Northwoods Homeowners Association

Hosted by City of Charlotte Neighborhood & Business Services at CPCC Main Campus
Background

On Saturday, February 7th 2015, the board members of the Northwoods Homeowners Association participated in a board retreat facilitated by the City of Charlotte, hosted at CPCC’s Main Campus. The following board members participated in the retreat:

- Chip Allen
- Ronnie Adkins
- Nancy Lewis
- Dianne Allen
- Debra Adkins

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.

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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Well attended association meetings/good participation.</td>
<td>• Current appearance of the neighborhood is not where it should be.</td>
<td>• More involvement from residents/higher participation.</td>
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<td>• Higher rate of home ownership.</td>
<td>• Perception of who can participate in meetings is not clearly understood.</td>
<td>• Welcome committee/welcome packages for new residents.</td>
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<td>• More rural environment.</td>
<td>• Participation rate by residents is low.</td>
<td>• Longtime home owners.</td>
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<td>• HOA had block captains.</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:

Northwoods is a beautiful community that seeks to foster neighborhood pride and social relationships.

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:

- **Engagement** – Newsletters, create committees for landscaping and beautification projects, solicit ideas for improving community safety, neighborhood walking groups, partner with Hawthorne Management, install pedestrian scale lighting.
- **Social activities** - 4th of July cookout, community yard sale, spring 2015.
- **Event planning** – Surveys, use social media to improve communication and gathering ideas.

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. **Engagement**
2. **Social Activities**
3. **Event planning**

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

- Design and circulate the HOA newsletter. Partner with businesses for advertisements and printing costs. Organize committees.
- Apply for a matching grant for pedestrian scale lighting to improve safety. Communicate the idea as a social activity to encourage participation.
- Create online surveys to solicit ideas and volunteers. July 4th cookout, block parties, community yard sale.
Northwood Home Owners Association

OUR VISION:

Northwoods is a beautiful community that seeks to foster neighborhood pride and social relationships.

