July 13, 2019

Belmont Community Association

Hosted by City of Charlotte Housing & Neighborhood Services at
Goodwill Opportunity Campus
Background

On Saturday, July 13, 2019, the board members of the Belmont Community Association participated in the Neighborhood Board Retreat facilitated by the City of Charlotte, hosted at the Goodwill Opportunity Campus. The following board members and/or community members participated in the retreat:

- Curtis Bridges
- Richard Grimstad
- Beth Howard
- Paul Fretz
- Laura Carr Hudson
- Kristen Wilson

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, 2020 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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drug Problems – Raids in 2015&lt;br&gt;Divide between short-term and long-term residents&lt;br&gt;Rapidly changing&lt;br&gt;Had block parties &amp; giveaways&lt;br&gt;No “sit-down” restaurants&lt;br&gt;Lots of corner stores&lt;br&gt;Lots of construction&lt;br&gt;Tight knit community&lt;br&gt;Crime in certain parts of the neighborhood&lt;br&gt;Had a dangerous reputation&lt;br&gt;Lots of boarded up buildings&lt;br&gt;Greenways weren’t used and were viewed as dangerous</td>
<td>Affordability is an issue both for commercial and residential&lt;br&gt;Still have boarded up buildings – mostly commercial&lt;br&gt;Residential is improving faster than commercial&lt;br&gt;Very walkable – greenways and lots of sidewalks&lt;br&gt;Need walkable destinations&lt;br&gt;Some places still have a dangerous atmosphere&lt;br&gt;Growing pains in finding the right commercial fit&lt;br&gt;Some good commercial investments&lt;br&gt;Divide between long-term and short-term residents is growing; also divide racially&lt;br&gt;Great proximity to downtown and work/retail destinations&lt;br&gt;Lots of opportunity – a chance to really shape the neighborhood into what residents want it to be&lt;br&gt;Influx of recently released convicts</td>
<td>Quick, affordable restaurant&lt;br&gt;Safe corner shop&lt;br&gt;More sit-down restaurants&lt;br&gt;An Alexander Michael’s style establishment&lt;br&gt;Develop a strong neighborhood identity&lt;br&gt;Fill in the vacant land and buildings with vibrant commercial/residential options.&lt;br&gt;Increase long-term residency&lt;br&gt;Increase safety&lt;br&gt;Find businesses that align with community goals&lt;br&gt;Family-oriented neighborhood&lt;br&gt;Develop walkable destinations&lt;br&gt;Employment opportunities in the neighborhood&lt;br&gt;Increase branding efforts</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:
The Belmont Community Association’s mission is to continue to foster a safe, friendly, and diverse community with neighbors working together.

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:

- **Commercial Engagement**
  - Land Use/Rezoning Education
  - Foster naturally affordable home construction/development
  - Land use committee involvement in rezonings
  - Continue to encourage Belmont businesses to employ Belmont residents
  - Support new businesses at community meetings
  - Attract bodegas offering fresh, healthy food
  - Belmont Marketplace
  - Hot Dog Hut
  - Employ local residents
  - Community non-profit affordable restaurant
  - Buy one, give one restaurant concept
  - Attract appropriate businesses & restaurants
  - Pitch Amelie’s about relocating in Belmont

- **Branding & Identity**
  - Community branding & identity
  - Grants for more visual branding
  - Paper newsletters to reach residents without internet
  - Develop and organize new/same Belmont logos, signage, business stickers – Branding
    - Learn more about the NMG program: [https://charlottenc.gov/HNS/CE/NMG/Pages/default.aspx](https://charlottenc.gov/HNS/CE/NMG/Pages/default.aspx)

- **Social Capital**
  - City services fair/block party
  - Social activities for seniors
  - Feature “hot spots” on Belmont social media for new businesses
  - Jump start internship

- **Events & Engagement**
  - History walk
  - Youth programming
  - Block party
  - Engage long-term residents
  - Outdoor neighborhood activities
  - Neighborhood competitions – yard of the month, holiday decorations etc.
  - Events for seniors

- **Safety**
  - Work with police on issues
  - Neighborhood Watch
  - Community education through/at meetings

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.
OUR VISION:
The Belmont Community Association’s mission is to continue to foster a safe, friendly, and diverse community with neighbors working together.

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

1. Branding & Identity
2. Engagement & Events
3. Safety & Community Engagement

IN 2019-2020, WE WILL WORK ON THESE ACTIVITIES GUIDED BY OUR PRIORITY:

- Apply for a Neighborhood Matching Grant for branding efforts by September 2020.
- Host a neighborhood competition (yard of the month, holiday decorations, etc.) by July 2020.
- Form a neighborhood watch by July 2020.
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>Apply for a Neighborhood Matching Grant for branding efforts by September 2020.</td>
<td>Beautification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Host a neighborhood competition (yard of the month, holiday decorations, etc.) by July 2020.</td>
<td>Welcoming &amp; Engaging Neighbors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Form a neighborhood watch by July 2020.</td>
<td>Public Safety</td>
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Your community is located within Charlotte’s Northeast Service Area. Your staff contacts for following up and community assistance are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlenea Duncan</td>
<td>Northeast Community Engagement Liaison</td>
<td><a href="mailto:csduncan@charlottenc.gov">csduncan@charlottenc.gov</a> or 704-336-2173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Short</td>
<td>Northeast Community Engagement Manager</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jshort@charlottenc.gov">jshort@charlottenc.gov</a> or 704-336-3862</td>
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