



Entry Form 2018 Annual Awards for Program Excellence

Entry Deadline: Friday, June 15, 2018, Midnight ET

Each entry must include a completed entry form. Please complete a form for each entry your HFA is submitting. The completed entry form will become the first page of your entry.

This form is a fillable PDF. Type your information into the entry form and save it as a PDF. Please do not write on or scan the entry form. **Questions: Call 202-624-7710 or email awards@ncsha.org.**

Entry Title: Enter your entry's title exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the awards program.

Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund

Category: Homeownership

Subcategory: Encouraging New Production

Entry Summary: A 15-word (max) summary of the program, project, or practice you are entering. Program will lead to homeownership for 180+ families while rejuvenating blighted neighborhoods.

HFA: Delaware State Housing Authority

HFA Staff Contact: Dan Shortridge, director of public relations

Phone: 302-739-0271

Email: dans@destatehousing.com

Visual Aids:

Are you mailing to NCSHA 10 copies of any visual aids that cannot be included in your entry PDF? Yes No

Payment:

- My HFA is mailing a check to NCSHA.
- My HFA is emailing the credit card authorization form to awards@ncsha.org.



Delaware State Housing Authority

Category: Homeownership: Encouraging New Production

Entry: Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund

PROGRAM INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

While most of Delaware's communities have largely recovered from the effects of the Great Recession, some neighborhoods and pockets still have not yet fully bounced back, experiencing high crime, low homeownership rates, and large numbers of vacant, abandoned or foreclosed properties. Many studies have documented the impact of these blighted properties on increased public safety risks, higher costs to local government, and a reduction in surrounding property values, perpetuating the cycle. In severely distressed neighborhoods, poor housing stock and low home values make redevelopment very difficult. There is no healthy real estate market; almost all sales are distressed sales, if there are any at all. And the cost to purchase and rehab properties in these areas outstrip the market value.

These are the complex challenges that the Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund was designed to overcome. Created from the bank settlements, the program puts money directly into these targeted communities – removing, renovating or replacing vacant, abandoned or foreclosed homes and then selling them to low-income residents who then become homeowners and stakeholders in the new neighborhood. This locally-driven, block-by-block approach to community development and new home production is working in communities up and down the state. Thus far, Strong Neighborhoods has used \$8.2 million from settlement funding to leverage \$26.6 million in other investment to create more than 181 new homes. To continue the excellent work of the Strong Neighborhoods initiative, the Governor has dedicated an additional \$2 million in his proposed budget for fiscal year 2019, which will allow for work on 40-50 new homes.

- **AN INNOVATIVE INITIATIVE**

The inception of Strong Neighborhoods was part of a strategic effort by DSHA staff to prioritize community development, bring homeownership back to distressed neighborhoods, and continue the important work of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. While fighting blight caused by the recession was a primary motivator, the DSHA team recognized that simply removing problem properties would not solve the issue, and that new housing production for persons of low to moderate income was the key to a long-term solution. Homebuyers must have incomes at or below 120 percent of the area median income. DSHA additionally recognized that a one-size-fits-all approach would not be appropriate, and allowed multiple eligible uses for the funds, including acquisition, demolition, financing, land banking, owner-occupied rehab, redevelopment and rehabilitation, all with the ultimate goal of increasing homeownership.

- **A REPLICABLE PROGRAM**

This program is replicable by any HFA or state or local government with funding and the twin goals of fighting blight and increasing homeownership production. DSHA did not hire new staff or use a vendor or consultant, but instead leveraged its existing expertise in financing and funding administration to develop the guidelines, applications, and review process for the program. The block-by-block,



Delaware State Housing Authority

Category: Homeownership: Encouraging New Production

Entry: Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund

neighborhood-centric approach also can be executed as funding becomes available, and does not require a large pool of up-front funds to get such a program off the ground.

- **RESPONDING TO AN IMPORTANT STATE HOUSING NEED**

Delaware's most recent Housing Needs Assessment reported that the state has an estimated 18,000+ "substandard" housing units, which includes homes which are vacant and abandoned. From a policy standpoint, state leaders recognized the need to fight blight in a targeted way, and used the bank settlement funds as a tool to increase homeownership during some lean state budget years. While Delaware currently has one of the highest homeownership rates in the country, at 70 percent in 2017, the economic recession and housing bust nevertheless left many families who would have been homebuyers in precarious financial positions. The Strong Neighborhoods initiative targeted assistance to homebuyers with incomes at or below 120 percent of AMI.

