



NEIGHBORHOOD BOARD RETREAT



March 19, 2022

Northwest Community Alliance

Hosted online by City of Charlotte Housing & Neighborhood Services

Northwest Community Alliance

2022 Board Retreat

Background

On Saturday, March 19, 2022, members of the Northwest Community Alliance participated in the virtual Neighborhood Board Retreat facilitated by the City of Charlotte. The following board members and/or community members participated in the retreat:

- Sam Smith
- Susie Taylor
- Jodi Adams
- Harvey Worthy
- Missy Eppes
- Katie Lloyd

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
- Outline a direction for the future of the neighborhood that represents the needs and desires of current and future residents
- Set clear goals and priorities for the upcoming year(s)

By participating in the retreat, our board earned a credit of up to \$1,500 toward volunteer hours required for the Neighborhood Matching Grant (NMG) to help execute one of the projects we identified.

To receive this credit, we'll submit a copy of the Developing Your Ideas worksheet with our NMG request. This credit will expire following the June 1, 2023, 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:

- Analyzing neighborhood trends and conditions
- Developing strategic priorities
- Developing project ideas

The agenda for the day was as follows:

- Introductions
- Icebreaker
- Understanding your neighborhood - SWOT Analysis
- Developing Strategic Priorities
- Creating SMART Goals
- Idea Development – Time for participants for develop an action plan for goal achievement

SWOT Analysis

We began our day with group discussion using the SWOT Analysis framework. 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

Our discussion helped us to find commonalities in our conversations.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NWCA is well organized with strong leadership• Clear community vision• Geographical location (proximity to the airport, Uptown, Belmont and Mt. Holly, Whitewater Center, large industries, and employment center)• Landscape/open space – rural, river, trees• Relationship with City Council• Open lines of communication with developers• Diverse community• Proximity to major transportation corridors• Open line of communication related to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact of COVID on organization participation• Low resident engagement - NWCA spans 1,000 households which makes outreach and communication difficult, senior population not on social media• Lack of strong community groups within NW• Low participation in Zoom meetings vs in-person• Renters not invested in the community• People prefer quick wins and are unwilling to participate in long term strategies• Lack of police presence making community more vulnerable to crime• Lack of strategic partnerships (e.g., churches, HOAs)• Northwest area is split between two city council districts - lack of dedicated leadership• Development decisions are typically in favor of big corporations and ignore resident input• City leaders view the NW as an industrial area and are unwilling to support other types of development

Opportunities

- Proximity to airport, highways and Uptown
- Space for modern, planned communities and other new development
- Define what Wilkerson could look like as a corridor to Uptown
- Educated workforce – opportunity to attract more white-collar jobs
- Keep working with petitioners to demand better and wider roads
- Improve relationships with churches and HOAs
- Brand NW as the “Outdoor Recreation Center of Charlotte”
- Improve marketing of the NW
- Overcoming negative perceptions of the area to attract diverse businesses
- Obtain 501c3 to qualify for additional grant opportunities
- Fundraise to complete projects
- Leverage residential growth to bring in more diverse businesses
- Increase parks in the area and accelerate plans to connect greenway
- Partner with business in the area to build the community
- Leverage skills and connections of existing NWCA board

Threats

- Negative reputation and perception of NW Charlotte
- 18-wheelers cutting through the neighborhood
- Truckers on the off ramps damaging roads
- Homeless population on Little Rock Rd.
- Loitering and illegal activity at the Hardees on Little Rock Rd. (owner lives in CA)
- Open area attracts crimes of opportunity
- Lack of police presence
- Developers buying up land
- Lack of community knowledge of Northwest Community Alliance; lack of engagement with Northwest Community Alliance
- Residents have differing opinions on the vision for the NW area/lack of united front

Strategic Priorities

After completing the SWOT analysis, participants began to brainstorm 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. This activity led us to the following priorities/action items being identified as important within our community:

- Create an online presence to celebrate Northwest communities and businesses (similar to CharlotteEast)
- Finalize nonprofit status
- Beautification project at turnaround with a branded sign (ex. a sign saying, “You Are Entering/Leaving the Northwest Community Alliance”)
- Host a community event
- Create Little Free Library/Pantry
- Use green space to host a community event to showcase NW communities include vendors – a fun, creative way to energize community
- Participate in the Adopt a City Street program – host community clean-ups
- Research if incorporating the far west part of community would increase NW’s voice
- Improve communication
- Brand NW as more than just an industrial area

The three priorities 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.

2022 Neighborhood Board Retreat Summary

Northwest Community Alliance

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

1

Host a community event

2

Finalize nonprofit status

3

**Brand communities in the
Northwest Community
Alliance**

IN 2022-2023, WE WILL WORK ON THESE ACTIVITIES GUIDED BY OUR PRIORITIES:

Host National Night
Out/Back to School event
in August 2022

Complete paperwork to
obtain 501c3 by June 2022

Develop a branding
strategy for Northwest
Community Alliance by
December 2022

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.

Project	Potential Resource Categories of Interest
Host National Night Out/Back to School event in August 2022 Lead: Susie Taylor	Community Engagement
Complete paperwork to obtain 501c3 by June 2022 Lead: Sam Smith	Board Organization
Develop a branding strategy for Northwest Community Alliance by December 2022 Lead: Katie Lloyd	Branding

Your community is located within Charlotte's Northwest Service Area. Your staff contact for following up and community assistance is:

Aisha Abdus-Sabur, Northwest Service Area Community Engagement Liaison	Randy Harris, Northwest Service Area Community Engagement Manager
Aisha.AbdusSabur@charlottenc.gov, 704-353-1923	Randy.Harris@charlottenc.gov, 704-432-2433