Belle Haven
Community Visioning

City of Menlo Park

ACTION PLAN
July 2013

Background

Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood is a community that is geographically, demographically and economically distinct from the larger city. The neighborhood has a strong sense of identity and a desire to improve the quality of life for neighborhood residents while strengthening connections across the community.

Belle Haven experiences challenges with crime, education and maintaining funding for services for residents. These issues have been exacerbated by the dissolution of redevelopment agencies in California, which removed a major tool for the City to provide services to the community. Major land use changes are underway or planned near or adjacent to the Belle Haven neighborhood, including Facebook's relocation to the Willow Road East Campus, development of a second Facebook Campus on the Willow Road West Campus and the approved mixed-use Menlo Gateway Project.

Recognizing that these changes present both challenges and opportunities for residents, the Menlo Park City Council approved a comprehensive community visioning process for Belle Haven in September 2012. The City laid the groundwork for this effort by completing a Community Snapshot (demographic profile, attached to this document) as well as two dozen stakeholder interviews in late 2012 (attached).

The Visioning Process

Led by City Community Services staff and consultants from MIG, Inc. (MIG), the visioning process began in January 2013 and concluded in July 2013. The visioning process built on the work initiated by the City and sought to engage a broader cross-section of the Belle Haven neighborhood than had been involved with earlier planning processes. It was designed to identify community values, prioritize services and programs, identify needed improvements, build capacity and better position Belle Haven to work with the City of Menlo Park and private developers to advocate for their interests.

A key tactic in achieving these goals was hiring neighborhood residents as outreach associates and as an extension of the MIG team. This strategy

enabled the City and its consultant to use trusted local residents to encourage participation in the visioning process and to better access existing communications networks and community-based organizations. This approach was also intended to identify and support neighborhood leaders and to strengthen relationships and communications between residents and their City government.

The six-month community visioning process included multiple strategies for engaging and gathering input from Belle Haven residents and other community members. This document outlines and highlights these activities and includes a high-level action plan for the City, Belle Haven residents and stakeholder groups to guide implementation of next steps. This Action Plan builds on the Community Vision and includes recommended roles, responsibilities and timelines for implementation. Visioning documents, questionnaire results, newsletters and other work products are attached as appendices at the end of the Action Plan.

Summary of Accomplishments

The visioning and outreach process consistently engaged and mobilized residents through a host of grassroots community outreach activities. Outreach efforts engaged many residents who have not historically engaged with the City, including many new residents, renters, and Spanish-speakers as well as youth and students. The visioning effort provided an opportunity to cultivate and strengthen the neighborhood's partnership with the City and to identify neighborhood priorities, community assets and needed improvements. Highlights and accomplishments of the process include:

- Over 80 residents attended a Kick-Off meeting on January 29 that introduced the MIG team and solicited volunteers for a variety of activities.
- Four Belle Haven residents were hired as part-time Outreach Associates. The Outreach Team included three English/Spanish bi-lingual members. MIG and the City held an orientation and training for the associates.
- A Community Meeting was co-hosted with the Menlo Park Police Department (MPPD) on March 21st to introduce the outreach associates and new Police Chief. A second joint meeting was held with the MPPD on May 16th. Approximately 70 people participated in both meetings.
- A neighborhood newsletter was developed and published in March and June. This newsletter, written in English and Spanish, was distributed both electronically and in hard copy. The City will continue to use this communication platform going forward.

- In March, the City launched a web page dedicated to the Visioning Process: www.menlopark.org/bellehaven. Moving forward, the City will continue to use this web page to share information and news relevant to the Belle Haven community.

- A Communications and Engagement Strategy identified target audiences, key messages and outreach tactics. The grassroots outreach approach focused on "high-touch," in-person activities.

- A set of outreach and information tools was developed, including a Fact Sheet, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), Community Questionnaire, Discussion Guide, and Outreach Toolkit for use by staff and associates. All materials for public audiences were developed in both Spanish and English.

