



**FY
2024**

**the
Neighborhood
DesignCenter**

Annual Report



Our Mission

Founded in 1968, the Neighborhood Design Center is a nonprofit organization that facilitates the development of healthy, equitable neighborhoods through community-engaged design and planning services.

By providing the tools, expertise, and partnerships necessary to realize neighborhood visions, we support broad participation in the evolution of the built environment, positioning historically disinvested neighborhoods to attract future investment. →

Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,

I'm excited to share the Neighborhood Design Center's Annual Report for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, a year full of remarkable achievements thanks to your steadfast support.

This year, we co-hosted International Placemaking Week with Project for Public Spaces, highlighting the transformative power of community-driven design. Six hundred people from all over the world joined us as we showcased how our work continues to shape neighborhoods, proving that design rooted in community vision transforms neighborhoods.

Our impact is growing! In FY24, we proudly completed 170 community-led design projects, each putting forward a unique opportunity for investment across Baltimore and Prince George's County. From creating safer streets to enhancing public spaces, these projects reflect our commitment to building more vibrant and equitable communities.

Financially, this has been our strongest year to date, surpassing \$2.5M invested in NDC service to communities. This milestone reflects the efforts of our dedicated staff, board, and volunteers, whose commitment to our mission makes every dollar matter. Their work allows us to grow and enhance our programs, enrich our impact, and set a strong foundation for the future.

This report shows stories of collaboration, inspiration, and fresh ideas that highlight our deep commitment to building vibrant, equitable communities. Every project and initiative represents the collective efforts of residents, designers, volunteers, and partners who believe in the power of place in a healthier, more equitable future.

Thank you for being an essential part of the Neighborhood Design Center family. Together, we are not just designing spaces—we are designing the future of our communities.



With gratitude,

**JENNIFER GOULD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN CENTER**

Who We Are

With decades of experience, our experienced team brings top design chops and unwavering commitment to this important work.

WITH NDC BETWEEN JULY 1, 2023 AND JUNE 31ST 2024

Board of Directors

Executive Committee

David Park, President
Kelly Danz, Vice President
Garrick Good, Treasurer
Rebecca Murphy, Secretary
Kayla Williams, Esq., Secretary

General Membership

Michael Bainum
Bobby Boone
Lindsay Brugger
Anna Dennis
Tracy Gosson
Jen Horton
Seema Iyer
Frederick Johnson
Ebony Landon
Dahlia Nduom
Gabe Oliver
Randy M Sovich
Heidi Thomas
Jennifer S. Vey
Dustin Watson
Amber Wendland
Lauren Wilson
Qiaojue Ju

Staff

Micaela Ada
Angelica Arias
Krystal Bagley
Collin Breidenbach
Karla Brent
Lubna Chaudhry
Jackie Clinton-Harris
Julia DiMauro
Jennifer Goold
Merrell Hambleton
Christina Hartsfield
Briony Hynson
Catharine Love
Allie O'Neill
Dana Puzey
Nicole Ringel
Laura Robinson
Jenny Smeltzer
Dequan Spencer



Americorps VISTA Volunteers

Maddy Silberberger-Franek
Evelyn DiSalvo

Supporters

Thanks to our funders and sponsors,
who believe in thriving communities
and vibrant spaces.

MAJOR PROGRAM GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

Prince George's County
Department of Public Works &
Transportation
Anacostia Watershed Society
City of District Heights
City of Hyattsville
Chesapeake Bay Trust
Chesapeake Conservancy
Dundalk Renaissance
Friends of Greenbelt East Trail
Prince George's County Local
Development Council MGM
Nature Sacred
NeighborSpace of Baltimore
County
National Fish and Wildlife
Foundation
RM Sovich Architecture
Town of Colmar Manor
SHARE Baltimore
Arch Social Club

Baltimore City
Baltimore City Department
of Housing and Community
Development
Prince George's County
Department of housing and
Community Development
Baltimore Greater Regional
Environmental Equity Network
Catonsville Arts District
Central Baltimore Partnership
City of Seat Pleasant
Black Butterfly Farm
Greater Baybrook Alliance
Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative
Maryland-National Park and
Planning Commission
Montgomery Housing Partnership
Maryland Department of
Transportation
Neighborhood Housing Services
of Baltimore

New Shiloh Baptist Church
Park Heights Renaissance
ReBUILD METRO
Reisterstown Improvement
Association
South Baltimore CLT
Southeast CDC
Town of Riverdale Park
United HealthCare Services
University of Baltimore
Upton Planning Committee
Washington College
WSP and the West North
Avenue Development
Authority
Maryland Heritage Areas
Authority
Smart Growth America
Prince George's County
Department of Housing and
Community Development

Supporters

FUNDERS GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation

Morris Goldseker Foundation of Maryland

The John J. Leidy Foundation, Inc.

Lockhart Vaughan Foundation

Morton and Sophia Macht Foundation, Inc.

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development

Prince George's County Council

Prince George's County Executive

Prince George's County Council Member Thomas E. Dernoga, District 1

Prince George's County Council Member Wanika B. Fisher, District 2

Prince George's County Council Member Eric C. Olson, District 3

Prince George's County Council Member Ingrid S. Watson, District 4

Prince George's County Council Member Jolene Ivey, District 5

CORPORATE SPONSORS

&Access

Anacostia Trails Heritage Area

Architecture by Design

Ayers Saint Gross

Broken Wall Community Church

Canopy

Degenerate Poker Club

Design Collective

Enterprise Community Partners

EnviroCollab, LLC

GCS | SIGAL

Harbor Bank/Goldiata

Harkins Builders, Inc.

Healthy Neighborhoods, Inc.

