Belmont Community Association

Hosted by City of Charlotte Housing & Neighborhood Services at
Central Piedmont Community College
Background

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

- Lorna Allen
- Teresa Reid
- Curtis Bridges
- Lauren Nyguen
- Ed Glodowski
- Kristen Paulet
- Lindsey Olson
- Minister Rosa Anderson

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>Welcoming neighbors</td>
<td>Belmont Community Association</td>
<td>Unique, diverse and caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring/compassionate people</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Improve comm. methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good outweighed the bad</td>
<td>Awareness about areas that need work</td>
<td>Stay neighborly as the community grows, lend a hand to help each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active NA prior to this one/Positive change of direction of current organization</td>
<td>Diverse and friendly community</td>
<td>Utilize the diversity of skills and resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>TG Parade with children</td>
<td>Lots of potential</td>
<td>Host more celebrations to unify the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Desire for Belmont to stay different and unique</td>
<td>Community beatification and well-maintained homes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was crime, gun fire, and an FBI raid</td>
<td>Great location &amp; great assets: light rail, community, greenway, character, history, families, trees, and front porches.</td>
<td>Take personal responsibility for the success of the n’hood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corner activity/loitering</td>
<td>Sense of accountability, residents show up to meetings.</td>
<td>Break down barriers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of awareness with communities opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Change/improve perceptions of Belmont</td>
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<tr>
<td>There was a fear of change and anger over gentrification, loss of relationships and neighbors</td>
<td></td>
<td>Create an identity and brand for the neighborhood</td>
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<td>Lack of communication to all residents</td>
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<td>Improve the perception of safety; more street lights, trees, trash</td>
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<td>Utilize available resources from the City</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As a community take care of the little things</td>
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</table>
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

To foster a safe, friendly, and diverse community through neighbors working together

(Together the group decided to continue with the vision set by the last Board Retreat as it still describes what their hopes are.)

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:

- **Resources (8 votes)**
  - Lending hands committee, a committee that mobilizes the community around completing projects that help a specific neighbor in need of assistance, utilizing skills that Belmont residents have to offer (3 votes)
  - Social senior project, resource fair, community dinners, relationship blog (2 votes)
  - Better stores (2 votes)
  - Centralized resources sheet (1 vote)
  - Call 311/911
  - Become more involved in events the city is putting on to be more aware and educated
  - Create a community list/database of neighbors with particular skills (carpentry, electrical) who are willing to volunteer
  - Provide a resource fair for the neighborhood
  - More outreach in the community and meeting their needs

- **Neighborhood Meetups (5 votes)**
  - Get to know all neighbors (5 votes)
  - More food events to get neighbors out and talking
  - Get to know our elderly neighbors
  - Neighborhood walking, bicycling, baby strollers, dog walker, etc. groups
  - Bike parade/ trips for kids

- **Communication (5 votes)**
  - Thinking of and utilizing different channels for communication (4 votes)
  - Community forum to get actionable ideas (1 vote)
  - Have a questionnaire, make it fun, give something away.
  - Community info boards attached to or near a little free library
  - Neighbor of the month spotlight

- **Belmont’s Atmosphere (3 votes)**
  - Be involved (3 votes)
  - Smile
  - Support each other
  - Get out of your comfort zone
  - Take a different route home
  - Saying hello
  - Have more babies
  - Follow the speed limit
  - Love
  - Check on your neighbors when you don’t see them in days
  - Walk through the neighborhood
  - Wave & engage others

- **Brand/Identity (2 votes)**
  - Have businesses that celebrate the community, its people, and its history (2 votes)
  - Annual community awards and recognitions
  - Correct and educate people with poor or inaccurate opinions of Belmont
  - “Drive like your kids live here” signs

- **Neighborhood Beautification (1 vote)**
  - Better lighting (1 vote)
  - Wider sidewalks
  - Street improvements
  - Block coordinators
- Do walk throughs of 2 streets at a time
- Yard of the month recognitions
- Trash cans at bus stops

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.
2017 Neighborhood Board Retreat Summary

Belmont Community Association

**OUR VISION:**
To foster a safe, friendly, and diverse community through neighbors working together

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

1. Expand Resources
2. Improve Communication
3. Belmont Neighbor Meet-ups

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

- **Lending Hand Committee**
  - Establish committee with chair by January 1, 2018

- **Better Stores**
  - Meet with all 3 corner stores by January 1st, 2018 to discuss inventory and pricing

- **Message Board**
  - Build Message board by September 23rd, 2017
Additional Notes:

Lending Hand Committee: Think about leadership/members and the mission/vision. Resources for this goal: survey, mission, Neighborhood Matching Grants, Bradley Construction, Rudy Cools, Fresh List, Amon Paving, Belmont CDC, churches, Habitat, Scouts, Salvation Army, schools: Hawthorn/Piedmont, Villa Heights, CLT Lab, Realtors, 311, City Council, neighbor sweat equity

Better stores: How can Belmont’s corner stores better serve the needs of the community? Resources for this goal: survey about what residents need, current business liaison, corner stores, competitive store, explore grants (Mecklenburg County Health Department), land use committee, developers, Better Block, regulations, outside vendors, CSA or Market, North Carolina Alliance for health (www.ncallianceforhealth.org) - Healthy corner store initiative, Elliot Royal – Mecklenburg county's Food Access Coordinator (980-314-9145; elliott.royal@mecklenburgcountync.gov)

Message board: potential locations include: Belmont Ave., Pegram, Seigle. Resources for this goal: Better Block, Neighborhood Matching Grants

Get to know all neighbors: Think about who to connect with and how to connect with people who have not previously participated in a community event. Make an intentional effort toward introductions. Resources: the 8 Board Retreat attendees who will encourage other association members to take part in this goal.

Parking Lot Items:

Better Block Brainstorm – Potential features to test during Better Block

- 4 way stop Belmont & Seigle
- Bike lane
- Coffee shop
- Community center
- Crosswalk
- Façade Improvements for commercial
- Greenery
- Kids & dog activities
- Lighting
- Message board
- Mural/poetry on building/Identity through Art
- Round-a-bout/Traffic Circle
- Seating-not under tree
- Shade
- Sidewalks
- Speed bumps
- Water feature
- Welcome to Belmont Sign

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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish Lending Hand Committee with chair by January 1, 2018</td>
<td>Welcoming &amp; Engaging Neighbors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with all 3 corner stores by January 1, 2018 to discuss inventory and pricing</td>
<td>Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build message board by September 23, 2017</td>
<td>Communication; Neighborhood Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit to bringing 25 “new” people to attend and be welcomed to an event by September 23, 2017</td>
<td>Welcoming &amp; Engaging Neighbors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your community is located within Charlotte’s Northeast Service Area. Your staff contacts for following up and community assistance are:

Charlenea Duncan, Northeast Community Engagement Liaison  
csduncan@charlottenc.gov or 704-336-2173

John Short, Northeast Community Engagement Manager  
jshort@charlottenc.gov or 704-336-3862