NEIGHBORHOOD BOARD RETREAT

July 15, 2017

Howie Acres Community

Hosted by City of Charlotte Housing & Neighborhood Services at

Central Piedmont Community College
Background

On Saturday, July 15, 2017, the board members of the Howie Acres Community participated in the Neighborhood Board Retreat facilitated by the City of Charlotte, hosted at CPCC. The following board members participated in the retreat:

- Lula Gwinn
- Roma Durham
- Gloriaetta Alexander
- Lamarick Alexander

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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peaceful community</td>
<td>A lot of interest in investment properties</td>
<td>Focus on quality of life of seniors in our neighborhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Everyone knew each other</td>
<td>Neighbors resist change</td>
<td>Children back in the neighborhood to help parents should be able to keep their homes</td>
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<td>Kids could play outside</td>
<td>Challenges engaging neighbors in the neighborhood</td>
<td>Home affordability for everyone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manicured lawns</td>
<td>Lack of connectivity inside the neighborhood – separation of roads</td>
<td>Economic incentives for local businesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>No renters / more property owners</td>
<td>Directions to our community are not clear because of light rail construction</td>
<td>Community center inside the neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We had a sense of community</td>
<td>Large number of renters</td>
<td>Closer ties with local church to develop after school programs and senior programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area businesses were well kept and thriving</td>
<td>Neighborhood park that needs to be cleaned</td>
<td>Educational assistance for everyone – access to jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td>The whole area was thriving</td>
<td>Homes in nice wooded lots</td>
<td>ESL programs for new neighbors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nice tree canopy</td>
<td>Beautification throughout the community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proximity to light rail</td>
<td>Engage everyone in the neighborhood in our projects</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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:**

*Howie Acres is an established, family-oriented jewel centrally located with natural beauty that embraces 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:

- **Beautification**
  - Art on each door with color or design
  - Nice entrance sign
  - Street sign at the beginning of each street
  - Benches on each street for pedestrians

- **Engagement**
  - Announcement board
  - Entrance sign
  - Street sign toppers
  - Community garden

- **Housing**
  - Connect senior homeowners with Code Enforcement and Rehab team

- **Park**
  - Park clean-up. Overgrown foliage prevents access to park from every entrance
  - Beautification project at the park

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

Howie Acres Community

**OUR VISION:**

*Howie Acres is an established, family oriented jewel centrally located with natural beauty that embraces diversity*

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

1. Engagement
2. Improvements
3. Neighborhood Park Accessibility

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

- Install entrance sign and street sign toppers to have a sense community and connectivity. Engage the neighbors in neighborhood’s logo design.
- Revitalize interior and exterior of senior citizens’ homes in the neighborhood by connecting them with Code Enforcement and Rehab Program.
- Engage elected officials and Mecklenburg County’s Park & Rec staff in conversation around neighborhood’s lack of connectivity to park.
Please list any parking lot items or additional activities beyond the initial 3 here.

- Review and revise Bylaws
- Fundraising activities

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>Install entrance sign and street sign toppers to have a sense community and connectivity. Engage the neighbors in neighborhood’s logo design.</td>
<td>Neighborhood Identity; Beautification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revitalize interior and exterior of senior citizens’ homes in the neighborhood by connecting them with Code Enforcement and Rehab Program.</td>
<td>Beautification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage elected officials and Mecklenburg County’s Park &amp; Rec staff in conversation around neighborhood’s lack of connectivity to park.</td>
<td>Recreation</td>
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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 Liaison  
csduncan@charlottenc.gov or 704-336-2173

John Short, Northeast Community Engagement Manager  
jshort@charlottenc.gov or 704-336-3862