- **DEMONSTRATING MEASURABLE BENEFITS TO HFA-TARGETED CUSTOMERS**

Twenty families with incomes at or below 120 percent of AMI have purchased Strong Neighborhoods homes. That is a population which struggles to find affordable housing and locate quality homeownership opportunities. Additionally, homebuyers must receive a minimum of eight hours of homeownership and financial literacy training provided by a HUD-certified housing counseling agency, ensuring that these families receive a continuum of services and are well-prepared for the tasks of being a homeowner.

- **A PROVEN TRACK RECORD OF SUCCESS IN THE MARKETPLACE**

Twenty of the Strong Neighborhoods homes, or about 11 percent, have been sold as of June 2018, serving families in Wilmington, New Castle County, Dover and Laurel. The majority of the funded homes are still in the pipeline – in the acquisition phase; with demolition in progress; or with construction or redevelopment currently under way. The majority of the completed homes have occurred in unincorporated New Castle County along the Route 9 corridor, near an area which the county government has made a priority with other investments including a new library. Another successful pocket has been in central Dover, the state capital, which has seen partnerships from three local nonprofit organizations turn crumbling, rotting houses into vibrant new homes.

- **PROVIDING BENEFITS THAT OUTWEIGH COSTS**

In the two settlement funding rounds, requests far outstripped resources, demonstrating the need and value of this program in Delaware's distressed communities. The total funding from the bank settlements was \$8.2 million, leveraging \$34.1 million in total investment to create at least 181 homes across the state. That is a baseline home number that will increase as production rises and units come on line, as the SNHF is a revolving fund that can receive additional revenues from net proceeds of home sales. The average per-unit funding is about \$45,000, a relatively small but hugely important investment.



Delaware State Housing Authority

Category: Homeownership: Encouraging New Production

Entry: Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund

The additional \$2 million allocated in the Governor's proposed budget for FY19 will allow work on between 40 and 50 new homes.

- **DEMONSTRATING EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES**

The program was allocated a total of \$8.2 million from two settlements, and held two separate application rounds. During those rounds, there were requests for millions more than what was available, clearly demonstrating the need. Without adding staff, DSHA used its expertise in funding and financing to craft guidelines and applications, and the partners – nonprofit agencies and local municipalities – leveraged their experience and local knowledge to perform the work. DSHA also developed infrastructure to ensure strong stewardship of the funds and accountability for program outcomes. Strong Neighborhoods was created alongside the Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund, administered by the state economic development office to improve resources for at-risk juveniles and adolescents, address unmet needs of high-crime areas, and fund projects by smaller organizations that may not traditionally receive grant funds. DSHA has a representative on the NBBF board.

- **EFFECTIVELY EMPLOYING PARTNERSHIPS**

SNHF was a partnership from the very beginning, as DSHA worked with the General Assembly and the Delaware Department of Justice to devote bank settlement funds directly to this effort. The applicants – our partner agencies and municipalities – were encouraged to work together and submit joint applications using a strong lead agency. The awardees to date include the Wilmington Housing Partnership; the Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank; Interfaith Community Housing of Delaware; Habitat for Humanity of New Castle County; the Inter-Neighborhood Foundation; the New Castle County Department of Community Services; Central Delaware Habitat for Humanity; NCALL Research; the Milford Housing Development Corporation; and the Laurel Redevelopment Corporation. The partners know the conditions on the ground, are already active in these communities, and they can best put the funding to work for the maximum impact.

- **ACHIEVING STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

A vital part of DSHA's mission is to provide quality, affordable housing opportunities for Delawareans, and homeownership is one of two core services in that mission. The current DSHA strategic plan identifies advancing and sustaining homeownership as one of four priorities for the agency, with the objective of expanding homeownership programs to improve access and affordability. When completed and sold, the Strong Neighborhoods initiative will lead to homes for more than 180 Delaware families who might not otherwise have achieved that goal in formerly blighted areas that would not otherwise have been redeveloped. That is a win-win for both individual homebuyers and their new neighborhoods.



Delaware State Housing Authority
Category: Homeownership: Encouraging New Production
Entry: Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund

VISUAL AIDS

1. Photographs from Strong Neighborhood sites:



DSHA Director Anas Ben Addi speaks at a demolition event on Bennett Street in Wilmington in March.

