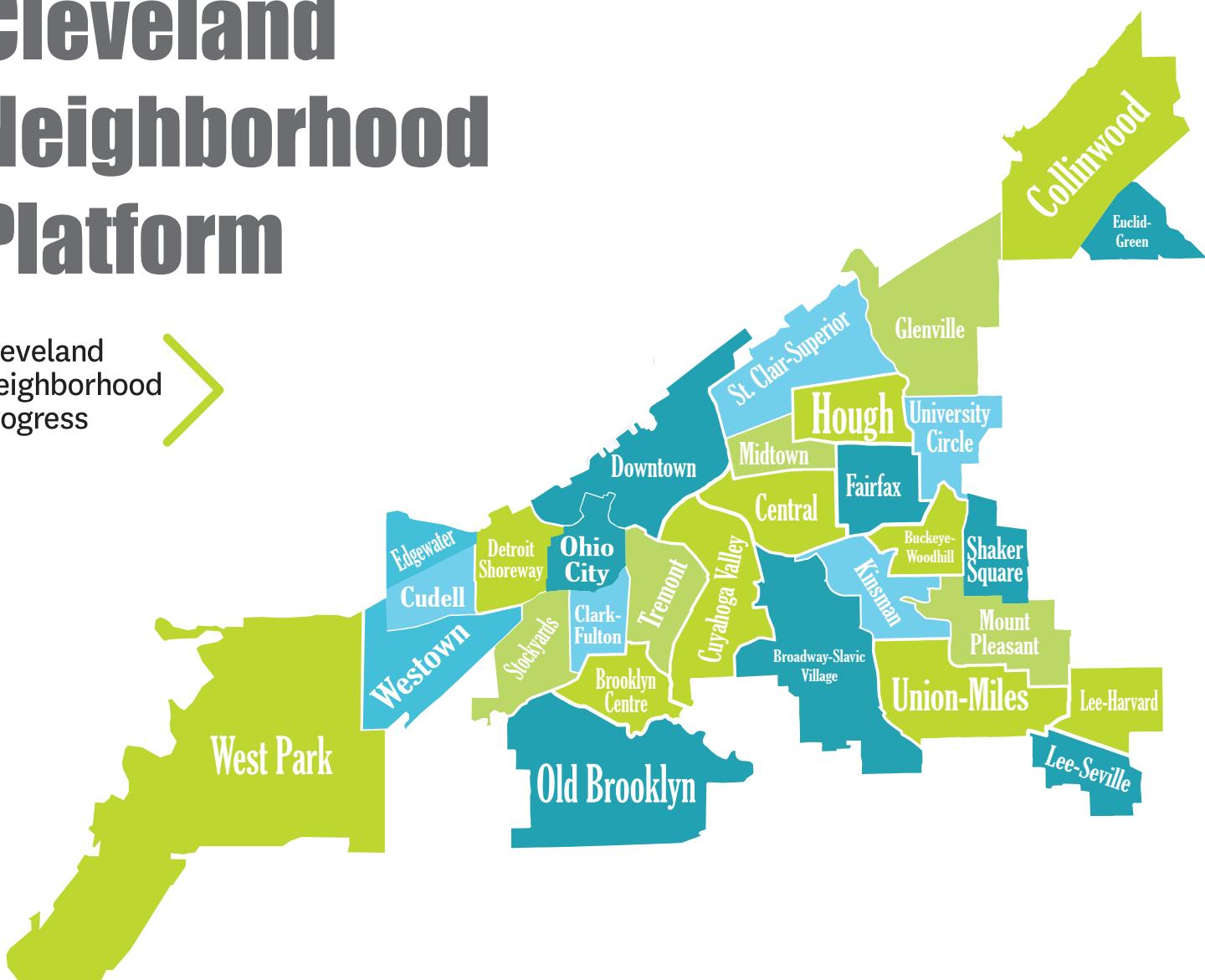


# Cleveland Neighborhood Platform



# Cleveland Neighborhood Platform

Cleveland  
Neighborhood  
Progress



## Introduction

Cleveland and its neighborhoods are at a crossroads. In the fall of this year, voters will elect their a new Mayor in 16 years and a new City Council. This election will provide an opportunity to select leaders with unique visions for Cleveland and who must commit to strengthening our neighborhoods. They should rigorously challenge the way services are delivered and resources are leveraged, including programs that involve Cleveland's private sector partners, foundations, community development corporations (CDCs), and other experienced non-profits. Much more than maintaining the status quo, our elected leaders must pursue an ambitious vision for Cleveland today that transforms our opportunities tomorrow.

