



OUR LADY OF MERCY-NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE-ST PATRICK'S CHURCH-TRINITY WORLDWIDE OUTREACH MINISTRIES

Gentrification in Our Community A Faith Community Response Community Report and Action Plan

Working Document

Overview

In response to changes in our community related the process of gentrification, three faith-based organizations hosted communities meetings open to the public for the purpose of gathering information from residents. The meetings well held on Tuesday, 24 April at Our Lady of Mercy-Neighborhood House; Sunday, 29 April at Saint Patrick's Church; and Wednesday, 2 May at Trinity Worldwide Outreach Ministries. We asked participants to complete surveys and participate in group discussions during which we too notes. More than sixty people attended the meetings and forty-seven people completed surveys.

Findings

- Residents have witnessed profound changes in our community. These changes have had positive and negative effects in their lives.
- The energized real estate market has increased the value of their homes but also brought an array of aggressive buyers that have brought real and perceived pressure (most of it unwelcome) on predominantly older and elderly home-owners.
- As neighborhoods change, residents are encountering increased property taxes and new neighbor with expectations for property maintenance that may be beyond the financial resources of long-time homeowners.
- In some cases, unscrupulous buyers are exploiting and, potentially swindling elderly, vulnerable homeowners. Added to this dynamic is the fact that many buyers are white and many of those feeling pressured to sell are black.
- Homeowners often do not feel confident that they have in the community or in government advocates that will protect their interests. While not all, many feel that they lack adequate information to make informed decisions related to their property; whether it regards maintenance, taxes, and sales.
- Residents have confidence in their churches and are willing to look to churches for information if they know that the churches have resource capacity.



Recommendations

- Establish resource centers at select churches and faith-based institutions.
- Develop resource materials to be shared through the participating churches and faith-based institutions.
- Facilitate the development of collaborative operational partnerships that will develop and maintain necessary resources.
- Provide venues for periodic community training and information sessions.
- Develop an ongoing process for tracking community changes and conducting periodic quantitative analysis
- Stimulate the involvement of a broad array of community volunteers to provide specific services such as limited home improvement.
- Facilitate, on an ongoing basis, opportunities for discussion and community-building among new and long-term residents.
- Develop and private, nonprofit, faith-based, self-sustaining community fund to provide support for homeowners in the areas of property improvement and tax relief.

Action Plan

Phase One

- Identify community support volunteers willing to educate residents, assist, advocate and more
- Compile community resource guide to answer resident questions and provide points of contact
- Develop a database for distributing news and information among community networks
- Define collaborating partner roles—organizations, groups, and, professional service providers
- Determine web/social media strategy and presence
- Raise awareness- publish findings, share findings
- Follow up with meeting attendees by providing progress updates



Phase Two

- Schedule community education and information sharing sessions
- Finalize resource guide and summary fact sheets for distribution at various collaborating partner locations
- Develop and schedule volunteer roles
- Prepare plan to conduct in-home maintenance service for residents in need
- Conduct awareness-raising outreach to realtors, attorneys, and others on action plan and community concerns
- Develop and refine assessment methods
- Track interactions with residents through Phase Two efforts and monitor potential changes in community needs
- Seek funding to support efforts

Phase Three (ongoing)

- Establish micro-financing fund for home-owners in need
- Conduct “tip sheet” mailings to residents for continued education and information sharing
- Develop neighbor-to-neighbor meetings to share neighborhood history with new comers
- Develop neighbor-to-neighbor meetings with new and legacy businesses
- Schedule neighborhood-oriented ecumenical Christian services to foster unity
- Schedule neighborhood-oriented Christian Holiday events
- Conduct neighborhood-oriented volunteer community improvement projects
- Encourage “Know Your Neighbor” activities