



October 20, 2015

Laura Clark – Renaissance West



Opportunity for a better life is often elusive in Charlotte, which suffers poor marks for upward mobility. An executive working to expand access to a more prosperous future here is Laura Clark.

Clark and her organization are forging an ambitious new community of hope on the footprint of one of the city's most destitute neighborhoods, Boulevard

Homes near Charlotte-Douglas International Airport.

Clark is executive director of Renaissance West Community Initiative. RWCI is developing a purpose-built neighborhood modeled after a successful project in Atlanta.

Growing economic inequality has been called the greatest threat to world peace by Carolinian Ben Bernanke, former Federal Reserve chairman. Bob Culbertson relayed that sentiment while introducing Clark to Charlotte Rotary.

Charlotte native Clark said she realizes she was lucky to grow up in stable circumstances that made it easier to succeed.

"The children in the West Boulevard area didn't choose their neighborhood," Clark said. Many are growing up in households headed by young, single females, she added.

RWCI is tackling low economic mobility by planning and constructing a holistic community that includes mixed-income housing, quality education and wraparound services, Clark said.

Renaissance West statistics are impressive: 334 units of mixed-income housing, including 110 senior apartments and 74 family apartments and townhouses completed and occupied. Opening by yearend are 150 additional family units. Planned are 60 market-rate apartments with monthly rents ranging from \$790 to \$1,000.

A cradle-to-career education approach will feature high-quality child care for children 0-5, a pre-kindergarten to 8th grade school and adult learning programs. A top-rated child development center will feature low teacher-student ratios with a developmentally appropriate and evidence-based curriculum.

Wraparound services RWCI will broker and align include programs for family support, early childhood and out-of-school enrichment, as well as health services and recreation and community engagement activities.

All this replaces Boulevard Homes where median income was \$8,000 and 80 percent of residents were unemployed. Only 49 percent of residents had a high school diploma or GED and just 14 percent of students were performing on grade level. Crime was rampant. Two Charlotte police officers were killed there in 1993. Former residents of Boulevard Homes get dibs on housing in Renaissance West, Clark said, but they must meet several qualifications, including a background check.

Renaissance West boasts \$90 million in public support, including Hope VI federal funding, as well as involvement from the Charlotte Housing Authority, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, the City of Charlotte and the Housing Trust Fund.

Now Clark and others are soliciting philanthropic contributions. Culbertson shared that iconic Charlotte leader Hugh McColl is among those raising money.

How will RWCI measure success? Clark listed housing stability, sustained and improved employment, school readiness, academic achievement, and community vibrancy rooted in healthy children and families.

RWCI is taking a two-generation approach based on both children and caregivers, said Clark, whose successful father was the son of a poor Italian immigrant. The long-term plan mirrors RWCI's Atlanta model, where Cousins Properties has been involved in successfully redeveloping East Lake for more than two decades.

"We have to stick with it," Clark said. "The worst thing that could happen is that 10 years from now we pass Renaissance West as say, 'we almost got it right.'"

Speaker Write Up: Elly Clary

Head Table: Irwin Carmichael, Kim McMillan, Tom Bartholomy, Bob Culbertson, Boyd Coggins, Sheila Cox; Invocation: Bill Loftin; Visitors & Guests: Mark Norman; Song: Ty Hands; AV: Jessica Dupree & Nikki Keith; Photos: Herb Harriss

Club News

Two new members were introduced this week: **Meg McElwain** welcomed **Lauri Eberhart**, a partner with Apollo Sports & Entertainment Law Group. Contact Lauri at lauri@apollogrouplaw.com. **Jerry Coughter** introduced **Rex Reynolds**, vice president, marketing with IBM. Reach out to Rex at rereynol@yahoo.com. Welcome to Charlotte Rotary.

Henry Bostic has retired from Premier (congrats) and can be reached at hbostic@carolina.rr.com; the latest good news story from Alto Cayma Peru is that Juan Jose Salhua Palma, who has been sponsored by Karen & **Herb Harriss** since he was twelve years old, has just learned he has been awarded a "full ride" Rotary scholarship to a university in Spain. Jim Hintz (hintzes3@aol.com) is glad to answer your questions or tell you how you can support the people and projects of Alto Cayma.

John Smarge, Past Rotary International Director, will be the keynote speaker at the District's Foundation Banquet, November 12, 2015 at the Historic Langtree Plantation in Mooresville. 6PM reception; 7PM dinner and program; \$50 per person. Sandy can handle your reservation if you are interested in attending.

Posted for Membership (comments to Rotary Office by 10/27/15)

Kay Peninger, President & CEO, Charlotte Museum of History (Museum, History)

Sponsor: Meg McElwain Endorsed: Bob Finley and Mike Rash

100 Projects Update

(1) we need 5 (minimum) Rotarians working a project for it to count toward our goal of completing 100 projects. (2) let Sandy know if you have signed up for anything.

10/31/15

Airport Run; 8AM and 2 have signed up (Davan Cloninger dcloninger@lifespanservices.org)

Feed the Hungry; 9:30 – 11:30 Cabarrus Arena & Events Center (zero signed up)

11/06/15

Veteran's Luncheon; 11:30AM and 4 have signed up; Matthews Rotary (Mal Earles mal.earles@edwardjones.com)

11/10/15

Safe Alliance Luncheon; need 5 table captains (Ron Kimble rkimble@ci.charlotte.nc.us)

11/14/15

Habitat (Restore 8AM-5PM) (Build 8AM-5PM) (book donations dropped off at Rotary meetings); Will Barnhardt (tectextiles@aol.com)

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS (10/20/15 – 10/26/15)

10/21 Leland Park

10/22 Louis Watts

10/23 John zumBrunnen

10/24 Jerry Walters, Charlie Greer

10/25 Jim Kelley

10/26 Wes Sturges

UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES (10/20/15 – 10/26/15)

10/20 Shelley & Chris Kemper

10/23 Sandy & Jim Osborne

Visitors & Guests	14
Club Members	166
Total	180
Percentage	59.7%

MEMBERSHIP

06/30/2015 319

10/20/2015 320

Net Increase: +1

New Members: Larry Broome, Lauri Eberhart, Rex Reynolds

Resignations: Tony Pinkard, Frank Watson, Brad Cansler, Marie Jaffe, Penny Hefner, Amber Brown, Nick Simonette, Tiffani Tedder

Guests: Kim Brattain, Robert High, Skyler Serenbetz, Robert Norris, Wayne Cooper, Ryan Herbin, Wangzhong Lu, Rebecca Senhauser, Tayuanee Dewberry, Carey Kuznar, Jay Potter

UPCOMING LUNCHEONS (www.charlotterotary.org and click on the events tab)

10/27 – Owen J. Furuseth, UNCC, Upward Mobility in the Area **Meet at Convention Center**

11/03 – Bill Barnhardt, The Rotary Foundation

11/10 - Excellence in Leadership Award **Myers Park Country Club**

Photos from our luncheons and other events can be found on [Flickr](#) [Click here](#)





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