



Charlotte City Council
Housing and Neighborhood Development Committee
Summary
May 13, 2015

COMMITTEE AGENDA TOPICS

- I. **Digital Inclusion Update (No Action Required)**
- II. **Community Engagement Program Updates (No Action Required)**

COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Council Members Present: Patsy Kinsey, Al Austin, John Autry, Ed Driggs

Staff Resources: Pat Mumford, Neighborhood & Business Services
Pamela Wideman, Neighborhood & Business Services
Nicole Storey, Neighborhood & Business Services
Gail Whitcomb, Neighborhood & Business Services

Guest: Frank Blair, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library

Meeting Duration: 12:00 PM – 1:15 PM

ATTACHMENTS

1. Agenda Packet – May 13, 2015
2. Presentation – Digital Inclusion
3. Presentation – Community Engagement Program Updates

DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

Kinsey: Called the meeting to order and introductions of attendees. We have two items on the agenda today, but neither need action.

Wall: Both items today are initiatives identified in your Focus Area Plan.

Digital Inclusion Update

Whitcomb: Frank Blair, Director of Technology and Operations with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library, is joining me today. We are here to give you an update on the collaborative efforts in the community around digital inclusion. Google's announcement was an opportunity for our community to look holistically at how we approach digital inclusion and seek to eliminate the digital divide. At its simplest, digital inclusion is about creating an environment where all residents, regardless of income level or where they live, have an opportunity to participate in twenty-first century opportunities. This is a long-term commitment and requires multiple sectors working together.

Blair: An important point about digital inclusion is residential access at home. The goal is to ensure that no one is left behind. Everyone has an opportunity to be connected and benefit educationally, economically, and in terms of civic engagement.

Presentation: *Addressing the Digital Divide*

Presentation: *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library*

For the last 20 years, the library has been the community's strategy in bridging the digital divide. Our focus is the 19% of the community currently not connected. About 10% of the Library's circulation is through eBooks. The steering committee has broken the problem down to four areas: awareness, relevance, skills, and resources.

Presentation: *What we know already . . .*

Driggs: The map shows the vulnerable areas. What data do we have on the percentage of households that do have internet connections? With gigabit, the speed of the connection is starting to become a discriminating factor as well. I am interested in the plan Google may have for free internet. Is that incorporated in your thinking and possible ramifications of that on the competition?

Blair: DigitalCharlotte.org has that information and we can follow up with more information. My understanding is that the Google offer is for residential only. Digital inclusion is vendor neutral. People will make their own choices about which vendor they go to for connectivity. High-speed internet access is critical for a host of things that will be coming in terms of economic viability and education.

Driggs: In Kansas City, you have a very pronounced concentration of the high-speed connections in certain areas and not in others.

Blair: I visited Kansas City in January and spoke with people involved in the effort over the last three years. The mayors put together a task force to address issues. They feel Charlotte is ahead of the game because we are starting now to talk about the issues.

Austin: Are there any studies about digital obsession?

Blair: We see adults shifting to eBooks, but parents and caregivers have a strong preference for printed books as a means towards literacy.

Blair: Presentation: *Developing a Strategic Plan*

Susan Patterson has requested funding through the Knight Foundation to hire a project manager for two years. One of the things that I saw that worked well in Kansas City was the Digital Playbook created by the Mayor's Task Force. It showed how the 80+ partners could contribute to ensure the entire community has access.

Presentation: *Stay Connected*

Whitcomb: Presentation: *City's Role*

It is important to note that the Knight Foundation will fund the Project Manager who will be employed by Queens University, but physically located at the library. The City will work with Queens University regarding Digital Charlotte in an advisory capacity. We are going to be intentional on how we message to neighborhoods the importance of being online.

Autry: We use the term inclusion, but do we have anything on the horizon to deal with competency?

Blair: Skills are one of the four elements that we will develop as part of the playbook. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library offers many programs that are orientated towards competency in a digital environment. We will work to develop a curriculum of digital competencies and paring those skills with resources.

Autry: Are we doing anything to identify other resources in the community to fill those gaps?

Gail: There are a couple of ways. When we talk about mapping the digital landscape, we find out what is here today. We will not create programs in a vacuum, but will listen to community members about their needs, look at other resources in Charlotte providing digital literacy training to help fill the gap, and connect citizens to that resource.

