

# **Attachment Capital?**

Place Attachment and Neighborhood Organizing  
in Community-University Partnerships

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**Participatory Action Research:**  
Challenges and Triumphs in the Field

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# Presentation/Discussion Format

- **Background-** About the Charlotte Action Research Project (CHARP)
- **Presentations**
  - Focus on two neighborhoods and comparison/contrast regarding “place attachment” and organizing (Liz)
  - Story of one neighborhood’s action research journey (Tara)
- **Discussion:** implications for planning and action research

# The Charlotte Action Research Project



## Mission

- *To provide **strong and sustained infrastructure** between UNC Charlotte and local marginalized neighborhoods;*
- *To establish opportunities to work with neighborhoods on mutually beneficial **action research, service learning, popular education and community organizing** projects to address issues of **spatial inequality**.*

# CHARP History and Structure

## Beginnings (2008-2011)

- Tangible volunteer events
- City Funding
- Examples: clean-ups, KaBOOM, meetings

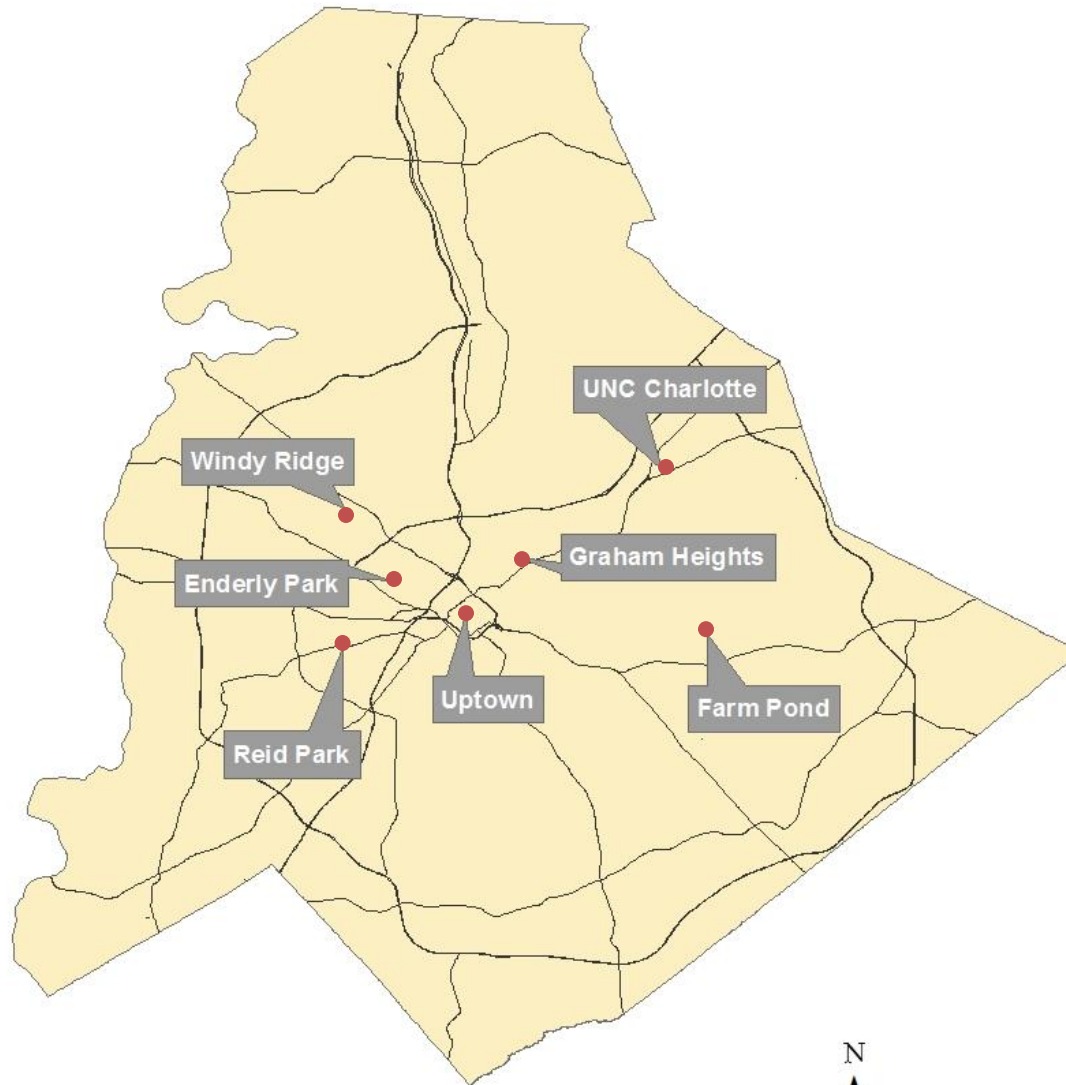
## Currently (2012-present)

