2012 BOARD RETREAT

COVENTRY WOODS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Hosted by the City of Charlotte at Foundation For The Carolinas
7/14/2012
On Saturday, July 14, 2012, the board members of the Coventry Woods Neighborhood Association participated in a board retreat facilitated by the City of Charlotte, hosted at Foundation For The Carolinas. The following board members participated in the retreat:

- John Bordsen
- Andrea Smith
- Todd Jennings
- Therese Bohn
- Bill Cooper
- Suzanne Williams
- Shelia Saints
- Brian Hetherington

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

Our board identified the following outcomes for the retreat:

- Ideas for grant money
- How to work more effectively with the city
- How to motivate community be a part of association
- Considerations/Involvement of diversity on board or meetings
- New ideas that are proactive not reactive
- Proactive goals and ideas

By participating in the retreat, 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 an external facilitator, tasked to keep our conversations on-task, productive, and focused on achievable objectives. The process was designed to help us capture what was the best of the past, what is 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
- Where’s the Energy – Energygram Exercise
- Project Planning Worksheet Review

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?
- **Positive**
  - Coming Full Circle; stronger in process
  - Yielded a City Council Member
  - Zoning, Development, Legal
  - Financial, emotional toll
- **Negative**
  - Zoning, Development, Legal

### Where We Are:
Why/why not would a person/business want to move into our community?
- **Why**
  - Good location established – new regeneration
  - Good construction of homes
  - Beauty of property - trees
  - Friendliness – involvement of neighbors
  - Edge – well positioned for positive outcome
  - Influence due to City Council Member
- **Why Not**
  - East side perception
  - Independence Plan
  - Lack of quality retail
  - Absentee landlords

### Where We Want to Be:
If you could make 3 wishes to make our community flourish, what would they be?
- Positive attention/Response from City
- Community Involvement within neighborhood, incorporate diverse community more
- Retail development (quality) – East Charlotte development, homes and businesses

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Based on this activity, our group identified shared values that would help us craft the vision for our community:

- **Cultural Integrity**
  - Knowing/valuing neighbors
  - Culture of inclusivity
  - Respecting diversity/the beauty of individuals
  - Preserving history
  - Progressive development doesn’t exclude
- **Board Leadership that Represents Residents**
- **Safety**
- **Friendly Interaction**
- **Variety of Family Units**
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 PRESERVE, PROTECT AND PROMOTE
COVENTRY WOODS WITHIN OUR
NEIGHBORHOOD AND ACROSS THE CITY.

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 for 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. We utilized 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.
  - Current realities keeping you from our vision.
  - Possible priorities/actions items to get us closer to our vision.
- Place the sticky notes on the chart paper.
- Organize the ideas by natural categories. Which ideas go together? Feel free to move any post-it note to another place. Move yours, move those of others, and feel free to do this. Do not be offended if someone moves yours to place where you feel it does not belong, just move it where you believe it goes.
- Once everyone agrees on the groups, give each one a name.
This activity led us to the following categories:

**CWNA Membership Engagement**
- Generate priority action items, gain consensus, and make it happen
- Continue to support the CWNA
- Reach out to minorities to join board; act as a bridge to their families and others of their ethnicity
- Reach out to at least one minority member of the neighborhood and lobby for them to help association to break language barrier to help create a more united association
- Neighborhood traditions – events – create new ones
- Increase neighborhood involvement as permitted or acceptable without being too forward
- Have more gatherings to encourage neighbors’ involvement in community
- Establish Neighborhood Watch
- Engaged membership
- Be more vocal on the benefits of being part of the community on a business development basis

**Government**
- Elect only mayoral/council members who will deliver what we need
- Push, cajole for more and better help from the city government
- Focus on who on city/county council we can influence
- More involvement with city/council meetings and agencies as they affect the east side and CW
- Work with tools available in city council to clarify our vision and needs to the entire county
- Approach the city and ask them to clean up garbage and mow areas along Sharon Amity that are overgrown due to homes being torn down – makes our neighborhood look bad
- Have members keep eye on city developments to stay on top of rising issues that may arise

**Partners**
- Hold forum with Chamber of Commerce to help them understand the importance of promoting Charlotte East in their publications
- Work with Chamber of Commerce/Development Community to change perception
- Contract realtors – letter – sent out promoting Coventry Woods
- Partner with more business and schools, realtors, flippers, associations
- Meet with Charlotte Apartment Association to encourage quality multi-family communities and good quality tenants

**Media**
- Increase readership via Newsletters that are more community inclusive
- Hold a forum with TV news directors and newspaper editors about incorrect coverage of the eastside, citing specific examples and metrics of their coverage and possible bias
- Advertise to different groups to educate of our strengths – realtors, home buyers, niche groups

