

# NPU INSIDER

Neighborhood Programs Unit

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### NPU Insider Update

The NPU Insider now covers all of our Neighborhood Programs:

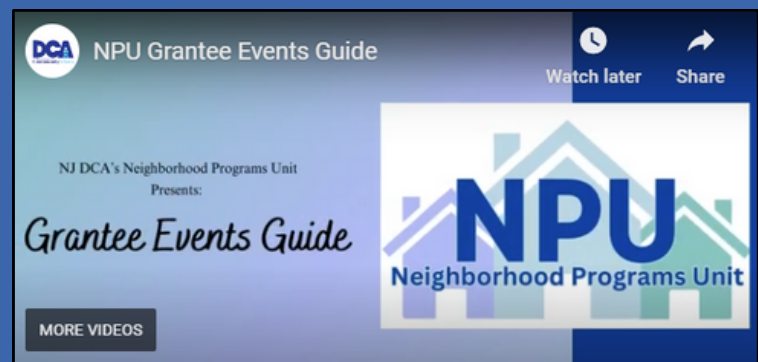
- Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC)
- Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP)
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

## OUR GRANTEE EVENTS GUIDE HAS BEEN UPDATED!

NPU updated the Grantee Events Guide video to make the procedure easier for inviting us to your events:

- You no longer need to email invitations to the Office of the DCA Commissioner.
- Email invitations to your grant manager and copy NRTC / NPP.
- Let us know if you'd like us to make remarks.

To access the video, click [HERE](#).





# NPU In Your Neighborhood

## Community Development in Bridgeton and Gloucester Township

On February 24th, the NPU team visited Bridgeton and Gloucester Township to conduct the closeout process for the Community Capital Needs grants.

The first stop was in Bridgeton, where Tri-County Community Action Agency, Inc. (doing business as Gateway Community Action Partnership) has repurposed a former church into a new community center. The facility is not yet open to the public, as it still is under construction.

The team then traveled to Gloucester Township to observe some new additions to a park that was funded by NRTC. This included a large fence surrounding a basketball court and a playground.

Finally, the team toured a nearby neighborhood where the township is developing affordable housing. Currently, three modern family homes are under construction, with plans for additional units in the future.

These projects were all funded by the Community Capital Needs grant through the Neighborhood Preservation Program.



## New Community Center Opening in Camden

**April 10, 2025:** The Neighborhood Programs Unit had the opportunity to attend and speak at the opening of the St. Joseph's Carpenter Society Workforce Development and Community Center in East Camden.

In addition to job training in building maintenance, community residents now have a resource for learning how to make their own home repairs. The space will also be used as a community center for resident meetings and office space for local contractors.

The event featured remarks from a series of speakers, including Mayor Victor G. Carstarphen and Camden County Commissioner Jennifer Fleisher, among others. Our very own Susan Catlett and Brad Harrington also said a few words, discussing the importance of the facility and the work SJCS has done to uplift the neighborhood.

After the ribbon was cut and closing remarks were made, the celebratory mood was deliciously accented with refreshments from local restaurants, including the Breakfast Palace, whose menu offers much more than just breakfast.

The new facility represents a substantial investment in Camden's human capital and will be a hub for community development and togetherness.

Saint Joseph Society's Workforce Development Center was funded (in part) by the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program, through a Community Capital Needs grant.





## Making Dough on Haddon Ave: Glassy Brown Cookies

On the cool afternoon of March 25th, NPU visited Haddon Avenue in Camden, for the grand opening of Glassy Brown Cookies, funded in part by the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program, or NRTC. The day was filled with speeches, great company, and of course, delicious cookies.

The event opened with remarks from owner, Arlene Felder, who gave us a little history on her story and Glassy Brown's mission. She then continued to thank everyone who helped make the opening possible. She made sure to thank the city of Camden and all of the partners that contributed to the successful opening. Including, Parkside Business & Community in Partnership (PBCIP), St. Joseph's Carpenter Society, and the members of her team, which included her family.

After her closing remarks, Ms. Felder encouraged everyone to enjoy some cookies. The day ended with laughter, a sense of community, and some delicious, sweet treats.



## NPU's Earth Day Adventures

On Earth Day, the NPU team made its way to Unity Square in New Brunswick to volunteer at a community clean-up event organized by Catholic Charities, Diocese of Metuchen. The NPU team joined residents in filling large garbage bags with trash and recyclables that had been discarded on the neighborhood's sidewalks. The clean-up lasted a few hours, and after collecting what looked to be 200 pounds of trash from the streets of New Brunswick, Shahadat, Suvi, and Susan headed to Perth Amboy for their next event of the day.

