

**Opportunity Neighborhoods (ON)** is a county-wide organizing framework to make policies and partnerships between communities, schools, and local government more equitable and effective for children, youth and families.

Fairfax County is a large and thriving community, encompassing over 400 square miles, and served by one of the largest public school systems in the nation. Despite the overall prosperity enjoyed around the county, areas of lower opportunity exist. Recent reports and initiatives have identified such areas in Fairfax as “Opportunity Zones” and “[Islands of Disadvantage](#).” To improve the lives of youth and families in these neighborhoods, broad networks of partners must work together – to collaborate with residents, identify service gaps, streamline systems, invest in evidence-informed services, and update policies.

There are a variety of major initiatives in Fairfax County that each have their own way of describing and categorizing the important work that they do to serve the community. Some important examples include:

- [Closing the Achievement Gap](#)
- [Community Health Improvement Plan](#)
- [Community Schools](#)
- [Consolidated Community Funding Pool](#)
- [Equitable School Readiness Strategic Plan](#)
- [Fairfax County Economic Success Plan](#)
- [Kids at Hope](#)
- [One Fairfax](#)
- [Opportunity Neighborhoods](#)
- [Opportunity Zones](#)
- [Portrait of a Graduate](#)
- [Successful Children and Youth Policy Team](#)
- [Three to Succeed](#)

Seven major themes (below) can be seen across these diverse initiatives. Opportunity Neighborhoods (ON) partners are involved in these initiatives – helping to build infrastructure, “connect the dots”, reduce redundancies, and implement equitable, effective practices. Each of us who serve children, youth and families can see our work in some or all of these themes, which are each described in greater detail throughout this bulletin.

1. COMMUNITY VOICES
2. YOUTH CONNECTIONS
3. EDUCATION
4. FAMILY WELLNESS AND STABILITY
5. CAREER PATHWAYS
6. SHARED GOALS & INFRASTRUCTURE
7. SHARED MEASUREMENT & DATA



ON partnerships improve access to early literacy programs

## 1. COMMUNITY VOICES

*Youth and their families are empowered to be active leaders and to contribute and benefit fully from a community that supports and encourages them to thrive.*

**Including:** Family and Community Engagement (ON) • Equity • Inclusion • Representation • Community Authority • Family, Parent, Teen Leadership • Support Networks • Neighborhood Ambassadors • Communities of Practice

ON partners are promoting the use of the [Spectrum of Public Participation](#), building infrastructure for collaborations with residents, and eliminating barriers for Neighborhood Ambassadors, residents, parents, and teens to play a meaningful role in planning and policy development. ON covers expenses to provide transportation, child care, and/or interpreters to support Neighborhood Ambassador involvement in county-wide councils, coalitions, and budget hearings. ON is a vehicle for progress toward the One Fairfax policy of inclusion, “regardless of age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socio-economic status, or neighborhood of residence or other characteristics.”

Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS) has established a **Communities of Practice** team to engage in best practice learning and advance collaboration and coordination among community engagement partners.

**Women Inspired Neighborhoods (WINS)**, facilitated by RestON lead partner, Cornerstones, provides a model for female leadership development and community building. Professionals from Cornerstones, NCS, FCPS, DFS Neighborhood Networks etc. provide support, training, networking etc. Typically, meetings include a training opportunity, refreshments, networking, etc. DFS staff facilitated a training on “how to have difficult conversations with your children” and focused on body safety, substance abuse, and bullying. We look forward to bringing lessons learned from WINS to other Opportunity Neighborhoods!

Neighborhood Ambassadors from Reston and Mount Vernon represented their communities at the Housing Discrimination Forum hosted by the Fairfax County NAACP at Bethlehem Baptist Church in October, 2018. Cornerstones and NCS staff coordinated transportation and supported a dozen Neighborhood Ambassadors to be present and share their concerns with the panel.



