

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY BLUE LINE CORRIDOR

ECONOMIC INCLUSION AGENDA



Image: Courtesy of Congress For the New Urbanism; Design by Design Collective

Acknowledgements

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC DC) would like to express gratitude to the individuals and organizations that made this economic inclusion agenda possible. This agenda is the result of collaboration between Prince George's County residents, stakeholders, and organizations who generously committed their time and effort to this process. A special thank you to Kaiser Permanente who both funded this work and acted as a key partner throughout the process.

Local Nonprofit Stakeholders

Mission of Love Charities
The Training Source

County Representatives

Economic Development Corporation
Office of Strategic Partnerships
Employ Prince George's
FSC First

Anchors and Property Owners

Horning
Prince George's County Community College
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit
Authority (WMATA)

Faith and Small Business Leaders

Collective Empowerment Group
First Baptist Church of Capitol Heights
Inncuvate
JD Clark Professional Services

Corporations and Foundations

Kaiser Permanente
Bank of America
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Councilmember Rodney Streeter, District 7
Rev. Ronald Triplett, Gethsemane United Methodist Church
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Small business Owners and staff at Keith & Son's Soul Food, Super Beauty, Blessed 24:7 Gift Shop and ELife Restaurant

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Executive Summary

In July 2021, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation DC (LISC DC) embarked on a collaborative effort to create an inclusive economic development agenda for Prince George’s County’s Blue Line Corridor. This Economic Inclusion Agenda outlines an equitable, place-based approach designed to build community wealth and power and connect local communities to the greater regional economy.

Goals

Two key goals were identified to inform the creation of this agenda:

1. Provide a set of recommendations for inclusive and equitable economic development that A) addresses pertinent issues identified through community engagement; and B) aligns economic development efforts with regional economic trends, community assets, and stated county priorities.
2. Develop a better understanding of the community development landscape and create an economic development forum for collaboration across a diverse group of stakeholders—including local nonprofit leaders, small businesses, faith leaders, county and regional officials, anchor institutions, and property owners—that prioritizes aligning economic development efforts with community values.

Process

The Economic Inclusion Agenda combined regional economic trends, community surveys, and the creation of a Central Avenue/Blue Line Corridor Task Force in its production. The Task Force was comprised of local nonprofit and faith leaders, small business owners, county leaders, and anchor institutions, who informed the strategic recommendations. We strove to center equity, address historic disinvestment, and reduce economic inequities for residents and local businesses.

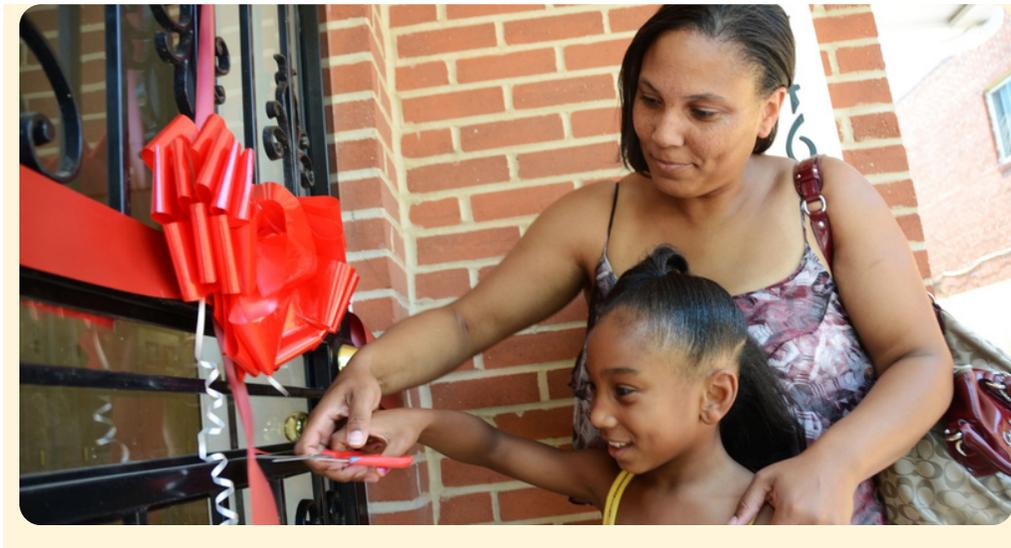
Study Area Context

The Blue Line Corridor is in central Prince George’s County, MD. The Corridor encompasses Capitol Heights, Seat Pleasant, Largo, and other small municipalities, and unincorporated areas. The Corridor is served by four stops on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Blue/Silver lines. In contrast to many other metro stops regionally, it lacks the presence of dense, mixed-use development. Over 85% of corridor residents identify as Black. When compared to regional data, many residents face inequities across health and wealth outcomes, particularly in the Western communities of the corridor.

Recommendations

[See Page 18]. These include short-term, mid-term, and long-term recommendations that will require a collaborative effort and an inclusive approach to implementation. Partners should continue to reassess and iterate on the recommendations and see this document as a living, active tool for meaningful implementation that aims to reflect the goals, values, and needs of the community.

About LISC



For 40 years, The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC DC) has worked with residents and partners to bring local neighborhood ideas to life, addressing poverty disinvestment and the deep impacts of racism to create great places to live, work and raise a family. LISC is a community development financial institution (CDFI) that pools funding from public and private sources and invests it in local community projects. LISC is a catalyst for neighborhood change and strives to make our region more inclusive, equitable, and prosperous for all.

