



OPEN HOUSE FEEDBACK REPORT

Dearington Neighborhood Plan Kick-off Open House was held at Dearington Elementary School for Innovation at 210 Smyth Street on December 12th, 2019 from 4:30 – 7:30pm. Event programming consisted of 9 stations to collect feedback on a variety of topics. Attendees could be entered into a raffle for gift cards for participating. Community resources, scattered throughout the school, were available for attendees as well and included: City Rental Inspections Team, AEP Energy Efficiency, GLTC, Rideshare Solutions, 2-1-1 Virginia, Community Access Network, Census 2020, Hire Lynchburg, Lynchburg City Schools, and three local pre-k organizations- Head Start, Smart Beginnings, and Humankind.

Steering Committee Members that volunteered at the event included Ethel Reeves, Angela Cox, Debbie Bryant, Kimberly Dyke-Harsley, and Dearington Elementary principal, Kelly Bivens.

What City Staff Heard

Dearington is a close-knit community with citizens often considering their neighbors part of their “family.” Many people have lived there a long time (three participants for over 50 years!) and feel connected to the place because of family and the people they know and love. The Dearington playground, and Jefferson Park & Center are favorite places along with familiar houses. Residents mainly feel safe and have access to adequate healthcare. There are neighborhood concerns that include speeding, missing sidewalks, littering, poor lighting, and vacant buildings, and neighborhood desires for better telling the history of the pool, park and neighborhood, and for more park amenities. The specifics of these are listed below and can be found in the posters attached. One community member noted that Dearington used to have everything and be a destination. That’s what needs to be revitalized.

Transportation

- Speeding (Page Street, Chambers Street, Smyth Street, Caroline Street)
- Rolling stops dangerous at 2nd & Smyth
- Sidewalks
 - missing on Chambers Street in multiple locations
 - missing on Kirby Street to park
 - narrow on Hillcrest
- Not much bus use, though may be used by residents in the Dearington Apartments
- Caroline not marked as a school zone, needs more stop signs
- 2nd Street is very narrow
- Drainage and parking issues on Smyth – curbing needed?
- Chambers to Caroline is a cut-through to avoid the Langhorne/Memorial light.

Aesthetics

- Vacant Housing
 - People want the vacant houses occupied and cleaned up

- It makes the neighborhood feel less safe
- Littering
 - At bus stops on Page Street
 - At certain locations (Payne/2nd, 1st/Patrick)
- Drainage problems on Smyth between 1st and 2nd due to no curbing

Jefferson Park & Recreation Space

- Most people walk to Jefferson Park and come down the road to the parking lot. Others take paths or walk down the hillside from Kirby Street.
- Trail to Blackwater Creek needs better signage
- Desire for paved trails
- Basketball court needs improvements
- People walk in the park
- Tennis courts are not well used. The Center, basketball courts, playground are more popular.
- The pool that as in the park needs to be marked and history remembered
- Need more equipment/programming for children
- Trail with exercise equipment through park wanted
- People like outdoor gathering areas like the pavilion
- Community garden desired

Expenses & Work

- Housing is *not* commonly the biggest household expense – food, healthcare, and others like school tuition and electricity were listed
- Most people drive to work
- Variety of jobs, many part-time. Many people trying to get to a comfortable retirement.

Health & Safety

- In general, people feel safe in the Dearington Neighborhood due to a neighborhood watch group, Lynchburg Police Department patrols, and the close-knit community that knows each other well.
- Poor lighting in some areas makes people feel unsafe at night
- Vacant homes make people feel unsafe in specific areas during the day
- Better sidewalks would improve safety
- Speedbumps to slow traffic down
- In general, people have access to medical and dental care and are happy with their doctors

Overall

- Community used to have everything you need and be a destination.