- PhD student RA's integrate research and action
- Campus Funding
- Coalition building between neighborhoods

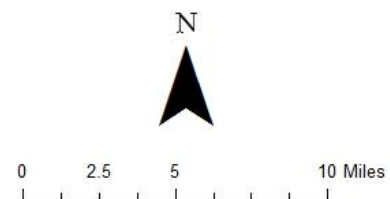
## Future

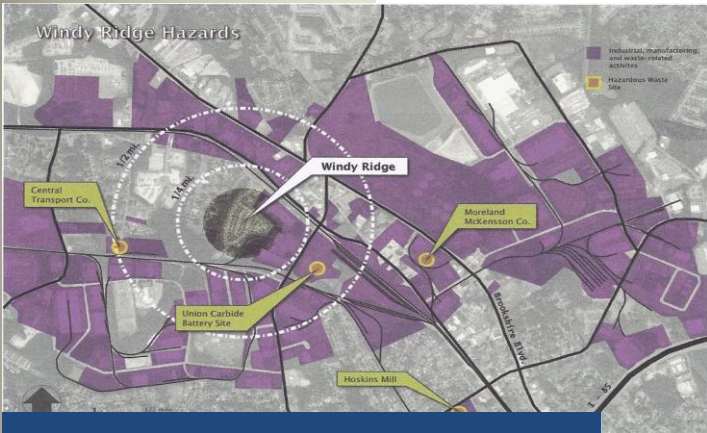
- Popular Education
- Service learning and becoming part of campus infrastructure

# CHARP's Partner Neighborhoods



**Mecklenburg County,  
North Carolina**





# Windy Ridge

## Neighborhood Entrance



## Hazards Adjacent to Community



“What kinda access you got with a train right there?.”



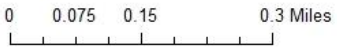
## Foreclosed Home

“It looks like this really simple neighborhood that was just plopped there but there’s a lot of issues behind... why it never should have been built.”

“You many not be able to afford the real suburbia but you got a little mock suburbia right here.”



## Atlantic Feature



# Graham Heights

“I tell my children that if I won the lottery I don't think I would want to move.”



