

Inaugural Chesapeake Connect trip to Cleveland provides delegates with fresh perspective on regional cooperation

A group of more than 40 of the Baltimore region's leaders joined the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) for Chesapeake Connect, a 3-day regional delegation trip to Cleveland, in early November.

The intent of the program is to highlight best practices in transportation planning, community development, economic development, and workforce development from a peer region.

"Through Chesapeake Connect, our goal was to expose the delegation to new ideas, challenge current perceptions, and foster new relationships between fellow leaders," said Michael B. Kelly, BMC executive director. "If we want to strengthen the Baltimore region, we need the buy-in of those who are committed to its prosperity."

The delegation included a sampling of the Baltimore region's key stakeholders and decision-makers - elected officials, presidents, CEOs and advisors at nonprofits, banks, universities, local governments and private businesses.

"We hope that this is the first of an annual program that will strengthen our region by offering new perspectives and encouraging cooperation across sectors

and jurisdictional lines," said [Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman](#), who serves as the chair of the BMC Board of Directors.

In 1940, the City of Cleveland was the sixth most populous municipality in the nation, followed by the City of Baltimore. Like Baltimore, Cleveland faced significant losses in population and employment during the latter half of the 20th century. Today, with a population of nearly 2.1 million residents, Cleveland is the 32nd largest metropolitan area in the United States.

Bolstered by the optimism of a [2016 Nation Basketball Association championship](#), the "Rock and Roll Capital of the World" is experiencing a renaissance in the post-industrial era. With downtown redevelopment buttressed by transit and anchor institution investment, a renewed focus on growing the region's manufacturing sector, and innovative partnerships reimagining both urban and suburban neighborhoods, Cleveland's successful rebirth presented the group with many lessons to bring home.

The delegation spent Sunday, November 5, through Tuesday, November 7, touring greater Cleveland - from the

recently redeveloped [Public Square](#) downtown and the [Van Aken District](#) in Shaker Heights, to the up-and-coming neighborhood of [Ohio City](#) on the west side of the city. The delegation traveled throughout the region with the guidance of the [Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Association \(RTA\)](#).

In addition, Chesapeake Connect included several panel discussions - from the impact of the [Healthline](#), a 10-mile bus rapid transit project, and the coordination between anchor institutions and philanthropic investment, to attracting, creating and growing employment opportunities in the region.

For Will Anderson, director of the [Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development](#), Chesapeake Connect showed him how the partnerships in greater Cleveland brought workforce and economic opportunities to the region. Baltimore County has similar opportunities, with powerhouse names such as McCormick & Company, Stanley Black & Decker, Paypal, headquarters for the Social Security Administration and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, five regional medical centers, and innovative educational institutions

such as the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) and Towson University. Major redevelopment projects in downtown Towson and Sparrows Point are generating billion in private investment.

"It takes a great deal of creativity for a region to attract and retain anchor institutions and businesses, as well as redevelop older commercial and industrial properties," Anderson said. "Chesapeake Connect has been an opportunity for us to see how a region similar to Baltimore worked together for decades to make the most of its assets. The redevelopment surrounding Cleveland Clinic and the Healthline corridor was particularly inspiring."

BMC worked with local partners in Cleveland, such as: [the Cleveland Foundation](#); [Cuyahoga Community College \(Tri-C\)](#); [Cuyahoga County Land Bank](#); [Edwins Leadership & Restaurant Institute](#); [First Suburbs Consortium](#); [Fund for Our Economic Future \(FOEF\)](#); Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Association (RTA); [Group Plan Commission](#); Healthline; [Magnet \(Manufacturing Advocacy Growth Network\)](#); [the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland \(MOCA\)](#); [NewBridge Cleveland](#); [Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency \(NOACA\)](#); Ohio

City, Incorporated (OCI); Public Square; [Team NEO](#); and [University Circle, Inc. \(UCI\)](#).

"I was particularly struck by the partnerships developed between higher education, philanthropy, government, nonprofits and businesses in Cleveland," said Dawn Kirstaetter, vice president for strategic partnerships at Baltimore City Community College. "This trip was a welcome reminder of our shared stake in the greater Baltimore region's success."

Local Chesapeake Connect sponsors included: the [Greater Baltimore Committee](#), [Howard Hughes Corporation](#), [Cross Street Partners](#), [Tradepoint Atlantic](#), [Hartman Executive Advisors](#), and with support from the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#).

Moving forward, BMC will continue the dialogue with the delegation, Kelly said.

"In order to build upon the insights gained, BMC will convene the delegation for focused follow-up conversations on how we might implement models seen in Cleveland," Kelly said. "We gauge the success of this trip on bringing these leaders together to witness Cleveland's regional cooperation, but also on our actions moving forward." ■

WHY CLEVELAND?

In 1950, Baltimore City and Cleveland were, respectively, the sixth and seventh largest cities in the United States. Steel production was driving the economy in both cities and new suburbs and highways were expanding our infrastructure well beyond the city lines.

What followed, in both regions, were decades of urban population loss, economic shifts away from manufacturing and the near complete decline of the American steel industry. While suburban communities grew and thrived, both cities struggled with the economic and social realities of the times. Baltimore City lost nearly 400,000 residents, while in Cleveland, without the economic anchor of the federal government, that number is nearly 600,000 people.

Today, both Cleveland and Baltimore see similar signs of an urban renaissance built largely on redevelopment projects and world class healthcare institutions. Meanwhile, our inner ring suburban communities are beginning to face, for the first time, both aging infrastructure and an aging population.

Many of the challenges Cleveland faces today mirror those we are attempting to address at home. Our hope is that Chesapeake Connect will provide leaders from the Baltimore region with insight into both successes and challenges Northeast Ohio has experienced in their attempt to build a post-industrial economy. ■



More than 40 leaders from the Baltimore region joined BMC's Chesapeake Connect 2017 delegation, which took place in Cleveland, Ohio. Photo courtesy of Gregory Wilson Photo





More than 40 of the Baltimore region's leaders, joined the 2017 Chesapeake Connect trip to Cleveland, Ohio. Representing BMC's Board of Directors were: Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman (above, left), who serves at BMC's chair; Anne Arundel County Executive Steve Schuh (below), who will serve as BMC chair in 2018; City of Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh; Carroll County Commissioner Stephen Wantz Maryland State Sen. Bill Ferguson; Maryland Del. Steve Lafferty; Queen Anne's County Commissioner James Moran; and J. Thomas Sadowski, vice chancellor of economic development at the University of Maryland and gubernatorial appointee to the board. Photos courtesy of Gregory Wilson Photo

