



Northeast Towson Improvement Association



**STRATEGIC PLAN
2026-2030**

NeTIA: Northeast Towson Improvement Association

The Community Association for Historic East Towson

Executive Summary

Building on NeTIA's history of advocacy and resilience, we have refined our present and future goals for the community and set a path to meet them.

MISSION

To preserve the history and protect the future of Historic East Towson, Baltimore County's oldest African American community.

VISION

NeTIA envisions a protected and respected Historic East Towson that shares our rich history and thrives as a unified community for generations to come.

GOALS

1. Advance Public History Projects

Create a new 501(c)(3) for the Road to Freedom Trail, and collaborate to make history projects publicly accessible.

2. Develop Community Programs

Revitalize NeTIA's signature programs and events, and develop new program offerings to serve community interests.

3. Cultivate Financial Independence

Develop fundraising channels to start a NeTIA Community Fund for investing in neighborhood priorities.

4. Foster Strategic Partnerships

Sustain existing partnerships and pursue new opportunities to advance NeTIA's goals through collaboration.

5. Institute Succession Plans

Define roles and document leadership processes to facilitate organization transitions and foster a pipeline for new leaders.



Honoring Our Past, Protecting Our Future

Historic East Towson's biggest challenge is the threat to the neighborhood's continued existence.

Through extensive discussion among community leaders, neighbors, and stakeholders to develop this strategic plan, respect emerged as a barrier: beyond Historic East Towson's borders, and at times even within them, there is a lack of awareness, recognition, and respect for what the community has built over almost two centuries.

This attitude manifests in a variety of ways, from new developments displacing historic homes to issues with community policing and government representation of the neighborhood's interests.

As the community is initiating important projects to preserve Historic East Towson's history, there is the simultaneous question of whether the neighborhood's treasured way of life will continue: Will new neighbors share legacy residents' commitment to the ethos of "One Big Knit," a community of care, where you can always run next door to ask your neighbor, by name, for a cup of sugar?

This existential threat raises the stakes of efforts to make Historic East Towson's past more visible in the fight for the neighborhood's present and future.

With this strategic plan, NeTIA boldly claims our identity and solidifies our goals to preserve and protect Historic East Towson through the next five years and beyond.

Mission & Vision Refined

In updating NeTIA's mission and vision statements, the core of who we are and what we do remains steadfast. However, we've made adjustments to the language we use to describe our work to make it more legible for those just learning about Historic East Towson and to refocus on the *why* of our efforts.

NeTIA's new mission makes our history explicit, and our new vision defines the stakes of our work for our future.

NETIA'S MISSION

Then: To preserve and protect the quality of life for existing and future residents of Historic East Towson.

Now: To preserve the history and protect the future of Historic East Towson, Baltimore County's oldest African American community.

NETIA'S VISION

Then: Historic East Towson is Baltimore County's oldest African-American community connecting our rich and complex history to a vibrant new future.

Now: NeTIA envisions a protected and respected Historic East Towson that shares our rich history and thrives as a unified community for generations to come.

