



Comprehensive Community Development

CASE STUDY

# Revitalizing Neighborhoods Through Resident Support

NEIGHBORGOOD PARTNERS

## CCD PRINCIPLES HIGHLIGHTED:



INTENTIONAL  
APPROACH



COMMUNITY  
DRIVEN



LAYERED  
STRATEGIES



GUIDING  
VISION & PLAN



STRATEGIC  
PARTNERSHIPS



COORDINATED  
LEADERSHIP



LAYERED  
INVESTMENT

## KEY INSIGHTS

- NeighborGood layers strategies across affordable housing, economic development, and support services to bring holistic change to a neighborhood in need.
- Building 62 single-family homes in partnership with Habitat for Humanity transformed distressed blocks and increased homeownership rates while a new Community Resource Hub adds essential services and support.
- A new social enterprise offers job experience for youth and builds a pipeline to a stronger future while revitalizing the commercial corridor.

### Joining Forces

In 2013, NeighborGood Partners, a community development organization based in Dover, Delaware, joined forces with a dedicated committee of partners to lead the Restoring Central Dover (RCD) initiative—a comprehensive revitalization effort. Funded by grants from the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, Healthy Communities Delaware and NeighborWorks America, this initiative aimed to address critical needs such as affordable housing, economic growth, safety, and essential services.

### A Vision for Vitality

Dubbed “Our Vision for Vitality,” the plan included strategic partnerships with a larger committee of residents, city government, police, nonprofits, and other entities. In the ten years since, NeighborGood has made progress in every pillar of the plan. Most notably, in conjunction with Habitat, they have addressed the anemic 25% homeownership rate by building 62 single-family homes.

“We’ve taken whole vacant blocks and redeveloped them,” said Patricia Kelleher, Real Estate and Community Development Director at NeighborGood Partners. “There are several blocks that were really distressed, a hive of criminal activity, that now are single-family homes. To walk down the street and see children’s toys on the front lawn—something that was just not conceivable when we started—has had a very uplifting impact on the community.”

The transformation has also increased property values, providing long-term residents with a sense of security and pride.

While the original revitalization plan set the direction for these efforts, NeighborGood’s comprehensive approach also allowed them to remain responsive to the community’s evolving needs. Two newer initiatives emerged: The Community Resource Hub and The Scoop on Lockerman.

### The Hub: Addressing Community Needs

Located on the corner of Lockerman Street in downtown Dover, The Community Resource Hub is a service center where residents can be connected to essential services such as food, recovery programs, and housing services. NeighborGood recognized that to develop housing in the surrounding blocks—rated one of the most dangerous areas in the state—they needed to provide other stabilizing services.

They took ownership of two formerly vacant buildings on Lockerman and created the hub, which, led by Tyrone Williams, is a partnership between NeighborGood and Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN). The center relies on support from multiple partnerships, including community churches, the Dover Public Housing Authority, the Department of Health and more, to provide much-needed, often urgent assistance.



“The greatest impact is in our unity. That brings us all together and shows us that no matter what happens, we can bridge those gaps and still meet together and find that unity in all things.”

—RONA HARRIS  
Community Development Manager

Community Development Manager Rona Harris, a psychiatric social worker, assists those with opioid addictions. Having responsive partnerships that can assist in quickly providing services can make a significant difference in service outcomes.

“When you’re dealing with individuals who have an addiction, if you don’t address it immediately, we can lose them, and that’s something that we try not to do,” said Harris.

With its location on the corner of a high-crime block, the Hub can also observe and work with local law enforcement to help minimize illegal activity. This has been a significant benefit for businesses on Lockerman, creating a ripple effect of safer, more inviting commercial spaces.





### The Scoop: Empowering Youth and Enhancing the Community

Adjacent to The Hub, The Scoop on Lockerman is an ice cream shop that enlivens the commercial spaces on the street while offering valuable opportunities to area youth. The idea for The Scoop originated with Kimberlynn Reeves, a public affairs specialist with the U.S. Attorney's Office who is also part of NeighborGood's partnership with PSN. Reeves was inspired by a restaurant in Dallas, Texas, that provided skills for formerly incarcerated individuals and believed a similar model could benefit Dover's youth. Community engagement in Dover, led by PSN peer engagement specialists, confirmed that a social enterprise like The Scoop could effectively address local youth employment and engagement needs.

Working closely with PSN and with the support of a \$100,000 NeighborWorks grant, NeighborGood Partners opened The Scoop in 2023. The shop employs at-risk youth aged 16 and older, providing job experience and professional skills while paying \$15 per hour, above the state minimum wage.

Support for the youth also includes school supplies, field trips, and filling gaps in other areas. One student credited The Scoop with keeping him from returning to gang activity after his release from a detention center, highlighting the program's importance.

"That's basically what our goal is," said Harris. "To give them the unity and the support. A lot of youth go down because they don't have the support, love, and unity of a family. The Scoop helps provide those pieces."

Of the eight students originally employed at The Scoop, all graduated high school, and three pursued higher education.

### Building on Success

More than ten years into the Restoring Central Dover initiative, NeighborGood continues to build on its success and incorporate lessons from its projects into its future vision. Yet, the true impact of NeighborGood Partners' efforts in Central Dover is seen in the effect of their layered development strategy. By revitalizing housing, providing essential community resources, supporting youth, and much more, NeighborGood continues transforming an area once known as a drug corner into a neighborhood where people feel safe to live, work, and enjoy.

Harris sums up the importance of these partnerships and the resulting improvements: "The greatest impact is in our unity. That brings us all together and shows us that no matter what happens, we can bridge those gaps and still meet together and find that unity in all things."

## LEARN MORE

- **Learn about** NeighborGood Partners' community initiatives.
- **Read more** about the positive impact of The Scoop. [Ice-cream-flavors-community-change](#)
- **Explore** their Vision for Vitality Strategic Plan.