JMT

MileOne Cares Fund

PNC Bank

RM Sovich Architecture

Rodgers Consulting

Waste Management

Whiting-Turner

Ziger | Sned Architects

IN-KIND

Atlas Restaurant Group

Banditos Tacos & Tequila

Elevate Design | Build

Guilford Hall Brewing

Union Craft Brewing



How We're Supported

\$899,340	Contributions and Grants
\$1,670,171	Program Service Revenue
\$13	Investment Income
\$49,703	Other Revenue
\$2,619,227	Total Revenue
\$1,484,044	Personnel (Salaries, Compensation, Benefits)
\$1,134,317	Overhead, Consultants, Events,* Marketing (*Includes expenses for co-hosting International Placemaking Week)
\$2,618,361	Total Expenses
\$866	Revenue Less Expenses

27%

REVENUE INCREASE, MARKING FY2024 OUR STRONGEST FINANCIAL YEAR YET

53%

REVENUE INCREASE FOR PROGRAM SERVICES SPECIFICALLY, SHOWING THE INCREASING BREADTH AND IMPACT OF OUR WORK

7.6%

INCREASE IN TOTAL ASSETS, BUILDING OUR LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH



FY2024 Stats

Our shared impact.

[209]

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

 170

PROJECTS

* 91% **

OF PROJECTS WERE IN LOW-TO-MODERATE INCOME COMMUNITIES

 86

CLIMATE RESILIENT LANDSCAPE PLANS

 7,292

TREES PLANTED

149 


NUMBER OF ENGAGEMENT EVENTS HOSTED

 1,734

VOLUNTEER HOURS

\$200k+ 

VALUE OF VOLUNTEER HOURS

 4,731

PARTICIPANTS ENGAGED IN THE CO-DESIGN PROCESS

 37%

YOY INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE CO-DESIGN PROCESS

 423k+

INDIRECT POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES

Prioritizing DEI









We upheld our commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.



The Neighborhood Design Center (NDC) has long upheld a commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. In alignment with our last strategic plan, in 2019 NDC began to invest more significantly in that commitment, bringing equity to the forefront of our values and organizational culture.

In collaboration with DEI consulting partner HGVenture, the Neighborhood Design Center has achieved substantial progress 1) clearly defining our organizational values, 2) establishing retreats for board and staff collaboration; 3) overhauling our hiring, onboarding, and consultant procurement policies to reflect our DEI commitment; and 4) committing organizational resources to support continuous DEI education for our staff.

HERE ARE SOME OF OUR FY24 INITIATIVES

-  **Organizational Norms:** Initiated all-staff conversations to identify and improve organizational norms, policies, and procedures.
-  **Market Equity in Hiring:** Conducted a full pay audit with salary.com to inform equity-focused salary revisions.
-  **Updated DEI Survey:** Engaged HGVenture to update the DEI survey and review exit interviews.
-  **Increased Staff Discretionary Time:** Allocated time for individual projects and professional development equally across all staff in the FY25 Budget.
-  **Financial Transparency:** Continued quarterly financial presentations to increase budget transparency.
-  **Health Benefits Expansion:** Added health benefits for staff members with dependents to enhance hiring and retention.
-  **International Placemaking Week:** Integrated NDC values into planning, focusing on equity and local empowerment.
-  **DEI Retreat:** NDC's DEI Work Group participated in an all-day retreat with HGVentures to establish a shared understanding of the group's role and communication mechanisms in relation to leadership, and to establish goals for FY25.

Our Values

This year, we put into practice our work to reframe NDC's key guiding principles.

With the guidance of DEI consultant HG Ventures, our board and staff engaged in a series of collaborative work sessions to identify, define, and outline our organizational values in FY23.

The work included a full board and staff retreat, biweekly committee meetings, and dedicated work days for both groups to explore how to operationalize the values across every aspect of the organization.

The resulting criteria defined in our values guide where we work, how we determine the projects we take on, where we invest resources, and how we shape the culture of our own practice.

This work represents more than an internal initiative; **it is a steadfast commitment to our community** and a reflection of our responsibility to cultivate equitable and just environments. We utilize the criteria defined in our organizational values to guide our decision-making processes, including where we work, how we prioritize projects, where we allocate resources, and how we shape the culture of our practice.

In FY24, the NDC board was tasked with adopting these values in their committee work, while our staff was responsible for integrating them into our internal culture and external service provision. This continuous practice not only strengthens our organization but also underscores our priority to keep improving and iterating on our efforts to better serve the community.



[See Values](#)



Context + Commitment

Committed to building just places.



Value 1 guides our compass. It dictates where we work, the projects we undertake, and where we allocate resources. Our commitment to building just places pushes us to disrupt systems that sustain inequities, ensuring that every decision we make aligns with our broader mission of social justice.

Disparities in well-being, health, wealth, policing, and education are distinct across race and class lines. We acknowledge that business as usual in the development of the built environment will continue to perpetuate the social, economic, environmental, and geographic inequalities that exist in our communities today. Unless we are actively working to mitigate immediate effects and dismantle long-standing power structures, we are complicit in upholding systemic oppression and white supremacy.

We use these criteria to guide where we work, the projects we take on, how and where we invest resources, and the culture of our own practice.

Mindset

Courageous in our curiosity.



