of the free environmental services this unbuilt land provides to the community. The free environmental services need to be evaluated against the costs of the damage developing unbuilt land will incur on the neighborhood, the community, homeowner insurance rates, increased use of pesticides to control insect pests, costs to treat water run-off, homeowner’s increased costs of heating and air conditioning, increased road repair and home repair building on unbuildable land, and more.

[Valuation of Natural Resources and Ecosystem Services: Economic Methods | SESYNC](https://www.sesync.org/resources/valuation-natural-resources-and-ecosystem-services-economic-methods) <https://www.sesync.org/resources/valuation-natural-resources-and-ecosystem-services-economic-methods>

### Root Causes:

- Land access
- Ordinances, “red tape,” zoning
- Homeowners Associations with restrictive land use
- Culture around lawns and wildness
- Land not being well used.
- Changing cultural mindsets or “what a lawn looks like.”
- Meetings to educate on ways to get to first steps in urban farming.
- Pesticide use
- Lack of education
- Zoning
- Lack of awareness about food security and food sovereignty

### Resources:

- Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Assn.
- Food Bank
- Tool Library / Tool Sharing
- Our City parks
- Community Centers
- Let’s Grow Akron
- Small farming
- Composting
- School run farms
- Space to farm
- Summit Metro Parks

## Notes from Tables

- Summit Soil and Water Conservation
- Summit Co. Master Gardeners
- Grants, state funding, corporation support possibilities
- Hydroponic, Visio Gardens
- OSU Extension
- Summit County Beekeepers
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Nonprofits
- Farmer's Markets
- 4-H Group looking to expand into urban
- Seniors and retirees: intergenerational opportunity
- Vacant properties

### Skills:

- Seed libraries
- Foraging (education for sustainable gathering of edible plants)
- Experienced people who could teach others to farm.
- Indoor and outdoor growing (rooftop use, containers, etc.)
- Waterspouts are implemented when tearing down buildings on a lot to access water for gardening.
- Knowledge and skills from folks willing to share.
- Strong immigrant community with skills

## DESIGN: Mind Map

**Narrative:** A cultural shift is important to allow for knowledge share, policy change, resource sharing, access to land, and financial support of urban farmers.

### Brainstorm:

- Specialist as Resource
- Culture shift
- Recognize difference of value from mass production
- Low cost of free, fresh produce for all citizens
- Cooperative buying from small farms
- Sustainability a bigger part of education
- Education
- Food from small local farms
- Farmers markets in every ward; farmer's markets to accept food stamps.
- Community supported Agriculture (CSA)
- Just, sustainable food system
- Reduced food waste
- Cleaner air, cleaner water, happier more colorful community



## Notes from Tables

- Access
- Land use at its best
- Internal Land Ownership
- Access to information: what's legal, practical, and what to avoid (knowledge hub)
- Access to farm tools' farm equipment sharing.
- Teaching farms
- Community gardens
- High school and academies recognize urban farming as a career.
- Mindset change
- Accessible water
- Food forests
- Individual farms for families
- The benefits of front porches and gardens for community building
- The building of a community through community care and work
- Communal spaces
- Accessible spaces being utilized.
- Small parks
- Allowing renters outdoor access to garden on apt. property

## DESTINY: Next Steps

**Narrative:** We are missing city policy makers, immigrant farmers, renters/landlords, funders, and educational entities in this conversation.

- 1) Consolidation of existing Resources
- 2) Discovering zoning/ordinance possibilities
- 3) Educating policy makers

- Researching what other communities have accomplished.

## Who Are We Missing in These Discussions?

- Immigrant population with farming skills
- School system and career academy
- More City involvement
- Education groups (Soil and Water Conservation, Seed libraries, etc.)
- People who live in apartment complexes and their landlords
- Funders and nonprofits
- People who control vacant land (city, owners, absentee owners)
- Akron library (their borrowing library is a great resource)

## GREEN SPACE ACCESS

### DISCOVERY: Asset Tree

**Narrative:** Green space access is just about that: accessibility. Green spaces should be available both in public and private spaces that are accessible through bike lanes, public transit, etc. Moreover, these spaces should be designed and interconnected thoughtfully such that they create greenways for people, plant, and animal life in a holistic environment (e.g., plants, insects, trees) that are sustainable and designed for natural thriving. Finally, access to green spaces should include food forests, flowers, and other kinds of green spaces beyond the typical recreation or forested park.