For these reasons, Cleveland Neighborhood Progress (CNP), a local nonprofit community development intermediary, engaged CDCs and PolicyBridge, a nonprofit public policy and advocacy “think and action tank,” to develop a Neighborhood Platform to recommend specific policies for Cleveland’s next Mayor and City Council. These recommendations will strengthen neighborhoods by improving Cleveland’s housing stock, increasing homeownership for low- and moderate-income homebuyers, injecting life into our main streets, and fostering renewed public confidence in municipal operations.

## **Cleveland Community Development Corporations and Cleveland Neighborhood Progress Overview**

Cleveland is a city with many distinct neighborhoods, each with their own character and pride, but many neighborhoods continue to suffer from disinvestment. There is also persistent inequality between neighborhoods in terms of development, amenities, and services, which research shows contributes to and exacerbates racial inequity. Since 1968, CDCs have sought to address community and economic challenges, often by leading on projects that for-profit developers were reluctant to take on, such as affordable housing and commercial corridor redevelopment in severely disinvested neighborhoods. In this regard, CDCs have played a significant role in creating the conditions that make commercially motivated real estate developers confident about investing in perceived “high risk” communities.

Founded in 1988, CNP has decades of experience investing in community revitalization in Greater Cleveland. CNP collaborates with all neighborhood CDCs to formulate plans and strategies to improve and strengthen Cleveland’s neighborhoods for residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. CDCs have the knowledge and expertise to revitalize Cleveland’s neighborhoods by focusing on place-making, housing, economic development, neighborhood infrastructure, and other community enhancement activities, using equitable development principles and strategies.

### **Neighborhood Platform Purpose**

For the first time in 16 years, Cleveland voters will elect a new Mayor and new members of City Council. These new leaders in City Hall will face long-standing challenges, including a deteriorating housing stock, disparities in investment across neighborhoods, the persistent effects of redlining, and the many pernicious ways that systemic racism continues to manifest in the lives of people and communities of color. As the new Administration and City Council seek to implement a new vision for the City of Cleveland, it is incumbent on CDCs and CNP to be trusted resources and partners in those efforts.

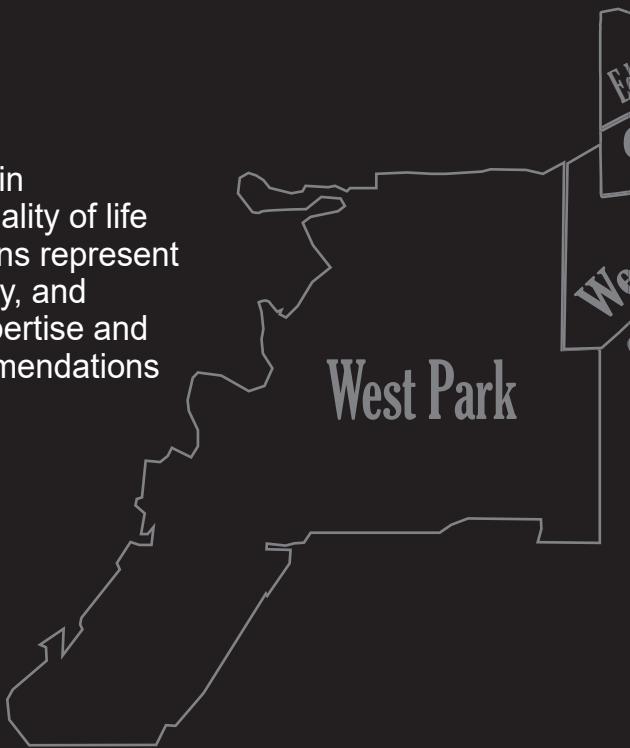
To that end, the Neighborhood Platform includes specific policy recommendations that will improve quality of life for all residents in all Cleveland neighborhoods. These recommendations are actionable and can be achieved in four years. They will also lay a foundation from which all neighborhoods can grow and thrive. As partners in this work and as the organizations closest to residents and small businesses in our neighborhoods, CDCs and CNP are committed to working with the new Mayor and City Council members, enacting these recommendations, and serving as partners and counsel in their successful implementation.

