

DSHA Announces \$2.8 Million Awarded to Strong Neighborhoods Projects Statewide

DOVER – Six projects statewide will receive \$2.8 million from Delaware’s Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund to address vacant, abandoned or foreclosed properties, Governor John Carney and Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) Director Anas Ben Addi announced today.

The Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund is used to support community development, address crime and transform neighborhoods that are experiencing blight or other forms of stress. Through the program, abandoned properties are removed, renovated or replaced and sold to low-income residents who then become homeowners.

This is the fourth round of funding since the Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund was launched in 2015. The investment of \$2.8 million will leverage more than \$11.5 million in private or other funding sources and lead to at least 53 new or rehabilitated housing units in Wilmington, New Castle County, Claymont, Dover and Laurel.

“Many of the communities in our state continue to feel the ripple effects of the foreclosure crisis a decade ago, and these effects have only been compounded by COVID-19,” said Governor Carney. “The Strong Neighborhoods program provides organizations working on the ground in these communities with resources needed to purchase abandoned properties, renovate or remove them and build beautiful homes in their place. The funding we’re announcing today will directly assist Delaware families by strengthening their communities and providing

increased access to affordable homeownership.”

“By increasing homeownership rates in these neighborhoods, we not only change the lives of the families who purchase the homes, but we also help reduce crime, increase home values and strengthen communities,” said DSHA Director Anas Ben Addi. “DSHA is proud to support these organizations who are working tirelessly, even throughout the pandemic, to inspire change in some of the state’s most underserved areas.”

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

Wilmington

- Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank (WNCLB) working in cooperation with the City of Wilmington Real Estate & Housing Department, \$400,000 for the acquisition and land banking of one commercial nuisance property and rehabilitation of seven units. The target area is concentrated around a one-to-two block radius surrounding 7th and Jefferson Streets in the West Center City area of Wilmington.

New Castle County

- Interfaith Community Housing of Delaware, Inc., \$250,000 to continue revitalization efforts along the Route 9 corridor. Funds will be used to purchase and renovate five blighted and vacant homes in the communities of Holloway Terrace, Garfield Park, Rosehill, Simonds Gardens and Collins Park.
- New Castle County Department of Community Services, \$450,000, to redevelop nine blighted and vacant homes in the distressed community of Edgemoor Gardens. Funding will complement and continue revitalization efforts in this area. New Castle County will also offer owner-occupied home repair and first-time homebuyer down payment and closing cost assistance with Community

Development Block Grant funding.

Claymont

- 2 Fish Home Renovations, \$300,000 to acquire and renovate six vacant and/or blighted homes in the Overlook Colony and Clearfield Village communities. 2 Fish Home Renovations will also receive \$50,000 for community support to hire a part-time employee to provide community engagement activities throughout the duration of the project. This project is a partnership between 2 Fish and Claymont Renaissance Development Corporation.

Dover

- NCALL, \$750,000 to acquire 12 vacant or abandoned properties and complete three demolitions of blighted structures (for a total of 15 units) within the Restoring Central Dover Plan area. NCALL will also receive \$50,000 to provide community support and engagement in the targeted area. This project is located within Dover's Downtown Development District.

Laurel

- Sussex County Habitat for Humanity (SCHFH), \$450,000 to identify and acquire nine properties in the blighted neighborhood known as Old Town and in nearby West Laurel. Three units will be located in Old Town and seven units will be located in West Laurel. Old Town is located within Laurel's Downtown Development District and is within Laurel's historic district. SCHFH will also receive \$50,000 to provide community support and engagement in the West Laurel area. This project is a partnership between SCHFH, Milford Housing Development Corporation, Laurel Redevelopment Corporation and the Town of Laurel.

2 Fish Home Renovations will use Strong Neighborhoods funding to continue the organization's efforts to improve the historic Overlook Colony and Clearfield Village area of Claymont. 2 Fish will also provide employment and job development opportunities for formerly incarcerated adults in New Castle County by hiring them to complete the home rehabilitation activities.

"This funding will help our organization further its core mission of providing job opportunities for returning citizens while also contributing to the revitalization of Claymont," said Keith Smith, president and founder of the organization. "For years, the Overlook Colony area has struggled with upkeep of rental properties, absentee landlords and preservation and rehabilitation of historic properties. With this funding, 2 Fish can renovate some of these blighted properties and provide affordable homeownership opportunities to help transform this community."

In Dover, NCALL and Central Delaware Habitat for Humanity will use Strong Neighborhoods funding to continue efforts to address dilapidated properties within neighborhoods around North New Street, North and South Kirkwood Streets and South Queen Street. The target area is made up of 75 blocks within the downtown Dover area with a homeownership rate of just 30 percent.

"NCALL and Habitat have been successful in the last few years in addressing blighted properties throughout Central Dover with 40 homes already constructed where dilapidated buildings once stood," said Karen Speakman, executive director of NCALL. "With this additional Strong Neighborhoods funding, we can continue to build on these efforts and give residents of these communities the opportunity to become homeowners."

Sussex County Habitat for Humanity will use their \$500,000 award to begin the second phase of their Laurel Strong project, transforming blighted neighborhoods and providing new

homeownership opportunities in the hardest-hit areas of the town.

“Laurel has a great vision for redevelopment, and we are pleased to be part of it,” said Kevin Gilmore, executive director of Sussex County Habitat for Humanity. “This Strong Neighborhoods funding will allow us to completely transform this area by increasing homeownership rates, improving the current housing stock and reducing crime.”

Since the launch of the Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund in 2015, \$13.7 million has been awarded to organizations throughout the state, leveraging an estimated \$43.2 million in private and other investment. The program was initially funded using one-time bank settlement dollars and is now funded with a \$3 million allocation in the FY 2021 state bond bill. Including the awards announced today, the Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund has provided resources to remove, renovate, or replace more than 284 blighted properties throughout the state.