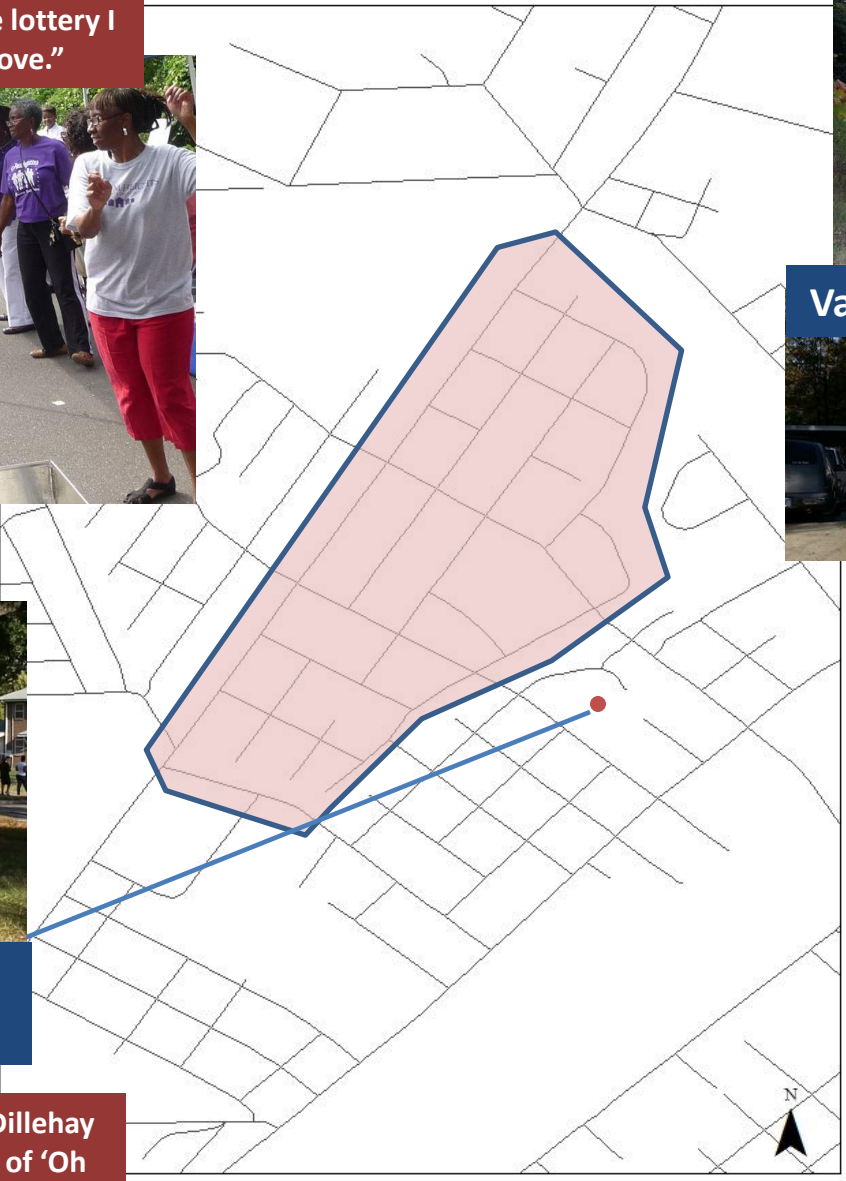
Spring Festival



Variations in Housing Stock



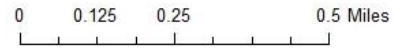
Dillehay Courts Public Housing



Light Rail

“I said something about including Dillehay Courts and there was just a chorus of ‘Oh no,’ they did not want to include them!”

“We are on the map that when the city get ready to expand they're coming this way... We think if we keep the crimes down and take care of our neighborhood... that could help.”



# Windy Ridge vs. Graham Heights: Organizing and Action Research Outcomes

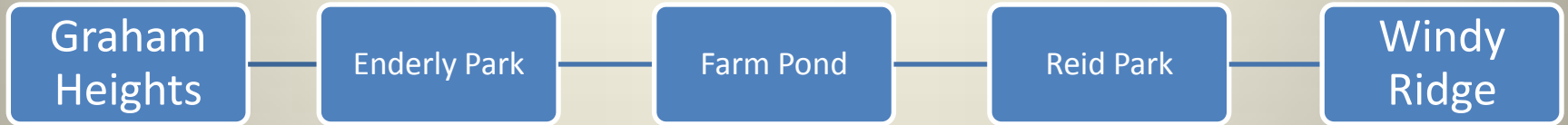
	Duration of Partnership	Participation Levels	Success of Outreach Events	Support for Physical Improvements	Action Research
Graham Heights	2 years				
Windy Ridge	5 years				



What is the role of place attachment in this disparity?



# Neighborhood Context Continuum



Goal	Graham Heights	Windy Ridge
<b>Organizational Capacity</b>	CHARP model is working- major uptick in enthusiasm for organizing; emergence of new leaders	Lack of interest in organizing; role of Homeowner's Association; transiency
<b>Physical improvements</b>	Small scale beautification projects have generated excitement	"Band aid" projects serve to "satisfy" instead of addressing larger scale issues of spatial injustice
<b>Social Capital</b>	Success in bringing together renters/owners.	Distrust and isolation.
<b>Research/Spatial Justice</b>	More difficult to implement in the short-run but possible with time; plethora of viable community partners.	Plenty of research projects; difficult to identify viable partners in the community.

# Resident Voices Example:

## *Attachment and Empowerment*

### Graham Heights

“I can see progress that we’ve made and I really think better things are going to come.”

“I mean the people began to feel more confidence...and more people started coming out and start working with us...”

“This neighborhood means so much to me cause I grew up in it...”

### Windy Ridge

“Nobody knows what we’re supposed to be doing or what resources we have.”

“Honestly there’s a lot of people I can [blame]... the police, the builder, the real estate company, the people that live here all have a part..”

“I thought you had to dial 911 to get a police officer...but when...he told me to email him or whatever, that was totally different for me.”

# Reid Park Context

- Developed in 1930s exclusively for Charlotte's African American population;
- History of organizing in late 1980s and 1990s
- Neighborhood Improvement Plan (NIP)



# Humble Beginnings

- 2009 Workshop Class
- A neighborhood where “people just don’t want to be engaged”
- Identified strong sense of pride and sense of attachment



# CHARP's Partnership

- 2010 Neighborhood Planning Seminar
  - Surveys
  - Pride Team: “that’s Reid Park for you”
- Neighborhood Matching Grant, Neighborhood Cleanups
- KaBOOM!



# Today's Reid Park

- Reid Park Initiative
- Visioning Workshop
- Steering Committee



# The Challenges

- Funding
- IRB
- Receptiveness of Geography Department
- Doctoral Research

**For Discussion:** What does the emergence of poverty in neighborhoods like Windy Ridge mean for progressive planners and community-university partnerships?

- Barriers to partnership- lack of “attachment capital”
  - Transience of most residents;
  - Homeowner’s Association;
  - “Othering” between residents- *who do we represent?*
- What are the alternatives?
  - Advocacy planning?
  - Traditional (non-participatory) research?
  - Back off completely?



# Discussion: Mediating...

- Institutional Demands (IRB)
- Research Needs—Relevant Engaging