To learn more visit
our [website](https://www.lisc.org/dc) at
[lisc.org/dc](https://www.lisc.org/dc) or reach
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Inclusive Economic Development

As a result of racial and economic injustice, many low-income individuals and people of color are concentrated in underinvested neighborhoods and systematically isolated from resources and opportunities to thrive. Traditional approaches to economic development and growth have historically left communities behind by ignoring current community assets and not prioritizing the needs community members, such as residents and existing business owners, identified. This results in communities that are displaced, disconnected, and lack support systems for the most vulnerable community members. An inclusive approach to economic development pursues communities in which all people, regardless of race, income or zip code, can live and thrive by supporting equitable access to wealth-building and power-building opportunities.



What is an equitable economic inclusion agenda?

The goal of an Economic Inclusion Agenda is to serve as a work plan that synthesizes insights, prioritizes equity, and guides coordinated investment and programmatic activity by aligning workforce and economic development efforts with the capacities and initiatives of community-based organizations and residents. The agenda is developed collaboratively by convening a cross-sector coalition of community-based organizations and leaders, local small business owners, county representatives, property owners, and other key stakeholders to ensure that partners are working together towards common, culturally relevant, and community-informed goals.

In the facilitation of this process and the creation of this agenda, our work was informed by:

1

Community-Centered Economic Inclusion

[Community-Centered Economic Inclusion - A Strategic Action Playbook \(Brookings, LISC\)](#)

2

Elevating Equity

[LISC's Elevating Equity Initiative](#)

[11th Street Bridge Park's Equitable Development Plan](#)

Process and Objectives



This Economic Inclusion Agenda was a collaborative effort that involved the participation of residents, local nonprofit and faith leaders, small business owners, public officials, anchor institutions, and other stakeholders ingrained in Prince George’s County, MD and the Blue Line Corridor. This process began in the **Fall of 2021**, with the identification of the Blue Line Corridor as the geography of focus.

In selecting the study area, LISC surveyed county and community-based stakeholders to identify a strategic corridor with documented structural inequities and a concentration of undervalued assets. The Central Avenue/Blue Line Corridor was selected due to its strong and vibrant cultural history, proximity to Washington D.C., access to the Metro, planned investment by Prince George’s County, and limited community development infrastructure.

LISC conducted a regional economic data analysis and hired Partners for Economic Solutions (PES) to lead community engagement efforts. LISC then convened, with the support of PES, The Central Avenue/Blue Line Corridor task force to analyze this information and leverage their working knowledge of the corridor and region to shape the creation of the agenda.

Future Iterations

This document is designed to serve as a starting point. Partners should continue to reassess and iterate on the recommendations and see it as a living, active tool for meaningful implementation that reflects the goals, values, and needs of the community.

Components of the Process



Challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Throughout the process, the COVID-19 pandemic drastically impacted protocols for safely engaging with community stakeholders. This negatively impacted the breadth and depth of community input gathered. Virtual platforms were leveraged as best as possible to host meetings and interviews with a range of stakeholders who provided valuable insight to inform the creation of the agenda. Nevertheless, future iterations should prioritize ongoing community engagement and participation.

Task Force



Central Avenue/Blue Line Task Force

The Central Avenue/Blue Line Task Force was formed in October 2021 with three main objectives:

1. To connect community, county and regional representatives, organizations and institutions
2. Integrate efforts in capacity building, workforce development, small business support and community/economic development to connect the corridor to regional opportunity
3. Provide a set of recommendations for inclusive and equitable economic development



| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Consultants Bobby Boone, &Access Abigail Ferretti, Partners for Economic Solutions Anita Morrison, Partners for Economic Solutions Manuel Ochoa, Ochoa Urban Collective</p> | <p>Local Nonprofit Stakeholders Bradley Heard, Greater Capitol Heights Improvement Corporation Deborah Martinez, Mission of Love Charities Kim Rhim, The Training Source Ramon Jacobson, Local Initiatives Support Corporation</p> | <p>County Representatives Larry Hentz, PGC Economic Development Corporation Diana Leone-Brown, PGC Office of Strategic Partnerships Jeffrey Swilley, Employ Prince George's Eddie Tuvin, FSC First</p> |
| <p>Anchors & Property Owners Gavette Richardson Duncan, Prince George's County Community College David Roodberg, Horning Brothers Steven Segerlin, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)</p> | <p>Faith & Small Business Leaders Rev. Harold Dugger, First Baptist Church of Capitol Heights Tisa Clark, JD Clark Professional Services Mark Lawrence, Incubate Dr. Bobby Manning, Collective Empowerment Group</p> | <p>Corporations & Foundations Laura Flamm, Kaiser Permanente George Leventhal, Kaiser Permanente Maurice Perry, Bank of America Darcelle Wilson, Greater Washington Community Foundation</p> |

Study Area Context

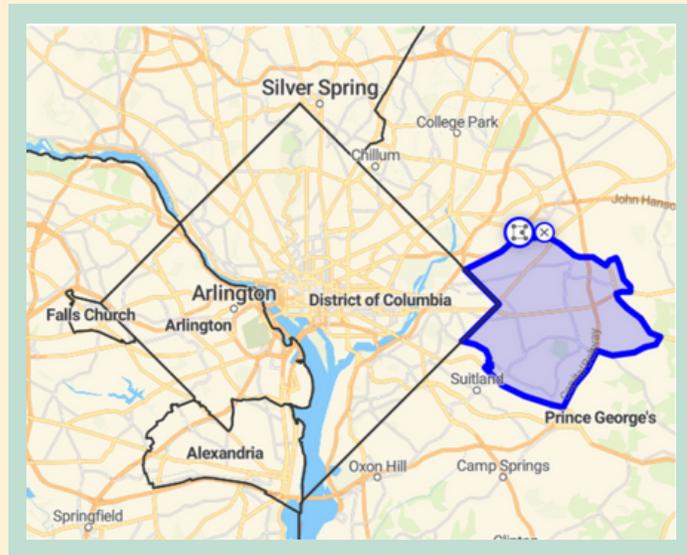
A. Study Area Context - Prince George's County

Prince George's County, Maryland is part of the larger Washington D.C, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) Region and borders the eastern boundary of Washington, D.C. The county is known as one of the wealthiest majority African-American counties in the nation, and has a wide range of community assets. These assets include geographic proximity to the Nation's Capital, transportation infrastructure, a strong base of higher education and health institutions, diverse communities, and more. However, the county continues to face challenges. Development has lagged behind the rest of the region for various reasons including systemic racism and disinvestment, a challenging and siloed regulatory environment and a bedroom community mindset. The county also fares far worse across metrics such as poverty, median income and social determinants of health, especially in inner beltway communities.

