



Toward an Equitable Region:

Lessons from Baltimore's Sustainable Communities Initiative

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Enterprise Homes' Heritage Crossing development in downtown Baltimore.

Preface

Producing more equitable regions, where low-income residents can access jobs, quality education, affordable housing, health care and other opportunities, is difficult. American metropolitan regions must overcome legacies of racial, political, and economic segregation and fragmentation that continue to inhibit the collaboration and coordination necessary to take action.

In Baltimore and many other metropolitan areas across the nation, local leaders and stakeholders have come together with the goal of overcoming these challenges to make real progress. This report presents the lessons we learned from assessing the process and outcomes of Baltimore's regional plan to reduce inequalities and increase access to opportunity for low-income residents. The analysis was funded by the Knowledge, Impact and Strategy (KIS) group at Enterprise Community Partners and performed by the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education (NCSG) at the University of Maryland.

Enterprise Community Partners and NCSG are committed to advancing knowledge on how to create more sustainable and equitable cities and regions through data-driven, inclusive processes. The Enterprise Mid-Atlantic Market Office and NCSG were also involved in the process that produced the Baltimore Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD), the central product of the Baltimore regional planning effort. NCSG staff were members of the Opportunity Collaborative, the group that led the production of the plan, led the development of opportunity maps that provided critical data for the planning process, and served on the Steering, Nexus, and Housing work groups. Enterprise staff were extensively engaged in the housing work group.

Identifying lessons from a process in which researchers are directly engaged is challenging. Because NCSG staff participated in debates that shaped the content and process of the plan, there is potential for bias. To minimize bias, we adhered to a strict interview protocol and methods of content analysis. Scholarship has also long recognized the benefits of researchers' direct engagement in communities and with problems central to their research. In Baltimore, our involvement provided key insights into the social, economic, environmental and political environment in which the plan took shape and provided unique access to some of the key players involved. It is our hope that this unique view into the process that took shape in Baltimore will offer useful insights for other cities and metropolitan areas that are attempting to alter their unequal landscape of opportunity and create more equitable regions.

Executive Summary

Regional planning has been slow to progress in many U.S. metropolitan regions. When it does occur, it often focuses on singular issues, such as transportation, and often lacks focus on issues of regional equity, particularly around issues of housing. As such, regional planning efforts have often failed to significantly shift the patterns of segregation and inequality prevalent in many metropolitan regions. To address these challenges, three U.S. federal agencies launched the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, a program that funded cross-sector regional planning efforts in 2010. The grant required its recipients to pay particular attention to equity in their regional planning efforts.

In 2011, the Baltimore, Maryland, region – one of the most segregated metropolitan areas in the country – received a \$3.5 million grant to conduct a planning process aimed at improving regional sustainability with a focus on decreasing disparities in access to opportunity for low-income residents. This report analyzes Baltimore's process and plans to assess the challenges and possibilities of planning for regional equity. In particular, our analysis focuses on four key dimensions of equitable regional planning: 1) the use of opportunity or equity-related data, 2) the extent of community engagement around issues of regional equity and opportunity, 3) the efficacy of regional collaboration in planning and post-grant implementation, and 4) the adoption of regional affordable housing policy.

Baltimore's process showed that federal grants can stimulate inclusive decision-making processes among diverse stakeholders. In Baltimore, the main planning group, known as the Opportunity Collaborative, provided a critical forum for inter-jurisdictional and multi-sector collaboration around issues of housing, workforce development and transportation. Throughout the three-year planning effort, the engagement of diverse stakeholders produced buy-in for the plan among Collaborative members and laid the groundwork for ongoing and future collaborations that would advance the plan's goals. However, a lack of structure for working across issues also led to a siloed planning effort that failed to address the nexus of issues that inhibit access to opportunity for low-income residents throughout the region.

Opportunity and equity-related data and mapping helped to bridge the plan's work across issues of housing, transportation and workforce development. Opportunity maps lent themselves to deep stakeholder engagement around regional equity and provided a common platform

for a data-driven approach to regional planning.

The Baltimore experience showed that engaged opportunity mapping processes can be time consuming, and that diverse interest groups rarely agree on what comprises regional opportunity. Regional opportunity maps can also often mask neighborhood-level issues and miss important assets and conditions that form the basis of effective community development efforts.

To create effective regional plans, community engagement is needed. However, it can be challenging to generate meaningful engagement on a regional scale, especially around issues of opportunity. Baltimore's process showed that civic and community organizations can play a vital role in engaging communities – particularly with hard-to-reach groups – but face challenges in making issues related to regional equity and opportunity relevant to the everyday lives of residents. Further, without prior planning and adequate funding, regional community engagement efforts may be informative for residents, but not particularly effective in shaping regional planning outcomes.

As important as Baltimore's regional plan was in cutting across historic divides in housing, workforce development, and transportation issues, the Opportunity Collaborative struggled to move the plan toward implementation. Their efforts underscore the need for ongoing coordination, cooperation, funding and political buy-in to move a plan from recommendations into reality.

These struggles have been particularly acute on the housing front, where a more equitable regional distribution of low-income housing continues to be a politically divisive issue. Baltimore's troubled history of segregation still presents in

the pernicious vestiges of institutional racism, influencing the distribution of opportunity around the region. Without critical dialogue about these issues by policymakers at the highest level, Baltimore's geography of opportunity cannot be fundamentally changed.

As metropolitan areas around the nation come together to address issues of equity and create greater opportunities for their most disadvantaged residents, Baltimore's regional planning process provides several key lessons:

- Regional planning requires the engagement of a broad and diverse set of stakeholders to generate the buy-in and long-term collaboration necessary for plan implementation. Organizational structures must be established to facilitate work across sectors to address the nexus of issues that influence the opportunity structure of a region.
- Equity and opportunity-related data and maps can provide a foundation for equity planning at the regional scale but should be developed through deep stakeholder engagement, be attentive to questions about how different populations view opportunity, and respect how regional-level data can mask neighborhood differences and assets.
- Underserved communities can be effectively engaged in the planning process through partnerships with community-based organizations, but engagement must occur early in the planning process, translate concepts of regional opportunity into concrete neighborhood concerns, and have a well-defined structure for integration into the plan.
- Effective, equitable regional plans must be cross-sectoral to address the many ways in which low-income communities experience opportunity and must include detailed implementation strategies. Regional plans must identify specific action items, organizations responsible for taking those actions, and specific timelines for implementation.
- Opportunity and equity analysis tools can help to make the case for regional housing planning, but advancing substantive housing policy change is difficult to accomplish at the regional level. Progress is often slow and requires strong cross-sector, multi-jurisdictional advocacy, consensus building and political will.
- If regional planning is to be effective over the long-term, stakeholders must build durable institutional structures at the regional level and find ways to influence plans, regulations, investments and policies at the local level.



Rowhomes slated for renovation in east Baltimore.

Introduction

Near the beginning of its first term, the Obama administration launched its signature urban policy initiative: the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, an interagency collaboration among the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency. The Partnership championed a set of livability principles as the foundation for interagency coordination. These included: providing more transportation choices; promoting equitable, affordable housing; enhancing economic competitiveness; supporting existing communities; coordinating policies and leveraging investment; and valuing communities and neighborhoods.

HUD's Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities – now the Office of Economic Development – led the Partnership's efforts and provided leadership on the principal tool of the initiative, the Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) Regional Planning Grant. In 2010 and 2011, the SCI grant program provided \$165 million to 74 metropolitan regions around the nation.

The SCI grant is the most recent large-scale federal funding of a cross-sector regional planning effort, and one that put equity issues at the forefront of the process. SCI grants were awarded in support of metropolitan and multijurisdictional planning that integrates housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation and infrastructure investments (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2016). The grants were also intended to spur economic competitiveness and revitalization; increase social equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity; slow energy consumption and climate change; and improve public health and environmental impacts.

Given the focus of the SCI grants on equity issues, it is one of the first programs in the nation to provide substantive insights into the problems and possibilities of achieving more equitable, opportunity-rich communities through regional planning. Among planning scholars and practitioners, metropolitan fragmentation has long been associated with the creation and perpetuation of racial and economic inequality, and the lack of a mechanism for regional planning has been viewed as a major barrier to reducing these inequalities (Orfield, 1997).

The Baltimore region was awarded a \$3.5 million SCI planning grant in 2011. This report draws lessons from Baltimore's SCI planning process to inform planning efforts with the goal of promoting more equitable regions and providing greater

access to opportunity for disadvantaged populations. Specifically, it evaluates four key aspects of Baltimore's SCI process with salience for achieving this goal: 1) the use of opportunity-related data in the planning process; 2) the process of community engagement around issues of regional equity and opportunity; 3) the challenges of regional collaboration in planning and post-grant implementation; and 4) the adoption of an effective regional affordable housing policy.

The report begins with an overview of Baltimore's history of segregation to frame the region's current housing challenges and SCI grant application. We then offer an analysis of the Opportunity Collaborative and the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD), including its implementation and potential for enhancing regional equity, opportunity, and affordable housing in the region. We end with lessons learned from Baltimore for other metropolitan areas tackling tough regional planning issues. Baltimore's successes can serve as a useful guide and its challenges can be anticipated as communities work together to build more equitable and opportunity-rich regions.

Research Methods

Our analysis is based on primary and secondary documents produced during the planning process and semi-structured interviews with 23 key informants. Our sources include documents produced by the Opportunity Collaborative, the regional body that led the planning process, and by other organizations that were part of the process, such as the Citizen's Planning and Housing Association's summary reports on the public engagement process. Additional sources include various media and other reports about Baltimore's SCI process, as well as historical and current census data.

To gain insight into the goals, development, and impacts of Baltimore's Regional Plan for Sustainable Development, we interviewed individuals who were directly involved with the Opportunity Collaborative. Each interview was conducted over the phone and lasted approximately one hour. Participants were selected via a snowball sample that began with key players in the planning process familiar to the research team, who then referred us to other interviewees who were also key to the process.

The interviews were semi-structured and included questions about each interviewee's role in the SCI process, their views on the activities and inclusivity of the Opportunity Collaborative, community outreach and engagement, the use of opportunity data and mapping, plan implementation, impacts on housing policy, and key lessons for other communities. These interviews were conducted just over one year after the final plan was released in May 2015.



Downtown Baltimore. Source: Steelplug, Wikimedia Commons.

Baltimore's History of Regional Inequality

The Baltimore region is racially and economically diverse – approximately 60 percent of its population is white, nearly 33 percent is black, about five percent is Hispanic or Latino, and five percent is Asian-American. The region is racially and economically segregated, with low-income blacks residing primarily in Baltimore City, and higher-income whites concentrating in wealthier suburbs. This fragmented social and economic geography developed from the region's long history of racial and economic segregation, discrimination and exclusion. But it also provides a critical context for understanding the challenges faced in planning for an equitable region that the RPSD tried to address.

