

South Baltimore Gateway Partnership Strategic Plan

Purpose:

The South Baltimore Gateway Partnership provides a *nimble* and *flexible* vehicle for enhancing the vitality of the South Baltimore Gateway neighborhoods, empowering community institutions and improving the welfare of the residents.

Vision:

Over a five year period, the South Baltimore Gateway Partnership will significantly improve the vitality of our communities by: 1) fostering community development and revitalization, 2) making communities cleaner greener and healthier, and 3) improving the health and well-being of residents.

Criteria:

While the South Baltimore Gateway Master Plan lists many important needs and opportunities, it is simply not possible to complete them all at once. Instead, the Partnership follows an organized strategy that *maximizes our effectiveness* within a smaller subset of priority subject areas. Our goal is to achieve *meaningful and measurable* change in the South Baltimore Gateway Communities and in the lives of the residents, regardless of their background or income.

From all the possible priorities outlined in the Master Plan, the Partnership selects strategic priorities that embody the best mix of the following characteristics:

1. *Alignment.* The priority must be aligned with the South Baltimore Gateway Master Plan, and informed by subsequent work such as the Valbridge Report.
2. *Impact.* Within a 5-year time period, and with the resources available to us, we can make a meaningful and measurable impact on the priority, as determined by clear outcome metrics.
3. *Equity.* The priority responds to needs across our communities in a fair and just manner that allows us to provide enhanced support to the communities facing the greatest challenges, without ignoring other neighborhoods in the process.
4. *Sustainability.* Wherever possible, priority should generate results that can be sustained in the long term.
5. *Synergy.* Wherever possible, Strategic Priorities should have a natural relationship with one another, such that our work on one subject reinforces our work on another subject.

6. *Partnerships*. Wherever possible, priority should create opportunities for collaboration with other organizations, including nonprofits and businesses from the District.
7. *Leverage*. Wherever possible, priority should create opportunities to leverage outside funding sources.

Priorities:

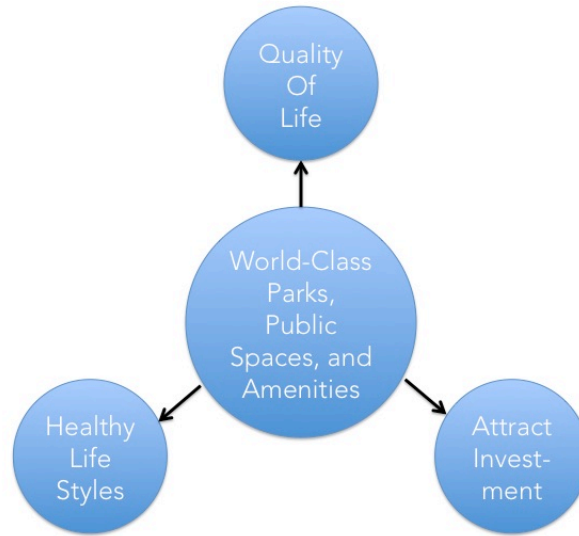
For the duration of this Strategic Plan, the Partnership will build a strategy based upon three priority subject areas and the synergy among them:

- **Community Development and Revitalization:** Improving the quality of neighborhoods by increasing the marketability of properties, stabilizing and improving housing and promoting redevelopment and investment.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Making neighborhoods greener, cleaner, and healthier by improving and upgrading parks and other green space, increasing tree canopies, and assuring clean air and water.
- **Health and Wellness:** Ensuring that all people in the area have equitable opportunities to lead healthy lifestyles by expanding access to healthy foods, wellness programs and space for recreation and physical activity.

Independent of one another, these are each important goals, worthy of concerted effort. But when brought together, they provide a powerful mechanism for driving positive change in neighborhoods across the District. Because of their natural synergy, efforts in one area can generate progress on the others.

By selecting priorities that reinforce one another in this way, the District can stretch the impact of each dollar spent, and harness positive ripple effects. Moreover, these are areas in which we can build durable partnerships with other organizations, and leverage our funds by collaborating with others.

The following outlines in detail one of our strategic priorities. Over the next five years, we will *improve neighborhood quality of life, attract desirable investment, and empower people to live healthy lifestyles* by building, enhancing, maintaining, and programming a world-class network of parks, public spaces, and neighborhood amenities.