**Narrative:** Akron has an abundance of resources and related parties with skills to achieve more accessible green spaces. First, Akron already has excellent natural resources (e.g., MetroParks, CVNP, Cuyahoga River) and social/structural/governmental resources (e.g., Akron Parks Challenge, CDC, PTV, SOSA). Akron also has more resources it could cultivate and develop, such as federal government funding, conservation easements, collaborations with private entities (e.g., Haley's Run preservation) to enhance the available resources in our city. The relevant stakeholders and skill sets will enable Akron to obtain and utilize these resources. Those stakeholders include the people of Akron, such as the parks staff, engaged Akron citizens, innovators, researchers, and various nonprofits who can be linked together and collaborate on projects. They also include experts in the community, such as Metro, AMATS, and GIS, who can enable us to create more accessibility. Stakeholders in Akron that have relevant skills also include news sources who can educate and connect people (e.g., Ideastream). However, there are root causes and grievances with Akron having yet to achieve green accessible spaces. These include unbridled industrialization and development, redlining, invasive species, zoning, disengaged politicians, poor communication, lack of equity, language barriers, and the extent to which developers scoop up lots that the community could use.

### Resources:

1. Natural Resources-City, Metro, National Parks and bike paths, Cuyahoga River, Lake Erie, Centrally located in NEO
2. Social/Structural/ Governance-Akron Parks challenge, Summit County Public Health, Community organizations, people who care, CDCs, Plans such as Akron Trail Plan, Preserve the Valley briefs and Master Plan, Form Based Code, SOSA-more regionalism
3. Potential resources-Government funding (state ODNR, Clean Ohio & feds NOAA), Deed restrictions and Conservation Easements, Vacant lots, pockets parks and gardens, Collective intellect of community, Community partnerships, Corporations and other landowners coming together as occurred rehab for Haley Run and Kelsay Creek, Safe Routes Grant program for sidewalks, GLRI grants

## Skills

1. People Power-Great park staffs, Akron citizens is conservation oriented, Collaboration is possible among non-profits, government, community business, Creative, innovative thinkers and knowledge, Volunteer power, Citizen participation in budgeting process
2. Institutional Expertise-Metro bus system, Traffic studies (AMATS), road diets, GIS analysis for resource inventory of wetlands, green space etc...
3. Information-Lamented ABJ, praised Signal and West Side Leader, Ideastream, Environmentalist must continue to educate

• Root Causes, Past Grievances with Current Consequences of Mental and Physical Health needs

1. Historic & manmade- Unbridled Industrialization, Ugly development, Too much blacktop, Invasive species, Redlining, Language barriers, Habitat destruction
2. Political and structural-Zoning, Politicians who don't listen to citizens over developers, Lack of communication (media and for citizens to decision makers), Public transportation, Expensive to maintain green space, many jurisdictions, Unused lots are eyed by developers, Consulting fees are high when we have expertise in-town such as UofA, Cleveland State, Need equitable resource allocation for parks & recreation, our access to CVNP brings concerns with over development

## DESIGN: Mind Map

**Narrative:** Some ideas for how to identify and cultivate accessible green spaces include GIS mapping to identify natural resources to protect, collaboration with various parties to create connected greenways—especially for bikes, and a sharing of road, trails, and environmental improvements. As it relates to development, ideas include requiring green building standards for all new and rehabbed building in Akron, encouraging home ownership (as opposed to external investors), eliminating parking minimums, using permeable surfaces, encouraging re-urbanization/infill, and using CLCs to install solar panels and EV charging.

There was also an emphasis on neighborhood-specific steps by funding CDCs, creating neighborhood master plans, and developing a Planning Department that works directly and collaborates with neighborhood advisory committees in developing organic and flexible plans.