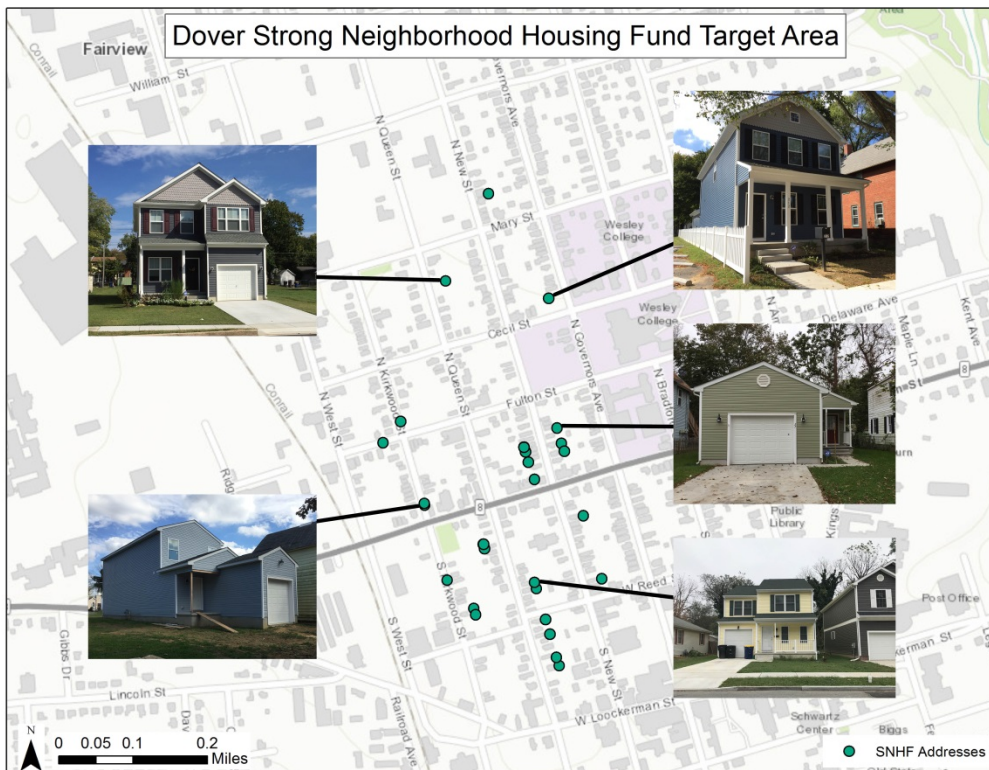


The Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank carried out another demolition in Wilmington in January.



Governor John Carney, center, on a neighborhood revitalization tour in fall 2017 with representatives from NCALL Research, Central Delaware Habitat for Humanity, and the Milford Housing Development Corporation, which are all active in Strong Neighborhoods projects in central Dover.

2. Map of Central Dover Strong Neighborhoods projects as an example of the impact.



3. Media coverage from spring 2017 funding announcement and coverage of progress in Central Dover.

Dover, Milford entities receive \$1.5M in housing grants

Funds to help rebuild neighborhoods and get low-income families in homes

By Mike Finney

Delaware State News

WILMINGTON — Dover's NCALL Research and the Milford Housing Development Corporation will receive a combined \$1.5 million in funding for new houses from Delaware's Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund on Monday.

NCALL will receive \$1 million for 20 new housing units in Dover and Milford Housing Development Corporation will get \$500,000 for 10 new units in Milford.

The money to be received by the Kent County entities is part of the Delaware Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund, which announced a total of nine projects statewide that will receive \$5.5 million in funding on Monday to address building new or rehabilitating older housing units.

"This funding will directly help families, cities and towns across Delaware become stronger," Gov. John Carney said. "When we put homes together, they become neighborhoods, safe places enriched by diversity where we collectively share in our cities' growth and successes.

"When families step into houses, they become homes — residences of refuge, centers of companionship, locations of learning and places of worship. Home is where we celebrate our accomplishments and draw

upon strength and support to face our challenges."

The investment of more than \$5 million in housing, which is being made in Dover, Milford, Laurel, Wilmington and New Castle County, will leverage an estimated \$15 million in private or other funding sources.

All homes will be sold to families or individuals with incomes at or below 120 percent of the area median income.

