



Focus Group #1: Neighborhood Leaders – West of Tryon

June 24, 2020

SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The first meeting in a series of Focus Group meeting for the Charlotte Center City 2040 Vision Plan was convened on June 24th, 2020. Focus Group #1 included Neighborhood Leaders – West of Tryon

INTRODUCTION

Following opening remarks from Michael Smith of Center City Partners, Chris Beynon, Principal with MIG, Inc., opened the meeting with a brief project overview. The PowerPoint presentation, projected via Zoom’s screen share functionality, provided an overview of the project, including community engagement activities, main objectives and goals, draft vision framework elements and focus areas, and a synopsis of the impacts and consideration of COVID-19 on plan outcomes. Immediately after the presentation, Chris Beynon facilitated a discussion with the meeting participants. Discussion topics focused in on the draft plan Vision elements, Goals, and emerging strategies but were also wide-ranging and encompassed an array of subjects, concerns, and ideas. Discussions were documented in real-time through a digital graphic summary shared with attendees through Zoom.

This document summarizes the information and ideas covered in the meeting, organized by topic. The Project Team will use the feedback collected during this session to revise the Plan Framework and inform draft plan recommendations. An image of the graphic notes recorded at the meeting is included at the end of the document.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Vision Plan

- The Vision Plan area is roughly a two-mile radius from the intersection of Trade and Tryon Streets. It includes several close-in neighborhoods
- The plan is managed by a partnership between the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and Center City Partners. It is the community’s plan and will be adopted by City Council.
- Recent events have created an incredible opportunity to pivot with and highlight key issues including neighborhood disinvestment.

Guiding Principles, Vision and Goals

- These are all good words but do not reflect the complexity or acknowledgement of past actions. For example, *which* people come first?
- Need to deal with history and consider who has traditionally come first. Black people are trying to be seen and recognized, and haven't been given the same opportunities to build equity.
- Neighborhoods on the planned light rail lines need an "equity injection" before the infrastructure (Gold Line) is completed. Renovate homes, lock-in tenancy and home prices so that existing neighborhoods can reap the benefits of light rail investment.
- A common perception is that African Americans need to get themselves out of the hole the system has put them in. Acknowledge history and change the systems that have kept people down.
- We agree with the Vision Words but be serious about it and what is needed to make them a reality. Learn from mistakes and previous systems.

Neighborhood Investment

- Implementation of the Gold Line Phase 3 (along French Street past JCSU to the Rosa Parks Station is critical to the success of these neighborhoods.
- The City and other partners must live up to commitments that were made during Gold Line planning.
- The Beatties Ford Road / Northwest Corridor need to be engaged in a truly inclusive effort. There is distrust in those communities.
- The areas adjacent to Uptown are mostly affluent, including the Five Points neighborhood, where there has been dramatic demographic change and homes sell for \$800,000.
- In the northwest, investments seem to stop at French Street.
- It's time to focus on Beatties Ford corridor and North End. Bring back mixed-income communities.
- There is commercial opportunity further up the corridor from Five Points.
- What are opportunities we can take advantage of without downsides? This can be done intentionally. People want more amenities in their communities without displacement.
- Oaklawn Park is a community a high homeownership rate but do not have basic services.
- Create 10-minute communities in North End and Northwest with amenities and affordable housing.
- Create more balance in how we are providing amenities. Don't layer on investment in already-invested areas.
- North End is not just the railyard. Include the eight neighborhoods in the two-mile radius that haven't received the investment including along the Statesville and North Graham corridors.
- Ensure active engagement of North End leaders beyond Camp North End.
- Invest in African-American businesses and professions.

- We are bringing in the wrong businesses to the neighborhoods. Grow businesses that are there with relationships, investment in the community. Invest in businesses that are already there and want to be in this community.
- Acknowledge and be intentional about addressing needs of the ‘crescent’ or ‘arc’ neighborhoods.
- The crescent should be somewhere you would locate headquarters and would show off to investors.
- Proactively recruit businesses to these areas.
- Overcome the connotations of black and brown neighborhoods and the belief is that African Americans “don’t want to take care of their neighborhoods”.
- Visions and renderings are important to help people imagine the potential.
- Bridge the gap between visions and renderings and what comes to fruition. The 2020 Plan had big ideas for North End that did not come to fruition.
- Community members become angry when outsiders come in with notions of what should be there.
- We need neighborhoods that all economic and educational levels can live there.
- Provide opportunities for the community and current residents to build businesses that reflects the community.
- Help uplift the community as development and investment comes. People will build ownership and pride, which results in people becoming caretakers.
- Lift, not change, our communities!
- Make sure construction and development contracts are going to black and brown neighborhood businesses when there are projects underway in their neighborhoods. Look at the New Deal as a model of when government contracts provided support to grow neighborhoods.
- Private money follows public money.
- Residents need wealth-building opportunities.
- Echo these ideas! Invest in African American businesses and ensure dollars circulate in the community.
- Need to listen to community members. The time for change is now!
- Build upon assets. Tell the unknown history and stories of neighborhoods and use them to attract visitors. Lakeview, NoDa and Plaza Midwood used to be African American neighborhoods.
- This group has incredible social capital. It is hard for us to trust the process because of the past, but it’s time for these groups to become leaders.

