2015 NEIGHBORHOOD BOARD RETREAT

Starmount Neighborhood Association

Hosted by City of Charlotte Neighborhood & Business Services at UNC Charlotte Center City
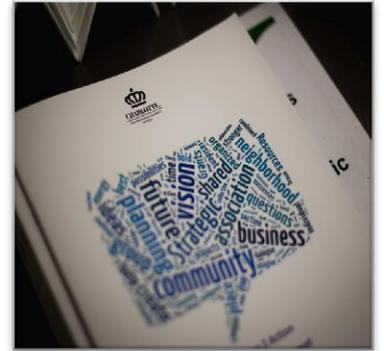
Background

On Saturday July 18, 2015, the board members and neighbors of Starmount Neighborhood, Starclaire Pool and Starmount Academy of Excellence   participated in a board retreat facilitated by the City of Charlotte, hosted at UNC Charlotte Center City. The following board members participated in the retreat:

- Jessica Brister
- Richard Wood
- Dale Brinegar
- Lori Brinegar
- Xiomara Rojas

- Nancy Mosier
- Bruce Peterson
- Eric Dehart
- Nancy Martinez
- Elijah Pitman

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.

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?
Positive • Low rental rate • Well-manicured lawns • Everyone knew each other • Sense of community • Young families with safe streets **Negative** • Things took a turn in the late 90's	**Why** • Affordable access to transit • Diversity • Central location • Young families moving into the neighborhood **Why Not** • Community is a cut through • Percentage of rental properties is increasing • Low participation at neighborhood meetings • No sidewalks	• Established partnerships (school and Pool) • Safety • Defined rules/regulations in the neighborhood • Developed neighborhood association board • Community Improvement Projects coming to our neighborhood

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:

Starmount, not just a place to live…

… a place to plant your roots.

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:

- **Partnerships (outside and inside partnerships)**
- **Beautification Projects**
- **Traffic**
- **Neighborhood engagement**

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 **Partnerships**	2 **Beautification**	3 **Traffic**

Action Items for 2015-2016 The three activities selected as most impactful toward achieving our strategic priorities are activities in 2015-2016 are:

Develop outside/inside partnerships

Beautification project in common areas

Develop awareness on the lack of sidewalks inside the community

Starmount Neighborhood Association

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

1	2	3
Develop inside and outside partnerships (focus on Starclaire Pool and Starmount Academy)	**Beautification project**	**Address traffic challenges inside the neighborhood**

IN 2015-2016, WE WILL WORK ON THESE ACTIVITES GUIDED BY OUR PRIORITES:

Coordinate a neighborhood meeting with the assistance of Starmount School to introduce neighbors to the idea of supporting Starclaire pool

Develop/send out a survey for neighbors with options on projects to beautify common areas (with future plans to apply for a Neighborhood Matching Grant)

Develop a neighborhood presence in the city. Reach out to elected officials, CDOT and CMPD to invite them to neighborhood meetings

Projects discussed for the future included:

- Work with CMS to restore tennis courts at Starclaire to serve Starmount residents
- Starmount Garden
- Starmount walking path at Starmount Academy
- Community partnerships
- Recruit community and corporate support for pool renovation
- Get Starclaire Club back to its original condition and membership
- Cleanup streets/creeks and common areas
- Adopt all of the creeks
- Property beautification
- Hold Rental property management accountable for concerns
- Sidewalk installation
- Traffic calming methods/devices
- Welcome new residents (welcome baskets)
- Membership drive
- Increase number of volunteers
- Realty companies working together with the neighborhood
- Finding opportunities to increase revenue
- Retail development
- More community events
- Improve communication tools (print, online, social)

Project	Getting Started	Resources
Project #1 **Develop inside and outside partnerships (focus on Starclaire and Starmount Academy)**	• **Planning a large neighborhood meeting**	**Mail Chimp:** Free online newsletter creator: www.mailchimp.com **Newsletter tips:** http://archive.ci.falcon-heights.mn.us/nlhandbook/com_tips.html
	• **Engaging your local school for future partnerships**	**Ways to partner with your school** http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/archives/partners.shtml Contact Liz Mitchell at enmitchell@charlottenc.gov or 704-336-8409 to learn about more ways to support your neighborhood school
	• **Invite your community police officer to neighborhood meeting**	**Find your community police officer:** http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/CMPD/response-areas/Pages/default.aspx
Project # 2 **Beautification project**	• **Develop/send out a survey for neighbors with options on projects to beautify common areas**	**Online survey tool: www.surveymonkey.com** Sample neighborhood survey: http://www.santacruzneighbors.com/files/form_sampleneighborhoodsurvey.pdf
	• **Research process to apply for a Neighborhood matching Grant**	Neighborhood Matching Grants Contact Atalie Zimmerman for more information: azimmerman@charlottenc.gov 704-336-4594
	• **Engage your elected official in your conversation**	**Invite your City Council representative:** **City Council Members:** http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/CityCouncil/MeettheCouncil/Pages/home.aspx
Project #3 **Address traffic challenges inside the neighborhood**	• **Find ways to asses pedestrian safety and/or slow down traffic**	**Charlotte Department of Transportation** Contact Chip Gallup 704-336-3922 or rgallup@charlottenc.gov
	• **Get tips to start a neighborhood watch in your community**	**CMPD: Neighborhood Watch Program** http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/cmpd/safety/neighborhoodwatch/Pages/default.aspx **Tips from the National Crime Prevention Council** http://www.ncpc.org/topics/home-and-neighborhood-safety/neighborhood-watch

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