

# LIVABLE MECK

BETTER...TOGETHER.

## 2019 PROGRESS REPORT



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 LIVABLE MECK

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# LIVABLE MECK

Livable Meck is an engagement infrastructure – bringing organizations together to enhance the quality of life across our community. Livable Meck’s purpose is to coordinate, support and enact positive change by:

- Engaging residents and stakeholders in a process to guide community growth;
- Facilitating collaboration among the community’s private, nonprofit and government organizations;
- Measuring the livability of Mecklenburg County’s communities; and
- Communicating stories and progress to inspire.

# PARTNERS

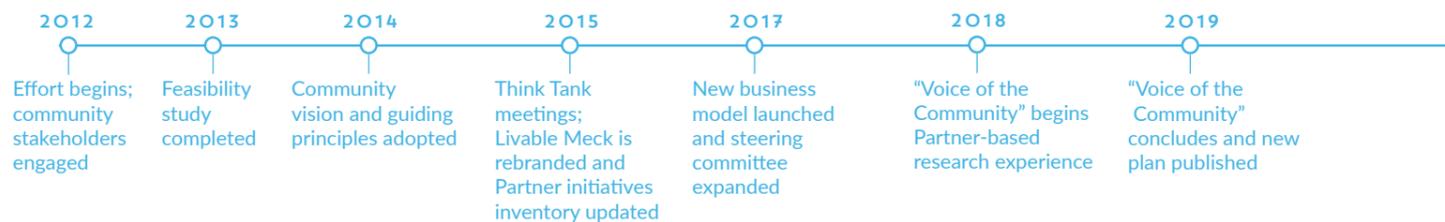
Livable Meck Partner Organizations agree to support the community plan and protect and enhance the quality of life in our community. Partners are encouraged to share their talents, wisdom and energy with each other in collaborative efforts and within their own business models. Visit [LivableMeck.com](http://LivableMeck.com) to learn more and get involved.

# EVOLUTION

In 2012, Mecklenburg County, Foundation For The Carolinas and the City of Charlotte assembled to consider growth projections and impacts. This effort resulted in the Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan. At that time, one million more residents were anticipated in the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) by 2050. In just a few years, that expectation has accelerated and we now anticipate one million more residents by 2030. The goal of Livable Meck is to leverage resources and knit together talents to meet the challenging demands of this growth.

In 2019, the “Voice of the Community” research revisited the original Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan and made modifications based on over 4,200 voices. Those voices want our community to be: HEALTHY, AFFORDABLE, SECURE, ACCESSIBLE, EDUCATED, INNOVATIVE, ENJOYABLE AND TOGETHER.

These principles, and the associated strategies, serve as a collective road map to ensure our community’s strengths dominate the story of our remarkable growth.



# REPORT

This report highlights “Voice of the Community” findings, Partner collaborations and success stories that exemplify the plan’s guiding principles. Partners submitted stories for this report.

THESE PRINCIPLES ARE STATEMENTS OF WHAT OUR COMMUNITY VALUES, ASPIRES TO BE AND GUIDES OUR DECISIONS.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

HEALTHY

pg. 10

AFFORDABLE

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SECURE

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ACCESSIBLE

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EDUCATED

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INNOVATIVE

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ENJOYABLE

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TOGETHER

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# VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY

The “Voice of the Community” research was designed to update the original Livable Meck plan and sets a course for the next five years. From August 2018 to May 2019, this research experience reached the Mecklenburg towns, nonprofit organizations, private businesses, faith-based organizations, universities and neighborhoods. “Voice of the Community” was successful in gaining insight and priorities to enrich our community’s quality of life.

The research was conducted in three waves:

- Wave 1 - August 1 to October 15, 2018;
- Wave 2 - November 1 to 22, 2018 & January 15 to February 15, 2019; and
- Wave 3 - March 15 to May 1, 2019.

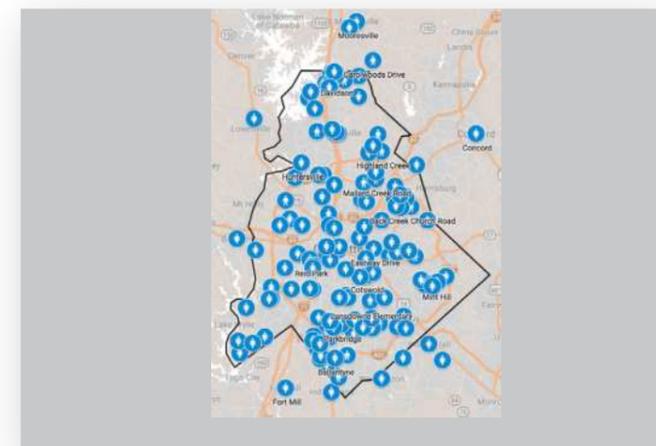
This approach allowed Livable Meck staff to consider information collected and build upon that data for the subsequent waves. In each wave, residents were asked open-ended questions, such as, “What makes a great community?” and “What needs to happen in the next 5-10 years?” This offered participants the opportunity to be creative and candid.