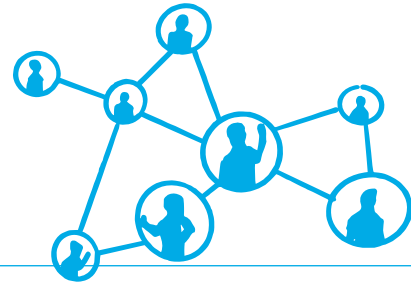
Value 2 drives our willingness to embrace learning as a continuous journey. This mindset allows us to stay adaptable in our practice, empowering our team to explore innovative approaches to problem-solving. We're unafraid to reexamine our assumptions, ensuring that the path we're on continues to reflect the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

We come to our work with open minds and a readiness to ask hard questions, listen deeply, and change course when necessary. Through this responsive approach, we make room for radical imagination, creativity, and inspired action in our collaborative practice.

We strive to maintain a curious and critical lens on our own processes, programs, biases, and patterns, and to incorporate what we learn from our partners, peers, and environment.

Process

Inclusive in our collaboration.



Value 3 underscores the importance of collaboration and collective decision-making in our process. We don't just invite communities to the table; we ensure that their voices shape the outcomes. By breaking down hierarchical barriers, we foster more equitable partnerships that extend beyond individual projects, creating a lasting impact through redistribution of power and resources.

We create participatory spaces anchored in support, connection, and mutual respect, where diverse experiences and types of expertise are valued. This approach recognizes everyone's innate agency, surfaces a range of perspectives and opinions, and makes space for all who want to join in. We welcome the opportunity to work through differing perspectives and priorities and build deeper understanding. By fostering connections across traditional hierarchies, we support new relationships, the redistribution of power, and increased access to resources long after an individual project ends.

Vision

Designing for just futures.



Value 4 drives our vision of a more equitable future, where power and influence are more evenly distributed. We aim to challenge the systems that have historically marginalized communities. By centering communities' leadership in the design process, we aim to challenge the systems that perpetuate inequity. This value ensures that our work isn't just about addressing today's needs but is focused on creating a more just, inclusive future.

Systemic inequity has both created current conditions of disinvestment and disproportionately accorded influence and resources to white-led nonprofits. We acknowledge the privilege our organization holds within the existing system. To push back on that system and support community power, we work where we are invited and on community-identified and community-led efforts.

We commit to decision-making structures that break down existing barriers; broadening our definitions of "skill" and "expertise" in community design; making space for new models of community development and ownership; and building an organization that centers those furthest from power. We believe in the radical potential of these actions.

Highlights From the Year

Over the last year, we invested heavily in securing national funding and recognition for local community-led, community-powered, equitable design, planning, and placemaking projects.

Here are a few accomplishments we're particularly proud of.



Highlights

Contributing to community design sector growth

Secured Major Funding for Innovative Public Art

The \$1 million Bloomberg Public Art Challenge Award for “Inviting Light” will support numerous public art installations and site activations across Station North and Greenmount West. The 2-year collaboration with Central Baltimore Partnership and The City of Baltimore Mayor’s Office and will feature renowned public space artists and community engagement components designed and implemented by NDC.

Hosted International Placemaking Week

Last year, we were thrilled to announce that Project for Public Spaces selected the Neighborhood Design Center to serve as the local host for the 4th International Placemaking Week June 5-8, 2024. The event drew a record-breaking 603 participants to explore treasured community-powered places across Baltimore. Through panels, short talks, mobile workshops, and site tours, the event galvanized placemakers from our region – and around the world! – while modeling spaces, places, and practices that enhance public health, strengthen community fabric, and combat systemic disinvestment and historic inequity.

Authored Our Equitable Engagement Toolkit

NDC’s Equitable Engagement Toolkit is a free and accessible resource bank that addresses common challenges encountered during the community engagement process and offers tools, strategies, and resources tailored to specific goals and contexts. The resource and engagement method database is the culmination of a 3 year Americorps VISTA project and is now available for free online through Gitbook.

Highlights

Expanding Our Services

The NDC team secured funding from **Maryland Department of Transportation** to extend the *Made You Look: Art in the Right of Way Toolkit* pedestrian safety program to Prince George's County.

Since its launch, **Made You Look** has successfully improved safety conditions by enhancing visibility for pedestrians and bicyclists throughout Baltimore and highlighting local safety issues to policymakers. We are thrilled to expand this initiative, growing its footprint to ensure that safe, vibrant streets are accessible to more communities across the state.

We initiated a new partnership with State of Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to **provide Placemaking Technical Assistance** to local partners across the state.

In collaboration with Gensler, NDC supported **SHARE Networks Baltimore Community Land Trusts** to provide capacity building services, convening membership for visioning sessions and development of a data platform.

Our Landscape Design and Environmental Resilience Team increased services to include submitting new **stormwater and design permits** in Prince George's County.

We ventured to the Eastern Shore to conduct a comprehensive feasibility study for a **future makerspace and innovation hub** at Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland.

We were invited to support two small municipalities in the **redesign of their town seal** to remove imagery harkening to a racist past.

Project

LANDSCAPE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

Stormwater Management Municipal Training Program

The Neighborhood Design Center’s Municipal Training Program brought together five municipalities from Prince George’s County to form a cohort focused on enhancing stormwater management practices. Each municipality, with varying levels of experience, received hands-on training from local stormwater engineering experts and developed customized maintenance schedules for their existing stormwater “Best Management Practices” or “BMP”s. The program created a network across municipalities, bringing public works departments and local agency leaders together to share skills and build relationships to power future collaboration and problem-solving.

This initiative improved the stewardship of **over 3,000 acres of urban land** within the Anacostia Watershed, contributing to the long-term health of the Chesapeake Bay. The participating municipalities, containing historically disinvested areas, had been working to address stormwater pollution, flooding, and tree canopy loss for over a decade. By focusing on BMP maintenance, this project strengthened the municipalities’ ability to sustainably manage stormwater infrastructure and protect priority watersheds in the Northeast and Northwest Branches of the Anacostia River.