Autry: It gives us some indicators on how to prioritize where the resources will go first.

Austin: The conversation around digital inclusion is a national issue. What cities are doing well and making their cities more inclusive?

Whitcomb: We looked at Kansas City and had conversations with Austin, who have been active for a while. On May 15, the Steering Team is participating in a city-to-city learning opportunity at the Federal Reserve with Chicago, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Detroit exploring best practices. We are going to learn from other cities and hopefully have something to teach other cities as well.

Austin: Where are the other providers in their delivery process?

Gail: I spoke to Time Warner Cable (TWC) yesterday and we are going to follow-up with meetings to learn more about what they are offering and where they are in working to bridge the digital divide. We also reached out to AT&T to have a similar conversation.

Blair: It does seem that people are ramping up digital speed offers, but we have not seen a commitment to have it available in all neighborhoods.

- Austin: Part of the conversation is to make sure they are equally aggressive as Google in that delivery.
- Blair: We plan to have those conversations with anyone providing bandwidth.
- Driggs: AT&T is talking about two gigabit services and TWC is looking to step up speed. Google breaks up the monopoly those ISPs have in certain parts of town. We should see some robust competition. The \$300 upfront fee and need for credit card for Google was a big obstacle in Kansas City. I think targeting that issue and seeing how to address it is important. That is why the Kansas City map was so black and white. I think they were surprised at how polar it was.
- Kinsey: Thank you to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library. Any library I visit, I see people using the computers.

Community Engagement Program Updates

- Wall: The second item is an update, but we will ask the Committee to provide feedback.
- Storey: I will share the interesting work going on within the Community Engagement Division. Aisha Alexander, former Community Engagement manager, was able to transform the Neighborhood Matching Grant (NMG) program into a model for neighborhood engagement. My interest was to provide a deeper dive. I not only looked at our NMG program, but also how to better align services, ensure we are effectively providing resources, and making it easier for residents to connect the dots. This approach has allowed us to do a lot of relationship building and research of data.
- Presentation: Objectives
Presentation: Peer Cities
Presentation: What We Learned
The number one challenge for communities was neighborhood engagement.
Presentation: What We Learned
Presentation: Neighborhood Engagement Feedback
- Autry: The grants do not include speedbumps, sidewalks, and the other amenities neighborhoods want.
- Storey: Are you referring to the NMG program? (Yes) We are happy to do more research on what projects can use NMG funds.
- Autry: Something is not connecting for citizens about what the grants can fund and then getting the people to the table to do it. I think the organization grants are a good component, since they have to be an organized community to apply for a grant.
- Driggs: What role do Homeowner Associations (HOA) play? Are they a useful means of accessing a neighborhood? In my district, there is a lack of engagement on the part of the HOAs. If I want to communicate with my constituents, there is no good communication channel.

Storey: The HOA is essential to our effort. For our NMG program, we only provide funding to HOA, neighborhood organizations or organized groups. Getting to that stage is a challenge and there is a lot of work to do to help neighborhoods get to that organized level. Many peer cities require neighborhoods to register as an entity with the city. We have that on a limited basis in Charlotte and we have an old resource, The Neighborhood Organization Contact List. One of the challenges is how to provide a neighborhood boundary. In peer cities that require neighborhood registration, they require the specific geography as part of the registration. Internally we have used Next Door Digital Geography. It allows neighborhoods to self-define their boundary and Next Door has a team that deals with any border dispute issues. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) has been involved with Next Door and we hope to use this resource citywide in the future.

Driggs: The Neighborhood Organization Contact list you are referring to is far out of date. It is hard to work from that list.

Storey: The list is managed by the Planning Department and we are looking at getting it in better condition.

Kinsey: I find that neighborhoods do not register their new officers each year.

Austin: Do we have an intentional effort to get out to the community to explain, "This is how the city or county government works?" I find that people are not understanding how this all comes together. Do we "in laymen's terms" explain how all this works?

Storey: Trying to connect the dots is a continual challenge for us. We do not go out and intentionally provide that training. If that is something of interest, we could explore this.

Autry: Did Community University become the neighborhood retreats?

Wideman: Community University was different. They offered training classes to help neighborhoods in several areas.