View the [results](#) on pages 6 through 9.



## 5 RESEARCH METHODS

A high-tech and high-touch approach was used for the methodology – specifically, **five** different techniques were used: In-person forums, web surveys, high-volume events, social media engagements and phone messaging access.



## 50 IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENTS

Livable Meck Partners hosted **50** in-person engagements across the County with local nonprofits, faith-based organizations and private businesses. Livable Meck Partners also promoted engagement via an online survey (English and Spanish versions).



## 4,200 VOICES

“Voice of the Community” research embraced the diversity of our community and made deliberate efforts to cast a wide net for inclusion based on age, gender, geography, employment status and race, gathering over **4,200** voices.



## THE RESULTS

The overall sentiment of participants was positive and cautiously optimistic about the future. Participants were proud to be here and want to make sure we move forward carefully. They want more of the good things including infrastructure, housing, schools and greenspace. They also want to make sure that everyone has access to these important services and amenities.

Participants expressed they want to live in a community that meets fundamental needs and values continuous improvement. Many discussions focused on health and human services, economics and being age-friendly. A desire for sound criminal justice systems and a stronger relationship with public safety organizations was also expressed. Being prepared for what the future might bring such as economic shifts or even natural weather events was a concern voiced by many. Further, participants wanted to accomplish these priorities by collaborating with and understanding each other. Togetherness, unity and opportunities for everyone were emphasized during each wave of research.

## COMMUNITY-WIDE PLAN

The information collected during "Voice of the Community" was synthesized into the new community-wide plan. The plan is organized by eight guiding principles and 39 strategies.

The first four guiding principles: **HEALTHY**, **AFFORDABLE**, **SECURE** and **ACCESSIBLE** describe the environment desired. The next three principles: **EDUCATED**, **INNOVATIVE** and **ENJOYABLE** describe what we'll do in our environment. The final principle: **TOGETHER** describes how we want to be with each other.

Associated with each guiding principle is a set of strategies recommended to achieve this principle. This plan sets the road map for protecting and enriching our quality of life for the next five years. View the [entire plan](#) on pages 8 and 9.

# BETTER...TOGETHER.

The input received during "Voice of the Community" emphasized the value of togetherness across and within our community. Participants stressed the importance of seeking to understand each other, collaborating to solve problems, and general fellowship. Participants also shared their perspective that our community is rich in resources and amenities, but people want continued enrichment to the quality of life. Livable Meck took these ideas of "togetherness" and "better" and created the new tag-line for the 2020-2025 community-wide plan: Better...Together.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Residents create the plan; Livable Meck Partners bring it to life. Partners are encouraged to align the new plan with their organizations' strategies, operations and decisions. Let's get started.



HEALTHY

AFFORDABLE

SECURE

ACCESSIBLE

EDUCATED

INNOVATIVE

ENJOYABLE

TOGETHER

AREA OF FOCUS  
DESCRIPTION

Build a healthier community by promoting physical and mental well-being and a healthy environment.

- Environmental Protection
- Nutrition
- Wellness

Encourage options that promote affordability and proximity to work and leisure.

- Aging-in-Place
- Childcare
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Jobs

Strive to enhance safety and create a more prepared community that can easily recover from natural disasters, significant events or emergencies.

- Economic Resilience
- Emergency Preparedness
- Infrastructure
- Public Safety

Facilitate and enhance equitable access to public amenities, services and information.

- Public Transportation
- Roads/Pathways
- Information Technology

AREA OF FOCUS

STRATEGIES

Increase access to and information about healthy lifestyle choices, healthcare and mental health services.

Increase access to healthy foods.

Protect and expand green space and recreational amenities.

Protect and restore the natural environment.

Encourage affordable options for healthcare and disease prevention.

Expand the availability of affordable recreation and cultural programs.

Encourage affordable housing options (including purchasing or rentals).

Prepare for natural disasters, economic shifts or significant events.

Plan for the future and population growth.

Address the conditions that give rise to public safety concerns.

Strengthen relationships between residents and public safety service providers.

Improve public transportation services to improve physical and economic mobility across and within the community.

Be accessible to all generations and abilities.