*The Neighborhood Platform also clearly articulates that CDCs are best positioned and qualified to be the primary mechanism to mobilize and strengthen Cleveland’s neighborhoods. Because of their reputations as trusted neighbors and resources for residents, small business owners, and other community stakeholders, CDCs have the unique ability to connect people with city services, personnel, community partners, and others. CDCs help deliver high-quality services and programs across the city, deep into every corner of every neighborhood. Cleveland’s next Mayor and City Council should partner with CDCs and leverage their expertise, relationships, and ability to mobilize, with the goal of delivering transformative change in every Cleveland neighborhood.*



## Policy Priorities

A coordinated and aligned community revitalization approach in Cleveland's neighborhoods will improve conditions and the quality of life for residents. The following four sets of policy recommendations represent areas where CDCs and CNP can be partners in thought, policy, and action. A new Mayor and City Council should leverage the expertise and experience that CDCs and CNP offer to achieve these recommendations during the first four years of a new Mayoral Administration.



# Overarching Values

There are five overarching values that a new Mayoral Administration and City Council must embrace and demonstrate. These values will build trust with residents and partners. They will confront systemic racism and disinvestment. And they will signal an understanding that our problems must be solved by bold action and inclusive convening. A new Mayor and City Council members must show that:



**Leadership is paramount,**  
to provide the creativity, energy, and  
resources required to strengthen  
Cleveland's neighborhoods;



**Partnership, Collaboration and  
Efficiency are essential**  
to achieve and maintain strong and  
vibrant neighborhoods;



**Open and Transparent  
Communication is necessary**  
to engage all constituencies  
efficiently and effectively;



**Robust Civic and Community  
Engagement is mandatory**  
to value the voice of neighborhood  
constituents



**Equitable Development  
will elevate Cleveland**  
as a national model for  
progressive change.

## Key Concepts

The Neighborhood Platform is built on the belief that for Cleveland to thrive, we must commit to and deploy equitable development strategies that address the long history of structural racism and racial injustice. Pursuing racial equity will lift the entire city, strengthen our entire economy, and improve quality of life in all neighborhoods for every resident. These key concepts are outlined below.

**Equitable Development** is a positive development strategy that ensures everyone participates in and benefits from community and economic transformation. It is intentionally focused on eliminating racial inequities and barriers and making catalytic and everyday investments to assure lower-wealth and other underrepresented people and businesses:

- Reside in healthy, safe, opportunity-rich neighborhoods that reflect their culture,
- Connect to economic and ownership opportunities, and
- Have a voice and influence in the decisions that shape their neighborhoods.

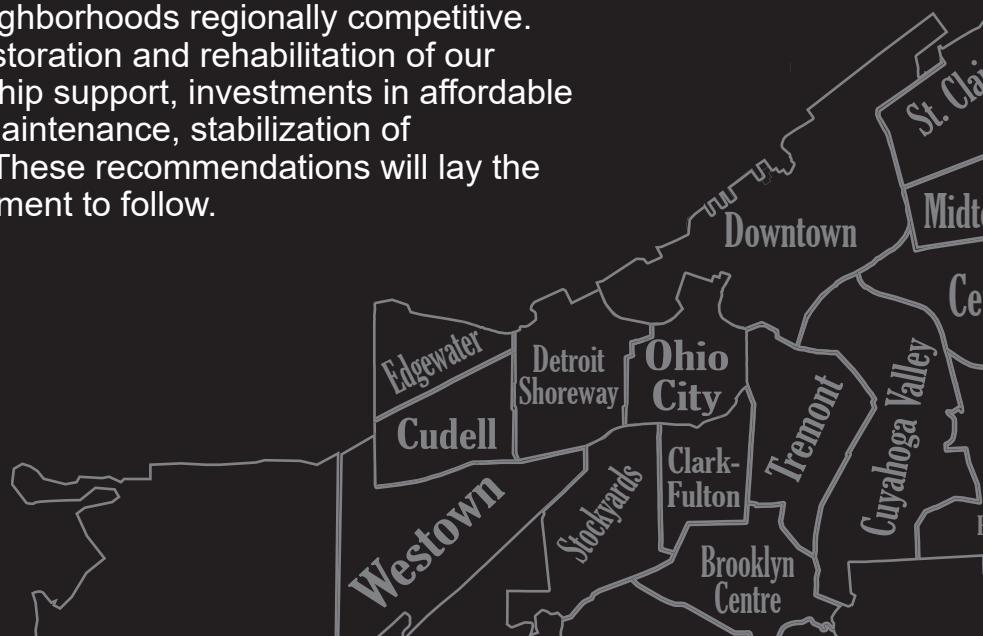
**Structural Racism** is racial bias across and within society. It is the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of factors such as public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms that work to reinforce and perpetuate racial inequity.

