

WORKING ON NEIGHBORHOODS

Surveys underway in neighborhoods, seeking input on visioning

CARLY WILLIAMS
SPECIAL
TO THE CHRONICLE

Twenty-four residents of LaDeara Crest Apartments united recently at the apartments' community resource center to participate in group surveys conducted by Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods (NBN) in partnership with United Way of Forsyth County.

Through April, residents from 13 northeast Winston-Salem neighborhoods are taking the surveys; survey takers receive a small compensation for their time.

NBN and United Way will use survey results to inform future development visioning by residents of specific neighborhoods.

Using computerized technology, participants in the 90-minute sessions use handheld response devices (clickers) to answer place-based questions regarding: health, safety, housing, employment, economic development, transportation, education, and recreational activities for children, youths, adults, and seniors.

Surveys, both individual (paper) and group (electronic), were conducted in the following neighborhoods: LaDeara Crest, Bowen Park, Dreamland, Castle Heights, Cardinal Acres, Prospect Park, Lakeside, Eastgate Village, Spaulding Drive, Wildwood Park, Northwoods Estates, Monticello Park, and Ebony Hills.

In addition to conducting surveys, NBN and United

Way are co-hosting Neighbor Nites in these same neighborhoods.

If you live in one of these areas and would like to help plan a dinner event with your neighbors and NBN staff, please contact arue@nbncommunity.org.

NBN is a local organization that partners with neighborhood groups to support and enhance resident-led activities by providing organizing assistance, technical support, and funding as needed.

Carly Williams writes for Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods.

Waughtown/MLK neighborhoods start year-long planning to improve area

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

On March 3, more than 75 residents, property owners and concerned citizens from the Waughtown/MLK neighborhoods met at the Enterprise Center to begin a year long process of deciding what steps should be taken to make their neighborhood an even better place to live, work and play.

The next community meeting is scheduled for April 28 at 6 p.m. at the Enterprise Center and will include presentation from Winston-Salem State University (WSSU) students.

The March meeting was the result of a city of Winston-Salem grant that was recently received by the S.G. Atkins Community Development Corporation (CDC) and uses the expertise of planners from the Piedmont Triad Regional Council (PTRC) and faculty of WSSU.

The S.G. Atkins CDC received the grant to facilitate a Martin Luther King Jr./Waughtown Neighborhood

Revitalization Initiative planning process covering an area within a half-mile radius of the intersection of South Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and Waughtown Street.

This racially diverse neighborhood includes a growing mix of residential, commercial and industrial uses. The plan will update the vibrant gateway into a more safe, walkable and appealing neighborhood for residents and visitors alike.

Development opportunities will create a distinct sense of character for the area as a destination.

More than two-dozen WSSU students from four different courses at WSSU attended and helped with a variety of logistical issues, including serving as scribes to collect all the participant's thoughts.

The meeting included a discussion of the purpose behind conducting the planning effort presented by Dr. Russell M. Smith, associate professor of geography at WSSU. Marco Andrade, principal planner with the City-County Planning Board, reviewed past planning efforts

that were conducted in the area.

Finally, a small group workshop was led by Cy Stober, water resources manager with PTRC, which engaged the community in deciding how to make the neighborhood a better place.

In the end, participants identified several key issues that they felt greatly impacted their neighborhood. These included issues of public safety, recreation, community appearance and economic development.

Neighbors attending the meeting also felt strongly that they would like to see more collaboration between the neighborhood and WSSU.

Members of the project team leading the planning effort are spending the this month meeting with additional residents and groups in the neighborhood who were unable to attend the meeting.

For more information contact Russell Smith, PhD, Smithrm@wssu.edu.



Alana James, United Way director of community-based collaboration, listens as residents ask questions at the community information meeting on Thursday, March 12, at the Cari Russell Community Center, 3521 Carver School Road. The meeting, sponsored by Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods and the United Way of Forsyth County, is a collaborative effort seeking active resident involvement in helping build stronger, healthier neighborhoods; for more information, contact Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods at 336-701-2626 or arue@nbncommunity.org.



Jackie Spease 'contemplates future involvement' as she reads the information sheet, provided by Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods and the United Way of Forsyth County, at the collaborative community information meeting.



Local community residents enjoy dinner as they listen to speakers of the Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods and the United Way of Forsyth County.



Nakida McDaniels, left, lead community organizer for the Neighbors for the Better Neighborhoods group, explains the upcoming plans at the community information meeting. NBN is a local organization that partners with neighborhood groups to support and enhance resident-led activities by providing organizing assistance, technical support, and funding as needed.

Neighborhoods

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said.

She said the United Way is using multiple resources to fund its work with NBN and did not receive a grant for the project but did receive an invitation to work with residents. NBN had been working with neighborhood groups already.

NBN is a local organization that partners with neighborhood groups to support and enhance resident-led activities by providing organizing assistance, technical support and funding as needed.

James said the United Way is involved with neighborhood-building because it needs residents to help the organization when it needs help. It's making investments.

"What we're trying to do is build trust so that people will work with us," James said. The help the United Way needs is volunteer gifts, skills and talents.

That's what NBN's Nakida McDaniels told the group of about 20 people in March that their communities need from them, too, to form asset-based communities.

Residents need to be able to work with institutions that can help them, she said.

"We teach the residents how they can step up to meet the institutions" and how the institutions can step back and work for "sustainable solutions."

There are a lot of small groups working in neighborhoods that need to be united toward the same goal, McDaniels said. NBN works to unite them.

James said United Way partners with agencies to help build stronger communities.

For instance, if a neighborhood doesn't have a grocery store, that might not become known to the people who can help the neighborhood get one until someone actually goes to the neighborhood to see the conditions. However, the neighborhood groups can unite to be one voice to tell the organization that the community

needs a grocery store and the residents and organization can work to find ways to bring one to the community.

The ways the United Way and NBN are using to get feedback from residents are the meetings, surveys — private and group — that ask residents about themselves and what they want to see in their neighborhoods, and Neighbor Nites, in which food is served.

Food was served at the March meeting. "A lot of this is about fellowshiping and knowing who each other are," James said.

McDaniels said it's also about educating, motivating and agitating to get people to act. "That's what place-based change is all about," she said.

The coalition is providing leadership training to residents who want to lead the effort to improve neighborhoods. Impact councils are being formed as the leading agents.

Some of the issues residents had at the March meeting were dormant neighbor-

hood associations, food deserts, senior services and not knowing neighbors.

Dorothy Bonner, a 30-year community organizer who lives in the Bowen Park area, said at the March meeting: "There's nothing like making a difference in your community and seeing the changes."

She said her area is in a food desert and she and her neighborhood group have started working to get a grocery store in the area.

Dr. Madeline Scales, retired assistant vice chancellor of student activities at Winston-Salem State University, has lived in Northwood Estate since 1968. She said when she first got there, she learned who her neighbors were. Now, "we don't know the people next door, so we really need to do something."

Jackie Spease runs an after-school program and summer camp that help children of inmates. She is hoping to find ways to link the programs through working in her community.



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