Connect neighborhoods via infrastructure and events.

Support ease of navigating the community – walking, biking and driving.

Increase access to Wi-Fi and technology.

Improve understanding of public services and how to effectively access them.

AREA OF FOCUS  
DESCRIPTION

Strengthen educational resources, programs and systems to unleash individual potential, close achievement gaps and enhance talent readiness.

- Skilled Workforce
- Arts & Culture

Leverage diversity of thought, ideas, talents, abilities and resources to create a thriving community.

- Creativity
- Technology
- Entrepreneurship

Enhance the community through experiences.

- Entertainment
- Destinations
- Festivals & Events
- Sports & Leisure

Build lasting connections and relationships that characterize a welcoming, connected and valued community.

- Hospitality
- Diversity
- Social Capital

AREA OF FOCUS

STRATEGIES

Foster a culture of life long learning.

Increase access to arts, science and history education.

Expand and enhance learning across all age groups.

Develop community leaders for the future.

Support new technology solutions.

Make it easier for new businesses to succeed and existing businesses to flourish.

Manage the regulatory environment to revitalize community character and preserve the natural environment while allowing for growth and innovation.

Expand options (indoor and outdoor) to participate in the arts, recreational activities, sports, parks and cultural events.

Welcome and promote culturally diverse culinary arts.

Encourage opportunities for residents to be entertained.

Encourage destination recreation opportunities.

Welcome new people, ideas and opportunities.

Bring people together via information and events.

Create an environment safe for diversity of thought and creative conflict.

Celebrate and integrate history, culture and diversity.

The first four guiding principles: **HEALTHY**, **AFFORDABLE**, **SECURE** and **ACCESSIBLE** describe the environment desired.

The next three principles: **EDUCATED**, **INNOVATIVE** and **ENJOYABLE** describe what we'll do in our environment. The final principle: **TOGETHER** describes how we want to be with each other.



# HEALTHY

We will build a healthier community, promoting physical and mental well-being and a healthy environment.

## STRATEGIES

INCREASE ACCESS TO AND INFORMATION ABOUT HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHOICES, HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

INCREASE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS.

PROTECT AND EXPAND GREEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL AMENITIES.

PROTECT AND RESTORE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

Area of Focus 1: Environmental Protection

Area of Focus 2: Nutrition

Area of Focus 3: Wellness



RESIDENTS RANK STRATEGIES INTO “NOW,” “NEXT” AND “FUTURE” PRIORITIES DURING AN ENGAGEMENT CAFÉ.

## BREATHING ROOM: AIR QUALITY BEYOND THE STANDARD

Mecklenburg County air quality has come a long way over the past decade. The number of “good” or green days on the Air Quality Index has doubled since 2004, and the air quality meets all federal health-based standards. Despite the progress, ground-level ozone monitored locally remains a concern and falls just shy of the national standard set to protect public health.

Mecklenburg County’s Air Quality Division recognized the narrow margin and the need for community-wide action given the continued growth of the Charlotte region. The “Breathing Room” initiative was started to prompt proactive steps to reduce ozone pollution and improve air quality.

Breathing Room began with ozone-reducing strategies assembled by Mecklenburg County Air Quality from resources like the Livable Meck Plan. The strategies included greener energy, cleaner fleets, structural advancements and outreach through education.

The next step for Breathing Room was to map out priorities over time. Public input is a foundation for

Breathing Room, and in 2019, the initiative convened community stakeholders including local youth councils, college students, public and private organizations, and others to rank strategies into “now,” “next” and “future” priorities. Participants considered things like pollution source, the cost-effectiveness of emissions reduced, and co-benefiting factors of the different solutions when setting priorities.

Those interested in joining Breathing Room and Mecklenburg County Air Quality in advancing and implementing the strategies to improve air quality can visit <http://airquality.mecknc.gov/breathingroom>.



# AFFORDABLE

We will encourage options that promote affordability and proximity to work and leisure.

## STRATEGIES

ENCOURAGE AFFORDABLE OPTIONS FOR HEALTHCARE AND DISEASE PREVENTION.

EXPAND THE AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE RECREATION AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS.

ENCOURAGE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS (INCLUDING PURCHASING OR RENTALS).

Area of Focus 1: Aging-in-Place

Area of Focus 2: Childcare

Area of Focus 3: Healthcare

Area of Focus 4: Housing

Area of Focus 5: Jobs



**FRIENDS THROUGH AUTISM AFTER 18 – PEERS AT MECKLENBURG COUNTY.**

## PARTNERS COLLABORATE TO CREATE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Since Livable Meck featured [Autism After 18](#) in an Engagement Café in 2018, the partnership has continued to grow and make a difference for adults with autism. Through a newly formed pilot program between Autism After 18, Mecklenburg County and Red Ventures, the group has been able to source employment for adults with autism.