**Racial Equity** is when race is no longer used to predict life outcomes. Pursuing racial equity requires the fair and just inclusion of all people in economic, social, and political life.



## Priority 1: Housing

A new Mayor and City Council should adopt equitable development strategies that make Cleveland's neighborhoods regionally competitive. These strategies should focus on restoration and rehabilitation of our existing housing stock, homeownership support, investments in affordable rental housing unit production and maintenance, stabilization of neighborhoods, and aging in place. These recommendations will lay the groundwork for other forms of investment to follow.



## HOUSING POLICY

- Engage CDCs and CNP to review the City of Cleveland's 10-Year Housing Plan and recommend amendments and action for moving forward. Make any changes within the first 18 months of a new mayoral administration. Develop a timeline by which to measure success and publicly report progress. CDCs should be partners in implementing this plan, especially in the areas of housing affordability, housing quality, and neighborhood reinvestments.
- Launch a locally funded Housing Trust Fund in partnership with Cuyahoga County to support the preservation and production of affordable housing. Non-federal investments should be made for both capital and operational expenses.
- Establish a committee that provides oversight on the compliance and reporting requirements of Cleveland's Community Reinvestment Act Initiative, which requires that depository institutions execute agreements with the city. Use this committee as a vehicle to work more closely with financial institutions to leverage their capital in Cleveland, especially in historically red-lined and disinvested neighborhoods.
- Create policies and practices that proactively preclude predatory investing in Cleveland's housing market.
- Expand and monitor the city's Certificate of Disclosure program in lieu of point of sale inspections.

## HOUSING PROGRAMS

- Increase homeownership in the city by 5% in the first four years of the new administration. Leverage traditional banking models for financing and explore partnerships with community development financial institutions and other non-traditional sources to offer down payment assistance, flexible home purchase mortgages, and other tools that can assist people to achieve home ownership and remain stable homeowners.
- Update the city's tax abatement policy to:
  - Use data to provide greater incentives in weak and middle markets;
  - Encourage rehabilitation and updating of housing stock;
  - Address transportation-oriented development, housing typology, and land use priorities; and
  - Expand environmental targets.
- Triple the impact of Cleveland's home repair programs and reduce bureaucratic hurdles to participation by working with community and nonprofit partners who may be better equipped to administer programs to achieve scale and efficiencies.
- Invest in community development financial institutions and other housing finance partners to amplify homeowners', homebuyers', and landlords' access to capital for down payment assistance, repair loans, low value mortgages, and other financial tools.
- Maintain and expand the loan loss reserve for Middle Neighborhoods that encourages private investment.
- Triple the impact of Cleveland's construction gap financing program, which subsidizes new home construction and full house rehabilitation to mitigate the impacts of appraisal gaps in Cleveland neighborhoods.

## RENTERS & LANDLORDS

- Prohibit discrimination against renters based on their source of income.
- Pass "Pay to Stay" legislation that allows renters to stay in their homes if they pay past-due rent and related costs in full to avert eviction.
- Pass a property tax relief program for low-income homeowners that encourages them to remain in their neighborhoods and enjoy wealth-building opportunities at the point of sale.
- Establish rental assistance, landlord/tenant abatements, and other incentives for landlords to keep rents affordable for Cleveland residents.
- Engage in vigilant code enforcement and rental registration to hold absentee landlords accountable for maintaining their properties.
- Pass legislation that holds property managers accountable for housing code violations on rental properties in Cleveland Housing Court and requires property owners outside of Cuyahoga County to appear physically in court for violations.



West Park

## Priority 2: Economic Development

Cleveland's next Mayor and City Council should focus on instituting equitable economic development strategies that nurture neighborhoods where businesses of all types provide competitive goods and services, create jobs, and foster wealth creation and income growth for all stakeholders.

