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Focus Group #11: Multicultural, Immigrant, & Advocacy Group

August 20, 2020

SUMMARY

**OVERVIEW**

**INTRODUCTION**

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.

**ATTENDEES**

Samantha Williams - International House

Toni Sawhney – India Association of Charlotte/ Festival of India

Frederico Rios - City of Charlotte Office of Equity & Diversity

Keri Revans – Camino Community Center

Lal Vishin - India Association of Charlotte/ Festival of India

Denise Coleman – Norsan Media

**DISCUSSION SUMMARY**

**We have been living through this “new normal” with the COVID pandemic for months now. What aspects of your daily life have become more important? i.e. sidewalks & public space, etc. What things have you missed?**

Denise

* Going to the park has been treat for me – having accessibility to the greenways has been great
* I’ve been enjoying being outside

Toni

* Its great to step out and see people who we usually don’t get to see
* People are talking to their neighbors; people want to talk and connect

Lal

* It’s given us time to reflect on what’s ultimately important
* I’ve been able to get to know my neighbors

**Thinking into the future, what are the missing pieces in our downtown and center city neighborhoods that would make this a better place for all?**

Keri

* Public transportation and providing more options for people – I’m excited to see planning of the new light rail line

Toni

* Before we turn into a concrete jungle, we must keep our public greenways and parks
* We need places for people to gather in Uptown other than just the street

Denise

* Transportation is a big one, but we also need art in public spaces that reflect the growth and diversity of Charlotte residents

Lal

* Affordable neighborhoods; we have sectors of our city that aren’t accessible. What are we doing in these plans to be intentional about economic diversity?
* People need to feel like they actually belong
* You can tell what type of you are walking into – it’s clear
* We need to breakdown the barriers to have a shared sense of community
* How can we break down barriers to make more inclusive neighborhoods?

Samantha

* I agree – I’ve seen communities being displaced by development, by parks, greenways, and apartments
* We must address gentrification of neighborhoods and residents
* We need to be able to live closer to the places we love and remain inclusive
* We need to maintain the character of these neighborhoods and keep them green

**Do you think that Uptown & other parts of Center City are welcoming, inclusive & equitable places? If not, what could be done to make them more welcoming?**

Keri

* Most people can’t afford to live Uptown – it’s not reflective of the larger Charlotte area
* There aren’t a lot of reasons to be in Uptown – It feels very much for the business class
* Families may not feel welcome. What can they do?

Toni

* In order to make Uptown attractive it needs to have everything - the shops, the parks, the cafes; a mix of uses and places to discover

Samantha

* I love that Charlotte has a lot of unique places, however they are outside of Uptown
* People leave Uptown to feel local
* We need local activity in Uptown

Keri

* When I have visitors, I don’t bring them Uptown
* I’m also deterred from coming Uptown because of the parking challenge
* We need places in Uptown that reflect our community

Toni

* Parking will always be an issue. Close the streets and make Uptown for pedestrians

Denise

* I like the open streets concept
* I like the parklets - could we use the existing temporary programs on a more permanent basis to change the culture of Uptown?
* Can we use our street space in different ways?

Lal

* Many cultural things don’t resonate with immigrants
* Uptown is intimidating, it’s a corporate culture
* It’s not people or family friendly
* Uptown does not reflect the cultural diversity of Charlotte

Grant

* Imagine if the culture of South Blvd, North Tryon, east Charlotte, and Central Ave. could be peppered throughout Uptown

**What are you hearing from your communities that are keeping people away from Uptown?**

Denise

* The only time we see diversity is during festival (Latino, India, etc.)

Keri

* We should be inviting the people of these communities into the conversation to plan culture

Lal and Toni

* We have segregated pockets of culture, but we are connected to center city
* Culture is not mainstream in Uptown Charlotte, banking is