

Collaborate Northeast

A Strategic Plan for the Backbone Organization to Facilitate Implementation of the Northeast Wilmington Revitalization Plan: 2019-2030

The Northeast

Wilmington's Northeast Community encompasses three census tracts northeast of the Brandywine Creek with a population exceeding 9,300. The community is predominantly African-American (89%) and is among the most socially vulnerable in the Mid-Atlantic: U.S. Census data reports that 38% of Northeast households are living in poverty and almost 25% of the area's housing units are vacant. The Northeast Community, however, also includes a variety of community assets--geographic assets, like the Brandywine River, the parks system, and a prime location within the regional transportation system, as well as people-based assets like the faith based community, civic associations, community centers, job training centers, medical facilities, schools, and the residents themselves. The community has been the subject of many prior planning studies—and several on-going analyses—that have provided recommendations for community improvement regarding revitalization/redevelopment, the Brandywine Riverfront, brownfields mitigation/reuse, and key transportation routes.



Blueprint Planning

Beginning in 2015, the Northeast community chose to undertake the Northeast Blueprint Revitalization Initiative based on the official Blueprint Communities® process, a program of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh supported by the University of Delaware

Center for Community Research & Service. This effort mobilized the community around a comprehensive look at revitalizing Northeast Wilmington and at facilitating the implementation of the community's priority projects and programs from the many prior and on-going studies. Additionally, the Blueprint planning process brought the community to the table in an organized and effective way that empowers a collaborative approach to redevelopment. The Northeast Wilmington Community Revitalization Plan--completed in 2017--identified five strategic focus areas the community believes are vital to improving the Northeast neighborhoods: 1) Community Economy, 2) Health/Healthy Living, 3) Housing, 4) Infrastructure (including environmental issues), and 5) Youth Development/Engagement.

For each focus area, the Blueprint Plan identifies a vision, goals, and short and long-term initiatives to be advanced by residents in collaboration with key partners including the City of Wilmington and non-profit organizations and agencies working throughout the Northeast. The original Blueprint Plan, the Northeast Wilmington Community Revitalization Plan, envisioned for each focus area, a vision, goals and short and long-term initiatives to be advanced by residents and key partners or stakeholders collaboratively. This would address

multiple issues at a time and would ensure projects were not working at cross purposes. The model of collective impact was chosen as the future means for driving forward positive change in the NE community.

During 2019, the Northeast Blueprint planning group undertook two parallel processes to clarify the priorities to revitalize Northeast Wilmington. The two processes worked somewhat interactively: one prioritizing potential activities for a variety of participating organizations to pursue; the other establishing a new entity to facilitate, coordinate, and communicate those activities for maximum collective impact and leveraging of resources.

In one, Whitman, Requardt & Associates, LLP was hired to integrate the results of all previous planning process into one Northeast Wilmington Implementation Plan for the Blueprint Initiative. This Implementation Plan identifies key strategies and partners for advancing the vision and goals of the Northeast Wilmington Community Revitalization Plan, as well as advancing the goals of ongoing work associated with several planning efforts in Northeast Wilmington. This work included a series of stakeholder meetings for each of the five strategic focus areas with Blueprint Team members, City of Wilmington officials, local institutions, residents, business owners, and other interested stakeholders.

The other, staffed by Urban Partners, engaged representatives of the Blueprint Initiative, Wilmington City and Delaware State agencies, the Northeast faith-based community, and housing and small business support organizations in a process to create this Strategic Plan for a new Backbone Organization to lead the implementation of the strategies, goals and activities outlined in the Northeast Wilmington Revitalization Plan. With so many different revitalization initiatives being discussed for the Northeast Wilmington area, this new entity is needed to act as the organizer and leader for advancing Blueprint strategies through collective impact.

Collaborate Northeast

Collaborate Northeast is the entity envisioned to fill this backbone role.

As a Collective Impact organization, Collaborate Northeast will facilitate and strategically organize the activities of relevant groups in Northeast Wilmington to accomplish a population-wide outcome. This includes embedding community member involvement in decisions being made in Northeast Wilmington. Collaborate Northeast will have the staff--separate from the participating collaborative partners--to plan, manage and support initiatives through facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting and handling logistical and administrative details to move the many stakeholder and community projects forward.

