



Focus Group Meeting #3 – Neighborhood Leaders – East of Tryon

June 25, 2020

Summary

OVERVIEW

The third meeting in a series of Focus Group meeting for the Charlotte Center City 2040 Vision Plan convened on June 25th, 2020. Focus Group #3 invited Neighborhood Leaders from various Center City communities to learn about the process and brainstorm new ideas relevant to their respective neighborhoods.

The meeting was conducted via Zoom and was facilitated and recorded by MIG.

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 and Goals

- Inclusive: Gentrification, food deserts, affordability, access to basic amenities and services, and displacement are Center City issues that need to be addressed. Inclusivity will be important moving forward.
- A top priority should be to support diversity throughout Center City.
- Capitalize on the energy from the Black Lives Matter movement. Talk to emerging BLM leaders to help Uptown leadership understand how to create a more welcoming, inclusive Uptown.

Housing Affordability and Gentrification

- Create strategies and find solutions to address displacement and housing affordable in a way that works for the entire Center City.
- Address gentrification in Five Point and West End.

- Develop more housing in and around Uptown, strategically locating it in key locations and at a density that achieves affordability.
 - Brevard Street is a potential location.
 - Dilworth – East Blvd and Main Streets have a lot of potential.
 - Density alone does not always translate to affordability.
- There is demand for a mix of demand for housing types. Ensure good design for all.
- Address the decrease of available affordable housing through policy.
- Adaptive reuse is a tool. It is cheaper to renovate and repurpose rather than tear down and rebuild.
- Explore strategies to develop different types of housing in Uptown beyond “typical” apartments. Something that represents the “missing middle” and is more integrated into the neighborhood.
- Explore potential of creating and implementing a system for housing subsidies, going beyond Section 8 and adopting creative solutions to address affordability issues and diversity in housing stock/accessibility.
- Wages play into the conversation. Achieving affordability should not be solely dependent on subsidies.
- The Belmont neighborhood adaptive reuse project is a good success story to serve as a model.
- However, there were no investment opportunities for residents living in Belmont prior to gentrification.

Mobility and Circulation

- Provide transit and connectivity solutions for those working in and around Uptown. Work with major employers, such as Atrium Health, to minimize commute traffic.
- South End is an extension of Uptown but cannot be directly accessed in a pedestrian-friendly way.
- Continue creating Complete Streets and walkable and bikeable environments. Policies that spur this infrastructure should be advanced to reach more areas.
 - For example, Davidson Street is not as walkable as it appears.
 - This practice is especially important in areas with older populations, such as the Cherry neighborhood. There are not many good options in Center City for those ageing in place.
 - “Increased taxes lead to displacement, gentrification and competes with Affordable Housing and Diversity goals”.
- Revisit permitted parking on neighborhood streets. High demand for parking is exacerbated with density increases.
- Several commuter corridors in neighborhoods surrounding Uptown have an issue with traffic including 3rd and 4th, Morehead, Providence Road, Charlottetown Road.

Access and Connectivity

- Provide access and invest in basic amenities in Center City neighborhoods to solve the issue of food deserts and lack of essential services.
- Access to healthy food and basic services needs to be improved to nurture more equitable communities. This includes clinics, grocery stores and schools.
- Ensure that amenities are accessible not just by car – create bikeable and walkable environments.
- Accessibility and availability of healthy food is a priority.
- Dilworth is a “little island” that is a self-sufficient, but prices are increasing rapidly, and more affordable options are needed.
- It is essential to link neighborhoods and Uptown to create a cohesive Center City.
- Dilworth, Wilmore neighborhoods need more bike and pedestrian connectivity.
- South Blvd and Tryon need more bike infrastructure.
 - The Rail Trail pedestrian bridge will be a huge improvement.

- The Rail Trail needs to be widened in some areas.
- Better connections between neighborhoods with commercial opportunity including Davidson, Mill District, and the North Tryon corridor. Remove barriers...like the North End railyard...to take advantage of opportunity.

Development Character

- New development should reflect and demonstrate appreciation for history and culture of Center City.
- New developments are “cookie-cutter” and all look similar to each other and face away from streets. An example is development along the Rail Trail, which feel exclusive.
- Currently development overlooks and dismisses African American neighborhoods and communities of color.
- New development encroaches on historical boundaries.
- New development should prioritize walkability and ensure that other infrastructure adequately services new projects.
- More recognition is needed to create an identity in certain neighborhoods – Cherry and Belmont in particular.
- District identity is important with “soft” boundaries.
- Adaptive reuse projects would help to maintain character.
- South End presents opportunity to create daytime vibrancy through street markets, festivals and other events and programming to encourage people to get out of the office and into public spaces.