Given the current context, the county's unique population, and proximity to Washington, D.C., there are opportunities and challenges that require collaboration between residents, organizations, businesses, and public officials to chart a new path forward. Momentum is building. In June 2021, Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks released her Economic Development Platform.

B. Prince George's County Economic Development Platform Goals

1. Increase the number of people who live and work in the county
2. Increase commercial tax collections by \$100M
3. Increase population by 50,000 and density in transit-oriented development areas (Metro, Marc, Amtrak, Purple Line) to promote a mix of incomes, housing options, amenities and job growth
4. Preserve housing affordability and diversify the County's housing stock
5. Increase the amount of healthy food retail square footage in low income, low access areas by 100,000 square feet
6. Increase areas in the County with identifiable character and a sense of place by promoting and improving priority areas as destinations



Prince George's County secured over \$450M for Blue Line Corridor Projects. \$45.7M was secured as of June 2021 for various projects such as a Prince George's County Amphitheater, according to the Prince George's County Economic Development Platform. Additionally, The Maryland House of Delegates approved \$400 million for the Blue Line Corridor through House Bill 897, which is currently awaiting approval from Maryland Governor Larry Hogan.

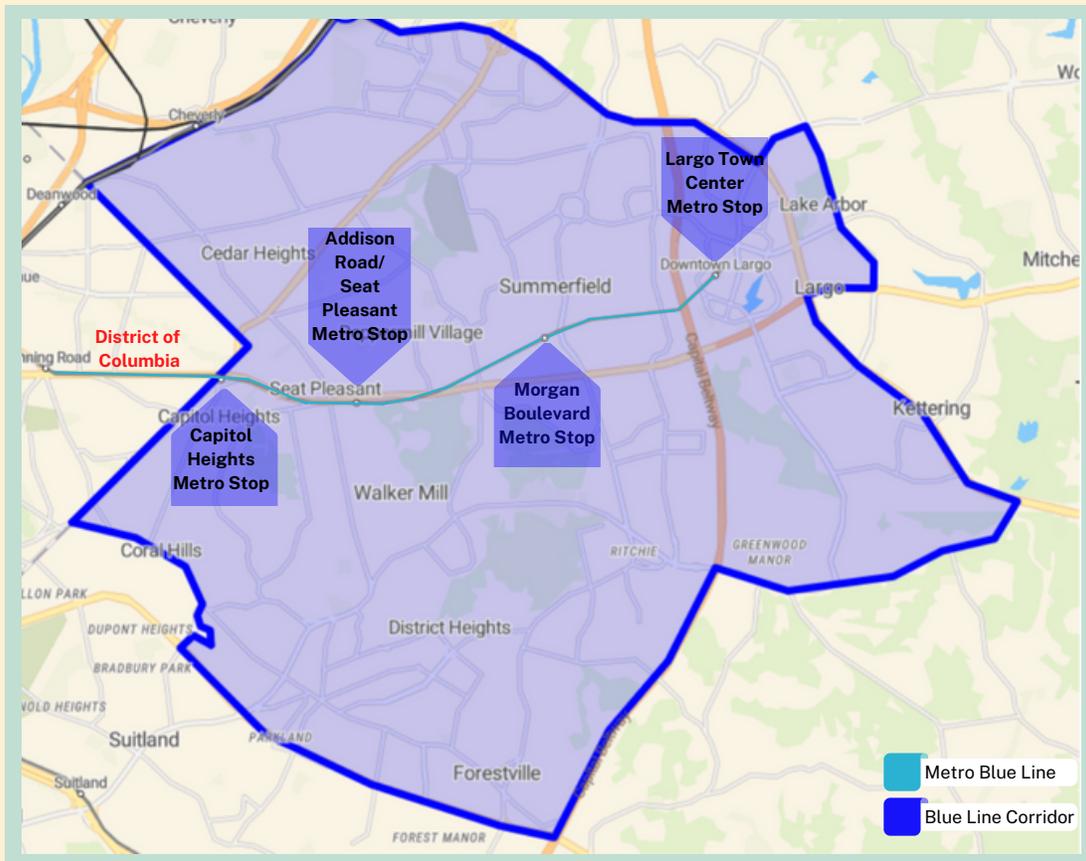
Study Area Context

C. Blue Line/Central Avenue Corridor

The Blue Line Corridor and surrounding study area are situated in the center of Prince George’s County, Maryland. The Corridor encompasses local municipalities Capitol Heights, Fairmont Heights, Largo and Seat Pleasant, as well as other small municipalities and unincorporated areas.

It is served by four stops on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Blue/Silver lines which are Capitol Heights, Addison Rd./Seat Pleasant, Morgan Blvd, and Largo Town Center. There is a particular lack of development around the Blue Line Corridor Metro stops, which limits the number of jobs near transit, discourages the use of the Metro to its full advantage, and ultimately devalues one of the community’s assets. The area is constrained by little walkability and a pedestrian-hostile environment. Residents in the corridor also face education and training gaps, higher levels of unemployment, and rental costs.