The Roots of Racial and Economic Segregation in Baltimore

In the first decade of the twentieth century, city reformers, including Baltimore Mayor J. Barry Mahool, helped craft the nation's first racially restrictive residential ordinance (Power, 1982). The law, signed in 1910, came after members of the city's burgeoning black middle class bought real estate in several of the city's traditionally white neighborhoods. Following enactment of the ordinance, black Baltimoreans faced an increasingly restricted supply of housing that led to rising rents and housing prices, overcrowding, and widespread neighborhood disinvestment. The 1917 Supreme Court decision, *Buchanan v. Warley*, ruled that residential segregation ordinances like those in Baltimore were unconstitutional.

Undaunted, segregationists adopted private mechanisms that had a similar effect. Racially restrictive covenants became widespread, preventing the sale or rent of homes to nonwhite families until well after World War II. Spurred by declining inner-city conditions and pressures for neighborhood integration, many white families left the city for the region's suburbs.

Following the 1948 Supreme Court decision, which ruled racial covenants unconstitutional (*Shelley v. Kraemer*), white flight out of Baltimore continued in earnest. While the greater Baltimore region added hundreds of thousands of residents in the postwar period, the majority settled in the region's suburbs. A state law passed just after World War II requiring approval from residents within the area designated for annexation effectively sealed Baltimore City's borders. Due to challenges from suburban municipalities, the city has not annexed land since 1918 (Duffy, 2007).

New federal housing assistance programs, such as those administered by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC)

and later, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which underwrote long-term mortgages, encouraged white working and middle-class residents to purchase homes in new suburbs.

Racial minorities and communities of color, however, were systematically excluded from the benefits of the postwar housing boom. In a practice that became commonly known as "redlining" (Figure 1), the FHA and private lenders denied loans to prospective homeowners residing in many non-white and mixed-race neighborhoods by labeling them high risk for default (Schwartz, 2015). In Baltimore, such neighborhoods were almost exclusively concentrated in the central city.

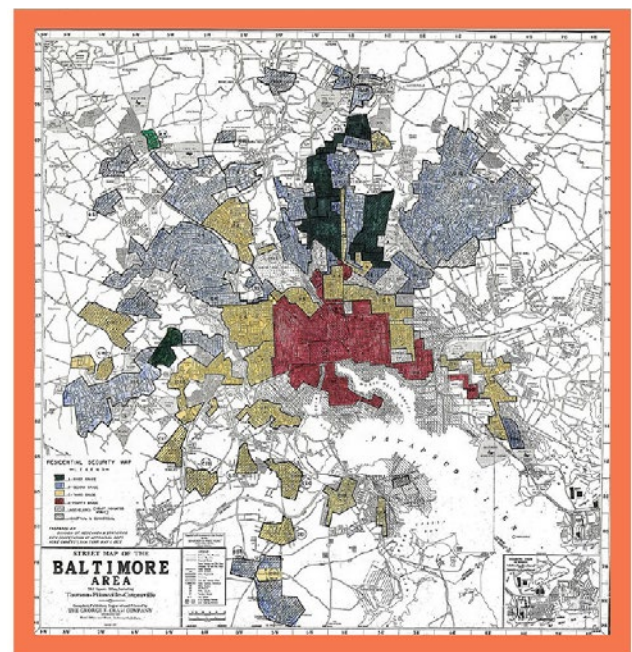


Figure 1. Baltimore HOLC Lending Map (1937). Reproduced from the Opportunity Collaborative (2014).

While the federal government underwrote the flight of economic capital and residents out of inner cities, it also invested in racially-segregated public housing within them. These projects often replaced housing lost to large-scale urban renewal projects, such as new highway construction and slum clearance.

Federal policy allowed local governments to choose whether to build public housing and where to place it. In Baltimore, many wealthier suburbs refused to build public housing, while many inner-city communities that suffered from a lack of investment welcomed it (see Appendix, Table 2). Further, public housing projects were segregated from the start, often with the explicit purpose of keeping black residents out of white neighborhoods. Between 1934 and 1954, all public housing projects in Baltimore were planned as either “white” or “negro” projects. While built as “de jure” segregated housing, many public housing projects remain segregated today (*Thompson v. HUD, 2011*).

In the past few decades, the poor condition of public housing and widespread acknowledgment of the harmful effects of concentrated poverty has led to shifts in federal housing policy. Instead of investing in place-based public housing, the federal government promotes programs that leverage housing in the private market, such as tenant-based rental vouchers.

Since 1996, there has been virtually no federal budget for constructing new public housing, while programs promoting mixed-income, lower-density housing like HOPE VI, privately developed place-based housing like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), and tenant-based rental vouchers have become common alternatives (Schwartz, 2015). However, the issuance of vouchers has failed to overcome the Baltimore region’s entrenched patterns of segregation, with the majority of voucher-holders being low-income black inner-city residents who use their vouchers to relocate from one high-poverty neighborhood to another (DeLuca & Rosenblatt, 2017).

Baltimore’s history continues to shape the region’s current housing market, its patterns of socioeconomic and racial segregation, and its geography of opportunity. The region’s lowest-opportunity neighborhoods are generally located in its core and are disproportionately nonwhite, while the highest-opportunity neighborhoods are typically located in wealthy suburbs that are disproportionately white (National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education, 2013; Reece and Gambhir, 2008).

Much of the region’s subsidized housing, especially subsidized multi-family housing, is located in low-opportunity neighborhoods. Likewise, neighborhoods characterized by the poorest performing schools, highest crime rates, and the most economically disadvantaged households are largely located in Baltimore City and adjacent neighborhoods of Baltimore County.

Public housing is disproportionately located in neighborhoods with the lowest levels of opportunity, highest number of rental units, and lowest housing values. And while there have been no major investments in transit in decades, what transit does exist fails to provide a reliable system of public transportation for many inner-city neighborhoods.

In contrast, crime is less common, schools are high-performing, skilled jobs are abundant, and housing prices are stable elsewhere in nearby Howard, Anne Arundel and Baltimore Counties. Even as the region has diversified, historical patterns of race and class segregation persist and continue to impact the opportunities of Baltimore City’s most disadvantaged residents (Opportunity Collaborative, 2014).

Opportunity Mapping and Regional Housing Vouchers

The forces that created Baltimore’s unequal geography of opportunity were not unique, nor were efforts to combat them through a regional planning process. In Chicago, a regional voucher mobility program was initiated in response to a consent decree between the Chicago Housing Authority and low-income minority tenants who charged racial discrimination in the location of public housing, known as the Gautreaux Project.

The Gautreaux Project set the stage for HUD’s Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing (MTO), which was a 10-year research demonstration. Launched in 1992, MTO provided evidence that neighborhoods affect life outcomes. It showed that voucher recipients who moved into low-poverty neighborhoods were more likely to live in less segregated, safer neighborhoods and higher-quality homes, and experience lower incidences of health problems (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2011b). Despite evidence of the research demonstration’s success, there was opposition to MTO, especially in Baltimore County. This opposition enabled U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland and her colleagues to limit the program’s nationwide expansion (Donovan, 2015).

Although changes in federal housing policies began to encourage the deconcentration of poverty, many public housing residents in Baltimore remained in distressed and segregated neighborhoods. In 1995, a group of black Baltimore public housing residents filed suit (*Thompson v. HUD*) against HUD, the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) and others. The residents charged that the defendants had created and maintained a racially segregated public housing system that violated their constitutional right to equal protection and the 1968 Fair Housing Act.

The plaintiffs in the case were supported by an opportunity analysis conducted by John Powell and the Kirwan Institute. The analysis showed that recipients of public housing assistance, both place-based and tenant-based, faced numerous challenges to improving their well-being, including racial segregation and concentrated poverty, and significant obstacles to accessing good schools, health care services, safe neighborhoods and economic opportunities.

In 1996, a portion of the case was resolved in a partial consent decree that included funding for the Baltimore Mobility Program (BMP), which launched in 2003. Between 2003 and 2014, BMP enabled more than 2,500 families to move out of high-poverty, segregated neighborhoods by providing them with housing choice vouchers (*Samuels and Rosenblatt, 2014*). The final *Thompson v. HUD* settlement was made in 2012 and included multiple provisions.

The largest portion of the settlement was the expansion of the BMP to include 2,600 additional families. HUD also granted an

exception that allowed vouchers to be used in units priced up to 130 percent of the area's fair market rent (FMR). This made them more effective in racially-integrated, low-poverty neighborhoods. Vouchers are administered regionally by the Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership, which facilitates cross-jurisdictional portability and provides housing counseling to voucher holders.

Additionally, a separate but similar fair housing complaint was recently settled in Baltimore County. The complaint was filed in 2011 by three clients of the Baltimore County Housing Office and two local housing advocacy organizations against Baltimore County and two administrative officials.

The conciliation agreement had three main outcomes. First, a commitment was made to support the development of 1,000 affordable housing units by private developers across the county. Second, a mobility counseling program was established to locate 2,000 families in certain low-poverty census tracts. Third, the county executive of Baltimore County was required to introduce a county law banning source-of-income (SOI) discrimination in housing markets in 2016.¹

It was against this backdrop of persistent racial and economic segregation, and new experiments in housing policy to address it, that community and government leaders came together to create a regional plan. Its central goals were to create a more equitable region in which low-income residents had greater access to high-opportunity neighborhoods.



Homes in Baltimore's Remington neighborhood.

¹ Such a law was introduced but not passed in 2016. Based on the vote count in the council, re-introduction will be required in 2019 and each year thereafter if the bill does not pass, until the agreement expires in 2028.

Building Baltimore's Regional Plan for Sustainable Development

Following HUD's notice of funding availability for the first round of SCI grants in December 2009, cities and regions from every state in the U.S. applied for grants (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2010b). In Baltimore, the effort was initially led by community-based organizations and other nonprofits in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Planning, which was to serve as the project's lead (P. Conrad, phone interview, September 15, 2016). Before the proposals were due, however, HUD released a requirement stating that metropolitan planning organizations must play a strong role in the process. In response, the Baltimore Metropolitan Council became the lead agency, and in doing so, marginalized several nonprofits that had formerly played an important role (D. Schmidt-Perkins, phone interview, September 8, 2016). The BMC-led proposal was not successful.

According to HUD reviewers, a major reason for the region's unsuccessful bid included lack of collaboration among various regional actors and a lack of emphasis on diverse aspects of regional sustainability (C. Payne and B. O'Malley, phone interviews, August 2 and 5, 2016). The proposal reflected BMC's traditional strength in transportation policy. However, it offered little focus on other HUD livability principles.