## Brainstorm:

- More Bike Lanes
- More access to Flowers, fruits and vegetables
- Protecting WHOLE environment for habitat, plants, insects (not just trees) will lead to hearing birds by increasing their access to native food sources; native plants
- Green space from parks and private yards throughout neighborhoods to create GREENWAYS with people interacting in a clean and safe place



- GIS Mapping for natural resources inventory and protect accordingly
- Add money for CDCs
- LEED-type certification for sustainable in-fill and rehabbing of housing stock and for developers. Benchmark & metrics tied to living and sustainable building standardsLeverage \$ with funders, corporations gov't , foundations, for maintenance
- Homeownership large component of caring for environment-increase homeownership, need Succession plan for older citizens who sell-houses end up in hands of investors otherwise which often become rentals (Akron is now 65% rental)
- A Neighborhood by Neighborhood master plan such as PTV promoted Valley master plan
- More community-minded Planning Dept. with neighborhood advisory committee
- City Planning create plans but need to be organic and amendable with input
- Organize Trail plan coordination, links to greenway connectors-tough when bike trails are from RRs
- Need to share burden of road, trails environmental improvements
- Eliminate parking minimums
- Use water permeable surfaces
- Stop sprawl, need a plan if tear down RE-URBANIZE
- Schools need EV charging stations, solar panels
- More Bike Lanes
- More access to Flowers, fruits and vegetables
- Protecting WHOLE environment for habitat, plants, insects (not just trees) will lead to hearing birds by increasing their access to native food sources; native plants
- Green space from parks and private yards throughout neighborhoods to create GREENWAYS with people interacting in a clean and safe place

## DESTINY: Next Steps

1. Create more CDCs focusing on housing, watershed, riparian setback
  2. Create Neighborhood Greenways - Inventory (GIS Analysis Mapping) green space, wetlands, hurt green space: Soil & Water Conservation, AMATS, Levin College Urban Planning. Assess policies how support or hurt green space
  3. Re-invigorate Master Planning Process and hold them in each ward throughout city, parks, churches, community centers with stipends for participation.
- Connectivity & Conservation
  - Engagement with groups like Project Ujima

## Green and Affordable Housing

### DISCOVERY: Asset Tree

**Narrative:** Akron has multiple identified causes for the issues with green and affordable housing that include the available housing stock not matching need, zoning restrictions on ADUs, and capital gains on sale. There are resources like federal legislation that can aid Akron's neighborhoods, parks, and CDCs, and city-owned land. The skills to create green affordable housing exist in Akron, such as developers who are revitalizing older buildings, green/sustainable businesses and innovators, city experts (e.g., arborist), and green architects.

### Root Causes:

- Many houses not occupied by as many people as they were designed for
- 1 or 2 people in house designed for 5+
- Zoning rooming houses?
- Housing stock not matched to household size
- Downsized apartments can be paid-off house
- Capital gains on sale
- Zoning restrictions--ADUs

### Resources:

- Inflation reduction act
- Trails- Towpath, Heritage
- Top notch hospitals
- University of Akron
- Space for new people
- Water system- municipal owned
- OCIT Tunnel
- Walkable neighborhoods
- Transit system
- Trees
- Parks
- Cuyahoga river
- Canal
- Summit lake
- City owned land
- Public right of way
- Wide streets
- Neighborhood CDC
- Solar power

### Skills:

- Developers of existing older buildings
- Leading edge technical businesses
- GOSO, Lighter than air
- Small and medium businesses invested in community
- Municipal fiber opportunities
- Green architects
- City arborists
- Metro
- Creative community
- Zoo
- Water restoration experts
- Community clean up groups
- Community gardens
- Urban farming
- International community
- Alignment Between City, County, State

### DESIGN: Mind Map

**Narrative:** Steps can be taken to increase green affordable housing including what is already provided by the city (e.g., assistance and education on home improvement), but also working with other stakeholders (e.g., United Way) to educate on issues related to taxes, home improvement, and sustainable living. Similarly, creating new legislation that holds landlords and developers accountable for new and existing structures would enhance the available housing and green living standards.

### Brainstorm:

- Assistance to those who want to improve houses, infrastructure
- Guidance—solar, Lead, IRA
- Coordinate education > United Way tax assistance
- Green requirements in exchange for city incentives
- Pathway to accountability for repairs on rentals
  - Prevent deterioration of housing
  - Escrow for repairs
  - Escrow for tax delinquency
  - Housing court
- Thermal imaging by drone of neighborhood heat loss
- Homeowner/renter skills training
  - High schools
  - Community festivals



**Narrative:** Including missing parties (e.g., homebuilders, developers, realtors, CDCs) in conversations is critical in the next steps. Neighborhoods should also create master plans that incorporate amenities and identify how to connect and collaborate with other neighborhoods, especially as it relates to transportation. Finally, neighbors can be engaged and educated on these issues with education and information opportunities about their existing liabilities and areas for improvement.