Due to its success, a second round of funding was secured to expand to new municipalities and facilitate further training and knowledge sharing.



Project

LANDSCAPE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

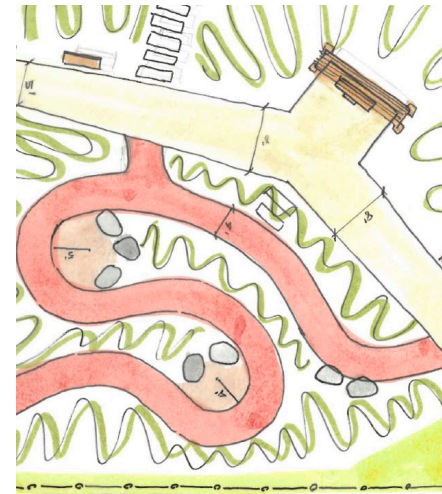
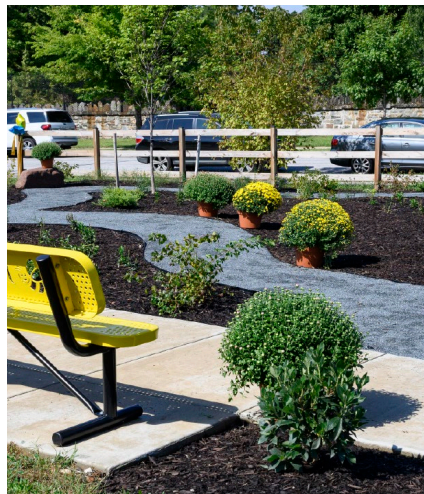
ReBuild Johnston Square Green Space

In partnership with the ReBuild Johnston Square Neighborhood Organization and Nature Sacred, NDC conducted a robust community engagement process to **design a meditative garden** for the Johnston Square community.

The project channeled feedback from the 2023 Johnson Square Fall Festival to inform the garden design, which was presented at Johnson Square’s monthly community meeting for feedback. Attendees had the opportunity to comment, ask questions, and identify their favorite concept elements.

Now built, the garden is a significant step towards realizing the larger Johnston Square Vision Plan, which aims to create a vibrant public realm.

Photos by Harry Connolly



Project

ARCHITECTURE AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Windom Road Barrier Project

In 1957, a corrugated metal barrier was installed as a physical reinforcement of segregation-era laws preventing Black residents to move freely between Brentwood and North Brentwood, the county's first incorporated African American town. While discriminatory laws are no longer in effect today, the town's leadership recognized that more action was needed to address the outdated barrier. Local leadership brought our team to the table to work closely with residents and leaders to design a solution.

NDC facilitated an 18-month engagement process with residents and local officials, ensuring that the community's vision for the site was central to the redesign. Together, they **developed a shared placemaking framework**, which included interpretive signs, bio retention planters, and streetscape improvements.

Initially funded by the Community Design Block Grant (CDBG), the project gained momentum, attracting \$265K in external funding and support from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority. These efforts led to the selection of artists Wes Moore and Nehemiah Dixon III to bring the community's design to life. The barrier sculpture and surrounding garden was unveiled in June 2024, symbolizing a new chapter in the town's history.

Photo by Nicholas London



Project

ARCHITECTURE AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Blue Light Junction

Through our Arts Space Technical Assistance program, we collaborated with Baltimore artist and farmer Kenya Miles to reimagine Blue Light Junction—a community hub inspired by the traditions of indigo dyeing. NDC’s conceptual designs **prioritized sustainability**, featuring a closed-loop water system and passive heating and cooling to minimize environmental impact.

The proposed plans incorporated built-in dye vats, trough sinks, and specialized plumbing to support the dyeing process. Renovations included a new garden-facing deck and accessible entry points, ensuring seamless connectivity between the workshop and the outdoor dye garden. South-facing windows were added to fill the workshop with natural light and provide a visual link to the garden.

Additionally, as a component of our Signal Station North lighting and public art project, Blue Light Junction partnered with NDC to bring a Modular Light Fixture public sculpture September 2023. Infinitely adaptable and scalable, Modular Light Fixtures, developed by Flux Studio, picks up on the District’s language of street art to add subtle, creative surface lighting to non-historic facades.

Photos by Side A Photography



Project

ARCHITECTURE AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Village Learning Place

The Village Learning Place (VLP) is an independent non-profit library that houses educational programs, enrichment opportunities, and informational resources. In addition to providing book rental, free computer usage, and other library services on their ground floor, VLP has expanded their programming to include summer camps, after-school programming, and other year-round classes for children, and lectures, concerts, and art events for adults in the community.

For their historic building located at 2521 St. Paul Street, NDC provided design services to envision how they can best optimize their space for their varied programming, while improving the **accessibility, security, and sustainability** of the building.

The volunteer team of designers (Andrew Bui, Amos Gambrah, Cristina Murphy, and Austin Tucker) engaged with VLP staff, parents, children and library patrons to identify the key challenges and opportunities for the space. The key recommendations for the library included:

- Improvements to the garden and side access of the building, moving the library's main entry to the accessible addition in the back of the building
- Relocation of the circulation desk and children's corner to create a large and flexible event space on the main level
- Additional infrastructure for young children in the basement, along with improved storage space, kitchen, and circulation