For the second round of grants, HUD urged BMC to develop a more multi-stakeholder collaboration, including a more diverse set of community-based groups and businesses (B. O'Malley, phone interview, August 5, 2016). HUD also suggested that BMC develop a clearer definition of the unique challenges of regional equity and opportunity in Baltimore that its plan could help address (C. Payne, phone interview, August 2, 2016).

Building the Opportunity Collaborative

Following Baltimore's unsuccessful first-round bid, BMC convened meetings with nonprofits and community-based organizations to collect ideas on a revised proposal. Given BMC's previous reluctance to include some of these same groups in the grant proposal, a few of the initial meetings were tense (C. Payne, phone interview, August 2, 2016). Chief among the groups' concerns was the initial proposal's lack of focus on critical regional issues, especially affordable housing. This issue was viewed by some as an inexplicable omission considering that the *Thompson* case was ongoing at the time (B. O'Malley, phone interview, August 5, 2016).

As a result of these conversations, the second-round application expanded its focus on housing and workforce development. It emphasized the unique challenges of the Baltimore region as a relatively wealthy metropolitan area with significant regional divides — between city and suburb, black and white, and rich and poor. This application was submitted on behalf of a newly-formed regional consortium: the Opportunity Collaborative.

The Opportunity Collaborative was a 30-member consortium convened by BMC that included both nongovernmental and governmental stakeholders (see Table 1 on page 10). The latter included representatives from each county in the region except Carroll County, which declined to participate. Other governmental representatives included universities and state-level agencies, such as the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, and two regional bodies: BMC and the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board. Nonprofit groups included a range of foundations, charities, advocacy groups, and community-based organizations. These nonprofits represented a broad range of interests such as housing, transportation, the environment, economic and community development, and the business community.

To draft the plan, the Opportunity Collaborative established a committee governance structure. BMC staffed the project and managed the SCI contract, but established a steering committee to lead the planning process (B. O'Malley, phone interview, August 5, 2016). The steering committee included BMC staff and representatives from Howard County, the University of Maryland, Morgan State University, the Annie

Table 1. Opportunity Collaborative Members

GOVERNMENT

City of Annapolis
 Anne Arundel County
 Baltimore City
 Baltimore County
 Baltimore Metropolitan Council
 Baltimore Regional Transportation Board
 Harford County
 Housing Commission of Anne Arundel County
 Howard County
 Maryland Department of Disabilities
 Maryland Department of Housing and
 Community Development
 Maryland Department of Planning
 Maryland Department of Transportation
 Morgan State University
 University of Maryland, National Center
 for Smart Growth

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Annie E. Casey Foundation
 Associated Black Charities
 Baltimore Integration Partnership
 Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc.
 Baltimore Regional Initiative Developing Genuine Equality
 Baltimore Workforce Funders Collaborative
 Central Maryland Transportation Alliance
 Citizens Planning & Housing Association, Inc.
 Community Development Network of Maryland
 The Coordinating Center
 Enterprise Community Partners
 Greater Baltimore Committee
 Innovative Housing Institute
 1000 Friends of Maryland
 Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition

Source: The Composition of the Opportunity Collaborative by Organizational Affiliation. (Opportunity Collaborative, 2015).

E. Casey Foundation, and several nonprofits including the Associated Black Charities, the Innovative Housing Institute, Baltimore Regional Initiative Developing Genuine Equality (BRIDGE), and the Citizen's Planning and Housing Association (CPHA). Scot Spencer, associate director of Advocacy and Influence at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Joshua Cohen, mayor of Annapolis, served as committee co-chairs. Mike Kelly was the lead staff person from BMC on the steering committee.

The steering committee established working groups to develop each major component of the plan. These included groups focused on housing, workforce development, transportation and plan implementation. The Nexus Committee encouraged collaboration and communication across the working groups (K. Sylvester, phone interview, August 15, 2016).

The housing, workforce development, and transportation groups included nonprofit and government stakeholders who collected and analyzed data and made recommendations for the final plan. The implementation working group was formed early to consider implementation strategies, but it

soon disbanded. Its dissolution was due in part to the departure of Joshua Cohen, then mayor of Annapolis, from his leadership role after he lost his re-election campaign in 2013. After his departure, no one stepped up to fill the gap and no further efforts were made to reconvene the committee (B. O'Malley, phone interview, August 5, 2016).

The committee structure seemed to serve the planning process well, though questions were raised about the Opportunity Collaborative's organization. While interviewees were generally satisfied with the coverage of the plan's goals in terms of housing and workforce development, some were critical of areas that were not given as much attention. Several individuals noted that transportation, though not ignored, did not receive as much attention as housing and workforce development and that environmental issues were almost completely absent from the plan. Some participants also lamented the creation of seemingly siloed working groups the SCI process was designed to bridge.

Generally, however, interviewees were satisfied with the composition of the Opportunity Collaborative and felt that it provided an open venue for diverse voices. Many participants noted that the effort to bring diverse nonprofit and government entities to the table was successful. Interviewees were particularly satisfied with the large number of participating parties. While regional, cross-governmental and nonprofit collaboration had occurred previously among smaller groups, for most participants this marked the first regional planning initiative with broad participation by diverse groups. A. Adar Ayira, project manager at the Associated Black Charities, noted that, during this early phase, committee leaders worked hard not to silence any voices.

A few interviewees thought that participation among certain groups was lacking, most notably elected officials and businesses. Though agency staff represented state and local governments, no elected officials served directly on committees, with the exception of Mayor Cohen. One interviewee was particularly frustrated by a lack of engagement by large employers, which he argued could have provided valuable input in the process (anonymous, phone interview, August 22, 2016).

Many agreed that managing a broad coalition of diverse regional stakeholders was difficult, but the process proceeded relatively smoothly over the three-year life of the grant. Spencer stressed that the bifurcation between government and nonprofits was one of the Collaborative's biggest obstacles. He likened the attempt to work together as analogous to mixing oil and vinegar — whereas government workers operate in a political environment and must be responsive to their elected leaders and diverse constituents, nonprofits represent a narrower set of interests.

Jessica Sorrell, program director at Enterprise Community Partners, summarized the view of many participants. She noted that there was occasional tension among Collaborative members because advocacy groups wanted more aggressive reforms than local governments were willing to support. She noted, however, that as time passed, these differences became better understood, allowing advocacy groups and local governments to work together more effectively.

Using Opportunity Mapping to Build the Plan

A critical part of the Baltimore planning process, and one that brought diverse working groups together, was opportunity mapping. Building on the use of opportunity mapping in the

Thompson case, the Collaborative created regional maps that demonstrated the links among housing, transportation, and workforce development in the region to issues of opportunity and equity (Baltimore Sustainable Communities Consortium, 2011).

The University of Maryland's NCSG led the opportunity mapping process. NCSG began by developing approximately 50 preliminary maps. These maps illustrated spatial patterns in housing, schools, transit, public safety, open space and employment in the region that it shared with the Nexus Committee (NCSG, 2013).

The Nexus Committee then established the Opportunity Mapping Advisory Panel (OMAP), which was charged with identifying the most critical measures of opportunity and developing composite opportunity maps. That group included about 70 members of the housing and workforce development committees and other regional experts (NCSG, 2013). It reviewed 165 maps over eight months to compose the plan's final opportunity maps (Figure 2), which were based on 92 opportunity indicators (NCSG, 2013).

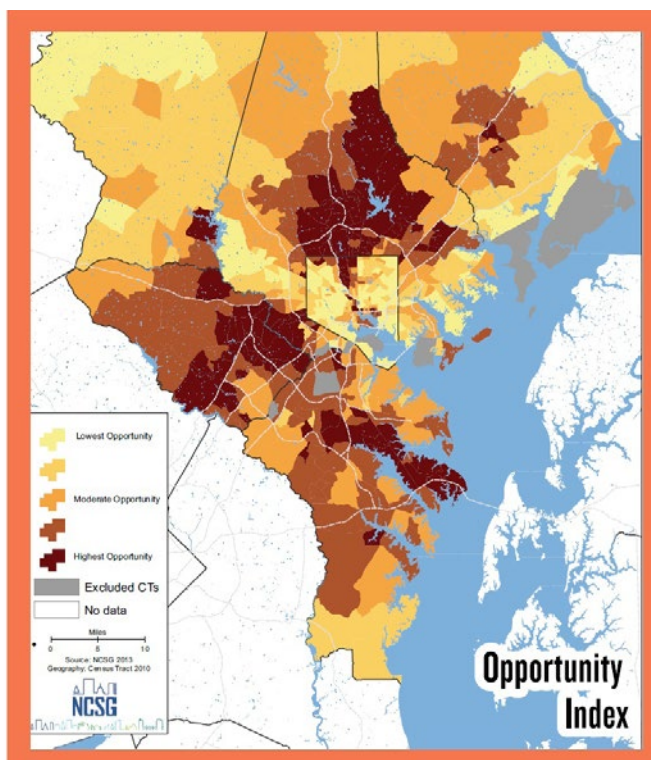


Figure 2. Final OMAP Composite Opportunity Index. Reproduced from the Opportunity Collaborative, 2014.

Interviewees held varying opinions about the usefulness and validity of the opportunity maps. Most thought the maps were useful in highlighting regional disparities. Many appreciated the inclusive process through which the indicators were developed.

Some, however, expressed frustration with the maps and mapping process. Dru Schmidt-Perkins, president and CEO of 1000 Friends of Maryland, for example, noted that many exurban areas depicted as high-opportunity areas were not necessarily good candidates for development. Kate Sylvester, assistant division chief at the State Highway Administration, added that individual, neighborhood-level factors that contribute to opportunity were obscured when indicators were combined into a single index. Similarly, Thomas Stosur, director of Baltimore City Planning, was skeptical of how Baltimore neighborhoods with hospitals and churches received relatively high opportunity scores when they had some of the most entrenched poverty in the city. Several others suggested that the process of developing the indicators was too time-consuming and burdensome with limited value, especially given the large number of indicators in the analysis.

There was also some disagreement about the value that the opportunity maps lent to plan content. Some interviewees noted that the maps were used in various working groups as policies and strategies were considered, especially in the housing group. Others were unsure as to how the opportunity maps influenced the final plan recommendations. Thomas Stosur, who served on the steering committee, noted that

there was no structure in place to utilize opportunity data to promote policy changes. Peter Conrad, former director of Local Assistance and Training at the Maryland Department of Planning, added that a detailed opportunity mapping planning process can often produce maps that are difficult for non-experts to understand, and therefore not particularly useful as a community engagement tool.