Reston Neighborhood Ambassador Syazana Durrani and Virginia Delegate Ken Plum at the annual “RestON” Opportunity Neighborhood event

## 2. YOUTH CONNECTIONS

*Youth are plugged in to a comprehensive network of caring adults who encourage and guide their positive academic and personal goals*

**Including:** Connected and Motivated Youth (ON) • Out-of-School Time Network • Enrichment • Mentoring • Extra-curriculars • Positive Behaviors and Healthy Relationships • Social-Emotional Learning • Community Service • Critical Thinking • Resilience • Growth Mindset

**Shared Goals:** This past year saw increased collaboration between ON’s Connected and Motivated Youth team, and the county’s [Out of School Time Network](#). Both groups had been working on similar strategies to engage the county’s youth, and in an effort to not duplicate efforts and share information, both work groups were merged, while still maintaining responsibility for their separate outcomes. With input from stakeholders across multiple youth-serving sectors, the team met regularly to develop a work plan that, while specific to Opportunity Neighborhoods, could be used by any youth serving organization. Five strategies were developed for the focal area. For each strategy, activities and action steps were also created. Under an equity lens, each action step details how to accomplish the corresponding

activity. Attention was paid to incorporate the development of 21st Century skills, the establishment of best practices for out-of-school time programs, the creation of formal mentoring partnerships/best practices, as well as the use of existing opportunities to enhance supporting networks (Road DAWG alumni networks, check and connect). Partners are currently expanding work to identify and promote mentoring opportunities for children and youth.

**Check & Connect:** FCPS and NCS are partnering to meet the needs of students and improve school attendance through this model that provides a 1-to-1 mentoring relationship with a trusted adult for participating students.

### 3. EDUCATION

Children, youth, and adults have access to an array of evidence-based, quality resources that prepare them for and address barriers to lifelong learning

Including: School attendance • School Readiness • Early Childhood Education • Literacy • Educational Support • Tutoring • Digital Access and Literacy

**School Attendance:** School attendance is both a challenge and a priority in the Opportunity Neighborhoods.

FCPS continues to collaborate with and inform ON communities and to mobilized partner networks around the importance of school attendance. Attendance related topics include the impact chronic absenteeism has on student achievement, reasons for student absenteeism, and resources available to students, parents and community members to encourage regular and consistent school attendance. The community-wide campaign to promote attendance is [Absences Add Up](#).

**New Resource for FCPS Students and Families:** The FCPS [Ombudsman Office](#) provides an independent, confidential resource for students, families, and community members, offering informal help to resolve concerns, problems, complaints, and other student-related issues.

**School Readiness:** DFS Prevention staff, NCS regional staff, and others collaborate with FCPS on each of the Neighborhood School Readiness Teams in the ONs to ensure that children are ready and available to learn when they go to school. FCPS programs: Early Literacy Programs (120 children, 102 parents); HIPPY (104 parents enrolled)

#### Early Childhood Education (ECE):

- The County funded 36 slots for additional children to receive high-quality early childhood experiences in early childhood programs throughout the County, including those located in Opportunity Neighborhoods.
- The [Nurse-Family Partnership](#) program was funded to expand by two nurse home visitors. They are now serving 50 additional families in the Herndon-Reston Opportunity Neighborhood. A total of 123 families were served by this program.
- A parent-child play group that supports children's social and emotional competencies is being facilitated in Hutchison Elementary School which is located in the Herndon Opportunity Neighborhood.
- Early Childhood Education partners plan to partner with families to support children's executive function skills through [Mind in the Making](#) and other initiatives and strategies; Implement the Early Development Instrument (EDI) to understand the quality and availability of school readiness supports and services; Create a system for prevention-focused early childhood and mental health consultation services to support children's successful participation in early childhood programs and eliminate expulsion and suspension practices; and Increase the supply, access and affordability of quality early childhood programs.