- Between early April and early June, outreach associates, MIG and City staff conducted extensive grassroots outreach in the Belle Haven community. This included:
    - Nine community conversations hosted by residents
    - Four community events (e.g., Walk/Bike to School Day, Easter Egg Hunt)
    - Intercept activities in five neighborhood locations (e.g., grocery stores and coffee shops)
    - Meetings with five local community-based organizations
    - Three "fishbowl" meetings with youth at local schools

- On Saturday, April 20, nearly 300 people attended a Community Visioning Fair at the Senior Center that included interactive activities for resident input, 10 community organizations, children's activities, lunch and free plant giveaways for Earth Day.

- Over 240 questionnaires were completed by community stakeholders and residents.

- Associates completed a neighborhood canvass of the 1,200 housing units in the neighborhood, distributing information and a questionnaire at each home.

- A Community Action Workshop was held on June 20th, attended by about 50 people, including residents, City staff and elected officials, and other community leaders. The workshop presentation of the outreach findings included questionnaire results. An interactive exercise to review and prioritize potential action items generated by the community was followed by group dialogues on key issues, commitments to support residents' top neighborhood goals, and an invitation to form neighborhood action teams.

- During the June 20th workshop, residents committed to forming action teams including Neighborhood Watch Leaders and an Education

Committee, as well as individual commitments on high-priority action items.

Questionnaire Results

During outreach and engagement activities, a broad cross-section of Belle Haven residents participated and provided input on neighborhood priorities. The community questionnaire enabled the City to collect data from a diverse group of Belle Haven residents, since it was available in English and Spanish, and both in hard copy and online. Outreach associates distributed questionnaires at all activities, meetings and group discussions they attended, as well as through neighborhood canvassing. A description of questionnaire respondents and highlights of findings is included below. A detailed summary is attached to this document.

Demographics

- A total of 244 questionnaires were returned.
- Half of the respondents were homeowners and half rent their home.
- 58% identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino, 15% Caucasian, 12% African-American, 12% Asian/Pacific Islander, 5% other (respondents were asked to check all applicable responses, so total is greater than 100%).
- The primary language of respondents was 54% English, 41% Spanish, and 4% other.
- 75% of the questionnaires were completed in English and 25% completed in Spanish.
- 79% of respondents were residents of Belle Haven.
- 42% of respondents have lived in Belle Haven 5 years or less, and about 20% each have lived in the neighborhood for 6-10, 11-20 or over 20 years.
- 85% of questionnaire respondents completed printed questionnaires and 15% completed online.

Neighborhood Priorities

The following lists reflect the ranking of services, programs and issues from the questionnaire results:

Most-used programs and facilities:

- Branch Library
- Kelly Park Fields
- Belle Haven Pool
- Onetta Harris Community Center

- ○ Senior Center

Most important to have in the neighborhood:

- ○ After-school recreation programs for youth
- ○ Branch library
- ○ Health clinic and services
- ○ Community center / programs for all ages
- ○ Sports and recreation facilities

Most important issues:

- ○ Public safety and reducing crime
- ○ Educational support and opportunities for youth
- ○ Job training and employment programs
- ○ Physical health and health care
- ○ Quality affordable housing and preventing displacement

Other Findings

The questionnaire also asked residents about how to best affect change in the neighborhood and about interacting with the City. Key findings include:

- A majority (64%) of respondents support working with local developers and foundations to identify resources for the neighborhood.
- Almost half (49%) support having one group that represents the Belle Haven neighborhood, while 39% support having multiple groups working on specific topics.
- When asked about individual commitments, respondents expressed in the questionnaire that they were most willing to join a mailing list to get information (43%), attend City Council or commission meetings to share ideas (40%) and volunteer with a committee or action team (38%).
- When asked about barriers to participating in neighborhood improvement, the most popular response was that people are already busy with work and family commitments (50%).