### **DESTINY: Next Steps**

- Discussion with missing people
- Neighborhood master plans
- Neighborhood amenities
- Schools
- Transportation connections
- Energy use averages/ household insulation levels
- Educating community about programs and resources

### **Who Are We Missing in These Discussions?**

- Developers and builders
- Immigrant community
- Bans
- Homebuilders Association
- Health dept.- minority division
- Fire inspectors
- Building inspectors
- Realtors
- CDC's tenants of marginal housing
- Foundations- Knight, GAR

## Property Tax Abatement

### DISCOVER: Asset Tree

**Narrative:** The property tax abatement has stemmed from and created multiple problems, particularly the disproportionate benefit held by investors and not transferred to owners, renters, and even the city itself. Resources could stem from amending the abatement laws to be more inclusive of residents (as opposed to developments) and creating more requirements for developers to qualify for the abatement (e.g., rent requirements, green building standards).

### Root Causes

- Tax Abatement should be for single family not investors
- How do renters who lives at homes 10+ years in the community, how do they benefit?
- How much \$\$ is available from the abatements
- Investor owned properties
- Distinct between for profit or no-profit

### Resources

- Nonprofit needs to be profitable for 20 years!
- If you rehab a house, you can get an abatement
- Establish rent > market rate > responsibilities for tenants > \$50 less than market
- Build Akron > provide quality housing in Akron
- 1900's house
- Immigrant families
- 1<sup>st</sup> time homeowners
- Education
- Economic and population growth
- Increase in number of building permits issued=more houses built
- Houses are in better shape
- Non for profit investing in the future: ex. EANDC, The Well

**Narrative:** First, it should be examined whether the abatement has benefitted Akron economically from multiple perspectives—not just units built. The legislation then should be amended to improve upon the detriments we see in its current form. Legislation could be amended to make property taxes more sustainable for lower income and middle income families as prices skyrocket. There could be more engagement with nonprofits to create housing without the need for abatement.

## DESIGN: Mind Map

### Brainstorm:

- How has the program worked thus far?
- Have we reached our goals when the program was first proposed?
- Akron City Dept. of Housing and Planning
- Administration and City Council
- Council can bring up the issues we see with tax abatement
- Need a good reason
- Solar panels > big expense > big rehab> not on the tax abatement list, but possible> sustainability - add it to this program
- How many investors have applied/benefitted from the abatement?
- Amend the legislation
- EV car charging station > need to check if it comes under abatement
- Need a report out of how its helped > community reinvestment housing council
- Nonprofit is not a 501c3 because they pay taxes, not a charity
  - Nonprofit gets the benefit from the abatement and then the kids of Akron get the money > picked up by the board.
  - Prop - 13 - Calif > if your house goes up in value 10x's tax increases 2%
  - If you want to help people maintain provide more money > taxes stay the same > reside in the house > affordable rent.
- Reach out to the people who applied for the ARPA funds and tell them about the tax abatement program
- If your neighbor is buying all the property, why do one person's taxes go up?
- Creation of developments has increased water use, business growth. More demand for services- cuts cost.
- Water was built for the growth imagined, but our population declined.
- People don't know about the tax abatement. Don't know how to fill out the application
- Rent below the AMHA required the taxes won't go up. (Great way to keep rent control)
- Abatement program was geared as a marketing strategy- not to help people.

**Narrative:** Relevant data sources need to be engaged with including CRA, CIMC, and the city to gauge the impact of the current abatement. The legislation needs to be amended to put more limitations on for profit investors and be more inclusive of individual home owners and local nonprofits. Finally, more sustainable standards for building and rehabbing of existing buildings should be incorporated.

## DESTINY: Next Steps

1. Check with the CRA data,
2. Ask the CIMC
  - Amend the legislation to exclude for profit investors. If they own multiple properties—exclude.

## Notes from Tables

- Need to check if our goals are being met.
- Checking permits- how many permits have been pulled for profit and nonprofit?
- Location of where tax abatement are occurring?
- Construct homes in other areas of the city> intent to build them outside of Merriman Valley
- Homes that are built are ready for transition to all electric and more sustainable
- Alternatives to home design—more sustainable
- Need to enforce the committee that was put together ins meeting and doing things
- Do it legally!

