

Chelsea EDC 2026 Strategic Plan

WHY IT MATTERS

- Community voice guides decisions
- Midpoint of 10 Year Plan
- Results will directly inform programs and funding priorities for 2026 and beyond.

WHO WE ENGAGED

- 11 Focus Groups/65 Respondents
 - Homeowners, Businesses, Community Partners, Government & CDCs, Youth, Seniors, Hispanic, Vietnamese, Bengali & South Asian, Neighborhood Association, and General Public
- Public Safety Survey/102 Respondents
 - 55 Residents, 42 Business Owners, and 5 Visitors

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This 2026 Strategic Plan translates what we heard from residents, businesses, youth, and stakeholders into clear organizational action.

REPORT STRUCTURE

NEED → ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVE → GOALS → 2026 ACTIONS → VISIBLE DELIVERABLES/OUTCOMES

HIGH LEVEL RESULTS

- Housing reinvestment is the top long-term priority
 - Rehabilitation of existing homes, reusing vacant properties, helping residents become homeowners with subsidies, supporting smaller developers
- Career pathways/jobs are critical to affordability
 - Training and ESL access critical to job readiness
- Youth/young people need greater access to job training/opportunities and access to more affordable food
- Businesses need help with funding, storefronts, permits, and customer acquisition and retention
- Beautification is common across all groups/methodologies
 - Correlates to feelings of safety/engagement
- Residents want cleaner, safer streets and more visible care
- Youth and young people need places to gather
- Access to fresh, affordable food is a common theme
- Residents want more opportunities to connect such as farm markets, block parties and cleanups
- Volunteering increases when whole families are involved and when people know each other

PRIORITY 1: HOUSING

NEED:

Stakeholders clearly expressed:

- A desire for more homeownership opportunities
- Concern about vacant or poorly maintained properties
- A need for support navigating funding, credit, and repairs
- Interest in “how other neighborhoods made redevelopment work”

Why it matters:

- These themes appeared in multiple surveys and listening sessions. Housing was the #1 community priority in focus groups. Residents want homeownership, reinvestment, and visible progress on abandoned or underused properties.

Objective: CEDC will move from small-scale homeowner support to a capacity-building housing strategy that positions the organization to lead redevelopment.

GOALS:

Goal 1#: Establish a Long-Term Housing Strategy for Chelsea EDC (Direction)

Goal #2: Reduce Blight and Improve Existing Housing Quality (Place-Based Impact)

Goal #3: Expand Equitable Access to Homeownership and Stable Housing (People-Based Impact)

Chelsea EDC Response/2026 Actions

- Capacity Building/TD Bank Grant
 - Conduct Peer Housing Model & CHDO Feasibility Analysis
 - Identify funding for housing, especially phase II
- Learning Opportunities
 - Rowan University Planning Studio Project
 - Exploration of Dodge Partnership with Stockton University
 - Jumpstart Model
 - Other Housing Agencies
- Advance Abandoned Property & Blight-Reduction Work (Ongoing)
 - Identify Receivers
 - Keep Vacant Property List Updated and top of Mind
 - Continue Code Enforcement Work
- Continue Work with Homebuying grants

Visible 2026/2027 Deliverables

- ✓ Case for Support/Resolution for Receivers
- ✓ CHDO Go/No Go Decision
- ✓ Findings from Rowan University Planning Studio
- ✓ Housing Partnership & Property Pipeline (3 Properties)
- ✓ Housing Funding Alignment & Readiness Framework
- ✓ CEDC Housing Strategy Document

PRIORITY 2: CAREER PATHWAYS

Community Need

Stakeholders — especially young people — said they want:

- Career exposure, not just job fairs
- Skills training to get and retain primary and secondary jobs
- Programs that include ESL, digital skills, and hands-on guidance
- A way to get better jobs without leaving Chelsea

Why it matters: Career advancement ranked second in community priorities — especially among young residents and ESL workers. Affordability was a common thread across surveys and focus groups. Good jobs were directly tied to affordability, more so than prices and costs

OBJECTIVE: CEDC will move from fragmented workforce efforts to a coordinated career pathways approach that leverages anchor institutions and neighborhood-based initiatives — including urban agriculture — to expand access to upwardly mobile employment for Chelsea residents and workers.

GOALS:

Goal #1: Support neighborhood-based green career pathways through urban agriculture (C.R.O.P.S.)

Goal #2: Create anchor-institution college-to-career pathways through Stockton University

Chelsea EDC Response/2026 Actions

- Identify and Convene Career Pathway Partners (Q1)
- Support Urban Farming as a Career Exposure Opportunity (Q2)
- Explore College-to-Career Opportunities with Stockton University (Q2–Q3)
- Coordinate with Workforce and Education Partners on Job Readiness (Q2–Q4)
- Document Early Learning and Next Steps (Q4)

Visible 2026/2027 Deliverables

- ✓ Urban farming activities in Chelsea are connected to career exposure or skill-building opportunities
- ✓ Chelsea residents and workers access college-to-career opportunities, with at least one internship, applied learning, or project-based pathway explored through Stockton University
- ✓ Career pathways, partnerships, and next steps are documented and positioned for funding

PRIORITY 3: MERCHANT SUPPORT

Community Need

Business owners, entrepreneurs and residents said:

- “Permits and paperwork are confusing.”
- “We need help accessing funding.”
- “Storefronts need improvement.”
- “Better facades and cleaner shops would make us shop local.”
- “We need help reaching customers — not just workshops.”