Some suggested, however, that the opportunity maps produced as part of the planning process have had usefulness beyond plan-making. For example, Spencer suggested that the transit-shed maps used in the opportunity mapping process were important for Amazon's new warehouse site selection in Southeast Baltimore. And, in Anne Arundel County, the most recent update to its consolidated housing plan incorporated opportunity-related data and recommendations on constructing housing in high-opportunity areas.

Outreach and Engagement Around the Plan

The opportunity maps were one of several tools that the Collaborative used to engage diverse stakeholders and community residents in the regional planning process. The Collaborative's goal was to reach one percent of the region's population, or about 26,000 people, through the engagement process (D. Pontious, phone interview, September 1, 2016). The SCI funding guidelines further specified that no less than 10 percent of the budget could be committed to activities that "deepen the engagement, participation, and governance of



Community Engagement Session.

populations traditionally marginalized in regional planning processes” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2011).

According to HUD, these populations included residents of public housing, immigrants, and racial and ethnic minorities, among others. To reach these goals, the Collaborative issued a request for proposal (RFP) and chose CPHA, a civic action organization in Baltimore with a long history of engagement with traditionally marginalized populations.

Outreach efforts began in April 2013, and included three rounds over the next year and a half. In the first round, CPHA invited community organizations to submit letters of interest to facilitate outreach about the plan. CPHA awarded these organizations small grants to enlist their assistance. Among other criteria, grantees were chosen based on their ability to reach one or more of HUD’s underrepresented populations and their existing activities where regional planning engagement could be incorporated. In total, CPHA chose 12 groups, including the Anne Arundel County Partnership for Children, Youth and Families; BRIDGE; CASA de Maryland; Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake; Project PLASE; United Workers; and Urban Alliance. CPHA also participated as one of the outreach groups.²

The first-round engagement effort included 60 meetings that directly engaged 3,197 people, and another 4,000 people online. The latter either signed up for the Collaborative’s listserv and/or interacted with its social media accounts. In direct outreach events, each organization engaged participants around the following questions: What does opportunity mean to you? What prevents you from being connected to opportunity? And how can we work together to get people and communities better connected to opportunity? The feedback received from these events was then synthesized by CPHA and presented to the Opportunity Collaborative committees.

The findings of the first round suggested that most participants believed that opportunity meant a chance for a better life, choices, options, or access to different aspects of opportunity. Participants felt transportation and a lack of affordable housing were particularly significant barriers to accessing opportunity. Many believed that community involvement and cooperation were among the most important factors for improving access to opportunity.

The second round of engagement mirrored the first, utilizing the same sub-grantee process, with many similar sub-grantee awardees. These groups directly engaged 2,415 people and 3,582 people online. In this round, engagement events were designed to garner feedback for incorporation into the regional plan. Participants were asked about their concerns regarding access to transportation, job availability and training, and housing access and affordability.

Participants identified their primary barriers to opportunity in public transit, job access, housing and income. Residents in outlying counties sought better access to public transportation, whereas residents in the city wanted better transit access to job centers in the suburbs. Participants consistently identified racial discrimination and bias against those with criminal records as major obstacles to employment. Many stated that jobs that pay enough to afford quality housing in good neighborhoods were hard to find (S. Holt, phone interview, August 12, 2016).

The third and final round of community engagement occurred immediately before the plan was made public in spring 2015. Eight community events were held across the region in five jurisdictions: three in Baltimore City, two in Baltimore County, and one each in Harford, Anne Arundel, and Howard Counties. Each event had a local sponsor responsible for bringing community members to the event, which resulted in approximately 189 attendees from diverse racial, economic and geographic backgrounds (S. Holt, phone interview, August 12, 2016). The events were led by CPHA and NCSG.

In the first half of each meeting, CPHA conducted an exercise called “Tic Tac Typology,” a game designed to explain the purpose of the regional plan while simultaneously collecting information from participants about their neighborhood’s problems and potential solutions. According to Steve Holt, CPHA’s project manager for outreach and engagement, they designed this game after a search for best practices in community engagement around issues of opportunity yielded few good examples. Given the difficulty in engaging residents around such an amorphous concept, CPHA looked for ways to make the concept speak to local concerns and issues in residents’ neighborhoods.

In the second half of the meeting, NCSG shared the opportunity mapping tool. They asked participants to explain how they defined opportunity in their neighborhood and facilitated a community conversation around residents’ responses.

2 Over the course of the process, the number of organizations decreased from 12 to eight because several organizations lacked the capacity to sustain long-term engagement, particularly as staff turned over (S. Holt, phone interview, August 12, 2016).

In all, CPHA and its partners directly engaged about 5,800 people in discussions about the RPSD, and thousands more online. Steve Holt, who was heavily involved in the process, noted that it is the engagement leader's job to present the problem or topic of discussion, then ensure time and a venue for those at meetings to talk about the problem and why it exists. Holt observed that CPHA was able to really get meetings going with this best-practice approach.

Though extensive, the engagement process did not reach its one percent goal. Interviewees were largely positive about the process of engagement, if not the integration of engagement into the plan, and many felt that CPHA's reliance on sub-grantees with established relationships in communities was an effective way to engage a diverse audience. Some also felt that the process generated valuable feedback about how residents of the region thought about opportunity and the barriers they faced in accessing it, especially in Baltimore City. They also believed it successfully met HUD's mandate to get underrepresented populations involved in the process.

Interviewees expressed frustration with the process, however. Holt indicated his disappointment with the geographic diversity of participants, noting that Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Anne Arundel County were well-represented, but residents in Howard and Harford Counties were harder to reach through CPHA's network of community-based groups. Time and budget constraints made establishing new relationships in these jurisdictions challenging. One interviewee suggested that CPHA was given an insufficient budget to fulfill the

Collaborative's ambitious plan of reaching 26,000 people across five counties and Baltimore City (anonymous, phone interview, August 8, 2016).

According to Martin O'Malley and many others, it is challenging to get people to engage with regional planning in meaningful ways: "The public has limited appetite for meetings about plans, especially when they are vague and conceptual. When it gets more concrete and people realize something is going to be built close to them, they get much more interested."

Further, the process itself had limitations. While it was designed to provide the Collaborative with more information about the ways that residents in the region conceptualized and accessed opportunity, the community workshops did not provide direct feedback on the plan's proposed strategies and policy recommendations. Several interviewees also noted that integrating community comments into the plan was difficult due to a lack of time and a clear process for doing so.

Many of the outreach efforts were conducted as the planning process was nearing its final stages; however, even if the sessions had been held earlier, no clear process was established to connect the community feedback to plan elements (T. Gwitira, phone interview, August 26, 2016). Regardless, the Opportunity Collaborative took an innovative approach to community engagement that leveraged the strengths of community organizations to engage populations usually left out of the planning process.



Bon Secours Chesapeake Apartments in southwest Baltimore.

The RPSD Outcomes and Assessment

Tragically, in April 2015, Baltimore was embroiled in a level of unrest not seen for decades. On the day of West Baltimore resident Freddie Gray's funeral – Gray died while in police custody – hundreds of protesters flooded the streets and a riot ensued. Over 200 people were arrested, businesses were looted, and buildings and vehicles set on fire. The governor declared a state of emergency and the National Guard was brought in to restore order.

Around that same time, a significant national study was released that ranked Baltimore last among 100 major U.S. metropolitan regions in terms of economic mobility for low-income children, especially black males (Chetty, Hendren, and Katz, 2016). As national attention was focused on racism and inequality in Baltimore, residents repeatedly told the media that they needed better access to affordable housing, transportation and jobs (C. Payne, phone interview, August 2, 2016).

The voices of these Baltimoreans mirrored the central tenets of the RPSD, which was released just after the riots. In this section, we describe the process that led to the creation of each element of the RPSD.

Major Elements of the Plan

Over the course of the planning period, the Opportunity Collaborative released three key work products: a housing plan, a workforce plan, and the opportunity maps. The central and final product was the RPSD. This 70-page plan details the opportunities and challenges in the region, the region's geography of opportunity and community involvement in the process. The plan also synthesizes the analyses and recommendations from separate subcommittees charged with developing strategies for housing, workforce development, and transportation.

The housing group conducted a detailed examination of data prepared by a housing consultant team whose members also attended the housing committee meetings. An important element of the housing committee's early work was the preparation and analysis of data that would later be incorporated into the region's Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA). The FHEA was a new HUD requirement that all SCI grantees were required to prepare to assess barriers to fair housing and access to opportunity. The FHEA requirement

was one of HUD's early attempts to "beta test" a fair housing planning process that would later be incorporated into HUD's new "affirmatively furthering fair housing" (AFFH) regulations. As part of the new AFFH regulations adopted in 2015, HUD released a nationwide AFFH data and mapping tool that makes available geospatial data similar to what was examined by SCI grantees.

The FHEA analysis revealed that the Baltimore region was growing and becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. While this diversity had produced vibrant multi-ethnic neighborhoods, it also showed that many of the region's neighborhoods were still trapped in historical patterns of racial segregation. The FHEA required the identification of racial and ethnic concentrations of poverty, which were defined as: majority nonwhite census tracts with poverty rates higher than the regional average. In the Baltimore region, these areas were concentrated in Baltimore City's most distressed neighborhoods.

In addition to the FHEA, the housing consultant team prepared data describing regional housing market trends and conducted a cluster analysis to identify distinct housing submarkets within the region. These analyses, when combined with the FHEA, led the housing committee to advocate for a submarket strategy with solutions tailored to different neighborhood conditions.

The final plan identifies strategies specific to four different neighborhood types, including high-opportunity areas, diverse communities, vulnerable communities, and highly challenged markets. The housing committee spent several meetings examining overlays between the FHEA, the submarket analysis, and the opportunity mapping data to arrive at a final submarket typology that both reflected distinct geographically-defined areas of housing need and were consistent with regional housing goals. The housing committee's work was

summarized in its final product, “Strong Communities, Strong Region: The Baltimore Regional Housing Plan and Fair Housing Equity Assessment.”

The workforce development group included representatives from each of the workforce investment boards in the Baltimore region, along with higher education, social service organizations, workforce development funders, workforce training providers, economic development stakeholders, transportation planners and others. Its final product, The Regional Workforce Development Plan, was based on several studies that explored the region’s workforce opportunities and challenges.

The first was the Baltimore Regional Talent Development Pipeline Study, which assessed the future demand for workers in the region by sector and their occupational characteristics. The second, Barriers to Employment Opportunity in the Baltimore Region, identified obstacles that kept low-skilled adults from finding jobs and advancing to careers that pay family-supporting wages. Based on a survey of over 1,000 unemployed residents in the region, the study found that a lack of transit access to jobs, a lack of skills and training, social networks and discrimination towards ex-offenders and minority residents were among the primary barriers facing unemployed residents.

