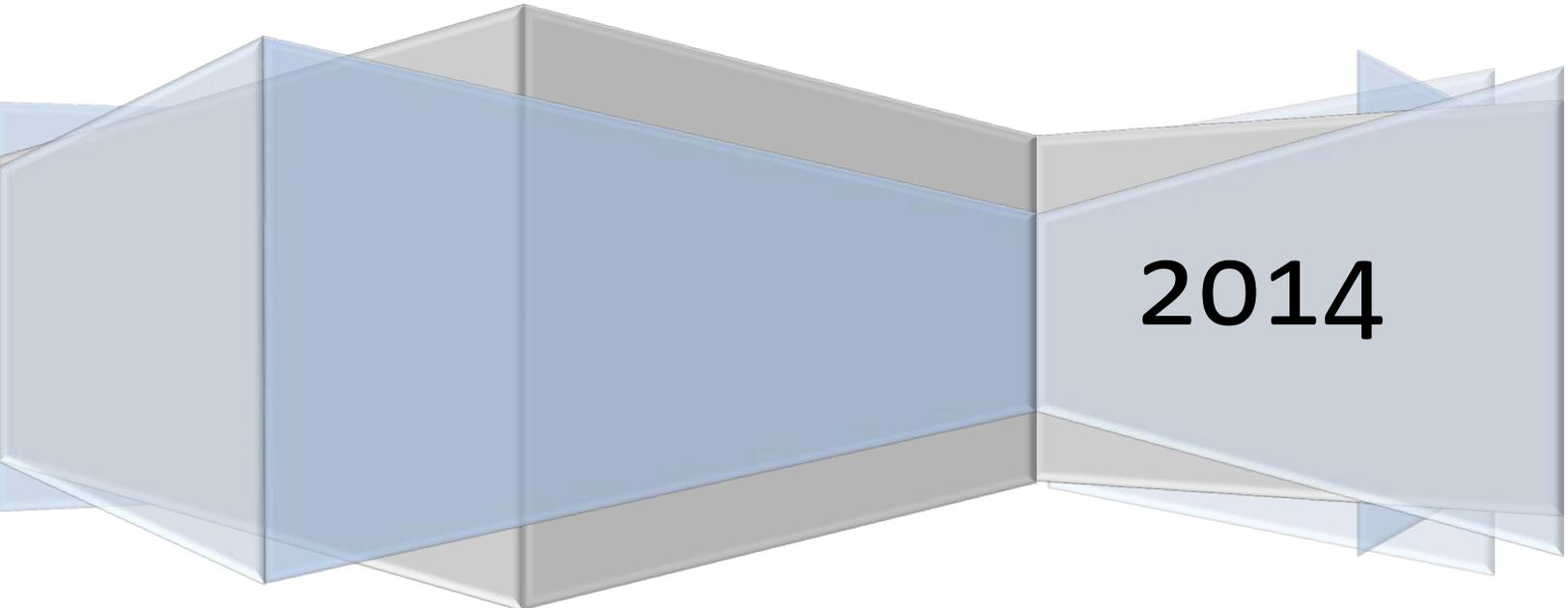# Amity Gardens

Board Retreat

Hosted by the City of Charlotte at UNC Charlotte Uptown Campus

2014

Amity Gardens

2014 Board Retreat

Background

On Saturday, July 19th 2014, the acting board members of the Amity Gardens participated in a board retreat facilitated by the City of Charlotte, hosted at UNC Charlotte Uptown Campus. The following board members participated in the retreat:

- Amy Harris
- Marty Payne
- Karen Lineburger
- Dan Mask
- Luke Carter

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 and completing a Vision-to-Action plan our board earned a $1,500 Neighborhood Matching Grant credit to help execute one of the projects we identified.

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.

