

Sustainable West Baltimore: The Power of Transit and Place to Transform a Community

A. Rating Factors

b. *In Responding to the First and Second Rating Factor.* (Attachment to SF-424). A TIGER II Planning Grant and HUD Community Challenge Grant application must include information required for DOT and HUD to assess each of the rating factors specified in Section III (Application Review and Rating Factors). Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate the responsiveness of a project to any and all of the rating factors with the most relevant information that applicants can provide, regardless of whether such information has been specifically requested, or identified, in this notice.

In order to fulfill the requirements of the **first rating factor**, an applicant must:

(1) Submit a narrative describing how the applicant will use the funding sought to achieve its desired outcomes and how the desired outcomes support the six Livability Principles. The narrative should also state the problems or barriers the project seeks to address, why they are an impediment to promoting a more sustainable future for the applicant community, and the outcomes the project seeks to achieve.

1. Purpose and Outcomes

In 2008, the Baltimore City Planning Commission adopted the West Baltimore MARC Transit-Centered Community Development Strategy. The Strategy represents a long-term and collaborative relationship between government agencies and residents of West Baltimore in their efforts to rebuild the West Baltimore MARC station area. The Strategy reflects the community's needs and expresses a vision for the future of the area based on community input received in 2006 and 2007 and provides recommendations for the stakeholders involved to help achieve desired outcomes. The Strategy also includes phasing recommendations to achieve large-scale and small-scale development over time, and, more importantly, to transition West Baltimore into a healthy, stable neighborhood for existing and future residents.

Community “Boundaries”

The West Baltimore MARC TOD area is roughly a half-mile circle around the station. This distance was chosen because it represents a 10-minute walk from the furthest point, which is considered the longest and furthest time and distance most people will walk to transit. The study area boundary provides a guide for focusing planning efforts. However, it is recognized that community improvements are needed beyond the MARC station's sphere of influence. Even though the Strategy lays out land use alternatives for the study area, many of the recommended process and implementation tools can be applied anywhere.

Neighborhoods within the Study Area

Baltimore is a city of neighborhoods, and West Baltimore is no different. Within the study area there are ten neighborhoods: Boyd Booth, Bridgeview/Greenlawn, Evergreen Lawn, Fayette Street Outreach, Franklin Square, Harlem Park/Lafayette Square, Midtown Edmondson, Mosher, Rosemont Homeowners and Tenants, and Shipley Hill. (Some neighborhoods are fully encompassed in the study areas; other neighborhoods have only pieces of their organization within the study area.)

1. Community Need

West Baltimore underwent dramatic changes in the second half of the 20th century. In the 1940s and 1950s, at its peak size, the area was a vibrant neighborhood full of rowhouses and community businesses. However the area experienced extensive population loss beginning in the late 50s, due to increased suburbanization, white flight, and the riots of 1968. In addition to these widespread urban problems, West Baltimore suffered an additional blow in the late 1960s when the City adopted the “3A” Interstate Highway System for the construction of I-170. The commencement of construction resulted in the demolition of 20 blocks and the displacement of almost 1,000 households, but the highway was never completed. The 4-mile segment that was completed has become known as the “Highway to Nowhere”.

i. Demographics

According to the 2000 Census the total population of the neighborhoods included in the West Baltimore area was approximately 25,000 people. These are primarily neighborhoods of families, with nearly 33% of the total population in 2000 comprised of those aged 19 and younger as compared 28% for the city as a whole. West Baltimore contains nearly 12,290 housing units of which only 75% are occupied. Of the total occupied housing units, 45% were owner-occupied, while 55% were renter-occupied. In 2008, the foreclosure rate was 2.15 per 1000 homes, which was higher than the City's overall rate of 1.89 per 1000 homes. The 1999 median household income for the area was \$23,500, which was lower than Baltimore City's median income of \$30,000. Also, nearly 30% of West Baltimore residents were classified as being below the poverty line in 1999 compared to 23% in Baltimore City. This area is 98.7% African-American according to the 2000 census and had an unemployment rate in 2000 of 10.3%.

ii. Existing Land Use Characteristics

The existing land use within the study area is predominately medium density residential with approximately 80 percent of the housing consisting of rowhouses. Some blocks have few or no vacant homes, while other blocks have a high number of vacant buildings. The majority of the nonresidential uses are industrial uses, especially southwest of the station and along the rail line.

iii. Existing Market Conditions

The demographic profile of West Baltimore reveals a low-to-moderate income, working class neighborhood. Steady population and household loss and modest household incomes challenge the neighborhood's stability and quality of life. Current residential market conditions show a transitional urban environment that may benefit over time from the close proximity to Downtown Baltimore and the University of Maryland, including the BioPark. Rental rates for multi-family units and private rentals tend to be below citywide market rates, providing an affordable housing alternative. West Baltimore's population is sufficiently large to support at least one modern supermarket in the short-term as well as affordably-priced family-oriented retail. Retailers selling comparison items or specialty goods require a higher density of households and a more diverse mix of incomes.

Housing Action Items

The housing principles determined and verified by the West Baltimore community form the basis for the housing strategies in the matrix. The overarching theme is to provide a "neighborhood of choice", in which existing and new households have housing options that meet their needs and lifestyles. The housing principles specifically deal with

- avoiding displacement,
- maintaining housing affordability,
- increasing housing diversity,
- increasing the amount of occupied housing,
- maintaining and protecting the character of existing viable housing stock, and
- drawing early investment to opportunity-driven places.

Economic Development Action Items

The economic development principles blend strategies to cultivate large-scale economic development opportunities, promote small business creation and entrepreneurship, and enhance opportunities for local employment. Where possible, cross-fertilization of these economic development principles needs to occur in order to achieve the optimum impact. As the market develops over time, less public investment will be needed to spur large-scale economic activity. In the meantime, collaborations with area employers and the Mayor's Office of Employment Development should address current workforce skill gaps for both youth and adults.

- Cultivate large-scale economic development opportunities.
- Attract and develop businesses and facilities to serve the local population.
- Promote small business development and entrepreneurship.
- Enhance local workforce, employment opportunities and local business participation.

Transportation Action Items

The transportation principles embrace a number of issues related to parking, neighborhood circulation, safety and security, modes of transportation and streetscape. The main objective is to create a transportation network that promotes West Baltimore as a livable, transit-oriented community enjoyable for pedestrians, bikers, transit riders, and drivers alike. Included in this matrix is the need to plan for the Red Line.

- Improve traffic safety and security
- Provide for adequate parking and improved neighborhood circulation
- Improve infrastructure and install new streetscape
- Plan for Red Line development

Funding from the HUD Sustainable Communities Challenge Planning Grant will be used to help implement the West Baltimore TOD Strategy by furthering the following Action Items:

- Develop strategies to prepare opportunity-driven place for immediate infill redevelopment
- Encourage infill housing developers to consider different housing types
- Remove, replace, and/or rehabilitate substandard housing stock
- Target and/or acquire the following infill opportunities block by block:
 - 1900-2100 block of Edmondson Avenue
 - 500 block of N. Pulaski Street
 - 2300-2400 block of Laurretta Avenue
 - 200 Block of North Monroe Street
 - Mount Street area
 - TEVO* Priority Blocks
- Improve/upgrade existing storefronts and revive empty ones block by block*:
 - Edmondson Avenue (near MARC station & at Franklin Street)
 - Intersection of Lafayette & Fulton
 - Intersection of Baltimore & Fulton
 - Intersection of Frederick, Pulaski & Pratt
- Create a non-profit community development corporation to assist in the implementation of the strategy and to take advantage of the current and future MARC and Red Line investments.