The opportunity to go to work every day, interact with others and bring home a paycheck contributes to a sense of purpose as individuals with autism transition to adulthood. Two Autism After 18 adults are working with Mecklenburg County and one is working at Red Ventures. These organizations have created an environment for adults with autism to have the same experience as other adults, while educating other employees on autism. Families of adults with autism are thankful for the opportunities provided by employers in the community.

“For any parent, your wish is that your children will grow up to be productive members of society, regardless of whether they have a disability,” said Pat Hassett, mother of Matthew Hassett, who now works at Red Ventures. “Everyone needs a purpose, a reason to get up every day, and work gives you that. There is dignity in

work no matter how menial the job. I think that young people on the spectrum just need to be given a chance. We thank Autism After 18 for giving that chance to Matthew. He is enjoying his work, meeting new people and he is using the skills that he has every day. He is part of a team. He has grown up!”

For individuals with autism, work offers them an engaging and enjoyable way to connect with others and make meaningful contributions at work and at home.

“Having a job to me means that you work in something that you're very passionate about and something that can make you very happy,” said Matthew Hassett. “I can ensure you that as long as you pursue your passion and stick with it long enough, you can be successful with it whatever it can be. If it's working as a teacher's assistant, a camp counselor or even an IT Asset manager, you can do anything if you set your mind to it, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Listen to your heart and pursue your passion. I'm just very happy to be working in a field that I know so much about and want to learn more of as time goes on.”



# SECURE

We will strive to enhance safety and create a more prepared community that can easily recover from natural disasters, significant events or emergencies.

## STRATEGIES

PREPARE FOR NATURAL DISASTERS, ECONOMIC SHIFTS OR SIGNIFICANT EVENTS.

PLAN FOR THE FUTURE AND POPULATION GROWTH.

ADDRESS THE CONDITIONS THAT GIVE RISE TO PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS.

STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RESIDENTS AND PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICE PROVIDERS.

Area of Focus 1: Economic Resilience

Area of Focus 2: Emergency Preparedness

Area of Focus 3: Infrastructure

Area of Focus 4: Public Safety



**MEMBERS OF THE SOUTHTOWNS SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAM.**

## LEVERAGING INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION TO IMPROVE THE COMMUNITY'S SAFETY

Feeling safe and protected go hand-in-hand with a desirable place to live, work and play. People want to know the community is prepared in case of natural disasters or significant events. During the "Voice of the Community" research experience, participants expressed a desire that public safety officials use new ideas and collaboration to address challenges.

The [Town of Matthews](#) and [The Matthews Police Department \(MPD\)](#) are strong Livable Meck Partners and have exemplified the power of embracing innovation and collaboration to tackle quality of life issues. MPD strives to promote a safe community by preventing crime and reducing the fear of crime while treating all individuals fairly and with respect. MPD is staffed by approximately 85 full- and part-time employees, and more than 20 dedicated citizen volunteers. These employees and volunteers can not do the work alone. In recent years, MPD has focused on emergency preparedness and collaboration to expand its reach and effectiveness.

In 2018, Matthews was hit with severe weather. Power outages, downed trees and flooded roads were quickly attended to through collaboration between Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services, and the Public Works

Department. Moving forward, the Town is launching an updated and more advanced Emergency Operations Center that will enable monitoring of storm situations and the impact on Matthews.

MPD is also a partner in collaborative efforts with surrounding police agencies and nonprofit organizations including Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, Mint Hill Police Department, Pineville Police Department, Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office, North Carolina Highway Patrol, Mecklenburg County Family Justice Center, and many others. In addition, it is a part of the [Southtowns Special Response Team](#). These talented, dedicated men and women provide a level of operational stability and expertise during high risk search and seizure warrants and provide the necessary resources should a member of the community need their special skills during a crisis situation.

By leveraging innovation and uniting teams of talented services providers, MPD has produced early and promising results and will continue to inform future innovations and improve the community's safety.



# ACCESSIBLE

We will facilitate and enhance equitable access to public amenities, services and information.

## STRATEGIES

- IMPROVE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO IMPROVE PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY ACROSS AND WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.
- BE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL GENERATIONS AND ABILITIES.
- CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS VIA INFRASTRUCTURE AND EVENTS.
- SUPPORT EASE OF NAVIGATING THE COMMUNITY - WALKING, BIKING AND DRIVING.
- INCREASE ACCESS TO WI-FI AND TECHNOLOGY.
- IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND HOW TO EFFECTIVELY ACCESS THEM.

