

Northside Neighborhood Initiative FAQs

Q. What is the Northside Neighborhood Initiative?

A. The Northside Neighborhood Initiative (NNI) was announced March 9, 2015. It is a partnership among neighborhood residents, UNC, Self-Help, the Jackson Center, the Town of Carrboro, and the Town of Chapel Hill that pursues a shared vision for the historic Northside Neighborhood: a family-friendly, multi-generational community that balances the needs of long-term residents, new residents, homeowners, renters and students.

Durham-based nonprofit Self-Help is utilizing a \$3 million no-interest loan from UNC to lead the acquisition and resale of properties in the Northside to create housing opportunities that are consistent with community goals and vision. Self-Help is working closely with the grassroots nonprofit Jackson Center, and in close collaboration with neighborhood residents, non-profit housing providers, local government, UNC, and other partners.

The NNI seeks to build on a long history of creative and courageous leadership among the people who live in Northside. It advances ongoing efforts of non-profit organizations like EmPOWERment, Inc., Habitat for Humanity, and the Community Home Trust, that have worked together over the years to promote and to build affordable housing and to conserve the unique strengths of the neighborhood.

Q. What is the vision?

A. The vision is to maintain and strengthen a vibrant, diverse, family-friendly neighborhood that includes elders, students, families, and others and honors the history of Northside.

Q. What are the goals?

A. The NNI is designed to balance housing types in the neighborhood, in order to preserve the future of Northside as a community that serves homeowners and renters from a wide variety of backgrounds with an emphasis on people who work in Chapel Hill and Carrboro, by pursuing the following specific goals: 1. Helping long-term residents who want to stay in Northside remain in their homes; 2. Attracting new residents – a balance of working families, seniors and students – from diverse backgrounds; and 3. Increasing the availability of housing and financing options for neighborhood properties

Q. How does the initiative work?

A. Self-Help works alongside the Jackson Center, and in close collaboration with neighborhood residents, in order to identify and acquire properties for renovation and redevelopment. Utilizing the loan from UNC, Self-Help seeks to buy properties for the “Northside land bank”, where they are maintained until ready for conversion to homeownership or rental housing consistent with the goals of the community, general in partnership with other housing developers.

Q. What is the Northside land bank?

A. We use the phrase “land bank” to mean a mechanism by which property can be strategically acquired, assembled, and converted to serve a community purpose. Self-Help formed the Northside land bank to gain control of key properties that can help support neighborhood goals. Self-Help looks to

acquire properties from owners looking to sell, and makes these properties available for purchase by homeowners, non-profit housing providers, and others responsive to neighborhood interests.

Q. How can I purchase a property from the Northside land bank?

A. If you are an individual buyer or represent an organization, and would like to inquire about property availability, please be in touch with the Jackson Center so they can add you to the contact list.

Q. What if I want to sell my property in Northside?

A. If you own property in Northside and are thinking about selling, please be in touch with the Jackson Center to talk more about your interests.

Q. Does the initiative affect students?

A. Students committed to being invested citizens of Chapel Hill have been leaders in making this effort possible. Students in the future will have an opportunity to live in vibrant, diverse community and expand their education and learn the history underneath their feet. Also, current and former students have for years played an active role by working as fellows, volunteers and full-time employees at the Jackson Center and other organizations active in the neighborhood. The NNI also seeks to reach out to rental property owners to establish intentional housing for undergraduate and graduate students.

Q. Do other town-university-neighborhood initiatives exist in the U.S.?

A. The idea of “town-gown” collaboration with specific neighborhoods is not common but there are examples across the country that help inspire NNI. We believe the NNI is unique in the scope of the vision, as well as in the commitment to authentic grassroots, community-based involvement in planning and implementation. Also, most other such initiatives focus on revitalizing disinvested communities adjacent to campuses, work that is important but in some ways less complex than NNI’s aspirations to balance needs in a community that has seen extensive investment in particular types of housing.

Q. Why is the Northside Neighborhood the focus of this unique effort?

A. Northside is not just a geographic area. This community is inclusive of all who live, work, worship, and play here. Residents of Northside have built, sustained, and served Carrboro, Chapel Hill and UNC for generations. The neighborhood remains one of the most diverse, vibrant, and culturally important neighborhoods in Chapel Hill/Carrboro.

Q. How can I get involved?

A. Please be in touch with the Jackson Center if you would like to learn more or offer your time to help the NNI succeed.