Improvement Themes

In addition to data gathered from the questionnaires, input was collected from open-ended questions as well as during community conversations, neighborhood meetings and community workshops. (Meeting and workshop summaries are attached to this document.)

Through these many avenues, input began to coalesce around common themes. The primary areas of improvement identified by community members are:

- Public Safety and Crime Prevention
- Educational Quality and Access
- Economic Opportunity and Job Training
- City Services and Programs
- Neighborhood Infrastructure and Aesthetics
- Traffic and Safety
- Working Effectively with the City

These themes were used to organize potential action items for review and prioritization by the community during the June 20th Action Workshop. While some action items cross multiple topic areas, the themes listed above serve as the organizing tool for the Action Plan that follows.

From Vision to Action

Throughout the community outreach process, residents were asked about their top concerns and priorities. There was considerable agreement about the highest priorities, with many residents focusing on public safety and education. During community conversations and neighborhood meetings, community members were also asked to think of tangible actions that could be undertaken by a) residents b) the City and c) other partners to implement improvements in the neighborhood. Project staff collected these potential action items and organized them by improvement theme. These action items were presented as ideas generated from the community, not as assignments or commitments on the part of the City or neighborhood.

At the Community Action Workshop on June 20, 2013, residents prioritized the lists of action items and generated new ideas. Residents were asked to identify top-priority action items through a dot-ranking exercise. (The complete results of this exercise are attached to this document.) After voting and suggesting new action items, the large group split into three smaller groups to discuss the most popular topics – public safety and crime prevention; educational quality and access; and traffic and safety.

In each group, facilitators identified the 2 or 3 top priorities from the dot-ranking exercise and discussed what tangible steps residents could take to work towards these actions. Where appropriate, City staff and officials offered ways to support neighbors in those efforts. Groups also discussed potential leadership structures to work directly with the City or other partners to further

their goals. The results of the exercise and small group discussions are the foundation for the Action Plan below.

The following Action Plan emphasizes a small number of action items for each topic area, and focuses on "quick wins" so that residents and the City can take on a manageable number of actions with available resources while organizing towards longer-term goals. The top-priority actions items were based on community input at the Action Workshop. Other ideas generated throughout the process are included for future consideration.

Please note that the Goal and Next Step ordering are for reference purposes only.

Public Safety and Crime Prevention

Goal	Actions and Next Steps	Lead	Partners	Time Frame	Resources
1) Promote and create educational and recreational options for youth to help prevent crime	a) Identify and promote youth programs (e.g., teen leadership or community service programs)	Residents	• City Community Services Department	Short (6-12 months)	• City staff • Existing youth program directories and publications
	b) Pursue an outdoor community bulletin board to share information on programs	City	• CBOs • Residents	Short (6-12 months)	
2) Organize neighborhood watch groups	a) Contact MPPD to identify resources and next steps	Residents	• MPPD	Immediate (1-3 months)	• Local, state and national Neighborhood Watch groups
	b) Identify block captains to organize residents	Residents	• MPPD	Short (6-12 months)	• Belle Haven mailing list • Next Door
3) Participate in on-going dialogues with MPPD Chief and other law enforcement officers	a) Secure commitment from MPPD for regular dialogues; schedule and promote next event	Residents	• MPPD • Neighborhood Watch Groups • City	Ongoing (quarterly or bi-annual dialogues)	• City facilities / meeting space • Belle Haven mailing list

Public Safety and Crime Prevention

Goal	Actions and Next Steps	Lead	Partners	Time Frame	Resources
4) Host a workshop on burglary prevention	a) Schedule, plan and promote workshop	MPPD	• City • Neighborhood Watch Groups	Immediate or Short (<12 months)	
5) Develop a community advisory group to support public safety and crime prevention goals	a) Meet with MPPD and / or City to discuss potential advisory group structure and roles	Residents	• City • MPPD • Neighborhood Watch Groups	Short (6-12 months)	