Austin: I think those would be helpful to feel connected.

Storey: We are calling this the 2015 NMG Re-Imagination and are working to ensure the program is relevant.

Presentation: NMG Program History

Presentation: What We're Learning

Austin: How many times can they apply for a grant?

Storey: There are no limitations on the number of times an organization can participate. They have one year from the date of contract signing to complete the project and they cannot have two projects open at one time.

Austin: How much do we budget per year for these grants?

- Storey: We have approximately \$325,000. We have been able to invest that money in the community and in the last couple of years, have given out all of the money. This year we may fall short of funds and may need to hold contracts until the next fiscal year.
- Driggs: Are there neighborhoods that are much more aware of the program and access it more actively than others? Is this being equitably distributed or is it a matter of someone discovering how it works?
- Storey: This is one of the values of this process and logging the 950 grants we have. This map shows only 2011 to 2013. There are a series of maps that show the history of grant applications over time. Our coverage is growing and expanding, but having the maps allows us to see where we are not doing well. It gives us focused marketing for areas we are not reaching.
Presentation: Stakeholder Engagement
- Austin: In the communities that are Hispanic, is language the barrier? Do we translate materials to Spanish?
- Storey: I do not have specific information about why we are challenged there. We do not currently translate our materials to Spanish and we do not have a large number of staff who are bilingual.
Presentation: Stakeholder Questions
Presentation: NMG Learnings
Presentation: NMG Next Steps
Presentation: NMG Feedback
- Austin: In those communities that are getting seven to nine grants, is it because the same person is applying each time or are they just great projects?
- Storey: It could be any number of things. Many of the neighborhood profile areas have multiple organizations. Sometimes when there is a change in organization leadership they get inspired to do something different.
- Austin: Do we provide a laundry list of things they can do with a NMG?
- Storey: We currently have six categories. There is more work to do to seed different project types within our NMG program. I think we need to showcase the neighborhoods that have been successful and use them as a resource or inspiration for other neighborhoods.
- Autry: It would be beneficial to have a grant program for communities to connect to utilities, such as sewer and water. It can be difficult for some folks, especially the retired on a fixed income in the eastern part of the city, to afford connection fees. We have a problem with equitable delivery of services.
- Storey: We have had conversations with Charlotte Water. Because of their structure as a revenue-generating department, they cannot provide grants. The Stonehaven community has private water service. There has been a grant request to pay for exploratory services for an engineering firm to map those lines, which is a high cost endeavor.

Driggs: I think a lot of what it takes to get people to learn and take interest is leadership. I noticed one of the places without a star is Leadership Training. I look at rezoning situations, when someone steps up and becomes the principle point of contact in communicating the interests of the neighbors during a rezoning. I see an analogy to this process when you have someone take the responsibility to inform and get people mobilized. Maybe the leadership training could be a means of accessing the neighborhoods that are not participating.

Storey: That is a great suggestion. This program is not about dollars, but about resources and opportunities.

Kinsey: District 1 takes advantage of this and at the neighborhood meetings I hear all good things about the program. They talk about going to the training on how to apply for grants.

Austin: I have never heard anything negative, just trying to figure out ways to access it more.

Storey: In July 2015, we will have the NBS Neighborhood Board Retreat. We have 21 neighborhoods that were not able to participate in the first retreat this year due to the large number of applicants (70). We are reaching out to those 21 neighborhoods first. In September 2015, we will host the Neighborhood Leadership Awards. I want to hear how you want to be involved or additional thoughts you have about those events.
(All the Council members commented they wanted to be invited.)

It is important to note that you do not have to be NMG eligible to participate in the Board Retreat. That is a great opportunity for neighborhoods to develop some leadership and can help organizations that may be new or have had a change in structure.

Wall: Two great presentations from Neighborhood & Business Services showing the great work the department is doing.

Kinsey: This is very helpful because sometimes we do not know what is happening. We appreciate the update.

Wall: The next Committee meeting will be on June 10.

Meeting adjourned.

