

Beautification Grant Helps Strengthen Connection Between Neighborhoods

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The Beautification Grant offered by Keep Charlotte Beautiful at City of Charlotte does more than add a layer of charm to a neighborhood. It can unify communities and bring together residents of varying backgrounds and generations to volunteer to make their neighborhoods more captivating. In addition to learning about nature, residents bond and connect in a meaningful way. This happened with the Ravenwood and the Grove Park neighborhood associations as they collaborated to make the nearby Delta Creek Park more inviting for visitors and their pets.

Bibi Oubai, a Ravenwood neighborhood leader, was filled with joy as she reminisced on the project. She recalled, "For me, I feel like the project represents a little of neighborhood unity. It just is a great way to bring people together. I think if people had more opportunities to do things like this, if more people organized their neighbors to do things – you'd be surprised at how many people would help you. I mean, I'm still shocked."



Ravenwood and Grove Park Neighbors volunteering to beautify area garden

The neighborhoods previously established a joint garden club, so receiving a \$3,500 Beautification Grant allowed for them to strengthen their efforts. The goal for the project was to add a perennial garden to the park to allow for daily walkers and joggers to pause and enjoy the scenery, thus encouraging drivers to slow down through its nearby intersection. Ultimately, it was a success. This community project was supported by approximately 30 people, including children and adults of all ages. As a token of appreciation, those who volunteered received a small tree – a birch, persimmon, or willow oak tree provided by [TreesCharlotte](#) .



Dr. Jeff Gillman educating residents on plants

An educational component was also offered as an added benefit during this project. The Ravenwood neighborhood has a lot of people with ties to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC), so residents worked it into the grant to have the university incorporated in the project. "We had them help us pick out flowers. We tried to do mostly native plants, and they helped design the flow of the plants, and then they also came out and spoke to our neighbors," Oubai described.

Dr. Jeff Gillman, Director of Botanical Gardens at UNCC, was scheduled to speak to this group for an hour about the difference between good and bad pests in gardens, things that they could look forward to in gardening, etc. but everyone was so excited to soak up this information that he ended up speaking for nearly two to three hours.

This educational experience made residents proud to be a part of a caring community. They also noticed an increase to the park's daily visitors and a slight decrease in speeding around the intersection because people stop to enjoy the scenery, especially when the flowers are in full bloom.

"Grant work can be intimidating, I think a lot of people are intimidated by it because they're like 'oh I have to write this huge grant,' but it's really step-by-step. You start slowly, you go through all the steps, and the City is really helpful," Oubai said about the grant process.

To learn more and submit a letter of intent for the Beautification Grant, visit the Keep Charlotte Beautiful website. (</HNS/CE/KCB/Pages/BeautificationGrant.aspx>)

