

City of  
Akron, Ohio  
Office of  
Integrated  
Development  
Five Year  
Strategic  
Framework  
2019-2024

# WORKING SMARTER TOGETHER

**HEALTH**

**EQUITY**

**BEAUTY**

**RESILIENCE**

**ANY  
ABLE  
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ENT**

“My hope in the coming years, as we take this more inclusive approach to development, is that my neighbors find increased economic opportunity for themselves and their families and an overall improved quality of life.”

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## A MESSAGE FROM MAYOR HORRIGAN

Across the country, mayors are being asked to confront much of what challenges us as a nation. Economic inequality and failing infrastructure, housing, and basic safety all manifest themselves to local leaders on a daily basis. This means our constituents look to us to create real solutions for their very real problems. Many of my colleagues have come to the same conclusion I did: Government must evolve to meet the needs of today or face irrelevancy and continued negative outcomes.

Personally, I refuse to manage my city's decline.

As Mayor, I can't escape the effect my decisions have on the community. I grocery shop, worship, drive, mow my lawn, raise my family, and build my life alongside the people directly impacted by the choices made every day at City Hall. Those I serve deserve better economic and community development opportunities than we've seen the past decade, and the Office of Integrated Development is designed to achieve that.

OID is not about doing something different for difference's sake. It's about working smarter together to better assist community members in building Akron's future. It's about changing a culture of "What do you want?" to "How can we help?" It's a recognition that development is about more than just financial incentives and job counts. That constructing an equitable, resilient, and well-designed city is not just the right thing to do, it's also good business.

My hope in the coming years, as we take this more inclusive approach to development, is that my neighbors find increased economic opportunity for themselves and their families and an overall improved quality of life.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan Horrigan" followed by a horizontal line.

Daniel Horrigan  
Mayor of Akron





## MEET THE OFFICE OF INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

The Office of Integrated Development (OID) is a reimagining and restructuring of several existing City of Akron departments to remove silos and deliver the highest quality of service to Akron's residents, workers, business owners, and visitors.

OID demonstrates the City of Akron's commitment to innovative, transparent, and efficient governance and represents a new way of working both within and with the City of Akron.

The City of Akron is not the first community to undertake this type of restructuring. Cities including Detroit, Lansing, Louisville, and Minneapolis have each engaged in this type of process in recent years. While the City of Akron learned from those cities and hopes to inspire other cities, the resulting mission, values, structure, and plan for OID are authentic to the realities and many opportunities present in this community.

The creation of OID comes at a time when the City of Akron, like many other municipalities, is faced with a changing economy and workforce, growing expectations of residents on an expanded set of policy priorities, and a budget limited by the realities of debt burden. OID is not a panacea, but it is a proactive response by the City to these needs and a calculated bet on Akron's future.



## THE PATH TO OID

In early 2017, City of Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan convened a group of business and community leaders to assist him in reexamining the role of city government in economic development.

Over the course of the year, these leaders, known as the Akron Growth Council, determined that if the City was to provide meaningful economic leadership in the community, its internal structure needed to change significantly. Specifically, the Akron Growth Council noted the limitations of having the economic development, planning and community development, and engineering functions siloed both in philosophy and operations.

In parallel with the Akron Growth Council's work, the City engaged in Reimagining the Civic Commons (RCC)—a national initiative in five U.S. cities aimed at revitalizing and connecting civic assets. The initiative focuses on four main goals: civic engagement, socioeconomic mixing, environmental sustainability, and value creation. RCC revealed a new way of working to City leaders and further demonstrated the need for change.

In response, Mayor Horrigan announced the creation of the Office of Integrated Development (OID) during his State of the City address in February 2018. The new team brings together the existing departments of Planning and Urban Development, Economic Development, Downtown Operations, and Recreation, as well as elements of the Engineering Bureau, under a single strategic vision and newly created leadership in the form of a Deputy Mayor for OID.

## PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

OID began work immediately after the announcement by launching a handful of cross-team initiatives, including Great Streets Akron and the Akron Parks Challenge. However, to fully realize the potential of OID, and with support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the City of Akron engaged Spirit for Change Consulting LLC in May 2018 to lead a 15-month process to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Facilitate the organizational culture change needed to fully implement OID as not only an effective city department but as the preferred way of working that has broad team buy-in and can withstand future changes in personnel and elected leadership.
2. Establish OID within the City of Akron organizational structure with a transparent statement of vision, mission, and values.
3. Ensure that the staffing and resource needs of OID are fully understood and develop a strategy to meet those needs.
4. Develop and implement a communications and reporting structure that effectively and transparently shares the progress of OID with appropriate internal and external stakeholders.



# We determined that to provide meaningful economic leadership in our community, our internal structure needed to change.

5. Develop a set of measurable outcomes to track success and maintain accountability.

6. Develop and implement a prioritized five-year strategy for the areas of focus, including quality of public life, business growth and retention, and entrepreneurship and innovation.

The process to achieve the above outcomes engaged OID's leadership team—and all members of OID staff, at times—in a range of team and individual-capacity building activities designed to establish cohesion within OID while also creating a detailed blueprint of how OID would engage in and deliver on its program of work. Over the course of the 15-month process, Spirit for Change Consulting and OID leadership worked together to:

- Conduct baseline interviews with internal and external stakeholders to understand perceived risks and opportunities for OID.
- Work through a series of four strategy retreats with OID leadership to create the vision and mission, identify core values, and create a six-month tactical plan for work underway.
- Establish a set of internal-facing ways of working commitments to help the team create and operationalize a new way of working together focused on unity, solutions orientation, and cross-team support.

- Learn from other cities with OID-like teams, including Detroit, Lansing, Louisville, and Minneapolis.
- Conduct a staffing needs and skills gap analysis to inform the creation of OID's organizational chart and multi-year learning and professional development strategy.
- Establish overarching goals and associated metrics for OID that align current and future work.
- Engage the OID team in an all-staff ideation exercise called "Month of Ideas" designed to lift up new ideas that reinforce the core values.
- Create a schedule and structure for regular all-staff meetings to allow the OID team to bolster a culture of learning and knowledge sharing.
- Implement a new cross-team project dashboard to improve communications and transparency at all levels of OID about the full range of OID work.
- Coordinate with other working groups to ensure that OID is well positioned to lead or partner on the implementation of existing initiatives, such as *Elevate Greater Akron*—the new joint inclusive economic development strategy from the City of Akron, the Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce, and the County of Summit.