Other Ideas for Consideration
- Improve lighting on homes and in public spaces
- Work with MPPD to add cameras or bring other surveillance technology to the neighborhood
- Improve code enforcement activities
- Create more ways for anonymous and safe reporting of suspicious or criminal activity
- Better publicize existing MPPD reporting and communication tools (e.g., Next Door)
- Support community policing

Traffic and Safety

Goal	Actions and Next Steps	Lead	Partners	Time Frame	Resources
6) Improve safety near schools and areas where children often walk by implementing the Safe Routes to Schools Plan and other actions	a) Recruit parents or neighbors to be volunteer crossing guards	Residents	• City • CBOs • RCSD	Short (6-12 months)	• Belle Haven mailing list • School communication tools
	b) Find the Safe Routes to Schools Plan and ask Ravenswood School District to post it online	Residents	• City – Public Works • RCSD	Immediate (1-3 months)	
	c) Convene a meeting of MPPD, Public Works, School District Staff and other partners to discuss priorities and next steps	City – Public Works	• RCSD • MPPD • Residents • Parents	Short (6-12 months)	• Safe Routes to Schools Plan

Traffic and Safety

Goal	Actions and Next Steps	Lead	Partners	Time Frame	Resources
7) Pursue incentives and programs to reduce driving	a) Research tools (including Survey Monkey and Next Door) to find out why and where people are driving	Residents	• City – Public Works	• Short (6-12 months)	• Next Door
	b) Identify and promote existing ride-share resources	Residents	• City – Public Works	• Short (6-12 months)	• City staff • Existing publications
	c) Explore opportunities for new or expanded ride-share resources (e.g., Zim Ride)	Residents	• Local employers	• Medium (12-24 months)	• 511.org • Transit agencies
	d) Pursue an outdoor bulletin board to share information	*See above under Public Safety and Crime Prevention*			

Other Ideas for Consideration
- Eliminate parking around bus stops to avoid congestion and conflicts
- Add speed bumps or other traffic calming measures around schools
- Investigate traffic controls to minimize congestion during peak hours
- Review bus stop locations and improve bus stop amenities

Educational Quality and Access

Goal	Actions and Next Steps	Lead	Partners	Time Frame	Resources
8) Investigate the option of joining Menlo Park City School District	a) Provide a consultant to work with the neighborhood and education committee	City	• Education Committee	• Short (6-12 months)	
	b) Identify a City Council member to champion the process	City – Community Services	• City Council	• Short (6-12 months)	
9) Improve and expand educational support programs within RCSD and Belle Haven	a) Convene a meeting with Belle Haven School to discuss education issues	RCSD	• Education Committee • Community School Funders	• Immediate (1-3 months)	
	b) Support free or affordable homework programs	Education Committee	• RCSD • City • Community School Funders • CBOs	• Medium (12 -24 months)	
	c) Encourage local non-profits to work with Belle Haven schools	Education Committee	• RCSD • City • CBOs	• Medium (12 -24 months)	

Educational Quality and Access

Goal	Actions and Next Steps	Lead	Partners	Time Frame	Resources
	d) Identify and organize volunteer counselors and tutors for students and families	Education Committee	• RCSD	• Short (6-12 months)	• Belle Haven mailing list
	e) Support service learning / community service in the neighborhood	Education Committee	• RCSD • CBOs • Local non-profits and businesses	• Medium (12 -24 months)	

Other Ideas for Consideration
- Grow volunteer tutoring programs with residents and area employees
- Identify or provide more work spaces for students

Economic Opportunity and Job Training

Goal	Actions and Next Steps	Lead	Partners	Time Frame	Resources
10) Pursue or expand partnerships with local businesses to support internships, mentoring or hiring opportunities	a) Establish neighborhood leader(s) or organization(s) for this effort	Residents	• City • CBOs	• Immediate (1-3 months)	• Belle Haven mailing list • Next Door
	b) Convene a meeting of neighborhood and community leaders with businesses or liaisons to identify opportunities and next steps	Residents	• Chamber of Commerce • Local business organizations • Local employers • CBOs	• Short (6-12 months)	
Increase service learning opportunities for students	*See above under Educational Quality and Access*				

