February 23, 2019

McDowell Meadows HOA

Hosted by City of Charlotte Housing & Neighborhood Services at

Goodwill Opportunity Campus
Background

On Saturday, February 23, 2019, the board members of the McDowell Meadows HOA 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:

Elizabeth Stroud       Jewel Hale       Eliana Malta
Nancy Spencer         Brenda Glover     Kristin Davis
Julie Graff           Cynthia Stevenson Yvonne Morgan

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 March 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?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| + We had more events  
+ We had a Welcoming Committee  
+ It was quiet  
+ Yards were well kept  
+ Our HOA was active  
+ We were diverse/still are  
- Increased Rental property/absentee landlords  
- Lack | + Feels cozy and homey here  
+ HOA dues are low  
+ Attractive  
+ Affordable  
+ Great location  
- HOA dues are optional  
- Its hard to get in and out due to traffic on Tryon  
- Gunfire  
- Aging homes/repairs needed to mailboxes, siding  
- Too many illegally parked cars and truck in roadway  
- Noisy- ATV’s are being used on unfinished greenway area | Re-establish HOA with covenants that everyone can live with and wants to participate in  
- Improve lights at entrance  
- Increase neighbors interaction with each other |
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:

McDowell Meadows is a diverse and engaged community whose focus is on beauty, education, communication, and family values and is a great place to call home.

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:

- **Category 1 Community Engagement**
  - Bring Back the Welcoming Committee
  - Schedule Regular meetings to encourage engagement
  - Increase Communication

- **Category 2 Beautification**
  - Improve lighting and beauty at entrances
  - Join Keep Charlotte Beautiful/ Adopt a street/ organize cleanups
  - Etc.

- **Category 3 Code Related and Parking Issues- commercial and residential vehicles/street signs**
  - Get a hold of CDOT to talk about signs/illegal parking
  - Call 911 and 311 for illegally parked vehicles
  - Etc.

- **Category 4 Covenants/Dues**
  - Improve Covenant Document
  - Find Attorney/pro bono to help
  - Develop Steering committee to drive process

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.
McDowell Meadows

OUR VISION:

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

1. Covenants/Dues
2. Code Related and Parking Issues
3. Beautification

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

By March 2020, identify free legal assistance and work to improve covenant document.

Discuss signs/illegal parking with CDOT by the end of 2019.

By the September 2019 application deadline, apply for and receive a Neighborhood Matching Grant to improve lighting and beauty at entrances.
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>By March 2020, identify free legal assistance and work to improve covenant document.</td>
<td>Board Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss signs/illegal parking with CDOT by the end of 2019.</td>
<td>Public Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the September 2019 application deadline, apply for and receive a Neighborhood Matching Grant to improve lighting and beauty at entrances.</td>
<td>Beautification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Millicent Powell, Southwest Community Engagement Liaison</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:mepowell@charlottenc.gov">mepowell@charlottenc.gov</a> or 704-432-6814</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please list any parking lot items or additional activities beyond the initial 3 here.

1) The meeting attendees want to know if they can get more specific neighborhood data than the NPA as the NPA covers a greater area than their development.
   a. The Neighborhood Profile Area (NPA) is as far as we can drill down using the Quality of Life Explorer (https://mcmap.org/qol/); Charlotte Explorer might be helpful (vc.charmeck.org/Prerelease)

2) The meeting attendees need a contact person/some education to help them determine if the City can install additional general lighting in the neighborhood. They need help determining if the current lighting meets the requirements, and possible repairs with current lighting/contact information.
   a. CDOT contact Will Wigg, william.wigg@charlottenc.gov

3) Nancy Spencer agreed to organize a steering committee meeting (of the participants) to start talking about what can be done to improve covenant implementation and strengthen the HOA. They asked if Millicent Powell (mepowell@charlottenc.gov) can help them at this meeting and also help them find meeting space. Diane Adams volunteered to help them determine if any free legal services might be available to them to work on the covenants and potentially require HOA association dues as opposed to voluntary dues. The following resources were identified.
   a. Philip Freeman indicated that Community Engagement is looking to hire legal counsel and make it available to HOA’s for a short time. When available, this opportunity will be advertised here: https://charlottenc.gov/HNS/CE/CommunityInfo/Pages/NeighborhoodTrainingPrograms.aspx
i. Legal Services of Mecklenburg County, NC  
(704) 376-1600  
1431 Elizabeth Ave  
Charlotte, NC 28204  
Real Estate, Bankruptcy, Civil Rights and Consumer

ii. Mecklenburg County Bar Association  
(704) 375-8624  
2850 Zebulon Avenue  
Charlotte, NC 28208  
Real Estate, Bankruptcy, Civil Rights and Consumer

iii. [Website Link]

b. It should be noted that whomever is leading this group (sorry I can’t recall name), sends a letter out in May to ask people to join the HOA. **This is a good opportunity to get out a newsletter, organize a meeting, ask for covenant compliance, get buy in for NMG idea, etc.** I am hoping that the “steering committee” can help with this.

4) Keep Charlotte Beautiful provides free supplies for neighborhood clean-ups. Learn more at [Website Link] or contact Jonathan.Hill@charlottenc.gov