Project

CAPACITY BUILDING

Pennsylvania Avenue Main Street Welcome Center

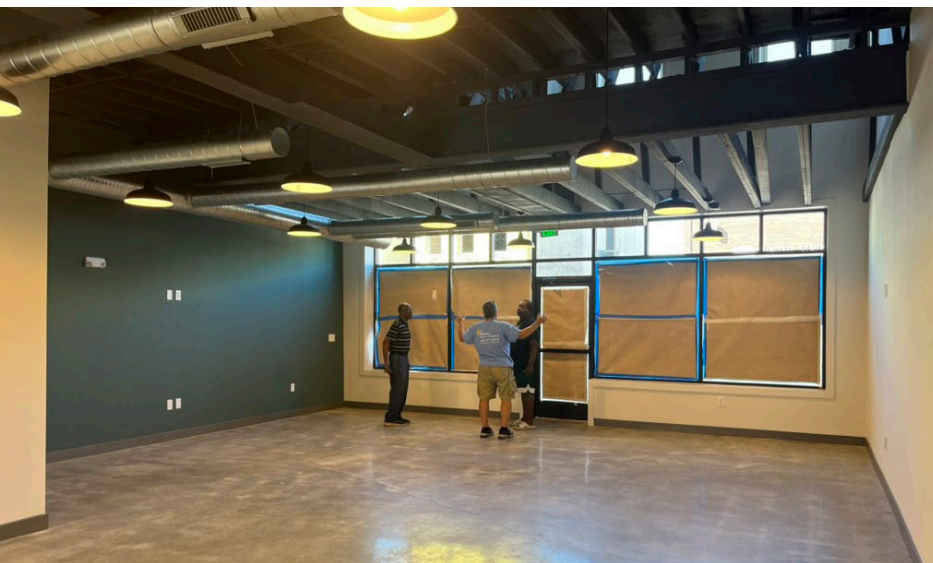
NDC provided project management support for the renovation of 1829 Pennsylvania Avenue, the new home of the Pennsylvania Avenue Main Street Welcome Center. This project, developed in partnership with the Upton Planning Committee, Kelly Little, SP Arch Inc., and Paradise Homes + Development, is **a key component of the area's larger revitalization**, which includes the restoration of the Arch Social Club, another NDC partner project.

Additional initiatives in the corridor include the new headquarters for the Mayor's Office of Cable and Communications and CharmTV, the revitalization of Avenue Market, the Billie Holiday Monument, and comprehensive planning with the West North Avenue Development Authority.

“

Revitalizing this area will help attract tourism dollars for the City and community and will draw those who want to experience Baltimore's historically rich African American culture as expressed through music, dance, and positive Black social life.”

—VAN ANDERSON, PRESIDENT, ARCH SOCIAL CLUB, TO THE BALTIMORE BANNER



Project

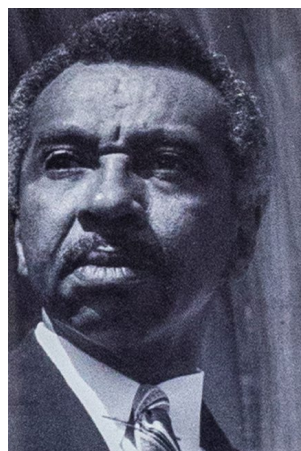
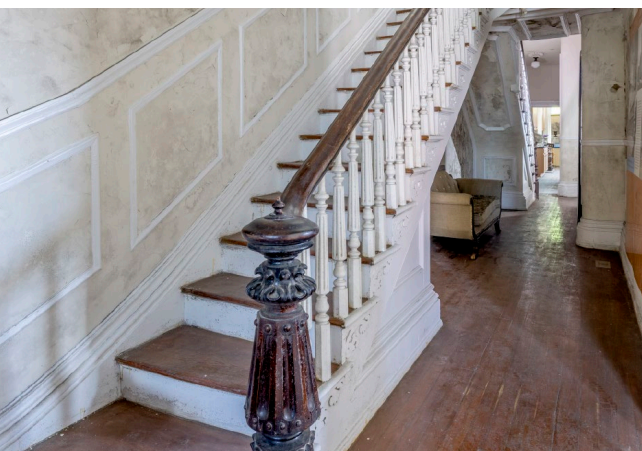
CAPACITY BUILDING

Parren Mitchell House

The Upton Planning Committee, in collaboration with NDC, has successfully **secured \$2.6 million** in state and federal funding for the renovation of the historic Parren Mitchell House, located in Baltimore’s Historic Upton Neighborhood.

Named after the late U.S. Congressman Parren Mitchell—Maryland’s first African American elected to Congress—this house represents the legacy of a pioneering civil rights leader who dedicated his life to advocating for affirmative action legislation and co-founding the Congressional Black Caucus.

This renovation project will preserve its rich history and cultural heritage while serving as a community hub that honors Mitchell’s contributions and fosters ongoing engagement, empowerment, and education within the Upton community.



Deep Dive

Placemaking Week

Last year, we were thrilled to announce that Project for Public Spaces selected the Neighborhood Design Center to serve as the local host for the 4th International Placemaking Week June 5-8, 2024. **The event drew a record-breaking 603 participants** to explore treasured community-powered places across Baltimore.

Through panels, short talks, mobile workshops, and site tours, the event galvanized placemakers from our region – and around the world! – while modeling spaces, places, and practices that enhance public health, strengthen community fabric, and combat systemic disinvestment and inequity.

On Thursday, June 6, participants ventured out on Mobile Workshops hosted by local partners across the city. Curated by the Neighborhood Design Center and The Medicine Show, the workshops brought participants to local neighborhoods to witness the incredible placemaking work underway in Charm City.

The conference ended with a neighborhood project tour of Greenmount West and vibrant celebration at Area 405.

