

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY BLUE LINE CORRIDOR

ECONOMIC INCLUSION AGENDA



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

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.

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

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.