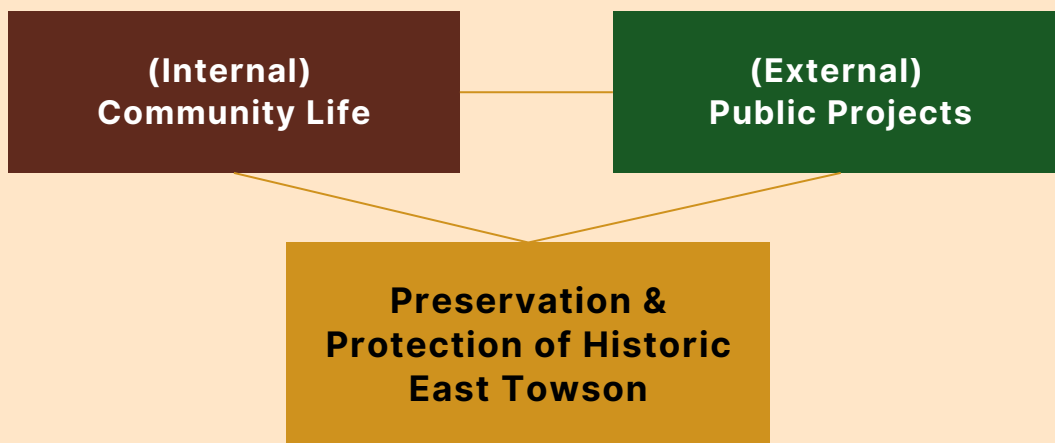


Our Work

NeTIA's work falls into two lanes:

1. (Internal) **Community life offerings for Historic East Towson residents**
 - a. These include: a community fund, neighborhood classes and resources, summer camp, signature events, and community protections and sovereignty.
2. (External) **Public projects to preserve history and build awareness of the neighborhood**
 - a. These include: the Road to Freedom Trail, neighborhood tours, oral histories and a pictorial history book, and historic neighborhood designation.

Efforts in both realms, however, work in tandem toward the preservation and protection of Historic East Towson. Increasing the public visibility of our neighborhood will help prevent the erasure of its history, while building up our strength within the community will help us sustain our existence.



Goal #1: Advance Public History Projects

PURPOSE

NeTIA engages in numerous public history projects, collaborations, and presentations. These efforts--both documenting Historic East Towson's history and publicly sharing it--are essential to NeTIA's mission of the preservation and protection of the neighborhood.

However, these history projects have grown in scope so much that they have become unmanageable within NeTIA alone. To continue their development, a new 501(c)(3) will be created for the Historic East Towson Road to Freedom Trail. The new organization will manage the neighborhood's public history projects while maintaining close ties with NeTIA for community input and participation.

OUTCOMES

- **Public history project management will transition to a new, separate Road to Freedom Trail 501(c)(3).**
Strategic steps:
 1. Pursue process to launch Road to Freedom Trail 501(c)(3).
 2. Move management and funding of history projects to the new organization.
 - a. Projects to move include: trail development, oral histories, digital archive, cemetery restoration, and pictorial history book
 3. Maintain NeTIA and community input into Historic East Towson history projects through the new Public History Projects Liaison role outlined in the NeTIA Succession Plan (p. 8).
- **Historic East Towson history and projects will be made publicly visible and accessible.**
Strategic steps:
 1. Transcribe and share community oral histories.
 2. Publicly launch the Historic East Towson Digital Archive.
 3. Write and publish the Historic East Towson pictorial history book.
 4. Place commemorative signage and art throughout the neighborhood.
 5. Apply for historic district designation status.

Goal #2: Develop Community Programs

PURPOSE

Community events have been an important part of Historic East Towson's culture for decades, if not centuries. In recent years, some of the neighborhood's signature events and programs have been placed on temporary hold due to circumstances outside of NeTIA's control. Other historic events haven't been offered in many years, but there is great interest in bringing them back.

In addition to reviving its longstanding traditions, the community aspires to bring people together through even more community programs and events. NeTIA is committed to reigniting its event and program offerings in an effort to rebuild and preserve the strong community ties that make East Towson unique.

OUTCOMES

- **Signature NeTIA programs and events will be revitalized.**

Strategic steps:

1. Address venue barriers and rebuild Juneteenth Celebration attendance.
2. Identify leadership and build infrastructure to relaunch the Carver Playground Summer Camp.
3. Plan a modern version of Organization Day parade and events.
4. Gauge interest in hosting repeat events like Jazz in the Rain Garden, Sip N' Paint, and Freedom School.

