

Community Grants Allow East Charlotte Leader to Keep Her Neighborhood Revitalized for Decades

Tiffany Johnson

tiffany.johnson@charlottenc.gov

4/19/2022



Almost 20 years ago, Diane Langevin and her neighbor decided they wanted to revitalize their neighborhood. They knew it would be a task, so they decided to start small, applying for funds from the Neighborhood Matching Grant (NMG) program offered by the City of Charlotte to aid in their effort. Diane was convinced that after the initial few grants, she would be done with grant writing. Decades later, she is still filled with excitement about submitting another grant application to once again refresh the look of her neighborhood in East Charlotte.

A native of Massachusetts, she has lived in her home for 33 years and counting. She has a true passion for the people living in the Winterfield neighborhood and serves as their president of the Winterfield Neighborhood Association, a title that she's held for over 20 years.

On what fuels her volunteerism, Langevin said, "I'm doing it because I want to do it. I want a stronger neighborhood to live together healthy. You can't have a good city unless you have strong foundations in neighborhoods. If it isn't for the neighborhoods, the city can have as much money as it wants, as much infrastructure as it wants, but without neighborhoods, it's nothing."

Her bonds created with neighbors are not taken lightly. For her neighborhood, she leads awareness for the Staying in Place Program, a grant offered by the City of Charlotte to support senior homeowners to stay in their homes. While supporting senior homeowners in her neighborhood, she also embraces the changing landscape of her neighborhood as it's seeing younger homeowners who are becoming active in their leadership. "When people volunteer, I say go for it, because I know I'm going to have to let it go eventually," Langevin said.

Relationships contribute to a thriving neighborhood. Within hers, there has been an increased effort to focus on socializing in between handling neighborhood association business. Most recently, this includes planning trips to the children's theatre and setting aside time at the beginning of their meetings to mingle. They call it "neighborizing," a play on words that combines the words socializing and neighbors.



She applauded the City of Charlotte for its numerous programs offered to residents that contribute to healthy neighborhoods. Personally, she's participated in the Civic Leadership Academy, the Citizens Academy offered by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, the Neighborhood Board Retreat, and, of course, the Neighborhood Matching Grants program.

She shared that her neighborhood "cannot afford to do a lot of things that need to be done to keep a neighborhood going, keep it vitalized, keep it fresh," but the NMG program definitely helps. The Winterfield Neighborhood is especially proud of its community garden, which NMG helped make possible. It has been funded twice by the NMG program and will soon celebrate its 12-year anniversary.

Having been in a position of service for so long, she praised volunteering for helping her learn how to delegate. If someone were to ask her how to get involved, she'd say, "Follow me, I will delegate. Once people get on board, they show their strengths and then start forming committees of their own."

"People see you volunteering and they say, why can't I do that?" she said, and it's a reaction that she loves. Langevin believes the NMG program "really gives a backbone" to neighborhoods and thinks it is something every neighborhood should consider.

To learn more about the city's community grants programs, visit <https://charlottenc.gov/HNS/CE/NMG> (/HNS/CE/NMG).

