



editor's note

by Matt Comer :: matt@goqnotes.com

As Charlotte grows, will popular neighborhoods change for worse or better?

I've been thinking a lot about change recently. It's nearly impossible not to. We're seeing tremendous changes in the political sphere as we move full-steam ahead into this year's local elections and next year's presidential picks. There are immense changes in our movement for equality, as we stare down a future "after marriage." There are changes in our economy, in the media, in conversations over race and inclusion and relations between police and local communities, particularly those of color.

But here at home, as I look around my daily environment, I'm seeing lots of changes, too. Population estimates recently topped out Mecklenburg County at over one million residents. When I moved here in 2007, the story, or so I vaguely remember, was that upwards of 90,000 people were moving into the city each year. Newcomers are flocking to the city again. To keep up with the growth, new apartment buildings are springing up across Charlotte. Recent news reports say that 10,000 new apartment units are currently under construction with another 10,000 in store. The

massive complexes are popping up everywhere, including in neighborhoods like Plaza Midwood and Noda, communities traditionally home to low-income people, people of color and LGBT people.

I'm reminded of this change everyday when I go to work. Next to my office, a new 250-unit complex is currently rising out of the flattened ground at the corner of Central and Louise Aves., where an event venue and other offices once stood. Just as we were going to press with this issue, that very same building became the butt of jokes on Facebook, where a meme defiantly declared, "The best thing about these new buildings in Charlotte is how seamlessly they fit into the neighborhoods."

Questions of neighborhood architectural integrity aside, I do often wonder just how "seamlessly" these new complexes full of new residents, many, perhaps, brand new to the neighborhoods to which they're moving, will mesh with the pre-existing culture and climate.

In short, it's a matter of gentrification. How will these new residents — and their

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A recent Facebook meme from Facebook user "Charlotte Absorber."

new ideas, new needs for services and new desires for amenities — affect the surrounding neighborhoods?

Plaza Midwood and NoDa are two of my favorite neighborhoods

in Charlotte. They find themselves anchoring the 28205 ZIP code, where the most recent

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spiritual reflections

by Isai Efurú :: guest contributor

Stand Still

Life has a way of stopping you in your tracks long enough for you to see that you're headed off of the trail. If we are wise, we pause and take in the danger long enough to turn things around. Circumstances placed us in the driver's seat and then throw a curve at us to see if we know how to pay attention.

I spent most of 2014 struggling with health issues. Reports from my doctors were dismal, yet I still tried to live out my "superwoman" persona. My desire to commit and "show up" outweighed my rationale for rest and better health. I said yes when my body and soul cried no, and would find myself exhausted at the end of the evening, set to do it all again the next day.

In the latter part of the year, I found myself exhausted, weak, irritable and stressed. On a fateful Wednesday afternoon in November, my body began to shut down slowly with numbness and the loss of mobility in my right arm. Two days later, I arrived at work, sluggish, drained

and slightly incoherent. By noon, I would be admitted to the hospital and diagnosed with a stroke. I was mortified; I'd been walking around for months unaware of the symptoms.

My poor health forced me to assess how I used my energy and to make my health a priority. I had to slow down, sit down and say no. Forcing myself to move instead of standing still almost yielded me a death certificate that I was not ready for. Thankfully, God intervened and blessed me with a steady recovery and minimal nerve damage. I was fortunate to walk away with not only a testimony, but a well-earned lesson. Life is not a race to the finish, but a walk through grace.

If we slow down enough to inhale the awesome presence of gratitude, we are naturally inclined to better care for ourselves and the time on earth that we are given to prosper. We can then stand still, let the music of life serenade us, and saunter along joyously within all that God has to offer. ::

guest commentary

by The Hon. LaWana Mayfield :: guest contributor

Equality requires commitment, diverse focus on needs

In March, Charlotte had the opportunity to prove we are the *Big City* we claim to be opposed to the *Big Town* we often appear to be. It is so easy to show up in front of the African-American, Women and LGBT community to smile and take pictures and receive donations and support, but when it is time to show your true support through votes some fall short. The business community in large part has learned this lesson, so as a community we all have to take a stand, stop spending our dollars where they are not wanted, and, as a collective, show the power of our votes.

I have been saying for many years that people that only show up when it's time for votes are *not* acceptable nor have they proven that they are worthy of support. It took a hard lesson at our Council meeting on March 2 to learn that everyone that claims support is really a supporter of full equality.

I am saddened by the results of adding protections for *all* of our citizens, but unfortunately not surprised. The only bright star is knowing that as a community we have a chance to build stronger relationships with those that are different from us. We must create opportunities for new and transparent dialogue. We must learn how to disagree respectfully. We must vote in candidates that get the importance of equality. What do I consider equality? Access to jobs to those formerly incarcerated, housing our poor, protecting and supporting our veterans, safe communities, the freedom to live our lives and stopping the bullying of LGBT citizens. #blacklivesmatter #LGBTQlivesmatter #latinolivesmatter #ALLLIVESMATTER. ::

— LaWana Mayfield represents District 3 on Charlotte City Council. She was first elected in 2011 and is the first openly LGBT elected official in Charlotte.



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