**The City of Akron Office of Integrated Development is committed to co-creating, with residents and businesses, a community that is healthy, equitable, beautiful, and resilient. Our team does this with clarity of process, transparent communications, data-driven strategy, and a culture of learning and creativity. Our goal is to embrace Akron's history and steward that legacy.**

**OLD's mission and vision are supported by 10 core values that further illustrate what OLD cares about. These core values drive the attitudes, choices, and actions of the OLD team. These values are visible throughout this strategic framework, in the way the team is structured and in the way the work of OLD is already being planned and implemented.**



**Equity.** OID values diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our team utilizes an equity lens in placemaking to ensure inclusive, healthy neighborhoods, where all have fair access to opportunities for economic opportunity and mobility.

**Community Focused.** OID values inclusive community engagement and works to deliver a consistent, high-quality experience for all customers, including residents, developers, and businesses.

**Stewarding Our Legacy.** OID values and embraces Akron's history. Our team works to build on that tradition not only to maintain what Akron offers but also to leverage that history for Akron's future.

**Deliver on Promises.** OID values delivering on its promises to the Akron community. Before a public commitment is made, our team works to ensure that the plans are up-to-date and aligned with the vision of the City and that financial feasibility and sustainability are considered at the outset.

**Be Strategic.** OID values being strategic and setting clear priorities. Our team understands that resources—time, staff capacity, and finances—are limited, and it works to maximize those resources by establishing and delivering on attainable goals that are data-driven and move the needle on the overarching strategy. Our team works to establish and improve processes through analysis and performance metrics.

**Clarity of Process.** OID values clear processes and roles, responsiveness, and accountability. Our team works to build and sustain respectful relationships internally, where individual team members understand how their work connects to OID's vision/mission and have an expectation of dependability and timeliness.

**Transparent Communications.** OID values effective, transparent communities. Our team works together internally and externally to engage in open communications that are honest, substantive, and solutions-oriented.

**Beauty as a Basic Right.** OID believes that all who live, work, do business, and visit Akron should experience high-quality design in buildings, infrastructure, and public spaces.

**Culture of Learning & Creativity.** OID values creativity and innovation. We strive to build and sustain a culture within OID that supports learning from peers, as well as from other places. Our team is entrepreneurial and interdisciplinary by design, and we empower all members of the team in building capacity through education, training, and peer exchange.

**Effectively Managing Partners.** OID values its partners. Our team works to build respectful, effective relationships with partners by providing effective communications, consistently delivering on promises, and clearly outlining partner roles in City-led initiatives.

## **EQUITY & OID**

While equity is called out as a core value for OID, it is important to note that it is foundational to every aspect of this strategy. For OID, equity is both a process and an outcome that involves fair treatment, access to opportunity, and advancement for all people. In pursuit of equity, OID will work to both identify and eliminate the barriers and root causes that prevent the full participation of some groups in Akron's growth and prosperity. OID understands that to improve equity there must be increased fairness within its own systems, processes, and procedures, as well as justice in the distribution of resources.



**DOWNTOWN**

**ELEVATE**

**PLACE**

**TEAM**

**EQUITY**

**The City of Akron Office of Integrated Development frames its work around five key goals. Each of the five goals, outlined in more detail on the subsequent pages, is designed to help the team deliver on core values, organize current work, identify future work, structure internal coordination, and effectively engage with residents and external partners.**

# DESTINY FOR ALL



# ATION

**GOAL ONE:** OID will advance a visionary plan to make Downtown Akron a destination for all Akronites and visitors, a hub for economic activity and jobs, and a fully functioning 24-hour neighborhood for Downtown residents.

## WHY THIS MATTERS

This goal serves to focus city resources and leverage key internal and external partners to help grow the residential population from the city center out and to help strengthen the role of Downtown as an employment hub.

## CORE VALUE ALIGNMENT

- Equity
- Community Focused
- Deliver on Promises
- Be Strategic
- Beauty as a Basic Right
- Transparent Communications



# ECONOM OPPORT





# OMIC



# UNITY

**GOAL TWO:** OI will advance, in partnership with the County of Summit and the Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce, the successful implementation of the *Elevate Greater Akron* plan to transform economic opportunity within the City and across the region.

## WHY THIS MATTERS

This goal recognizes the City of Akron as the economic engine driving the region and the critical role the City plays in effectively partnering on the successful implementation of *Elevate Greater Akron*.

## CORE VALUE ALIGNMENT

- Equity
- Community Focused
- Stewarding Our Legacy
- Effectively Manage Partners
- Transparent Communications

# PLACE MAKING KEEPING





**GOAL THREE:** OLD will advance strategic place-making and place-keeping policies, plans, and practices designed to enhance the design and livability of Akron's neighborhoods—including Downtown Akron—for current residents and to attract new residents to grow the population to 250,000 by 2050.

#### WHY THIS MATTERS

This goal underscores that the economic and social future of the City of Akron depends on stabilizing and growing the population. Population growth will create the density necessary to attract and retain business, as well as the social capital needed to support public life and civic institutions.

#### CORE VALUE ALIGNMENT

- Equity
- Community Focuses
- Deliver on Promises
- Be Strategic
- Stewarding Our Legacy
- Beauty as a Basic Right

# LEARNING CREATIVELY



# VG & VITY



**GOAL FOUR:** OID will advance its mission by effectively leveraging the skillset and insights of a range of partners and initiatives, as well as creating a culture of learning, creativity, and knowledge sharing that builds team capacity and supports interdisciplinary problem-solving.

#### WHY THIS MATTERS

This goal embraces OID as a new way of working by engaging in more effective external partnerships and by better supporting the ongoing learning and capacity building of staff.

#### CORE VALUE ALIGNMENT

- Community Focused
- Be Strategic
- Clarity of Process
- Culture of Learning and Creativity
- Transparent Communications
- Effectively Manage Partners



# MORE EQUITABLE AKRON



# BLE



**GOAL FIVE:** OID will advance its mission for a more equitable Akron by developing and implementing policies designed to alleviate inequity in all its forms and by being intentional in building and sustaining the OID team capacity in the areas of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

#### WHY THIS MATTERS

The goal recognizes the importance of OID being more reflective of the community it serves and building staff capacity to advance a more equitable future for the City of Akron.