Area of Focus 1: Public Transportation

Area of Focus 2: Roads/Pathways

Area of Focus 3: Information Technology



## A PINEVILLE NONPROFIT CONFRONTS SUBURBAN POVERTY AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Pineville Neighbors Place is a testament to a little-known set of facts: suburbs are not always models of prosperity and education, and they often lack internet resources just as severely as urban and rural communities.

While Pineville is a location for shopping, restaurants, car dealerships and medical care, it's also home to the workers who staff these businesses, and who often rely on minimum-wage income. Three years ago, civic leaders realized that residents who needed access to social services often lacked the resources to make their way to agencies and government centers in central Charlotte. They founded Pineville Neighbors Place in 2016, and Pineville Neighbors Place became a Livable Meck Partner in May 2018.

"The poverty rate in Pineville is between 15 and 20 percent," said Jane Shutt, executive director of Pineville Neighbors Place. "We pledged to have an office in Pineville to serve this population, so they can get the help they need. We are able to connect them to the organizations that provide help, in a convenient location at a convenient time." Digital resources are an important part of these needs, according to Shutt.

"We're putting people at such a huge disadvantage if they don't know how to use computers," said Shutt. "People who lack computer access, either at home or nearby, or who lack digital literacy skills, have trouble accessing common services, including job applications, resume creation and distribution, medical insurance applications, and medical or food assistance.

Computer access is also particularly important for high school students and their parents, who otherwise must rely on smartphones to write papers, submit assignments online, or access progress reports." One of the barriers Shutt's team faced was the lack of a conveniently located library. The team made laptops available for use at the Pineville Neighbors Place office so people can use them for tasks such as job applications, checking email and online benefits.

Shutt shared the need for digital literacy support with Livable Meck and was connected to Bruce Clark with Digital Charlotte (a Livable Meck Partner since 2017). Pineville Neighbors Place is one of five nonprofit organizations in the fall 2018 cohort of the Digital Charlotte Program Accelerator. The program delivers a six-week digital and media literacy course to community organizations, and at the end of the course, participants receive a laptop computer.

Funded by Google Fiber and managed by Digital Charlotte, the Digital Charlotte Program Accelerator is a project of the Knight School of Communication at Queens. The 2-year-old program has now graduated more than 125 people with digital literacy certificates and supported 15 nonprofit organizations.

Rachel Pepper, the lead instructor at Pineville Neighbors Place, said she is rewarded by watching students build skills and confidence. Pepper started volunteering when she was a Queens student, and enjoys helping people reach their goals.

"I have one student who was having a lot of trouble typing and using the mouse to scroll and we've been working on that for the last 30 minutes of class," Pepper said. "Today he just filled out a form, online, by himself. It only took him 10 minutes, but five weeks ago it probably would have taken him an hour. And he was smiling the whole time."

The collaboration between Pineville Neighbors Place and Digital Charlotte exemplifies the power of knitting together resources to address quality of life issues.



# EDUCATED

We will strengthen educational resources, programs and systems to unleash individual potential and enhance talent readiness.

## STRATEGIES

- FOSTER A CULTURE OF LIFE LONG LEARNING.
- INCREASE ACCESS TO ARTS, SCIENCE AND HISTORY EDUCATION.
- EXPAND AND ENHANCE LEARNING ACROSS ALL AGE GROUPS.
- DEVELOP COMMUNITY LEADERS FOR THE FUTURE.

Area of Focus 1: Skilled Workforce

Area of Focus 2: Arts & Culture



## OUTDOOR LEARNING BRINGS EDUCATION TO LIFE FOR MECKLENBURG STUDENTS

**Out Teach**, formerly REAL School Gardens, unlocks student performance with experiential learning outdoors. By coaching and inspiring teachers to take students outside for meaningful and authentic real-world experiences, Out Teach gets students more engaged in Science, Math and Language Arts lessons. To provide access to outdoor learning environments for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) Title I schools, Out Teach also partners with companies and foundations to help create feature-rich Outdoor Learning Labs where teachers can take their classes for hands-on experiential lessons.

caterpillars thriving thanks to their milkweed. Real-life experiences such as these get students excited about new discoveries and help students remember what they've learned and effectively apply it in new situations.