A variety of activities are coordinated among partners in Opportunity Neighborhoods to help families prepare their children for learning

## 4. FAMILY WELLNESS AND STABILITY

*A continuum of supports allows youth and their families to identify their goals for health, safety, stability, and self sufficiency, and to access resources for reaching them*

**Including:** Service Access and Navigation • Trauma-Informed Practices • Behavioral, Mental, and Physical Health Access • Basic Needs Assistance • Housing Stability • Financial Assistance and Literacy • Safety • Alternative Accountability • Restorative Practices • Diversion • Transportation • Child Care • Reunification

The [Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax](#) has released its new [Community Health Improvement Plan](#) (CHIP) – the community’s strategic plan for population health over the next five years. The key issues to be addressed by the new CHIP are *healthy environments and active living, healthy eating, and behavioral health* – all important initiatives that align well with ON’s goals. In fact, ON has been a critical partner in implementing the original CHIP, collaborating with initiatives such as the [Fairfax Food Council](#) and [Healthy Minds Fairfax](#) to implement CHIP strategies. In developing “CHIP 2.0,” the Partnership sought input from diverse groups and stakeholders throughout the county. ON and ON’s involvement in regional change teams provided a perfect opportunity to reach a number of stakeholders from various organizations and sectors in each region, providing important feedback to help shape the new CHIP.

A [resource map](#) for the Mount Vernon and West Potomac pyramids was created by the Fairfax County [Human Services Resource Guide \(HSRG\)](#) in collaboration with ON Mount Vernon. The map was created as a tool for school and county staff to help members of our community connect to services in our area including food, financial assistance, preschools and more! Similar tools will be developed for additional neighborhoods in the future.

The [Trauma-Informed Community Network \(TICN\)](#) has offered their basic Trauma & Resilience (Trauma 101) Training across the county to a wide-variety of groups, to include the Neighborhood Ambassadors in RestON, and Mt. Vernon ON Partners. Plans are underway to develop a

menu of strategies to offer similar training to parents in partnership with faith and community-based partners.

There are a variety of programs and agencies supporting this work across the county, and in ONs. The Community Services Board served 725 unique youth clients through Youth Outpatient and Case Management, Youth Intensive Services, & Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court Services. FCPS provided 8,626,450 free meals & 1,923,244 reduced cost meals to students. FCPS’s weekend backpack program served 2,130 students and distributed 66,900 backpacks. In 2017, NCS Coordinated Services Planning received 48,305 contacts including 10,100 from residents in Mount Vernon and Reston.



## 5. CAREER PATHWAYS

*Students and parents are empowered to take advantage of the academic and career preparatory resources that are best tailored to their personal skills and assets*

**Including:** Workforce Readiness • Career Preparedness • Opportunity Youth • Young Adult Re-engagement • Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Math (STEAM) • Advanced Academics

The [Successful Children and Youth Policy Team \(SCYPT\)](#) has asked for recommendations to better serve “Opportunity Youth” – individuals ages 16-24 who are neither in school nor working. ON’s focal area work on workforce readiness provides an existing structure to both identify opportunities and to pilot strategies in ON neighborhoods. The team, which expects to report back to the SCYPT later this year, is working on inventorying existing programs and services for opportunity youth, developing a proposal for reengagement services to connect individuals, and creating new programming and program enhancements to better serve this population.

## 6. SHARED GOALS & INFRASTRUCTURE

*Collectively defining the problem and creating a shared vision to solve it*

**Including:** Organizational Capacity • Infrastructure • Sustainability • Addressing Barriers • Community Training • Connecting the Dots • Community Wealth Building • Inclusive Prosperity • One Fairfax • Three to Succeed • Public-Private Partnerships • Transportation • Interpreters • Child Care

**Equity and Inclusion:** Partners throughout ON networks are learning and sharing promising practices to move toward a system that is inclusive of diverse perspectives and which places more authority in the hands of people we serve, as part of our commitment to One Fairfax. FCPS has educated ON communities about the work around cultural competency and equity. By collaborating with ON communities we are building a common language, identifying and addressing equity gaps and improving cultural proficiency of county partners and residents.

