

Mural Unveiled in Genesis Park Neighborhood Pays Tribute to Courageous Leader Pastor Brewton

Tiffany Johnson

tiffany.johnson@charlottenc.gov

10/6/2021



Neighborhoods thrive on community, connection, and courageous leaders. For the Genesis Park neighborhood, formerly known as Double Oaks, a daring leader is just what it needed to allow for people to feel safe in their homes again. After losing her husband to murder in 1973 in that area, Pastor Barbara Brewton felt called to return to the neighborhood to establish a new culture void of crime and drugs.

"That was why she had the mission to get this neighborhood back together," recalled Sharon Young, President of the Genesis Park neighborhood association. "She wanted the neighborhood to be better than any neighborhood around. She just wanted everything to be at top notch level." Young remembers Pastor Brewton, who died in

2008, as a strong leader who took pride in the place they call home. Brewton was there when people needed a helping hand, serving people through her church and the Brewton Hope for Harvest Center [☞](#), which provided meals for the homeless and continues to serve the community.



Sharon Young, Genesis Park Neighborhood President sharing remarks

When the opportunity arose in 2018 to create a mural for the sound wall, Young immediately thought of Pastor Brewton as the person to honor. "To me, she was the founding person for Genesis Park, so it was no better way to honor her than to put a mural up of her," Young said proudly. "That way the neighborhood cannot forget her or forget the work she had done."

Local artist Sala Faruq designed the mural, which was made possible through a \$15,500 Neighborhood Matching Grant (</HNS/CE/NMG/Pages/default.aspx>) from the City of Charlotte, \$5,000 by the i77 Mobility Partners, and in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). Genesis Park neighbors voted on

themes and then mock-ups designed by Faruq, ultimately selecting to produce the two pieces that are now available to be exhibited on a rotating basis. It is the first art installation on a NCDOT noise wall in the region.

After three years in the making, the mural was unveiled on Saturday, September 18. It was a major celebration featuring neighborhood leaders and residents, Pastor Brewton's loved ones, including her daughter, Catherine, and sister, Rosa, Mayor Vi Lyles, and others who helped bring this project to fruition.

The mural is placed just above the community garden, which actually used to be further down in the neighborhood but was moved and made longer to coincide with the mural and to allow more space for gardening. "It was no better place to have the mural than over the garden because the garden was the centerpiece of the neighborhood itself," Young said. The area also used to be home to a youth garden where young residents would grow fresh food and give what they grew to their elderly neighbors. Neighbors hope to bring back the youth garden and to put a table out near the current garden for residents to come and start picking fresh vegetables.



Mayor Vi Lyles picking fresh vegetables within the Genesis Park Community Garden

Current neighborhood leaders are working hard to educate the next generation and new neighbors so that the baton can be passed to new residents who will continue to preserve the pride and culture of this area. They continue to push for an open environment that encourages neighbors to work collectively to keep their neighborhood safe. This is done through information sharing, relationship building, and never giving up on encouraging their residents to attend community meetings and to get more involved.

"My inspiration to keep going is because I refuse to let this neighborhood go back to what it used to be. To think about it before I moved into this neighborhood, prior to getting to know Pastor Brewton, this was a drug haven...it was one of the worst drug areas in the United States. So, for us to keep it the way it is now, we have to pay homage to her," Young shared.

For more information on the Neighborhood Matching Grant Program, visit www.charlottenc.gov/nmg .