City Council

Housing and Neighborhood Development Committee

Wednesday, May 13, 2015

12:00 p.m.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center

Room – 280

Committee Members: Patsy Kinsey, Chair
Al Austin, Vice Chair
John Autry
Ed Driggs
LaWana Mayfield

Staff Resource: Ann Wall, Assistant City Manager
Pamela Wideman, Deputy Director, Neighborhood & Business Services

AGENDA

I. Digital Inclusion Update (No Action Required)

The Committee will receive an update on the City's Digital Inclusion efforts. On January 26, 2015, Google announced that Charlotte had been chosen to receive its high speed internet service. Since that time, staff has been working with a group of public and private partners to address the digital divide and to ensure that all neighborhoods are aware of Google's and other service providers' internet offerings.

II. Community Engagement Program Updates (No Action Required)

Staff will provide an update on their research and national best practices on financial and technical assistance programs to support neighborhood revitalization and engagement.

Distribution:

Mayor/Council
Ron Carlee, City Manager
City Executive Team
Corporate Communications
Anna Schleunes- City Attorney's Office
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Coalition
for Housing

Holly Eskridge
Randy Harrington
Phyllis Heath
Fulton Meachem
Fred Dodson
Julie Porter
Kim Graham
Chief Rodney Monroe

Willie Ratchford
Ledger Morrissette
Patrick Mumford
Pamela Wideman
Tom Warshauer



Digital Inclusion

Housing & Neighborhood Development Committee
May 13, 2015



Today's Presentation

- Provide update on Community's Digital Inclusion efforts
- No action requested



What is Digital Inclusion

Digital inclusion is the process of building an environment where all people, especially those in underserved communities, have the resources to benefit from the internet in the home.

It requires **long-term commitment** and localized solutions. It also demands **multiple sectors working together**, including: local government, community organizations, businesses, education & learning institutions, faith community, foundations, healthcare, and individuals.



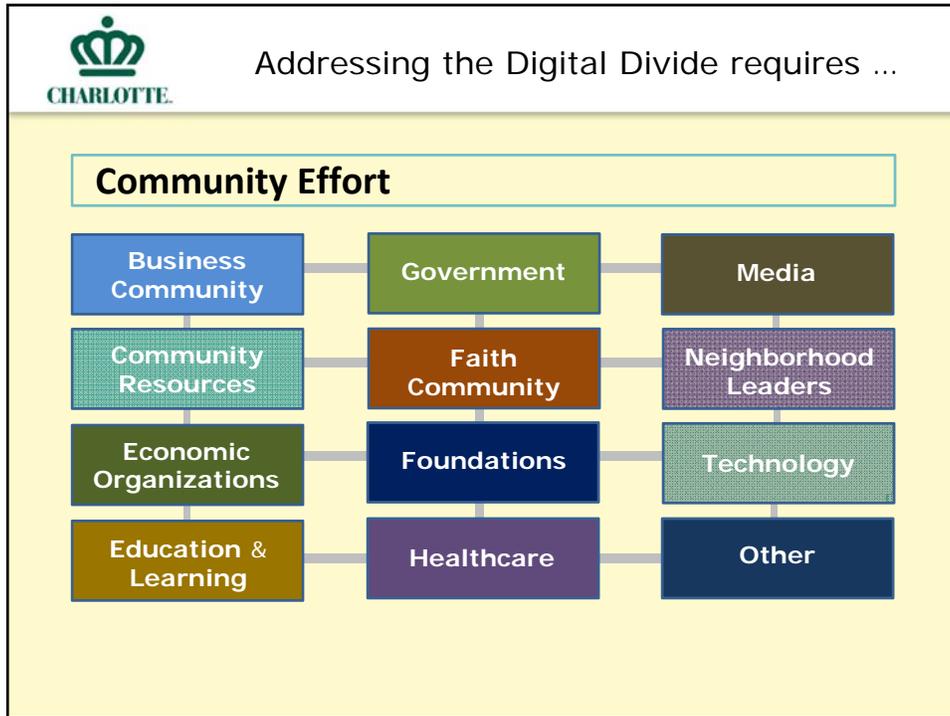
Why This Matters

A connected Charlotte is

Educated - Engaged - Economically Viable

Inclusion & Equity	Civic Process	Neighborhood Revitalization	Economy of the Future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All residents participate in 21st Century opportunities Broadband is a prerequisite for social & economic inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All voices are important Citizen engagement with local government will increasingly involve technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All neighborhoods matter Neighborhood-level access positively influences neighborhood engagement and stability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charlotte will be a next century city Jobs & Industries of the future will be technology centric