The Jewish Renaissance Foundation hosted its annual Community Garden opening in the Perth Amboy Alliance for Community (PAAC) neighborhood. Residents, many of whom were on Spring Break from school, came together to get their hands dirty. The day was spent pulling out weeds, raking leaves, and cleaning up trash. While taking much needed breaks, the volunteers decorated wooden Earth Day-themed ornaments that will decorate the garden. We were able to connect with the communities that we serve and help the earth feel a little cleaner! Earth Day was a win-win!





## Eli's Legacy Park Opening

On the beautifully sunny afternoon of Wednesday, April 23rd, NPU's Susan Catlett and Sandy Sleiman visited the Parkside neighborhood in Camden for the Grand Opening of Eli's Legacy Park on Haddon Avenue. The event was a heartwarming commemoration to "Mr. Eli", proprietor of Eli's Taylor shop, a neighborhood staple that stood on the lot for decades.

Members of the community gathered, mingled, and enjoyed music played by a live DJ. CEO of Parkside Business and Community in Partnership, Bridget Phiefer, spoke about the history of the park and the motivation for its development. After Phiefer's remarks, she invited the crowd to enjoy a barbecue buffet, provided by Eli's Legacy Park's next-door neighbor, Blowin' Smoque barbeque restaurant.

While neighbors, business owners, and other community stakeholders enjoyed their delicious barbecue, both the mayor of Camden, Victor Carstarphen, and NPU's Susan Catlett gave touching speeches about the revitalization efforts turning "blightness to brightness" in East Camden and other parts of the City.

The event wrapped up with a live band and some great tunes. It is clear that Eli's Legacy Park will be a new staple in the Camden community for years to come.



## CDBG Corner

### CDBG's Day in New Brunswick

The CDBG team had an eventful day on April 22nd, 2025. In addition to joining the rest of the NPU team in Unity Square for the Earth Day clean up event, the CDBG team also visited a few other sites.

Their second stop of the day was Elijah's Promise Soup Kitchen, also located in New Brunswick. The staff was nice enough to welcome them with cookies and a tour of the building. CDBG staff saw where the food was made, how they deliver it, and the classroom they use for culinary education.

After Elijah's Promise Soup Kitchen, the team made their way to another part of New Brunswick to visit the Urban Health Collaborative. The CDBG team explored their facility, where community residents are provided with necessities such as food, clothing, diapers, toiletries, and more. The non-profit is currently conducting research on programming to help residents learn to grow their own food.

It was definitely an eventful and meaningful trip for the team who got to see firsthand how their work serves community residents.



# Resource Round Up

## NPU Insider Exclusive Interview

**NPU's Susan Catlett conducted a virtual interview with DCA's Chief Data Officer, Dr. Chris Wheeler.**

**Dr. Wheeler gave the NPU Insider information on data resources, neighborhood trends, and more relevant information that could be helpful to our grantees.**



**Susan:**

Please tell us about your role as Chief Data Officer for the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs and how your work impacts the programs and services offered by DCA?

**Chris:**

As Chief Data Officer I manage the Department's open data portal, conduct research informing policy development and program evaluation, create and update key data products, and provide data analytics and research support to various divisions of DCA. My work also entails keeping DCA staff informed on the latest demographic, housing, and economic trends affecting the Department's work and providing evidence-based research that measures the impact of DCA's programs and services.

**Susan:** You created the Neighborhood Trends Database posted on the NPP and NRTC web pages which contains very detailed information about every inch of our state, by municipality, census tract and census block group, and identifies eligibility for both the Neighborhood Preservation and the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Programs. Can you share a little about this tool and how it might be helpful for Neighborhood Programs applicants and grantees?

**Chris:** The Neighborhood Trends Database was created to make Census data on New Jersey's diverse communities more accessible to our applicants and grantees. It tracks conditions and trends happening within different neighborhoods across the state, including information like housing market activity, demographics, and socioeconomic factors, allowing for analysis of neighborhood conditions and development patterns over time. We offer information at the census tract, block group, and municipality level. The Database offers our applicants and grantees reliable community-level data that can be used in grant applications and program evaluation projects.

**Susan:** Are there other DCA data resources our applicants or grantees might find helpful?

**Chris:** We offer many other helpful data products including a Rent Control Survey, Local Code of Ordinances Directory, a Development Permit Viewer and Dashboard, and a Lead Paint Law Inspection Dashboard. We have also produced a food desert listing and map in partnership with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority that shows where residents have limited access to affordable, healthy, and nutritious food. These resources can be utilized to help residents struggling with burdensome rent increases, food insecurity, and lead hazards.

**Susan:** You recently shared the US Census Bureau 2024 Population Estimates with our unit, which showed a "sharp spike" for New Jersey. Can you tell us how this spike might impact NPP and NRTC neighborhoods?

**Chris:** The spike was driven by a rise in foreign migration to New Jersey. NPP and NRTC neighborhoods with large immigrant communities may notice an increase in their foreign-born population, as the effects of the pandemic on curtailing immigration continue to fade. Neighborhood service needs may change in line with a growing population coming in from outside the United States.