Other Ideas for Consideration
- Continue to support Job Train
- Engage middle school students in community service through the City of Menlo Park
- Identify paid opportunities for community members to share services and expertise (e.g., classes at Onetta Harris)
- Promote summer employment and internships to Belle Haven youth
- Work with local employers to pursue priority hiring agreements and/or additional outreach to Belle Haven residents

City Services and Programs

Goal	Actions and Next Steps	Lead	Partners	Time Frame	Resources
11) Provide more afternoon and evening activities for youth and high-school age students including drop-in programs and places	*See above under Public Safety and Crime Prevention*				
12) Improve the quality and diversity of programs and classes	a) Gather and evaluate feedback on programs, classes and instructors provided in Belle Haven and other Menlo Park neighborhoods	City – Community Services	• Residents	• Short (6-12 months)	
	b) Identify top-priority improvements and implement changes as budget and resources allow	City – Community Services	• Residents	• Medium (12 -24 months)	

Other Ideas for Consideration
- Consider moving and/or improving the branch library
- Improve resident access to fields in the neighborhood
- Make more computers available in public places
- Increase the number and hours of current popular programs
- Ensure responsiveness to resident requests

Neighborhood Infrastructure and Aesthetics

Goal	Actions and Next Steps	Lead	Partners	Time Frame	Resources
13) Identity resources and programs to help property owners and residents maintain their property	a) Establish neighborhood leader(s) or organization(s) for this effort	Residents	• City • CBOs	• Immediate (1-3 months)	• Belle Haven mailing list
	b) Identify key maintenance issues and barriers to upkeep	Residents	• City •	• Short (6-12 months)	
	c) Inventory and promote existing resources	City	• Residents • CBOs	• Short (6-12 months)	
	d) Consider sliding scale or reduced fees for high-priority needs	City		• Medium (12 -24 months)	
14) Organize resident efforts to clean up the neighborhood and make minor property improvements	a) Host a meeting with resident leaders and recruit volunteers to plan and promote events	Residents	• CBOs • City	• Short (6-12 months)	• Belle Haven mailing list

Neighborhood Infrastructure and Aesthetics					
Goal	**Actions and Next Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Time Frame**	**Resources**
Other Ideas for Consideration • Enforce crew clean up after landscape maintenance • Provide more public trash cans and plastic bags for dog waste • Locate cameras along major streets • Locate a dog park in Belle Haven					

Working Effectively with the City

Goal	Actions and Next Steps	Lead	Partners	Time Frame	Resources
15) Meet with neighborhood groups to discuss neighborhood history and issues of distrust	a) Establish neighborhood leader(s) or organization(s) for this effort	Residents	• CBOs	• Immediate (1-3 months)	• Belle Haven mailing list
	b) Draft an agenda and request a meeting with City leadership	Residents	• CBOs	• Short (6-12 months)	
16) Consider providing a dedicated Council position for Belle Haven	a) Establish neighborhood leader(s) or organization(s) for this effort	Residents	• CBOs	• Immediate (1-3 months)	• Belle Haven mailing list
	b) Draft an agenda and request a meeting with City leadership	Residents	• CBOs	• Short (6-12 months)	
17) Disseminate information about City resources to support implementation of	a) Report annually on City grant funding of community organizations	City – Community Services	• CBOs	• Ongoing (annually)	• Belle Haven mailing list

Working Effectively with the City

Goal	Actions and Next Steps	Lead	Partners	Time Frame	Resources
Visioning Process action items	b) Provide information on plans and funding through regular neighborhood communications	City – Community Services	• CBOs • Residents	• Ongoing (quarterly)	• Belle Haven newsletter

Other Ideas for Consideration
- Create new forums for submitting ideas and issues to the City
- Create additional neighborhood action committees
- Increase awareness of existing opportunities for engaging and working with the City
- Identify resources to support Belle Haven residents' elections
- Consider using OHCC staff as liaisons and for referrals to City services and staff
- Create signs in both Spanish and English in Belle Haven

Recommended Process Improvements

In addition to the action items outlined by topic in the Action Plan, MIG recommends the following steps to improve the effectiveness of the Belle Haven / City partnership moving forward.

