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NEIGHBORHOOD BOARD RETREAT



July 15, 2017

Optimist Park Community Association

Hosted by City of Charlotte Housing & Neighborhood Services at

Central Piedmont Community College

Optimist Park Community Association

2017 Board Retreat

Background

On Saturday, July 15, 2017, the board members of the Optimist Park Community Association participated in the Neighborhood Board Retreat facilitated by the City of Charlotte, hosted at CPCC. The following board members participated in the retreat:

James Atkinson
Rachel Stark
Pauline Simuel

Scott Jernigan
Cecilia Johnston



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, 2018 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.

Where We Were: Reflecting on our past, what were some of the best/worst moments?	Where We Are: Why would or wouldn't a person/business want to move into our community?	Where We Want to Be: If you could make 3 wishes to make our community flourish, what would they be?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat Homes • Close-knit • Community-centered • Activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition • Development • Divided • Apartments and townhomes • Single family homes vs multi-family • Being squeezed out by other communities • Struggling to maintain identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better communicate identity • Engage new residents who are proud to live in Optimist Park • Clear community future • Connected with seniors • Engaged with community partners • More volunteerism

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:

To foster an attitude of community spirit and involvement through the development of recreational, social, cultural and educational programs and facilities in Optimist Park

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:

- History & Identity
 - Get a mural in a common space in the community (CATS wall?) that details the history of OP
 - Have events that commemorate the history and bring people together that are fun
 - Yard signs with brief history of houses & develop a walking tour of the neighborhood
 - A website that helps new residents connect with the history
 - Pursue newspaper article about OP's history
 - Save areas that reflect OP's history
- Community Involvement
 - Recruit more neighbors to attend OPCA meetings
 - Identify businesses in the neighborhood and get them to buy in to OP
- Amenities
 - Meeting space for OPCA
 - Recreation for seniors
 - Green space
 - Map out public space
 - Test run a crosswalk
 - Land trust or something similar to preserve affordable housing
- Information & Development
 - Conduct research on plans that impact the community
 - Reach out to work with biz and developers to be a part of shaping the future of OP
 - Maintain resident voice in community growth and development

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.



2017 Neighborhood Board Retreat Summary

Optimist Park Community Association

OUR VISION:

To foster an attitude of community spirit and involvement through the development of recreational, social, cultural and educational programs and facilities in Optimist Park

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

1
History & Identity

2
Community Involvement

3
Neighborhood Amenities

IN 2017-2018, WE WILL WORK ON THESE ACTIVITIES GUIDED BY OUR PRIORITIES:

Install a mural in common space in OP that details the history of Optimist Park and helps brand our identity

Increase attendance of neighborhood association meetings and make relationships with local businesses in the community

Secure a place for the neighborhood association to meet regularly

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
Install a mural in common space in OP that details the history of Optimist Park and helps brand our identity	Beautification; Neighborhood Identity
Increase attendance of neighborhood association meetings and make relationships with local businesses in the community	Board Development; Partnerships; Welcoming & Engaging Neighbors
Secure a place for the neighborhood association to meet regularly	Partnerships

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

Charlenea Duncan, Northeast Community Engagement Liaison	John Short, Northeast Community Engagement Manager
csduncan@charlottenc.gov or 704-336-2173	jshort@charlottenc.gov or 704-336-3862