"These projects will be helping families and individuals who need housing, while strengthening the neighborhoods in which they are located, revitalizing properties that have fallen into disrepair and bringing people back to live in them," said Delaware State Housing Authority Director Anas Ben Addi.

The money received by NCALL Research will help the organization with its Restoring Central Dover initiative in building new houses and restoring civic pride in the city's Downtown Development District.

"The city of Dover is growing, it's on the move, we're revitalizing a lot of the old housing that we had and providing not just a place to stay for people, but a home," Dover Mayor Robin R. Christiansen said.

"When you have people who have homes and a vested interest in the community it's going to provide for pride in the entire community, as well as public safety."

The MHDC will use \$500,000 to create 10 new housing units in the city of Milford's downtown area.

The effort is aligned with Milford's

Rivertown Rebirth 2025 plan, said Milford Mayor Bryan Shupe.

"Increasing homeownership will help strengthen our community and support our downtown," he said. "Neighborhoods succeed because of the people living and working there, and we are pleased to partner in this effort."

The Laurel Redevelopment Corporation also received \$500,000 for 10 new housing units in Laurel.

Also announced was \$475,000 in funding for the Vacant Property Maintenance Fund, which will help local governments clean up vacant and abandoned properties.

Wilmington will receive \$175,000 and New Castle, Kent and Sussex counties will each receive \$100,000.

The first round of funding from the Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund was allocated in 2015, with \$2.7 million going to build or rehabilitate 68 housing units in Wilmington, Dover and New Castle County.

Mr. Addi said that applicants requested more than \$8.2 million, but not all projects could be funded.

"The level of interest remains high, showing the strong involvement and commitment that our partners and others have to supporting neighborhoods in need," he said. "We hope that these successes will

Delaware's Strong Neighborhoods Fund Projects

- Kent County, \$1.5 million: NCALL Research, \$1 million for 20 new units in Dover; Milford Housing Development Corporation, \$500,000 for 10 new units in Milford.

- Sussex County, \$500,000: Laurel Redevelopment Corporation, \$500,000 for 10 new units in Laurel.

- New Castle County, \$1.3 million: New Castle County Department of Community Services, \$1.3 million for 10 new units and 17 rehabbed ones along the Route 9 corridor.

- City of Wilmington, lead applicant Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank, \$2.1 million: Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank, \$645,000 to acquire blighted properties and remove them; Wilmington Housing Partnership, \$205,000 for four new units and two rehabbed; Interfaith Community Housing of Delaware, \$550,000 for eight new units and three rehabbed units in Wilmington; Inter-Neighborhood Foundation, \$200,000 for four rehabbed units in Wilmington; Habitat for Humanity of New Castle County, \$550,000 for 10 new units and one rehabbed unit.

allow us to expand this effort in the future to even more communities in the future."

Reach staff writer Mike Finney at 741-8230 or mfinney@newszap.com.

Kent County 2nd Levy Court District Registered Voters

Absentee Voting is available for those eligible voters who are unable to go to the polls
March 21, 2017 for the 2nd Levy Court District Special Election

Vote Absentee:

From Wilmington to Laurel, state invests in housing projects

Kathy Canavan March 14, 2017 0 Comment Anas Ben Addi, Delaware Housing Authority, Interfaith Community Housing of Delaware, John Carney, Matt Meyer, new castle county, Nonprofit, Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund, wilmington, Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank



WILMINGTON – Standing in a gym at the William Hicks Anderson Center last Tuesday, Mayor Mike Purzycki told a crowd, “My impression when I first came here was this isn’t right that this beautiful center is in the middle of such dysfunction.”

The center, located at Fifth and Madison streets, is the centerpiece of a West Side neighborhood where at least 30 shootings have occurred in the last six years – some with multiple victims and at least five fatalities.

One shooting occurred just outside the center where children play. Once, a woman took cover inside the center during a daytime shooting.

The center, which neighbors call simply “Hicks,” was the site of a celebration Tuesday as officials, social workers and bureaucrats gathered to celebrate the announcement of a \$5.5 million investment from the Delaware Housing Authority’s Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund. The money will go to address vacant, abandoned or foreclosed properties. Nearly half — \$2.1 million — will go to nonprofits working in Wilmington.

The \$5.5 million investment is expected to leverage an estimated \$15 million in private or other funding.

“This funding will directly help families, cities, and towns across Delaware become stronger. When we put homes together, they become neighborhoods, safe places enriched by diversity where we collectively share in our cities’ growth and successes,” Gov. John Carney said.