## **NEIGHBORHOODS & MAIN STREETS**

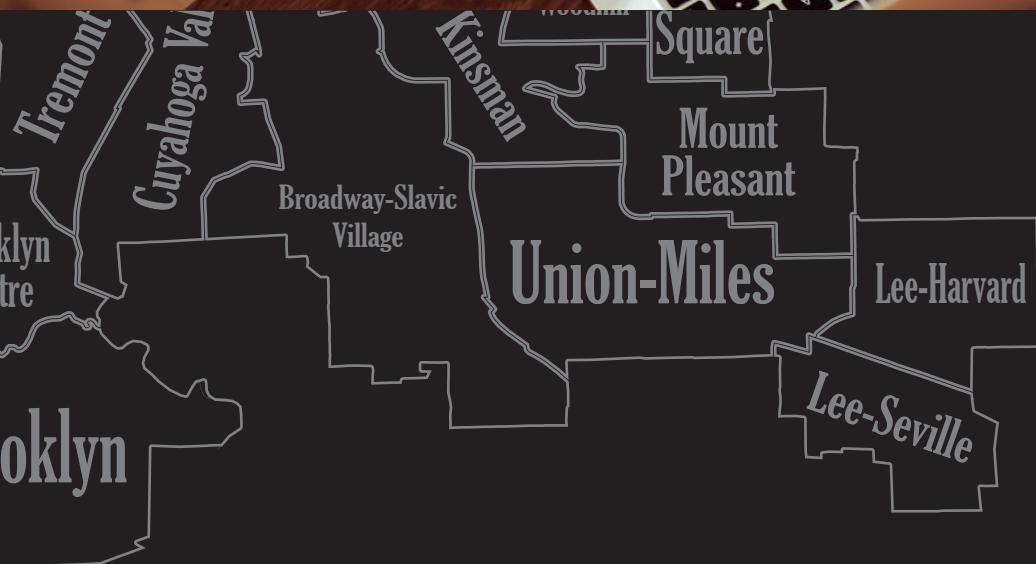
- *Articulate at a public forum a clear strategy for neighborhood transformation in the first year of a new mayoral administration.*
- *Make new investments in the restoration and rehabilitation of main streets in order to build commercial corridors that attract and retain businesses.*
- *Establish a “white box” renovation program - similar to the Storefront Renovation Program – to refund costs associated with restoring commercial buildings in designated areas.*
- Within 18 months of the new administration, *launch a comprehensive marketing plan for Cleveland and its neighborhoods* to be achieved by an external partner with public support and input from other partners.

## **SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT**

- *Develop and/or expand investments in programs and partnerships to train small and minority business owners.*
- *Establish temporary use variances for pilot projects that must be renewed on a scheduled basis to encourage innovation and experimentation in our neighborhoods.*
- *Convene with financial, philanthropic, and economic development partners and leverage public investments and programs to establish a new fund for forgivable capital for business expansion for targeted enterprises, such as women- or minority-owned businesses. Operate the program through a third party, with CDCs and CNP involved in its execution.*

## **DEVELOPMENT-FOCUSED POLICY**

- To provide clarity for future investment, *implement form-based zoning* that maintains Cleveland’s urban fabric, allows more streamlined development processes, encourages density, includes non-automobile usage, and engages community members in the process.
- *Advance progressive tax policies that encourage development and penalize the holding of vacant land and structures, especially when not done in furtherance of a neighborhood plan. Explore options that may include “split roll property taxes” and other forms of vacancy tax.*



## Priority 3: Neighborhood Infrastructure

CDCs strongly encourage equitable investments to create neighborhoods with assets such as parks, green spaces, recreational amenities, safe streets, street lighting, and affordable, high-speed broadband.

## BROADBAND ACCESS

- *Support public-private partnerships that invest in digital infrastructure.*
- *Reduce by 50% the number of households and small business that are not connected to the internet by highspeed broadband. Progress should address both connection and affordability.*

## GREENING CLEVELAND

- To address the impact of climate change and increase regional resiliency, *reduce by half the number of Cleveland neighborhoods where the tree canopy is projected to be below 30% in 2031.*
- *Support the Cleveland Tree Coalition and its efforts to maintain and grow Cleveland's tree canopy.*
- *Enforce and refuse occupancy permits for developers who do not implement and maintain landscaping as approved by the Planning Commission.*
- *Increase the adoption of street trees, commercial corridor trees, vacant land, parks, and other green spaces by neighborhoods, businesses, and community groups by working with a partner to administer programs to achieve scale and efficiencies.*
- *Assess fees or accept land donations in lieu of fees on new development to increase park acreage across the city.*
- *Identify which vacant lots controlled by the City Land Bank are not suitable for building and work with nonprofit partners to transform them into micro-forests, pocket parks, gardens, and other innovative uses that increase greenspace and quality of life.*

