



Focus Group #13: North End Community Leaders
October 1, 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

Jeff Phar
India Solomon
Sharon Young
Darryl Gaston
Melissa Gaston
Adrienne

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?

Darryl

- I feel like my mental health has been challenge seeing my friend and neighbors experience hardships
- People have lost jobs and place to live. Since resilient North End Community Coalition (NECC) we have provided resources to our neighbors and residents.
- In terms of Black Lives Matter, I’ve experienced this since 1961 in my hometown of Charlotte and its always been this way. I’ve been black since 1961.
- I’m bringing righteous indignation as NECC wants invited to the Camp North End kickoff.

Jeff Phar

- I’m a resident from Graham Heights
- As human, its stressful to not be connected with other people

- We're been adjusting but working to communicate with our neighborhoods, elders, to stay participated in the neighborhoods
- We have voting coming up. We are encouraging me to vote by mail
- People are nervous about going to the polls (we have many high-risk residents)
- Social distancing is strange; it takes a while to get used to

India

- We prefer to see our neighbors face to face
- It's been a struggle to get everybody connected
- Not everybody feels welcome in "Center City"
- Engaging with people has been a challenge

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?

Darryl

- We need banks, grocery stores, drug stores, and recreation
- We are lacking healthy restaurants
- The Students in our schools are struggling
- We need housing at 80-60% AMI on the community
- We are lacking decent sidewalk and public place to just "be"
- We must go to Beatties Ford, Sugar Creek, or Center City for post office business
- I remember when we had pet stores, a Dairy queen, and place to go with our children
- Residents that look like me feel the "white folks" are coming to kick us out
- I've watched Biddlesville go from 2-3 bedroom bungalows to expensive housing
- I want to see people who want to live here afford to stay here
- Let's put housing in place affordable enough for people to stay here
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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?

Melissa

- I guess it feels better, if you have money you can go there
- There is not a lot of restaurants or thing you can go to for a minimum wage worker or make \$10-\$15/hours. I don't see there is opportunities for them to experience
- I think there are some challenged with the city given the homeless situation. It shows us we need to do something for people that experience homeless finding some places to live
- I don't think there is a lot housing, for people seeking housing, to live in Uptown
- We obviously need to do something because the city is becoming a "have vs. have not"

- To me this, this a problem because those who work in the service industries won't be able to live uptown, they will have to be bused out. They can't simply quickly run back home during a work break to check on kids and return.
- I think it's rather foolish for developers to say they "can't afford" to included affordable housing in certain areas because it cost too much. They are only looking at their profit every, they can afford to give up a little bit.
- Yes, Uptown has restaurants and parks that are accessible for people, but I think it's still not open and welcome for everyone depending upon income
- Even on the North End, everybody talks about Camp North End, as if its the holy grail. They have been a great partner, but for so long it's been blocked off and not everybody has felt welcome.
- No grocery stores want to come her, we don't have the rooftops, we don't have the education. How are people going to live without that?
- Even a store like Wayne's, it better than is has been, but it still not a basic grocery store. It still not a chain store.
- It's still frustrating for neighbors who can't afford a car and can't do that or this.
- Public Wifi: I just found out this week that they are bringing this to the corridor. This is great but they are going to apartment complexes that are owned by the Hosing Partnership. They should be footing the bill so the city can use Care Funding to put Wifi in other parts of the city.
- It would be great for people to be able to sit on their porch and get access
- We also need to prepare for people with the devices needed that can access public Wifi. Just because you have public WIFI doesn't mean you'll have the device you need. Its hard for people to apply for jobs or work from home off their phone, without having something with a keyboard.

Adrienne

- I agree with all my fellow board members
- I think the things we are used to seeing in newer developments are right up the ally of what Brightwalk residents would be liking to have.

What are your thoughts on converting the railyard on the other side of Tryon to a park? (Queens Park)

Jeff Phar

- I think it would be great for Charlotte. From what we are experience though, I think it would make the problems worse for gentrification.
- People with resources will want to live by the park about push out those don't have resources
- We need more of the affordable housing Darryl was talking about
- The park idea is good, but I think it creating more of a problem.
- There has been lot of conversations about the problem of having concentrations of poverty. But it's also a problem to have concentrations of wealth
- People don't want to talk about that because they usually associate this with the fantasy of the American dream

- We just want to be able to live in a clean, safe neighborhood, in a regular house, and still have sidewalks, and grocery stores, and have a function community without it having to turn over.
- No one is complaining about the additional services, or places being clean, or building new things. The problem is you are moving out the people who look like me.
- If we can get these things and not displace people, then we can add more people! It just can't be at a cost of the people who live there.

Melissa

- I think Queens park is the great idea. However, I've seen some of the plan for retail and housing. If possible, I think they need to include housing that isn't just at 80% AMI.
- Put some 30% AMI so people can take advantage
- A lot of people talk about the North End being close to the Blue Line. However, we are disconnected on this side of Tryon because of the railyard. It's not accessible for people in our area.
- The first mile last mile concept hasn't been as successful.
- People who live here need (the fruits of the labors) the basic amenities and not simply because new people are moving in
- On another note: other parts of the city are getting greenways. We don't have a greenway here! We can't talk about access without this in the conversation