- **New community program offerings will be developed to serve community needs and interests.**

Strategic steps:

1. Develop proposal and schedule for a regular Appliance Training program.
2. Explore needs and interests for senior-accessible programming, including Dementia-friendly events and Baltimore County "Village" status.
3. Foster connections with community partners like the Elks Lodge and local churches to collaborate on new events.
4. Build up culture of community get-togethers and regular programming following community interests.

Goal #3: Cultivate Financial Independence

PURPOSE

One avenue to increase the community's agency in defining its own future is to build up its financial resources. For instance, if NeTIA is able to purchase homes directly from neighbors interested in selling, those properties become more difficult for developers and utilities to take over, and further shrink the neighborhood.

Community funds can also strengthen interpersonal bonds and mutual support, creating opportunities for investments like home repair funding and student scholarships. Financial independence is a challenging goal for small community organizations, but one well worth striving for to protect the community.

OUTCOMES

- **NeTIA will foster fundraising efforts to launch a Community Fund.**

Strategic steps:

1. Run targeted fundraising campaigns to meet community needs.
2. Build partnerships with volunteer/student groups to give paid neighborhood tours.
3. Expand Carver Community Center rental opportunities.
4. Identify funding and investment opportunities to grow NeTIA's savings.

- **Community Fund goals and procedures will be defined to begin investing in neighborhood interests.**

Strategic steps:

1. Articulate community priorities for investment.
2. Develop procedures for proposing and approving use of NeTIA funds.
3. Begin making community investments, which may include property purchases, home repair funds, and scholarships.

Goal #4: Foster Strategic Partnerships

PURPOSE

NeTIA has found new paths toward achieving community goals through recent collaborations with universities, government agencies, churches, businesses, organizations, and community groups. These opportunities have created visibility for the neighborhood, brought in funding, ignited preservation efforts, and overall, strengthened support for the Historic East Towson community.

Looking forward, partnerships will continue to be key to pursuing NeTIA's mission and achieving our vision for a protected and respected East Towson.

OUTCOMES

- **Existing NeTIA partnerships will be sustained and deepened.**

Strategic steps:

1. Continue historic preservation relationships with historians, archivists, universities, and conference networks.
2. Grow collaboration and goodwill with Baltimore County through projects like Smart Growth America's Community Connector Program.
3. Sustain core partnerships, including with NeighborSpace of Baltimore County and Towson University's GIVE grant writing program.

- **New opportunities for strategic collaborations will be identified and pursued.**

Strategic steps:

1. Maintain networking connections and attend events to stay open to incoming opportunities.
2. Seek out new collaborations based on developing NeTIA needs and goals.
3. Reflect on and prioritize investments in short vs. long term collaborations, based on capacity and interests.

Goal #5: Institute Succession Plans

START DATE: DECEMBER 2025

COMPLETION DATE: MAY 2026

PURPOSE

As detailed in full in its own document, NeTIA's Succession Plan is a component of NeTIA's Strategic Plan, outlining the organization's short-term and long-term processes, focused on sustainability, preservation, and visibility. It provides guidelines for how outgoing leaders will document responsibilities, processes, decision-making, and organizational priorities to preserve institutional knowledge and empower new leaders.

NEWLY DEFINED ROLES

A major emphasis of the new succession plan is defining two roles that have long existed in the practice of NeTIA leadership, but have not previously been named: the Public History Projects Manager and the Community Life Coordinator. Defining these roles will help facilitate the separation of the new Road to Freedom Trail 501(c)(3), which will take over the Public History Projects Manager role. The NeTIA counterpart of the role will become the Public History Projects Liaison, maintaining NeTIA input into public projects.

SUCCESSION PLAN STEPS

1. Collect and document essential organizational leadership information.
2. Elect new NeTIA leadership in March 2026.
3. Onboard new NeTIA leaders.
4. Transition Public History Projects Manager role to Liaison role.
5. The Road to Freedom Trail becomes an independent 501(c)(3) organization and Public History Projects Liaison finalizes role transition.