Photos by Side A Photography



MOBILE WORKSHOP PARTNERS SITES AND HOSTS INCLUDED:

- Afro Charities
- Bon Secours Community Works
- Creative Nomads, along with the Baltimore Waterfront Partnership, and the Maryland Commission on African American History
- The Farm Alliance of Baltimore, including The Natural Dye Initiative, Filbert Street Garden, Plantation Park Heights, BLISS Meadows, and Black Butterfly Farms
- Graham Projects and SolRaya Public Space
- Joltage - Baltimore Markets
- MAG Partners at the Baltimore Peninsula
- Make Space, along with Black Women Build and Onyx Development
- The Peale Museum, with support from Quatrefoil Associates
- ReBUILD Metro, ReBUILD Johnston Square Neighborhood Organization, The Sixth Branch, and Heart's Place Services - Hope Village.
- Southeast CDC, along with Highlandtown Main Street, Highlandtown Arts District, and the Creative Alliance
- Station North Tool Library

PLACEMAKING WEEK SEED FUNDING PROVIDED BY:

- Office of the Mayor, The City of Baltimore
- Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
- T. Rowe Price Foundation
- Goldseker Foundation

PLACEMAKING WEEK LOCAL SPONSORS:

- Ayers Saint Gross
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Baltimore National Heritage Area
- City of Baltimore Department of Planning
- Downtown Baltimore Partnership
- Greater Baltimore Committee
- inPLACE Design
- Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
- Maryland Department of Planning
- MCB Real Estate
- Open Works
- Weinberg Foundation



“

The 2024 Placemaking Conference gave me such hope and optimism for our work and world. Learning from fellow practitioners on what is possible was so inspiring and practical. This was the best conference I’ve ever attended, and I feel so lucky to be a part of this profession.”

—DREW CRAWFORD, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS AND REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT, DOWNTOWN CLEVELAND, INC.

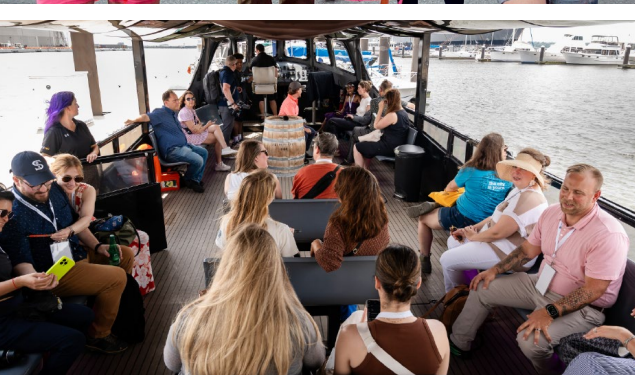
While Placemaking Week is over, our work to advance Placemaking Sector growth in our region has just begun!

“

Feedback from community partners and local participants indicates a strong feeling of sector-building in the Baltimore region. We’ve had many great conversations with folks who attended, with exciting ideas to keep strengthening this network moving forward.”

—BRIONY HYNSON, NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN CENTER’S DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Placemaking Week will have an estimated economic impact of \$500,000 on our city!



Deep Dive

Inviting Light: Bloomberg Public Art Award

Last summer, we were thrilled to be part of the collaborative team behind “Inviting Light,” an innovative public art project that has garnered national recognition by making Baltimore one of eight cities to receive **\$1 million through the Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge.**

Curated by Baltimore’s own Derrick Adams and produced by Central Baltimore Partnership, Baltimore City Mayor’s Office, and NDC, “Inviting Light” will bring five site-specific temporary public art installations to Central Baltimore as well as five site activations by artists. This will be followed by a year of scheduled events and curated arts programming for the community to engage with.

“Inviting Light” builds upon the extensive research and insights gathered from Signal Station North, NDC’s district lighting plan and public space initiative for Central Baltimore. Fueled by community input gathered through publications, workshops, and events, the project centered community engagement, research, and urban analysis to inform:

- A Public space lighting plan;
- Creative lighting installations; and
- Free, practical community tools for Station North and other communities wishing to implement public lighting projects.

We are thrilled to continue this work to foster a vibrant and equitable public space in Central Baltimore that resonates with the community’s values and aspirations.

Photo by Todd Evans



Deep Dive

Equitable Engagement Toolkit

Our Americorps VISTA Maddy Silberger-Franek concluded a **3-year effort** to develop and implement NDC's Equitable Engagement Toolkit, a free and accessible resource that addresses common challenges encountered during the community engagement process and offers tools and strategies tailored to specific goals and contexts. The resource, along with an engagement method database, is now free and available online through Gitbook.



“The goal from the start has been to think about how we might plan, facilitate, and measure equity within our engagement processes, specifically when we take on larger planning projects.”

—NDC PROGRAM MANAGER JULIA DIMAURO

In 2021, VISTA Jalen Powell-Bartley supported community engagement for NDC's planning projects, with a specific goal to identify improvements to strengthen equitable engagement in our approach.

In the VISTA project's second year, Evy DiSalvo took the lead, aligning the goals of the toolkit with the most challenging barriers NDC staff encounter in their engagement processes, and found:

- 1 The lack of clearly defined goals for engagement and projects is a frequent challenge. Without clear goals, it becomes challenging to plan for equity and accessibility.
- 2 The absence of accessible references and resources leads to a sense of reinventing the wheel during engagement events or workshops.

To address these challenges, Evy provided guidance to clarify the goal-setting process, setting clear guidelines for designing for engagement at the earliest stages of a project. Additionally, she collected a database of tools and methods for practitioners to reference when designing an engagement session using GitBook, a website that allows users to create customized and accessible workbooks.



“Instead of creating a plan for engagement from scratch for each project, now we have a resource that provides the necessary questions and steps.”