## Who Are We Missing in These Discussions?

- Missing > community reinvestment housing council
- Someone who has benefitted from the abatement > for profit > non profit > resident
- Real estate agents
- Lawyer > housing code > tax policy > this is what you can/can't do

## Neighborhood Pollution

### DISCOVER: Asset Tree

#### Root Causes:

**Narrative:** Lack of standards, reporting knowledge, and disposal options. Urban planning disasters due to redlining.

- Not enough EPA standards
- No Enforcement of Violators
- So much Illegal Dumping of Construction Debris in West Hill
- Not Enough Tire Disposal Options
- Waste Management Issues
- How Do We Report It?
- Public Awareness of issues and solutions
- We need to open up buried waterways and also create access to small water ways that are hidden away
- Bowl of East Akron
- Revolutionize City Planning Department
- Waste Transfer Station
  - Fall 2023 Management Contract in 3 years or will put forth for a bid
- Goodrich Brownfields
- The Dirt Pile

#### Resources:

**Narrative:** lots of data and agencies

- Tansy Recycling
- Education of Community/Media
- Media
- EPA EJ Map
- Erin Brockovich Website
- 2016 EPA Brownfield Testing
- Fairshake
- 2002 Waste management Agreement
- ARQAMID

#### Skills:

**Narrative:** Small neighborhood groups and citizen scientists are getting formed and self organizing.

- Neighborhood Clean Up Programs



## Notes from Tables

- U of A Enviro Science
- Concerned Citizens
- Truly Reaching You
- Keep Akron Beautiful
- Rubber City Reuse
- FACTS
- BEN
- Tom Todd
- Network with people who gather data eg. car monitors for particulate monitor

## DESIGN: Mind Map

**Narrative:** Cross pollination of neighborhood groups and resources to build solutions faster. Make existing resources for disposal more well known and more accessible. Find funding opportunities.

### Brainstorm:

- Leadership Akron and Junior Leadership Akron should visit the waste transfer station as part of their outdoor and environmental day
- get leadership Akron and TB into trash issue (clean ups)
- Incentivize Neighborhood Clean Ups
- Try Yard Corps (couldn't make out rest of note)
- more tire disposal sites
- environmental accountability and enforcement
- accountability
- incentivize city to put trash cans in neighborhoods
- Coalition of impacted people to protest and tackle together
- canvass neighborhoods for neighborhood coalition
- citizen scientists on air and water monitoring
- network neighborhood groups to increase power and voice even if the specific issues aren't shared
- protests
- network/support group
- data to bring forward law suits
- media campaign to increase empathy
- use local and regional paper to advertise/ promote clean up/reporting to publish law breakers
- update websites on work going on in Akron
- education website/ social medias
- community education for waste disposal
- Co-City 8 Design Principals
- create a film festival where kids make short films of trash and pollution in their neighborhood and what/how a clean up could lead to a better home and tomorrow
- Black Pastor Environmental Health Training

## Notes from Tables

- School Seminars
- trash collection technology within storm drains
- Woe Funders
- capacity issues
- use the universities, UA and KSU
- set up sustainability department and city council to take pollution complaints
- sustainability department to reward reporting and penalize polluters
- Tire rim stipulation?
- more info on playground tires?

## DESTINY: Next Steps

1. Meet with Different Neighborhood Groups
2. Canvass Directly Impacted Areas
3. Meet with Casey
  - Identify Funders
  - Citizens for Air Monitoring
  - Schedule next meeting with Casey
  - Acknowledgement of environmental racism

## Who Are We Missing in These Discussions?

**Narrative:** Avoid white savior complex and meet with those directly impacted.

- Impacted neighbors
- International Institute
- Congregations
- Diverse People
- Summit County Minority Health Department
- Avoid white savior complex

## Green Ribbon Commission/Sustainability Director

### DISCOVER: Asset Tree

**Narrative:** When discussing the Green Ribbon Commission & Sustainability Director, the concerns were far reaching and varied. At times, they did not necessarily pertain to this issue but rather issues of sustainability at large in Akron and the interconnected social, racial, and environmental injustices that are present in the city. The challenges that will be faced by the commission and director include this web of interconnected issues, as well as past precedent, concerns about neighborhood differences, and issues with enforcement/timeline. But, there are numerous resources in Akron that can be leveraged to find members for this commission but also parties for the Director to collaborate with on how to address sustainability in Akron.