#### CORE VALUE ALIGNMENT

- Equity
- Community Focused
- Beauty as a Basic Right
- Culture of Learning and Creativity



***DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD  
DEVELOPMENT***

***INCOME EQUITY  
AND ECONOMIC SECURITY***

***ECONOMIC  
GROWTH***

***AKRON'S POPULATION  
GROWTH & LIVABILITY***

***OLD TEAM  
DEVELOPMENT***

***INVESTMENT, PARTNERSHIP,  
AND DEVELOPMENT***

# **The Office of Integrated Development will employ a robust set of indicators—to be reported on annually—to track and report on progress in meeting its goals.**

The work of the Office of Integrated Development is ultimately about transforming Akron's neighborhoods and improving the lives Akron residents in meaningful ways. This type of change requires bold action and equally bold measures of accountability. The Office of Integrated Development will employ a robust set of indicators—to be reported on annually—to track and report on progress in meeting its goals.

Information for the indicators will be drawn from a number of sources, including publicly available data from the U.S. Census and partner organizations, such as The Fund for Our Economic Future, in addition to data developed by the City of Akron. OID will create a baseline report using these indicators in late 2019 and will begin reporting publicly on progress in 2020.







# Indicators for Downtown Neighborhood Development

Collectively, these indicators track Downtown Akron's ongoing transformation into an active, livable neighborhood and job hub.

## **NUMBER OF HOUSING UNITS (DOWNTOWN)**

This measure will help demonstrate Downtown Akron's growth as a fully functioning neighborhood

*Source: City of Akron*

## **HOUSING MIX (DOWNTOWN)**

This measure will help demonstrate that Downtown Akron is attractive to a diversity of residents with differing housing needs.

*Source: City of Akron*

## **COMMERCIAL VACANCY RATE (DOWNTOWN)**

Commercial vacancy, as it declines, will demonstrate Downtown Akron's growth as a job hub.

*Source: Downtown Akron Partnership*



# Indicators for Income Equity and Economic Security

Collectively, these indicators track Akron's ability to build and sustain an inclusive economy that reduces poverty and economic inequities.

## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

This measure tracks the median income for Akron's households and, over time, an increase in that figure will indicate a growing economy.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BLACK/WHITE DISPARITY

This measure, over time, will track the reduction in household income inequality between Akron's white and black population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS AND EARNINGS

This measure looks at the median earnings over the past 12 months for those aged 25 and older by educational attainment level—less than HS, HS or equivalent, some college or associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and graduate or professional degree.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## ECONOMIC SECURITY

This measure tracks the number of households earning a living wage.

Source: *The Fund for Our Economic Future*

## POVERTY (% INDIVIDUALS BELOW POVERTY LEVEL)

This measure tracks the number of people or households living below the poverty line.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau





# Indicators for Economic Growth

Collectively, these indicators track the growth in Akron's economy and employment.

## GROSS METROPOLITAN PRODUCT

Increases in GMP will demonstrate that Akron is growing economically.

*Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis*

## GROWTH IN YOUNG FIRMS (FIRMS 0–5 YEARS OLD)

This measure will demonstrate how Akron's economic development efforts—including Elevate Greater Akron—are working to support new firms.

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

## LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

This measure tracks the working population in the group aged 16–64 who are currently employed or seeking employment in the economy. Robust participation means that Akron is growing as a job hub and economic engine.

*Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*





# Indicators for Akron's Population Growth & Livability

Collectively, these indicators track the growth in Akron's population, as well as critical livability factors needed to support and sustain that growth.

## POPULATION GROWTH

This measure tracks growth in Akron's population. Population growth generally indicates sustained economic growth as well.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## ACRES OF PARKLAND PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

This measure tracks Akron residents' access to parks. A higher level of park acres per 1000 residents is an indicator of a more livable community.

Source: City of Akron

## TREE CANOPY

This measure tracks the tree canopy—or density of tree coverage—in Akron. A tree canopy (of environmentally appropriate trees) of 20–40% is generally considered a baseline for a healthy urban forest.

Source: City of Akron

## WALK SCORE®

This measure tracks the walkability in Akron and, over time, the growth in access to and quality of pedestrian infrastructure.

Source: Walk Score

## TRANSIT SCORE®

This measure tracks the access to transit in Akron and, over time, the growth in that access and the transit network overall.

Source: Walk Score

## BIKE SCORE®

This measure tracks the bikeability in Akron and, over time, the growth in access to and quality of the biking infrastructure.

Source: Walk Score

## RESIDENTIAL TAX ABATEMENT APPLICATIONS

This measure tracks participation in the residential tax abatement program as a proxy for resident commitment to staying in Akron and retaining ownership.

Source: City of Akron

## GEOGRAPHIC EQUITY

This measure tracks the elimination of concentrated poverty.

Source: The Fund for Our Economic Future





# Indicators for OID Team Development

Collectively, these indicators track the capacity building and engagement of the OID Team.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING BUDGET

This measure tracks the resources budgeted annually per employee for learning and training as a proxy for capacity building.  
*Source: City of Akron*

## OID STAFF DEMOGRAPHICS

This measure tracks the changing demographics of the OID team and, by extension, the effectiveness of efforts to diversify the team over time.  
*Source: City of Akron*

## EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

This measure tracks OID employee job satisfaction.  
*Source: City of Akron*

## EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN TRAINING

This measure tracks the participation of OID team members in training and learning opportunities as a proxy for engagement.  
*Source: City of Akron*







# Indicators for Investment, Partnership, and Development

Collectively, these indicators track Akron's ability to attract the private and public investment needed to revitalize and redevelop the city.

## **PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN REAL ESTATE PER \$1 OF CITY INVESTMENT**

This measure tracks Akron's ability to attract the private investment needed to revitalize and redevelop the city.

*Source: City of Akron*

## **FEDERAL HISTORIC TAX CREDIT**

This measure tracks Akron's ability to attract public investment from the Federal government needed to preserve, rehabilitate, and adapt the city's many historic structures.

*Source: National Park Service*

## **NEW MARKETS TAX CREDIT INVESTMENT**

This measure tracks Akron's ability to attract the New Markets Tax Credit investments needed to catalyze redevelopment in the city.

*Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Community Investment Explorer*

## **STATE HISTORIC TAX CREDIT INVESTMENT**

This measure tracks Akron's ability to attract public investment from the State needed to preserve, rehabilitate, and adapt the city's many historic structures.

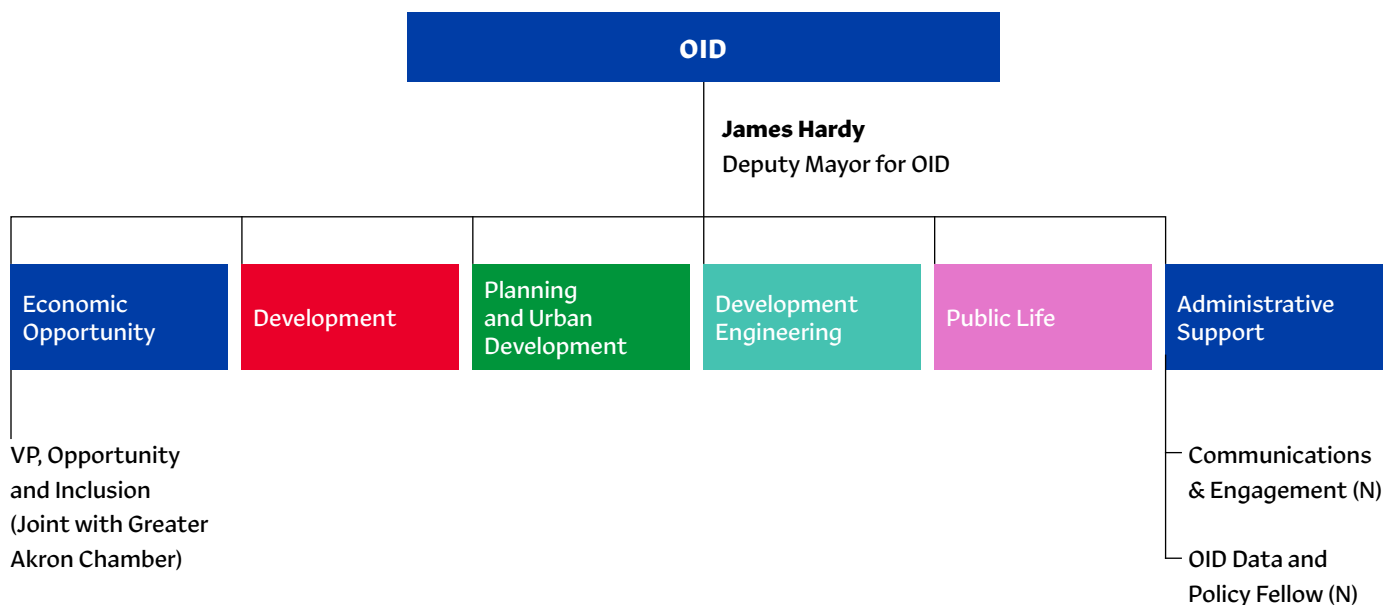
*Source: Ohio Development Services Agency*

## **LOW INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDIT INVESTMENT**

This measure tracks Akron's ability to attract Low Income Housing Tax Credit investment, which is one of the few production tools available for mixed-use, mixed-income development.

*Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Community Investment Explorer*

**The Office of Integrated Development leverages an existing team of highly trained and experienced city employees into a new structure designed to best implement OLD's mission, vision, and goals.**



The Office of Integrated Development leverages an existing team of highly trained and experienced city employees into a new structure designed to best implement OID's mission, vision, and goals. The new structure embodies a new way of working in the City of Akron by supporting improved transparency, communication, coordination, and cross-team learning. The new structure also recognizes the budget realities facing the city by accounting for all current staff and strategically proposing minimal new positions to build the team over time.

