



NEIGHBORHOOD BOARD RETREAT



February 21, 2022

Oaklawn Park Community Improvement Organization

Hosted online by City of Charlotte Housing & Neighborhood Services

Oaklawn Park Community Improvement Organization

2022 Board Retreat

Background

On Monday, February 21, 2022, members of the Oaklawn Park Community Improvement Organization 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:

- Kendra Allison, Board President
- Jerome Walker, Board Vice President
- Felicia Yates, Board Correspondent Secretary
- TaLaya Brown, Board Financial Secretary
- William Hughes, Board Treasurer
- Bethany Rodriguez, MYEP Youth Programs Coordinator
- Arushi Vaish, MYEP Ambassador
- Danya Hussein, MYEP Ambassador

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">• We meet. If someone calls a meeting, people will attend.• An advantage is our relationship with the city.• The historic designation of Oaklawn Park is also an advantage along with our legacy families. Many people don't want to leave this area, or they inherit and keep homes that have been in their families for generations which encourages black home ownership.• Oaklawn park has a locational advantage as it is very central and transportation is accessible.• There are multigenerational assets by having the support and input from multiple age groups. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication/low resident engagement. There needs to be more ways to participate in meetings and expand the reach of people who attend meetings.• Inexperience of executive board. Many board members started around the same time and still have room to grow; however, some board members disagree and said that the executive board brings plenty of creativity and energy.• Gentrification. Despite the historic designation, gentrification in surrounding neighborhoods is moving closer to Oaklawn Park.• Lack of seizing opportunity. Oaklawn Park has missed out on several opportunities to apply for grants and receive funding by not obtaining 501c3 designation and due to a lack of awareness of resources. |

Opportunities

- Development in surrounding areas could bring opportunities for the community to have greater access to cleaner facilities, better grocery stores, and improved walkability to such places.
- Beautification. There is a lot of room for beautification in the community through landscaping or art projects that could make the people feel better. New or improved signage could also help identify a sense of place and the historic designation.
- There is opportunity to enhance partnerships with the City and County. For example, assessing aging infrastructure like the sewer systems.
- Being involved in bigger conversations. In the Beatties Ford Rd. area, major redevelopment is coming, and the community needs to know what type of industries are coming and if there are going to be jobs for people in the area. The Oaklawn Park area lacks the ability to have a work, live, and play community structure, and by utilizing organizational efforts, community members could be a bigger voice in the planning of this opportunity that will have lasting impacts on the community.

Threats

- Development in Uptown. The Oaklawn Park community is right outside of Uptown and is greatly impacted by their development decisions.
- Gentrification. Taxes become too high for residents that are on a fixed income which could majorly hurt elderly community members.
- Lack of being able to take care of properties due to the higher price of repair.
- Internal threats associated with the difficulty to agree on changes in the community. There are residents who do not understand the benefits of change and progress and are therefore afraid of change.
- The lack of success in communicating the importance/benefits of change and progress in the community is a threat to the progress of necessary changes.

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:

- Increase community-resident engagement communications via a website, newsletter publication, and phone blast system.
- Community beautification/tidying. Lighting and cleanup projects to make the dead-end portions of the community feel more apart of the neighborhood and less vulnerable to crime.
- Informational signs could be installed to tell people more about the community.
- Home upkeep projects. Look into resources offered by Lowe's Home Improvement and the Realtors Care Day charities to help the community make residential repairs.
- Find out how many youths are in the neighborhood.

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

Oaklawn Park Community Improvement Organization

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

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>1</p> <p>Increased community-resident engagement communication via a website, newsletter publication, and phone blast system.</p> | <p>2</p> <p>Community beautification projects like lighting and tidying to make dead ends more a part of the neighborhood and less vulnerable to crime.</p> | <p>3</p> <p>Home upkeep projects utilizing community resources through Lowe’s Home Improvement and Realtors Care Day.</p> |
|--|---|---|

IN 2022-2023, WE WILL WORK ON THESE ACTIVITES GUIDED BY OUR PRIORITES:

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Increase community-resident engagement through website and newsletter publication within the next 3 months (May 2022).</p> | <p>Use funding from current NMG to move forward/be completed with neighborhood lighting and signage projects and dead-end revitalization within the next 6 months (August 2022).</p> | <p>Utilize resources such as Lowe’s Home Improvement and Realtors Care Day for home repair projects in the community within the next 9 months (November 2022).</p> |
|---|--|--|

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 |
|--|---|
| <p>Increase community-resident engagement through website and newsletter publication within the next 3 months (May 2022). Lead(s): Kendra Allison & Felicia Yates</p> | <p>Communication Community Engagement</p> |
| <p>Use funding from current NMG to move forward/be completed with neighborhood lighting and signage projects and dead-end revitalization within the next 6 months (August 2022). Lead(s):William Hughes & Jerome Walker</p> | <p>Beautification Neighborhood Improvement Community Safety</p> |
| <p>Utilize resources such as Lowe’s Home Improvement and Realtors Care Day for home repair projects in the community within the next 9 months (November 2022). Lead(s): TaLaya Brown</p> | <p>Neighborhood Improvement Beautification Partnerships</p> |

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

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| Aisha Sabur, Northwest Community Engagement Liaison | Randy Harris, Northwest Community Engagement Manager |
| aisha.abdussabur@charlottenc.gov | randy.harris@charlottenc.gov |