A third study identified career pathways in key industry sectors. This study identified five career pathways in the region’s transportation and logistics sector that workers could follow to move from an entry-level position into a mid-skilled family-supporting career. The products of the workforce committee and its consultants were among the most highly regarded products of the planning effort. And because of their quality and lack of political sensitivity, these products were among the most aggressively publicized (anonymous, phone interview, September 2016).

The transportation subgroup produced no separate plans, but their work was later included in the RPSD. Kate Sylvester of the State Highway Administration noted that the lack of a stand-alone transportation plan was likely the result of time constraints. According to one member of the housing subcommittee, the emphasis on transportation also came from the growing recognition among those participating in the housing and workforce subcommittees that expanding

access to opportunity would not be possible without tackling transportation issues head-on.

Drawing upon the housing, workforce, and transportation plans, the RPSD provided detailed analysis of the region’s housing, workforce development, and transportation planning issues. In housing, this included a focus on issues of segregation and the area’s unmet need for housing in areas of opportunity. In workforce, it stressed key middle-skill job growth sectors and career pathways associated with those jobs. In transportation, it analyzed the nexus between major employment centers and public transportation, identifying 12 significant job centers that were found to lack adequate access to transportation.

These analyses are followed by goals in each of the areas and strategies to achieve them. Under housing, this included six objectives and subsequent strategies to address unmet housing needs and leverage housing to increase low-income residents’ access to opportunity. In workforce, this included strategies to mitigate barriers to employment and broaden workforce development efforts. For transportation, strategies focused on improving access to the region’s suburban job centers for low-income city residents. The plan also presented three “ambitious, but attainable goals” that aimed to bring together the housing, workforce and transportation plans by addressing regional disparities and improving opportunity through place-conscious approaches that were feasible, practical, and regional in scope (see Appendix, Figures 3-5).

The RPSD closed with strategies for moving the plan forward, including a possible implementation strategy. This strategy focuses on a spatially-oriented approach to implementation, and also held certain local or regional bodies accountable. It identified 11 potential corridors where “neighboring communities [can] plan together across jurisdictional lines to grow the region’s economic opportunities while also meeting the needs of individual jurisdictions and residents” (Opportunity Collaborative, 2015). According to the plan, this geography reflects where it is possible to achieve a range of interventions and investments to foster concrete outcomes.

RPSD Assessments

The plan was, in the words of many interviewees, a good plan – one that was the product of a long and collaborative

effort and clearly expressed the needs of the Baltimore region. Interviewees were particularly impressed with the workforce development plan, and they consistently identified it as a highlight of the RPSD. They also frequently noted that the level of collaboration on workforce development issues was unprecedented for the region.

The transportation plan did not receive marks as high as the workforce plan, in large part because of the way it was drafted. At the time of the SCI process, BMC was already engaged in a long-range planning process for regional transportation and thus placed a much narrower focus on transportation planning as part of the RPSD, with BMC playing a leading role (K. Sylvester, phone interview, August 15, 2016). Nonetheless, many who were familiar with the transportation plan believed that it made a valuable contribution to the RPSD, especially its focus on the connection between transportation access and workforce development.

Interviewees were also generally satisfied with the housing element of the plan. Most characterized the housing plan as aspirational. Policymakers noted its emphasis on the links between housing, segregation, poverty and areas of opportunity. The plan also highlighted the problems of dilapidated and abandoned housing in Baltimore City, which became especially relevant in the wake of the 2015 riots. Many also expressed satisfaction with the use of data, particularly when the plan went beyond typical housing market conditions to link housing to social policy, such as its emphasis on the shortage of accessible housing for those with disabilities.

In addition, the opportunity maps, which were reviewed by the housing group and integrated into the FHEA and housing submarket analysis, helped to demonstrate the connections between regional housing market disparities, regional transportation accessibility, and the location of economic opportunities. The emphasis on multi-sectoral policies is reflected in the housing plan's objectives and recommendations.

Perhaps more so than in any section of the plan, however, interviewees expressed frustration with the housing plan. Concerns varied, but were overwhelmingly related to the



Opportunity Collaborative's Baltimore Regional Plan for Sustainable Development launch event in June 2015.

strength of the recommendations. Some characterized them as watered down and not specific, with no metrics, timelines, or deliverables listed. Others stressed how the focus on constructing new housing in high-opportunity areas, though justified, could leave certain areas behind. For example, Erin Karpewicz, policy and development coordinator at Anne Arundel Community Development Services, Inc., noted that the plan's focus on housing in opportunity areas neglected places that have long needed funds for neighborhood preservation and revitalization. The latter was a critique often voiced by those with ties to Baltimore City, especially low-income neighborhoods in East and West Baltimore.

Barbara Samuels added that while affordable housing resources had long been directed to these neighborhoods, other resources like recreation centers, jobs, retail and business development and education that were beyond the purview of the housing plan were not.

Demonstration Grants

While the RPSD was broad and aspirational, the Opportunity Collaborative also tried to make a difference in the region through demonstration grants. These grants were given to local organizations working to make the region more sustainable by improving transportation, housing and workforce development (Opportunity Collaborative, 2015).

Sixteen grants totaling \$750,000 were awarded to 16

government and nongovernmental organizations in two rounds of funding. The awardees and their projects tended to focus on workforce development and transportation projects, and included a range of activities from internships for low-income youth to environmental cleanup (see Appendix, Table 3).

Interviewees had positive assessments of the demonstration grant process. Many said that the grants were effectively dispersed to organizations that could make a real change in their communities. Many also noted that the grants were an excellent way to engage nonprofits that might not otherwise have been involved in the work of the Collaborative. Others, however, noted that there were few linkages between the demonstration grants and the larger planning effort, thus it was unclear whether the demonstration grants helped to facilitate plan implementation.

Plan Implementation and Impact

The most challenging part of any planning process is often not creating the plan, but ensuring that its recommendations lead to action. For a plan as ambitious as the RPSD, this challenge is even more formidable because of the coordination, funding and leadership needed to make the recommendations a reality. Given that the plan was just completed in 2015, efforts around plan implementation are still in their early phases.

An important outgrowth of the Opportunity Collaborative was a new group, the Opportunity Coalition, which formed in early 2016 with the goal of ensuring the plan's implementation. Patrick Maier, executive director of the Innovative Housing Institute (IHI), founded the group, which continues to meet regularly.

The Coalition is led by a group of entry-level and mid-career leaders from local nonprofits known as Opportunity Fellows. These fellows represent organizations from across the region that began meeting during the final nine months of the planning process to build leadership and serve as community liaisons for post-plan implementation. The fellows were a unique outgrowth of the Baltimore region's SCI grant. No other recipient in the nation tackled the issue of plan implementation by funding and empowering local leaders (Opportunity Collaborative, 2015b).

After the plan was released, the fellows compiled their

recommendations into a white paper and many continued to work with IHI and other nonprofits through the Opportunity Coalition (Opportunity Collaborative, 2015b). With the Opportunity Collaborative having disbanded shortly after the release of the RPSD, the Coalition has played an important role in keeping the plan alive and pressing for change.

Another significant outgrowth of the plan was the collaborative process that led to the formation of new relationships important for moving the plan forward. For instance, the housing committee continues to meet monthly, well over a year after the completion of the plan with the support of BMC staff. Local public housing authorities (PHA) also continue to meet to discuss interjurisdictional housing issues such as HUD's reduction in fair market rents are used to determine subsidies for voucher holders (B. Samuels, phone interview, October 16, 2016).

Jessica Sorrell of Enterprise Community Partners noted that the planning process created a robust infrastructure for ongoing regional conversations about housing that did not exist previously. In fact, before the RPSD process began, several nonprofits in the region, including BRIDGE, IHI, and CPHA had been engaged in regional housing advocacy under the auspices of the Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign (BRHC). Since 2004, BRHC and its member groups have worked together on regional issues such as inclusionary zoning and fair housing. And while these organization each played a role in the Opportunity Collaborative, it also gave them the opportunity to connect with other nonprofits, such as Enterprise, to work more directly with local governments to press for change (B. Samuels, phone interview, October 16, 2016).

In fact, several interviewees noted the importance of relationships developed through this planning process. The Central Maryland Transportation Alliance (CMTA) formed a stronger relationship with BMC that continues to improve coordination and collaboration on issues of regional transit (B. O'Malley, phone interview, August 5, 2016). Representatives from the Associated Black Charities, 1,000 Friends of Maryland, and Howard County government also emphasized the importance of the relationships they built through the RPSD.

These collaborations led six Baltimore-area governments,

four local PHAs and BMC – all parties to the Opportunity Collaborative – to jointly submit a memorandum of understanding on a new regional Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH). The AFH is required by HUD under the July 2015 Fair Housing Rule. If this document is submitted as proposed, Baltimore will be one of the few regions in the country to take a regional approach to the AFH. The region has also made strides toward the creation of a regional, project-based voucher program, which represents a major step forward for the regional coordination of fair housing policy in the Baltimore area.

In late 2015, HUD awarded the Howard County Housing Commission a three-year grant to develop a regional, project-based voucher program. BMC and other PHAs in the region are working together to create 100 project-based vouchers in high-opportunity neighborhoods. The Opportunity Collaborative's housing work was crucial in getting this grant application to HUD (D. Pontious, phone interview, September 1, 2016).

Another important outcome was the creation of a housing policy coordinator position within BMC. This position was originally created to assist BMC in completing the 2012 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI) for the Baltimore Metropolitan Region, and later, the RPSD. HUD requires all recipients of HUD funds to prepare an AI, and Baltimore's AI is one of the few to be prepared on a regional basis.

During the completion of the RPSD, the housing policy coordinator became a permanent position at BMC. Housing policy, formerly addressed largely as a local issue in the Baltimore region, now has regional policy expertise and coordination, a key recommendation of the RPSD housing plan. "Staffing at the Baltimore Metropolitan Council has been invaluable for convening the Housing Committee and facilitating development of this Regional Housing Plan ... funding must be identified to continue this function if the promise of this Plan is to be realized" (Opportunity Collaborative, 2014). Interviewees across government and nonprofit organizations praised this as one of the plan's biggest victories. Additionally, the charter of BMC was expanded by the state legislature to call on the organization



Opportunity Fellow graduates with civic and community leaders from the Baltimore region.

to "facilitate coordination and collaboration among local jurisdictions ... in areas that include regional transportation, housing, workforce development, and renewable energy products and usage" (Senate Bill 547).