(N) Indicates a new position

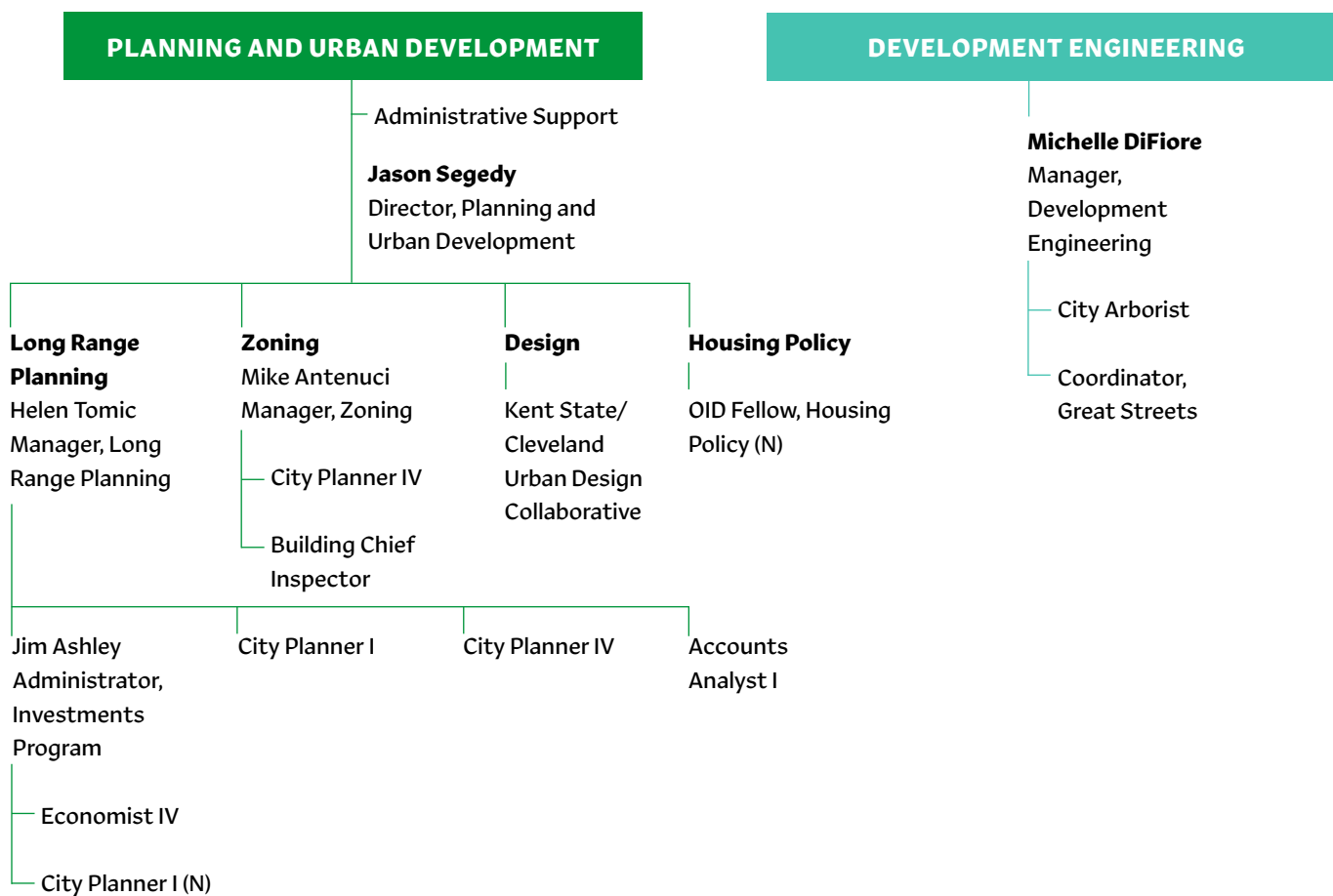


**ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

While not a new unit per se, Economic Opportunity does represent an important commitment for the City as part of the *Elevate Greater Akron* work. The City and the Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce have jointly hired a VP, Opportunity and Inclusion to support *Elevate Greater Akron* and, for OID, to help to advance work under Goal 1 and Goal 5.

**DEVELOPMENT**

Economic Development becomes Development in the OID structure. The Business Retention and Expansion Division is structured to support the *Elevate Greater Akron* plan and to align with similar teams at the Akron Chamber of Commerce and the County of Summit. The Policy and Development Division will continue its focus on finance, innovation, and entrepreneurship, but it will expand to include a new Land Use and Real Estate team. The Land Use and Real Estate team will be OID's hub for strategic deal-making to make the best use of city-owned real estate.



### PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Planning and Urban Development retains its core functions as required by the City Charter. The new Long Range Planning Division formally brings together the capital planning, comprehensive planning, and community development functions. Zoning essentially remains the same, but the team will increase opportunities to cross-train and collaborate with the Long Range Planning.

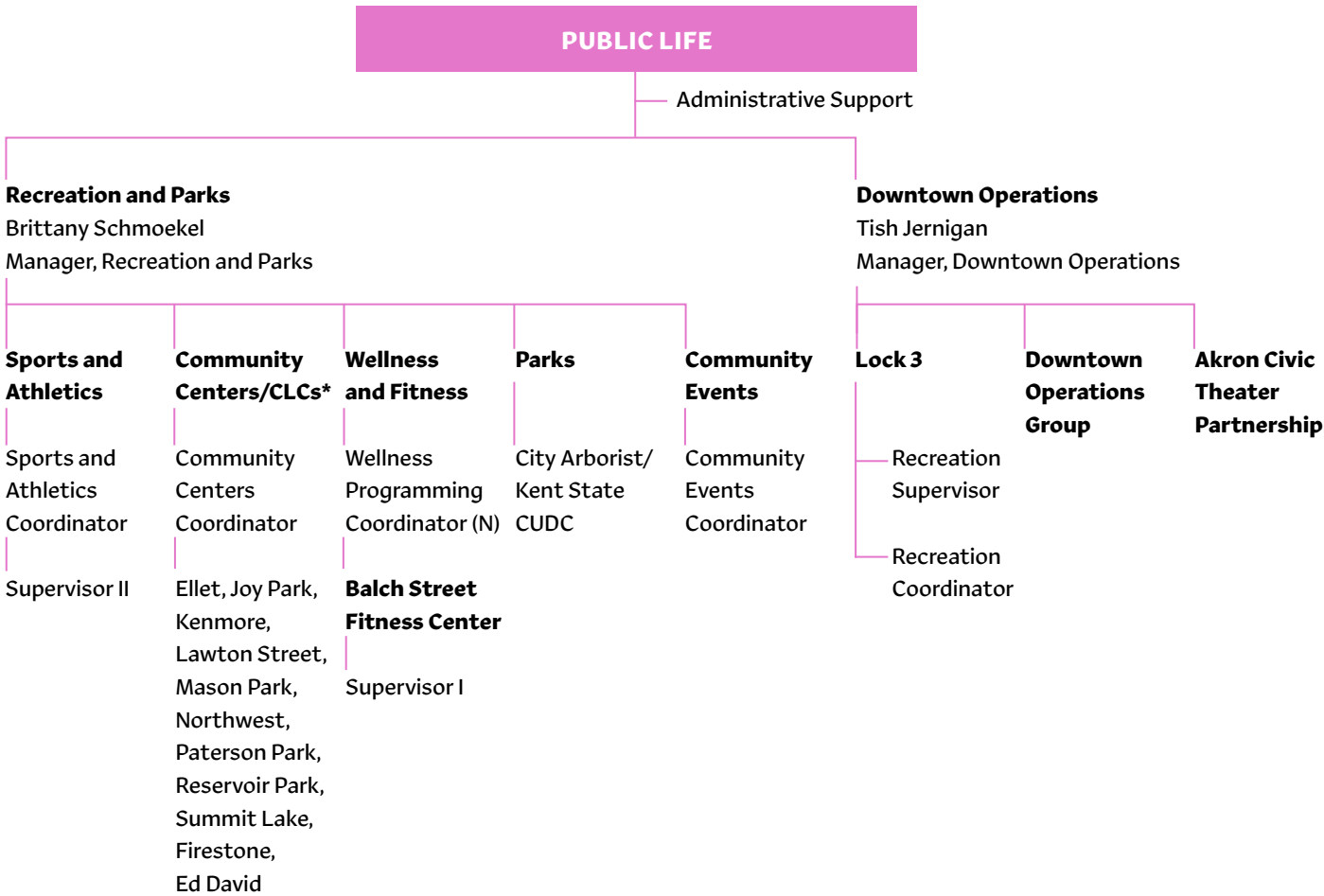
OID is leveraging a partnership with Kent State University's Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative to restore much needed design capabilities, but this is also a priority skill set for future hires in Planning and Urban Development. Under Housing Policy, when resources are identified, OID proposes to bring on a mid-career housing Fellow to work closely with Planning and Urban Development and others in OID to develop an expanded strategy for Akron's housing policies.