In addition, Novant Health and the Charlotte Hornets Foundation teamed up to support the Outdoor Learning Lab build at Lebanon Road Elementary, and Duke Energy and Piedmont Natural Gas supported the building of an Outdoor Learning Lab at Governors' Village STEM Academy. And not all schools require a full Outdoor Learning Lab to make the most of the Out Teach Professional Development Program. At Hidden Valley Elementary, Out Teach simply enhanced their existing outdoor learning spaces with helpful new learning features to improve their outdoor classroom.

Out Teach, with the financial and volunteer help of generous corporate partners, created Outdoor Learning Labs at three new Title I Schools during the 2018-2019 school year. Teachers can use the outdoors to bring any subject to life, and key learning lab features, such as whiteboards and seating areas, raised beds, and habitats, help teachers make the most of the space. Out Teach Instructional Coach Luisa Aviles worked one-on-one with teachers at Walter G. Byers K-8 School, coaching them on how to effectively engage students using experiential learning outside. Byers teachers like Kerrie Lalli saw their student engagement blossom as they recorded data on the growth of milkweed and tracked the migration path of the monarch butterflies visiting their outdoor learning space. The cross-curricular lesson continued as students learned about the needs of plants and animals while observing the monarch

To date, Out Teach has partnered with six Title I elementary schools in the CMS system to develop ongoing outdoor learning programs. Out Teach exemplifies Livable Meck's commitment to education and learning by helping train teachers to unlock every student's potential for academic achievement and thereby closing achievement and opportunity gaps, and creating engaging outdoor spaces welcoming to students and the community.



**LUISA AVILES PERFORMS A MODEL LESSON TO DEMONSTRATE EXPERIENTIAL TEACHING TECHNIQUES OUTDOORS.**



**CATHERINE THOMPSON PRACTICES EXPERIENTIAL OUTDOOR TEACHING TECHNIQUES.**



# INNOVATIVE

We will leverage diversity of thought, ideas, talents, abilities and resources to create a thriving community.

## STRATEGIES

SUPPORT NEW TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS.

MAKE IT EASIER FOR NEW BUSINESSES TO SUCCEED AND EXISTING BUSINESSES TO FLOURISH.

MANAGE THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT TO REVITALIZE COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND PRESERVE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WHILE ALLOWING FOR GROWTH AND INNOVATION.

Area of Focus 1: Creativity

Area of Focus 2: Technology

Area of Focus 3: Entrepreneurship



## “ART OF RECYCLING” PROGRAM SHOWCASES THE IMPORTANCE OF RECYCLING

To educate the community on Mecklenburg County’s recycling program and assist the public in addressing recycling contamination, the [Arts & Science Council](#), [Livable Meck](#) and [Mecklenburg County Solid Waste](#) developed the “Art of Recycling” program. The program supports the creation of temporary public art using recyclable materials.

Art is a powerful medium to evoke emotion, and the program leverages art to cut through the clutter of other forms of advertising to reach the community with this important message.

Many of the art installations draw on the importance of our fragile environment and call on residents to act to address environmental issues in ways like eliminating use of plastic bags, reducing use of single-use plastics and polystyrene materials, or joining a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program to limit food packaging and support urban farms.

The program highlights the other R’s of recycling as well. In the three R’s of recycling, the importance of REDUCE and REUSE are often overlooked. The project reminds us of the priority of these two facets of stewardship and encourages artists, makers and businesses in our community to consider using recyclable materials in their production. The installations are all on public properties making them accessible to any community

member. Installations for this pilot program were completed in June 2019.

As our environmental landscape shifts under changing conditions, we must continue to innovate and seek new ideas and ways to address issues. Partnerships in the community, such as the one demonstrated by this program, allow us to bring attention to important community issues.

To learn more about recycling, visit [www.WipeOutWaste.com](http://www.WipeOutWaste.com).



**L: TEMPORARY ART AT HICKORY GROVE LIBRARY.  
R: ARTIST CHARLES PILKEY WITH STUDENTS.**



# ENJOYABLE

We will enhance the community through experiences.

## STRATEGIES

EXPAND OPTIONS (INDOOR AND OUTDOOR) TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ARTS, RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, SPORTS, PARKS AND CULTURAL EVENTS.

WELCOME AND PROMOTE CULTURALLY DIVERSE CULINARY ARTS.

ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS TO BE ENTERTAINED.

ENCOURAGE DESTINATION RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES.

Area of Focus 1: Entertainment

Area of Focus 2: Destinations

Area of Focus 3: Festivals & Events

Area of Focus 4: Sports & Leisure



**YOUNG SCIENTISTS ADMIRE A MACHINE DRAWING A PICTURE.**

## INGERSOLL RAND AND PROJECT SCIENTIST TO OFFER STEM EDUCATION EXPERIENCES TO GIRLS

Women make up nearly half of the U.S. workforce, but hold less than a quarter of the country's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) jobs, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. To help close that gap, Ingersoll Rand engaged Project Scientist - a nonprofit STEM organization dedicated to exposing a diverse population of young girls to a high-quality STEM academy inspiring confidence in their pursuit of learning throughout the year.

