July 13, 2019

Oaklawn Park Community Improvement Organization

Hosted by City of Charlotte Housing & Neighborhood Services at

Goodwill Opportunity Campus
Background

On Saturday, July 13, 2019, the board members of the Oaklawn Park Neighborhood Association 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:

- Doris Harry
- William Hughes, Jr.
- Ruth Quick
- Chamos Pride-Tate
- Myrtle Miller
- Ann Roddy
- Sabrina Cunningham
- William Worsley

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, 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>
| • Christmas caroling (hotdogs and tea)  
  • cookouts in the park  
  • kids would meet in front yards to play different games  
  • mostly African American families who were educated and noteworthy – one resident describes this as the place where “movers and shakers” lived  
  • mausoleum was always a place of mystery | • neighborhood is changing rapidly, gentrification cited by one resident  
  • high number of renters and less concern for curb appeal  
  • mausoleum has fallen into disrepair | • responsible renters and homeowners  
  • signage and beautification  
  • historical designation |
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:

Oaklawn is a community of families working together to preserve its historic legacy while engaging the surrounding community to build a better future.

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:

- **Critical repairs**
  - mausoleum repair
  - homes need repair

- **Signage**
  - entrance signs
  - signs directing people to different parts of town

- **Connectivity**
  - connect current neighborhood to other parts of city
  - walking trails, biking trails, access to transportation

- **Beautification**
  - community garden
  - entrance cleanup
  - work with Duke Energy to clear plot they own

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.
2019 Neighborhood Board Retreat Summary

Oaklawn Park Community Improvement Organization

OUR VISION:

Oaklawn is a community of families working together to preserve its historic legacy while engaging the surrounding community to build a better future.

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

1. Signage & connectivity
2. Beautification
3. Critical repairs

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

Install entrance signs and create and install wayfinding signs (JCSU, Uptown, walking path) by the end of 2019.

Clear Duke Energy’s field and determine if a community garden is a possibility by August 2020.

By the end of 2019, meet with Director of Cemeteries to determine feasibility of repairing mausoleum.
Please list any parking lot items or additional activities beyond the initial 3 here.

1. Need HNS to connect neighborhood leaders with Director of Cemeteries to determine what can be done about mausoleum.
   a. Contact William Bibby at wbibby@ci.charlotte.nc.us
2. Board will develop a Neighborhood matching grant proposal for the wayfinding signs.
   a. Learn more about the NMG program here: https://charlottenc.gov/HNS/CE/NMG/Pages/default.aspx

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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Install entrance signs and create and install wayfinding signs (JCSU, Uptown, walking path) by the end of 2019.</td>
<td>Beautification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear Duke Energy’s field and determine if a community garden is a possibility by August 2020.</td>
<td>Beautification; Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the end of 2019, meet with Director of Cemeteries to determine feasibility of repairing mausoleum.</td>
<td>Partnerships</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>
</tr>
</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 704-432-2433</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>