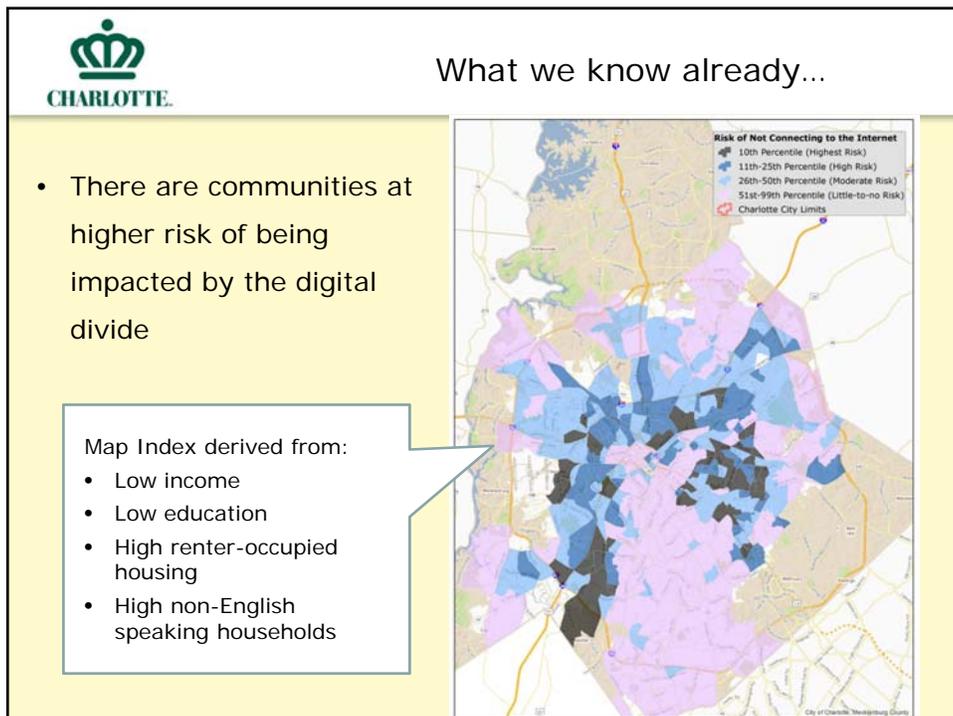


Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library

Libraries bridge the digital divide

- Last year, more than 900 library computers were used 809,309 times
- Last year, users connected to Library WiFi about 330,000 times
- **This year**, WiFi usage is up 26% from same period last year

19%
of households do not have Internet access at home



 Developing a Strategic Plan

Steering Team **80+ Community Partners**

 Developing a Strategic Plan

Path Forward

- 
 - Hire Project Manager (Knight Foundation/Queens University)
 - Located at Library
- 
 - Map local Digital Inclusion landscape (Queens/Community Partners with support from NBS Community Engagement)
- 
 - Work with community and stakeholders to **develop and refine plan**
- 
 - Broaden outreach
 - **Implement plan**



Stay Connected



#digitalcharlotte
REGISTER TODAY
LOGIN NOW

 TOOLS X

 PARTNERS ♥

 PEOPLE +

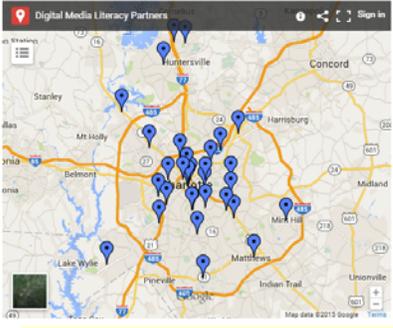
 CHALLENGES

Digital Media Literacy for Everyone



Digital Charlotte connects groups promoting digital and media literacy including volunteers, students, the schools, the libraries, city government local industry, and local community services providers. As a resource guide, an educational space, and an arena for community-based activities, the website frames the greater Charlotte area as a connected learning laboratory.