Through a grant from the company's charitable foundation, [Ingersoll Rand](#) and [Project Scientist](#) hosted a Project Scientist expedition at the Trane manufacturing plant in Charlotte, N.C., on October, 31, 2018 (a teacher workday for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools). Throughout the day, 40 young girls learned STEM skills, interacted with women in the STEM workforce and experienced manufacturing and engineering demonstrations first-hand.

"Seeing and experiencing our jobs through the faces and reactions of these young scientists make it a memorable day on the job," said March McClanahan, plant manager for the Trane manufacturing plant in Charlotte. "We enjoy hosting this event to educate and inspire these young girls to continue on to a higher education in STEM."

Participants experienced various STEM career roles by practicing mathematics with members of the finance department, estimating the weight of compressors on the manufacturing floor, designing marketing posters for industrial instruments, and more. They also learned about chemical reactions with Trane chemists and how to fold a shirt in two seconds with the operational excellence team to practice problem-solving.

The girls were encouraged to dress up as their favorite scientist as they ended their day by trick or treating throughout the Trane plant.

"Getting to see a robot draw a picture was exciting, the hand-held scanner was cool, and trick or treating was yummy," said Emily Kennedy, a 7-year-old participant who plans to be a veterinarian. "I liked dressing up as Jane Goodall."

Ingersoll Rand has 2020 sustainability commitments that include providing girls with STEM education experiences. As part of these commitments, the company engaged Project Scientist in 2017, hosting an expedition at the Trane manufacturing plant in Charlotte and capped off a week of summer camp focused on energy and engineering at Concordia University with an expedition at the Trane Sales office in Brea, California.



# TOGETHER

We will build lasting connections and relationships that characterize a welcoming, connected and valued community.

## STRATEGIES

- WELCOME NEW PEOPLE, IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES.
- BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER VIA INFORMATION AND EVENTS.
- CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT SAFE FOR DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT AND CREATIVE CONFLICT.
- CELEBRATE AND INTEGRATE HISTORY, CULTURE AND DIVERSITY.

- Area of Focus 1: Hospitality
- Area of Focus 2: Diversity
- Area of Focus 3: Social Capital



PANELISTS, LEFT TO RIGHT:  
**VICTOR ARMSTRONG, E. ELISE HERMAN, M.D.,  
 REVEREND REBECCA WOODMAN &  
 ELIZABETH PETERSON-VITA, PhD**

## WORKING TOGETHER TO REDUCE MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA

In the wake of the pain of the opioid crisis, violence affecting our schools, places of worship and government facilities, and a disproportionate veteran suicide rate, national conversations are forming around our collective failure to identify and provide adequate care for those with mental health issues and mental illness.

“The numbers are staggering, and so whether we have first-hand experience with mental illness or we have a family member, it exists,” said Rebecca Woodman, director of Care and Counseling at Forest Hill Church. “I think the first step is just the recognition...the awareness.”

In November 2018, the faith community (Forest Hill Church), area health providers (Atrium Health, Novant Health, Mecklenburg County Public Health Department) and Livable Meck partnered to host an Engagement Café on Reducing the Mental Health Stigma. A group of experts assisted Partner organizations in broadening their awareness and understanding of the topic through a panel discussion, engagement exercises, and a question and answer session.

“I think it’s important anytime we can get a group of people together, whether it’s professionals or whether it’s lay people, talking about mental health issues and mental illness, because that’s the only way we are going to be able to eradicate stigma, by normalizing the conversation about it,” said Vic Armstrong, MSW, vice president of Behavior Health at Atrium Health. During the Café, partners voiced where they saw gaps in service and failures in their own operations, and

committed to act. E. Elise Herman, M.D., Novant Health Psychiatric Recovery & Counseling, called out the misconceptions around the labeling of those facing the challenges of mental illness, noting, “Someone who is suffering from addiction may feel differently than someone who is an addict. You’re placing that identity on them.” Outcomes from the Café included several training sessions on mental health first aid to partner organizations. Additionally, several Livable Meck partners have begun to explore issues specifically pertaining to enhanced geriatric mental health services and care in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg region.

“We used to think that serious mental illness was like a physiological death sentence and it is not. Recovery is possible,” said Elizabeth Peterson-Vita, M.D., former clinical director of Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services.