While efforts toward implementation are ongoing and much progress has been made, some interviewees also expressed frustration with implementation to date. Chief among these were concerns regarding the lack of a clear plan for action, funding for implementation, and BMC's lack of authority to implement the plan's key recommendations. Some considered the dissolution of the Opportunity Collaborative after the RPSD release a failure of the process. With the dissolution of the Collaborative, it was unclear how the RPSD would be monitored, updated and amended over time. Some attributed a lack of implementation to the SCI grant structure, which provided no funding for implementation, while others felt that this issue should have been more carefully addressed within the planning process or plan itself. One interviewee suggested that BMC should have taken leadership on the implementation process, while others argued there should have at least been a structure in place for regional cooperation after the plan's creation.

Others critiqued what they perceived as a lack of progress on the political front. The majority of RPSD recommendations require the support of local government – either politically or financially – but some felt that the process lacked political buy-in. However, several noted that elected leaders did not

have a seat at the table from the outset. As a result, they had little impetus to push for implementation. Many suggested that the lack of political leadership was compounded by county-level elections, which in 2014, brought into office more conservative executives in Anne Arundel, Harford and Howard Counties. Many had hoped that BMC's Board of Directors, which is made up of county executives and other local officials, would champion the plan's implementation, but had yet to see this happen. BMC itself serves only in an advisory capacity to county governments, but without their support, it is unable to implement plan recommendations.

Political leadership was also lacking at the state level. For instance, Maryland's newly-elected governor, Larry Hogan, canceled Baltimore's flagship transportation project, the \$900 million Red Line light-rail, arguing that it was "not the best way to bring jobs into the city" (Dresser and Broadwater, 2015). This project was deep into the final planning stages and had strong support from community groups and transportation planning agencies. Its cancellation in June 2015, the very same month the RPSD was launched, signaled a shift in state-level investment priorities away from Baltimore City and County and from public transportation projects to more rural and exurban projects.

Another area of concern was the media coverage of the Opportunity Collaborative and RPSD. While some interviewees thought the media coverage was ample and even exceeded their expectations, others thought the coverage, especially during the planning process, left much to be desired and that more progress on implementation could have been made with a more widely-publicized planning process.

In our analysis of media coverage of the Opportunity Collaborative and the RPSD, we found 19 items with a focus on the Collaborative or its actions.³ Ten of these 19 were not news articles, but press releases about planning events and milestones. After the plan's release, the *Baltimore Sun* published two articles on the plan. We located another 27 articles that referenced the Opportunity Collaborative or the RPSD, but in which neither was the focus. These largely referenced the Collaborative's work to emphasize the importance of issues

such as the intersection of transportation and jobs, housing or regional planning in the Baltimore region. The media strategy of the Opportunity Collaborative reflected the political sensitivities surrounding issues of equity, race and opportunity in the region; leaders of the Collaborative consciously bypassed controversy by avoiding a large, coordinated press and public outreach strategy.

The Future of the RPSD

Interviewees were, on the whole, cautiously optimistic about the future of the RPSD. Many were positive about the housing, workforce and transportation plans, noting that local governments and organizations can use them to continuously evaluate problems and create solutions within their respective realms. Others saw the work as having just begun. They noted the important role of those in the advocacy community to continue to push for change, and for local government agencies to pick up the mantle in their own jurisdictions. Given a plan as lofty and far-reaching as the RPSD, several participants noted that it will take time to see measurable results.

Nearly all interviewees indicated that the path to a more equitable and inclusive region as envisioned by the RPSD still has many hurdles ahead. For example, many pointed to the failure of the source-of-income discrimination bill (also known as the HOME Act) in Baltimore County in the summer of 2016. The measure was introduced by County Executive Kamenetz, as required by the settlement of the Baltimore County fair housing case, but it was defeated by a 6-to-1 vote in the Baltimore County Council. Advocates argued that the measure was necessary due to provisions in the Housing Choice Voucher Program that do not require landlords to participate and thus, often lead to voucher recipients being denied housing. Opponents argued that requiring landlords to participate in the voucher program would place an unfair administrative burden on these landlords, particularly those operating on thin economic margins.

Despite the RPSD's goal of getting the measure passed and the aggressive advocacy of groups involved in the Opportunity Collaborative, the HOME Act was soundly defeated.

³ This included searches in Google News, LexisNexis, and the Opportunity Collaborative website's News and Media section. Search terms included "Baltimore Regional Plan for Sustainable Development," "Opportunity Collaborative," "Baltimore Opportunity Collaborative," "Baltimore Sustainable Community Initiative," "Baltimore Sustainable Community Initiative Grant," "Baltimore RPSD" and "Baltimore SCI."

Lessons from Baltimore for Building Equitable, Opportunity-Rich Regions

While the Baltimore experience is unique in many respects, it is quite common in others. Many metropolitan regions across the U.S. share similar histories of racial and economic segregation, deindustrialization, and a fragmented metropolitan region in which opportunity is unevenly distributed. The insights about Baltimore's regional planning process hold important lessons for Baltimore, as well as other metropolitan areas committed to regional equity planning efforts on the metropolitan scale. The six most prominent lessons learned are outlined below.

1. Regional planning requires the engagement of a broad and diverse set of stakeholders that is difficult to sustain.

One of the most positive and widely-shared perspectives among interviewees was the ability of the regional planning process to foster strong relationships among civic, nonprofit and government stakeholders. In this sense, the Opportunity Collaborative was an undeniable success. Baltimore has a diverse array of neighborhood groups, faith-based associations and advocacy organizations. While several of these organizations had formed issue-specific coalitions in the past, the regional planning effort was the first to engage such a broad array of stakeholders working side by side with government staff on regional issues. Without the cooperation and engagement of community-based groups prior to the awarding of the SCL grant, Baltimore's planning effort would never have gotten off the ground. Conversely, without funding and the regional platform created by the SCL grant process, the cooperation would not have been taken to the next level to engage across sectors and municipalities with a distinct focus on equity and opportunity.

Though collaboration during the planning process was abundant and productive, lasting partnerships have been more difficult to maintain. When the plan was released and the funding exhausted, collaboration waned. However, it has not ended — as is illustrated by the ongoing meetings of the housing group and public housing authorities.

In the absence of funding for implementation and with a lack of commitment from elected officials at the local, regional and state levels, collaboration across sectors and between community-based organizations and government stakeholders has stalled. Further, while the regional partnership that was built was diverse, it was not diverse enough. Opportunity

Collaborative participants were mostly based within the City of Baltimore, lacked representation from at least one suburban county, and failed to bring key political and business stakeholders to the table early on. With the absence of a metropolitan planning authority with the power to implement regional plans, such buy-in among diverse multi-sector actors is critical early on and throughout the process.

2. Opportunity data and maps can provide a foundation for engaged regional equity planning, but must not overlook neighborhood-level issues.

Opportunity maps in the U.S. were first developed to redress fair housing issues, but have since become a useful tool for community-based groups, local governments and metropolitan planning organizations to advance equitable development plans locally and regionally. With the Obama Administration's mandate to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing, which requires local governments to prepare Fair Housing Equity Assessments, such tools are becoming more useful in planning and decision-making. The Baltimore experience demonstrated that opportunity maps and the processes that produce them can be important tools in this effort.

Opportunity maps visually illustrated how opportunity was unevenly distributed across the region and helped to make the case that regional collaboration was needed to promote greater access to opportunity for low-income residents. They were particularly useful in making the case for workforce development in Baltimore City, new investments in affordable housing in high-opportunity suburbs, and public transportation that connects city residents with suburban jobs. To a lesser extent, these maps were important in informing local decision-making beyond the plan, including decisions regarding economic development and local housing planning.

As useful as the opportunity maps were at the regional scale, they were less well-suited for decision-making about neighborhood-level community investment. Opportunity analyses based on regional benchmarks can distort or omit important neighborhood issues, especially in disadvantaged communities. As a result, there remain concerns that Baltimore's opportunity maps could serve to direct affordable housing to high-opportunity areas, while failing to direct other investments to low-opportunity neighborhoods, though both are sorely needed. The process underlines how critical it is that place-based investments not be seen as a trade-off for people-based investments that focus on moving to opportunity. Opportunity or equity-related data needs to be made available to communities of various scales to be useful in addressing the many challenges they face in improving their well-being, whether in their existing neighborhoods or in new ones.

A further challenge in constructing opportunity maps that are useful to regional planning — and to the work of both local governments and community-based organizations — is the time and engagement process needed to make the data relevant to diverse stakeholders. Creating opportunity mapping indicators in an engaged manner can be time-consuming, given the volume of data that can potentially be integrated into opportunity indices. Further, the final maps can be too abstract or complicated for many to use or interpret without prior training, education, and an awareness of their strengths and limitations.

While the creation of opportunity mapping indicators and data should engage broad stakeholders in the process, it should do so with specific goals in mind about the value of stakeholder feedback in the process at different phases of the process and how to make the tool most relevant to key audiences and key questions. One of the main values of opportunity maps is their ability to convey the landscape of opportunity in a region graphically and simply, which can help make the case for interventions and planning strategies.

In an effort to create complicated indicators that reflect the particularities of a region, the central message and power of opportunity maps should not be lost. At the same time, the process is limited by using simplified indicators to convey complex realities. Current opportunity mapping practices are not well-suited to showing the complexity of place-specific challenges,

or the ways in which residents think about or experience opportunity. They are one of many tools that communities need to make the case for regional equity and to engage diverse communities in conversations about how to change it.

3. Underserved communities can be effectively engaged through community-based partnerships, but need to be meaningfully engaged and affect planning outcomes.

Given the plan's focus on equity and opportunity, it was especially important for the Opportunity Collaborative to reach disadvantaged groups who are often underrepresented in planning processes. It did so effectively by engaging established, community-based organizations that had worked in various neighborhoods for a long time and had established a rapport with residents and earned their trust. This strategy worked well in getting traditionally underrepresented groups to the planning table.

Finding ways to engage diverse communities in the regional planning process, however, proved more challenging. In community workshops, residents were asked to provide feedback about the ways in which they experienced opportunity in their neighborhoods and the barriers they faced in accessing opportunity around the region. Such conversations were often challenged by the lack of a shared definition of opportunity and data on regional equity that was not meaningful in specific neighborhood contexts. With a lack of established tools for effective regional engagement around issues of opportunity and equity, CPHA was forced to create their own tools to help communities make sense of these complex and abstract ideas in meaningful ways. This is a critical arena for new research and fresh thinking about effective community engagement.

While the effort to reach disadvantaged communities was a notable success in Baltimore, the process failed to meet its larger outreach goals, in part due to the lack of a coordinated communication strategy. Although the goal of reaching one percent of the region's population was an ambitious target that would have required a large amount of funding and time to accomplish, the process could have been helped by a more clearly defined public relations and outreach campaign. While some media attention was given to the process and the final plan, a more thoughtful media campaign would have been useful for creating engagement and buy-in for the plan across the region.