"The corridor is a gateway to the county from the District. We should develop it that way, especially around all four Metro stations. We need to phase out strip malls and bring in different types of plazas. Mixed-use – housing, retail, commercial." – Resident, Largo



"Unfortunately, I think our corridor and county is behind the ball when it comes to development. Capitol Heights is a blank slate. There are abandoned buildings, and vacant lots, but our civic involvement is low and our community is not very well informed on issues as it relates to community development related issues. I want to see more walkability, better support of small businesses, community driven development." – Resident, Capitol Heights

Study Area Context

D. Demographics

The Study Area has roughly 108,000 residents, which represents approximately 12% of Prince George's County population. Most of this population is concentrated around the Central Avenue corridor with 34,000 living in the area (3,400 per square mile). From 2010 to 2019, the Blue Line corridor gained 3,100 residents or 10%. The Study Area is 86 percent Black, with the next largest population self-identified as Hispanic, representing 8 percent.

E. Employment and Educational Attainment

The unemployment rate in the Study Area is 6.1%, 2.5 percentage points higher than the national average of 3.6%. Not surprisingly, educational attainment seems to be a key determinant of the level of employment. Those without a high school diploma have an unemployment rate of 9.5%, compared to 7.5% of those with a high school diploma, 6.3% of those with some college. Prince George's County residents with Bachelor's degrees or higher have an unemployment rate below the national average at 3.2%.

Data further indicate disparity by race and ethnicity with 8% of Black Study Area residents unemployed compared to 4% of White/Non-Hispanic residents, despite similar labor force participation rates of 81% and 82% respectively.

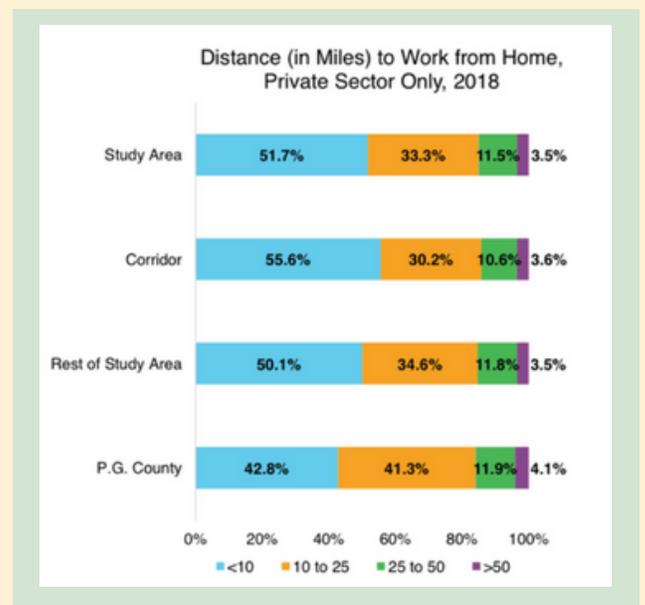
F. Commuting

Whether they select to live along the Blue Line corridor due to the excellent access to transit or they grew up in the community, many residents travel well outside the area for work. Fifteen percent of employed residents commute more than 25 miles each way to work. Stakeholders reported many area residents unable to participate in civic matters due to the time spent commuting.

G. Business Environment

The majority of jobs offered in the corridor represent consumer-facing, low-wage, low-growth opportunities. The jobs that do offer a living wage are disproportionately held by individuals who are White and do not live in the corridor.

Locally run businesses most often fall into the auto repair, casual dining, daycare and health services categories. Many of the small businesses are longstanding (10+ years), and all of the small business owners live within Prince George's County.



Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout the process of gathering insights, focus groups and interviews were conducted with community members on topics such as community engagement, small business support, and workforce development.



Planning and Development

There is fear and cynicism regarding development from residents, community members and local business owners. One fear is that development will drive up housing costs for residents and leasing costs for small businesses and accelerate displacement. Additionally, stakeholders spoke about frustration with numerous instances of planning that have not resulted in tangible outcomes. Many expressed that it is time for “less planning and more implementation”.

“Too many initiatives I see are not grassroots. They do not come from or include members of the community. We know change is coming, but I worry that current residents won’t be included.”
– Local faith leader



Interest in Additional Amenities

Residents and local stakeholders showed a strong interest in additional amenities. One of the clearest needs is for a grocery store. The Western part of the corridor encompassing Capitol Heights and Seat Pleasant is a food desert. A smaller boutique grocery store opened in 2020, but in the summer of 2022 closed its doors.

Other Key themes highlighted included:

1. Safe and diverse places to gather such as sit-down restaurants, green spaces, and other informal gathering spaces
2. Improved walkability and safety measures along central avenue and providing access to metro stations

“We need a main attraction, something to bring people to the [western part of the] Corridor.” – Local small business owner based on Central Avenue



Investments in Residents and Small Businesses

Another key theme that emerged from the engagement was the importance of driving investment in current residents, non-profit organizations and small businesses. Examples include:

- Small business technical assistance, especially for BIPOC entrepreneurs
- Affordable Job Training and Certifications and access to living wage jobs
- Investments in home repairs for current homeowners

“We need to help people in the corridor who already own homes – help with home renovations; help them age in place; get them interest-free loans to redo kitchens, bathrooms, etc. Help them make it an asset they can pass down to the next generation.” – Local resident and planning official



Community Participation

Long commutes, childcare costs and access, and other time constraints inhibit the civic participation of residents. Stakeholders communicated a vested interest in improving the capacity of residents to participate in the process of planning and implementation to ensure that community members feel that the development is for their benefit.

SWOC Analysis

Data from [Mass Economics](#), findings, and insights from stakeholders were used to conduct a strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities (SWOC) analysis.