**Backbone Role:** The bulk of ON funds go to community-based non-profit partners who play a backbone role in each neighborhood. The current contracts for this funding cycle will end on June 30th, 2019. A Request for Proposals (RFP) will be released this winter, for Opportunity Neighborhoods, Neighborhood Initiatives Centers, and Community Schools. Awardees will be notified around April of 2019, and the new contracts will go into effect in July, 2019.

**ON Expansion:** We are currently in a planning and outreach phase to expand from two ON sites (Mount Vernon and Reston), to four sites, adding Culmore and Herndon. Second Story is our lead partner for the planning and outreach phase of work in Culmore, and Cornerstones/Connections for Hope are working with us in Herndon. In both neighborhoods, partners are developing a community outreach plan and a timeline to ensure that residents and community partners are actively involved in the vision and rollout for the new Opportunity Neighborhood. We are so grateful for the tremendous community interest and support for the impact and infrastructure that ON provides! Stay tuned!

**Community Schools Pilot/SCYPT:** The pilot for the first two Community Schools in Fairfax launched this fall, building on the existing infrastructure and partnerships in the Mount Vernon ON. Now, county leadership representatives are considering the expansion of the Community Schools model into other schools throughout the county.

## 7. SHARED MEASUREMENT—DATA

*Developing methods to collectively track progress in the same way*

**Including:** Common Progress Measures • Data and Service Gaps • Data Development

ON aims to develop a comprehensive data strategy that allows us to monitor the health and well-being of Fairfax County residents and to evaluate the impact of policies, programs, and system alignment efforts designed to improve outcomes and reduce disparities.

Our program evaluation work, based on the Results Based Accountability model, aims to answer three questions: How much was done? How many were served? Did we have the impact we wanted? For example, a food pantry might deliver 1,000 pounds of food each month to 100 client families, and help 90% of enrolled families become food secure within a year. Ideally, we can aggregate data to examine the combined efforts of partners (non-profits, schools, and county agencies), to highlight trends and totals across multiple providers of related offerings. If these trends show us that we are moving away from our goals, we can re-evaluate our work and revise our strategies. If these trends show us that we are moving toward our goals, we can consider increasing our investment and expanding programs.

ON's system level work aims to improve outcomes for all residents of Fairfax County. Our system level evaluation work follows a population health approach and aims to answer the following questions for each focal area of interest: How are residents of Fairfax County doing overall? How are outcomes distributed within the County? These two questions provide insight on the well-being of the average resident and on how well-being varies across the County. For example, the immunization rate for the County could be 90% overall, but vary significantly across neighborhoods. System level data can help inform how resources are distributed and can help us understand the impact of previous investments.

The next phase of development involves addressing data gaps; aligning program and system level efforts; and developing a set of "core" measures. There are gaps in the data we need to evaluate ON that need to be addressed as we move forward. In particular, since most of our existing data focuses on program-level work, we will need to develop a strategy for evaluating system-level work. To support this work, a set of core measures are in development to serve as the crosswalk between these two levels of analysis. These core measures will help us understand how programs are helping us achieve our goals for the whole County and how County-wide initiatives and alignment efforts are helping us improve outcomes for communities across the County.

**Community Voices:** Opportunity Neighborhood Mount Vernon (ONMV) has 4 very engaged Neighborhood Ambassadors who learn about resources in their community and share them with their neighbors. These residents are helping their communities and are each planning activities in their neighborhoods to build community and knowledge among their neighbors. In addition, we have two Community Change groups in the Sequoyah and Audubon Estates neighborhoods. These groups encourage residents to communicate regularly with their neighbors through a What's App group, host gatherings and events, share resources, and publicize happenings at their local schools. The Sequoyah group has benefited from robust involvement from the Parent Liaison and DFS Social Worker at Mount Vernon Woods Elementary School.

**Shared Goals:** ONMV has built relationships with many non-profits, government agencies and faith communities. Often, when these groups are looking for a resource or a connection, they reach out to ONMV staff and partners. We have been able to connect service providers with other agencies to recruit participants for programs and services while also helping groups build relationships with others to strengthen their offerings.