1. **Improve two-way communication**
   a. Continue to use the Belle Haven webpage on the City website and the newsletter for regular communications with Belle Haven residents and stakeholders. (City)
   b. Identify and use official channels for City communication (e.g., public comment at City Council meetings, Open Town Hall on website, etc). (Residents/CBOs)
   c. Identify neighborhood leaders, residents and/or City staff who can serve as liaisons to the City for residents who prefer not to use formal communications channels. (Residents/CBOs/City).
   d. Invite neighborhood leaders and residents to contribute to staff presentations to City Council to increase the authenticity of progress reports and action item updates. (City).
   e. Maintain and expand the Belle Haven master mailing list, and continue the practice of sending hard-copy materials to residents who do not use email. (City)
   f. Share City communications with neighbors, networks, family and colleagues through formal (e.g., Next Door) or informal channels. (Residents/CBOs)
   g. Continue to provide bi-lingual communications to the neighborhood as well as real-time interpretation for monolingual Spanish-speaking residents. (City)
   h. Identify volunteer interpreters who can support neighborhood participation for monolingual Spanish-speakers. (Residents/CBOs)

2. **Use non-electronic neighborhood communication tool(s) in addition to the Belle Haven webpage and e-blasts.**
   a. Pursue the installation and management of an outdoor community bulletin board. (City)
   b. Continue use of flyers and banners to promote neighborhood events (City).
   c. Disseminate information and materials to residents who do not have access to computers or the internet. (Residents/CBOs)

3. **Hold an annual Community Fair to build community identify, share information with residents, get input on key issues and report results.**

a. Identify and recruit partners (e.g., community-based organizations and foundations) to support an annual event. (City)

b. Volunteer to help organize, staff and promote annual event. (Residents/CBOs)

c. Include an event or activity that reports progress made on key issues and action items from the Visioning process. (Residents/CBOs/City)

4. **Ensure transparency and share information and data**

a. Document complaints and issues with City services (e.g., maintenance issues) including date, time, and actions taken. (Residents)

b. Make specific requests for information of the City (e.g., City Services budget or accounting of redevelopment funds). (Residents, CBOs)

c. Provide detailed information upon request or as needed to address confusion and questions about City processes. (City)

5. **Increase Belle Haven representation on City commissions and committees**

a. Identify and recruit Belle Haven residents for vacancies on City commissions, committees and other leadership roles. (Residents/CBOs)

b. Notify the Belle Haven community of commission vacancies and other opportunities as they arise, using established communication networks. (City)

c. Identify resources to support residents' campaigns for City Council or other elected positions. (CBOs)

6. **Sponsor a capacity-building workshop for Belle Haven residents to learn about City decision-making, communications, and public outreach practices and to identify appropriate points of contact.**

a. Promote workshop attendance and share information with those who could not attend (CBOs/Residents).

7. **Consider forming a Belle Haven Commission or other formal advisory body that draws from existing community organizations and reflects the diversity of the neighborhood.**

Attachments

- Community Snapshot
- Community Conversations
- Outreach and Communications Strategy
- Fact Sheet
- FAQ
- Questionnaire
- Questionnaire Summary
- Action Plan Priority Exercise Results
- Neighborhood and Community Workshop Flyers
- Neighborhood and Community Workshop Summaries
- Neighborhood and Community Workshop Presentations
- Newsletters