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|
| <p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of multiple underutilized parcels • Geographic location advantages, proximity to Washington, D.C. and other areas in the region • Excellent access to public transit • Good worker base <p>Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Executive vision and County economic plans • Kaiser Permanente • Prince George’s Community College • Strong faith-based community • Active civic associations • Longstanding nonprofit and community organizations | <p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hostile pedestrian environment • Poorly maintained properties • Older building stock, redundant supply <p>Businesses and Residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple government jurisdictions create regulatory barriers and result in limited coordination • Gaps in small business support • Under-employment and low wages • Education and training gaps • High cost of housing • Limited affordable childcare • Poor access to affordable and healthy food • High-need for financial literacy |
| Opportunities | Challenges |
| <p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land assembly (funding) • Strategic collaboration between corporate partners to develop and Innovation District • Unimproved sites along Central Avenue/WMATA Joint Development • Improving Gateways • Central Avenue Connector Trail – Better pedestrian and bicycle links • Transportation access expansion • Improve pedestrian access and safety • Repositioning of Metro adjacent properties <p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity-building among local organizations • Alignment with faith-based community to pursue community development goals | <p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory environment • County and local policies create barriers to growth through zoning and small business tax code • Rent level insufficient to support new construction • Growing traffic volumes and cut-through traffic • Aging buildings inhibit businesses' ability to compete • Competition from e-commerce reduces demand for brick and mortar businesses • Inadequate funding for affordable housing • Limited business access to financing, specifically for technical assistance and expansion <p>Residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language barriers for immigrant residents • Hiring barriers related to residents' life skills capacity |

Recommendations

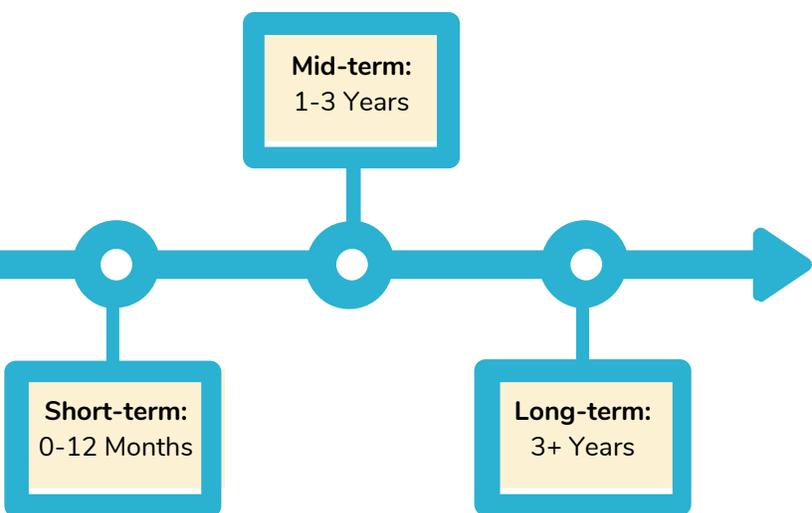
Thirteen interrelated recommendations were identified. Recommendations are classified into short, mid, and long-term timelines. All of them will require collaborative efforts and an inclusive approach to implementation. These recommendations aim to prioritize the building of community wealth and power by:

- 1) addressing pertinent issues identified through community engagement;
- 2) aligning economic development efforts with regional economic trends, community assets, and values, and stated county priorities, and;
- 3) encouraging collaboration amongst diverse stakeholders.

Exploring avenues to connect local residents and small businesses to the regional economy is another key goal. Three specific industries were identified: construction and sustainability, healthcare, and information technology.

The strategies are categorized into the following:

1. **Place:** Cultivate a unique and observable identity for the area that is designed and co-owned by community members.
2. **Community:** Increasing the capacity and collaboration among community and faith-based organizations.
3. **Business:** Foster supportive environments where local businesses can sustain themselves and attract a diverse clientele.
4. **People:** Create educational and workforce opportunities to access quality jobs and financial security.
5. **Policy:** Policy interventions to support local residents and businesses and drive inclusive economic development



Implementation Stages

Some recommendations are already on their way to implementation. In addition to their timeline, some recommendations will have the following distinctions:

1. **Active:** The recommendation is being funded, executed, and/or moved forward by partner organizations.
2. **Planning:** The recommendation is in its scoping and planning stage.

Recommendations

| | Recommendation | Timeline |
|-----------|---|--------------------|
| PLACE | Host a creative placemaking initiative to engage artists, local residents, and municipal leaders to collaboratively reimagine the physical environment in the Blue Line Corridor | Short: 0-12 Months |
| | Establish an arts and culture hub and purpose on the Blue Line Corridor | Long: 3+ Years |
| | Create an equitable transit-oriented development fund that prioritizes funding projects which address community-led priorities | Long: 3+ Years |
| COMMUNITY | Partner with county leadership to convene Blue Line focused work groups that bring diverse stakeholders together to move an inclusive economic development agenda forward | Short: 0-12 Months |
| | Establish Community Development Corporation (CDC) or CDC-like presence on the Blue Line Corridor | Mid: 1-3 Years |
| | Advocate for increased public, corporate, and philanthropic general operating support to current, longstanding Community Development Organizations from the county and private sources | Mid: 1-3 Years |
| | Create a nonprofit organization with the mission to provide capacity building to local community development organizations and advocate alongside residents, businesses, and CDOs in pursuit of an inclusive and equitable county | Mid: 1-3 Years |
| BUSINESS | Convene small construction and construction-related businesses to understand areas of potential support, provide technical assistance and connect to business opportunities | Short: 0-12 Months |
| | Establish place-based services in the corridor for locally owned small businesses | Long: 3+ Years |
| PEOPLE | Explore Workforce synergies with the Purple Line Corridor Coalition | Short: 0-12 Months |
| | Administer a healthcare or construction-focused training program for Blue Line Corridor residents that includes career readiness training, job skills and connection to employment opportunities | Mid: 1-3 Years |
| POLICY | Advocate for amendment of county guidelines to qualify local nonprofit organizations with minority boards and/or staff as “local” and “minority-owned” for purposes of awarding contracts. | Mid: 1-3 Years |
| | Advocate for policy interventions to incentivize developers to lease to locally-owned small businesses | Long: 3+ Years |