This Strategic Plan lays out the mechanics of operation for Collaborate Northeast to spearhead this implementation effort.

Mission & Approach

The mission of Collaborate Northeast is to coordinate and facilitate place-based redevelopment in Northeast Wilmington in a sustainable, creative and community-driven manner to ensure that economic and environmental resiliency is incorporated into every aspect of revitalization so that every resident can enjoy the highest quality of life. The organization will facilitate collaboration among governmental, non-profit, community-based, and private sector organizations to carry out the community's priority activities. Ongoing community outreach and engagement will guide this implementation.



As the Backbone Organization guiding this mission, Collaborate Northeast will emphasize the collective impact approach by:

- assuring that all participants share a vision of change and pursue a **Common Agenda**;
- encouraging all participating organizations undertake **Shared Measurement Systems**—collecting data and measuring results consistently on a short list of community indicators;
- coordinating **Mutually Reinforcing Activities** among all participants toward achieving the objectives of the Northeast Wilmington Implementation Plan; and
- pursuing **Continuous Communication** among participants and with all segments of the Northeast Wilmington community.

The collective impact approach will be leveraged to coordinate program implementation and mixed-income development in order to grow economic diversity within the community that will benefit existing and new residents alike.

Strategic Plan

Four strategic initiatives will be pursued by Collaborate Northeast during its first five years in pursuit of its mission and outcomes.

I. Organizational Capacity & Structure. Create, fund, staff & organize Collaborate Northeast to effectively engage the community, carry out this Strategic Plan, and update the Plan periodically.

Key Strategic Elements and Actions

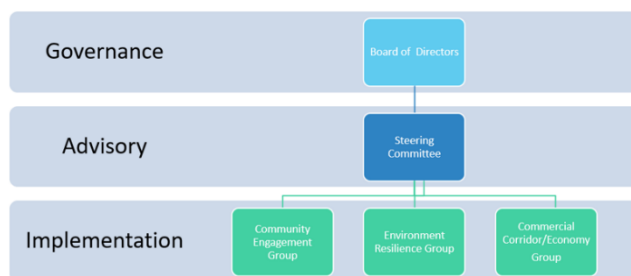
1. Create the organization/entity
2. Raise funds to support the core organization
3. Develop staff capacity
4. Establish baseline metrics and track performance

II. Community Engagement. Facilitate and coordinate on-going community engagement through effective communications with the community and community participation in all activities. Facilitate the community goal to create a sense of place and a “brand” for Northeast Wilmington. Coordinate a robust calendar of community events and participation mechanisms.

Key Strategic Elements and Actions

1. Create and support a Community Engagement work group
2. Develop and implement an effective communications process with the Northeast community
3. Coordinate a robust calendar of community events
4. Advance strategies for improving community health, safety, economics, and engagement
5. Monitor, advocate for, and communicate to the community the public sector’s progress in implementing key infrastructure improvements & targeted site reuse

Possible Collaborate Northeast Structure



III. Community Development Along Key Commercial Corridors. Foster the growth of commercial corridors, especially along North Market Street and Northeast Boulevard, that work for residents through coordinating public investments in the transportation network, encouraging investment by business and property owners, and facilitating access to the resources necessary for revitalization.

Key Strategic Elements and Actions

1. Create and support a Key Commercial Corridors work group
2. Encourage business/property owner associations or collaborative groups for North Market Street and for the Northeast Boulevard Corridor
3. Encourage property improvement and business/services expansion
4. Encourage public sector investment in priority improvements and business development

IV. Resilience Through Housing Redevelopment. Support private residential rehabilitation & renovation and public green stormwater infrastructure investments, especially in the area between Brown-Burton Winchester Park and the Brandywine River. Support development opportunities that respond to the priorities identified by the community.

Key Strategic Elements and Actions

1. Create and support a Resilience work group
2. Advance comprehensive housing redevelopment strategies
3. Advance investment in connectivity to recreational resources and in green infrastructure to increase neighborhood resilience
4. Advance brownfields redevelopment to support green infrastructure and housing strategies
5. Track collective progress/success of implementation