Background

On Saturday, July 15, 2017, the board members of the Amity Gardens Neighborhood Association participated in the Neighborhood Board Retreat facilitated by the City of Charlotte, hosted at CPCC. The following board members participated in the retreat:

Luke Carter
Annie Flint
Sandy Milling

Marty Payne
Donna Thomas

The City of Charlotte values citizen leadership and its ability to make an impact in the communities, in which we all live, work, play and shop. With this in mind, the board retreat process was initiated to help neighborhood based organizations develop strategic plans to improve quality of life in their communities.

Purpose

The purpose of the board retreat was to

- Generate meaningful conversations around improving quality of life in our community
- Set clear goals and priorities for the upcoming year(s)
- Develop a vision and strategic priorities for our community

By participating in the retreat, our board earned a $1,500 match credit toward a Neighborhood Matching Grant (NMG) to help execute one of the projects we identified.

To receive this credit we’ll submit our completed Vision to Action Idea Development Plan Workbook with our NMG request. This credit will expire following the September 1, 2018 NMG application deadline.

Process

Our board retreat was conducted by trained facilitators tasked to keep our conversations on-task, productive, and focused on achievable objectives. The process was designed to help capture the best of the past, the best of the present, and how we can add to our strengths to build a better future. The focus was:

- Developing a vision to guide our decision making and activities
- Developing strategic priorities that aligned with our vision
- Developing project ideas
The agenda for the day was as follows:

- Introductions
- Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?: Arrow Activity
- Where We Want to Be: Vision Statement Exercise
- Seeing the Forest through the Trees: Developing Strategic Priorities
- Working Lunch – The Year Ahead
- Idea Development – Time for participants for develop an action plan for goal achievement

Where Are We Going, Where Have We Been?

We began our day with paired interviews using the “Where Are We Going, Where Have We Been?” activity. The activity was intended to help us reflect on:

- What we value
- What are the best things about our community and the people who live here
- What are our past successes
- Where are the potentials and possibilities

After interviewing our partners we shared our discussion with the group, finding commonalities in our conversations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where We Were: Reflecting on our past, what were some of the best/worst moments?</th>
<th>Where We Are: Why would or wouldn’t a person/business want to move into our community?</th>
<th>Where We Want to Be: If you could make 3 wishes to make our community flourish, what would they be?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Best</strong></td>
<td><strong>Why</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Increasing property values&lt;br&gt;• Convenient location&lt;br&gt;• Safe&lt;br&gt;<strong>Why not</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Lack of recreational facilities</td>
<td><strong>Mote sidewalks</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>A “DO CREW” or group that helps community move forward</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Pierson Drive extension</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less traffic&lt;br&gt;• Halloween&lt;br&gt;• Community sports</td>
<td><strong>Worst</strong>&lt;br&gt;• More crime&lt;br&gt;• Lower property values&lt;br&gt;• More rentals</td>
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Our Vision

Our vision is the unifying statement for our community that will guide our decision making and reminds us of what we are trying to reach. It is based on our shared values and preferences for our community’s future. It combines the best of what was, what is, and what could be.

**OUR VISION:**

Amity Gardens Neighborhood Association is dedicated to maintaining an established, peaceful, safe, attractive, healthy and involved community for all residents through partnerships, community projects, and events.

Strategic Priorities

After committing to a shared vision, the board began to brainstorm on strategic priorities. This is where we began to define what is most important to us in order to achieve our vision. Strategic priorities are initiatives that will help us move closer to our vision of our community. The idea is to focus on a few things and do them very well as opposed to many things and missing the mark.

