



# Finding Home

## How Do We Create Connection and Belonging?



# Host Kit

And so grounding in the feeling of belonging as this very fundamental human need, we need to know we belong. It's part of how we know that we're safe. It's how we know that we can show up and be our whole selves. It's how we know we can actually show up and be a learner.

*Dr. Susie Wise,  
Design for Belonging*

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There are no quick fixes to the challenges we face as a community. Progress happens when residents, organizations, neighborhoods, and local government work collaboratively and creatively. By coming together, we can lay the foundation for more sustainable solutions.

When we listen and learn from each other, we have the power to impact communities and lives.

This is what **On the Table CLT** is all about.



## Introduction

Thank you for participating in this gathering as part of the reactivation of On the Table CLT (OTT). The return of OTT signals the continued need for community dialogue and CBI's ongoing commitment to creating spaces where every voice can shape Charlotte's future. This toolkit offers key questions and strategies to consider as you create a space for people of various national, ethnic, racial and other various backgrounds to share ideas together to build a more fair and just community where everyone belongs.

**Everyone has a story that connects them to this place we now call home. What is yours? How does your experience shape the community? How can it help build momentum for a future where all residents feel they belong? Let's explore our experiences by sharing through conversation.**

We normally encourage 60 to 90 minute mixed-group conversations about how we define home and belonging in our community. You are free to adapt that to fit any time constraints. We suggest you be intentionally inclusive – invite a new neighbor or colleague who is not usually a part of your personal space or professional networks.



### *A Note on Charlotte City Council Resolution*

*July 22, 2019; August 25, 2025*

In 2019, Charlotte's City Council affirmed that our city should be "welcoming and inviting" of people from "diverse... backgrounds," but the 2025 resolution no longer includes this language (City of Charlotte, 2019, 2025).

**This change makes our OTT conversations more important than ever as we gather to listen, learn, and understand one another. By coming together, we can continue to uphold inclusive values and build a stronger Charlotte where sustainable solutions emerge through collaboration.**

Charlotte is an evolving city; it is our desire to be an inclusive community where everyone thrives – by intentionally reducing the impact of segregation and expanding relationships across differences, known as social capital. Many believe we have an integrated community social fabric, but studies show this is not always the case. Refer to the insert included with your host kit for some statistical data about Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Whether you are a native Charlottean, a Mecklenburg County resident, or new to the community, we invite you to join us as we share, listen and act.

### Take A Moment To Arrive

🕒 10 Min.



#### **Overview (Please read aloud):**

The word "home" often generates a feeling of belonging. We began today's session with an acknowledgment of Charlotte's original inhabitants. Take a moment to silently reflect on what makes Charlotte-Mecklenburg home for you. Think of a time when you've either felt connected or disconnected within your community. What creates a sense of belonging for you? Why do you feel you belong here? Based on Charlotte-Mecklenburg's evolving demographics, who "belongs" here now?



## Define

Ask each guest to think about the definitions of home, immigration, and migration. In their own words, either verbally or in writing, invite them to share their short definitions.

# Connection and Belonging

## Guiding your conversation at the table

🕒 30 Min.



Ask each guest to answer the following questions silently. Instruct them that they may use the Notes section on their handout to clarify and record their thoughts. Each guest should take about two minutes to share a story about finding home in Charlotte during a time of change – whether as a native-born person, a longtime resident, or as a newcomer from another part of the U.S. or from another country.

## How do we create Belonging?

*Each guest should be encouraged to respond and can use the handout as a reference if they have recorded any thoughts they wanted to share.*



### Things that make you feel welcomed in a community

Think about the communities you are a part of such as places of worship, school, work, your neighborhood, or even within your family.



### What connects you personally to an ever-changing Charlotte-Mecklenburg?

Describe Home. Give one short example of a person/place/thing that makes you feel connected.



### Can you recall a specific time in Charlotte-Mecklenburg that you were aware of being less connected or disconnected from community?

Briefly share about a specific time when you have felt disconnected. What did you do to reconnect?

## What barriers may keep us from experiencing connected communities?



**We want to understand what it means to feel connected and belong.**  
Ask participants to read each barrier aloud.

### Barriers & Topics

- **Affordability:** Whether it's housing, groceries, shelter, healthcare, or the ability to get around, affordability determines whether you can pay to get by day-to-day.
- **Resilience:** The ability to bounce back from tough situations, like sickness or stress, while continuing to function, adapt, and recover.
- **Navigating Community Support:** The way in which people identify, connect, and engage with public support structures, services, and resources in the community to reach their goals.



Ask

### Do any of these topics resonate with your experience?

We recognize that some issues are polarizing. After listening to participants for a year, we have identified specific barriers related to affordability, resilience, and navigating community supports.



Say

**Each table may choose to explore all three barriers or go deeper into the one that feels most relevant to your group's experiences.**  
Start from your lived experience. We are here to learn from one another.



Ask

**Have you gained new insight or perspective from the group sharing – if yes, how so?**



Ask

**What can you do as an individual to ensure others have access and opportunity to succeed in our community?**  
This could be work, housing, and educationally.



Ask

**What strengths can we leverage, individually and collectively, to take concrete steps as a community to expand belonging for all?**



### Group Activity

Identify one Charlotte or Mecklenburg County area-specific action we can take as a group together in future months. Share your plans for community-led action and impact with us!

# Host Suggestions

On the Table CLT can take place over coffee, breakfast, lunch, dinner, or anytime at your convenience. Don't forget to register your event at [www.cbicharlotte.org](http://www.cbicharlotte.org) and complete the [Host Commitment Form](#). Our approach is intentionally open-ended to encourage On the Table CLT participants to share varied perspectives, listen carefully to each other's stories, and to act with each other in mind. Our time together allows us to identify community strengths, challenges and make real plans to take action.