—EVY DISALVO, VISTA

With the completed toolkit in hand, year-three VISTA Maddy Silberger-Franek spent her time with us in 2024 creating partner-facing goals, values and design principles to help establish common frameworks with our collaborators. Additionally, Maddy supported stakeholder mapping with community partners, which helps support an equitable process by identifying *all* stakeholders that should be included in a project’s outreach before planning the engagement design.

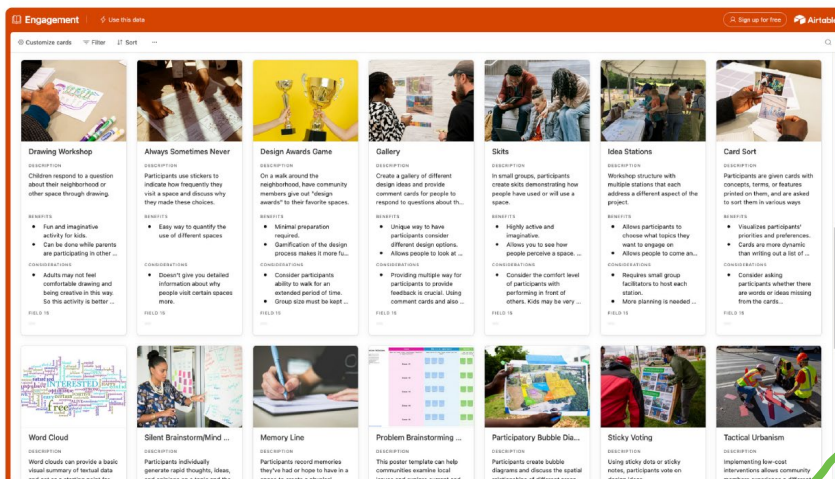


“It can be easy to think of obvious people who should be involved and then end up excluding groups of people. The stakeholder mapping is meant to have us think critically about those we should involve and be frank about those who might be typically excluded.”

—MADDY SILBERGER-FRANEK VISTA

In addition to having the finalized toolkit and resources, Julia points to the process of developing the toolkit as part of its success. “There’s been so much conversation internally that’s just been exciting,” says Julia. “Informally, amongst staff, we’re talking about how we can improve what we do, reach more people when we’re doing engagement, and have more honest conversations with community partners about what engagement should look like in order to be equitable and reach audiences that they would like to reach. It resulted in many great conversations with staff about the barriers to engagement and what we might do to make our events more accessible or the way that we communicate easier to understand.”

The toolkit is currently internal to NDC, yet as we test and refine our methods, we are continually collecting and organizing resources to share [here](#).



Looking Forward

In the last 10 years, NDC has grown fourfold. We have big plans for the next decade, too! We've established a development department and a business operations department, and undertaken organizational restructuring to support our increased staff and capacity. Today, we are a staff of 17 supported by hundreds of volunteers and community organizations across Maryland.



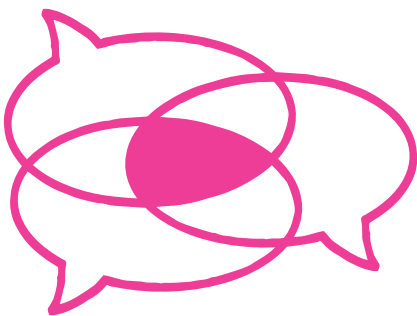
What's Next

Building, Sharing, and Equalizing Power

Next year, we are excited to further our commitment to building, sharing, and equalizing power through a **new initiative led by our VISTA member**. This project will begin with a comprehensive scan of community development services both within and beyond NDC, identifying the current landscape of support available to our partners.

Through collaborative workshops with staff, service providers, and community members, we'll gather critical feedback to deepen our collective understanding of the impact of these services. The VISTA member will also conduct a gap analysis, engaging at least 30 community partners to explore how existing service provision aligns—or falls short—of community needs, and **how these gaps connect to broader structural power dynamics**.

This effort will culminate in a summary report that outlines findings, identifies critical needs, and offers recommendations for closing gaps and enhancing our impact in the years ahead. Through this work, we aim to create more equitable, community-driven pathways in our service delivery.



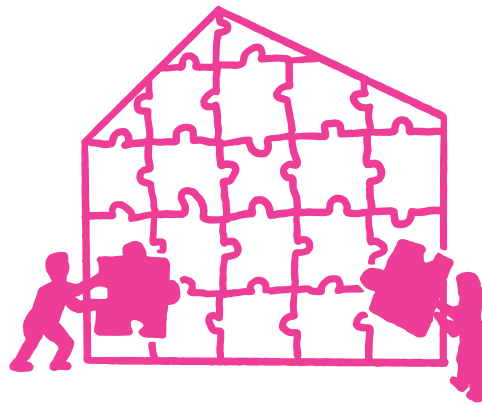
What's Next

Elevating Placemaking Practice in our Region

This year, the Neighborhood Design Center is poised to redefine its approach to placemaking with bold initiatives that will deepen our impact across Baltimore. Thanks to the support of the **France-Merrick Foundation**, NDC will embark on a pivotal journey to sharpen our equitable placemaking practices.

Building on momentum gathered from hosting the 4th International Placemaking Week in June 2024, our work will serve as a catalyst for community dialogue and action around public space in our region.

By collaborating with local partners and experts, we will produce a comprehensive Findings and Recommendations Report and an Operational Manual for Community Participation & Leadership in Placemaking. These resources will empower communities, guide our practices, and **set a new standard for placemaking** that reflects the diverse voices of Baltimore.



