

Northeast Central Durham (NECD) Livability Initiative – Partnership for Sustainable Communities takes an integrated approach

The Northeast Central Durham (NECD) Livability Initiative – Partnership for Sustainable Communities is a community driven collaborative implemented in tandem with Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Transportation (DOT), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to coordinate housing, transportation, and to protect the environment. The City of Durham Department of Neighborhood Improvement Services along with six other city departments support this community led initiative. The Initiative is making significant progress and is currently implementing neighborhood programs that foster a walkable, safe, diverse, and eco-friendly community. The NECD Livability Initiative is composed of four resident-driven community schemes: (1) Coordinated Public Transportation; (2) Economic and Workforce Development; (3) Multi-functional Green Spaces; and (4) Safe and Healthy Environment.

The goals and objectives that motivated the creation of this program:

NECD Livability Initiative goals are aligned with the six Livability Principles: (1) value communities and neighborhoods, (2) promote equitable, affordable housing, (3) provide more transportation choices, (4) support existing communities, (5) coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment, and (6) enhance economic competitiveness. Each of the four schemes organizes sustainability projects and programming in accordance with the six Livability Principles. Perhaps, one of the most far-reaching NECD Livability Initiative objectives is to support opportunities for community members to proactively identify issues and dialogue with decision-makers. Deploying resources more efficiently to communities has long been the goal of Neighborhood Improvement Services' Division of Community Engagement. The NECD Livability Initiative is an example of innovative community programming.

Active and effective relationships/partnerships have been built through the NECD Livability Initiative over the past thirteen months. They integrate complex economic, social, health, and environmental problems in Northeast Central Durham. NIS utilizes a valuable citizen participatory design module, designed by **greenschemes™** to strengthen and restore resident's trust in government and build the community's capacity to create a sustainable NECD. The citizen-led schemes meet monthly with local, state, and federal agents to identify those technical resources and funding opportunities that will create sustainable projects and programs.

This program contributes to improved city functioning, efficient use of resources, and enhanced quality of life:

Members of the four schemes work in a non-traditional way, creating a place where affected residents, local service providers, state and federal agencies, and allied professionals plan together in a co-design fashion around the same table. Through this process community needs are identified as resources are aligned and marshaled to support sustainable community projects. Stakeholders now have common vested interests that open the doors for residents to effectively impact public policy. Public awareness, involvement, and accountability are critical to revitalizing NECD and creating a healthy community.

How has the program responded to challenges and barriers to its implementation?

Funding is the greatest challenge for the NECD Livability Initiative. Creating non-traditional public-private partnerships with local institutions of higher learning, grass-roots organizations, and financial institutions laid the foundation for accurate/realistic assessments of NECD's needs and coupled those needs with efficient, cost effective methods of project implementation. Examples: Goose Creek Clean-Ups, community Basic Energy Education Workshops, developed a trail system and a walking club to combat obesity and chronic illnesses, conducted two Durham Area Transit Authority (DATA) bus stop and shelter assessments which were incorporated into DATA's "Designing a Better Bus System" survey, and created a marketing slogan for Northeast Central Durham – "NECD: Where Access meets Opportunity". All Projects were completed at little or no cost.

What aspects of this program are transferable to other cities seeking to accomplish similar goals?

With slight customizations, all aspects of the Community Engagement Participatory Design Model (CEPDM) used in our initiative are transferrable to other cities, including the utilization of the Technology of Participation (ToP®). The most unique quality of our model is that it fosters the integration of a wide diversity of ideas, design aptitude, and community participation in order to restore neighborhood stability and human connections. Our CEPDM can easily be molded to fit other cities seeking similar sustainability goals in community engagement and development.



The Neighborhood Improvement Services Division of the City of Durham, NC supports the NECD initiative. Greenschemes™ was contracted to design the integrated and participatory process and to facilitate the plenary gatherings. Other work of greenschemes™ can be seen at www.greenschemesnc.com.