

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.

Strategic 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.

We can summarize this strategy by saying that 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 investments.



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.

It is 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 South Baltimore Gateway Master 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.

Responding Compassionately to Emergent Problems:

While we are committed to our Strategic Priorities, we are not blind to the fact that our communities also have other needs, some of which are immediate and urgent. SBGP may occasionally elect to respond compassionately to these emergent situations in a *focused, time-limited manner* that does not undermine our larger strategy.

For example, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged quite suddenly, causing residents across the District to require hand sanitizer, protective masks, food, and other basic supplies. Because SBGP was able to move more nimbly than larger organizations, we rapidly developed a distribution network for food and other essential items until more experienced partners could step in to provide long-term support. This choice allowed us to respond to an emergent situation without abandoning our Strategic Priorities or assuming perpetual responsibility for aid distribution.

Addressing Public Safety and Education:

Just as a classroom is not the only way that children learn, traditional policing is not the only way to improve public safety. To the contrary, the 2020 Baltimore City Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan specifically explains that:

“Historically, Baltimore has over-relied on the 3Ps – policing, prosecutions, and prisons – in an attempt to reduce violence and strengthen community safety. This strategy has not only failed to yield longterm results, it has also come at an extremely high social cost to many of our most vulnerable communities.”

The 2020 CVPP goes on to quote Mayor Scott, who observes:

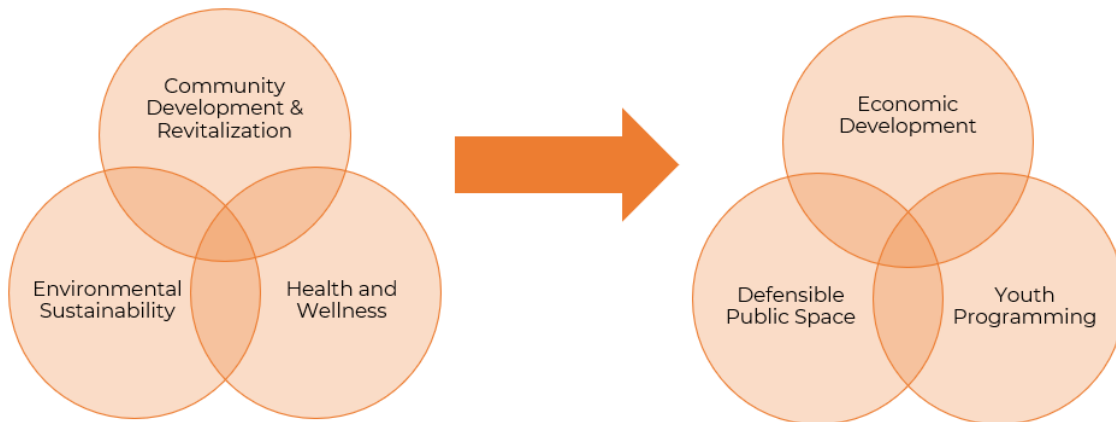
“We must no longer subscribe to the thinking that police alone can stem the tide of violence. [Instead] we must ask what every agency and institution that interacts with our residents can do to stop the violence.... Baltimore will

embody what it means to treat violence as a public health epidemic.”

SBGP addresses public safety and education by treating them as vitally **interrelated topics** that are **fundamentally integrated** into this Strategic Plan through the **creation, maintenance, and programming of defensible public space**. Specifically, we provide:

1. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). SBGP **reduces the attractiveness of public spaces for criminal activity** by ensuring that these spaces are well designed, well maintained, and activated with programs that generate natural surveillance.
2. Reliable and Enriching Youth Programming. SBGP targets **gaps in the support structure** for children by funding programs:
 - At **times when children are unsupervised**, such as after school, on weekends, or over the summer.
 - Including **subjects that are chronically underfunded within the BCPS system** (e.g. environmental education, physical education, and arts education).
 - In **empty places** that require activation to feel safe.
3. Economic Opportunity. Any serious public health approach to crime must recognize the obvious reality that **neighborhoods facing the most crime have the least opportunity**. Communities that carry the burden of chronic disinvestment must be able to generate economic opportunity if they are to **provide credible alternatives** to criminal behavior.

Therefore, the three Strategic Priorities listed above can easily be reframed as a bold and comprehensive agenda for both education and public safety:



Nonetheless, as with other emergent problems that fall outside of our Strategic Priorities, we may occasionally consider funding a more traditional approach to crime prevention in a focused, time-limited manner that does not undermine our larger strategy, but rather compliments it. Such a decision could only happen:

- In response to an **emergent** situation that reflects a **specific concern**;
- In response to a **direct request** with the support of the community in question; and
- Where there is a reasonable likelihood that the approach will be **effective**.

In considering these requests, solutions should:

- Naturally **complement** our existing programs (e.g. a security camera in a park);
- Involve **capital improvements** (e.g. lighting) over staffing (e.g. security patrols);
- Are **discrete and time-limited** so as not to distract from our larger strategy; and
- Do not cause our residents to **feel unwelcome** anywhere in the District.

Similarly, we may occasionally consider funding a more traditional approach to education in a focused, time-limited manner that does not undermine our larger strategy, but rather compliments it. In allowing for this possibility, we do not intend to cover baseline services that are the obligation of the City or school district.

Funding Allocation:

The Partnership will invest in three broad categories of work:

- *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

ORIGINALLY APPROVED BY BOARD ON 2/22/17
UPDATED AND APPROVED BY BOARD ON 1/19/22

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.