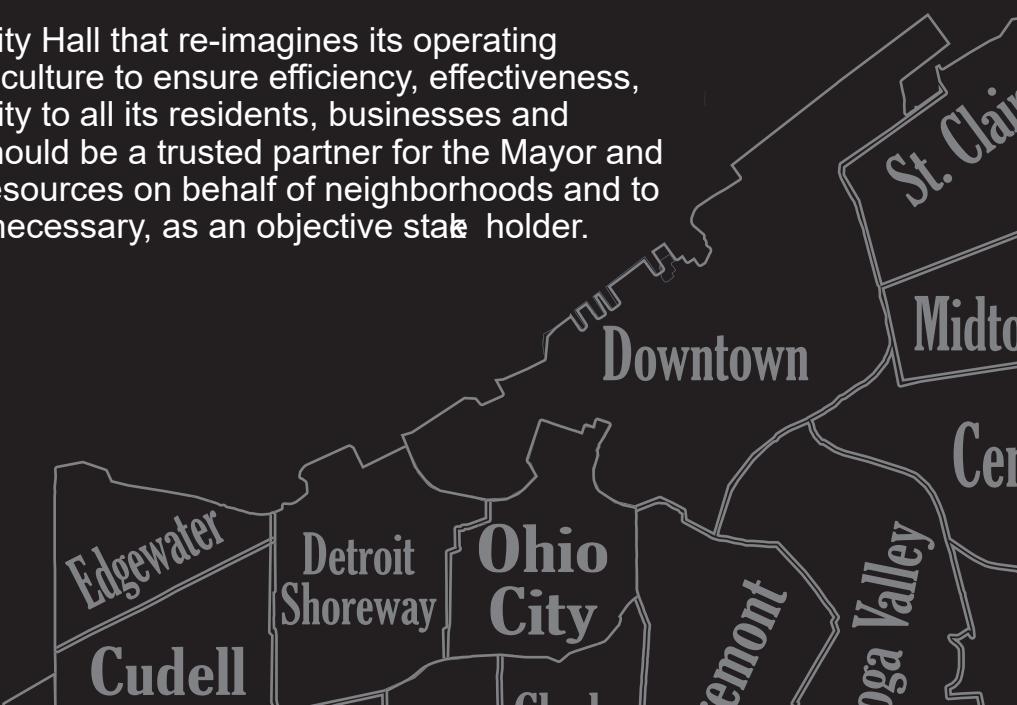
## STRENGTHEN NEIGHBORHOOD INFRASTRUCTURE

- Within the first year of the new mayoral administration, *develop and launch a strategy with adequate funding for regular maintenance and repair of neighborhood parks, green spaces, and bridges.*
- *Create a public access area on the city's website that regularly updates the status of maintenance and repair projects and collects stakeholder comments.*
- *Work with partners to strengthen Cleveland's right-of-way ordinance.*
- *Launch a CDC-led Mainstreet Enforcement Program to quickly identify and coordinate neighborhood infrastructure trouble spots for resolution.*
- *Continue the current administration's commitment to leading the Vision Zero Cleveland Task Force.*
- *Improve accessibility to city amenities by identifying and prioritizing funding for no less than 60 new miles of interconnected multipurpose trails, off-road trails, cycle trails, and protected bike lanes.*
- *Coordinate and align requests for state capital funding with partners, including Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, the Downtown Cleveland Alliance, Enterprise Community Partners, and the Greater Cleveland Partnership.*



## Priority 4: Municipal Modernization

CDCs support a new vision for City Hall that re-imagines its operating systems, policies, practices, and culture to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, and accountability to all its residents, businesses and constituencies. CDCs can and should be a trusted partner for the Mayor and City Administration to leverage resources on behalf of neighborhoods and to hold the city accountable, when necessary, as an objective stake holder.



