

## **GROWING TOGETHER IN NORTH RIVER MANATEE COUNTY INITIATIVE TO CATALYZE COMMUNITY-LED CHANGE**

*A Partnership of Bishop-Parker Foundation, The Patterson Foundation, and  
The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation*

Bishop-Parker Foundation, The Patterson Foundation, and The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation are launching a multi-year initiative to catalyze community-led change in North River Manatee County, Florida (including Duette, Ellenton, Memphis, Parrish, Palmetto, Rubonia, Snead Island, and Terra Ceia). This initiative is generously supported by The Patterson Foundation to foster wide community participation around identifying and acting on shared aspirations.

The goals of this initiative are to:

- (1) Illuminate key issues that matter to people and better understand the underlying conditions that make up the community;
- (2) Take action on key issues that matter to people; and
- (3) Strengthen North River Manatee County's civic culture so the region has the capabilities to shape its future and deepen its good work.

The Harwood Institute, Bishop-Parker Foundation, and The Patterson Foundation share a deep belief that the people of North River Manatee County are best positioned to shape and drive the community's future. The solutions are right here in the community, and our work builds on the good that is already happening.

### **THE OPPORTUNITY**

North River Manatee County is a great place to live. As the area experiences rapid growth, people's concerns are rising. The community is facing a fundamental choice: Will it further fragment amid the pressures of growth and change or come together to shape a shared future?

Moving forward in a more hopeful way will require strengthening the area's civic culture—how people interact, work together, and get things done. Now is the time to come together. The people of North River Manatee County have what it takes to step forward, turn outward to one another, and build a stronger community together.

## UNLEASHING COMMUNITY-LED ACTION

This initiative focuses on the issues that matter most to people. At the same time, it strengthens North River Manatee County's civic culture – how people, organizations, and leaders work together to get things done. This initiative is designed to address specific issues that matter to people while strengthening North River Manatee County's civic culture to foster an environment where people, organizations, and leaders work together in new ways. Building upon the findings of the report, *Growing Together in North River Manatee County: Shaping a Shared Future*, this initiative will catalyze long-term change in the following ways:

- **Public Innovators Labs** – The Harwood Institute will host two in-person “Labs” for approximately 50 local leaders and residents. The Labs are learning experiences that introduce the Harwood approach and the practice of Turning Outward. Participants will use these tools to take action and create meaningful change in their community.
  - **Getting Started Lab – July 2026:** The first Lab orients participants to the Harwood approach and gets them started in applying the mindset and practice of Turning Outward. Lab participants will learn to see the need to Turn Outward to their community; understand how change happens in a community; develop ways to engage people in the community and discover what matters to them; discern where their community is starting; and identify how to show up more intentionally in their work and lives.
  - **Unleashing Impact Lab – Early 2027:** The second Lab helps participants take intentional actions to unleash, grow, and spread a chain reaction of actions throughout their community. Lab participants will learn to see how a chain reaction is unleashed; strengthen their community's civic culture; develop new ways to engage in ongoing learning and innovation; and name what it will take to keep showing up with greater intentionality in their work and lives.
- **Learn and Apply Webinars** – The Harwood Institute will provide a series of pre-recorded “Learn and Apply” webinars for the community to use at specific points throughout the initiative. These webinars reinforce the Turning Outward practice and expand on important topics to help those engaged in the work to deepen their learning and accelerate progress.
- **Coaching of Action Teams** – Harwood Certified Coaches will support three action teams, consisting of community leaders and residents who will apply the Harwood approach to take action on what matters to people in the community.
- **Workspaces** – Harwood Certified Coaches will design and lead in-person “workspaces” for the action team, Lab participants, and other engaged community members and partners. The workspaces will promote the cross-fertilization of ideas, provide opportunities for problem-solving, teach new areas of the Turning Outward practice, and accelerate and deepen the application of the practice.



- **Harwood Catalytic Guides** – Six leaders will go through the 13-week-long intensive Harwood Catalytic Guide program. Harwood Catalytic Guides support people in applying the Turning Outward practice, which enables them to create community-led change, unleash the potential of their community, and show up with intentionality. Harwood Catalytic Guides can also serve as strategic partners to Bishop-Parker Foundation and The Patterson Foundation.
- **Harwood Essentials Orientation** – Bishop-Parker Foundation and The Patterson Foundation will host Orientation Sessions to welcome and orient interested community members to the Harwood approach to use it in their own work or join an action team.
- **Story of Change** – Near the end of the action phase, The Harwood Institute will prepare and design a Story of Change to be distributed throughout North River Manatee County to leaders, organizations, and residents.
- **Network of Public Innovators** – Bishop-Parker Foundation and The Patterson Foundation will nurture the local network of Public Innovators who engage throughout the initiative.

## TIMELINE

The initiative will launch in July 2026 with the Getting Started Lab. The Harwood Institute's coaching of the action teams will begin immediately following the Lab and extend through July 2028. The Unleashing Impact Lab will be held in Spring 2027, with workspaces occurring at key junctures throughout the initiative.

## STEPPING FORWARD

You are a vital part of this work. Your insight, leadership, and involvement will help shape the future of North River Manatee County. To learn more or get involved, contact Amber Lamerson, Director of Community Impact at Bishop-Parker Foundation, at [amber@bishopparkerfoundation.org](mailto:amber@bishopparkerfoundation.org).

## ABOUT THE PARTNERS

**Bishop-Parker Foundation**, inspired by the philanthropic legacy of our founders, partners with nonprofit and public organizations to strengthen Manatee County for current and future generations. Grounded in our values of community building, kindness, and stewardship, we invest in collaborative efforts that reflect the voices of the community and honor our founders' legacy.

**The Patterson Foundation** is a fully endowed charitable entity strengthening people, organizations, and communities in ways that foster wide participation around shared quality-of-life aspirations. Through its Aspirations to Actions initiative, The Patterson Foundation has engaged The Harwood Institute since 2012 to encourage communities in Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota counties to turn outward, discover shared aspirations, and transform them into meaningful action.

**The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that equips people, organizations, communities, and networks with the tools to bridge divides, build capacity, and tackle shared challenges. The Harwood Institute's work is rooted in a philosophy of Civic Faith and the practice of Turning Outward. Founded in 1988, the Institute's approach has spread to all 50 states across the U.S. and 40 countries around the world.