Recommendation: Host a creative placemaking initiative to engage artists, local residents, and municipal leaders to collaboratively reimagine the physical environment in the Blue Line Corridor

Active

Creative placemaking provides an avenue to establish a unique sense of identity in a particular area in a community-driven, collaborative way. Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks highlighted this concept in the Prince George's County Economic Development Platform by stating: "Increase areas in the County with identifiable character and a sense of place..." Beginning in Winter 2022 at Addison Plaza Shopping Center, The Capital Market and the Prince George's Arts & Humanities Council will implement a two-part creative placemaking initiative designed to celebrate, honor, and amplify the unique cultural history of the Central Avenue Corridor, Greater Seat Pleasant Area and Prince George's County. The initiative will speak to the power of the arts to address social determinants of health and prioritize input from residents and support local artists and small businesses.

Partner Organizations

The Capital Market

Horning Brothers

Prince George's Arts & Humanities Council

Best Practices

- [Hyatt Park Placemaking Initiative - City of Hyattsville and Neighborhood Design District](#)
- [Creative Suitland](#)
- [Resilient Together](#)

Long-Term: 3+ Years

Recommendation: Establish an arts and culture hub and purpose on the Blue Line Corridor

One of the key fears often cited with development is the loss of community identity. As the County pursues the creation of an arts and entertainment district, it is essential that current community residents are co-designers and that the history and culture of corridor communities is honored and memorialized. Creative placemaking and the arts in general provide the medium to achieve such goals.

The Task force recommends a public-private effort to take advantage of the currently available underutilized land and establish a permanent arts and culture hub similar to past county efforts in the Gateway Arts District and Suitland. Importantly, these efforts not only foster a unique identity and sense of community, but also are drivers of inclusive economic development.

Best Practices

- [The Gateway Arts District](#)
- [Joe's Movement Emporium and the Prince George's County Revenue Authority launch Creative Suitland](#)

Recommendation: Create an equitable transit-oriented development fund that prioritizes funding projects which address community-led priorities

One of the unrealized strengths of the study area is its underutilized real estate assets. Due to its proximity to transit and vacant properties, and the county's visions for development, it is imperative that public officials and private partners create means for local communities to participate in future development.

An Equitable TOD fund is a pool of capital created by a municipality, state, or nonprofit organization for the purpose of providing low-cost, financing to support inclusive and equitable development. The purpose of a TOD fund is to provide developers with access to acquisition, predevelopment, or construction financing to buy or improve properties along transit corridors. A particular focus of any Blue Line Corridor acquisition fund should be to:

1. Prioritize increasing community ownership, and community participation in design. Examples include legacy corridor small businesses or nonprofits purchasing space outright or partnering with a developer on a mixed-use project (See [Dance Loft on 14th](#)).
2. Support transit-oriented development and mixed-income housing including housing for residents as low as 30% AMI.

The most effective funds include participation from corporate, philanthropic and public entities, who often can play a role in public land acquisition or loss protection. The State of Maryland allocated \$400 million to support development along the Blue Line Corridor in the spring of 2022, and there is current legislation before the state to establish a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Capital Grant and Revolving Loan Fund. Each of these provide avenues for public involvement. Importantly, as detailed in later recommendations, to ensure any such acquisition fund achieves the above-mentioned goals it must be accompanied by capacity building investments in local, community-based developers.

Best Practices

- [Equitable Transit-Oriented Development Accelerator Fund \(ETODAF\)](#)
- [Capital Asset Transition Fund](#)

COMMUNITY

A common theme of this document is the importance of increasing the investment in local nonprofit community development organizations across Prince George's County and in the Blue Line/Central Avenue Corridor. Community Development is the work of building and sustaining inclusive and equitable neighborhoods. A traditional model within community development is a Community Development Corporation (CDC). The traditional CDC model is designed to be constituted of various local stakeholders carrying forward a community-driven vision for the neighborhood. CDCs perform a range of services including organizing and advocacy, affordable housing and real estate development, and placemaking activities to name a few. CDCs can also act in a supporting role for organizations and programs that already operate within the area through navigating policy and capacity building and helping to channel state and federal resources to the neighborhood. If development in the Central Avenue/Blue Line Corridor is to be inclusive and equitable, high-capacity, community-rooted, nonprofit organizations with community and real estate development expertise is essential.

Recommendation: Partner with county leadership to convene monthly Blue Line focused work groups that bring diverse stakeholders together to move an inclusive economic development agenda forward

Planning

In recent years, there have been multiple work groups, task forces, and committees focused on the Central Avenue / Blue Line Corridor, led by a variety of stakeholders. Moving forward, there should be a coordinated effort to host consistent public-private Blue Line-focused work groups, particularly as the implementation of recommendations outlined in this agenda and other initiatives are advanced. The members of the work group should be locally-rooted organizations, residents, state and local officials, and stakeholders with diverse perspectives and areas of expertise. The convenings should create space for ongoing community input and prioritize implementation.

