Druid Hills Neighborhood Association
Board Retreat
Hosted by the City of Charlotte at UNC Charlotte Uptown Campus
Background

On Saturday, July 19th 2014, the board members of the Coventry Woods Neighborhood Association participated in the Neighborhood Board Retreat hosted by the City of Charlotte at UNCC Uptown Campus. The following board members participated in the retreat:

- Darryl R. Gaston, President
- Lurlean Spencer, Secretary
- Melissa Lowe Gaston
- Lorraine Hutson

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 Neighborhood Matching Grant credit to help execute one of the projects we identified. The credit will be applied to our neighborhood’s required match and must be accompanied by a completed Vision to Action Idea Development Book alongside a NMG application. NMG credits expire one-year from the date of retreat attendance.

Process

Our board retreat was conducted by professional facilitators trained 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/why not would 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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<tr>
<td>- Drug trafficking and related issues; - Some of the changes since 1960’s and ’70’s were negative; - Norris &amp; Justice Aves. were dangerous + Druid Hills was “place to be” in the 1960’s (1st Black Police Officer was from DH; dentist and doctor’s offices, etc. were in D H.) + Housing is better due to new builds by CMHP and Habitat as well as work of Code Enforcement + Neighborhood association stronger with officers and strategic plan + Community policing and strong relationships with stakeholders</td>
<td>Desirable: - Close to City Center/can see sky line - Great neighbors - Strong churches - Strong neighborhood watch - Up and coming neighborhood with housing options - Infill land available for home construction</td>
<td>To see: 1. Commercial/businesses/services established in community 2. Good schools with strong afterschool programs 3. Rebranding the community related to: • Appearance • Crime reduction/safety • Curb appeal</td>
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<td>Undesirable: - Fear/negative perception - Homelessness issues - Slum lords - School rating - Food desert - No recreation outlets for young - Sense of disorder: dumping, overgrowth, etc.</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:

Druid Hills: Charlotte’s “breath of fresh air” – close to our vibrant City Center – where neighbors care!

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:
  o Current action items getting you closer to our vision.
  o 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:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Child Safety</th>
<th>Community Rebranding</th>
<th>Stronger Partnerships</th>
<th>Community Engagement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s Safety</td>
<td>• Effective marketing of Druid Hills.</td>
<td>• Engage community stakeholders</td>
<td>• Night Out Community Event</td>
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<td>• Look for grant opportunity to help branding.</td>
<td>• Communicate with stakeholders</td>
<td>• Talk to neighbors about DHNA</td>
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<td>• Request more funds to accommodate business needs</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Partner with schools to improve education &amp; parental involvement</td>
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<td>• Meet with Councilmember</td>
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</table>
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, these are:

1. Strengthen Partnerships
2. Community Re-branding
3. Community Engagement

**Action Items for 2014-2015**

The three activities selected as most impactful toward achieving our strategic priorities are activities in 2014-2015 are:

1. Engage Community Stakeholders
2. Research grant opportunities for re-branding community image
3. Meet and talk with Druid Hills’ residents about involvement with DHNA
2014 Neighborhood Board Retreat Summary

Druid Hills Neighborhood Association

OUR VISION:

Druid Hills: Charlotte’s “breath of fresh air” - close to our vibrant City Center –where neighbors care!

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

1. Strengthen Partnerships
2. Community Re-branding
3. Community Engagement

IN 2014-2015, WE WILL WORK ON THESE ACTIVITES GUIDED BY OUR PRIORITIES:

1. Engage Community Stakeholders
2. Research grant opportunities for rebranding community image
3. Meet and talk with Druid Hills’ residents about involvement with DHNA
## Resources to Get Started

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Getting Started</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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| **Project # 1**  
Engage Community Stakeholders | • Create a survey for stakeholders to gauge their interest in participating in neighborhood activities  
• Develop communication tools to communicate with stakeholders, neighbors about upcoming events | Online survey tool: [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)  
Nextdoor: Create a private social network for your neighborhood: [https://nextdoor.com/about_us/](https://nextdoor.com/about_us/)  
Mail Chimp: Free online newsletter creator: [www.mailchimp.com](http://www.mailchimp.com) |
| **Project # 2**  
Research grant opportunities for rebranding community image | • Learn more about Neighborhood Matching Grants program  
• Search for online grants  
• Marketing/branding basics for neighborhoods | Apply for a Neighborhood Matching Grant: [http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/nbs/communityengagement/nmg/Pages/default.aspx](http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/nbs/communityengagement/nmg/Pages/default.aspx)  
Contact Atalie Zimmerman at 704-336-4594 for more information  
Find other grants online: [http://grantspace.org/Tools/Knowledge-Base/Funding-Resources/Foundations/finding-grants](http://grantspace.org/Tools/Knowledge-Base/Funding-Resources/Foundations/finding-grants)  
| **Project #3**  
Meet and talk with Druid Hills’ residents about involvement with DHNA | • Find fun ways to engage residents and recruit board members | Recruiting potential board members [http://www.hoaleader.com/public/351.cfm](http://www.hoaleader.com/public/351.cfm)  