**Current Action Items**
- Social Events
- CMPD Coordinator Involvement
- Sponsor Political Forums
- Welcome Neighborhood Back
- Speaking at Council meetings on issues that affect our community
- Expanded membership to include 50 or so households – Independence Blvd (“a seat at the table”)
- Woods Watch
- Pine Needle Sale
- Candidate Forum
- Expanded (and profitable) newsletter – distribution: 500 households
• Continue to brainstorm new ideas to involve neighborhood
• Newsletter to involve the media – coverage
• Working on neighborhood watch – working with police
• Involving local restaurants
• Protecting neighborhood by working with CMPD – crime watch
• Preserving Coventry Woods by keeping a history of important events
• Supporting neighboring businesses – acquiring ads for our newsletters
• Door to door for community involvement
• Participating in retreat for input on improvement
• Promote Coventry Woods – getting media attention – both print and broadcast
• Protect Coventry Woods and be involved in land use decisions and rezonings
• Preserve Coventry Woods: sponsoring neighborhood get togethers
• Bring neighborhood together for social events/interactions
• Interacting with CECP and other East Charlotte neighborhood associations
• Staging 1 free neighborhood involvement event per season
• Steady pipeline to local TV stations for community projects

Realities Holding You Back from Your Vision
• Lack of support from city
• Reaching that “next group” of neighbors
• Lack of support or ‘buy in’ from developers, city planners staff, and the media
• Lack of community involvement
• Absentee owners
• State and city road projects
• Eastside stereotype
• Money for improvement projects
• Language barriers
• Tons of cash for uptown – little or nothing for East Charlotte regeneration
• Stop and go retooling of Independence Blvd
• City staff doesn’t understand dynamics of neighborhoods in East Charlotte
• Road expansion and the lack of knowledge of what the outcome will be
• Lack of quality stores i.e. grocery stores
• Neglect from city/county government
• 40 years of poor city zoning decisions
• Too much rental housing – especially too large deteriorating complexes

The board then identified the three priorities that were most important for us to begin working on to achieve our vision:

1. **GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIP CAMPAIGN**
2. **PARTNERS**
3. **CWNA MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT**
Potential Projects

The board then began to brainstorm on possible projects or activities that aligned with their strategic priorities:

Government Relationship Campaign
- Identify ‘go to’ people in city – resolve problems
- Be more vocal with city/county government
- Invite officials to CWNA meetings/events
- Develop multiple allies
- More code enforcement (make the contacts)
- More code enforcement (make the contacts)

Partners
- Spotlight member strengths
- Database of all key contacts and people in ‘roots section’
- Become more proactive with CECP
- Contact flippers, realtors, developers (personal approach).
- Media to promote CWNA
- More advertisers in newsletter
- Sell the city on CWN (and chamber)
- Tap neighborhood content experts

CWNA Membership Engagement
- Membership Drive
- Integrated Neighborhood communications plan
- Leverage existing CWNA members to increase new member yearly
- Compelling events – benchmark events
- Reach out to ethnic residents
- New traditions and old traditions
- Newsletters and establishing other media involvements
- Facebook and website (posting photos)
- Email alerts for members
- Develop tangible membership benefit (tiered activity/item pricing)

Action Items for 2012-2014

After identifying potential projects, the board voted on one project to pursue for each strategic priority in 2012-2014:
OUR VISION:
TO PRESERVE, PROTECT AND PROMOTE COVENTRY WOODS WITHIN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND ACROSS THE CITY.

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

1. GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIP CAMPAIGN
2. PARTNERS
3. CWNA MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

IN 2012-2014, WE WILL WORK ON THESE ACTIVITIES GUIDED BY OUR PRIORITIES:

1. MEMBERSHIP DRIVE
2. EDUCATIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD TOURS FOR CITY STAFFERS & OFFICIALS
3. DATABASE FOR KEY CONNECTIONS
Coventry Woods Neighborhood

OUR VISION IS:
To preserve, protect, and promote
The Coventry Woods Neighborhood
within our neighborhood and
across the city.

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

1. CWNA Membership
   Engagement

2. Gov’t
   Relationships

3. Partnerships
   Community
   Members

IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS, WE WILL WORK ON THESE
ACTIVITIES GUIDED BY OUR PRIORITIES:

- Membership
  Drive
- Educational
  Neighborhood
  Tours
- Key
  Connections

- Full Listing
  of Key
  Connections
- Coordination
  of Neighborhood
  Events
- Working
  directly
  with key
  stakeholders
- Membership
  Drive
- Data
  Collection

- Development
  of a database
  for key
  stakeholders

- Development
  of a membership
  drive
- Development
  of educational
  neighborhood
  tours
- Coordination
  of neighborhood
  events
- Working
directly with
key stakeholders