In late October 2018, ONMV hosted a yearly update event, which was attended by 90 people. This event provided an opportunity to highlight on ONMV's successes of the past year and plans for the future, including the new Community Schools initiative.

**Community Schools:** In Fall 2018, ONMV launched Fairfax County's first two Community Schools at Walt Whitman Middle School and Mount Vernon Woods Elementary School through a collaboration with FCPS, Fairfax County

Government and United Way of the National Capital Area. Each school has a Community School Coordinator who works full-time at the school to coordinate and enhance community services and initiatives in the schools, such as mentoring, food markets, volunteer opportunities, holiday and back to school give-aways, and more. These coordinators help the school staff by supplementing service coordination that often falls on the social worker, parent liaison, counselors or engaged teachers, and allows them more time to focus on the other parts of their role, while ensuring that these support services are still provided.

**Results Highlights**

- 5 Neighborhood Ambassadors donated 192 hours of their time to attend 67 events and distribute information to their neighborhoods
- 6,166 email and social media contacts
- 1,182 clients served by South County Financial Empowerment Centers
- 765 kids (< 5yrs old) received free books each month through the Imagination Library program
- 92 kids enrolled at the Early Learning Center, including 36 pre-K kids
- 9.5% increase in pre-K enrollment since the previous year)
- Imagination Library served 765 Mount Vernon children in CFY 2018
- [NCS-Partners in Prevention Fund](#) programs provide specific evidence and research-based programs to address a broad array of primary prevention needs. 375 participants served by PIPF programs across the county, including 143 participants in Mount Vernon. Partners include Community Preservation and Development Corporation (CPDC) Destiny Temple of Faith, and Capital Youth Empowerment Program.



ONMV partners work together to promote events for children, youth , and families

Neighborhood & Community Services	Total Attendance	Meals	Rides
Gum Springs Community Center	18,872	11,341	5,715
South County Teen Center	20,780	7,802	2,311



RestON's Neighborhood Ambassadors have been a wonderful addition to our county-wide partnerships! Pictured: India Jones, Limya Elshazli, Lubna Mohamed, and Cassie Gainey

This year, collaboration between partners has been a critical component that has led to RestON achieving many of the outcomes of the ON Focal Areas. The following are a result of dedicated and committed partners not only collaborating, but leveraging their resources, listening to resident feedback, improving communication with one another regarding existing gaps, and sharing a part in supporting our residents.

**Mind in the Making (MITM):** A partnership between Cornerstones, FCPS (Forest Edge, Dogwood and Hunters Woods elementary schools) & Fairfax County Office for Children. MITM is a parent engagement training focused on building seven life skills that are essential for children: Focus and Self Control, Perspective taking, Communicating, Making Connections, Critical Thinking, Taking on a Challenge, and Self-Directed engaged learning. The MITM is a strategy of and meets the outcomes for Focal Area 3- school readiness and early childhood education. A total of 30 children and 24 parents participated in the program. A colleague and intern from DFS supported the childcare efforts.

**Annual event- 2 year report out**

On Wednesday, Nov 14th, RestON hosted a two-year report out at Reston Association's Lake House. This intimate event focused on highlighting to RestON leadership the progress that had been made through Reston Opportunity Neighborhoods since launching in October 2016 (2 years before). The agenda included a presentation by one of the Stonegate Neighborhood Ambassadors (Syazana Durrani), a video presentation by the property manager, Nidiah Harvey, and Lubna Kabrin, 1 of the 2 Neighborhood Ambassadors at Cedar Ridge, a presentation by NCS Region 3 colleagues, and comments by the ON Strategy Director, and Cornerstones CEO Kerrie Wilson. The event was emceed by Leila Gordon, Reston Community Center Executive Director.

