

Harper's Choice Community Association
Strategic Planning Engagement – January 5, 2019 and March 5, 2019
Facilitated by Rebecca Murphy, on behalf of Maryland Nonprofits

Harper's Choice Community Association (HCCA) engaged Maryland Nonprofits to assist them with reviewing their mission in an environment that is vastly different from the one that existed when the association was initially founded, and to help the Board develop their vision and values, and new role within the community.

It was clear throughout the retreat that the Association Board believes strongly in their work, in the community, and in their role within the Village.

Process

The facilitated full day retreat provided the Board with the opportunity to answer a series of questions about their work and their role, as well as that of HCCA more broadly, within the community. They considered these questions both within the framework of what was required of them by the Columbia Association and as an HOA, and also based on the different ways that people now define community and make connections based on societal evolution.

Results

The first item of business was for the Board members to agree upon words to describe their role in the community; they agreed upon the following words:

- Connect
- Advocate
- Problem Solve
- Liaise
- Create Community Identity
- Communicate

Next, Board members broadly agreed on the following: that they are required to enforce the Village covenants and that the Association must have a Village Manager and a Covenant Advisor, although those two roles can be filled by the same person. There was further agreement that the Association is responsible for holding annual board member elections, holding board meetings that are open to the public, and follow the Homeowners Association Act rules. They further agreed that even though covenant enforcement is a requirement, and is sometimes thought to be onerous by some, it is also part of the glue that both creates and connects community.

In reviewing and updating the Village mission statement, Board members felt strongly that, while it was important to update it and modernize it, it was also critical to be sure that the mission statement honored and respected the Village's past. Board members also felt it important that the mission statement include and acknowledge the existence and contributions of other entities in the Village other than just residents, which is why it also includes references to businesses, property owners and other stakeholders. After a series of discussions and exercises, the Board arrived at the following:

Mission Statement

The mission of HCCA is to create and nurture community and to work to maintain the Village as an exceptional place for residents, businesses, property owners, and other stakeholders.

The Board felt it important to create both vision and values statements, in an effort to clearly express what they feel the Harper's Choice Community identity is, and what they believe, broadly, the community stands for. After a thoughtful discussion that touched on everything from James Rouse's original vision for the founding of Columbia to how to explicitly, yet artfully, articulate the essential importance of diversity and inclusion, the Board arrived at the following HCCA Vision and Values Statements:

Vision Statement

The Village of Harper's Choice is a diverse, inclusive, and engaged community with strong neighborhood relationships, collaborating toward our shared mission.

Values Statement

HCCA looks to the future while honoring the past. As a community, we value:

- Collaboration
- Diversity
- Engagement
- Equity
- Inclusiveness
- Integrity
- Sustainability
- Transparency

The second element of the strategic planning process focused on the development of goals, priorities and quarterly benchmarks to guide the Board's work for the next year. The benchmarks' purpose is to move the HCCA forward and help solve the challenges that the Board identifies, and to assist them in being a more productive organization going forward.

The goals, priorities, and benchmarks, outlined below, provide a roadmap for the Association's work, with specific action items to be carried out with timelines and deadlines where appropriate.

Goals, Priorities, and Benchmarks

1. To increase community engagement
 - a. To increase board diversity
 - i. diverse slate of nominees (3/14/19) - economic, racial, gender
 - ii. every Board member must identify and speak with at least one person who is different from the majority of the current board by the March meeting.
2. To increase participation in community events
 - a. General Board discussion about events at February 2019 meeting, with follow-up at May 2019 meeting
3. To increase participation in HC redevelopment efforts

- a. Create folder on webpage with information and publicize it - staff to complete by January 31, 2019
- b. Hold a Village meeting dedicated to HC redevelopment efforts
4. To increase participation in HC electoral process
 - a. to have a quorum at the next Board election - 4/27/19
 - b. publicize and do additional outreach and board engagement through social media
5. To focus and refine outreach and communication efforts
 - a. Commitment to having a Board level discussion about prioritization - April 2019 meeting, followed by issuing an RFQ to determine \$\$\$ for inclusion in the budget in May 2019
 - b. Development of a more robust website, including a higher functioning mobile version
 - c. Live social media links
 - d. Commitment to increased board participation through their personal social media channels
6. To generate additional revenue
 - a. Commitment to having a Board-level discussion about available mechanisms - 10/2019 Board Meeting
7. To develop a stronger community identity at events, in publications and online
 - a. incorporate resident stories
 - b. highlight HC places
 - c. celebrate community contributions, connect them specifically to community
 - d. increase community knowledge about neighborhoods

The final portion of the session, held at the Association's March Board meeting, focused on having the Board members identify barriers to executing the goals, priorities and benchmarks, as well as identifying the strategies and solutions to solving them.

Although the Board identified several barriers, as well as mechanisms for addressing them and some potential solutions, there was very little in the way of broad agreement about anything beyond what the barriers were. Not only did there seem to be a basic lack of understanding among some Board members regarding what type of community engagement would be appropriate between the Association and other Village institutions, there was also a fair amount of disagreement about where the Association should begin with respect to either problem-solving strategies, or specific solutions.

Barriers, Problem-Solving, Solutions

Barriers

- Low amount of community participation
- Lack of a distinctive community identity
- Lack of Harper's Choice-specific community identity distinct from the overall Columbia Association identity
- Multiple neighborhoods within Harper's Choice make it challenging for there to be a cohesive Harper's Choice identity

Problem-Solving Suggestions

- Surveys regarding programming suggestions, time/schedule availability

- Marketing efforts targeted to elementary schools - Spring Fairs, Pools, summer activities, PTAs
- One page documents with bullet points, listing new mission, vision and values statements

Proposed Solutions

- Start with elementary schools - Longfellow and Swansfield, parts of those communities live in Harpers Choice and go straight through from elementary through high school. If you start engaging children and their parents when they are young, they can become future volunteers, participants, etc.
- Have a box on a table at an event, with a brief questionnaire for HCCA to gather data from community members
- Work with schools and organizations to identify opportunities for collaboration and requests for resources, etc., create relationships. Start with small things, low effort things.

Next Steps

Board takes on one priority at each upcoming Board meeting and tackles them one at a time.

Approved June 4, 2019