Finally, community outreach and engagement must happen early in the process to allow time to incorporate community input into the plan. Meaningful engagement also requires a structure and process for integrating community feedback into the plan. Given that the outreach process began late and had such ambitious goals, there was little time to digest the diverse — and often conflicting — concerns expressed by different groups. Further, there was no established process for doing so. Community planning is a process of trust-building. It requires not only the engagement of broad constituencies with a stake in plan outcomes, but also that their voices be reflected in the final documents to ensure a shared interest in pushing for plan implementation.

4. Regional plans must work across sectors and begin with implementation in mind.

The Baltimore RPSD process engaged a broad and diverse set of stakeholders, focused on a key set of issues related to regional equity, and produced thoughtful and innovative analysis with an ambitious set of goals. However, the plan was more siloed along issue areas than the Opportunity Collaborative architects originally envisioned and has not moved toward implementation as quickly as many had hoped.

Because the challenges of cross-sectoral planning and implementation are not unique to Baltimore's effort, the structure of the Opportunity Collaborative was designed to address these critical issues. However, the early dissolution of the Nexus and Implementation Committees derailed these efforts and led to the production of relatively disparate plans without specific action items, organizations responsible for taking on such actions, and a timeline for getting them done. Once the plan was released and the Opportunity Collaborative disbanded, there was no organization responsible for implementation. Without the structure that the Collaborative had provided and the funding of the SCI grant, implementation has been slow to progress. Although groups like the Opportunity Coalition have stepped in to fill the gap and continue to push for implementation, without a clear list of action items, it is difficult to assess how implementation is progressing, where additional work is needed, and how to measure the plan's impact.

For regional plans to be implemented, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) such as the BMC have a critical role to play. MPOs often lack the tools to compel local municipalities to comply with regional planning efforts and rely on the

voluntary efforts of local municipalities. However, regional plans can anticipate these political challenges and create plans with both carrots and sticks. They can get political buy-in early on and push for policies that give MPOs some authority to shepherd plans through implementation.

The planning process should not just be about generating great ideas, but also the political will and the tools needed to make them a reality. In Baltimore, progress continues to be made both because BMC is playing a more significant role and because the ground swell of activism from community-based organizations continues to hold BMC and local governments accountable.

5. New tools are helping to make the case for regional housing planning, but substantive regional housing policy changes take time and strong coalitions.

The Baltimore planning process offers several lessons for regional housing planning and policy. Importantly, the FHEA required by HUD placed the issues of fair housing, regional housing inequality, and disparities in access to opportunity front and center in regional planning. Too often, fair housing policy is divorced from regional planning processes with disastrous effects for low-income communities. Baltimore's housing plan demonstrates that the requirement for municipalities to make use of fair housing data in their planning process can lead to more thoughtful plans that have an equity lens at their core. The regional project-based voucher program is a great example of the power of opportunity and fair housing analysis to push forward new housing policies and inform the efforts of community-based organization and others.

Housing has long been among the most difficult issues to address at the regional level. Local land use regulations have and continue to perpetuate exclusionary policies that shape highly unequal housing patterns and reinforce racial and economic segregation. Despite clear evidence of progress, the Baltimore plan does not bind local governments or stakeholder organizations to make the difficult choices needed to implement many of its recommendations. The ongoing struggles involved in moving the plan from strategy to action without accountability was evident in the outcome of the Baltimore County HOME Act. Even with aggressive advocacy efforts by several members of the Opportunity Coalition, the bill was defeated. The coalition that emerged around the issue, however, continues to build momentum and strength as it has pushed the issue forward at the county and state levels.

In the absence of MPOs with the authority to create and implement regional housing policy and planning, the challenge of creating regional housing policies with teeth will continue to rely on the strong organizing efforts of grassroots community-based organizations with the data to help them make the case to elected officials, and bold leadership from the top of local and regional institutions. BMC's establishment of a full-time housing position is a promising step in the right direction. However, if like most MPOs, BMC only collects data on housing inequalities and fails to develop a political strategy to push its more privileged municipalities to act, the region will continue to make slow progress on the issue.

6. Stakeholders must build durable institutional capacity at the regional level and find ways to influence plans, regulations, investments and policies at the local level.

The HUD sustainable communities planning grants were one-time grants to regional coalitions focused on preparing regional sustainability plans. In Baltimore, the Opportunity Collaborative created an innovative plan that focused on issues of equity and opportunity. But it has yet to make much progress on implementing its recommendations, in part because its MPO lacks the resources, authority and, to some extent, the will to do so. With regard to issues of transportation and the environment, many MPOs have some of those attributes. However, only a few metropolitan areas maintain regional governments with an interest and capacity to engage in issues of housing, economic development and social equity.

In Baltimore, the Opportunity Collaborative helped push BMC to expand its focus on issues of regional housing. However, community-based and advocacy organizations must have the capacity to keep up the fight. In other metropolitan areas, influential private and nonprofit organizations have been critical to pushing regional housing agendas forward, often with the support of local philanthropy. Baltimore is not yet among those metropolitan areas. With a lack of political will from the top, philanthropies and local community advocates play an even more important role. The ongoing meeting of the housing group, which includes community-based organizations and local philanthropies is an important step toward continuing to make slow but steady progress.

In the absence of regional authority or capacity, progress toward implementation will need to take place where the authority to make critical decisions regarding issues of housing, equity and opportunity lies: at the local level. Regional coalitions are important for bringing pressure to bear on policies, investments and plans at the local level. In fragmented and segregated regions like Baltimore, many community-based organizations that work on issues of equity and opportunity focus on inner-city issues, but lack the capacity to sustain the pressure necessary to open up high-opportunity neighborhoods, which are often located in the suburbs. Building regional coalitions that combine their resources and expertise to put pressure on wealthier counties and municipalities to act is imperative. The experience with the HOME Act in Baltimore County suggests it will not be easy, but this strategy holds the greatest promise in an era of diminishing support for regional planning.



Miller's Court in Baltimore's Remington neighborhood.

An Equitable Future for Baltimore?

The Opportunity Collaborative was a multi-year, multi-million dollar effort to develop coordinated strategies to address the growing economic and social disparities that pose a challenge to the long-term sustainability and health of the greater Baltimore region (Opportunity Collaborative, 2015). The evolution of these economic and social disparities can be traced to decades of ongoing regional segregation, institutional racism and discrimination, and public policy. While history has shown how entrenched these patterns are and how difficult they are to change, the SCI grant brought diverse stakeholders in the Baltimore region together in an unprecedented way for the purpose of developing coordinated strategies to address these disparities.

The RPSD suggests a number of feasible paths forward, but implementation of the plan will require the will of local jurisdictions, either in coordination with their neighbors or alone. Significant shifts in the landscape of regional opportunity in Baltimore will require political buy-in from all parts of the region married with on-the-ground efforts of nonprofits, community leaders and others to educate their constituents about the importance of the plan and hold their elected leaders accountable.

The progress thus far offers reason for optimism. The SCI process has shown that leaders from across government, nonprofits, and the community in the Baltimore region are passionate about reducing regional inequality. The momentum built during the regional planning process has slowed but continues to carry forward through the efforts of the Opportunity Coalition, BMC, and in the minds and actions of many who sat and worked together at the planning table.



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Appendix

Table 2. Total Number of Public Housing Units in Baltimore Region Jurisdictions, 2010

| | Total Public Housing Authority Units | Total Households on Waiting List | Extremely Low Income | Minority | Disabled |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Anne Arundel County | 1,026 | 4,192 | 3,853 | 3,044 | 341 |
| City of Baltimore | 10,322 | 15,193 | 14,463 | 14,550 | 3,232 |
| Havre de Grace | 60 | 353 | 201 | 257 | 20 |
| Howard County | 50 | 348 | 284 | 304 | 82 |
| Total | 11,458 | 20,086 | 18,801 | 18,155 | 3,675 |

Reproduced from Mullin & Lonergan Associates (2012).

Table 3. Demonstration Grant Awardees and Projects

| Demonstration Grants | Amount | Summary |
|--|----------|---|
| City of Aberdeen | \$10,500 | Drafting of zoning code amendments and review requirements for transit-oriented development area |
| Anne Arundel County Partnership for Children, Youth & Families | \$57,856 | Workforce training and employment program for public housing residences |
| Baltimore City Department of Transportation | \$46,000 | Market analysis, economic feasibility analysis and stakeholder engagement for West Baltimore MARC station |
| Baltimore Community Foundation/Blue Water Baltimore | \$46,000 | Community engagement and neighborhood cleanup projects to reduce pollution in Baltimore City |
| Central Baltimore Partnership | \$35,000 | Homewood Community Partners Initiative Implementation |
| Central Maryland Transportation Alliance | \$50,000 | Analyze and prioritize public transportation service in targeted employment centers |
| Howard County Office of Transportation | \$55,103 | Evaluation of best practices for providing efficient and effective sustainable transportation from affordable housing communities to employment centers |
| Community Development Network of Maryland | \$63,750 | Creation of a public relations campaign called "Consider the Person" to change negative perceptions of Section 8 voucher recipients |
| American Visionary Arts Museum | \$25,000 | Partial support of a workforce training program to connect troubled youth with job and life skills |
| Belair-Edison Neighborhood, Inc. | \$54,223 | Design and marketing of a unified marketing brand for a distressed community through the partnership of government, community association, nonprofit organizations, business owners and residents |
| Blue Water Baltimore | \$43,623 | An education and ambassador program to reduce pollution and generate citizen awareness and engagement |
| Light House | \$45,000 | Early funding for a social enterprise catering company that provides supplemental employment opportunities to graduates of Light House's culinary training program |
| Urban Alliance | \$37,000 | Creation of a college internship program, including case management services |
| BWI Business Partnership | \$60,000 | Implementation of new transportation choices for the under-employed and job-ready in Baltimore City to fill jobs in the BWI Airport district |
| Central Maryland Transportation Alliance | \$50,000 | Analysis of alternative transit solutions to reduce turnover at a suburban employment center |
| Job Opportunities Task Force | \$65,000 | Establishment of a skills training program that leads to family-supporting jobs on Baltimore City's westside |

Reproduced from Opportunity Collaborative (2015).