## Super Host (Lead Convener)

Community Building Initiative  
hosts 450 Community Partners  
on Dec. 12, 2025.



## Community Partners

Attend Dec. 12, 2025 at  
Friendship Missionary at 8 am.



## Champions

Host 31-100 participants  
throughout the day on December  
12th or at your convenience.



## Hosts

Host 8-30 participants  
throughout the day on December  
12th or at your convenience.

# Helpful Hints



Do

- ✓ Make time for everyone to participate, hosts must watch the clock!
- ✓ Invite guests to follow-up and expand on ideas.
- ✓ Acknowledge that agreement and consensus may not be the goal of your gathering.
- ✓ Resist centering one story. This is a space of sharing, so share time, space, and possibly food!
- ✓ Share your photos, videos and stories on December 12, using the hashtag #FindingHomeCLT, along with your zip code, on X, Facebook, Instagram, Blue Sky, and LinkedIn.



Don't

- ✗ Micromanage the conversation; let it flow freely.
- ✗ Be judgmental or dismissive of any person's comments or ideas.
- ✗ Promote argument or unproductive debate.
- ✗ Don't hesitate to ask if you have questions. We have a team ready to help!



Contact us **with any questions at**  
[communications@cbicharlotte.org](mailto:communications@cbicharlotte.org)

# Let's Take Action!

On the Table CLT was initiated to spark dialogue but more importantly to catalyze community-led action. Now that we have gathered, let's share the ideas that sprang from our conversations with each other! Share your ideas, reflections, and next steps using the hashtags #FindingHomeCLT, and include your #zipcode so we can see how communities across Charlotte-Mecklenburg are mobilizing for impact.

Together, we can commit to creating the community and home we desire. We can ensure that all Charlotte-Mecklenburg residents feel welcomed, seen, and truly at home.

Here are a few things your table can do to impact this work after today:

- ✔ **Keep the dialogue alive in your everyday spaces** – Share one idea or quote from this conversation in your workplace, faith group, or neighborhood circle. A five-minute conversation at the start of a meeting or a casual conversation over coffee can spark meaningful dialogue.
- ✔ **Make space for voices that are often unheard** – Be intentional about asking whose perspective is missing. Practice listening before responding, and consider how you can use your access. Use your platform to highlight stories and experiences that usually go unseen. Sometimes leadership means stepping back so that others can be heard.
- ✔ **Facilitate regular touchpoints** – Consider organizing a short “lunch and learn” or informal check-in with colleagues or friends to continue talking about belonging, opportunity, and community. Don't wait for a formal event to connect with your community.
- ✔ **Make volunteering and local impact visible** – The next time you're in a meeting or gathering, highlight a local organization doing meaningful work. Even sharing a link or flyer can open doors for someone who wants to get involved but doesn't know where to start.
- ✔ **Start with one small, personal action** – Ask yourself: “What is one action I could take tomorrow to move toward the community I want to see?” Even the smallest of efforts moves us to a better tomorrow. Share this question with others and invite them to do the same.
- ✔ **Fulfill your civic duties** – Actively engage in civic life. Participate in every election, especially local ones, and stay informed about issues that affect your community. Attend school board or city council meetings to learn and share perspectives. Small acts like reminding a neighbor about voter registration and sharing nonpartisan resources help strengthen participation and ensure everyone's voice is represented.
- ✔ **Stay connected with Community Building Initiative** – Stay up to date with CBI through [www.cbicharlotte.org](http://www.cbicharlotte.org) and follow all socials at CBI Charlotte. Encourage coworkers, neighbors, and friends to join CBI's work.



WAKE UP • INTERRUPT • STEP UP™

[CBICHARLOTTE.ORG](http://CBICHARLOTTE.ORG)





## How Do We Create Connection & Belonging?



### Where do we go next?



- Nearly 10% of households in Mecklenburg County, or about 100,000 people, have no internet access at all, and 24.8% don't have broadband access.
- Mecklenburg County has nearly every type of recreational amenity, including: 250 athletic fields, 240 miles of trails, 149 tennis courts, 109 basketball courts, 16 community gardens, 14 fishing piers, 6 dog parks, 5 golf courses, and 3 senior centers.
- In fiscal year 2020, the 20 library locations in Mecklenburg County were visited over 2.5 million times and lent over 5.6 million items. The number of library card holders shows a steady increase from 228,577 in 2016 to 234,087 in 2018.

### What got us here?



- Unemployment on January 1, 2020, was 3.7% in the Charlotte Metro Area; it spiked in April 2020 to a high of 13.4% (COVID). In January 2025, unemployment was 3.9%.
- Charlotte added 23,423 residents between July 2023 and July 2024 ~1,952 per month, 64 per day. Total population in July 2024: 9473,476. Sixth fastest growing City in the nation (by population). 14th largest City in the nation (by population).
- In 2014, Charlotte ranked 50 out of 50 for economic mobility for the largest 50 community zones in the US. In a 2024 follow-up study, Charlotte ranked 38 out of 50.

### What's in the ground?



- The percentage of adults in Mecklenburg County without a high school diploma or equivalent was 10% in 2019, down from 12% in 2010.
- There were 202 pharmacies in Mecklenburg County in 2021, down from 213 in 2016.
- The average home price in Mecklenburg County was \$365,860 in 2021, up 73.2% from 2013.
- Between 1960 and 1967, Brooklyn was demolished in five stages as part of an urban renewal project. This displaced 1,007 families (mostly Black) and destroyed 1,480 homes and 216 businesses, with not a single new residential unit built to replace them.