## **RE-ENVISION MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

- *Prioritize departmental reorganization to better deliver services and results for residents and neighborhoods, with a focus on three clusters:*
  - **Development**, including the areas of planning, economic development, community development, the Mayor's Office of Capital Projects, neighborhood services, urban forestry, and building and housing;
  - **Mobility**, including the areas of pedestrian and non-automobile transportation, traffic engineering, and planning; and
  - **Community Health**, including public health, recreation, parks, aging, and community affairs.
- *Foster a workplace culture and restructure municipal operations as warranted to create a City Hall experience that is friendly, respectful, responsive, and focused on residents, visitors, customers, and other stakeholders*
- Within the first year of the new administration, *initiate comprehensive technology reforms that transform the way Cleveland collects and uses data to inform municipal operations, measure success, target resources, and engage the public*. Goals should include improving the use of public resources, making data open and accessible to the public, enhancing residents and customer experiences with city services, and overhauling the way residents and businesses can interact with the city through digital interfaces.
- *Increase by 50% the number of building inspectors within the first 36 months of the new administration.*

## **EMPOWER CDCS TO HELP TRANSFORM OUR NEIGHBORHOODS**

- Within the first year of the new administration, *engage CDCs, CNP, and other stakeholders in re-imagining community development funding* with a focus on more effectively using CDBG funding to meet neighborhood needs and funding CDC operations and programs through alternative, non-federal sources.
- *Institute quarterly meetings between the mayor, members of his/her cabinet, Council leadership, CDC leaders, and CNP leadership* to solicit input and feedback on community and economic development activities across Cleveland neighborhoods.

## **STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH RESIDENTS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

- Redesign, invest in, and reinstitute the city's language access plan* to make municipal services accessible for people with limited English proficiency, including providing key documents and applications in various languages and timely third-party interpretation and outreach services.
- Establish dedicated coordination for philanthropic opportunities* that require collaboration between city government and external partners to improve intake review, writing, awarding, and reporting.
- Institute regularly scheduled community meetings* to engage neighborhood stakeholders in dialogue and decision-making to build trust and foster authentic communication.



# Collaboration



Implementing the recommendations enumerated in this Neighborhood Platform will strengthen Cleveland for all residents and small businesses, but there are additional opportunities for CDCs and CNP to support a new Mayor and City Council as they seek to increase the quality of life across all Cleveland communities. The areas below represent fields in which CDCs and CNP often have active roles or support the work being done by individuals, grassroots coalitions, and nonprofits with expertise and experience to make powerful change for Cleveland residents. In fact, these individuals and groups also need CDCs, CNP, and the broader CDC ecosystem to meet our communities where they are. To that end, CDCs and CNP are critical partners in these solutions. They are committed to supporting these efforts because they address issues of racial equity, they strengthen our communities, and they make Cleveland neighborhoods better places for everyone to live, work, and play.



### Workforce Development

Cleveland residents deserve employment opportunities that provide livable wages, benefits, and access to career pathways for future growth. A new Mayor and City Council should leverage their influence and political capital to align all of the workforce development programs and funding towards a shared vision of prosperity for Cleveland residents.



### Environmental Justice

As a legacy city, Cleveland's industrial past lingers today in our homes, soil, water, and air. Too often and for far too long, the poorest Cleveland residents and communities of color have endured the greatest exposure to these environmental injustices.

Environmental justice is inseparable from racial equity. A new Mayor and City Council should use the city's resources and influence to restore the health of our people, homes, and neighborhoods.



### Public Safety

Safety is a bedrock principle for strong neighborhoods, but many, diverse factors contribute to what makes a neighborhood safe. Safety forces and programs should make residents, businesses, visitors, and others feel protected, but not policed. A new Mayor and City Council must work with each neighborhood to learn from the past, explore innovative solutions to current challenges, and further integrate our safety forces in our neighborhoods.



### Education

Our schools are vital members of and gathering places in our communities. A new Mayor and City Council should continue to make investments in Cleveland schools, so that our children are prepared to join the workforce in the careers of their choosing and so that they are prepared to be engaged citizens in their city and community. While the classroom is the traditional place where children learn, our neighborhoods, playgrounds, and parks are classrooms without walls where kids learn every day, all year long. CDCs and other community-based organizations provide educational and youth-oriented programming that engage and strengthen students and their families. A new Mayor and City Council should empower those community partners who help extend learning beyond the classroom and into our neighborhoods.

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## Cleveland Neighborhood Platform

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**West Park**

The Cleveland Neighborhood Platform Report Prepared by

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