Table 4. Summary of RPSD Goals, Strategies and Action Items

| Goal | Strategies | Action Items |
|--|--|--|
| Grow regional economic opportunities and competitiveness | Retain, attract and incubate businesses in the Baltimore region that create mid-skilled jobs that pay a family-supporting wage | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Partner with anchor institutions and employers in key industries to support job growth, especially for disadvantaged populations 2) Leverage industry-led partnerships to attract more businesses that offer career laddering and advancement opportunities |
| | Prepare workers for mid-skilled jobs that pay a family-supporting wage | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Partner with workforce training providers and employers to develop career pathway training programs 2) Increase the number of industry-led partnerships for workforce development 3) Improve career readiness for middle and high school students 4) Expand adult basic education, ESOL and GED prep courses |
| Improve transportation access to career, training and educational opportunities | Improve transit service to connect workers with jobs and training opportunities in suburban job centers | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Enhance public transit services that connect low-income neighborhoods and residential growth areas to job centers 2) Build strong bike and pedestrian connections between public transit stops and employment centers 3) Leverage transportation infrastructure to revitalize housing, employment and retail |
| | Increase transportation options to jobs and education | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Promote vanpooling, shuttle and ridesharing programs to and from jobs 2) Support programs that give workers affordable access to cars |
| Close the opportunity gap by increasing the supply of housing attainable to all income levels of the region's workforce | Build a mix of housing choices and job opportunities near each other | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Preserve, revitalize and create affordable and accessible housing near job centers 2) Create and maintain high-quality neighborhood infrastructure and healthy environmental conditions 3) Focus job and housing development near existing and planned transit nodes |
| | Coordinate state and local neighborhood revitalization with workforce development efforts | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Target workforce development efforts to people in assisted housing 2) Ensure that neighborhood revitalization strategies are comprehensive and integrated with workforce programs 3) Increase homeownership counseling and assistance as part of revitalization efforts 4) Increase counseling, asset-building and mobility assistance for families using vouchers |

Figure 3. Housing Plan Goals and Strategies

1. Address unmet housing needs

for 70,000 low-income households, including 14,000 that include a person with an ambulatory impairment, to increase opportunity and advance fair housing through local inclusionary zoning, providing affordable/accessible housing at transit-oriented development sites and on surplus public land, creating housing funds, enforcing fair housing laws, coordinating among public housing agencies, and prohibiting discrimination based on the home-seeker's source of income.

2. Sustain the region's diverse communities

by promoting cross-cultural competency (the ability to engage with and understand people from different cultures) marketing and celebrating diverse neighborhoods, maintaining and creating diverse high-quality infrastructure, preventing foreclosures, and piloting the type of intentional integration strategy that has been successful in such communities as Oak Park, Illinois.

3. Bolster vulnerable communities

by promoting homeownership and preventing foreclosure, preserving and revitalizing existing affordable housing, maintaining and creating high-quality infrastructure, convening local housing and school officials (given key role of schools in neighborhood attractiveness), strengthening partner neighborhood-based organizations, and coordinating state and local revitalization efforts.

4. Bolster opportunity for people in highly challenged markets

using transformative investments that leverage the private market, assisting families who wish to move to higher-opportunity areas, developing interim plans for areas waiting for transformative investment, maintaining and creating high-quality infrastructure in coordination with redevelopment and targeted investment areas, and leveraging transit investments such as the Red Line.

5. Connect housing efforts to transportation and workforce development

by improving transit service to job centers, supporting alternative transportation efforts, maximizing asset-building efforts for people living in subsidized housing, and including affordable housing near transit.

6. Support plan implementation through continued convening of the housing committee,

with staff support from the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, integrating Regional Housing Plan elements into existing state and local plans, developing metrics to track progress, and continuing to integrate housing with workforce development and transportation.

Figure 4. Workforce Plan Strategies

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>1. Create more industry-led partnerships for workforce development</p> <p>Implement industry-led sector strategies for workforce development and offer a broader menu of pathways into family-supporting careers. Increase the competitiveness of industry sectors with effective training and stackable, industry-valued credentials that lead to jobs with family-sustaining wages and benefits.</p> | <p>2. Establish stronger basic skills, ABE, ESL and post-secondary education</p> <p>Increase the availability, awareness and completion of Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, and GED preparation courses and develop continuing pathways into skills training and higher education. Such education is needed to help many of the region's low-skilled adults who lack basic reading and math skills, often making them the hardest to employ.</p> | <p>3. Improve job-focused transportation and create job-accessible housing.</p> <p>Improve transportation access and connections between low-income neighborhoods and high-growth job centers; align affordable housing and job centers to boost economic opportunities for lower-skilled workers.</p> |
| <p>4. Take steps to undo structural racism</p> <p>Eliminate policies, practices, and institutional cultures that promote and support structural racism and implicit biases against people of color. Work to change societal cultures that promote and support discrimination, which creates chronic barriers to opportunity for people of color.</p> | <p>5. Provide additional resources for people with criminal records</p> <p>With about one in five job seekers in the Baltimore region reporting a criminal record that is a barrier to employment, we must provide more workforce development pathways to help them. Additionally, we should reduce the number of individuals entering the criminal justice system by addressing the factors that lead to crime and create policies to eliminate hiring biases against ex-offenders.</p> | <p>6. Expand resources</p> <p>Increase resources available to industry and workforce development organizations, expand technical assistance to small businesses, and add new services to help workers with multiple barriers to employment. While trends show that a growing number of Baltimore region residents are falling into poverty, the resources that are available to help workers overcome barriers to employment opportunity are declining.</p> |

Figure 5. Transportation Plan Strategies

1. Research and implement a more comprehensive transit network

While the region is home to an extensive multi-modal transit network, the core system has gaps and often fails to coordinate service with locally operated transit systems, such as Central Maryland Regional Transit and Harford Transit, in the region. The service network provides good access to downtown Baltimore but does not contain sufficient circumferential and radial lines to provide efficient access to other employment centers.

2. Leverage existing transit hubs to shorten commutes and increase access to job centers

By focusing on more efficient transfers and stronger connections at transit hubs and employment centers, the region's transit network could provide an increased level of service without an increase in cost. Specifically, a stronger emphasis on intermodal transit hubs would foster improved regional access.

3. Promote family-supporting job growth near transit and in areas accessible to mid-skill workers

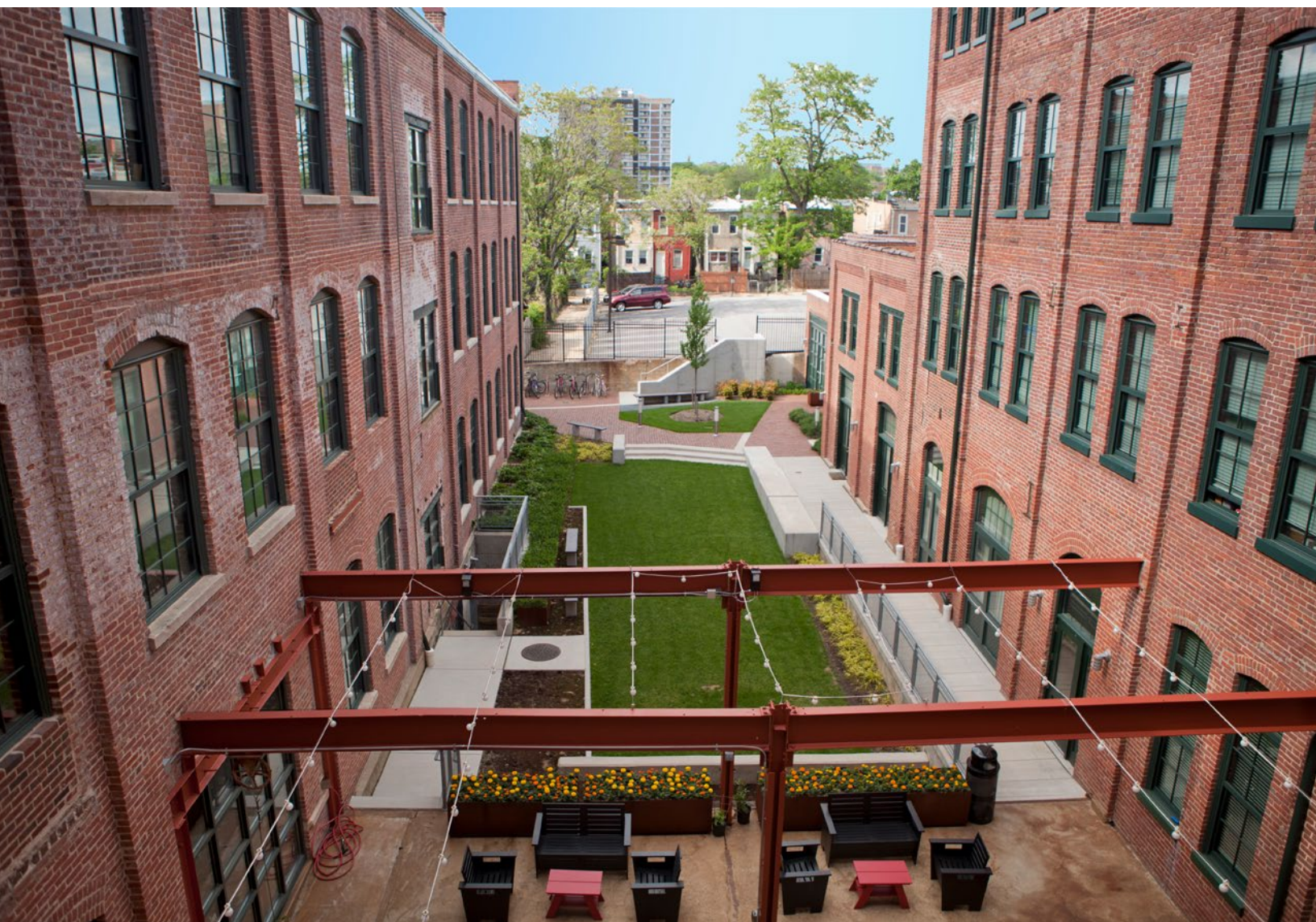
Mid-skill workers generally use mass transit more often than the general population. The region should explore marketing transit access and create incentives for business to locate near high-volume transit hubs. This recommendation should be a significant consideration in the region's comprehensive transit-oriented development strategy.

4. Increase the availability of industry-led transit programs and address immediate needs through targeted vehicle access programs

Maximize the use of private sector transit benefits to promote employee use of public transportation. Additionally, the region can provide technical assistance to industry partnerships exploring alternative commuting models, and market the benefits of transit to work sites and provide a guaranteed ride home to transit commuters in the event of an emergency. While increased transit ridership is a cost-effective and environmentally friendly way to connect workers to jobs, in some cases, the most immediate solution to reducing barriers to mid-skill workers is to increase car access. Successful models for expanding vehicle access or ownership are targeted toward workers with specific employment opportunities and provide support to help manage the full cost burden of using and maintaining a vehicle.

5. Focus on "last mile" connections to job centers, including bicycle and pedestrian access

Bridging the "last mile" from transit lines to job locations often presents the greatest hurdle for transit commuters. These issues could be addressed by providing improved pedestrian and bicycle access, better integration of transit services, and transit-friendly site design around commercial development. Additionally, the region should encourage "complete street" design and prioritize bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure near job centers.



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