### DEVELOPMENT ENGINEERING

Development Engineering is newly created as part of OID and serves a critical liaison function between OID and the Engineering Bureau. The City Arborist will move from the Public Service Department to Development Engineering and will also support the build-out of the parks design function in Recreation and Parks. The Great Streets Initiative will also sit in Development Engineering with a dedicated coordinator.

(N) Indicates a new position





**PUBLIC LIFE**

Public Life brings together Downtown Operations and a reconfigured Recreation and Parks. Establishing Public Life is one of the biggest changes resulting from OID’s creation, but it is a change that will provide opportunities for strategic collaborations for downtown and neighborhood parks, recreation, and events.

Downtown Operations will lead on Lock 3, the Downtown Operations Group, and the Akron Civic Theater Partnership. Recreation and Parks will build on the results of a year-long strategic planning process for the former Recreation Bureau. The existing Parks Maintenance team serves an important role in the City and will continue to do so as part of the Public Service Department. The reimagined Recreation and Parks team is really about creating a vision for Akron public spaces, including their programming and design. A new Wellness Programming Coordinator will replace the former Active Adults position and will focus on growing neighborhood-based fitness and wellness activities citywide.

**ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT**

OID will reposition its talented administrative staff by exploring opportunities for those staffers to cross-train, lead on special projects, and support OID at an enterprise level. OID also plans to obtain resources for a cohort of Fellows to support policy, communications, engagement, and other special projects at an enterprise level.

(N) Indicates a new position

## AN ENGAGED, INCLUSIVE TEAM

The success of the Office of Integrated Development rests in large part on its staff's ability to establish and embed a new way of working across the team. As illustrated in OID's Core Values and the Indicators for Success, learning and training opportunities for every member of the OID team are essential for the successful implementation of this strategic framework. As part of the implementation of this strategy, OID will work to secure external resources to support a learning agenda for the OID team, in addition to leveraging existing internal and external opportunities for shared learning, professional development, and cross-training.

OID is also committed to building and sustaining a team that better reflects the community it serves. A key element of the OID learning agenda will be a focus on implicit bias training and racial equity education. In addition, OID is partnering with the City's Department of Human Resources to develop a more inclusive recruitment approach for both permanent and temporary positions, with the goal of increasing diversity—particularly racial diversity—in the candidate pipeline.

Employee engagement is also critical for the success of OID. OID has implemented three tools to support this engagement. First, to build transparency and clear internal communications, all staff now meet regularly for OID All Team meetings, which provide an opportunity for staff to engage with peers and OID leadership. Second, in 2018, OID piloted the "Month of Ideas," which will now continue on an annual basis. During the Month of Ideas, staff are asked to submit any and all ideas that advance OID's mission and speak to the core values. All submitted ideas are reviewed and receive a decision from the management team. In 2018, 53 ideas were submitted and 27 of those ideas were implemented as quick wins. Finally, starting in 2019, OID will conduct an annual employee survey to assess, among other things, staff engagement and satisfaction on the job.

## ALIGNING BUDGET TO VALUES

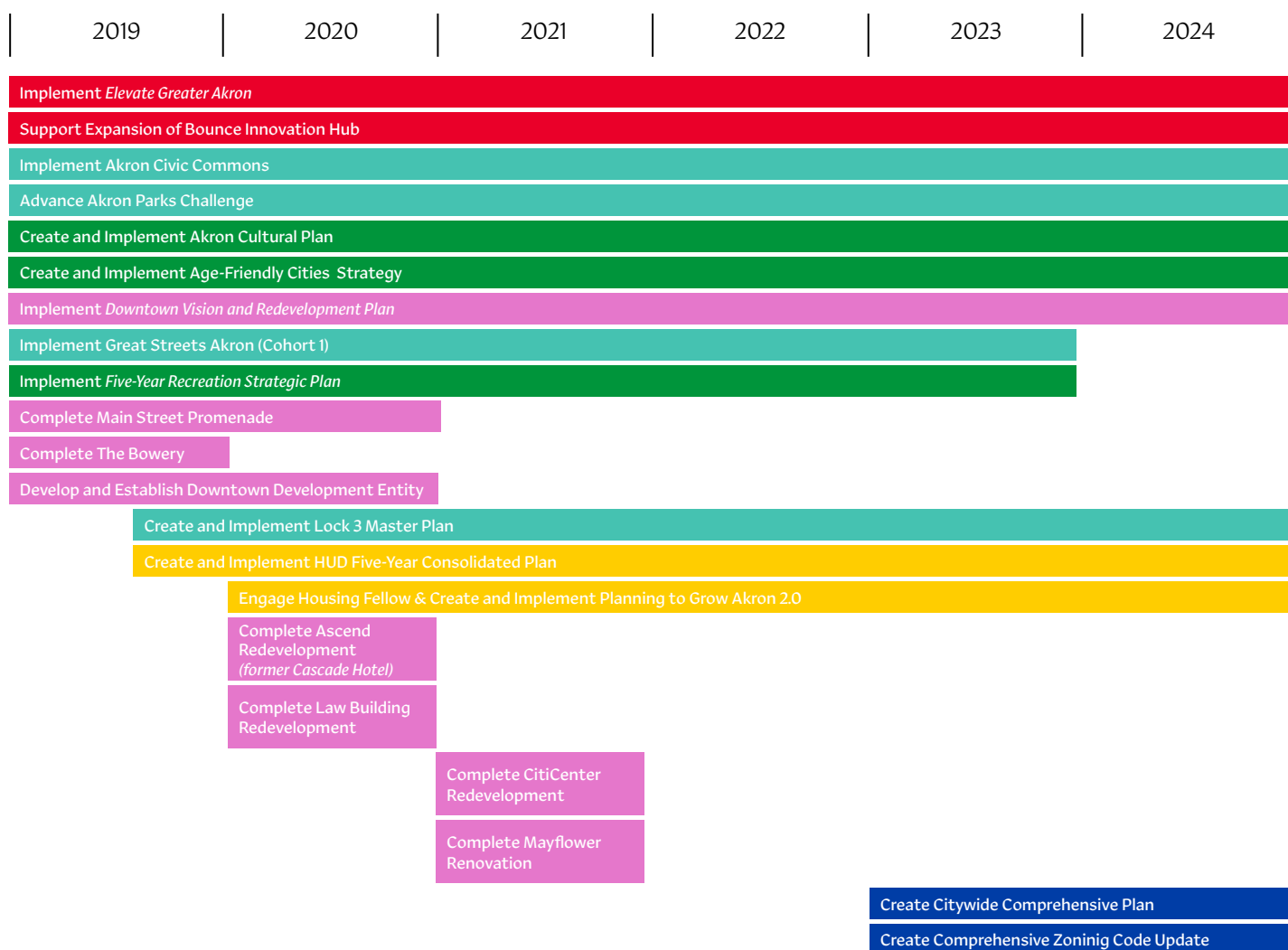
Budgets are a clear representation of what an organization truly values. In addition to a new team structure, the Office of Integrated Development is also making changes to the City budget that reflect its goals and values. OID plans to leverage a combined \$23.3 million annual budget to advance the goals outlined in this strategic framework.