**Neighborhood Ambassador (NA) Training:**

This year the ambassadors participated in more than 7 trainings which helped to build their capacity to serve their communities, and build their leadership and professional skills [trainings listed below]. The NAs have also attended and spoken at community forums including: the Reston Association Strategic Plan, NAACP housing discrimination forum and Kaiser Permanente roundtable on access to health care. Training for NA's included:

- I. Orientation facilitated by Cornerstones
- II. Trauma-Informed Community Network's Trauma Awareness 101 facilitated by Chrissy Cunningham, Neighborhood and Community Services Prevention Unit
- III. Effective group facilitation facilitated by Karen Cleveland, Leadership Fairfax
- IV. Customer service- facilitated by Aurelia Gilley and Yolanda Bonilla, NCS Teen Center
- V. Effective community outreach – facilitated by Cornerstones and Jenifer Henry-Jones, NCS
- VI. Managing Secondary Trauma -NCS Cost of Caring training facilitated by NCS Prevention and Trauma-Informed Community Network partners
- VII. Handling conflict and effective conflict resolution strategies facilitated by FCPS,
- VIII. NA retreat facilitated by a life coach consultant

**Program and Events:** Engagement events at the ON sites or benefitting ON residents were made possible in partnership with property management staff at the sites and include: Fun Days and Fall Festivals; Fairfax County Police supported National Night Out at each site; FCPS, NCS, Reston Community Center and others planned and supported the annual Back to School Bash- 2018 which had record high numbers of over 2000 in attendance. Each of these activities provided an opportunity for residents and partners to engage, share and learn with each other.

- 1,122 people served during 585 office hour sessions (Westglade, Crescent, Stonegate, & Cedar Ridge)
- 2,887 Summer Meals were served at Cedar Ridge and Westglade
- RestON provided 211 referrals to community resources and 46 referrals to Cornerstone's community care management program
- Southgate's Pro Bono Legal Clinic assisted 66 RestON clients
- FCPS school social workers referred ~1,363 students to community resources

Neighborhood & Community Service	Total Attendance	Meals	Rides
Reston Teen Center	19,884	1,170	10,508
Southgate Community Center	21,516	8,995	5,715

# Opportunity Neighborhoods

Are You **ON**? Connect with us!

## GENERAL

Website: <http://bit.ly/OpportunityNeighborhood>

Contact Kristen Brennan, ON Management Analyst  
Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services  
Email: kristen.brennan@fairfaxcounty.gov

## NEIGHBORHOODS

### Mount Vernon

United Community Ministries  
Contact Stephanie Hopkins  
E-mail: Stephanie.hopkins@ucmagency.org

### RestON

Cornerstones  
Contact Toni Francis-Bowie, MA  
Email: toni.francis-bowie@cornerstonesva.org

### Culmore

Second Story  
Contact Nandred Navarro  
Email: nandred\_navarro@thealternativehouse.org

### Herndon

Cornerstones/Connections for Hope  
Contact Toni Francis-Bowie, MA  
Email: toni.francis-bowie@cornerstonesva.org

## Teamwork!

As part of our infrastructure, each ON has neighborhood ambassadors and a trio of staffers supporting the work and “connecting the dots”. The lead or backbone non-profit and neighborhood ambassadors are represented by a strategy manager. The county government is represented by a community developer, and FCPS has now assigned senior social workers to serve as liaisons between the schools in each neighborhood. The senior social worker will link schools and ON engagement teams with a variety of resources or services that will meet the needs of students and county residents. We continue to develop the infrastructure and communication lines that allow us to connect the dots across our large and diverse system.



The three legs of the ON stool

## What's That Abbreviation/Acronym?

CSP: Coordinated Services Planning  
DFS: Fairfax County Department of Family Services  
FCPS: Fairfax County Public Schools  
HSRG: NCS Human Services Resource Guide  
NA: Neighborhood Ambassador  
NCS: Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services  
NN: Neighborhood Networks  
OFC: Office for Children  
ON: Opportunity Neighborhood(s)  
PIPF: Partners in Prevention Fund  
SACC: School Aged Child Care  
UCM: United Community Ministries  
WINS: Women Inspired Neighborhoods