Focus Group #1: Neighborhood Leaders Meeting – Graphic Recording

ALL IN 2040 CENTER CITY VISION PLAN
 NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERS: WEST OF TRYON
 6/24/2020

INTENTIONALITY **OPENNESS**

VISION ELEMENTS

Thriving	Inclusive	Memorable
Resilient	Sustainable	Loved

NEEDS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/ATTNEMENT
 VISION NEEDS TO ADDRESS RACIAL INJUSTICE
 → "YES, PULL THE HANDBRAKE"
 WHAT IS NEEDED TO CHANGE THE DYNAMICS
 → LEARN & MOVE FORWARD

GOALS

1. Engage local residents	2. Connect with diverse neighborhoods	3. Inspire local entrepreneurs	4. Increase housing and jobs
5. Build strong neighborhood leadership	6. Build local economy	7. Encourage civic participation	8. Increase green infrastructure

EMERGING STRATEGIES

Invest in public transit	Support local businesses and entrepreneurs	Support local artists and creatives	Support local food systems
Invest in affordable housing	Support local workforce development	Support local environmental and green infrastructure	Support local cultural and arts organizations

GENERAL COMMENTS
 WITH DIGNITY & RESPECT
 → NEED TO INCLUDE OUTREACH TO BEETLE FOOD/NEW CONSUMER
 → MUST INCLUDE PRIOR COMMITMENTS
 → OPPORTUNITY TO PIVOT (w/ COMB BLM)
 → BALANCE NEED FOR AMENITIES WITH PREVENTING DISPLACEMENT
 → EQUITY WILL PRECEDE EQUITY
 → LOCAL DEV.: BOBBY DEAKERFIELD
 → ANGELA AMBROISE (AFF HOUSING)

HOW DO WE REACH YOUR COMMUNITY?
 WHAT HAS NORTHEAST OUTREACH BEEN TO DATE?
 → AULIN 2040 COM.
 WHICH BUSINESSES SHOULD BE REACHED?
 → OR, WHICH EXISTING BUSINESSES SHOULD BE PAPPED UP?
 "WE MUST LISTEN!"
 LOCAL DEV.: BOBBY DEAKERFIELD
 ANGELA AMBROISE (AFF HOUSING)

KEY QUOTES
 "ENERGY OF INVESTMENT THAT SUPPORTS THE COMMUNITY"
 "LIFT, DON'T CHANGE A COMMUNITY."
 "LET'S NOT BE AFRAID TO GO WHERE WE MUST GO"

COMMON QUESTION:
 WHAT ARE THE PUBLIC INVESTMENTS
 ALWAYS LEADS PRIVATE
 MARKETING MATERIALS
 → LEAD IN THE VISION
 → USE EXISTING MATERIAL IF NEED BE
 BEETLES FIED RD. (AND ADJACENT CORRIDOR)
 HISTORICALLY ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CORRIDORS IN CHARLOTTE/MECK
 PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW THAT & BE GUIDED THERE
 USE THE VISION GIVEN AS A SALES TOOL

COMMUNITIES SHOULD BE ABLE TO ATTRACT BUSINESS — PUBLIC INVESTMENT WILL LEAD PRIVATE INVESTMENT
 PRIVATE INVESTMENT
 PUBLIC INVESTMENT
 → NEED TO BE PROMPTLY RECEIVED
 → NEED TO ASK "WHY" THIS IS AN ISSUE TO BEGIN WITH
 → PRIVATE TO: LIFT A COMMUNITY
 → CONTRACTS OVER CHARITY
 → BUILD INSTITUTIONAL CAPITAL

NORTH END:
 BASIC AMENITIES
 → CHANCELOT STORE
 → DRUG STORE
 → POST OFFICE → EVEN A MAILBOX
 → BANKS
 BUSINESS SHOULD BEYOND TO THE NEEDS OF THEIR PROSPECTIVE COMMUNITIES
 THINK BEYOND NEEDS — HOW DO WE INCORPORATE ALL RESOURCES
 → ECONOMIC & EDUCATIONAL DIVERSITY
 BLUE COLLAR TO DOCTORS