OID is also responsible for the Capital Budget. Led by the Planning and Urban Development team, OID will engage in a transparent planning process focused on making the most of limited financial resources while also delivering equitable outcomes for Akron's residents.

While not an insignificant sum, OID's budget only represents 5% of the City's annual operating budget. Many more resources and partnerships will be required to effectively implement the work outlined in this strategy. The OID team, with the support of the Mayor's Office, is already adept at attracting these resources to advance key initiatives, and the team will continue to do so with even more focus under this strategic framework.

**The Office of Integrated Development is charged with stewarding Akron's rich legacy into a more equitable future. The City of Akron recognizes that for the city to truly succeed in the future, every Akron resident benefit from a livable and resilient community and have fair access to opportunity and the ability to participate in a just, inclusive local economy.**

Delivering on this mission requires OID to craft a program of work that is both ambitious, but sufficiently focused to deliver on its goals in measurable ways. Certainly, the fundamental operations expected of Development, Planning and Urban Development, Development Engineering, and Public Life will continue, though with a more intentional and cross-team approach aligned to OID's Core Values. However, for signature projects and initiatives—some of which are already underway—OID will organize its work into six areas of focus that collectively prioritize inclusive growth and prosperity in Akron.



## PRIORITY ONE

# Implement the *Elevate Greater Akron* strategy with the Chamber and County

*Elevate Greater Akron* is a ground-breaking, inclusive growth strategy being advanced jointly by the City of Akron, the Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce, and Summit County. *Elevate Greater Akron* focuses on five strategies: taking a new approach to business retention and expansion; addressing Akron's economic inclusion issues; supporting innovation among young companies; refocusing on key job hubs, including downtown; and establishing a unified culture of economic development in the region.

The Office of Integrated Development is playing a critical role in the implementation of *Elevate Greater Akron*. Specifically, OID is the lead partner in making Akron a dynamic, attractive place to live and work, with a focus on Downtown Akron. As noted in the previous section, OID's reconfigured Development team

includes a business retention and expansion division that is aligned with similar teams at the Chamber and County. The Development team will have a focus on growing entrepreneurship, including expansion of the Bounce Innovation Hub, northeast Ohio's first open innovation hub. The creation of the new real estate team is also an important step in ensuring that Akron can leverage city-owned properties for their highest purpose, in alignment with *Elevate Greater Akron* and OID's own goals and values. OID will also make significant advancement in closing the opportunity gap for Akron residents through the new vice president for opportunity and inclusion position that is jointly hired with the Chamber.





## PRIORITY TWO

# Prioritize Placemaking, Placekeeping, and Public Spaces

The City of Akron's commitment to great public spaces is not new but, with the creation of OID, those efforts are expanding. OID's work in this space is greatly informed by its participation in the Akron Civic Commons. Akron is one of five U.S. cities in the national Reimagining the Civic Commons demonstration, which seeks to counter economic and social fragmentation by revitalizing and connecting public places using an outcomes-based process focused on civic engagement, socioeconomic mixing, environmental stewardship, and value creation. The Akron Civic Commons focuses on three areas—Civic Gateway, Summit Lake, and Park East—and the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath trail that connects them. The annual Akron Parks Challenge, launched in 2018 in partnership with the Akron Parks Collaborative, invites residents to pitch their vision of how to improve their favorite Akron park. The initiative provides up to \$100,000 per park to make the selected visions a reality.

Active streets are also critical public spaces throughout the city. OID launched the Great Streets Akron Initiative in 2018 to spark new investment in eleven neighborhood business districts across Akron. With a focus on placemaking and placekeeping in Akron's diverse neighborhoods, Great Streets is leveraging façade improvement matching grants, small business development programs, and streetscape and public safety improvements, as well as pop-up and permanent programming, all designed to support local businesses by attracting residents and visitors.

OID is also prioritizing enhancements to one of Akron's most popular and central public spaces—Lock 3. Having hosted more than two million visitors since its opening in 2003, Lock 3 requires a fresh look at its design, programming, and operations to ensure that it remains an essential downtown public space for residents and a regional attraction for visitors.



### PRIORITY THREE

## Implement the *Planning to Grow Akron* Strategy

*Planning to Grow Akron*, released in 2017, is a forward-looking housing strategy that understands that Akron's future growth depends on a greatly diversified housing stock that both revitalizes existing neighborhoods and introduces new construction. The implementation of the strategy, to date, has yielded successful new programs such as the Residential Tax Abatement Program, which exempts 100% of the added property value on any new home construction or home renovation (valued at approximately \$5,000 or more) for a period of 15 years.

As part of the continued implementation of this strategy, OID will secure resources for a Housing Policy Fellow to work with the team on an expanded set of recommendations for the future of housing in Akron. The Planning and Urban Development team will also continue to lead the work on Continuum of Care and the five-year consolidated plan required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.



## PRIORITY FOUR

### Enhance Akron's Public Life

Public life is about the connections that form when people come together in public spaces. At a time when trust in public institutions and between neighbors is falling, focusing on enhancing public life is more essential than ever before. OID has embedded this focus into its very structure with the creation of a Public Life team. Two areas of focus for the that team will be the implementation of the *Recreation Strategic Plan* and a new arts and culture plan in development by partner ArtsNow.

