

CLIENT

City of Wilmington Department of Public Works (DPW)

DATES

2024-2025

COLLABORATORS

Arcadis (Prime)

REFERENCE

Alex Cartwright (he/him)
Resilience and Planning Consultant
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BUDGET

\$97,180

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Wilmington Department of Public Works launched the Lower Brandywine River Flooding Study and Mitigation Strategy to reduce flood risk in Northeast Wilmington following repeated flood events, including Hurricane Ida. Connect the Dots partnered with DPW and Arcadis to design and implement a trauma-informed, community-centered engagement process that balanced public education, trust-building, and actionable input alongside ongoing technical modeling. The engagement effort helped build shared understanding of flood risk and mitigation tradeoffs, informed early concept development, and positioned the City to pursue future funding while coordinating with adjacent infrastructure projects.

SERVICES PERFORMED

- **Project Setup:** Facilitated internal Audiences and On/Off-the-Table workshops to clarify scope, roles, decision-making authority, and opportunities for public input, and developed a Public Involvement Plan and stakeholder map informed by prior efforts and post-Hurricane Ida community trauma.
- **Outreach & Awareness Building:** Developed communications sharekits, one-pagers, bilingual outreach materials, and visual tools to ensure consistent messaging across partners. Designed accessible pop-up materials that helped residents identify shared values, river access preferences, and community priorities.
- **Engagement:** Planned, designed, and staffed three pop-up events, two public workshops, and one open house. Used interactive boards, mapping activities, and kid-friendly elements to collect high-level feedback and build project familiarity. Pop-ups met residents at existing community events, while workshops and the open house presented conceptual flood mitigation alternatives and tradeoffs.
- **Adaptive Strategy:** Supported a mid-project pivot in response to shifting federal funding conditions and alignment with the adjacent 12th Street Connector Project. Developed presentation materials and facilitation approaches to coordinate City agencies, elected officials, technical partners, and future funders

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Engagement Outcomes:

- Raised awareness of the flood mitigation study among residents and community organizations, engaging 223 participants.
- Interactive, low-barrier engagement formats helped reach families, youth, and residents who may not typically attend formal public meetings.
- Strengthened partnership with trusted local organization Northeast Rising, helping to rebuild trust following fatigue from prior planning efforts.

Insights and Implications:

- Residents prioritized water access, public space quality, and nature-based solutions alongside flood protection. Hybrid approaches with enhanced amenities were preferred over purely gray infrastructure.
- Clear communication about tradeoffs, limitations, and implementation timelines proved critical to managing expectations.
- Coordination with parallel infrastructure projects (notably the 12th Street Connector) emerged as essential to feasibility and long-term success.



People Engaged



223

