July 15, 2017

Villages at Back Creek

Hosted by City of Charlotte Housing & Neighborhood Services at
Central Piedmont Community College
Background

On Saturday, July 15, 2017, the board members of the Villages at Back Creek participated in the Neighborhood Board Retreat facilitated by the City of Charlotte, hosted at CPCC. The following board members participated in the retreat:

- Grey McKoy
- Amanda Buckner
- Joy Clark
- Yukai Johnson
- Denise Wilson

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where We Were: Reflecting on our past, what were some of the best/worst moments?</th>
<th>Where We Are: Why would or wouldn’t a person/business want to move into our community?</th>
<th>Where We Want to Be: If you could make 3 wishes to make our community flourish, what would they be?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BEST</strong></td>
<td><strong>WHY?</strong></td>
<td>1. The pool would be a safe and functional amenity for all residents to enjoy 2. There would be speed humps on the main street, increasing public safety 3. There would be increased communication and community involvement, and renters would be included in activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community was finally fully built out</td>
<td>• The new HOA is making a real effort to get residents more engaged and involved</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Transition to new property management company improved quality of life</td>
<td>• Location of the neighborhood is great with easy access and nearby amenities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Residents now manage HOA</td>
<td>• Homes are affordable, ideal for young families and first-time home buyers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WORST</strong></td>
<td><strong>WHY NOT?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parking issues – there was not enough parking for residents</td>
<td>• The pool could be a great amenity but isn’t working</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Public safety was poor – both walkability and crime</td>
<td>• Renter/owner relationship is problematic and challenging</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Communication was a challenge between residents, especially renters and homeowners</td>
<td>• Public safety sometimes continues to be a problem – traffic moves too quickly throughout the neighborhood</td>
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</table>
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 Villages at Back Creek is a safe, friendly and diverse neighborhood that promotes unity within the 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:

- **Amenities**
  - Renovate pool area: fence, pool lining, security system, lawn furniture, FOB system
  - Create potential playground
  - Create additional parking

- **Public Safety**
  - Install speed humps
  - Install street lights
  - Install safety signs
  - Launch community/crime watch

- **Community Involvement**
  - Host events: community parties, clean-up day, back-to-school day, summer cookout
  - Host “Dog Crap Pick Up”
  - Increase community pride
  - Host classes, workshops: finance, health, safety, technology, 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.
2017 Neighborhood Board Retreat Summary

**Villages at Back Creek**

**OUR VISION:**
The Villages at Back Creek is a safe, friendly and diverse neighborhood that promotes unity within the community.

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

1. Improve Community Amenities
2. Increase Community Safety
3. Increase Community Involvement

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

- Renovate the pool area
- Research the process to install speed humps
- Host two community events
Please list any parking lot items or additional activities beyond the initial 3 here.

- CDOT Traffic Study: see Resources below
- Correct name of neighborhood: Villages OF or AT Back Creek? Residents prefer Villages at Back Creek.
  - From a little bit of research it looks like most of the HOA-owned property is called Villages AT Back Creek. We did not find properties using the “of” terminology but did notice that at one time the builder BnA Homes had a sign that called the neighborhood Villages OF Back Creek. The City allows neighborhoods to self-select their names, so as long as all governing documents state “at” you should be all set to continue with that terminology. (If not, you would need an attorney to assist with drafting updates to the name; Charlenea Duncan noted below can assist with helping identify a resource for that.)

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Potential Resource Categories of Interest</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Renovate the pool area</td>
<td>Beautification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research the process to install speed humps</td>
<td>Public Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host two community events</td>
<td>Welcoming &amp; Engaging Neighbors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDOT traffic study</td>
<td>Public Safety</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charlenea Duncan, Northeast Community Engagement Liaison</th>
<th>John Short, Northeast Community Engagement Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:csduncan@charlottenc.gov">csduncan@charlottenc.gov</a> or 704-336-2173</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jshort@charlottenc.gov">jshort@charlottenc.gov</a> or 704-336-3862</td>
</tr>
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