

Whole Blocks Strategy: Guidance from MD DHCD

Organize a strong team of neighborhood leaders and residents

- Engage and listen to a broad base of community and institutional leaders to communicate the needs and desires of the neighborhood; and, develop a comprehensive community-driven masterplan
- Engage neighborhood residents and key stakeholders to establish and drive a whole blocks redevelopment strategy in concert with public officials and development partners

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Build from strength as much as possible, and address areas of weakness as needed

- Use Baltimore City typologies to understand market characteristics
- Renovate or redevelop where there are readily understood and measurable strengths (a block with high owner-occupancy, fewer VBNs, proximity to a stronger neighborhood market) and clear community assets – parks, schools, a local landmark, anchor institutions.
- Identify key landmarks in the built environment, including train stations, cemeteries, and commercial districts. Use clear boundaries/edges and identifiable focal points and centers; a small park, a small commercial core, a landmark, and/or a preeminent block
- In concert with the community's plan, demolish areas of concentrated vacancy that depress the neighborhood market values and harbor crime; create new community open spaces (parks and gardens) in place of concentrated blight.

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Identify contiguous clusters of whole blocks

- Plan for a sequence of reinvestment in whole block clusters to phase reinvestment.
- Each cluster should be approximately 5 blocks by 5 blocks and be walkable (select an area large enough to matter and small enough to remain manageable)
- Identify and concentrate reinvestment strategies for each cluster, including code enforcement, pre-development, acquisition, disposition, renovation and infill construction, repair grants, cleaning and greening of vacant lots, and renewal of neighborhood infrastructure.

Determine variables to measure

- Measure expected change over time: i.e., homeownership, vacancy rate, permit activity, population growth. The Baltimore City Neighborhood Typology has been tracking this data every few years since 2008, so there is an existing benchmark that is consistent across the city.

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Raise consistent public/private investment

- Consistent, sustained funding prevents delays in the implementation timeline, builds market momentum, and maintains productivity and efficiency in construction staffing. Neighbors and potential new buyers need to see consistent change to build confidence and be encouraged to stay in their neighborhoods.