“When families step into houses, they become homes – residences of refuge, centers of companionship, locations of learning, and places of worship. Home is where we celebrate our accomplishments and draw upon strength and support to face our challenges.”

In Wilmington, the Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank was awarded \$645,000 to buy and clear blighted properties to make way for development. Interfaith Community Housing of Delaware was awarded \$550,000 for building and rehabbing housing units. Wilmington Housing Partnership was awarded \$205,000 for rehabbing units, and Inter-Neighborhood Foundation was awarded \$200,000.

Habitat for Humanity of New Castle County was awarded \$550,000 for 10 new units and one rehabbed unit. The New Castle County Department of Community Services will use \$1.3 million to create 10 new housing units and rehab 17 units along the Route 9 corridor.

“For many people, their home is the largest investment they will ever have,” New Castle County Executive Matthew Meyer said. “New Castle County will use these funds to enable more than two dozen families to own a home and we believe that will help drive other positive impacts, including improvements in educational achievement and health outcomes and reduce neighborhood crime.”

In Dover, the housing nonprofit NCALL was awarded \$1 million to support 20 newly constructed homes in partnership with the Central Delaware Habitat for Humanity.

In Milford, the Milford Housing Development Corporation was awarded \$500,000 to lead the development of 10 new homes in neighborhoods surrounding the downtown.

The Laurel Redevelopment Corporation and its partners, Sussex County Habitat for Humanity and the Milford Housing Development Corporation, were awarded \$500,000 to build 10 homes in the Old Town area.

Anas Ben Addi, director of the Delaware State Housing Authority, said applicants requested more than \$8.2 million, but not all projects could be funded.

“These projects will be helping families and individuals who need housing while strengthening the neighborhoods in which they are located, revitalizing properties that have fallen into disrepair and bringing people back to live in them,” Ben Addi said.

The Housing Authority also designated \$475,000 for the Vacant Property Maintenance Fund, which helps local governments clean up vacant and abandoned properties.

Photo via Flickr user [Let Ideas Compete](#)

Grants will help build, rehab 100 homes in Delaware

[Matthew Albright](#), The News Journal Published 3:18 p.m. ET March 13, 2017 | Updated 16 hours ago



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Abandoned, run-down houses can be a major obstacle to revitalizing cities.(Photo: SUCHAT PEDERSON/THE NEWS JOURNAL, SUCHAT PEDERSON/THE NEWS JOURNAL)Buy Photo

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Delaware state government will spend about \$5.5 million to build or rehabilitate about 100 homes in Wilmington, Dover, Milford and Laurel, officials announced Tuesday.

The "Strong Neighborhoods" project aims to address abandoned and vacant properties, which local leaders see as an obstacle to economic revitalization.

OTHER EFFORTS: [State trying to revitalize downtowns](#)

"This funding will directly help families, cities and towns across Delaware become stronger," Gov. John Carney said. "When we put homes together, they become neighborhoods, safe places enriched by diversity where we collectively share in our cities' growth and successes."

The money comes from settlement money the state received from major banks in the wake of the 2008 foreclosure crisis. All of the homes will be sold to families with incomes at or below 120 percent of the local median income.

Here are the groups that will receive funds:

- The Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank will get \$645,000 to buy and clear up blighted properties.
- The Wilmington Housing Partnership will get \$205,000 to build four new units and rehabilitate two more.
- Interfaith Community Housing of Delaware will get \$550,000 to build eight new units and overhaul three old units in Wilmington.
- The Inter-Neighborhood Foundation will receive \$200,000 to redo four units in the city.
- Habitat for Humanity of New Castle County will get \$550,000 to build 10 new units and rehab one.
- New Castle County's department of community services will get \$1.3 million to build 10 new units and restore 17 existing units along the Del. 9 corridor.
- NCALL Research will get \$1 million to build 20 new units in Dover
- The Milford Housing Development Corporation will get \$500,000 to build 10 new units in Milford
- The Laurel Redevelopment Corporation will get \$500,000 for 10 new units in Laurel.

In addition to these projects, the state will place \$475,000 into the vacant property maintenance fund, which helps local governments prevent abandoned housing from falling into blight and disrepair. Wilmington will get \$175,000 and each of the counties will get \$100,000.