Where We Were: Reflecting on our past, what were some of the best/worst moments?	Where We Are: Why/why not would a person/business want to move into our community?	Where We Want to Be: If you could make 3 wishes to make our community flourish, what would they be?
- Neighborhood had a sense of community. - Neighborhood events (Halloween, etc.); participation with local school; families and children outdoors together. - Neighborhood was safe though with some crime. - A heritage/legacy was created of Amity Gardens being a great family neighborhood.	- Location of the neighborhood is ideal with easy access to Monroe & Sharon Amity. - Good, well-built starter homes. - Great tree canopy. - Quiet neighborhood. - Community is currently coming together (at recent neighborhood potluck 40+ neighbors attended). - Decreased curb appeal. - Absence of youth activities. - Lack of retail choices.	- Continue to create opportunities for community engagement (events). - Develop Board (elect officers; establish bylaws; etc.). - Increase curb appeal, property values. - Increase quality of surrounding retail. - Neighborhood identification (entrance signs). - Decrease traffic. - Create community garden.

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:** Our vision is to maintain Amity Gardens as an established, peaceful, safe, attractive and involved community for all residents.

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:

Board Development

- Elect Officers.
- Create bylaws.
- Get tax identification number.
- Open checking account.

Community Enhancement

- Install entrance signs with surrounding landscaping.
- Repurpose Amity Garden vintage signs.
- Create a community garden.
- Create a common area for neighborhood gatherings.
- Tree banding.
- Install a 'Little Free Library'.

Communication

- Improve communications.
- Create an email chain.
- Increase number of residents using NextDoor.com.
- Report crime when it is observed.

Activities/Community Building

- Host a plant swap event.
- Host a neighborhood-wide yard sale event.
- Create various community events.
- Create a sense of ownership.

Advocacy/Lobbying

- Create a CMS Liaison position (to ensure a partial magnet school at Oakhurst, etc.).
- Create bike paths/lanes.
- Install sidewalks.
- Recruit unique local coffee shops and other retail; revitalize community shopping centers, etc.

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, these are:

1 Board Development	2 Community Enhancement (protect tree canopy)	3 Community Enhancement (entrance signs)

Action Items for 2014-2015

The three activities selected as most impactful toward achieving our strategic priorities are activities in 2014-2015 are:

1

Develop Board (bylaws; officer elections; etc.).

2

Tree Banding to protect from fall cankerworms.

3

Install entrance signs \ Explore using vintage Amity Garden sign.

Amity Gardens

OUR VISION: Our Vision **is** to maintain Amity Gardens as an established, peaceful, safe, attractive and involved community for all residents.

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

1	2	3
Board Development	Community Enhancement (protect tree canopy)	Community Enhancement (entrance signs)

IN 2014-2015, WE WILL WORK ON THESE ACTIVITIES GUIDED BY OUR PRIORITIES:

1	2	3
Develop board (bylaws, officer elections, etc.).	Tree banding to protect from fall cankerworms.	Install entrance signs \ Explore using vintage Amity Garden sign.

Resources to Get Started

Project	Getting Started	Resources
Project #1 Develop board (bylaws; officer elections; etc.)	• Research board functions and roles	BoardSource: https://boardsource.org/eweb/ How to organize a committee: http://www.mycommittee.com/BestPractice/Committees/Startingacommittee/tabid/244/Default.aspx
	• Create bylaws	Writing community bylaws: http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/organizational-structure/write-bylaws/main
Project #2 Tree banding to protect from fall cankerworms	• Learn more about tree banding	Basic information about tree banding: http://www.charmeck.org/city/charlotte/epm/Services/Landscaping/Pages/fall%20cankerworm.aspx
	• Get resources to band your trees	Tree banding grants: http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/nbs/communityengagement/pages/treebanding.aspx Tool Bank supplies for neighborhoods: http://charlotte.toolbank.org/
Project #3 Install entrance signs	• Apply for a neighborhood matching grant to install signs	Neighborhood Matching Grants http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/nbs/communityengagement/nmg/Pages/default.aspx Contact Atalie Zimmerman for more information: azimmerman@charlottenc.go 704-336-4594