ALL IN 2040 CENTER CITY VISION PLAN

NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERS: EAST OF TRYON

6/25/2020



vision elements

Thriving	Inclusive	Memorable
Resilient	Sustainable	Loved

DIVERSITY & DENSITY
→ MORE CONSISTENCY

"WE DON'T WANT ANOTHER ATLANTA
→ INTENSIFY DEV. PATTERNS

GROWING TRAFFIC CONCERNS
→ EXISTING COMMUNITIES TAKE THE BURDEN
• CONNECTIVITY DOES NOT MEAN CUT-THROUGH

goals

1. Enhance livability	2. Complete diverse neighborhoods	3. Healthy, safe communities	4. Income, equity, and growth
5. Create open spaces and outdoor areas	6. Reduce urban heat islands	7. Maximize green and blue infrastructure for all	8. Create quality and distinctive

GENERAL COMMENTS

- "THERE'S SO MUCH TO DO!"
- ADDRESS HEALTH DISPARITY
• NO MORE FOOD DESERTS
- CHARLOTTE IS AT THE "BOTTOM OF THE BARREL"
FOR UPWARD MOBILITY
- DISTINGUISH BETWEEN AFFORDABLE HOUSING (LHC & AMI) & SUBSIDIZED HOUSING
• SOMETHING NEW & UNIQUE TO ALLOW PEOPLE TO AGE IN PLACE
- DENSITY HASN'T ALWAYS EQUATED AFF HOUSING → NEED TO ADDRESS ALL-PRICE RENTS (FOR RENTERS / OWNERS)



How do we reach your community?

- NEED TO PROVIDE MORE OPPORTUNITIES
 - REPEAT PRESENTATIONS AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL
 - DISCUSS PARTICIPATORY RULES TO PRACTICE WITH CITY/DEV.
 - ALL THE VOICES TO THE TABLE
 - GREENTHIGHS, HOME ACRES
 - THOSE WHO TRAVEL TO, WORK IN THE AREA
- "CAPITALIZE ON THE MOMENT TO ASK SOME OF THE TOUGHER QUESTIONS"
- "A MORE EQUITABLE PLACE FOR ALL REGARDLESS OF ECONOMIC STATUS"

How important is architectural design?

- THEY KNOW WHAT THEY DON'T WANT WHEN THEY SEE IT
- DIFFERING OPINIONS
- VERY IMPORTANT IN SOUTH END
- NEW DEVELOPMENT HAS BEEN EXCLUSIVE, NOT INCLUSIVE
- SHOULD INTEGRATE W/ COMMUNITY MORE
- MAKE VISUALLY DYNAMIC

TRANSPORTATION TO & FROM HOSPITAL
→ CONNECTING TO LIGHT RAIL

INCREASE ACCESS TO FRESH / HEALTHY FOOD FOR THE WHOLE CITY
→ IMPROVING BIKE ACCESS

WALKABILITY → **LIVABILITY** → **BIKABILITY**

DAVIDSON CORRIDOR
→ OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

HISTORICAL BOUNDARIES NEED TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED, RESPECTED

WIDEN DAIL TRAIL
→ EXPAND PED/BIKE CONNECTIVITY

ADDRESS PARKING (SEPARATE)
→ STRUCTURES
→ PERMITTED PARKING (OUTSIDE OF ST)

MORE PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY CONNECTIONS TO SOUTH END

ADDRESS THE MISSING MIDDLE
→ MIX OF HOUSING TYPES (NON-TREND)
→ WELL INTEGRATED INTO NBHDS

PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS ALLOW FOR EQUITABLE ACCESS ACROSS THE AGE SPECTRUM

NEW GROWTH/INFIL SHOULD NOT EMBODIE COOKIE CUTTER DEVELOPMENT

INDIVIDUAL NBHD IDENTITY ← DEFINE BY PROCEEDING USES
→ REVEALS CHARACTER, HISTORY & SOUL OF A NBHD

ADAPTIVE REUSE ALLOWS FOR NEW GROWTH WHILE MAINTAINING CHARACTER

NBHD TRANSITIONS/BLENDING ARE CRITICAL

CITY LED DEVELOPMENT (CASE STUDY: NO NBHD GUIDANCE)
→ 70% PRIORITY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS

CONTINUE TO EXPAND LIGHT RAIL ← INCREASED TRANSPORTATION ACCESS

BRIDGES / TAKE-DOWN BRIDGES
→ CONNECT EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS
→ CONNECT PROXIES ACCESS

INFRASTRUCTURE NEED TO KEEP PACE WITH DEVELOPMENT
HOUSING CHOICE / DIVERSITY (SEPARATE)
NO STAGNATION

ALLOW RESIDENTS TO LIVE CLOSE TO WHERE THEY WORK

CONNECT W/ LEADERSHIP OF MOVEMENT

EXPAND MODEL TO INCREASE COMMUNITY BUY-IN

LOCATE PROPERTIES WITH COMMUNITY & RESPOND TO CONTEXTUAL / SPECIFIC NEEDS

emerging focus areas

Cedar Yards	Silver & Blue Line Crossing	Tryon Street in Uptown	Medical School Opportunity	East Trade / Government District	North End	Broad Street	West Trade Corridor	South End Gateway
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