February 08, 2020

Belmont Community Association

Hosted by City of Charlotte Housing & Neighborhood Services at

Goodwill Opportunity Campus

Background

On Saturday, February 08, 2020, 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	• Teresa Reid
• Richard Grimstad	• Jennifer Heath
• Rudy Glenn	• Beth Howard

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 a copy of the Developing Your Ideas worksheets from the Neighborhood Board Retreat Participant Workbook (pages 14 – 17) with our NMG request. This credit will expire following the June 1, 2021 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.

Where We Were: Reflecting on our past, what were some of the best/worst moments?	**Where We Are:** Why would or wouldn't 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?
Worst: - Unsafe - Isolation - Crime - Poverty - 80's-90's - Drugs - Negative connotations of a red-lined neighborhood Best - We know each other - Habitat for Humanity - History as a mill village – we were a functioning community - Large number of churches - We held block parties - Once had a library	- Housing density; infrastructure to support issues - Traffic - Parking - Frustration when our requests aren't met - Uncertainty - Transportation - Gentrification - Need intentionality around our transitioning neighborhood - Old neighbors – don't always feel included - Neighborhood association is active – invite others to participate - Business is moving in – invite people to convene in partnership with businesses - We're becoming a destination - Businesses are forming and bringing jobs - Amenities are accessible - Loitering (drug dealing) is still an issue	- Know our neighbors - Community center – a place to congregate - Neighbors are accountable for one another - Peaceful, safe neighborhood - More businesses – retail, services, mixed use - Residents vote – rides to polls, candidates' forums, information about how to participate - Block parties - Well-lit for safety - Clean yards and streets

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:** *Belmont is a vibrant, historic neighborhood that celebrates diversity and community, just one mile from uptown.*

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:

Fill in the categories (large Post-Its) and associated ideas/action items, adding and deleting bullet points as necessary.

Category One
An Engaged Neighborhood
Action:
      Hold (1) a candidates' forum and (2) conduct voter registration outreach over the next 12 months
Resources:
      Neighborhood Leads: Board champions the effort
      Engage: Democracy Now, League of Women Voters, Mecklenburg Co and NC Boards of Elections, Local
      representatives and candidates
How measure?
      Benchmark against Quality of Life Explorer voter participation rates
Next steps:
      Discuss the candidates' forum and voter registration efforts at the upcoming board meeting; then call
      Democracy NC and hold the event

Category Two
A Safe Community
Action:
      Seek funding for the purchase of increased lighting and technology (video cameras, for example) for residents to
      use as part of Belmont's crime fighting initiative and a "light up Belmont" home lighting initiative
Resources:
      Neighborhood Leads: Rudy, Beth and Curtis (engages grants person)
      Engage: CMPD, Phillips, Red Cross (smoke alarm installation programming), Duke Energy, City of Charlotte,
      Neighborhood Watch Program
How measure?
      Funding sources identified within 12 months
      Convene residents for safety event – measure (1) participation rate and (2) actions taken by residents
      At the Board level: Gather anecdotal feedback about community support
Next steps:
      Rudy will set a date for the community meeting – discuss what homeowners can do to increase safety; Spring
      2020

Category Three
Intentional Growth
Action:
      Host a speakers' forum through which residents can hear from experts around affordable housing,
      gentrification, zoning and smart growth
Resources:
      Neighborhood Lead: Richard
      Engage: City of Charlotte (Charlenea Duncan CSDuncan@CharlotteNC.gov, Laurel Street Development (Dianne
      Nelson)

How measure?

    Number of residents who attend

    Whether identified neighborhood actions to help address the issue are undertaken

Next steps:

    Richard will research resources, present to board, identify date and host the event

Parking lot and additional activities identified:

<u>An Engaged Neighborhood:</u>

- Communications assessment – outreach to identify residents' preferred method to receive information; target delivering communications to places where neighbors already congregate (book clubs, corner stores, houses of worship)
- "Meet Up Belmont"
- Research trash pick-up (community clean-up) programs/incentives/models for engaging residents
- Resource fair – convene community resources so residents have a "one stop" information opportunity around jobs, internships, etc.
- "Sneak Peek" soft openings for neighbors to visit local businesses before they open to the public

<u>Intentional Growth:</u>

- Tree planting

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 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.

Belmont Community Association

OUR VISION: *Belmont is a vibrant, historic neighborhood that celebrates diversity and community, just one mile from uptown.*

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

1	2	3
An engaged neighborhood	Safe community	Intentional growth

IN 2020-2021, WE WILL WORK ON THESE ACTIVITES GUIDED BY OUR PRIORITES:

Hold a candidates' forum and conduct voter registration outreach over the next 12 months

Explore funding to purchase lighting and technology (video cameras, for example) for homeowners and a "light up Belmont" home lighting initiative December 2020

Host a speakers' forum through which residents can hear from experts around affordable housing, gentrification, zoning and smart growth by Spring 2021

Is this goal SMART? Yes

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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.

Project	Potential Resource Categories of Interest
Hold a candidates' forum and conduct voter registration outreach over the next 12 months	Community Engagement
Explore funding to purchase lighting and technology (video cameras, for example) for homeowners and a "light up Belmont" home lighting initiative by December 2020	Safety
Host a speakers' forum through which residents can hear from experts around affordable housing, gentrification, zoning and smart growth by Spring 2021	Community Engagement

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 Manager
[csduncan@charlottenc.gov]() or 704-336-2173