We started out thinking big and then narrowed down our focus using the Affinity Mapping Process, detailed below:

- Grab some sticky notes from the table. Keeping the vision statement in mind, write down as many of the following as you can think of, one per sticky note:
  - Current action items getting you closer to our vision.
  - Possible priorities/actions items to get us closer to our vision.
- Place the sticky notes on the wall.
- Organize the ideas by natural categories, once everyone agrees on the groups, give each one a name.
This activity led us to the following categories and action items being identified as important within our community:

- **Beautification (in progress)**
  - Amity Gardens entrance signs
  - Lights/security for entrance signs

- **Organizing/Advocacy**
  - Bug city about sidewalks/petition
  - Pierson Drive extension/petition
  - Committees
  - City health evaluation/healthy living initiative
  - Walking group

- **Events**
  - Pot lucks
  - Grow Owl Fest/expansion
  - Help your neighbors
  - Safety fair
  - National Night Out
  - Community meetings

- **Volunteerism (we agreed that this could be considered organizing, but decided to group in a separate bucket for exercise; selected project was moved to Organizing/Advocacy strategic priority)**
  - Goal of getting more neighbors involved
  - Get volunteers to agree to speak at Council meetings
  - Create a network of volunteers who help other neighbors/ “DO CREW”

Each participant was provided three (3) stickers to be used for voting. Stickers could be placed all on one or two items or shared amongst all of the ideas identified. The three categories receiving the most votes are the strategic priorities that are most important for us to begin working on to achieve our vision. Within these three categories, there were three activities selected as most impactful toward achieving our strategic priorities.

The strategic priorities and activities are summarized on the following page.
Amity Gardens Neighborhood Association

**OUR VISION:**

Amity Gardens Neighborhood Association is dedicated to maintaining an established, peaceful, safe, attractive, healthy, and involved community for all residents through partnerships, community projects, and events.

**TO HELP US REACH OUR VISION; WE WILL FOCUS ON THREE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

1. **Beautification**
2. **Events**
3. **Organizing/Advocacy**

**IN 2017-2018, WE WILL WORK ON THESE ACTIVITIES GUIDED BY OUR PRIORITIES:**

1. Install four (4) Amity Gardens Neighborhood Association entrance signs by October of 2017.
2. Expand Owl Fest by 50% in 2017, having at least 75 people in attendance.
3. Develop “DO CREW.”
   - Research best practices
   - Develop system for identifying need and matching talent
   - Recruit at least 20 volunteers for launch at Owl Fest

Best Practices: Catholic Heart, Project Serve, Boy Scouts and other organizations.
Please list any parking lot items or additional activities beyond the initial 3 here.

1. Neighborhood would like the City to note that they are “Amity Gardens,” not “Amity Garden.”
   *Steve Wood addressed on 07/17/17.*

2. Neighborhood would like the name of an attorney to help with creation of “DO CREW” organizing documents.
   *David Jessup, Jr. addressed on 07/15/17.*

3. Neighborhood will work with their City Council member to address infrastructure concerns (sidewalks and thoroughfares).
   *City Council contact information can be found [here](#). Amity Gardens falls within Council District 5.*

**Resources to Get Started** - You’ve rolled up your sleeves and established your vision. We have compiled resources that may assist your organization in achieving your goals on our Neighborhood Training Programs and Resources [website](#). We have identified resource categories that may be applicable to your projects below; please do not hesitate to explore more categories as you undertake your work! Links and contact information are provided for information only and are subject to change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Potential Resource Categories of Interest</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Install four (4) Amity Gardens Neighborhood Association entrance signs by October of 2017</td>
<td>Neighborhood Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand Owl Fest by 50% in 2017, having at least 75 people in attendance</td>
<td>Welcoming &amp; Engaging Neighbors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop “DO CREW.” - Research best practices - Develop system for identifying need and matching talent - Recruit at least 20 volunteers for launch at Owl Fest</td>
<td>Welcoming &amp; Engaging Neighbors; Partnerships</td>
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Your community is located within Charlotte’s Southeast Service Area. Your staff contacts for following up and community assistance is:

**Kim Barnes, Southeast Community Engagement Manager**

kbarnes@charlottenc.gov or 704-336-8408