WILMINGTON: [Can Purzycki battle blight?](#)

State officials hope their relatively small investment can spur bigger spending by private companies and non-profits. Delaware State Housing Authority officials estimate the \$5.5 million will "leverage" about \$15 million in outside money.

"These projects will be helping families and individuals who need housing, while strengthening the neighborhoods in which they are located, revitalizing properties that have fallen into disrepair and bringing people back to live in them," said DSHA Director Anas Ben Addi.

Contact Matthew Albright at malbright@delawareonline.com, (302) 324-2428 or on Twitter @TNJ_malbright.

Housing Fund Allocates \$5.5 Million for Kent, Sussex Counties

Posted: Mar 15, 2017 4:41 PM EDT Updated: Mar 15, 2017 11:17 PM EDT

By Jacqueline Karli

CONNECT



WBOC



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WILMINGTON, Del. – Nine projects statewide will receive \$5.5 million from Delaware’s Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund to address vacant, abandoned or foreclosed properties, Governor John Carney announced this week, joined by Delaware State

Housing Authority Director Anas Ben Addi and elected officials and community leaders from across Delaware.

“This funding will directly help families, cities and towns across Delaware become stronger. When we put homes together, they become neighborhoods, safe places enriched by diversity where we collectively share in our cities’ growth and successes,” Governor Carney said.

The second round of the Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund, funded by bank settlement money, will lead to about 100 new or rehabilitated housing units in Wilmington, New Castle County, Dover, Milford and Laurel. The investment of \$5.5 million will leverage an estimated \$15 million in private or other funding sources.

“These projects will be helping families and individuals who need housing, while strengthening the neighborhoods in which they are located, revitalizing properties that have fallen into disrepair and bringing people back to live in them,” said DSHA Director Anas Ben Addi.

The housing projects chosen for funding in this round, listed by jurisdiction, are:

City of Wilmington, lead applicant Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank, \$2.1 million

- Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank, \$645,000 to acquire blighted properties and remove them
- Wilmington Housing Partnership, \$205,000 for four new units and two rehabbed
- Interfaith Community Housing of Delaware, \$550,000 for eight new units and three rehabbed units in Wilmington
- Inter-Neighborhood Foundation, \$200,000 for four rehabbed units in Wilmington
- Habitat for Humanity of New Castle County, \$550,000 for 10 new units and one rehabbed unit

New Castle County, \$1.3 million

- New Castle County Department of Community Services, \$1.3 million for 10 new units and 17 rehabbed ones along the Route 9 corridor

Kent County, \$1.5 million

- NCALL Research, \$1 million for 20 new units in Dover
- Milford Housing Development Corporation, \$500,000 for 10 new units in Milford

Sussex County, \$500,000

· Laurel Redevelopment Corporation, \$500,000 for 10 new units in Laurel

The Milford Housing Development Corporation will use \$500,000 to create 10 new units in the City of Milford's Downtown Development District area. The effort is aligned with the city's Rivertown Rebirth 2025 plan, said Milford Mayor Bryan Shupe.

"Increasing homeownership will help strengthen our community and support our downtown," Mayor Shupe said. "Neighborhoods succeed because of the people living and working there, and we are pleased to partner in this effort." Applicants requested more than \$8.2 million, but not all projects could be funded, said director Ben Addi.

"The level of interest remains high, showing the strong involvement and commitment that our partners and others have to supporting neighborhoods in need," said Addi. "We hope that these successes will allow us to expand this effort in the future to even more communities in the future."

Also announced was \$475,000 in funding for the Vacant Property Maintenance Fund, which will help local governments clean up vacant and abandoned properties. Wilmington will receive \$175,000 and New Castle County, Kent County and Sussex County will each receive \$100,000.

The first round of funding from the Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund was allocated in 2015, with \$2.7 million going to build or rehabilitate 68 housing units in Wilmington, Dover and New Castle County. All homes will be sold to families or individuals with incomes at or below 120 percent of the area median income.

Patricia Benton, who recently purchased a home in New Castle County's Garfield Park neighborhood as part of the the first round of SNHF grants, said she is enjoying her new home. "It's like having a brand new home but in an established community," she said. "I could not be happier. I love my new home!"

Interfaith Community Housing of Delaware, one of the 2015 recipients, is constructing 11 units of affordable live/work housing for artists in the Quaker Hill Historic Neighborhood, located in Wilmington's Creative District. The work is being done by repurposing old vacant, abandoned residential properties in which some have been vacant for nearly 30 years.