Public History Projects Manager

ROLE DESCRIPTION

Key Responsibilities

1. *Develop & manage history projects*

- a. Coordinate stakeholders, supporters, and participants to memorialize East Towson's history across public projects.
 - i. Current projects include: Road to Freedom Trail, oral histories, digital archive, pictorial history book, Pleasant Rest Cemetery restoration.
- b. Seek project funding
 - i. Grants, public partnerships, fundraising and corporate sponsors

2. *Liaise with the East Towson community*

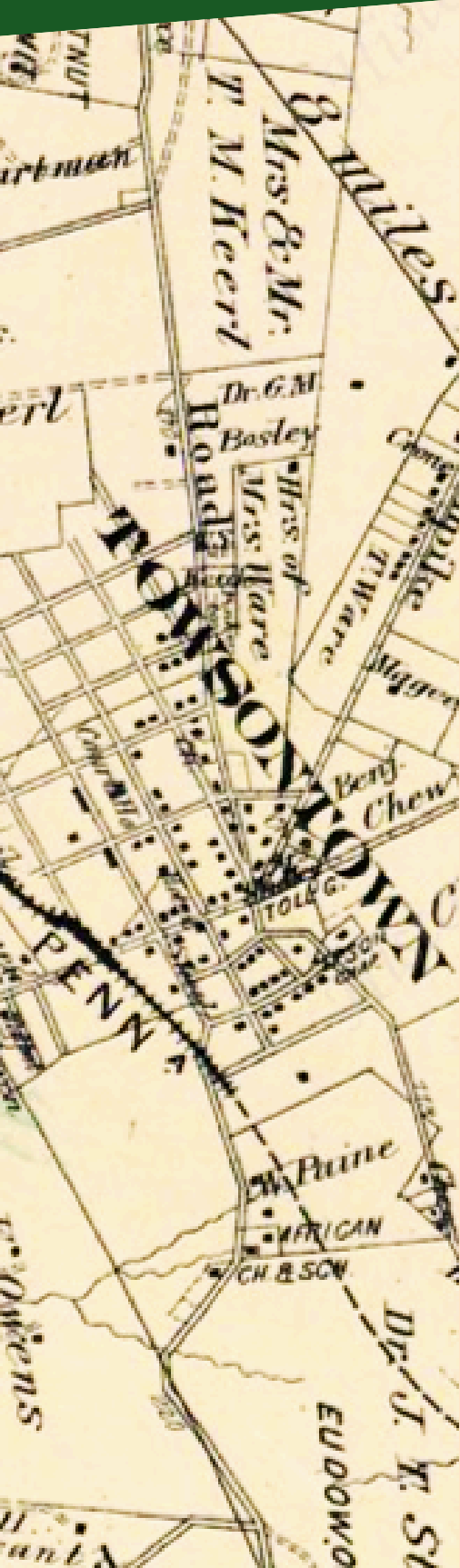
- a. Gather community input on public history priorities and project direction
- b. Update the community on project progress, challenges, and opportunities

3. *Promote visibility*

- a. Serve as a public spokesperson for Historic East Towson's history
- b. Represent Historic East Towson at descendant history conferences and events
- c. Pursue speaking and media opportunities to build awareness
- d. Collaborate with university and community groups on visibility efforts

4. *Advocate for preservation*

- a. Network with public leaders to build protections for Historic East Towson
- b. Pursue historic designations and recognition for the neighborhood
- c. Represent community interests in public history project collaborations and government decision-making





Community Life Coordinator

ROLE DESCRIPTION

Key Responsibilities

Community Programs

1. Facilitate Community Events
 - a. Current events include: Juneteenth Celebration, Sip N' Paints, Jazz in the Rain Garden, and Bingo Nights
2. Develop Programs
 - a. Current program interests include:
 - i. Appliance Training Program
 - ii. Youth Programs: Historic East Towson summer camp, create Saturday School opportunities, etc.
3. Manage Operations: Oversee use of Carver Center facilities (access, maintenance, rentals).