The *Recreation Strategic Plan* is a five-year strategy that recommits the Recreation and Parks team to delivering on a mission to “provide fun, safe, and affordable opportunities to enhance quality of life and encourage deeper connections” with the community. When complete, the Akron Cultural Plan will guide city-wide efforts to advance opportunities that will create culture, as well as increase cultural diversity.

OID is also committed to ensuring that residents of all ages can actively participate in public life. In 2019, the City of Akron joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities and embarked on a five-year effort, led by OID, to make Akron a more livable and age-friendly community.



## PRIORITY FIVE

### Implement the *Downtown Vision and Redevelopment Plan*

The continued implementation of the *Downtown Vision and Redevelopment Plan*, developed with the Downtown Akron Partnership and endorsed by the Akron City Council in 2018, is vital for the City. Akron needs a thriving 24-hour downtown that is a full-fledged neighborhood with a mix of housing, retail, entertainment, and public spaces. Downtown also serves as a critical job hub, not only for Akron, but for the larger region.

One of the most visible efforts underway to achieve this vision is the \$31 million Main Street Promenade project, which broke ground in 2018. When both phases of the project are completed in 2020, the Main Street Promenade will provide transformational infrastructure improvements, including dedicated bike lines, new pedestrian pathways, enhanced green infrastructure and stormwater management, and improved transit and traffic patterns, among other benefits.

OID is also focused on the successful redevelopment of several downtown properties, including The Bowery, Cascade Hotel, The Mayflower, CitiCenter, and the Law Building. As development in Downtown Akron takes on renewed momentum, OID will also lead the effort to establish a much-needed independent downtown-focused development entity.





## PRIORITY SIX

# Modernize Akron's Planning and Zoning Frameworks

Akron's last comprehensive plan was adopted in 1919. It's time for a new city-wide comprehensive plan and associated comprehensive zoning code reforms to solidify the blue print for Akron's future land use. In fact, the *Downtown Vision and Redevelopment Plan* and *Planning to Grow Akron* cannot be fully implemented in the absence of an update of the fundamental

frameworks that drive planning and development in the city. Updating the comprehensive plan and zoning code, both of which will require significant resources and partnerships, also provides an opportunity to engage residents and business in the co-creation of two foundational tools that will guide the shape of things to come in the City of Akron.





The Office of Integrated Development wants to make it easier for residents and businesses to connect to the right member of its team. The list below outlines the most frequently addressed topics and who to contact in OLD's new structure for answers.

For general inquiries, please contact **330-375-2133**.

## DEVELOPMENT

**Contact the Business Retention and Expansion Division team** at 330-375-2133 or BRE@akronohio.gov with inquiries about:

- Building or construction permit
- Business expansion
- Downtown development
- New development
- Starting a new business

**Contact the Policy and Development Division team** at 330-375-2133 or development@akronohio.gov with inquiries about:

- Business assistance programs
- Buying land from the City
- City economic policy
- City Tax Incentive Review Board
- Resources for entrepreneurs and start-ups

## PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

**Contact the Long Range Planning Division team** at 330-375-2090 or planning@akronohio.gov with inquiries about:

- The Akron Parks Challenge
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding
- The Complete Streets Commission
- Historic preservation
- The HOME Investments Partnerships Program (HOME) funding
- The Beyond the Table grant program (in partnership with Akron Community Foundation)
- Residential property tax abatement
- Support for Community Development Corporations (CDCs)
- The City's capital budget
- Urban design

### **Contact the Zoning Division team**

at 330-375-2350 or zoning@akronohio.gov with inquiries about:

- The Board of Zoning Appeals
- The City Planning Commission
- Zoning and subdivision regulations

## DEVELOPMENT ENGINEERING

### **Contact the Development Engineering**

**Division team** at 330-375-2355 or developmentengineering@akronohio.gov with inquiries about:

- The City Tree Commission
- Great Streets Akron
- Nuisance trees
- Street trees & streetscapes

## PUBLIC LIFE

### **Contact the Recreation and**

**Parks Division team** at 330-375-2850 or recreation@akronohio.gov with inquiries about:

- The City Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
- Hosting a community event in a City of Akron park
- Public art
- Recreation programming
- Reserving a City park or field

### **Contact the Downtown Operations**

**Division team** at 330-375-2877 or lock3@akronohio.gov with inquiries about:

- Downtown festivals and events
- Lock 3

**“I believe OLD is, and will continue to be, a critical paving stone in the pathway to a healthier, equitable, and more prosperous Akron.”**



## THE PATH FORWARD

“What is OID?” Since beginning this process in early 2018, that has been the question I’ve been asked most often. My answer always begins with, “A better way of working.”

This strategic framework lays out more than just a new organizational structure, although that is important. It additionally charts a course toward a more transparent and accountable method of urban development—one that recognizes the need to bring community and economic development together to achieve measurable outcomes for real people.

In Akron, we are working to build a city that is resilient in the face of an ever-changing world. We were once the “Rubber Capital of the World,” manufacturing more tires and associated materials than anywhere else on Earth. A multitude of changes outside of the City’s control led to significant population and job loss, as well as disruption across our regional economy. Like those in many cities of our kind, we have struggled to find our economic footing in the intervening years. Too often, we have been chasing a “silver bullet” solution, instead of growing what we have. The OID processes, and this framework, are meant to be an answer to that history as we step out of

the Rust Belt shadow to reclaim and renew our own future. This is a lofty goal that will require OID to build strong relationships with external stakeholders—including funders—to support and partner with us in this new way of working.

Government must change the ways in which it operates if we hope to see an improvement in the lives of those we serve. The economic divide in our communities continues to create poor health, staggering wealth gaps, and downright hopelessness. We, as public servants, must respond. I believe OID is, and will continue to be, a critical paving stone in the pathway to a healthier, equitable, and more prosperous Akron.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James Hardy". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large, sweeping initial "J".

James Hardy  
Deputy Mayor  
Office of Integrated Development

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The City of Akron thanks Lynn M. Ross, founder and principal of Spirit for Change Consulting, LLC, who served as the lead consultant for the planning process.

This document was designed by the Original Champions of Design, with original photography by Shane Wynn Photography.



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DANIEL HORRIGAN, MAYOR

# AKRON