Partner Organizations

State Delegate
Jazz Lewis

LISC DC

Prince George's
County Council

Other Local
Partners

Best Practices

- [Purple Line Corridor Coalition](#)
- [Housing Opportunities for all Workgroup](#)

Mid-term: 1-3 Years

Recommendation: Establish Community Development Corporation (CDC) or CDC Like services on the Blue Line Corridor

There are a few existing CDCs in Prince George’s County, however, the ones based in the Blue Line Corridor are in their nascent stages. Establishing a CDC or CDC-Like services, with a vision informed by local residents and businesses, is an essential step in supporting inclusive and equitable development. A local Blue Line CDC should prioritize advocating alongside community members as new development comes, supporting the creation of a community driven vision for the corridor, and eventually building the capacity to buy and develop land themselves. Furthermore, CDC-like services in the corridor can aid in increasing the capacity of existing nonprofit organizations and serve as a “backbone” for community-led efforts. Implementation should prioritize exploring avenues to support and build the capacity of current community development organizations in the Blue Line.

Best Practices

- [Marshall Heights Community Development Organization](#)
- LISC CDC Memo

Recommendation: Advocate for increased public, corporate, and philanthropic general operating support to current, longstanding Community Development Organizations from the county and private sources

Investing in local existing Community Development Organizations county wide will help advance the goals of building community power and connecting communities to the regional economy. Examples include nonprofit affordable housing developers, CDCs, workforce development providers, small business technical assistance providers and more. General operating support dollars from County and Private sources to organizations with proven impact and those with strong community driven visions should be prioritized.

Best Practices

- [Community Development Block Grant](#)
- [LISC Oramenta Newsome Fellowship & Section 4 Capacity Building Funds](#)

Recommendation: Create a nonprofit organization with the mission to provide capacity building to local community development organizations and advocate alongside residents, businesses, and CDOs in pursuit of an inclusive and equitable county

There is high energy for community development conversations but low levels of capacity and interconnectedness across Prince George’s County. In neighboring DC, the [Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development](#) plays a critical role in shaping public policy, and convening and educating housing, small business and other community development organizations. There is a need for a similar non-governmental organization to support community development organizations in Prince George’s County.

Important momentum is already underway via the county’s Housing Opportunities for All Workgroup (HOFA), and Purple Line Corridor Coalition. A key recommendation in the HOFA work group’s Comprehensive Strategy Report was to create a housing policy and implementation board, composed of diverse, cross-sector representatives from across the geographic region, to advocate and monitor the implementation of core housing recommendations. In the North part of the county, the Purple Line Corridor Coalition, convenes ongoing workgroups across housing, small business and workforce designed to ensure development along the line is inclusive and equitable.

Current iterations are often constrained to specific geographic locations or focus areas. There should be a concerted effort to build on that momentum to create a comprehensive convening and capacity-building organization that prioritizes housing and economic development.

"The county needs a strong county-wide organization to take the lead similar to a CNHED in Washington, DC or Non-Profit Montgomery in Montgomery County." – County Representative & Task Force Member

Best Practices

- [The Coalition for Nonprofit Housing & Economic Development \(CNHED\)](#)
- [Housing Opportunities for All Workgroup](#)
- [Purple Line Corridor Coalition](#)
- [Nonprofit Prince George’s County](#)

Recommendation: Convene small construction and construction-related businesses to understand areas of potential support, provide technical assistance and connect to business opportunities

Active

Given that multiple forms of investment are being initiated in the Blue Line Corridor, there are opportunities to connect and elevate the expertise of construction and construction-related businesses in the corridor. Local construction-related businesses can play a leading role in community development as well as create jobs for local residents and generate revenue that will be reinvested into the local economy. However, additional information on both the supply and demand sides is needed. Task Force Members Mark Lawrence of Inncuvate, and Tisa Clark of JD Clark Professional Services, are in the midst of a pilot program designed to address this need. Together they will 1) conduct focused outreach to identify the population of construction and construction-related businesses; 2) provide initial education and capacity-building services while identifying potential long-term supports and 3) collect data on upcoming construction contracting opportunities in the corridor. Importantly, the group will also explore synergies with workforce development efforts in construction.

Partner Organizations

- Inncuvate
- JD Clark Professional Services
- LISC DC

“If this area is going to develop, there should be a way for individuals who live in the community that is developing to be employed on those projects. We need accessible job training to help make this happen. Unfortunately, the Community College is not accessible, nor do people know about their programs.” –Resident, Capitol Heights

Long-Term: 3+ Years

Recommendation: Establish place-based services in the corridor for locally owned small businesses

Currently, the small business ecosystem in the Blue Line Corridor is underinvested. Local, “mom and pop” small businesses, many of which are BIPOC owned and led, would benefit from support services to help grow their business and attract new customers. According to a recent report by Brookings, greater rates of self-employment are indicative of lower poverty rates and fewer instances of displacement. Current business support services in the county require business owners to commute to other areas to receive assistance. Expanding access to affordable resources for small businesses and entrepreneurs to the Blue Line Corridor, such as legal and technical support, would result in job creation and wealth-building for the community. Additionally, these resources can provide needed assistance and capital for aspiring entrepreneurs who bring unique skillsets and/or address unmet needs with their startup businesses.

Best Practices

- [DC Main Streets Program](#)
- [Anacostia BID](#)
- [Rising Tide Capital](#)

“Small businesses are barely making it in the area. They have no support and despite wanting to expand, they are scared, and don’t have the resources or a place to turn to for support.” – Local Faith leader

Recommendation: Explore Workforce synergies with the Purple Line Corridor Coalition

In 2021, the Purple Line Corridor Coalition engaged stakeholders in workforce development and other sectors to produce a document entitled “Long -Term Strategies for the Purple Line Corridor: Ensuring a More Inclusive and Equitable Recovery in the Post-Pandemic Era.” Two of their key strategies include creating new and targeted workforce training programs and increasing access to jobs created by the Purple Line for those living in the corridor or small business enterprises. There are commonalities in the workforce efforts being done by the Purple Line Corridor Coalition and some of the strategies outlined in this document. Therefore, exploring synergies can lead to new insights and efficient implementation of workforce recommendations.