Community Organization

1. Build relationships
2. Support Public History Projects
3. Liaise with Local Government
 - a. Possible representation needs include: Baltimore County government, Road to Freedom Trail, Senior Services, and Baltimore County Senior "Village" Designation.

Community Needs

1. Develop Community Fund: Create and grow a shared community fund.
 - a. Seek an advisor/consultant to outline routes to grow financially.
 2. Field Neighborhood Concerns
 3. Expand Protective Initiatives
 - a. Neighborhood home renovations
 - b. Awards/scholarships
 - c. Acquiring Adelaide Bentley Park
 - d. Purchasing homes as they come up for sale, to prevent acquisitions by BGE and developers.
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Public History Projects

Role Transition

PUBLIC HISTORY PROJECTS MANAGER

- Manage public history projects; coordinate stakeholder and participants across public history projects; seek funding through multiple community-oriented pathways.
- Liaise with the Historic East Towson community; provide project updates; promote visibility and advocate for preservation as spokesperson, and community advocate.

LAUNCH OF ROAD TO FREEDOM TRAIL 501(C)3

PUBLIC HISTORY PROJECTS LIAISON

- Serve as NeTIA's primary contact with the Road to Freedom Trail; share updates, manage community involvement, and ensure alignment with NeTIA's goals.
- Gather feedback from NeTIA leadership and Historic East Towson community members to inform public history projects
- Develop and maintain documentation processes to preserve essential materials



Organizational Leadership SUCCESSION TIMELINE

Month 0	December <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submit the finalized Strategic Plan, including this Succession Plan supplement.• President establishes a shared digital drive that will include organizational leadership documents, ongoing projects, and contacts.
Months 1-2	January-February <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NeTIA leaders document leadership processes, ongoing projects, and contacts.
Months 3-4	March-April <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At the Annual Meeting on the first Tuesday of March, new organizational leaders are elected, including the role of President.• Outgoing leadership facilitates onboarding and transfer of responsibilities to incoming leadership (including access to digital drive, passwords, contacts).
Months 5-6	May-June <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public History Projects Manager finalizes transfer of responsibilities and materials to the Road to Freedom Trail 501(c)(3).• Newly identified leaders begin to take on organizational responsibilities more independently.



Public History Role TRANSITION TIMELINE

Months 0-6
(estimated)

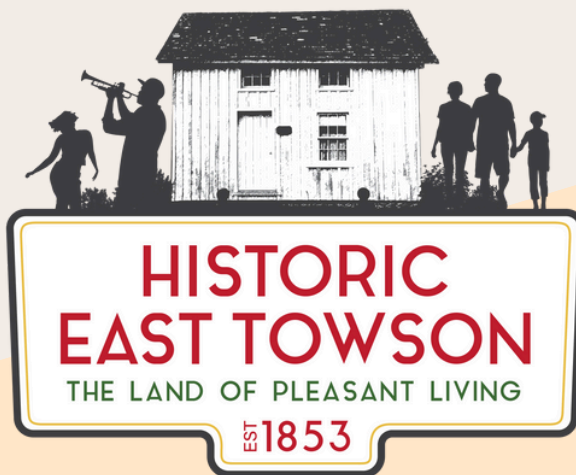
December-June

- Public History Projects Manager pursues process of creating a new Road to Freedom Trail 501(c)(3).
- Until the new 501(c)(3) is established, the Public History Projects Manager continues in the present role within NeTIA.

Months 6-12
(estimated)

July-December

- Once the Road to Freedom Trail 501(c)(3) is established, management of Historic East Towson's public history projects moves from NeTIA to the new 501(c)(3).
- NeTIA's Public History Projects Manager role transitions to become the Public History Projects Liaison, facilitating collaboration between NeTIA and the new 501(c)(3).



NeTIA: Northeast Towson Improvement Association