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NEIGHBORHOOD BOARD RETREAT



February 24, 2018

Villa Heights Community Organization

Hosted by City of Charlotte Housing & Neighborhood Services at

Goodwill Opportunity Campus

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"> • 2009-loose organization • Lots of code violations • Drug problems/sales • Crime/prostitution • Active neighborhood watch • Good turnout at meetings • Affordable housing prices • 2015-similar problems • Gun shots, drugs • Active neighborhood board; sowed the seeds for resident participation • Branding arose as an important issue • Good diversity • Walkable • Good location – near NoDa, plaza Midwood, down town, light rail, greenway, highway access • Felt like neighbors were hard to get to know at first; wary of new people moving in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New park/playground amenities • Earned trust and friendship of neighbors – now have a bond and relationship with residents • Light rail opening will be draw • Love walkability and proximity to other neighborhoods and attractions • Love Cordelia park and the greenway • Good diversity • Crime is down now from where it was even 2 years ago • Home ownership is on the rise • Litter problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like more engagement from residents • More diverse board • More diverse meeting attendance • Need sustained engagement – how do we achieve this? • Have a logo but need a brand • Clarify mission/vision • Increase community pride • Reduce litter • Increase friendliness • How do we welcome/embrace new residents • Land-use committee stay focused and committed

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:

The Village on the hill, where diverse neighbors work together to foster a vibrant, welcoming community.

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:

- **Building Community**
 - Community history project/interviews – talk with new & old residents about what’s important
 - Start neighborhood meetings with something to connect attendees
 - “pay it forward” about your neighbor
 - Door prizes at neighborhood meetings
 - Find methods of recognizing neighbors for successes
 - Create initiative to welcome new neighbors
 - Welcome visits/kits for new neighbors
 - Create welcome committee
 - Make neighbors easy to access
 - Grow neighborhood participation
 - Get volunteers to work on talking to neighbors

- **Special/Social Events**
 - “Adopt a senior” program
 - Community landscape day
 - Socials to involve all neighbors
 - Annual yard sale day
 - Find ways to help neighbors in need

- **Partnerships**
 - Relationship with Villa Heights Elementary School
 - Get more sidewalks - CDOT
 - Partner with credible brands to build our own
 - Strategic partnerships with North Davidson corridor
 - Church liaison from the board
 - Get more businesses in the VH area to be part of the organization
 - Solicit new businesses/restaurants to the neighborhood
 - Liaison to the diverse annual black picnic

- **Organizational Development**
 - Promote and build neighborhood internally
 - Clearly define what VHCO is and what it is not
 - Have outside world recognize & understand Villa Heights
 - Do less but do it well

- **Neighborhood Pride**
 - Give people a reason to stay in Villa Heights
 - Build neighborhood pride
 - Build value street by street

- **Signage & Communication**
 - Neighborhood monuments and signs
 - Raise money to put into neighborhood information signs
 - Communication to reach all neighbors – Next Door, newsletter, website e-mail etc.

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.



Villa Heights Community Organization

OUR VISION:

The Village on the hill, where diverse neighbors work together to foster a vibrant, welcoming community.

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

1
Building Community

2
Building Community

3
Partnerships

IN 2018-2019, WE WILL WORK ON THESE ACTIVITIES GUIDED BY OUR PRIORITIES:

**Community
History &
Neighbor
Interviews**

Welcome Kits

**Business
Engagement**



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
Community History & Neighbor Interviews	Communication
Welcome Kits	Welcoming & Engaging Neighbors
Business Engagement	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