Strong communities conquer challenges together. By fostering dialogue about mental health issues to remove the stigma, and by providing services for community members in need of resources, we can address this important topic.

View the summary video of the Café at <http://bit.ly/30WkQnT> and visit [stophestigma.org](http://stophestigma.org) for more information.



# QUALITY OF LIFE: DATA FOR LIVABLE MECK

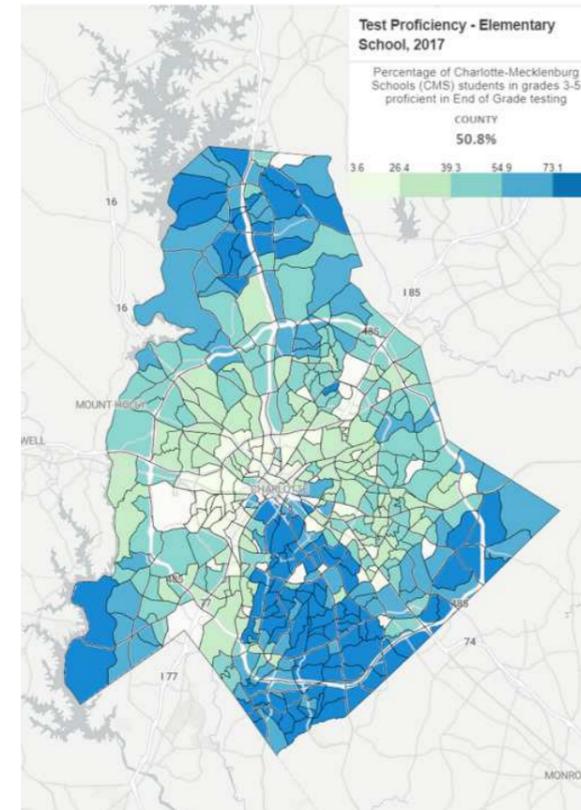
While the Livable Meck plan uses guiding principles and strategies to lead our community into the future, it also leverages data to identify and measure quality of life issues, relevant trends and outcomes. Livable Meck uses a variety of data sources, but the primary source of information is the **QUALITY OF LIFE EXPLORER**.

The Quality of Life Explorer is a map-based data dashboard looking at the social, housing, economic, environmental and safety conditions in Mecklenburg County. It is open to anyone as a resource. Residents, businesses, service providers, government agencies, realtors, universities and others can use the Explorer to learn more about the County and its neighborhoods, develop programs and services, and plan for the future.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED?

Over 80 variables providing detailed information about neighborhood housing stock, household income, jobs, health, education, tree canopy coverage, crime rates, code violations, community engagement, energy consumption and much more:

- Maps, trend information, data tables and summary reports for 462 neighborhood profile areas
- Ability to explore data by custom geographies (i.e., the light rail corridor, school zones, business districts or jurisdiction such as the City of Charlotte)
- Links to hundreds of City, County and community resources to help people learn more and take action



## ARE OUR STUDENTS PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE?

The map (left) shows the number of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) students in grades 3-5 achieving a proficient score (Level III, IV or V) on both reading and math end-of-grade tests.

Elementary test scores, particularly third grade reading proficiency, are a critical indicator of future academic success. Test scores can assist education administrators, policy-makers, businesses, residents and community organizations in tracking academic performance and developing strategies to increase academic proficiency.

This map is an example of how the Quality of Life Explorer highlights the differences between neighborhoods to better understand the level of preparedness within the community.

## WANT A SUMMARY REPORT FOR YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD? IT'S AS EASY AS 1-2-3!

In your web browser, navigate to <http://mcmmap.org/qol>.

Type your address in the search bar where it says "Search Map" and select your address from the drop-down list that appears. Then click the "Show Map" button beneath the map to make sure you landed in the right place.

Click the "Report" button beneath the map to generate a summary report of all the information in the Quality of Life Explorer. And you're done! Or, click on the report header where it says "Summary Report" to give your report a custom name.

## PROGRAM HISTORY

The Quality of Life Explorer was created in partnership with the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County and the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute, with the towns of Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews, Mint Hill and Pineville.

The Quality of Life Explorer, formerly the Quality of Life Study, has been a resource to our community for more than 20 years. In 2012, the study transformed into an interactive dashboard including all of Mecklenburg County. Prior to this time, the data was available only in very large, printed reports. Because of these changes, data prior to 2010 is not comparable to the data found on the dashboard today.

CHARLOTTE | CORNELIUS | DAVIDSON | HUNTERVILLE | MATTHEWS | MINT HILL | PINEVILLE

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