Where to Build Your Skills





City's Role

- Initial Convener
 - Steering Team (Every two weeks)
 - Digital Inclusion Update Meetings (Every two months)
- Mapping support
- Messaging Digital Inclusion
 - National Night Out
 - Back to School Events
 - Neighborhood Board Retreat
 - Neighborhood Leadership Awards
- Other



Questions

Frank Blair

Director of Technology and Operations
Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library
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Gail Whitcomb

Community Engagement
Neighborhood & Business Services
704.336.5849
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Community Engagement Program Updates

Neighborhood Financial and Technical Assistance Programs

Nicole R. Storey, AICP
Neighborhood & Community Partnerships Manager
5/14/2015



Objectives

- Share neighborhood engagement learnings from peer city analysis
- Present overview for Charlotte's Neighborhood Matching Grant (NMG) re-imagination
- Receive feedback from Committee on neighborhood engagement, grants and future opportunities


Peer Cities

- Peer City Survey conducted
- First comprehensive look at neighborhood programs since 1992
- 29 cities selected, 22 responded
- Peer City Selection criteria:
 - Known neighborhood engagement programs
 - Similar demographics
 - Frequent innovators
 - Surveyed through recent complementary efforts
 - National Citizen Survey (ICMA & NRC Inc.)
 - Budget & Evaluation CE Survey
 - Google Fiber Contenders
 - NMG Original Peer Cities




Peer Cities

2015 NMG Peer Cities Surveyed

• Arlington, TX	• Dublin, OH	• Pittsburgh, PA
• Arlington County, VA	• Durham, NC	• Portland, OR
• Atlanta, GA	• Eugene, OR	• Raleigh, NC
• Austin, TX	• Garland, TX	• Rock Hill, SC
• Beaverton, OR	• Indianapolis, IN	• San Francisco, CA
• Carrollton, TX	• Kansas City, MO	• San Antonio, TX
• Chesapeake, VA	• Madison, WI	• Santa Monica, CA
• Chicago, IL	• Orlando, FL	• Seattle, WA
• Cleveland, OH	• Owasso, OK	• Tulsa, OK
• Denver, CO	• Phoenix, AZ	

Indicates Peer City Survey Completed



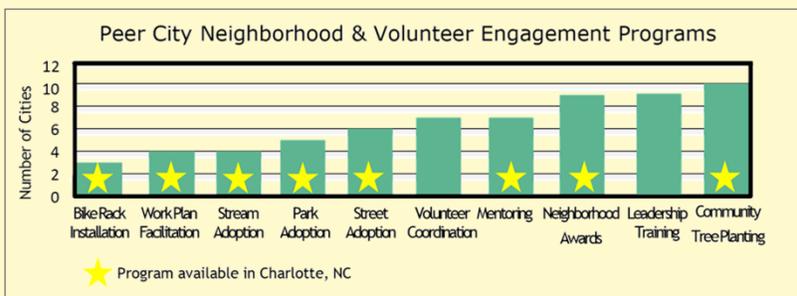
What We Learned

- **Neighborhood Engagement-** Most common community challenge
- **Grant Programs-**
 - 90% offer neighborhood grants
 - Most award 5-10 grants per year
 - Portland, Charlotte and Seattle 40+ grants per year
 - Grant value \$500 to \$30k, most < \$8,000
 - 40% offer business grant programs
- **Impact-** Peers struggling to measure program impact, resident quality of life



What We Learned

- **Neighborhood Training-** 40% offer training & workshops
 - most conducted in-house, one or more times per year
 - Provide leadership development, meeting facilitation and organizational development skills with networking





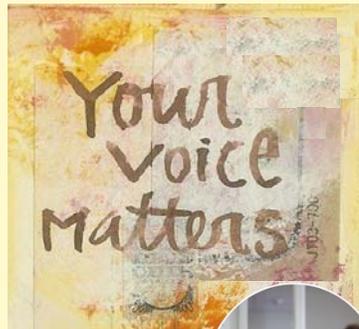
Neighborhood Engagement Feedback

1. What needs are you hearing?
2. Additional cities for study?
3. Additional tools or opportunities?
4. Other feedback?



2015 NMG Re-Imagination

- Opportunity to
 - Assess where we're been
 - Review where we are today
 - Evaluate how best to move forward to ensure continued program relevance and success
- Process
 - Data Gathering & Analysis
 - Stakeholder Engagement
 - Program Enhancement