Interfaith Executive Director Gary Pollio said that for Interfaith to be truly successful, each project must fit into the community and meet its expectations. "Our projects are not just about the housing," Pollio said. "Our overarching goal is revitalizing the neighborhood, expanding affordable housing opportunities for new residents, and growing community."

DOVER POST

Old makes way for new on Kirkwood Street

By Jeff Brown

Posted May 22, 2018 at 12:01 AM

VIDEO - The sound of wood and brick being smashed reverberated down South Kirkwood Street.

Work to realize a vision of home ownership and relieving urban blight commenced May 21 with the demolition of two condemned homes in the city.

The sound of wood and brick being smashed reverberated down South Kirkwood Street throughout the day as workers from Sunnyfield Contractors tore through the old structures.

The first, 45 S. Kirkwood, was built in 1925, while the house at 43 S. Kirkwood dated to 1920. Both two-story homes were bought in February by NCALL Research using funds from the Delaware State Housing Authority.

They are part of a project to tear down nine vacant, boarded-up properties. Restoring Central Dover is a community-based effort to spur home ownership and economic development in the state capital.

Five houses on North Kirkwood and two on South Queen Street also will be demolished, according to NCALL Executive Director Joe Myer.

In a May 11 press release, Myer said most of the abandoned properties were known nuisance areas, attracting crime and illegal activities.

“This is an unprecedented move to eliminate blight in our downtown and to create new and attractive for sale housing to truly meet our goals for Restoring Central Dover,” he said.

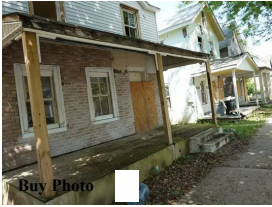
The lots will be redeveloped and sold to qualifying homebuyers, with the South Kirkwood lot being developed by the Central Delaware Habitat for Humanity.

NCALL and Habitat have received a joint award of \$1 million from the Delaware State Housing Authority to redevelop 20 properties in central Dover.

Grants help Central Dover neighborhoods lose blight, receive facelifts

Jerry Smith, The News Journal

Published 2:08 p.m. ET May 22, 2018 | Updated 5:25 p.m. ET May 22, 2018



(Photo: Jennifer Corbett, The News Journal)

Joe Myer and his cohorts at NCALL want Central Dover to be a place where people want to live, work and play.

Up until now, however, that has been a slow-motion dream for the director of the lead agency of the comprehensive community development effort called [Restoring Central Dover](http://www.ncall.org/restoring-central-dover/). (<http://www.ncall.org/restoring-central-dover/>)

That strategy, comprised of more than 20 different organizations with the same goal — including non-profits, government agencies, businesses, institutions, and residents — just got a boost when NCALL and Central Delaware Habitat for Humanity received a joint award of \$1 million in Strong Neighborhood Housing Funds to redevelop 20 properties in Central Dover.

Ten of the properties will be developed in the near future by NCALL, while the other 10 will be developed later by Habitat.

"The whole idea with Restoring Central Dover is to bring opportunity back to the residents and businesses there," Myer said. "This is an unprecedented move to eliminate blight in our downtown and to create new and attractive for-sale housing."

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Joe Myer, executive director of NCALL, stands at home on N. Kirkwood St. that is scheduled for demolition and will be rebuilt by Strong Neighborhood Housing Funds near downtown Dover in an effort to stop blight and improve housing. (Photo: Jennifer Corbett, The News Journal)

Central Dover is comprised of a number of distinct residential areas clustered around the historic Lookerman Street commercial corridor. The plan area is made up of 75 blocks, which is roughly 393 acres in size.

Some challenges include crime and the perception of safety, the socioeconomic conditions of residents, and major vacancies among land parcels and buildings.

Demolition work began Tuesday on nine of those vacant and boarded-up properties near downtown Dover. Myer said the lots will be redeveloped in the near future and then sold to qualifying homebuyers.

Five of the properties stand side by side on a single block of North Kirkwood Street, while two others are on South Queen Street, right in the middle of the Restoring Central Dover footprint.

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Properties along N. Kirkwood St. wait for demolition and will be rebuilt by Strong Neighborhood Housing Funds near downtown Dover in an effort to stop blight and improve housing. (Photo: Jennifer Corbett, The News Journal)

The remaining two are on South Kirkwood and will be developed by Central Delaware Habitat for Humanity.