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

1. Engagement
2. Social Activities
3. Event planning

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

- Design and circulate the HOA newsletter. Partner with businesses for advertisements and printing costs. Organize committees for engagement.
- Apply for a matching grant for pedestrian scale lighting to improve safety. Communicate the idea as a social activity to encourage participation.
- Create online surveys to solicit ideas and volunteers. July 4th cookout, block parties, community yard sale.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Getting Started</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project #1</strong>&lt;br&gt;Design and circulate the HOA newsletter. Partner with businesses for advertisement and printing costs. Organize committees for engagement.</td>
<td>• Develop newsletter content&lt;br&gt;• Create a weekly e-mail blast</td>
<td>Mail Chimp: Free online newsletter creator: <a href="http://www.mailchimp.com">www.mailchimp.com</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Find out what businesses are in your area.&lt;br&gt;• Help connect the business owners to resources that can improve their business</td>
<td>CPCC’s Small Business Center: <a href="http://www.cpcc.edu/sbc">www.cpcc.edu/sbc</a>&lt;br&gt;Charlotte Business Resources Portal: <a href="http://charlottebusinessresources.com/befcor-top-10-reasons-to-use-504-loans-to-finance-businessexpansions/">http://charlottebusinessresources.com/befcor-top-10-reasons-to-use-504-loans-to-finance-businessexpansions/</a>&lt;br&gt;Why businesses should partner with surrounding neighborhoods: <a href="https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/article/174358">https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/article/174358</a></td>
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<td>• Create a committee</td>
<td>How to organize a committee: <a href="http://www.mycommittee.com/BestPractice/Committees/Startingacommittee/tabid/244/Default.aspx">http://www.mycommittee.com/BestPractice/Committees/Startingacommittee/tabid/244/Default.aspx</a>&lt;br&gt;Board development online resources: Board Source - <a href="https://boardsource.org/eweb/">https://boardsource.org/eweb/</a></td>
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<td><strong>Project #2</strong>&lt;br&gt;Apply for a matching grant for pedestrian scale lighting to improve safety. Communicate the idea as a social activity to encourage participation.</td>
<td>• Consider applying for a Neighborhood Matching Grant to purchase or improve street lights&lt;br&gt;• Free Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs) from Duke Energy</td>
<td>Neighborhood Matching Grants provides grant funding to improve lighting and make your community safer:&lt;br&gt;Contact Atalie Zimmerman at <a href="mailto:azimmerman@charlottenc.gov">azimmerman@charlottenc.gov</a> or 704-336-4594 or go to the Neighborhood Matching Grant website for more information <a href="http://charmecnk.org/city/charlotte/nbs/communityengagement/nmg/pages/default.aspx">http://charmecnk.org/city/charlotte/nbs/communityengagement/nmg/pages/default.aspx</a>&lt;br&gt;Request free CFL's from Duke Energy: <a href="http://www.duke-energy.com/freecfls/">http://www.duke-energy.com/freecfls/</a> or call 1-800-943-7585.</td>
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<td>• Communicate information about ideas, events, and meetings in a variety of ways</td>
<td>Mail Chimp: Free online newsletter creator: <a href="http://www.mailchimp.com">www.mailchimp.com</a>&lt;br&gt;Set up a conference call option for meetings: <a href="http://www.freeconferencecall.com">www.freeconferencecall.com</a>&lt;br&gt;Nextdoor: Create a private social network for your neighborhood: <a href="https://nextdoor.com/about_us/">https://nextdoor.com/about_us/</a>&lt;br&gt;Make signs to announce meetings with FastSigns® Reusable Yard Signs: <a href="http://www.fastsigns.com/sg-yard-signs/Yard-Signs">http://www.fastsigns.com/sg-yard-signs/Yard-Signs</a></td>
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### Project #3
Create Online Surveys to Solicit Ideas and Volunteers for July 4th Cookout, Block Parties, & Community Yard Sale.

- Survey residents about what type of communication platform they would prefer to use (newsletters, website, meetings, flyers, social media)

  **Online survey tool:**
  [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)
  **Types of neighborhood communication:** [http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/article/Association/Effective_HOA_Communication](http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/article/Association/Effective_HOA_Communication)
  **Additional examples of communication:** [http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/governance/participation/comtechniques.asp](http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/governance/participation/comtechniques.asp)

- Partner with existing volunteer groups to recruit additional volunteers
- Participate in a workshop about volunteer recruitment

  **Hands On Charlotte matches volunteers with projects:** [www.handsoncharlotte.org](http://www.handsoncharlotte.org)
  **Volunteer Match will post volunteer opportunities online:** [http://www.volunteermatch.org/](http://www.volunteermatch.org/)
  **Habitat for Humanity Group Volunteers:** [http://www.habitatcharlotte.org/getinvolved/volunteer/groups](http://www.habitatcharlotte.org/getinvolved/volunteer/groups)
  **MAVA- Metrolina Area Volunteer Administrators offers workshops on volunteer recruitment:** [http://mavanc.org/](http://mavanc.org/)

### Parking Lot
For sidewalk repair, contact Scott Curry at CDOT
Scott Curry
Pedestrian Program Manager, CDOT
spcurry@ci.charlotte.nc.us
704-432-4638

For information about foreclosed property in your community, contact a local realtor
www.realtor.org
or look up the status of a property that may be foreclosed on Virtual Charlotte:
[http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/nbs/about/Pages/MappingApplication.aspx](http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/nbs/about/Pages/MappingApplication.aspx)

### City of Charlotte Northwest Service Area Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Randy Harris</th>
<th>Kim Barnes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Service Area Leader</td>
<td>Northwest Service Area Specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone: 704-432-2433</td>
<td>Phone: 704-336-8408</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:rgharris@charlottenc.gov">rgharris@charlottenc.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:kbarnes@charlottenc.gov">kbarnes@charlottenc.gov</a></td>
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