

HCID Case Studies

Baltimore: Opportunity Collaborative



Overview

Baltimore's Opportunity Collaborative, a 25-member consortium made up of public, educational and nonprofit organizations, was awarded a \$3.5 million HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant through the Baltimore Metropolitan Council in February 2012. Consortium members include six local government, three state agencies and fourteen non-governmental organizations, including two university partners. Recognizing that growing economic and social disparities pose a central challenge to the long term sustainability and health of the greater Baltimore region, the consortium will produce a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development ("RPSD") to guide future growth and investment in the region. Four key components that will be incorporated into the RPSD include:

- **Regional Housing Plan:** Identify housing priorities based on a regional demographic and market study and Fair Housing Equity Assessment
- **Workforce Development Plan:** Assess opportunities, barriers and challenges for upward mobility with a goal of creating career pathways for future employment training in key industry sectors
- **Transportation Plan:** Strategy for building out the system throughout the next 25 years
- **Opportunity Mapping:** Analyze residents' access to opportunities and demonstrate how the region can connect housing, transportation and workforce development

The region's transit network has not driven substantial TOD investment throughout Greater Baltimore in the way that better connected transit systems have catalyzed new development elsewhere. New development that has occurred in transit-rich areas often lack provisions on affordability. If this trend continues, the region risks displacing low- and moderate-income residents who rely on public transportation from existing or planned transit-rich neighborhoods as well as missing an opportunity for mixed-income housing solutions.

Use of Funds

New commitments for transit investment in Greater Baltimore – primarily the City but also surrounding County suburbs – have presented an opportunity for the region to increase the supply of high-quality affordable housing in transit-rich neighborhoods. In November 2012, the Opportunity Collaborative issued \$375,000 to eight

demonstration projects that coordinated transportation, housing and workforce planning.

- City of Aberdeen and the Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor: \$10,500
 - Prepare zoning amendments and develop review requirements for the Aberdeen TOD Area
- Anne Arundel County Partnership for Children Youth and Families and Anne Arundel Community College: \$57,856
 - Workforce training /employment program for public housing residents on weatherization projects
- Baltimore City Department of Transportation, AIC Development, Midtown-Edmondson Association, People's Community Health Centers and Bon Secours Health System: \$55,000
 - Market analysis, economic feasibility analysis and stakeholder engagement for the West Baltimore MARC station
- Baltimore Community Foundation, Blue Water Baltimore, Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore and the Baltimore Office of Sustainability: \$46,000
 - Community engagement around neighborhood runoff/litter issues through school and community activities and a storm drain mural project
- Central Baltimore Partnership and Johns Hopkins University: \$35,000
 - Implement the Homewood Community Partners Initiative
- Central Maryland Transportation Alliance, BWI Business Partnership: \$50,000
 - Analyze and prioritize public transportation service in targeted employment centers
- Neighbor Ride and Howard County Offices of Transportation, Workforce Development, Planning and Zoning and Housing and Community Development: \$55,103
 - Best practice study for transportation between affordable housing communities and employment
- Maryland ABCD Network: \$63,750
 - Public relations campaign to change negative perceptions of Marylanders holding Section 8 Vouchers or other housing subsidies

Partnerships and Collaboration

Baltimore benefits from a concerted public- and private-sector effort to improve its several blighted neighborhoods. In addition to the Opportunity Collaborative, the State runs a Sustainable Communities program to target public investment and Baltimore City's successful Vacants to Values program reduces acquisition costs and expedites the demolition and rehabilitation of vacant row-homes. Private developers leverage these programs to attract investment in emerging neighborhoods.

As a result of Maryland's recent gas-tax increase, the state committed \$689 million to right-of-way acquisition for and construction of the Red Line, a 14.1-mile light rail project that will link the east and west sides of Baltimore via downtown's vibrant Inner Harbor commercial district and several distinctive neighborhoods. Advocates expect that this transit project and others will spur re-investment and economic development in deeply-neglected, distressed neighborhoods as well as stable, growing neighborhoods; however, many question whether it will considerably improve the region's ineffective multi-modal network to the point where it would attract substantial re-investment.

Community Engagement

Over two and a half million citizens reside within the six jurisdictions comprised within the Opportunity Collaborative region. Through extensive public education and engagement, government, philanthropic, and private sector partners have been working together with community members to develop a practical plan to connect with residents in a meaningful way. The Education and Engagement Committee (EEC) will oversee activities that facilitate public input in the planning process and incorporate public participation into the RPSD. This will occur through three engagement rounds and will be integral part of development and implementation.

The goals of the Education and Engagement process are to:

- Reach out to 26,000 residents across a broad range of communities and stakeholders
- Develop and implement an integrated process to ensure meaningful and diverse participation
- Create a region-wide sense of ownership in the development and implementation of the RPSD

Additional Resources

Opportunity Collaborative Website

<http://www.opportunitycollaborative.org/>

Opportunity Collaborative Sustainable Communities Application

<http://www.baltometro.org/downloadables/SustainableCommunities/ApplicationNarrative.pdf>

Citizens Housing and Planning Association

<http://www.cphabaltimore.org/toc/>