NMG Program History

- December 1992
 Neighborhood Matching Grants (NMG) Program Approved
 - Program Goals
 - Build capacity and participation in neighborhood-based residential & business associations
 - Allow neighborhoods to self determine improvement priorities
 - Leverage citizen involvement and resources to revitalize and reinvest in low & moderate income neighborhoods
 - Stimulate the development of partnerships between City and community groups
 - Eligibility
 - Low & Moderate Income Neighborhoods-1990 Census Tracts with Median Household Income (MHI) below \$31,873
 - Grant awards
 - \$25,000 maximum



What We're Learning

Internal Data Analysis

- 950 grant applications logged since 1993
- 317 unique neighborhoods
- 439 neighborhood or business organizations
- \$7,295 avg grant value
- 95% approval rate for submitted applications
- \$40,493 MHI 2011-2015 applicants
- Data being used to understand community defined priorities & opportunities

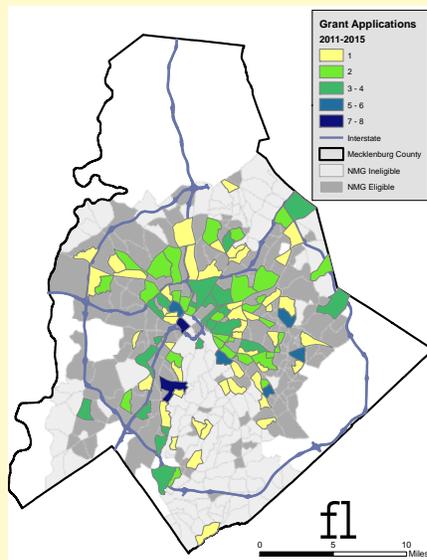
Grant Activity Requested	% of Total
Programming <small>(Athletic, Youth, Arts, Skills Training, etc)</small>	19.47%
Tree Banding	12.84%
Signage <small>(Community Branding, Crime Prevention, Traffic Calming)</small>	12.74%
Beautification	11.47%
Park/Playground/Athletic Field	6.32%
Fencing/Gate	5.26%
Marketing/Outreach	4.63%
Lighting	4.11%
Community Center	4.11%
Festival/Event	3.68%
Equipment	3.47%
Organizational Development	2.42%

5



What We're Learning

- Program participation is increasing & expanding
- Know where program is well subscribed and where more engagement is needed
- Neighborhoods characterized by higher disinvestment measures are more likely to participate, these include:
 - High drop out rate
 - High % of renters
 - Housing code violations
 - High vacancy rates
- As communities organize, NMG participation increases
- We're not doing as well in neighborhoods with higher Hispanic populations



Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder Engagement Underway

Feedback requested

- NMG program participants
- key staff & review committees
- engaged community residents
- elected officials

Input opportunities

- in-person interviews
- telephone interviews
- online surveys
- NBS Board Retreat interviews

68 Interviews Complete





Stakeholder Questions

Sample questions:

1. What's going on in the community. What's positive, what are concerns?
2. What improvements would have greatest impact?
3. What is their experience with the NMG program, what did they like, what could be better?
4. What projects are being planned?
5. What partners have neighborhoods worked with or heard about?
6. What types of training would be beneficial, what format?



NMG Learnings

- Program is beneficial
- Application process can be challenging, increase ease of use
- Ensure no neighborhood gets left behind
- Use data to better direct services
- Departments & community partners want to engage neighborhoods
- Need more neighborhood related training opportunities
- Consider new activities – digital, aging, connection to schools, connections to business districts, improvements to private property



NMG Next Steps

- Complete stakeholder engagement
 - Council feedback
 - more interviews
 - public meetings
 - data driven outreach
- Present recommendations for program enhancement
- Update program materials
- Develop and implement marketing & Promotion strategy



NMG Feedback

1. What feedback are you hearing?
2. What improvements or changes would you recommend?
3. Is eligibility sufficient?
4. Should any initiatives be further incented?
5. Other feedback?



Upcoming Events



- July 2015
NBS Neighborhood Board Retreat



- September 2015
Neighborhood Leadership Awards



Upcoming Event Feedback

1. Planning is underway, what improvements are desired?
2. How do you want to be involved?
3. Other feedback?