Why it matters: Residents said they want cleaner facades, better business quality, and local places worth supporting.

OBJECTIVE: CEDC will support small businesses by providing consistent, on-the-ground assistance and investing in corridor and public-space improvements that increase visibility, activity, and customer traffic in Chelsea.

GOALS:

Goal #1: Provide Direct, On-the-Ground Support to Chelsea Businesses by a dedicated individual

Goal #2: Improve Commercial Corridors through Facade and Business Development Investments

Goal #3: Activate Dover Park as a Neighborhood Destination that Supports Local Businesses

Chelsea EDC Response/2026 Actions

- Hire and onboard a dedicated business support staff member (Q1–Q2)
- Conduct Regular Business Outreach and Needs Identification (Q2–Q4)
- Support Facade Improvements and Targeted Business Development Investments (Q2–Q4)
- Coordinate with Partners to Advance Dover Park Improvements (Q2–Q4)
- 5. Coordinate merchant support with beautification, block parties, and community events (Ongoing)

Visible 2026/2027 Deliverables

- ✓ Consistent business presence established; businesses receive direct support, not just referrals
- ✓ Storefront improvements become visible mid-year
- ✓ Dover Park becomes event-ready by mid to late Q2

PRIORITY 4: BEAUTIFICATION/CLEAN & SAFE

Community Need

Community survey validation: **Beautification was the #1** thing people said they want, **and also the #1 motivator for volunteering.**

People said:

- The neighborhood looks cleaner and safer than before
- They want **more planters, public art, and visible care**
- Dover Park feels underused and could be a youth hub
- “We volunteer when we see visible improvements”

Why it Matters: Beautification ranked highest in community priorities and is strongly tied to feelings of safety.

OBJECTIVE: CEDC will improve the quality, identity, and stewardship of Chelsea’s public spaces through visible block-by-block enhancements, coordinated branding, and community-based activation that reinforce safety, pride, and belonging.

GOALS:

Goal #1: Improve the Chelsea Neighborhood Through Visible, Block-by-Block Enhancements

Goal #2: Strengthen Neighborhood Identity Through Branding, Public Art, and Block-Level Activation

Goal #3: Prepare and Steward Dover Park as a Safe, Welcoming Community Space

2026 Actions

- Advance Block-by-Block Public Realm Improvements (Q1–Q4)
- **Implement Coordinated Chelsea Branding and Wayfinding (Q1–Q2)**
- Support Block-Level Activation that Reinforces Neighborhood Identity (Q2–Q4)
- Advance Dover Park Design, Improvements, and Stewardship (Q2–Q3)
- Expand Volunteer Stewardship and Community Care Efforts (Ongoing)

Visible 2026 Outcomes

- ✓ A clearer, more cohesive Chelsea identity is visible,
- ✓ Dover Park becomes an active community space
- ✓ Chelsea shows visible, block-by-block improvement

PRIORITY 5: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY (EVENTS)

Community Need

People said:

- More Block parties
- Celebrations of Diverse Culture
- Family-friendly, free activities
- Ways to meet neighbors
- Residents consistently said they want more access to fresh, affordable food through community-based gatherings such as farmers markets.

Why it Matters: Community events are the **#1 motivator for volunteering**.

OBJECTIVE: CEDC will strengthen neighborhood belonging and social connection by supporting consistent, place-based community gatherings — including block parties, cultural celebrations, and food-centered events — that bring residents together, activate public spaces, and reinforce local pride.

GOALS:

Goal #1 Build Consistent, Neighborhood, Food-Based Traditions

Goal #2: Use Events to Strengthen Volunteerism and Local Engagement

Goal #3: Reinforce Local Culture, Identity, and Pride Through Celebration

2026 Actions

- Deliver Seasonal Block Parties Across the Neighborhood (Q2–Q4)
- Expand Empanada Fiesta as a Signature Community Event (Q4)
- Integrate Volunteer Recruitment into Community Events (Ongoing)
- Coordinate Events with Beautification and Public Space Use (Ongoing)

Visible 2026 Outcomes

- ✓ Three block parties in three seasons
- ✓ Biggest Empanada Fiesta yet
- ✓ Volunteer Engagement Increased

CROSS-CUTTING ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACH OF PLAN

To deliver visible, meaningful progress in 2026, CEDC will apply the following principles across all priorities:

- **Invest in visible, place-based improvements** that reinforce neighborhood care, identity, and safety
- **Build partnerships and organizational capacity** rather than creating standalone programs
- **Integrate youth, workforce, merchant, and resident engagement** across initiatives
- **Use public spaces, community events, and food-centered gatherings** to strengthen connection and belonging
- **Sequence work intentionally** so every quarter delivers visible progress residents can see and experience

AT-A-GLANCE 2026 TIMELINE

Q1 – Research, Capacity, and Visible Identity

- Wayfinding, banners, mosaics, and neighborhood branding launched
- Workforce and housing scans underway
- Business support staffing capacity established

Q2 – Activation Begins

- First façade improvements initiated
- Job readiness and career exposure activities begin
- Block party season launches
- Dover Park readiness and early improvements advance
- Farmers market or fresh food gathering explored

Q3 – Momentum Builds

- Second seasonal block party delivered
- Continued storefront and corridor improvements
- Housing and workforce findings shared
- Food access pilot or planning continues

Q4 – Showcase and Position for Funding

- Expanded Empanada Fiesta delivered
- Third block party completed
- Dover Park design and stewardship framework finalized
- Workforce and community engagement summaries published
- Draft housing strategy completed and positioned for funding