July 13, 2019

Biddleville-Smallwood Community Organization

Hosted by City of Charlotte Housing & Neighborhood Services at

Goodwill Opportunity Campus
Background

On Saturday, July 13, 2019, the board members of the Biddleville-Smallwood Community Organization 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:

Lucas Blanchard          Martha McCullough
Paul VanGundy            Travis Bell
Suzie Berry

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? (Top 3 are highlighted)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Our neighborhood has always gone through cycles of change.</td>
<td>• Access to Uptown is a big attractor – good transportation options</td>
<td>• Better business environment (attract and cultivate local businesses)</td>
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<td>• Part of our neighborhood’s history/reputation is grounded in a challenging legacy of racism and housing/social segregation.</td>
<td>• The “front porch culture” is an asset</td>
<td>• Cultural identity supported by Bruns Academy as a key anchor</td>
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<tr>
<td>• At times in our history there has been a lack of school investment and support, but at times the schools have been great.</td>
<td>• There’s a lack of businesses – investors are hesitant with their capital – perception of risk on the West Side</td>
<td>• Cultural identity supported by better social cohesion among neighbors</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The community used to be very close-knit. Neighbors knew each other and supported each other. There seems to be less of that in recent years with the influx of new residents.</td>
<td>• The dichotomy between tenured vs. new residents creates an interesting social dynamic</td>
<td>• Better access to healthy foods</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Better transportation – specifically bus access/frequency of service</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Clean, bright, and safe (related to traffic, litter, and landscaping)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Inclusivity (community collaboration and support of Bruns Academy)</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:

Neighbors growing a vibrant, cohesive community rich in history and diversity

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:

- **Improve Safety and Mobility**
  - Traffic calming projects
    - Identify trouble spots
    - Contact CDOT Public Service to get traffic studies and understand what is possible/permitted
  - Improve walkability
    - Glass removal
    - Tree trimming
  - Identify stop signs with poor visibility and compliance
  - Educate residents on sidewalk maintenance responsibilities
  - Identify possible “minor sidewalk gap” projects and contact CDOT Pedestrian Program

- **Invest in Our Community Assets (Our Residents & Bruns Academy)**
  - Print more signs for neighborhood meetings
  - Get board members who are more representative of the neighborhood
  - Improve social media presence
  - Create a “Welcome to the Neighborhood” package for new residents
    - Flyers
    - Coupons to local businesses
    - Invitation to neighborhood meetings
  - Strengthen board education partnerships with Bruns Academy
    - Invite Bruns Academy Principal to neighborhood meeting
    - Inform neighborhood about partnerships happening at Bruns

- **Keep Biddleville-Smallwood Bright and Beautiful**
  - Identify hot spots for littering
  - Install a community gateway at a strategic spot
  - Host a neighborhood clean up day
    - Glass removal
    - Tree trimming
  - Ban the sale of glass in Charlotte
  - Contact CDOT about upgrading existing street lights and adding new
  - Identify a Park/Public Space Board Owner

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.
2019 Neighborhood Board Retreat Summary

Biddleville-Smallwood Community Organization

OUR VISION:
Neighbors growing a vibrant, cohesive community rich in history and diversity

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

1. Keep Biddleville-Smallwood Bright and Beautiful
2. Improve Safety and Mobility
3. Invest in Our Community Assets (Our Residents & Bruns Academy)

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

1. Identify priority streets and hold a neighborhood clean-up day by July 2020.
2. By July 2020, partner with CDOT to conduct traffic counts to understand traffic calming options at key trouble spots & inventory transportation requests (with specific locations) related to street lights, sidewalk gaps, and stop signs.
3. By December 2019, get 10 residents signed up for the Aging in Place tax abatement grant program.
Please list any parking lot items or additional activities beyond the initial 3 here.

Bonus Goal: Secure a Neighborhood Matching Grant (NMG) by December 2020 for a community gateway project. Learn more about the NMG program here: https://charlottenc.gov/HNS/CE/NMG/Pages/default.aspx

Other action items:

- Educate residents on sidewalk maintenance responsibilities at board meetings.
- Start Instagram and Facebook accounts and post at least once a week.
- Inform residents about partnerships with Bruns Academy.

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>Identify priority streets and hold a neighborhood clean-up day by July 2020.</td>
<td>Beautification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure a Neighborhood Matching Grant by December 2020 for a community gateway project.</td>
<td>Beautification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By July 2020, partner with CDOT to conduct necessary traffic counts to understand traffic calming options at key trouble spots and inventory transportation requests (with specific locations) related to street lights, sidewalk gaps, and stop signs.</td>
<td>Public Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By December 2019, get 10 residents signed up for the Aging in Place tax abatement grant program.</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cherie Grant, Northwest Community Engagement Liaison</th>
<th>Randy Harris, Northwest Community Engagement Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:Cherie.Grant@charlottenc.gov">Cherie.Grant@charlottenc.gov</a> or 704-336-3322</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rharris@charlottenc.gov">rharris@charlottenc.gov</a> or 704-432-2433</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Keep Charlotte Beautiful provides free supplies for neighborhood clean-ups. Contact Jonathan.Hill@charlottenc.gov and learn more at https://charlottenc.gov/HNS/CE/KCB/Pages/default.aspx

Learn more about CDOT’s Neighborhood Traffic Management at https://charlottenc.gov/Transportation/Programs/Pages/TrafficCalming.aspx

Learn more about the Aging in Place program at https://charlottenc.gov/HNS/Housing/Homeowners/Pages/Aging-In-Place.aspx or by contacting hnsinfo@charlottenc.gov