



February 08, 2020

Villa Heights Community Organization

Hosted by City of Charlotte Housing & Neighborhood Services at

Goodwill Opportunity Campus

Villa Heights Community Organization 2020 Board Retreat

Background

On Saturday, February 08, 2020, the board members of the Villa Heights Community Organization 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:

• Don Do	• Chantelle Morales
• Max Carroll	• Candace Davis

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 a copy of the Developing Your Ideas worksheets from the Neighborhood Board Retreat Participant Workbook (pages 14 – 17) with our NMG request. This credit will expire following the June 1, 2021 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?
<p>Best</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong working-class community <p>Worst</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No community spaces • Crime • No identity • Drug activity • Dilapidated neighborhood 	<p>Why</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood identity/branding • Growing VH—specific business membership • Lots of retail and residential development • Major improvements to crime/drug activity • Transformative community • LightRail & CATS & CLT cross-city trail (transit growth) <p>Why Not</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of parking • Lack of sidewalks • Fighting against “NoDa” identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better use of community space • Sidewalk continuity & pedestrian safety • Centralized communication station (Cordelia) • Increased parking for Cordelia Park (bathroom specifically) to access greenway • Dog park • Lighting in common spaces • Stronger community identity • Continue & strengthen businesses in VH • Restroom in Cordelia & Progress Parks

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: *Villa Heights is a welcoming, diverse, and established community rooted in natural beauty, seeking to enrich its residents through friendly charm, unique city lifestyle, and proximity to abundant culture.*

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:

Fill in the categories (large Post-Its) and associated ideas/action items, adding and deleting bullet points as necessary.

- **Category 1 Stability/Retention/Scalability of Community Leaders**
 - Create structure of support
 - Create co-chairs
 - Engage members that showed interested
 - Foster positivity
 - Timeline on tasks-goals
 - Reevaluate roles
 - FUN!
 - Strong stable leadership team

- **Category 2 Integrate & Outreach to Disabled Senior Community**
 - Identification of population
 - Events- Businesses (Chicken King, Amelie's)
 - Key community member-Angela Ambrose
 - Door to Door Outreach/Community outreach: block members
 - Resource List-names of those willing to transport
 - McCreech Place
 - *More inclusive, diverse and informed residents*

- **Category 3 Collaborate between residents & businesses on event for community**
 - Passion to Help/Philanthropy
 - Identify & invite local businesses, advocates
 - Location—general, local
 - Neighbor in need tool/survey could be anonymous
 - Annual event?
 - *Annual philanthropic passion project*

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 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.



2020 Neighborhood Board Retreat Summary

Villa Heights Community Organization

OUR VISION: *Villa Heights is a welcoming, diverse, and established community rooted in natural beauty, seeking to enrich its residents through friendly charm, unique city lifestyle, and proximity to abundant culture.*

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

1
Strong stable leadership team

2
Inclusive informed residents

3
Philanthropic Passion Project

IN 2020-2021, WE WILL WORK ON THESE ACTIVITES GUIDED BY OUR PRIORITES:

By end of Q2, new president, co-chairs, and support roles

Is this goal SMART? Yes

Within 6 months, create resource list

Is this goal SMART? Yes

Within 6 months, identify best time of year for the community project and begin choosing leaders

Is this goal SMART? Yes

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
By end of Q2, new president, co-chairs, and support roles	Board Development
Within 6 months, create resource list	Community Engagement
Within 6 months, identify best time of year for the community project and begin choosing leaders	Partnership

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 Manager
csduncan@charlottenc.gov or 704-336-2173