### Root Causes:

- Past practice
- Safety issues: don't feel safe walking—loose dogs, fear of crime
- Action/involvement
- 40-50% residents rent and cannot garden
- Fear of theft, judgement
- What options are there for enforcement?
- Food access
- Neighborhood differences
- Transportation- CLE
- Accountability
- Timeline

### Resources:

- Summit Coil and Water Conservation District
- Community partners
- Engaging actions
- Summit Sustainability Alliance
- Green housing
- Bi-Centennial
- Communication for green and sustainable issues
- Transit expert
- Expert on communication and implementation
- Climate risk assessment
- Cleveland consultant
- Neighborhood groups
- Ecologists—U of A, SMP, CVNP
- UA Students and environmental orgs on-campus

### Skills:

- None listed

## DESIGN: Mind Map

**Narrative:** A number of avenues emerged in terms of next steps for the commission and sustainability director. First, primary issues of crime and homelessness need to be attended to as they dovetail with neighborhood cleanliness, safety, and walkability. The city should examine engaging its citizens by identifying experts in sustainability, existing neighborhood assets and businesses, and coordinating large scale volunteer operations to address very local issues. The city should also make this a two way street where education and engagement flows both from the citizens to the city, and vice versa.

### Brainstorm

- Safety > enforcement
- Civilian Corps
- Attending to marginalized unhoused
- Crime
- Sidewalks
- Broken windows
- City of Akron apply for grants
- Designating space in right of way
- Experts on sustainable design and development
- Continuing education in sustainability
- Green refuse and sanitation
- Recycling
- Acknowledge existing assets in community> green ribbon gardens and businesses
- Work with small business
- Highlight neighborhood successes
- Elevating people
- Litter pick-ups in neighborhood
- Providing support and structure for individuals
- Volunteer programs > SMP > CVNP
- Volunteer and coordinating large scale Projects
- Coordinate with director about communicating about sustainable living
- Wards Reps/ Neighborhood Council
- Work with APS students

## DESTINY: Next Steps

**Narrative:** The next three steps are to first define sustainability, identify experts, and bring them to the table to engage with the city.

- Define what we mean by sustainability
- Find experts
- Bring experts to the table to create commission
- City talking with community organizations and coalition
- Partnership with UA and UA researchers

**Who Are We Missing in These Discussions?**

- See Next Steps



## Ongoing Issues/Extra Table

1. There is an expectation that action on Climate Resiliency will be addressed through the Bloomberg Award program and Power A Clean Future Ohio consulting.

Questions remain such as...Will it be whole system? Will it be driven by Justice 40 criteria? Will it address biodiversity? Will it utilize community assets and support start-ups? Will it be data driven? Will Sustainable Development standards be adopted? etc.

2. Develop Comprehensive Land Use Plan

*White Pond and Theiss Woods are examples of the necessity to protect and preserve “critical green space” now. A plan that would include the community and address issues such as - climate, energy efficiency of buildings, dark skies, conservation corridors and tree canopy - (native trees, number of trees to reduce heat island impact, clean air, storm water control, wind damage reduction to buildings, etc.) Consider Carbon Credits for lands that are critical green infrastructure for the city ie La Due Reservoir, etc.*

3. Build capacity and knowledge around “third party” sustainability standards like USGBC - LEED Certifications or others.

4. Address easy wins or “low hanging fruit” ie. in regards to emissions and costs/benefits

- a. Design and implement efficient lighting strategies for Firestone Stadium’s field lights that are on all night negatively impacting bio-diversity and the budget. (Dark Skies Initiative)
- b. set a policy to first spend procurement dollars for sustainable products and local purchase when possible.
- c. Conserve Theiss Woods beyond 5 year plan. Consider carbon credit program for revenue once Acorn Project is done.

5. Need for better communication, coordination and collaboration between city and community on neighborhood projects.

6. Seek to Integrate and be engaged in regional collaborations in sustainability.

7. Protect Akron’s Water from fracking and toxic spills through legislation and water plant updates. (East Palestine train/Lake Rockwell)

8. Filter and promote all programs of the city through a cost/benefit analysis that clearly articulates how the program or project benefits the health and safety of the community, environment and local economy. Incorporate an Equity Assessment - Ask not just who does this help, but who does it harm?

9. Leverage partnerships with current and new partners to create awareness, foster inclusivity and promote sustainability as an economic driver for the city. ie Akron Community Foundation, SOSA, etc.

10. Insure community engagement through a Green Ribbon Commission that would help co-create and implement a Sustainability and Resiliency Action Plan for the City of Akron.