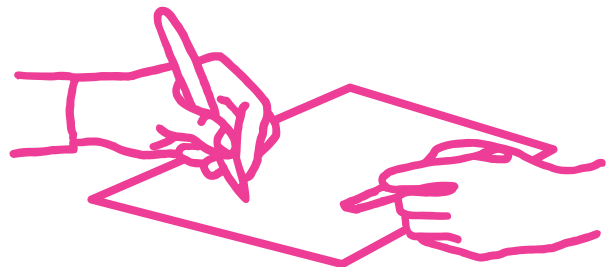
What's Next

Strategic Planning

Over the past decade, NDC has grown fourfold, and in the last five years alone, we've established development and business operations departments, restructured our organization, and expanded to a team of **17 staff members** supported by hundreds of volunteers.

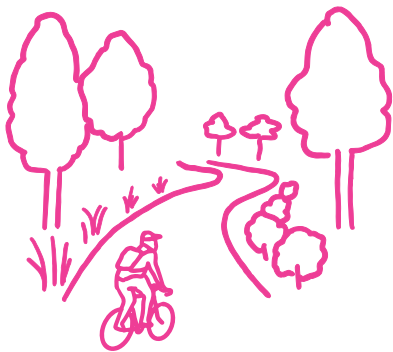
During this time, we also strengthened and diversified our board, bringing in new voices and perspectives that better reflect the communities we serve. This fall, we are undertaking a strategic planning process to build on this momentum and chart our path forward. **Cedarcroft Advisors** initiated this journey with conversations among our board and staff, setting the stage for a collaborative effort.

Next, we'll partner with **UPD Consulting** to articulate our theory of change, which will guide our future work. With this vision in hand, we'll return to Cedarcroft Advisors to finalize our strategic plan, equipping NDC to continue our impact-driven mission in the years ahead.





Our Services



DEPARTMENT

Landscape Design and Environmental Resilience Planning



The Landscape Design and Environmental Resilience team specializes in climate resilient landscape and forestry planning reflective of the unique needs of each community we work with.

Our team of landscape architects and designers, urban foresters, and arborists work to provide everyone access to well-designed greenspaces, which provide meaningful gathering spaces, improve community and individual well-being, and maximize ecosystem function and health.



Community Landscape Design

We create accessible, outdoor spaces across scales that respond to the environmental conditions of individual sites and the aspirations of community leaders.

PROJECT TYPES:

- Neighborhood parks and pocket parks
- Playgrounds and playscapes
- Community gardens and healing gardens
- Interpretative trails and streetscapes
- Vacant lot redesign
- Neighborhood greening plans
- Native, pollinator, and Bay-friendly planting plans
- Planting events and education
- Project and grant management
- Visualizations



Schoolyards and Learning Environments

We believe that every student deserves access to safe, sustainable, and inclusive outdoor spaces. Our designs provide opportunities for play, education, and exploration to improve physical and mental well-being and learning outcomes.

PROJECT TYPES:

- Outdoor classrooms and STEM spaces
- Environmental education
- Schoolyard planting plans
- Nature play
- Tree planting workshops
- Schoolyard learning gardens
- Sensory play and learning



Green Infrastructure

Our environmental resilience planning team integrates Best Management Practices (BMPs) for stormwater management, flood mitigation, and climate change to address community concerns.

PROJECT TYPES:

- Green infrastructure master planning
- Green infrastructure inventories and maintenance plans
- Green and complete street plans
- Stormwater management concept plans
- Stormwater management training and capacity-building for communities and municipalities



Urban and Community Forestry

Whether working at the neighborhood scale, on a city street, or in a pocket park, our certified arborists support communities to leverage the many public health benefits of a robust tree canopy.

PROJECT TYPES:

- Urban and community forest management plans
- Municipal and neighborhood tree inventories
- Street tree design
- Food forest design
- Tree planting demonstrations and education



Our Services



DEPARTMENT

Architecture and Community Planning



The Architecture and Community Planning team specializes in participatory architectural design, place-based arts initiatives, and planning.

Our team of architects, designers, planners, and engagement specialists hold strong commitments to design excellence, social justice, and responsive plans that prioritize the community's vision for neighborhood revitalization and progress.



Engagement and Facilitation

Our staff is trained to make organization and community-scale decision-making easier and more inclusive. As facilitators, we design the engagement process, structure meetings and workshops, document the process, and provide findings to enable stakeholders to bring their expertise to projects.

PROJECT TYPES:

- Youth engagement
- Community and project visioning
- Place-based strategic planning
- Asset mapping
- Train-the-trainer workshops
- Coalition building
- Engagement training



Community Planning

Our planning team helps neighbors define a collective vision about how their community should look and function. We prioritize bringing the right people to the project early and work to build actionable and inspirational documents that will guide the creation of just and equitable places.

PROJECT TYPES:

- Neighborhood plans
- Site planning & feasibility studies
- Zoning & regulatory analysis
- Architectural streetscape plans and design guidelines
- Main Street identity
- Housing strategy planning



Architectural and Interior Design

In collaboration with community members, our Architecture and Interiors team identify a vision for spaces, produce design options that reflect what we've heard, and deliver documents that can be used to fundraise, apply for grants, or further develop designs with a licensed design professional.

PROJECT TYPES:

- Code analysis
- Site planning
- Conceptual building and space plans (existing buildings and new construction)
- Interior design and furniture plans
- Facade improvement programs (design and management)
- Visualizations
- Project and grant management



Arts Planning and Cultural Programming

Our placemaking team listens to the unique history of each neighborhood and proposes design and art solutions that anchor and amplify those stories. We collaborate on projects in the public realm that change how people understand themselves and their places.

PROJECT TYPES:

- Public Art + administration (includes artist residency programs, management of artist RFQs and RFPs)
- Public art implementation
- Placekeeping and placemaking
- Historic preservation
- Place-based identity
- Public space design
- Cultural and public artplans

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