July 15, 2017

Genesis Park Neighborhood 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 Genesis Park Neighborhood Association participated in the Neighborhood Board Retreat facilitated by the City of Charlotte, hosted at CPCC. The following board members participated in the retreat:

- Charles Vakala
- Nakisa Glover
- Chisa Brookes
- Tiffany Fant
- Alana Weaver
- Glencie Rhedrick
- Tina Marshall

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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Crime and drug activity</td>
<td>• Property taxes are higher</td>
<td>• Keep the identity of the neighborhood while improving quality of life</td>
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<td>• Poor quality of housing</td>
<td>• Homes in disrepair</td>
<td>• Inter-neighborhood cooperation</td>
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<td>• Shift from multi to single family</td>
<td>• Cars blocking sidewalks and streets</td>
<td>• For Your Neighborhood By your Neighborhood</td>
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<td>• Rebranding</td>
<td>• Lack of cultural understanding</td>
<td>• Regular community events</td>
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<td>• Used to be closer-knit</td>
<td>• Good location</td>
<td>• Build relationships between neighborhoods</td>
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<td>• Physical barriers and divisions</td>
<td>• New sound barrier wall on 77</td>
<td>• Access to healthy foods</td>
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<td>• Corner store has more fresh food supplied</td>
<td>• Access to transportation (rail)</td>
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<td>• State and Fed not go through the neighborhood</td>
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<td>• Beautification</td>
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<td>• Lighting</td>
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<td>• Parking</td>
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<td>• Better use of public community space/ City right of way</td>
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<td>• Bike path</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Maintaining identity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Health</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Connect Genesis Park to: places, people, wider community, opportunities, value of home ownership</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:**

*Genesis Park is a cohesive neighborhood committed to building enduring relationships that lead to healthy and prosperous living.*

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:

- **Education Workshops** – use various outreach methods (flyers, social media, emails) to invite residents to come to the workshops held at either a church or the community center.
  - Partner with a banker or other person to lead a class on **financial literacy**.
    - Community Link: [http://communitylinknc.org/financial/](http://communitylinknc.org/financial/)
    - CPCC: [https://www.cpq.edu/financial_aid/fyi/financial-literacy](https://www.cpq.edu/financial_aid/fyi/financial-literacy)
    - Free online classes: [https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/personalfinance/2017/01/31/5-free-online-classes-improve-your-financial-literacy/96568562/](https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/personalfinance/2017/01/31/5-free-online-classes-improve-your-financial-literacy/96568562/)
  - Partner with a licensed real estate appraiser to host a class on **knowing the value of your home**.
    - Other online databases of appraisers: [http://www.xsitesnetwork.com/](http://www.xsitesnetwork.com/)
  - A workshop on **investing/improving your home**.
    - Lowe’s/ Home Depot/ contractor to talk about projects you can do yourself and when to call a professional
    - A bank about home improvement loans
  - A workshop on **hiring an advocate** or someone to negotiate for you
  - A workshop for the whole community to notice when a **property might be in distress**
    - Code Enforcement: Kristin Davis (704-432-5394; kmdavis@ci.charlotte.nc.us)

- **Placemaking** – create a sense of place where everyone can gather together in a beautiful and positive atmosphere
  - Create a community anchor location that is a draw for others to come to and portrays a unified identity.
    - [www.betterblock.org](http://www.betterblock.org) & [http://charlottenc.gov/civicinnovation/placemaking/Pages/default.aspx](http://charlottenc.gov/civicinnovation/placemaking/Pages/default.aspx)
    - [http://charlotte.toolbank.org](http://charlotte.toolbank.org)
    - Tour other successful anchors like the one in Pine Valley
    - Invite Community Engagement staff to a board meeting

- **Beautification** – recruit volunteers from residents and home owners to come together and make the neighborhood look beautiful.
  - Have Phillip Freeman come and speak about the tier 1 façade grant
  - Invite someone from Housing to come and talk about the lead paint program (see Resources)
  - Get families, youth, neighbors to help each other with projects

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

Genesis Park Neighborhood Association

**OUR VISION:**

*Genesis Park is a cohesive neighborhood committed to building enduring relationships that lead to healthy and prosperous living.*

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

1. **Education Workshops**
2. **Placemaking**
3. **Beautification**

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

- Host educational workshops about: financial literacy, home value, home improvement, and finding an advocate
- Create a community anchor location that is a draw for others to come to and portrays a unified identity
- Recruit volunteers to come together and make the neighborhood look beautiful, including façade improvements
Full Listing of Post-Its:

- Communication - 3 votes total
  - 100% digital inclusion - 2 votes
    - Offer community internet connections/capabilities for easy access to information
  - Informational community sign (solar powered) that can be updated electronically – 1 vote

- Collaborative Efforts
  - Create collaboration between surrounding communities to further advantage efforts of strengthening communities
    - Camp North End
  - Community Solutions Taskforce
  - Community Engagement
  - Youth Outreach

- Transportation
  - Low-cost transport service
  - Set aside parking spaces to ease issues with traffic flow based on rental units/homeowners
  - Increases transportation access

- Placemaking – 3 votes total
  - Mobile health for food and health care – 1 vote
    - Farmers market
  - Anchor location – 2 votes
    - Community gathering place
  - Community incubator
    - Small community space/food center that encourages entrepreneurship
  - Low-cost restaurant
  - Community monthly/annual events
    - Recurring community event

- Beautification – 3 votes total
  - Community solar garden
  - Community lighting improvements
    - Street lights painted by local artists
  - Creative street signs that provide positive messages, utilizes local artist
  - Façade improvements to homes – 3 votes

- Education Workshops – 9 votes total
  - Housing education
  - Workshops on home ownership
  - Financial education
  - Education on the value of homeownership – 3 votes
    - Education seminars on housing values
  - Passing wealth through home investment – 6 votes
  - Educate the community on options to maintain home ownership
Parking lot:

- Invite Lori Lencheski from Economic Development to talk about the commercial properties in need of attention and about façade improvements for businesses
  - 704-336-3285, Lori.Lencheski@ci.charlotte.nc.us
- Invite Andrew Bowen to a Board Meeting to talk about the Quality Life Explorer
  - 704-336-5775, abowen@charlottenc.gov
- Invite the at large City Council members to a meeting
  - [http://charlottenc.gov/CityCouncil/bios/Pages/ContactUs.aspx](http://charlottenc.gov/CityCouncil/bios/Pages/ContactUs.aspx)
- Invite Cherie Grant to Meeting
  - See below for contact
- Invite Philip Freeman to meeting
  - 704-336-4594, Philip.Freeman@charlottenc.gov
- Find out what other organizations and resources help with fixing disparity
- Have Rob Phocas come and speak about North End Smart District
  - 704-336-7558, rphocas@ci.charlotte.nc.us
- Invite Code Enforcement to Board Meetings (see contact earlier in workbook)

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](http://). 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>Host educational workshops about: financial literacy, home value, home improvement, and finding an advocate</td>
<td>Partnerships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create a community anchor location that is a draw for others to come to and portrays a unified identity</td>
<td>Neighborhood Identity; Welcoming &amp; Engaging Neighbors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit volunteers to come together and make the neighborhood look beautiful, including façade improvements</td>
<td>Beautification</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>
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</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 704-432-1579</td>
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</tbody>
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