Mid-term: 1-3 Years

Recommendation: Administer an industry-based healthcare or construction-focused training program for Blue Line Corridor residents that includes career readiness training, job skills and connection to employment opportunities

Planning

Data analysis and community engagement revealed industry clusters with the greatest opportunities for the area. Furthermore, new developments, such as the University of Maryland Capitol Region Medical Center along the Blue Line Corridor, provide a unique place-based opportunity for workforce development. Administering an industry-based training program can invest in and expand the skills of residents and improve economic outcomes for individuals in the corridor. There is also an opportunity to foster relationships with workforce organizations that are already serving the corridor and Prince George’s County as a whole.

"People are not finding jobs within the county. There needs to be training in technical careers that can pay good salaries like construction trades, plumbing, electrician, HVAC maintenance." -Local Nonprofit Leader

Partner Organizations

The Training Source

Inncuvate

Prince George's Community College

JD Clark Professional Services

Best Practices

- [Kaiser Permanente](#)

Recommendation: Advocate for an amendment of operating procedures to qualify local nonprofit organizations with majority BIPOC boards and/or staff as “local” and “minority-owned” for purposes of awarding contracts.

As discussed above, investing in local community development organizations is a central theme in this document. One avenue to do so is via county investment tools and RFQ’s such as those published via the Prince George’s County Redevelopment Authority and Department of Housing and Community Development Housing Production Trust Fund. The county should consider amending legislation that will qualify local, BIPOC-led nonprofit organizations for existing incentives in evaluation criteria that prefer MBE and locally owned for-profit businesses. This is especially important in the issuing of RFPs or RFQs and would give such nonprofits more opportunities to compete for public purpose opportunities. For the county to achieve it’s economic goals of preserving housing affordability and ensuring individuals with lower income can live and thrive in areas targeted for development, it must ensure that longstanding, local nonprofits can not only maintain their standing in the community, but also grow their capacity and services.

Long-term: 1-3 Years

Recommendation: Advocate for policy interventions to incentivize developers to lease to locally owned small businesses

Locally owned small businesses contribute to a community’s local economy and sense of identity. Oftentimes, traditional development can increase leasing costs for small businesses and affect their customer base by bringing in large corporation storefronts. The Prince George’s County Redevelopment Authority has included small business preferences in their RFP evaluation criteria which is a helpful measure for retaining local and BIPOC-owned businesses. Prince George’s County should further examine policy interventions to ensure that small businesses are not driven out of their own communities as a result of economic development. Such policies could incentivize developers to reserve certain square footage of their developments to be leased to locally-owned small businesses and/or maintain current leasing prices for small business owners.

Best Practices

- [Portland: Affordable Commercial Tenanting](#)
- [East New York Commitments Report](#)

Appendix

The Blue Line/Central Avenue Corridor is filled with a diverse set of culturally rich communities that continue to deal with a range of economic and health inequities. As these recommendations are improved, iterated on, and adopted, we are committed to deploying our full range of tools and resources. We look forward to working with residents and community leaders; public officials on the municipal, county and state level; and philanthropic and corporate stakeholders to build an inclusive and equitable Blue Line Corridor, Prince George's County and DC Region.

LISC Investments to Date

- \$2.7M Predevelopment and Acquisition financing to Community First Development Corporation in support of 210 on Park, a mixed-use project in Capitol Heights, MD
- \$60,000 in HUD Section 4 Funds granted to Housing Initiative Partnership (HIP) and Sowing Economic Development and Empowerment (SEED)
- \$27,500 to The Capital Market to activate a vacant commercial space in Addison Road Shopping Center and create an interactive exhibit honoring the culture of the corridor
- \$20,000 to support Inccuvate LLC and JD Clark Professional Services as they conduct construction and construction related small business outreach and technical assistance
- 3 Newsome Fellows (over \$22,000 of in-kind support) placed at Prince George's County community development nonprofits to support their capacity

No process could ever capture the full picture of community assets and opportunities. Below are recommendations for future iterations of this work. While some themes are not directly related to the scope of the Economic Inclusion Agenda, they provide valuable insight into the community stated priorities.

Encouragement for Future Iterations

- One clear area of feedback from residents was the need and interest to invest in the current assets of Blue Line communities. To do so effectively, future iterations should develop an asset map of the corridor inclusive of current and planned community assets as well as new and planned developments.
- To better respond to community fatigue in regard to over planning and under implementation, any future efforts should prioritize short term wins alongside long term priorities. Additionally key success metrics should be developed to allow Task Force members and other local partners to take responsibility for implementation and set clear evaluation criteria to measure impact.
- Engage partners and incorporate a deeper analysis of transportation and housing related issues, including:
 - Engaging the Maryland Department of Transit State Highway Administration, the government authority responsible for maintenance and operation of Central Avenue/Maryland 214
 - Incorporating and analyzing bus line usage by residents in the corridor. As one local stakeholder stated, "the metro is an asset, but residents cannot take advantage of it. There is a need for 'last mile' like transportation". We are encouraged by WMATA's Better Bus Initiative that aims to, among other priorities, redesign the bus service in Prince George's County.
 - Conducting a deeper exploration of housing related issues including the current housing stock, planned housing units, the ideal mix of unit types and affordability needed in the corridor and how to help current homeowners remain in place. The Housing Initiative Partnership and Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland both have programs to do so, but ensuring residents are connected to these resources is important.