This Strategic Plan will not detail the specific tasks that we will undertake in the coming years. The Executive Director and the Program Committee will make those decisions on an ongoing basis. However, sample projects that could be funded under this approach might include:

- Filling our parks and public spaces with lively activities, events, athletics, and other programming;
- Cleaning and maintaining our public spaces so that they appear safe, attractive, and inviting;
- Spearheading the creation of new parks, recreational facilities, trails, and bike lanes;
- Using high-quality public amenities to attract or anchor new neighborhood investments; and
- Stitching our communities together through safer and more attractive non-automotive connections.

It is also worth noting that this strategy gives us an excellent opportunity to make meaningful progress on several of the high priority “Transformative Initiatives” called for in the Plan, such as creating *expanded trail networks*; building a *world-class waterfront park system*; providing *clean water in the Middle Branch*; and creating an *upgraded Carroll Park*. And as our improved parks and public spaces help to stabilize communities, this strategy will also *spur reinvestment and redevelopment*. Similarly, it will *promote physical activity with opportunities to bike and walk*, empowering people to lead healthier lifestyles.

Funding Allocation:

The Partnership will invest in three broad categories:

- *Transformational Projects* that dramatically improve conditions in the District. These could be either major capital projects or major programs. Transformational projects have implications that affect the entire District, often generating long-term outcomes

over multiple years of funding and partnerships. Such projects should clearly advance our strategic priorities.

- *Enhanced Services* that supplement the services already provided by the City or other partners. These could take the form of ongoing programs, maintenance, or capital investments. These enhanced services should improve upon the baseline services provided by the City, and should not be a way for the City to simply meet its basic obligations to communities.
- *Community Grants* that directly empower communities to improve their neighborhoods as they themselves see fit. These will be awarded based upon specified criteria and a transparent selection process.

As a general rule, the Partnership will only invest in projects that directly further the strategy outlined above. That said, we will allow greater flexibility when providing Community Grants to neighborhoods, because these organizations better understand how best to balance our broader strategic Priorities with other pressing local priorities.

Based upon a long process of strategic decision-making, we have decided to fund these three categories at the following levels. (If we later discover that, in practice, another funding allocation would actually create better outcomes for people in the District, then we will adjust the allocations accordingly).

Category	Criteria	Approximate % of Program Funds
Transformational Projects	Each year, transformational projects will be funded based on four criteria: alignment with strategic priorities, leverage of partnerships in the community, capacity to benefit the entire District, and sustainability beyond the grant period.	50%
Enhanced Services	Funds are allocated over multiple years, for a limited number of services (including capital projects) that have a material positive effect on the District and its communities. Outcomes will be tracked to ensure their effectiveness.	30%
Community Grants	Each year, community representatives may apply for grants to fund their own efforts at making a substantive positive impact on the community. We will provide some flexibility, so that communities can participate in our Strategic Plan while also solving their own pressing problems.	20%

Evaluation:

The Partnership will constantly monitor and evaluate its own effectiveness, and will actively

look for opportunities to improve its strategy. In doing so, we will develop evaluation criteria that emphasize successful outcomes for residents and businesses in the District, rather than focusing on inputs such as dollars spent.

This may require us to change how programs are administered; eliminate programs that are ineffective; reallocate funds between the three major categories of funding; or examine our underlying strategy. Whatever the consequence, we will never be afraid to acknowledge our own mistakes, because doing so helps us to better serve our fellow citizens.

Communications:

The South Baltimore Gateway Partnership is committed to an *open, transparent, and responsive* process that engages our community. Moreover, we believe it is important that people *see* where their Local Impact Grant funds are being spent.

Therefore, we will operate under the following communications principles:

1. We will comply with the Open Meetings Act, ensuring that anyone can attend our meetings hear our decision-making in action.
2. We will schedule a public meeting every year to review our proposed budget.
3. We will make our core planning documents, including our annual budget, this Strategic Plan, our Fiscal Audits, and our Performance Evaluations available online for everyone to see.
4. We will maintain a website filled with useful information.
5. We will develop a clear logo and brand identity for the Partnership.
6. We will use social media to ensure that community members can follow our progress in real time.
7. Capital projects, service programs, and public events funded by the Partnership will incorporate the brand identity through signage and other means.
8. Enhanced Services provided by the Partnership will be performed, wherever possible, by workers in clearly identifiable uniforms and vehicles.