Most of the properties were known nuisances and magnets for crime and illegal activity and news of them being torn down has been greeted with relief by neighborhood residents.

Dawn Thomas has lived across the street from the five properties on North Kirkwood for 10 years and said they have been empty for four or five of those years.

The small flower garden in front of her house is one of the few bright spots in the neighborhood.

"It really looks bad for the street when there are five houses abandoned and boarded up," she said. "This will help clean up the neighborhood and make it more appealing."

Myer said that in a relatively small area, the concentration of demolition and revitalization will have a major impact on the look of the community, the perception of downtown Dover, and the pride of those who have already invested and continue to remain in the neighborhood.

NCALL did a study in 2014 when the Restoring Central Dover effort was launched. It showed only 25 percent of the homes in the area were owned compared to 70 percent in Delaware.

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Five properties along North Kirkwood Street in Central Dover will be torn down and four new homes built in an effort to increase homeownership in Central Dover neighborhoods. (Photo: Jennifer Corbett, The News Journal)

"That is because there has not been a lot of positive investment there," Myer said. "We aren't trying to move that rate up to 70 percent, we just want to offer opportunities and bring that up more if we can."

Myer said NCALL has set a 50 percent homeownership goal for Central Dover.

A lot of what NCALL has been doing in the past is in-fill housing as the organization has become aware of different lots scattered among the Central Dover footprint. Myer said the Strong Neighborhood Housing Funds grant will allow the organization to step that up.

Dover Police Chief Marvin Mailey said the Restoring Central Dover effort, especially tearing down vacant, boarded-up houses has helped reduce crime in the targeted area.

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An interior of a property along N. Kirkwood St. The property will be demolished and rebuilt by Strong Neighborhood Housing Funds near downtown Dover in an effort to stop blight and improve housing. (Photo: Jennifer Corbett, The News Journal)

That work goes hand in hand with the Dover Police Department's focus on reducing overall crime in the Central Dover footprint, which includes increased patrols in the area.

"We tie a lot of crime to vacant housing," Mailey said. "It's a haven for criminal activity. So many things can happen in a vacant home."

[NCALL \(http://www.ncall.org/\)](http://www.ncall.org/), which is a statewide, Dover-based, nonprofit affordable housing and community development organization, has been instrumental in other neighborhood initiatives to reduce crime and spur economic development in the downtown area.

Myer calls this latest initiative a good follow-up to last summer's [Lights On, Dover Strong \(/story/news/2017/07/13/campaign-light-up-dover-crime/459779001/\)](/story/news/2017/07/13/campaign-light-up-dover-crime/459779001/) campaign, where 300 homes in Central Dover's high crime area were fitted with free lighting on the front and back porches.

Before they received the lights, residents signed a pledge that said they would call law enforcement if they saw criminal activity in the neighborhood.

"All of the households we targeted wanted the lights," Myer said. "Many residents in nearby neighborhoods asked when is my block coming?"

Restoring Central Dover was also instrumental in the City of Dover receiving the Downtown Development District (DDD) designation in 2015 and access to new revitalization resources.

Out of that came the recent [Unlock the Block \(/story/news/2018/04/23/downtown-dover-talked-potential-foodie-haven-draw-millennials/531977002/\)](/story/news/2018/04/23/downtown-dover-talked-potential-foodie-haven-draw-millennials/531977002/) campaign to fill vacant commercial spaces in downtown Dover.

The initiative — focused on properties along Lockerman and adjacent streets — assists landlords in finding tenants for vacant buildings and offers incentives to owners to redevelop their properties.

"Restoring Central Dover has been a great initiative," Myer said. "You are seeing the housing improvements, you are seeing fewer vacancies in the commercial corridor and you are seeing people in the area who are more engaged in what is happening in their neighborhoods."

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[Mental health after pregnancy: OB-GYN adds social worker for postpartum depression \(/story/news/health/2018/05/15/better-address-depression-del-ob-gyn-practice-hires-social-worker/599196002/\)](/story/news/health/2018/05/15/better-address-depression-del-ob-gyn-practice-hires-social-worker/599196002/)

[Hotline tip leads to arrest of two Kent County men for dumping trash \(/story/news/2018/05/15/hotline-tip-leads-arrest-two-kent-county-men-dumping-trash/587365002/\)](/story/news/2018/05/15/hotline-tip-leads-arrest-two-kent-county-men-dumping-trash/587365002/)

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