

Notes from Public Meeting of the Northwest Quadrant Study Committee  
Charles "Lind" Brown-Greene Street Gym  
July 8, 2009 6:00 PM

Henrietta Goode: Opening remarks and introduction of committee members.

We (the neighborhood) need to step up and be a part of things – in the know. We need to form a neighborhood association. Three important points to consider: Change is going to happen; we must become involved and a part of that change; we must educate ourselves about what is going on.

Dwayne Smalley: I am the one responsible for the flyers advertising this meeting that you all found in your mailboxes. Explains the importance of the neighborhood by quoting from the introduction of the NWQ Design Principles. Tells about vacant lots and boarded up houses, there are many out of state owners, NWQ is a target for redevelopment. We need to preserve what we have and continue the legacy of those who were here before us. We have a community. How do we keep it?

We need your input.

Billy Keyserling: This is not a City meeting. It was called by the committee. I grew up understanding that we all understand here in Beaufort how important land is. The goal is to see how you can use your own land to the highest and best use. This neighborhood has already changed. It is more diverse than ever. Lots has been done in this community: Operation Good Neighbor, Project Repair, Block-By-Block. The neighborhood is the core of the City of Beaufort. There are lots of needs. We don't want to lose the diversity. Council appointed this committee to study the neighborhood and make recommendations to Council later in August. Most of us do not know why the neighborhood is called the Northwest Quadrant. Perhaps we all need to research this to find a new name if that is appropriate. We are aiming for a neighborhood with more pride.

Pete Palmer: How many landowners are present? We can help you most. Financial opportunities, Operation Good Neighbor and Habitat can all work together. Each house has its own story, unique. We ask for your input. We are meeting weekly at 1211 Boundary Street at 5:00 PM. You are welcome to come and be a part of all of this.

John Gadson: Change has already occurred. No longer predominantly African American. It is a diverse community. Vacant lots are owned by a diverse group as well. Large number of vacant lots, as much as 40%. There are a large number of unoccupied houses, some are unlivable. Viable and occupied houses mean more taxes for the City. City has identified the NWQ for redevelopment. There is pressure to tear down houses. When City Codes comes to the HRB with requests for demolition of vacant and abandoned and unsafe houses, it falls to the HRB to determine if the house (if historic) is beyond repair before the HRB permits demolition. The City has stated that if the houses are to be demolished, they will work with property owners to allow time to pay back the cost of demolition. The area is popular to developers. We (the committee) want you all to be part of things.

James Bellew: We on the Redevelopment Commission have some big projects underway, such as Boundary Street for example. Currently, I am looking at lots of options and I will have this information to share with you at a later date. I will serve as a liaison to you.

Al Hefner: We are here to hear from you. New cities like Habersham are copying you all. We are looking at changes to zoning as an example to allow more flexibility to redevelopment of your property. The NWQ has a quirky look and looking at zoning changes is one way to maintain that.

Charlotte Brown: This is the opportunity/time to start a neighborhood association. We in the Old Commons started a neighborhood association to address zoning in our neighborhood. We have been very successful, but it takes lots of hard work.

Henrietta Goode: We need unity and we need to hear from all of you.

Dwayne Smalley: We are in the process of conducting interviews, going door to door to hear what you have to say about your home, your neighborhood and what your needs are. When you see us at your door, please let us in to talk. There is not much history about our houses and our neighborhood. We want to hear everything you know and any photos you might have of your own house or the neighborhood so that we can begin to write our history.

Brenda Dooley: Habitat partnered with the City for Block-By-Block and worked on 32 homes. Habitat can be a part of this. Explains the Habitat requirements and that they are willing to help with owners of vacant lots to build new houses. Habitat does not do repairs, but will build handicap ramps. They are working on a grant in the NWQ.

Ed Allen: It is hard to deal with the City of Beaufort and Codes. Lots of hurdles. Too many hoops, especially for older people. They just give up. Don't create more obstacles that kill the dream.

Billy Keyserling: The design center that was established several years ago died because the community did not embrace it. The community needs not only to get but to give back.

Randolph Elliott: It took me five months to go through the process when I built my house. It was not easy to get things through the process. Our neighborhood is trashy, right of ways are not maintained. The City should pay more attention to the neighborhood.

Petro Pop-Stefaniza: SCE&G powerlines on Greene Street are a concern. This must be stopped.

Charlotte Brown: A neighborhood association could have attacked this and other issues. The neighborhood did not protest and SCE&G paid for easements.

Deborah Johnson: We need to respect the neighborhood. It is small in scale and has setbacks that should be maintained. We seem to be trashing the neighborhood. We do have pride in our neighborhood. I think it is beautiful.

John Gadson: Scale is important. There is pressure to build tall and large. We need to appreciate what is there already; modest structures should be respected.

D. Davidovic: Power lines are what is ugly. The biggest problem in the entire historic district is overhead power lines. All should be buried.

Eliza Wilson: I have an issue with a power pole that was moved onto my property. It has many lines for new houses. All of these should be underground.

Maurius Payne: Senior citizens are not educated about financing or fixing up their houses. I want a revitalized neighborhood. We need to respect the elders. We should not allow new houses without yards. I volunteer to contact anyone who is getting letters from the City about demolition. I am working on finding grants for people in our neighborhood.

Laura Von Harten: There is money in affordable housing programs in the County. Micro loan program through USDA in Walterboro may be available for small amounts.

Henrietta Goode: We thank all of our young neighbors, Javon, Marius, Dwayne and others for your participation. We need young people to make all of this work.

Javon Williams: Beaufort is the most beautiful place. It is Beaufort's turn. I am available for anything that I can do to help.

Deborah Johnson: May I suggest that we have future meetings in the Northwest Quadrant if possible.

John Gadson: This is only the beginning. We need to get together as a group again.

Henrietta Goode: We need to have an organizational meeting to form a neighborhood association. I propose July 22, 6:00 PM here at the Gym. Our committee is wonderful. We as a neighborhood need to organize. We need to be involved in making things happen. We need an associate, to elect officers and to organize. We need young folks. See you all here on July 22 to begin.

Pete Palmer: Thank you all for coming. Do you want to meet again with the committee before we make our presentation to Council in mid August? We should plan to meet on August 5 at the same time and place if that is agreeable. Also, please come to our weekly meetings at 5:00 at 1211 Boundary Street. We will have a meeting tomorrow at 5:00. We would love to see you there.

John Gadson: Please sign in before you leave.

Meeting adjourned: 8:05 PM

Notes taken by Donna Alley